

The Church Defined

Paul warns of heresy in the Church

Studies in the Prison Epistles
of the Apostle Paul

COLOSSIANS

Verse by verse

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A DISPENSATIONAL COMMENTARY

Colossians

Introduction

Several scholars dispute the authenticity of Colossians. The late Catholic writer, Father Raymond Brown (1998), said that, "*At the present moment about 60 percent of critical scholarship holds that Paul did not write the letter*" (*An Introduction*, p. 610).¹ Another such scholar, Norman Perrin, gives several considered opinions against Pauline authorship and authenticity (*The New Testament: An Introduction*, pp. 121-123): language and style (though he acknowledges that there are Pauline idiosyncrasies in the letter); the absence of Pauline concepts, and the presence of concepts not found in the earlier letters. Perrin seeks to show that there are some concepts of Christology and of the Church in Colossians that might be better understood as deutero-Pauline. We will examine those as we move through the epistle. Another scholar, Werner Georg Kummel, suggests that these concepts are within the boundaries of authentic Pauline thought (*Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 342-345). He offers several opinions in favor of authenticity (op. cit., p. 345). His comments are found at the end of this commentary.ⁱ

Note that reference to Colossians by Paul in his Ephesians letter supports the authenticity of Colossians. If Ephesians is thought by critics to be written c. 100 and draws from Colossians, then logic dictates that Colossians was written some time before and must have been considered authentic in order to be used for imitation by the author of Ephesians if he was anyone other than Paul.

On the other hand, the arguments against authenticity should not be discarded or underestimated. Udo Schnelle argues strongly against authenticity (*The History and Theology*, pp. 282-288). Raymond Brown provides an overview of five arguments against authenticity: vocabulary, style, theology, the dispute with false teachers, and the characters and situations presented (*An Introduction*, pp. 610-615). Of the arguments against authenticity, the strongest are those

¹ Father Raymond E. Brown, S.S., a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and one of America's preeminent biblical scholars, died after a heart attack on Saturday, August 8, 1998.

maintaining that Colossians shows a more developed theology in its Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology than the later Pastoral Epistles and Ephesians.

My position is clearly in favor of Pauline authorship and authenticity based on consistency of doctrine and clear ecclesiology, the focus of Paul's letters preparing the Church in the period c. 50-80 A.D.

This letter was written to address, what has come to be known as, *The Colossian Heresy*. From details that we can extract from the letter, it appears to be a mixture of early Gnosticism (from *gnōsis* "knowledge," and legalistic Judaism, i. e., *Sabbaths*, *New Moons* and *circumcision*). The problem that the practicing Gnostic faced was, in its simplest terms, framed this way; all matter is evil so how then can one avoid its influence and keep his/her higher nature unmarred and/or contaminated? One answer was rigid asceticism. That consisted of elements including a very spare diet, abstaining from animal flesh, refraining from marriage, and no use of olive oil as an emollient. A second answer was to disregard matter altogether. That led to an uncontrolled license. New Orleans on Mardi Gras is a good example of what happens when the Old Adamic Nature is unrestrained, but still marches down the street in lock step with a rigid adherence to ritual Law. We might think back to the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians warning them against turning back to the legalism of the Law.

Bishop J. B. Lightfoot said of this Epistle that "The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fullness than in any other of St. Paul's epistles." Kenneth Wuest adds that "the reason for this is that the Colossian heresy in its attack upon the Person of the Lord Jesus made it imperative that the great Apostle meet it with such precision and fullness in doctrine regarding His Person as would successfully cope with the false teachings of this system." This brings us to a question to which we must forge an answer today—what is our responsibility today regarding heresy, false teaching within our local assembly? How should it be dealt with, and who should confront it when it occurs?

The question must be asked; "Why must we confront heretical teaching?" Heresy is error, which often results from some aspect of truth being taken out of its context (more likely than not its dispensational setting) and applied in an inappropriate manner.

In Corinth, Paul said this about some of the things being taught as truth; “for there must be also heresies among you, in order that they who are approved may be made manifest (revealed) among you” (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is productive to view heresy as an opportunity; it is there in order to reveal those among the believers who hold truth in error, and it is there in order to identify those who are ready to confront it with the truth of God’s Word. Paul is teaching the assemblies how to select and trust the *elders in their midst*. At its core, heresy is a work of the flesh; it’s not forced on us, but concocted by our own minds in an undisciplined state, rearranging truth as we think it should be rather than simply taking God at His Word, from His Word! In the Gentile assemblies of Galatia Paul identified these works of the flesh; “idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, factions, seditions, heresies” (Galatians 5:20). Oh, this wasn’t peculiar to the Gentile believers, for we see Peter warning the transitional Jewish believers at the very beginning of the Age of Grace, “there are false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Peter 2:1). We must recognize and appoint our elders carefully and examine their doctrinal understanding and instruction with precision. Paul also saw this very thing as an on-going problem for the Body of Christ. “For I know this: that after my departure (death) shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). The Apostle John also saw this same thing developing and error spreading as a result. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, in order that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

Heretics cause us to learn how to handle doctrinal error correctly, and to train us how to share the truth. This process forms Christian character and glorifies God. As Paul told Timothy in his last Epistle; “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose them” (2 Timothy 2:24-25). In this same letter, Paul gives the antidote to error—“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Thus, heresies, the errors that they teach, make us to be like the Bereans, who “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

It is a definite mercy that in His wisdom God allowed every possible form of error to arise in the apostolic era of the church's history, in order that all might be exposed, and the truth declared through inspired men; that thus the faith in its simplicity might be preserved for the generations to come. As a result of this, Satan has nothing new to offer. Old heresies are redressed and brought forward as new conceptions of truth from age to age, but in this respect "there is nothing new under the sun."

—Dr. Harry A. Ironside

"We little know how good and necessary it is for us to have adversaries, and for heretics to hold up their heads against us."—Martin Luther

Colossians 1

(1:1) As usual, Paul begins by identifying his ownership by Christ Jesus. He is an "Apostle of (genitive of possession; belonging to) Christ Jesus." Paul's status as one "*sent with a message*" was accepted by Peter and the other Apostles (Galatians 2:7-9; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 5; 2 Corinthians 12:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:6). In the term, "By God's will," Paul stresses that his Apostleship was not one appointed by man, even less was it by his own choice; but was a personal appointment by Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, accompanied by His revelation to Paul, as with the other Apostles' election. Further, Paul states that Christ had set him apart from his birth to be an Apostle (Galatians 1:15). As a Jew steeped in Old Testament Scripture, Paul would identify with God's calling of the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 49:1, 5) and Jeremiah before him (Jeremiah 1:5), though he knew the special nature of his born-again relationship to the ascended Jesus.

I believe that Paul is already thinking ahead to the challenges that the young church is going to soon face, for he recognizes Timothy in his introduction, "And Timothy our brother." Timothy has clearly grown in Paul's respect to where he is linked with Paul in greeting (4:10-14).² As elsewhere in Paul's letters "Grace and peace" come from "God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ)—Note the absence of the article before Lord, indicating that the character of Lord Jesus Christ is emphasized, not the fact of His Person. That indicates that Paul is considering Him equal to the Father as the source of blessing to man, and especially to the Church, His Body. Any thought that the ecclesiology of this letter is not Pauline is thoroughly out of the question. Grace precedes peace as always, because it is by grace that we are saved, and on rebirth it is onto the

² For more on Timothy see Acts 16.1 on; Philippians 2.19-22; and the letters to Timothy

ground of peace that we are moved. "To the holy" *hagioi* is 'ones set apart' "in Christ."

*'In Christ' is where they are positionally;
'set apart ones' is what they are positionally.*

As believers, they are the recipients of both actions of the Holy Spirit; they did not initiate either action, nor are they the initiators of the results—that is what makes this all of grace. Let one iota of man's efforts get involved and you no longer have grace, but rewards.

"and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae." This phrase indicates that while salvation is by faith, evidence of our standing is to be found in faithfulness. These words are spoken to those who faithfully follow Him. Note that "in Christ" says that it is in Him, and only in Him that all of the believer's blessings are going to be found by means of faith; and it is He alone who can keep us faithful in our walk. Remember from our study of Ephesians that He has prepared beforehand the works in which we should walk as His masterpiece (*poiema*) Ephesians 2:10.

Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus, by God's will, and Timotheus the brother,
to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ which [are] in Colossae. Grace
to you and peace from God our Father [and Lord Jesus Christ]. Colossians
1:1-2

(1:3-4) When Paul gives thanks it is "to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is an important distinction, for it recognizes the Father as the supreme will within the Trinity, and thus the God and Father of the incarnate Jesus, our Lord. That does not diminish the Lord Jesus one bit, but establishes the order of divine decrees and the doctrine of procession.

Thanksgiving is the core of Paul's prayers, which are offered "continually," for the believers in Colossae. Doesn't this remind you to *pray without ceasing*? These believers have a reputation for their "faith in Christ Jesus" and for "the love," which they "have towards all the saints." The root word for saints is *hagios* or ones set apart unto God.

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
continually [when] praying for you, having heard of your faith in Christ
Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints, Colossians 1:3-4

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The title 'our Lord Jesus Christ' contains three elements.

First; He is Lord (*kurios*). He is the One Whose Name is above every name. He is Yahweh Himself (Philippians 2:9). To the Jew and to Paul the name above every name was Yahweh and in the Greek Old Testament Yahweh is represented by *kurios*. He is also elsewhere the great 'I am' (John 8:58, compare Exodus 3:14). Louie Giglio likes to refer to this as literally 'I Be' a very accurate rendition. It is yet another name for Yahweh and is thus 'the Word' who existed in the beginning, through whom God created the worlds (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6, 9), "the Lord of all."

Second, He is 'Jesus.' "He became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). He was truly man and yet without the Old Adamic Nature, so that in His humanity He was all that man was ever intended to be. The Bible tells us that there are only two men before God; the First Adam who sinned, and the Last Adam who redeemed us all and reconciled the world to God. He is the Last Adam. In His humanity, He hungered (Matthew 4:2); He grew thirsty (John 4:7; 19:28); He suffered, and He died the death of a man. His victory over death was a Man's victory, and He rose and ascended, entering Heaven as the ascended Man in whom we are joined to God. The name Jesus means 'Yahweh is salvation,' and so our heavenly position is guaranteed (1) by His character as the Kinsman Redeemer and (2) by His attributes as Divine.

Third, He is 'the Christ.' By His death and resurrection He is declared to be 'both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:36). To Israel, He is the expected King, Israel's Messiah, and the One appointed to eternal Rule (2 Peter 1:11; compare Psalm 145:13; Daniel 4:3, 34; 7:14). For all creation, He is the One who both sits on His own throne and also uniquely shares His Father's throne (Revelation 3:21), the One before whom every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:10). To the Church He is the Groom to whom the Bride is joined in blessed union forever. Because of this He is the powerful One (Romans 1:4). He is the One worthy of worship and honor. He is the Lord of glory. He is the

LORD JESUS CHRIST!

(1:5-6) So we see that Paul has heard of their sound faith firmly fixed in Christ as the [object of their faith](#). They profess love (*agape* source love that requires no response) for all believers, and they have hope regarding the future. This combination of faith, love and hope is seen repeatedly in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's Epistles (Review your notes on Romans 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 13:3; Hebrews 10:22-24; 1 Peter 1:22-23; and see Galatians 5:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8). "Faith" refers to two factors in their lives—one, is their response to the Gospel, and two, to their present behavior and attitude towards others (see 1:23). If we say that they are grounded in *the faith*, then that should trigger in us this all-important thread of *sound doctrine* that runs throughout the Pauline Epistles. We are seeing it in every piece of correspondence. He commends them because they continue to express those sound principles in their lives. Love is the evidence of their true faith, the work of the Spirit within them (Ephesians 3:16-19). Their faith produces positive "hope" towards the future, expressed by Paul to the believers in Corinth and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).

"The love which you have towards all the saints" brings to mind the wonderful little book by Frances Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*, in which he declares that love, *agape*, is the quality of *new creation life* in the believer that Satan cannot counterfeit. This has been from the beginning the singular sign of a genuine Christian. Where love is lacking, true repentance is not to be found. Finally, it was a command of Jesus at the end of the prior dispensation that His disciples should love one another (John 13:35; 15:12, 17) and in this present dispensation it is the first quality seen of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). *Agape* is not sexual; nor is it based on the degree to which the person loved responds. It is solely sourced in [the regenerated human spirit](#), led by the indwelling Holy Spirit, producing the spiritual attitude of Christ in the one who loves. Its goal is God's best for those so loved.

Here is a glimpse of heavenly assets of the earth-bound believer—"the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens." This hope is based on the firm belief regarding the Rapture, when the Lord descends from Heaven to claim His Bride. Dead believers are raised and living saints are transformed as He takes them to be with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54). Our hope, like theirs, is on deposit with our ascended Lord.

Part of the gospel of Christ is that hope deposited in Him; "of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the glad tidings." When they offered the

gospel of *new creation life in the resurrected and ascended Jesus*, it was punctuated by reference to the Christian's glorious hope, the Rapture. "Word" refers to the will of God revealed, and "the truth" goes directly to the content of the Gospel, which is again a constant theme of Paul's writings. It is not simply belief that results in salvation; it is acceptance of "the word of truth." Content is everything! Review your notes on Ephesians 1:13, where Paul speaks of 'the word of truth, the Good News of your salvation.' But it doesn't stop here, for those glad tidings are "in all the world, and are bearing fruit and growing." In Romans, Paul declared that the 'invisible things of Him are clearly seen by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that every man is without excuse.' That universal display of God's creative presence and sovereign reign over all the earth is presenting the gospel of salvation throughout the universe, "bearing fruit and growing." In their case, that gospel was growing "from the day they heard (them, the glad tidings) and knew indeed the grace of God, in truth."

on account of the hope which [is] laid up for you in the heavens; of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the glad tidings, which are come to you, as [they are] in all the world, [and] are bearing fruit and growing, even as also among you, from the day ye heard [them] and knew indeed the grace of God, in truth: Colossians 1:5-6

(1:7-8) Paul had apparently sent Epaphras³ to establish this assembly at Colossae, and the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13) as well. Paul declares that, "he is faithful" in carrying the gospel and establishing these assemblies 'on our behalf.' Epaphras is called "a faithful fellow-servant (*sun-doulos*, the word for 'slave') describing his relationship to Paul; and a faithful servant (*diakonos* the word for one who renders service, our 'deacon,' describing his relationship to Christ), of Christ." Paul has reinforced this theme to the believers in Corinth, by reminding them that "It is required of servants that they be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Epaphras was faithful to the end that he apparently experienced imprisonment with Paul (Philemon 1:23).

³ **'Epaphras,'** See also 4:12; Philemon 1:23—short for Epaphroditus; probably used to distinguish him from another Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25; 4:18).

even as ye learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow-bondman, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you, who has also manifested to us your love in [the] Spirit. Colossians 1:7-8

Paul's prayer for the believers at Colossae

(1:9-11) On learning of their response to Christ, Paul and his band of lieutenants began to pray for them constantly. We should take this to heart with regard to our missionaries' efforts and converts. The first thing that they prayed for was that the young believers might have "spiritual wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of His will." Then the prayer was that they may walk in accordance with wisdom and understanding (verse 10). To the believer "Wisdom" (Grk. *sophia*) is the application of doctrine to one's experience. "Understanding" is to gain an orientation to grace in your condition that is consistent with your position in Christ. If this is Spirit-led, it will result in a more consistent *departure from evil* (Job 28:28) in your life. To the Gnostic, *sophia* was their goddess Wisdom. "Bearing fruit in every good work" takes us back to Ephesians and the works "prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

The works are His, not ours;
and our part is simply to *walk in them*.

Finally, they prayed that they might have the strength imparted to enable them to do it (verse 11), for without that God given (power) strength all would be impossible. And finally they prayed that they might appreciate the power and glory through which this has become possible, our redemption in Christ (verse 12-14).

I want to emphasize again my conviction that God the Father is the forgotten member of the Trinity in this generation. Today, the fastest growing segment of Christendom, the Pentecostal/charismatic assemblies, is focused almost exclusively on the Holy Spirit as the center and object of their worship. On the other hand, there are the large denominations that see the historical Jesus as the focus of their worship, and are adhering to the Law as their ethic for living, missing altogether the distinction of the ascended Jesus on this side of Pentecost. For those Christians who know the difference, here is the source of both the power and the privilege of walking in those works prepared before hand—it is the will and action of the Father. It is the Father Who has done these things. Paul's thanksgiving is always directed to the Father. He points out that He has "made us meet," which is to say that we have been made "suited to His

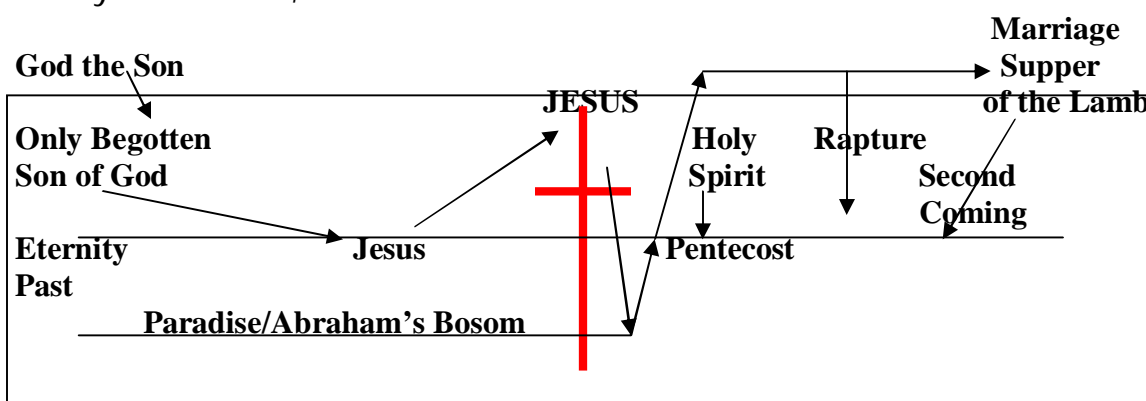
purpose." By the Father we have been *delivered* from our old Adamic sin nature; *redeemed* from the slave-market of sin; *forgiven* of our sins; *ransomed* from the penalty of sin; *healed* from the effects of sin; *restored* to righteousness, and *forgiven* of our sin-debt! The totality of His work has *reconciled* us to Him forever!

The purpose of the Father is to make "us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light." How did He do this? "He has delivered us from the authority of darkness and brought us into light." Note well that He did not simply bring us to light, but "into light." There is our *union* with God in Christ. Here is light; that "we have been made to be the righteousness of God in Him" (1 Corinthians 5:21).

The Son of His Love

“in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”

So, we have been brought into heavenly places with Christ. Our position before the Father is *in the Son*. The Father sees only two men before Him; the First Adam, now redeemed according to the promise (Genesis 3:15); and the Last Adam, who paid the price of redemption and was raised from the dead to glory and ascended to the heavenly throne of the Father. It is from that glorified position that our life here flows. While we recognize Him as our Lord, and submit to Him in life, we also share His power and His glory through union with Him (Ephesians 2:4-6). This is our present state, preparing us for our heavenly destiny as His Bride, united forever



We need to recognize that God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, has ever been the single object of the Father's love. **God the Son** is His name in respect of eternal God and the heavens, prior to and apart from creation. The **Only Begotten Son of God** is the name of the Second Person of the Trinity with respect to creation, inclusive of mankind. The Only Begotten Son of God was and is the object of the Father's love just as He was in eternity past. At no time was the relationship compromised between the members of the divine Trinity. When Christ was incarnated in flesh as the **Son of Man**; that title identified Him with mankind and established Him as humanity qualified to redeem fallen Adam from Sin. The Son of Man was identified as **Jesus**, the name above all names and the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. **Christ** is His title with respect to Israel and Earth; but, Jesus is the name of the **ascended Man** in heaven, the **Groom** of the new creation Assembly. **King of Kings** refers to His eternal relationship to all of creation; and **Lord of Lords** is His title as the object of worship for all living things, both heavenly and earthly. As King of Kings, He rules from both His and His Father's thrones (Revelation 3:21).

When you look at the work of Jesus on the cross, you can see every element in the barrier between man and God dealt with and removed.

<div> He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, in order that we might be made to be the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 </div>	SIN	ATONEMENT
	PENALTY	REDEMPTION
	BIRTH	REGENERATION
	RIGHTEOUSNESS	IMPUTATION
	POSITION IN ADAM	POSITION IN CHRIST
	SPIRITUALLY DEAD	NEW CREATION LIFE

Now, clothed in the Righteousness of Christ, we can approach our Righteous Father and enter into a relationship with Him. Our Sin has been fully atoned for and subsequently removed as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12). We have been redeemed from slavery to Sin by the blood of the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-20), thus forgiven and cleansed. Through regeneration we are reborn into God's family and His righteousness is imputed to us. Now our position is in Christ "in whom we have redemption," and our life is His life; thus we are new creations, spiritually alive! The fact that every element of the barrier of separation has been removed is the doctrine of [Reconciliation](#). This is the ministry of every Christian.

The price of our redemption was paid at the bar of justice to the Father, as the Judge of all, in order to satisfy a broken Law and to secure for us "the forgiveness of our sins." . If you have the slightest inclination as a Christian to use the Law as a standard of behavior or an ethical system for living, then think carefully through what Christ accomplished for you. He satisfied the Law because you could not! Why, then, should you have to test the Law to prove that to your own satisfaction? Isn't the fact that Christ died under the Law proof enough? Are we so deceived that we believe our keeping some aspect of the

Law has merit? Would that have saved our Lord Jesus from even one iota of the price that He paid for our redemption?

For this reason we also, from the day we heard [of your faith and love], do not cease praying and asking for you, to the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, [so as] to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God; strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory unto all endurance and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated [us] into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; Colossians 1:9-14

(1:15) When Paul says that Christ “is the image of the invisible God,” then his Jewish heritage and all that he knows as a reborn, Christian, apostle comes out. The God of Israel was not visible, in fact or in any sort of physical representation. Nor could He be represented by any form in earth or heaven, neither supernatural being, man or beast (Exodus 20:4). Any “image” would suggest that He had been seen. But Christ has made the invisible God known in an entirely unique way--through His life, the demonstration of His power, and His teaching. In everything that He did He displayed the character of God and revealed His glory, as John said, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Out of his own Jewish heritage, John also would say “No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten (*monogenes*) Son, who is in the Father’s bosom, He has revealed Him” (John 1:18).

From our previous studies in Hebrews we can glean the following:

(1:3) “Brightness” has been described as radiance, out-raying, or effulgence. Today, we might understand it better as *radiation*, not just the transmission of heat or energy, but the emission of elements, a spewing forth of the essential nature of something, an ionic bombardment. The Son is all of the essence of God that this world can even discern. He is the encapsulation of the glory of God now released within this cosmos. “Glory” refers to the fullness of God’s attributes, the totality of His essence, His character, His being. All of God’s very nature that can be released in man’s world is radiated from the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever stature the prophets possessed among the

fathers stands in stark and pitiful contrast to this superlative description of God in Christ.

"Express image" is *charakter* and has to do with all the parts of the features of God. Where "glory" speaks of the nature of God in whole, *charakter* speaks of the individual parts in concert. The Son is not only the representation of the whole of God, but of every individual aspect of His divine person (nature), all of His attributes embodied. When, therefore, Christ came and presented Himself the singular, perfect sacrifice, all law passed away and He, the alternative, stood in its stead. The Law was like a great searchlight, looking for that perfect manifestation of God within the world of men, and when it discovered Jesus the Christ, its search was ended and the Son emerged. John stated it this way; "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and only, who is at the Father's side, has completely revealed Him" (John 1:18).

John acknowledges that Christ is the present and total revelation of all that God is! It is Christ victorious who stands before us and faces the Father. Our goal for living is *His character*, not the Law. It is not that standard of

Our goal for living is <i>His character</i> , not the Law . . . Any believer who extracts elements from the Law of Israel and attempts to use them to measure his/her life before God, impoverishes himself/herself in terms of the higher calling of the Lord Jesus Christ.
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acceptability measured in bulls, goats, loaves, tithes, lands, or time. Our only standard is His life! Any believer, who extracts elements from the Law of Israel, and attempts to use them to measure his/her life before God, impoverishes himself/herself in terms of the higher calling of the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:21-"For me to live is Christ;" Galatians 2:20-"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;" 1 Thessalonians 5:10-"...whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him;" each verse presents the believer's only norm, the living Lord Jesus. No believing Jew under the Law would ever have thought to say, "For me to live is Jehovah's acceptable sacrifice." Nor would he say, "Whether we are awake or asleep, we may live joined to the sacrificial lamb." Becoming one with the sacrificial animal being offered was not a real concept. Commutation of sin, both personal and corporate, to the sacrifice was their reality! But, for the Christian it is altogether different. Our blessed position is *in the Son*! Not just redeemed *by* Him, but redeemed *in Him*.

The Ark of the Covenant and its contents presented a constant picture, a type, of God covering the sin of man by the blood of the sacrifice, which the

Levitical priests sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. The book of Leviticus is filled with references to the sons of Aaron “making atonement” for the Israelites by blood offerings. These blood offerings, sprinkled on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant, *covered* the sins of Israel and gained God’s forgiveness for the penitent offerer. In contrast, here Paul states that our sins have been “cleansed (purged)”⁴ once for all, not simply ‘covered’ as in their past. Where the priest of Israel ‘covered’ the sins of the people every year, the Son, having “cleansed” us all of sin once and forever, “sat down” at the right hand of the Father. Wuest reminds us that, “having made” is a middle voice participle, which represents the subject (the Son) either acting upon himself or in his own interest. Christ, on His own initiative, acted upon Himself, offering His own body as the Sacrifice for sin (10:12) and acting in His own interest pursued the will of the Father. But, at the same time, “By Himself” (NASB) is not the best translation, because it conveys a sense of following solely His own will and not that of the Father.

“Purification of sins” should be understood in its fullest implications. We are not purified from sins only, but the sin itself has been put away by the sacrifice of the Son. In the present, the power of sin has been walled-off; a separation from the believer has been affected. In the future, after death, the very presence of sin has been separated from the believer. Therefore, *purging* or *purifying* describes the very fact of sin having been located apart from the believer and the basis for guilt and penalty nullified.

Who being the radiation (brightness) of His very nature (glory),
and the express image of his person, and maintaining (upholding)
all things by the word of his power, when he, having made
purification of sins (purged our sins), sat down on the right hand of
the Majesty on high; Heb. 1:3

The Triumph of Christ – John Flaxman, 1807

He is declared to be “[the firstborn \(prototokos⁵\) of all creation.](#)” Among men the firstborn is a reproduction of the father. But, in Greek philosophy the “firstborn” (*prototokos*) was also seen as the one who fully represented the divine Reason (the mind and thought of God), and the Logos (the will of God expressed), in its

⁴ The Greek root is the word from which we get *catharsis*.

⁵ We get “prototype” directly from this word. It is the first of something that has never been seen before.

relation to the world. But in this instance, both are eternal thus one melds into the other becoming two of the Divine Trinity. The emphasis is on the essence, commonality of attributes, and the essential nature apart from appearance. As “the firstborn of all creation,” Christ is seen to have authority over all creation. That sphere of authority comes with His identity as Creator. He was in existence before all things (eternality), and He is superior because He is God’s ‘firstborn.’ These are anthropomorphic terms, and provide woefully inadequate mental images. You should glean from them oneness of essence, shared attributes, but not that He was ‘born later’ than the Father in sequence of events. When some of our favorite teachers and theologians used the term ‘eternally begotten,’ to mean ‘not begotten at a point in time,’ to describe this, it set off a nineteenth Century brouhaha between several giants in the Brethren camp. The rift between Sir Robert Anderson, J. B. Stoney, and F. E. Raven, on one side, and William Kelly et al, on the other, continues today through Believer’s Bookshelf, which will not print Anderson and Stoney’s works simply because they defended Raven.

who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation; Colossians 1:15

(1:16) In John’s Gospel we learn of Christ that “all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). Referring back to our studies in Hebrews 1:2; Paul told us that it was Christ “through whom He made the worlds.” Jesus, as the Firstborn and Only Begotten Son of God, created all things. Let your mind wrap around this! It was not simply the Earth, but the entire universe; and beyond that, in eternity past there was the creation of every single element in the angelic/heavenly realm. Paul is careful to include those beings which existed before the world was created, and to exclude nothing. Paul establishes His preeminence with the short phrase; “He *is* before all things” (*autos estin pro panton*). The purpose of all creation was for His glory and “unto Him” for the *total* satisfaction of His attributes. As He sustains and holds together all things, His supremacy over all is unceasing and total. When we read; “because by Him were created all things,” A. T. Robertson points out that there are some interesting options offered by the word play. If we translate the preposition as “in Him,” then He is the *sphere* in which all things were created, and thus is *bigger* than them all. But, if we translate the preposition as “by Him,” then He was the *source* of that creation. “Created” is aorist tense, signifying a *once for all* action.

“In the heavens and on the earth” includes all beings, whether visible and earthly or invisible and heavenly. “Thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers” are classes of authorities including Satan himself. Get a firm grip on

this—when the enemy of God confronted the Firstborn/Creator, Jesus, the God-Man did not use one iota of His authority and power in responding. He used the Word of God as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. He did that so that we would have absolutely no excuse for doing likewise. Now, to the Church of the New Testament, we have additionally been given the instructions of the Apostles and, like Jesus, the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“In Him all things hold together.” This is a statement of His present work.

because by Him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities: all things have been created by him and for him. Colossians 1:16

Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church

(1:17-20) “He is the Head of the body” is meant to convey the picture of a single entity, not a head in heaven and a body here on earth, though joined to Him. We are not about *representing* Him here, but about *living in Him*. From Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we learned that His headship is not just over the Church, but that He is the “Head over all things” (Ephesians 1:22). Use of the definite article before “head” and “body” indicates differentiation and specificity between the Head and the body. Though we are distinct from our Lord, we are in complete unity with Him; thus His Headship stresses His supremacy, but as His Body we are one in union. Union means that we have been crucified with Him (Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; especially Romans 6.5-6; 7.4; Ephesians 2.16); we have risen with Him (Romans 6.4-6; Ephesians 2.1-6); we are one with Him (Ephesians 5.31-32; 1 Corinthians 12.12-13); and the bread at the Lord’s Table brings our union with Him into our experience in an altogether ordered way (1 Corinthians 10.16-17). It is the way that our common experience emphasizes spiritual union as the Body of Christ. William Kelly says that the idea of the body is never thought of as being in relation to the world, but always thought of as being in relation to God and to each other.

Our position in Christ was secured to us by our Lord Jesus, “Who is the beginning.” It is His Church, which He announced to Peter (Matthew 16.18) would be built upon faith. Because He is the source of our faith, it follows that He is the source of our new creation life. As the “firstborn from the dead,” He delivered those Old Testament saints from Abraham’s Bosom (Paradise) in His ascension, to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, as the friends of the Groom.

Through His resurrection, the resurrection of new creation believers is assured (Romans 6:5-6). We live because He lives, and at His voice all the dead will rise to judgment or to glory (John 5:28-29). This is all in order “That He might have (preeminence) the first place in all things.” As we study Scripture this recurring theme keeps on impacting us; it is that the objective of all creation is to see the Lord over all things, in heaven and in earth. The very next word “for” establishes the reason for that sweeping objective of all creation; “for in him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell.” Get this—From the Father proceeded the Son in Eternity Past; and from the Son proceeded the Holy Spirit in Eternity Past; and in Eternity Past the Father declared the Son to be known as the Only Begotten Son; and in time, the Only Begotten Son was declared to be known as Jesus, and it was the “good pleasure of the Father” that in the Man, Jesus, should all the *plērōma* (fullness)⁶ of the Godhead dwell. But this odyssey doesn’t stop there, as amazing as it is—for the Son (Jesus) was working on a masterpiece from the beginning. He was building something that would look like Him in every respect, and the Father and the Holy Spirit who filled the Son full (*plērōma*) were so perfectly satisfied. So when the Son returned to the Father it was to announce the coming of His Bride to all creation; and heaven rejoiced and the Holy Spirit descended!

The Goddess Ishtar

"The Light-bringer"

Babylonian High-Mother-Goddess.

**Like Inanna, she is the goddess of fertility, love and war.
Her cult was the most important one in ancient Babylon
and Ishtar became under various
names the most important Goddess
of the Near-East and Western Asia.**

Religions, both ancient and contemporary, tend to organize around many bogus intermediaries, through whom men and women, who feel unworthy and insignificant, can approach God indirectly. But Paul sweeps any such notion aside. The Babylonian cult of the Queen of Heaven and her son, Tammuz, which Israel had brought right into the Temple, was even in Paul’s day rearing its head again as the cult of Mary and the saints. If you have any doubts, then I invite you to read the Gospel of Bartholomew. But—in a preview of coming attractions—Paul emphatically states that “there is one mediator between God

⁶ The meaning of ‘fullness’ here would seem to be the entire attributes of the Godhead.

and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). No other is either qualified or needed, and *to seek such is an insult to Him* and what He has done.⁷

"To dwell" is an aorist infinitive, to dwell once for all, the verb implying permanent dwelling.

To expand on our understanding of "The fullness" (*plērōma*), the word is used of patches "filling up" a tear in clothing (Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21), but the fullness is not the patch itself but the completeness of the whole once

it is patched. It is used of baskets being "filled up" (Mark 8:20), thus it speaks of the whole basket full. It is used of the future "fullness" of Israel when they come into the full and complete enjoyment of what they have lost (Romans 11:12).

Finally, it is used of "the fullness" of the Gentiles (that's us in this dispensation of Grace), referring to the complete number of those who respond to Christ (Romans 11:25). Love is the '*plērōma*' of the Law, fulfilling it and completing it (Romans 13:10). "*plērōma*"

describes the blessing of Christ, with nothing coming short of full blessing (Romans 15:29), and it is the *plērōma* of the times, when the sequence of events for man is complete (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10). Therefore, we can see clearly that *plērōma* carries the ideas of completeness and totality.

"Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that you have spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto you.. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouths, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil." (Jeremiah 44:15-17).

"Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, "Have you seen this, O son of man?" Turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces to the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.... Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." (Ezek. 8:14-16, 18).

⁷ Dr Peter Pett BA BD DD

Theologically *plērōma* is used of "His fullness," the fullness of Christ (John 1:16), signifying the totality of what He is and has. It is used of being "filled unto all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19), signifying the totality of the love that God would give us as a whole (or even possibly the totality of the love of God). It is used of "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 3:13) signifying the totality of what Christ is as the Last Adam (perfect humanity). And in Ephesians 1:23 it is used of the Church as "the fullness of Him Who fills all in all," where it would seem to mean that, once the plan of redemption is completed, the church will, like the patch, make up what is lacking in His overall supremacy, making Him complete (remember that the patch completes the fullness; it is not itself the fullness). Until that day occurs He is (by His own choice) not totally complete. All the saved are gathered in and presented perfect in Him. (Some see this as meaning that they receive of *His* fullness and thus are made complete in Him (see Colossians 2:10)). In Colossians 2.9 we read, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," where it signifies that in Him is the totality of *what God is*, and this leads us on to the fact that we are made complete in Him.

So plērōma represents completeness, totality, and fullness. And here in 1:19 it indicates that in Him dwells permanently the complete fullness of God with nothing lacking.

And He is before all, and all things subsist together by him. And He is the head of the body, the assembly; who is [the] beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things: for in him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross -- by him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.
Colossians 1:17-20

(1:21-22) Now, Paul launches into the application of the fullness of God to a hostile target, "you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled." Note the departure from the King James text by the Darby New Translation. These believers are being reminded that they were, not so long ago, separated from God (alienated) and enemies of God and the assembly by means of their "wicked works," which enslaved them. "Yet" is showing a contrast; once separated by the barrier (see page 8) "now has it reconciled." The "it" again refers to the Godhead present in Jesus; the *pleroma*

which filled Him to overflowing. “Reconciled” is the fact that the barrier has been totally removed—not just for the elect, but for every man—even further, for all of creation! His “death” left it all in the grave. What was left was “holy and unblamable, and irreproachable,” not before man, but “before it” the irrepressible fullness of the Godhead.

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it; Colossians 1:21-22

The Mystery of God, Christ in You the Hope of Glory (1:23-29)

(1:23-24) “The faith founded and firm” is Paul’s way of saying, as he did in other passages we have studied, *sound doctrine* or *my doctrine*. It’s not the *fact* of faith that is effective in salvation, but the *content* of that faith. This is a very important distinction to understand. We are a forgiving and tolerant people, primarily because we have been blessed to live our lives to date in a relatively peaceful society. Because of that tempering, we tend to drift towards accepting everyone’s faith, based on their own definition, as being valid and efficacious. We want to believe that if they are sincere and solid in their trust, even though they don’t accept the gospel of Jesus that we offer to them, then they are somehow covered by the grace and forgiveness of God. Listen to this carefully—“if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which [is] under heaven;” “if” means that this is conditional, (third class, maybe you will and maybe you won’t) “ye abide.” To reinforce this whole concept, he adds, “and are not moved away from the hope of the (gospel) glad tidings, which you have heard,” referring to that which Paul has taught. It goes back to content. Further, this message is one that has “been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven.” That universal proclamation of the gospel of grace is the display in the heavens, the Gospel in the Stars that we have reviewed several times in this series—once in Genesis, then in Job, Psalms, and Romans; and now in Colossians. It is a recurring theme often overlooked and rarely understood across Scripture. In this very poignant comment, Paul expresses his rejoicing “in sufferings for you.” This is something that the Church in the west doesn’t really know much about. In Africa, the Far East, and the Middle East, Christians are caused to suffer for the cause of Christ and often that is on behalf of other Believers. Under the oppression of Rome, Paul understood this very well. Then he adds, “and I fill

up that which is lacking of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh.” This is a bit tricky—Paul is advancing the thought that our life *in Him* completes Christ, in that He and His Body are the means of satisfying the purpose of the Godhead in all creation. The sufferings of Christ for sin includes the sufferings of His Body; thus, as we experience tribulation and suffering for the sake of His righteousness, we are completing Him. Therefore, when He suffered “for his body, which is the assembly (Church)” it included our suffering for the Church!

Paul had the best of reasons to know that to serve Christ would regularly lead to suffering of one kind or another, for he had previously been the chief cause of that affliction. His awareness is documented in his letter to the Corinthians, “the sufferings of Christ abound to us,” (2 Corinthians 1:4-5). He also believed that this was necessary for the growth of the Church, in order “that we may be able to stand alongside to strengthen those who are in any affliction through the strengthening with which we are strengthened by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4-5). So he knew that as a servant of Christ he must enter the “fellowship of suffering” with his Lord and the Church. To the Galatians he said that he “suffered birth pangs” for them (Galatians 4:19); and to the Ephesians that he was “a prisoner on their behalf” (Ephesians 3.1).

if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which [is] under heaven, of which I, Paul, became minister. Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is lacking of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for his body, which is the assembly; Colossians 1:23-24

(1:25-27) The words, “of which” refer back to “the faith founded and firm, and the hope of the gospel.” It is a reaffirmation of that to which he has been called as “minister” *diakonos*. Note that there is no definite article before “minister,” so Paul is not claiming to be the *only* minister, but is calling attention to the *character* of his ministry. The standard by which his calling is measured is “according to the dispensation of God.” There has been a major change in the economy of God’s grace, away from Law and based on freedom and the ascended Jesus. There is a fairly large segment of evangelical Christianity who believes that the change did not begin in Acts 2 with Pentecost, but with Acts 9 and the enlistment of the Apostle Paul—they are known as the Acts Niners! They have missed the point that Paul was the *Chronicler*, but the Holy Spirit was the *Actuator* of this change. Paul understood that his ministry was “towards (the Church) you” and that the goal was “to complete the Word of God,” which was God’s revealed

will and purpose in the Church. That completion was “the mystery, which has been hidden from ages and generations.” Without the indwelling Holy Spirit it was impossible to see this relationship of Jesus and the Father, and of Jesus and His Body, the Church. So, in the period from Exodus 19 until Acts 2 and the descent of the Spirit, it was presented in shadow form, the typology of the Old Testament. “But,” introduces the strongest possible contrast; we have moved from the condition of being “hidden” in the ages of the past, to “now been clearly revealed *manifest* to His saints.” Peter Pett points out that “none who *will* hear are excepted.” There is no exclusion, for it is offered, as John noted in his Gospel well after the fact, to “whosoever will” come. God was making known to them the fullness of the riches of that mystery, and that mystery was “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” For these Gentile believers it meant this; in the Old Testament (through the Gospels and up to Pentecost) if they were to enter into a relationship to the God of Israel, they had to become Jews. Now they are hearing of a body where Jews and Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the promise of God (Ephesians 3:6). “[The riches of the glory](#)” as Darby has it, is a Hebraism for [glorious riches](#) and it probably brought to mind what Paul would later call the “[unsearchable riches of Christ](#)” (Ephesians 3:8). If you want to see a melding of Pauline theology and ecclesiology throughout his letters; then ponder this paragraph from Dr. Peter Pett on the subject of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

“How are we to express fully this amazing fact and its Consequences, the exception of the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8)? Christ the Creator and Redeemer being among them and in them, possessing them, dwelling within each of them (Ephesians 3:17), working in them (Philippians 2:13), united with them so that they have become His body, and are thus becoming perfected together as He is perfect, being made complete as He is complete, and are experiencing His saving work which will bring them to their glorious inheritance and destiny (1:12; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:14) and give them glory (Romans 5:2; 8:18; 1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:17; Ephesians 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 5:4).”

of which I became minister, according to the dispensation of God which [is] given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which [has been] hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory: Colossians 1:25-27

(1:28) Paul here recounts for the Believers in Colossae the core and content of his ministry—it is “Christ in you the hope of glory” that he and his team of co-workers “announce” (lit. “proclaim”), “admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom.” To proclaim is to *preach forth*; to admonish is to *warn and encourage*; to teach is to *impart doctrine systematically*. The sphere in which this is done is “wisdom” the application of doctrine to experience. This is the scope of the responsibility of leadership in the local assembly, the duties of the Elder, which we just studied in Titus. The Evangelist preaches forth the Gospel. If you have a Pastor/Elder who is a gifted Evangelist, then his messages will be aimed in that direction. If you have a Pastor/Elder whose gift is counseling, then his work will be in warning and encouraging his flock. If you have a Pastor/Elder who is a gifted teacher, then look for instructive messages from his pulpit. The same thing is true of every man charged with an Elder’s responsibility. All three applications require that he be “apt to teach” the Word of God. The goal is to “present every man and woman perfect in Christ.” “Perfect” is the word for *complete* or *mature*.

The work of leadership is the
spiritual maturation of the Body.
To expand the Body is
the express work of the Holy Spirit,
who draws men to Christ.

Paul says that he is “combating” not in his own strength, but “according to His working,” (there are those works again, prepared before the foundation of the world that we should walk in them) “which works in me in power.” The announcing, admonishing, and teaching in all wisdom that Paul is doing is not coming out of his own strengths, nor even less, out of his own will; it is a battle that is being waged on a spiritual plane by God versus Satan, and we (Paul and all of us) are the pawns on the board—the squares are already and the moves are present in the mind and plan of God—we are to walk through the moves that are already planned, in the power of the Holy Spirit within..

whom we announce, admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Whereunto also I toil, combating according to his working, which works in me in power. Colossians 1:28

Colossians 2

Paul's Great Concern for God's People

Paul wants these believers to know of his great concern for them and of the efforts he makes on their behalf. He wants them to appreciate that he is not just concerned for his own converts but for them and those that they bring to Christ as well; indeed for all the people of God. And as he contends in intercessory prayer for them, it is that their minds might be encouraged and strengthened, also that they may love one another and might enjoy the full riches of assured understanding (*sunesis*, which includes the ability to discern truth from falsehood) *in Christ*, because all the treasures of wisdom (reasoned thought) and knowledge (apprehension of truth) are hidden *in Him*. Here is yet another great metaphorical reference to the feigned tenets of Gnosticism as compared to the doctrinal truths of Christianity. *Sunesis*, *sophia*, and *epignosis* are all touted as coming from the mother goddess, wisdom. These Colossians are reminded that in Christ lies the reality of truth and knowledge. This is very pertinent to us today for we are constantly given the option of attempting to live our lives or move as an assembly of Jesus Christ on the basis of human reason and knowledge, rather than on the basis of Spirit-led instruction consistent with the stream of God's revelation of His Word for us. We dare not compromise.

Where True Wisdom Lies (2:1-5)

(2:1-5) Where the King James Version has "striving" the Darby Translation has "combat." Both carry with them the idea of active, physical, fighting and that is exactly what is meant.

*Prayer is a warrior's engagement of God's enemies;
it is not the passive entreaty of a bowed and beaten
suppliant.*

The latter describes the prayer of the sinner who has just accepted what the Spirit has been showing him/her regarding their own strength. But for one 'accepted in the Beloved' our position in Christ gives us standing before the Father and access to His mercy and love as His own dear child. Paul's prayer, "That their hearts may be strengthened," introduces the ministry of the Holy Spirit into the Believer's prayer--The word for "strengthened" is *parakaleo*, *para* meaning alongside, and *kaleo* from *klete*, that T shaped ornament on the dock to which ships are secured; thus the noun *paraklete*, used by Jesus of the Holy Spirit in the

Gospel of John 14:16, 26. There, Jesus is looking forward to His ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower the true Church. It is the Spirit who anchors us '*in Christ*,' our harbor and refuge. Paul clearly has the Holy Spirit in view here, He is alongside us, helping us, guiding us, strengthening us, and comforting us (see 1.9) by bringing to our minds the indwelling of Christ Himself (Ephesians 3.17; Galatians 2.20) for He is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8.9) and without Him no one can claim to be a Christian, who's inheritance is "all the treasures of wisdom (*sophia*) and knowledge (*epignosis*)."

It is important for you to recognize what Paul has just spoken to these believers. All of the ancient religions put forth the idea that they held the keys to wisdom *sophia* and knowledge *epignosis*, two of the essential elements of Gnosticism. This is also true today of Masonic practitioners, from whom sprung the Mormon Church; of an aberrant group of fundamentalists who follow a paper called the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forgery claiming to be a plan for the Jewish takeover of the world; of the Church Universal and Triumphant (Elizabeth Claire Prophet); of J. Z. Knight and her supposed ability to channel Ramtha, a 2000 year old prophet; of the entire Word of Knowledge segment of evangelicalism (Frederick Purnell, Benny Hinn, Robert Tilton); the Word of Faith movement (Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866), E. W. Kenyon, Oral Roberts, and Kenneth Hagin); of Ekankar and their claims of access to the ascended past masters;--hear this well: what they all claim to have, and do not have, is the down-payment of every Believer's inheritance, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

For I would have you know what combat I have for you, and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to [the] full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Colossians 2:1-3

((2:4-5) This is stated plainly here in order that, "no one may delude you by persuasive speech." Paul is like a loving parent. He says, look, I may be soon "absent, but I am with you in spirit." Remain steadfast (order) in "the firmness of your faith in Christ." It is his plea for them to remain solid in the content and object of their faith, which is the Gospel they have been taught. Do not be deluded by these doofuses abroad in the world with fanciful notions of their own importance. Paul is preparing these believers for his departure from them in death.

And I say this to the end that no one may delude you by persuasive speech. For if indeed in the flesh I am absent, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.
Colossians 2:4-5

(2:6-7) Do not let the changing condition of the world that surrounds you rob you of your heritage in Christ, which you learned from the Apostles, and they learned it directly from Paul and his associates. "Therefore, as you have received the Christ" (His name as the promised and appointed One from God the Father), "Jesus the Lord (of us is implied)." Here is the foundation on which they are to build—The One promised to Israel throughout the Old Testament, has arrived as "the Christ" and is known to us as "Jesus the Lord." Your response is to "walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him." What do you know by now about walking in Him? It is to walk in those works of the Spirit that have been prepared beforehand specifically for us! Why? It is so that we might be "rooted and built up in Him." Will the Father leave that up to us? Or will He leave it to chance? Absolutely not! This is something that He oversees through the Spirit within each of us Who is as close as the cleat on the dock, within us! Therefore, we can be "assured in the faith, just as we have been taught" so that we can be "abounding in it with thanksgiving." "Thanksgiving" is *eucharistia*, the term widely used of the Lord's Table. Our remembrance of Him in His death is one of thanksgiving on our part.

As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and assured in the faith, even as ye have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

(2:8) What is so damaging to the lives of Christians is the philosophy that backs up Word of Knowledge, Word of Faith, and all of the theologies listed above that are so twisting the Gospel. Paul says emphatically that you are to "see that there is no one who shall lead you away (from your assured faith) as a prey." Think through these things and make sure that they are not in conflict with sound doctrine. Most of them are "according to the teaching of men." They sound good and reasonable because they are filled with human reasoning and rationales, but at their core, they are not consistent with the Word of God as revealed through the Apostle to the Gentile Church, Paul. The Church does not operate on the basis of what works for the world. It works on the basis of faith, the faith of Christ, who in obedience to the will of His Father gave Himself for us!

See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

(2:9) This is one of the most sweeping statements in all Scripture—Fullness is *plērōma*. It means that *all* of the attributes, and *all* that every one of them means, was a constant, indwelling, element in the Person of the Only Begotten Son, the *Lord Jesus Christ*! “Bodily” means that the *plērōma* of the Godhead was here, in time, space, and history; and that it is in a form to which we can relate and understand—the form of a Man! **JESUS**.

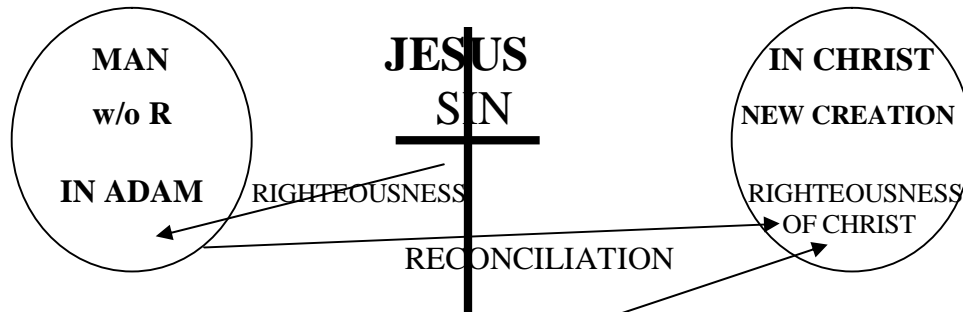
For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

(2:10-12) “and you are complete in Him.” Do you recall what we have just been studying in Chapter 1? It is that everything that the Father accomplished in Jesus, was to satisfy and fill full (or complete) that which was lacking in the Godhead. If Paul hadn’t said it, I wouldn’t dare—because my finite, pitiful mind simply will not allow me to consider that there could be anything lacking in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whatever it was has been totally satisfied by the ascended Jesus. Now, in the ascended Man, “you are complete.” Now, wrap yourself around this for a moment—the One who completed the Godhead is the same One who completes me, and you! He “is the head of all principality and authority.”

Now Paul takes us to Romans six—when, and what was accomplished in us, that made us “complete in Him?” It was our union with Him in His death to sin! That union is described as “circumcised with circumcision not done by hand:” it was a spiritual act by God on us! It is described as “putting off of the body of the flesh.” We were born into that “body of the flesh” by being born into Adam’s family. Christ, in His incarnation, was cut off from Adam, because He had no human father; but He possessed humanity, because He had a human mother! That meant that He had humanity, but no Old Adamic Nature, which comes from the father to every child. By being put into union with Him, we have been ‘cut off’ from our Old Sin Nature, which resides in the flesh, in our *new creation* life! We still have to deal with it because we are still carrying around the baggage of the flesh in our physical bodies, but we are free from its power over the *new creation Spirit*, which produces in us the life of the ascended Jesus. “In baptism” does not describe water baptism but Spirit baptism into Christ; “in which you have also been raised with Him through faith;” not ours, but “faith

of the working of God who raised Him from among the dead.” That is the faith that was given to us as part of our salvation package, as Paul said in Ephesians, “by grace you are having been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves it is a gift of God.”

“He who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us;
in order that we might be made to be the righteousness of God in Him”
2 Corinthians 5:21



and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and authority, in whom also you have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ; buried with him in baptism, in which ye have been also raised with [him] through faith *of the working of God* who raised him from among the dead. Colossians 2:10-12

(2:13-14) The word “quickened together” *sunzōpoieō* means to be *made to be alive together with*. Paul addresses the condition of the Colossian believers prior to their salvation, in order to show them the tremendous change that has been wrought in their lives and relationship to God. “And you,” removes any suggestion that he is talking about someone down the pew—“being dead” is a state in which they were *continually* dead, devoid of spirit, “in offences” is *in the sphere of offences*. What he has said is that their offences are incidental to the fact that they existed in the state of continual death, being devoid of spirit and thus without life before God. They existed in a manner that left them un-cut-off, not separated in any manner, from the flesh. In other words, they were but animals in their lives; a state that erudite mankind today insists is the lot of man. This is exactly what Darwin et al has argued for generations; and Christians, feeling attacked, are fighting against it with all their might. Would we not be better served by agreeing with Darwin and his mob and simply pointing out the dead end to the road they have taken? The question to Darwin is;

Seeing clearly the connection to animal life around us, what will ever lift us out of that commonality with all animal life and into a relationship to our Creator, who is evident throughout the material world?

Scripture has this answer—"He has quickened us," *made us alive*; "together with him." Remember from Ephesians 4:8 when it said that Christ "led captivity captive?"⁸ Well, that gathering together with Him is the same sense used here. In doing that for us, He is "having forgiven us all the offences," which is a present perfect—we stand before the Father as forgiven of all the offences—it is an accomplished and irreversible fact! Further, "the handwriting in ordinances which [stood out] against us" is "having been erased" past perfect, erased in the past with present results. "He has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross," that's an aorist tense, once and for all, irrespective of any events ever to follow. In addition to erasing the Law, which is the "handwriting in ordinances" he has nailed it to the cross and taken it away (that's also the picture presented by the scapegoat released into the wilderness.¹¹) Now some would say that the Law today is a good instrument for showing man his sinfulness. Yes, it does do that—but, it only shows him his condemnation—it is like a parent that always criticizes and focuses on the wrong that the child does. What kind of adult does that child grow up to become? You get a critical, mean-spirited, child with the self-image of one who cannot please the parent and is an underachiever. Replace that Law with the living image of One who is victorious over all sin and death, who holds the keys of life in His hands, and who loves infinitely and without flinching at our efforts that do not reach our goals at the time, and what do you think you will get? You get an adult that understands that 'all things are possible' and that knows that 'love never fails.'

And you, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has quickened together with him, having forgiven us all the offences; having effaced the handwriting in ordinances which [stood out] against us, which was contrary to us, he has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; having spoiled principalities and authorities; he made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it. Colossians 2:13-15

⁸ I would be remiss not to point out that Kenneth Wuest, one of my most trusted sources, holds that the captivity led captive refers to those principalities and powers or "the demons of Satan in the atmosphere of this earth" being taken away. Since I believe them to still be here in this dispensation, then it seems to be inconsistent. I prefer that "captivity captive" refers to the OT saints held in Abraham's Bosom.

(2:16-17) If you, therefore, are that kind of adult, the Paul's next admonition is directly to you—"Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink (whether you eat or avoid eating), or in matter of feast (what you celebrate), or new moon or Sabbaths (celebrations of a religious nature)." Why? It is because these practices are all but shadows of "things to come." When Paul said "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink" the command is quite unequivocal; a matter of principle. "Meat" is *brōsis*, the act of eating; and "drink" is *posis*, the act of drinking. Anticipating our resuming studies in the Pastoral Epistles, he could have added, because "every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving" (1Timothy 4:4).⁹ "But" introduces a contrast; in contrast to all those things that are but shadows, "the body is of Christ." In other words, all those things listed above are but the fancies of man as to what pleases God as they imagine Him to be. But, the Church lives in the reality of Who and What He really is! Paul put it this way to the Romans; "He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, does not eat to the Lord, and gives God thanks" (Romans 14:6). This is a direct comparison to the rigid ascetic practices of the Gnostics.

Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast, or new moon, or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

(2:18-19) Therefore, "let no one fraudulently deprive you;" other versions have "rob" here. I think that "rob" carries with it the idea of forcefully taking something from you; but "fraudulently" is the taking by means of a lie, the con game, in this case, leading believers away by false doctrine. The "*fraud*" involves one who is "doing his own will in humility and worship of angels." Paul is talking about entirely false humility—it's Benny Hinn, all decked out in a white suit with collar, moving across the stage praising Jesus, but calling all attention to himself and the show of his power and his control over the channeling of God's power, to those who adore him. It's Robert Tilton, coiffed and expensively dressed, stopping mid-sentence to receive a 'word from God' about someone in his television audience who needs to hear how to make their vow and receive either healing or wealth in response to their contribution to his ministry. It's Katherine Kulhman and Jan Crouch claims of receiving messages from visiting angels and wrestling with demons in the dark of night to authenticate their

⁹ Do you see how closely these epistles of Paul are linked in terms of emphasis on preparation of the Church for growth and strength after he and the other Apostles are gone? Look at the repetition of doctrines and spiritual lessons from letter to letter.

ministries. Think of an entire, world-wide, organization built upon one man's head stuck in a burlap bag, receiving messages from an angel, Moroni; interpreting golden plates that told of Jesus in America and two lost tribes of Israel doing battle and forming the great burial mounds that dot the American landscape from the East coast to the western plains. The representation of that angel can be seen today atop the great Tabernacle in Utah. Those leaders enter "into things which [they] have never seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of their flesh." Dr. Pett says that "Because these people concentrate on intermediaries and visions they fail to hold fast to the One Who is Head over all. They fail to hold fast to Christ. Thus they do not receive that which is needed for an increase in their spiritual lives. Only He Who is the Head over all things can satisfactorily supply them with what is required for this purpose." The "Head" implies authority, the source of purpose and of "increase of God."

Let no one fraudulently deprive you of your prize, doing his own will in humility and worship of angels, entering into things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh, and not holding fast the head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. Colossians 2:18-19

(2:20-23) "If" is first class; "Since you have died with Christ," which takes them immediately to Romans 6:2-4. It is an accomplished fact that every believer has died with Christ and has been buried with Him in His death. This is the moment of our union with Him. "Having therefore died to the elements of the world," states the case—the *elements of this world* are those things that appeal to our Old Adamic Nature. They did not die, we died to them! Expositors says: "They had died with Christ to legalism, how absurd then for ordinances to be imposed upon them." So the question is; having died to them, "why do we subject ourselves (passive voice) to them (those ordinances) as if we were still alive to them?" They amount to "harsh treatment of the body," but not in any certain honor, rather "to the satisfaction of the flesh." They are nothing more than "teachings of men, which appear to be wise in (the sphere of) voluntary worship, and humility" but are nothing more than egocentric exercises.

If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as [if] alive in [the] world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, (things which are all for destruction in the using [of them]:) according to the injunctions and teachings of men, (which have indeed an appearance of wisdom in voluntary worship, and

humility, and harsh treatment of the body, not in a certain honor,) to [the] satisfaction of the flesh.

Colossians 2:20-23

Colossians 3

(3:1-3) Here is another first class conditional "if;" "Since you have been raised with the Christ," Note the article before Christ. We have been raised (past perfect-with the result that we continue to be raised) with "the" Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God! The definite article calls attention to the quality of the object. This means that His attributes are in view, his character. Actually, the sentence is better rendered "Since you are having been raised with God glorified, be seeking things [which are] above, where the Christ is; sitting at the right hand of God."

If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things [which are] above, where the Christ is, sitting at [the] right hand of God: have your mind on the things [that are] above, not on the things [that are] on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

(3:4) "Manifested" is revealed; "when the Christ is revealed who is Himself our life, then shall you also be revealed with Him in glory." Christ on the throne in heaven has moved the fount of living water, which He is, to heaven. That's where it now flows from towards its earthly destination, every believer who is walking in Him, in light. That living water flows through us to a lost and thirsty world, revealing us as connected for life in Him.

When the Christ is manifested who [is] our life, then shall you also be manifested with him in glory. Colossians 3:4

(3:5) "Therefore" is on the basis of the preceding truth, we should be "putting to death [our] members, which are upon the earth." This is a present tense, continuous action verb. How do you accomplish that? You move through life constantly "reckoning yourself to be dead" to the sin that is plaguing you. In *The Complete Green Letters*, Miles Stanford calls this *the reckoning that counts*. "Fornication" is adultery for the married, or sex outside of marriage for the single. "Uncleanness" includes sodomy and/or any other sexual activity prohibited under the Law in the Old Testament; "vile passions," are perversions, like human sacrifice, or cannibalism; "evil lust," includes those things that do

not contribute to the benefit of others, but use and debase human life; and “unbridled desire,” is the Old Adamic Nature freed to do whatever it conceives within one; “which is idolatry” is a summary statement concerning the entire list—they all constitute worship of something other than God, and that makes them all idolatry!

Put to death therefore your members which [are] upon the earth,
fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire,
which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5

(3:6) The “sons of disobedience” are those from mankind who are rejecting the gospel of grace and are therefore following the *principalities* and *powers* of darkness, the minions of Satan. Men and women who do not accept the redemption offered them in Christ are aligning themselves with the targets of the “wrath of God.” The practices in which they engage themselves are those of verse 5 and are the elements of living in darkness that elicit God’s wrath.

On account of which things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Colossians 3:6

(3:7) It is also true that believers also “once walked” and “lived in these things.” The fact of their existence in life does not exclude one from the grace of God, for indeed, we were all saved out from that same slave market that held mankind bound until the Kinsman Redeemer paid the price for our freedom.

In which you also once walked when ye lived in these things. Colossians 3:7

(3:8) The strongest contrast is presented; “But now,” introduces our entirely changed condition in Christ—“you also put off all these things; wrath,” which is violent opposition; “anger,” which is a condition of mind; “malice,” an intention to do harm; “blasphemy,” the specific thoughts of man directed to disobeying God’s direction; and, “vile language out of your mouth.” This last thing is a direct condemnation of cursing, foul language, coarseness, and base thoughts expressed openly; the things that fill our ears daily in our society.

But now, put off, you also, all [these] things, wrath, anger, malice,
blasphemy, vile language out of your mouth.

(3:9-11) "Do not lie to one another" is very pointed—it says to *stop something that is going on!* Every time we, as believers, practice any one of the elements that are condemned here, we are *lying to one another*, because we are engaging in a practice that is driven by our Old Adamic Nature and we have been cut off from that by our death and union with Christ. We have been resurrected in the new creation, "renewed into full knowledge according to the image (icon) of Him who has created" that new man.

Do not lie to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to [the] image of him that has created him; wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ [is] everything, and in all. Colossians 3:9-11

The attitude of the Christian towards other members of the Body of Christ

(3:12-14) "As the elect of God, holy and beloved," describes our standing. We are "set apart" holy/*hagios* by God and to His purposes, and that is equally set apart, regardless of where or what we were prior to our salvation. "Beloved" means that we are all loved of our heavenly Father. So towards one another we should "put on" the following; "bowels of compassion," the word *bowels* denoting the lower organs of the body, believed to be the center of one's emotions. "Kindness" is the outward expression of an inner humility "lowliness and meekness," which should characterize the Christian, regardless of his/her station in life. If you consider yourself to be 'better' than someone else, then you will not be *kind*, but *condescending*. You should be "longsuffering, forbearing one another" within the Body of Christ. Listen carefully to this—we are moving rapidly into an era where people who are won to the Lord simply will not fit into any pattern at all with which we are familiar. Today's seekers are going to be as hard pressed to satisfy the next generation of new believers as we are today, if they are to maintain any semblance of spiritual and doctrinal stability. The next generation after the seekers is going to be racing after things that satisfy and draw them in at a rate that would simply overwhelm us; and we at least have the memory of what worship was like at a more steady and leisurely pace. This verse is written especially for us! "Forgiving one another, and (first class) if any should have a complaint against any (and you will and do), then even as the Christ has forgiven you, you do the same."

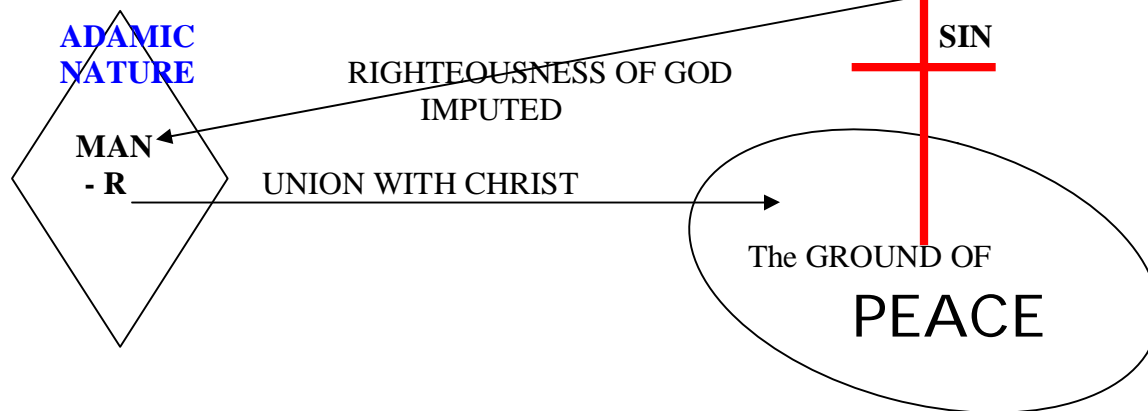
Oh yes; and while you are busy forgiving them,

“love them, for that is the glue (bond) of maturity.”

Ouch!—that hurt!

Put on therefore, as [the] elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also [do] ye. And to all these [add] love, which is the bond of perfectness. Colossians 3:12-14

(3:15-17) Now don't sit around rubbing that sore spot on your spiritual pride, rather “let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts *cardia*.” The word *cardia* refers to the upper organs of the body, which was thought to be the center of one's mental processes and the will. We use the word ‘mind’ to convey the same thing. Thus, “As a man thinks in his heart *cardia* (*mind*), so he is!” If we are to achieve peace of mind, then it is to be found “in Christ” who is our peace.



When Christ imputes His righteousness to us the Holy Spirit takes us and moves us into union with Him and that places us on the ground of peace with God. We are at peace because every thing that defines sin and sinfulness has been dealt with by Christ on the cross and our union with Him in the grave. When He rose from the grave, He brought us with Him, clothed in righteousness. So, we are to “let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly.” That’s the first part—God the Father’s expressed will through the Son is to inhabit us “thoroughly and richly.” Thoroughly is like an inlaid floor; the color and pattern go all the way through the material. God’s Word is not to be a veneer, but the substance of our entire being. Further, we are to be “in all wisdom teaching” the Father’s Word to all who will listen. “Wisdom” is the application of doctrine to experience, so the implication is that our “teaching” should be practical and applied. Additionally,

we are to be “admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.”

And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. And everything, whatever ye may do in word or in deed, [do] all things in [the] name of [the] Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him.
Colossians 3:15-17

The attitude and behavior of the Christian towards others in his/her family

(3:18) This entire letter is focused on the order of leadership, the headship of Christ over the Church and over all of creation. Following that pattern (“as is fitting in the Lord”), wives are to “be subject to” their husbands as the head of the family. It is typology, the patterning of things on Earth after the real things that exist in Heaven.

Wives, be subject to [your] husbands, as is fitting in [the] Lord. Colossians 3:18

(3:19) The responsibility of the husband is not one of rule, but, as the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Church, then the husbands are to “love [their] wives” with an infinite love *agape*. This is love that requires no response in order to continue to flow. Since the action is all on the husband’s end, there is absolutely no reason for bitterness to enter in.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Colossians 3:19

(3:20) Children are to be obedient to their parents “in all things.” We are in a period where abuse of children is rampant. Our duty as parents is to shower the children around us with respect and loving attention. As Christ is our sanctuary, so too are we to be our children’s sanctuary. They should feel safe in our space, and willing to allow us into their space. They need their own secret place in which they can keep things to themselves until they are ready to share it with us. Only then can they “obey” in the sense indicated here.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in [the] Lord. Colossians 3:20

(3:21) The responsibility of fathers is to give direction to their children so that they are not discouraged or made to feel that they cannot please you with their accomplishments. My mother and father were so consistent with this. I do not ever remember going to them with an idea of something I wanted to do, or attempt, but that they were encouraging and supportive. The first question they always asked was; "when do you want to start?" The next was, "how are you going to do it." The third was, "what can stop you?" and the next question was, "how are you going to overcome that and any other obstacle?" What a wonderful way to raise boys into young men who believed that anything they set their mind to was possible.

Fathers do not vex your children, to the end that they be not disheartened. Colossians 3:21

(3:22) Here is the basis of a work-ethic that any manager could be extremely pleased to have under him. It describes an employee that honors and respects his manager "master according to the flesh," not with an open show of loyalty, but with a mind that is committed to seeing his work profit the company or manager. He does this because "he is in awe of the Lord."

Bondmen, obey in all things your masters according to flesh; not with eye-services, as men-pleasers, but in simplicity of heart, fearing the Lord. Colossians 3:22

(3:23-25)* Here the word is 'work hard at whatever you do, as a work for the Lord, rather than to men.' To the Thessalonians Paul said it this way; "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need." This, my friends, is our charter as the Body of Christ. This is the *true work* of the Church. God did not leave us here to save the world; He sent the Holy Spirit to do that. He left us here as a living testimony that Christ has risen indeed and is our living Lord. The bigger our splash, the less attention is drawn to Him. The louder our shouts, even of the gospel, the less the world hears the quieter voice of the Spirit whispering to their very souls. The brighter our garb, the harder to see the purity of Christ clothed in righteousness. We are not here to compete with the Spirit, but to stay out of

His way as He draws men and women to Christ in us. *A family iron ore mine in Russia, circa 1910

Whatsoever ye do, labor at it heartily, as [doing it] to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of [the] Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance; ye serve the Lord Christ. For he that does a wrong shall receive the wrong he has done, and there is no respect of persons.
Colossians 3:23-25

Colossians 4

(4:1) Therefore, if we employ or manage people who are in our debt, then treat them in a “just and fair” manner, “knowing with certainty that you also have a Master in the heavenlies.”

Masters, give to bondmen what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in [the] heavens. Colossians 4:1

(4:2-4) We are to “Pray without ceasing” and lace our prayer “with thanksgiving” rather than with petitions. Note that Paul’s request for their prayer is focused on his opportunity to “speak the mystery of Christ.” This is the core of his ministry and he is engaged in seeing to it that the young church is made aware of their uniqueness in the plan of the Father. He does not complain that he is bound to this ministry, but that he “may make it clearly revealed” to those with whom he is able to speak. Today we have an opportunity to join Paul in that endeavor. Those of us within the Church are carrying an obligation to the Lord our Savior to take to those who do not know the mystery of the Body of Christ in union with our risen Jesus, the truths of identification with Him. We dare not let this obligation deteriorate into our attempting to be the biggest, brightest, or most renowned Bible Church in the village. We, like Paul, are called to consistency and the content of our gospel.

Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door of the word to speak the mystery of Christ, on account of which also I am bound, to the end that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak. Colossians 4:2-4

(4:5) To keep us on the pathway, we are to “walk in wisdom towards those without.” That means to apply right doctrinal principles in our relationships so that opportunities are truly redeemed.

Walk in wisdom towards those without, redeeming opportunities.
Colossians 4:5

(4:6) Our conversations and manner of speaking should always be gracious and as Paul told Titus, gentle. But, they should be “seasoned with salt” or to the point. Don’t be so politically correct that the words lose their meaning and the warning against rejecting them is so clouded as to not be recognizable.

[Let] your word [be] always with grace, seasoned with salt, [so as] to know how you ought to answer each one. Colossians 4:6

(4:7-9) Tychicus is called “the beloved brother and faithful minister.” But, he is also known as a “fellow-bondman *doulos* a slave relationship in the Lord.” Paul is teaching them by example what true friendship grows from commonly held beliefs about Christ. Tychicus is going to tell them all they want to know of Paul’s condition and then he is going to return to Paul with the same information about their condition. While there, he is going to “encourage their hearts” as they continue to trust God for their every need. Onesimus is recognized as a “faithful and beloved brother” and a companion of Tychicus.

Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-bondman in [the] Lord, will make known to you all that concerns me; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that he might know your state, and that he might encourage your hearts: with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is [one] of you. They shall make known to you everything here. Colossians 4:7-9

(4:10-11) Notice how Paul separates between those of his followers with Jewish backgrounds and those of Gentile origins. “Aistarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus,” are of the circumcision. Paul says that they are the only companions of his that worked for “the kingdom of God” and who have “been a consolation to me.” I take this to mean that these young men worked early on in the ministry of Jesus to Israel and prior to their enlightenment by the indwelling Holy Spirit on behalf of those anticipating the coming of the kingdom of God. Now, they are a consolation to Paul and are supporting the message of the mystery of the church revealed through Paul’s gospel.

Aristarchus my fellow-captive salutes you, and Mark, Barnabas's cousin, concerning whom ye have received orders, (if he come to you, receive

him,) and Jesus called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These [are the] only fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who have been a consolation to me.

(4:12-14) Epaphras, Demas, and Luke are all commended for their work in Laodicea, Hierapolis and Ephesus.

Epaphras, who is [one] of you, [the] bondman of Christ Jesus, salutes you, always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all [the] will of God. For I bear him witness that he labors much for you, and them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you, and Demas. Colossians 4:12-14

(4:15-17) Salutations

Salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly which [is] in his house. And when the letter has been read among you, see that it is read also in the assembly of Laodiceans, and that you also read that from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in [the] Lord, to the end that you fulfill it. The salutation is by my hand, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Colossians 4:15-18

ⁱ If the substantive differences of Col can be understood on the basis of the concrete polemical argument of the letter, then there are substantive matters which support the assumption of Pauline authorship as well. (a) The assumed relationship of the writer to the readers corresponds in several points to Philemon: in both letters there are greetings from Epaphras, Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, Demas (Col 4:10 ff; Philemon 23 f); both letters mention the sending of Onesimus (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 12) and have special words for Archippus (Col 4:17; Philemon 2). These agreements do not occur in the same relationships and formulations, however, so that the thesis is unconvincing that the indubitably Pauline Philemon has been imitated by a non-Pauline writer only in these personal remarks. (b) The household admonitions in Colossians 3:18-4:1 shows a remarkably small Christianizing, especially in comparison with Eph 5:22-6:9, which is much less easily understood for a non-Pauline writer than for Paul himself. (c) In contrast to Eph, the use of the formulas *ἐν χριστῷ* and *ἐν κυρίῳ* in Col correspond completely to Paul's usage. (d) J. Knox has pointed out that the letter, which was intended for Laodicea (4:16a) was probably addressed to the smaller city Colossae because Onesimus was from Colossae and Paul sought contact with the community in which Onesimus' master lived, since it was he to whom Philemon brought so grave a request. Besides, the unusually comprehensive rule for slaves is best understood (3:22-25) if the business with the slave Onesimus were to be settled at the same time. Even though all these arguments may not be of equal weight, together they strengthen the supposition that Col originated with Paul.

ii THE SCAPEGOAT OFFERING
Leviticus.16:5-11; 15; 21-24; 29-31

The scapegoat was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement. Modern Jews call it "Yom Kippur." *Yom* means "the Day" and *Kippur* means "to cover." The Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) was the day God covered the People's sins, thus it was a very special day for the nation of Israel. On Yom Kippur the High Priest first took a bath; then, dressed in his holy white garments; he walked to the tabernacle and there offered a young bullock as a sin offering for himself and his family. He did this because he was required to get his heart right with God before he could offer sacrifices for the sins of the people to whom he ministered.

After he offered a sacrifice for his own sins, he selected two young male goats. They had to look as much alike as possible. They were actually like identical twins or clones. The High Priest then took them to the door of the Tabernacle and he presented them to the Lord.

There he had an urn containing two lots. He reached into the urn, took hold of both lots and pulled them out. He placed one lot on one goat, and the other lot on the other goat. According to how the lots fell, one goat was called the Lord's goat, and the other goat was called the scapegoat.

The High Priest had two pieces of scarlet cloth; he tied one piece of scarlet cloth around the "neck" of the Lord's goat and he tied the other piece of scarlet cloth around one of the "horns" of the Scapegoat.

He killed the Lord's goat; caught its blood, and took the blood into the holy of holies in the Tabernacle or Temple and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, while he confessed the sins of the people privately to God. He then came out to the scapegoat; laid his bloody "hands" on it, and confessed the sins of the people a second time before all the congregation of Israel. He gave the scapegoat to an unknown man. Then the High Priest removed his holy white garments, washed his hands, and took a bath.

The unknown man led the scapegoat into the wilderness, where he turned it over to a second unknown man.

This second unknown man led the scapegoat further into the wilderness and turned it over to a third unknown man, and then a fourth, and a fifth, and on and on the scapegoat went into the wilderness.

No one knew where it wound up--It just disappeared.

When you go back and look at the significance of these things, you see that there were two goats, but just one offering. Thus, each goat is part of the picture. It takes both goats to get the whole picture.

The scarlet cloth that was put on the goats represented sin—sin that's easy to see—sin that's bright red! At the cross, Roman soldiers put a scarlet robe on Jesus. That scarlet robe symbolized sin that was put on Jesus.

The Mother of Harlots in Revelation seventeen is dressed in purple and scarlet. These colors represent earthly rule and the sin of her one-world religion. To us the Word of God is; "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah.1:18).

Scarlet represents sin.

White represents purity.

The death of the Lord's goat meant that sin must be covered.

Sacrifice meant that someone or something had to die to cover sin, and it had been so from the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. For Israel under the Law, it was done on the Day of Atonement; the day God covered the people's sins. God said, "It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11).

To Israelites after the cross, He reminded them that, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Hebrews 9:22). Through the Apostle Paul, He also said to the Romans that "The wages of sin is death." So sin, from Adam to our day, must be covered by the death and shed blood of a sacrifice.

The death of the Lord's goat meant that God will accept a substitute.

Like Adam, or Isaac, before the Law was imposed, the people of Israel didn't have to shed their own blood. They shed the blood of the Lord's sacrifice provided to them; the blood of a substitute, the blood of the Lord's goat. When the Jews who had been under the Law were presented the Gospel of Grace by Peter, he told them that "We were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18), and reminded them that Jesus was our substitute.

Furthermore, says the apostle John, "The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

The death of the Lord's goat pleased God. He forgave the people's sins.

Picture Jesus on the cross. Blood is on His back where He took an awful beating. Blood is on His brow where a crown of thorns was jammed down on His head. Blood is on His face where His beard was plucked out. Blood is on His hands and feet where He was nailed to the cross. It is a horrific, bloody sight! But the Bible says, "It pleased God to do that" (Isaiah. 53:10). Why? There is no happiness in that pleasing, but satisfaction of every facet and scrap of His attributes. His holiness and righteousness were satisfied. His perfect justice was met and His eternal existence was rendered full by the life of the Only Begotten Son laid down for mankind flawed by sin. Many would accept that sacrifice, believe on Jesus for their redemption, and thus be saved.

His blood covered all our sin, and His sacrifice pleased God.

But, covering sin wasn't enough; for His work on the cross was greater still than all our sin

There was a second goat called the scapegoat, and because this scapegoat goat was there, we know that the sacrifice of the first goat wasn't the whole picture. So when the High Priest went to the scapegoat, laid his bloody hands on the scapegoat, and confessed the people's sins publicly before the congregation; this laying on of hands symbolized the transfer of sin to the scapegoat's body. The scapegoat then bore the people's sins in his own body. Jesus was our scapegoat.

Anticipating the Messiah's coming and sacrifice of Himself, Isaiah said; "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." "Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 1:4-6)

After the cross, to the Jews considering what they had witnessed on Golgotha, Peter said, "He bore our sins in His own body" (I Peter 2:24). So, to resolve the issue of sin, simply covering sins isn't enough. A scapegoat was needed and it would bear sin in its own body.

Sin must be removed and forgotten.

The scapegoat removed the people's sins by carrying them away. They were removed and forgotten forever. When the unknown man took them, they disappeared into the wilderness; but when Jesus the Creator took them, He removed them, as the Psalmist said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm. 103:12). To the Jew on this side of Pentecost, transitioning from Law to Grace, God said, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

Now, watch how men respond to this choosing of an acceptable sacrifice by God.

This choosing of two goats, killing one, and letting the other go, was played out at the cross. Two men were brought before Pontius Pilate. We call one Jesus; the other we call Barabbas or Bar-abbas. Bar-abbas means Son of Abba or Son of the Father. It's like Peter whose name was Simon barjona (Matthew 16:17). He was Simon son of Jona. Do you know what the first name of Barabbas was? An ancient manuscript says the first name of Barabbas was Jesus (Syriac version of the Bible). If you want to check this out, there's a footnote about it in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible at Matthew 27:17.

So, two men were brought before Pontius Pilate: one was Jesus Son of God; the other was Jesus Son of the Father; Jesus the Christ, and Jesus Bar-abbas. Because God forgave the people's sins, it was the custom of the Roman government to forgive and release one Jewish prisoner at this time. Barabbas was scheduled to die for the sins of insurrection, murder and theft (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:25; John 18:40). Pontius Pilate brought Jesus and Barabbas before the crowd and asked the mob; "which one do you want released?" He intended to release Jesus. He

obviously thought Barabbas was so bad the people would choose to release Jesus. But the people chose to release Barabbas.

Thus, Jesus was killed as the Lord's Goat, and Barabbas walked away like the Scapegoat. This clearly is a picture of Jesus dying in our place, and us walking away. But there's yet more--

The High Priest washed his hands after he released the Scapegoat—do you remember what Pontius Pilate did after this? He washed his hands.

The Scapegoat just disappeared into the wilderness, and Barabbas just disappeared off the pages of history.

Jesus was the Lord's goat that died to cover the people's sins; and He was the scapegoat that carried away the people's sins; and we..? we are the guilty Barabbas that just walked away.

Here is the most important comparison of all—The two goats were offered on the Day of Atonement year after year; but Paul said, through Jesus Christ “we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11).

Our Communion, the Lord's Table, is a remembrance service of His sacrifice on our behalf.

It elicits from us the most profound thanksgiving, because we have received the atonement. Our sins were covered while we were yet sinners, and removed forever, as far as the East is from the West.