

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

JOHN MILLER

Copyright © Hayes Press 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, without the written permission of Hayes Press.

Published by:

HAYES PRESS

The Barn, Flaxlands

Royal Wootton Bassett

Swindon, SN4 8DY

United Kingdom

www.hayespress.org

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Revised Version, 1885 (RV, Public Domain). Scriptures marked KJV are from the King James Version, 1611 (Public Domain).

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS - WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN (W. BUNTING)

It would appear that the apostle had not visited Colossae, or Laodicea, in the upper valley of the Meander river (Col.2:1¹). Yet the saints in these two towns, and in the nearby town of Hierapolis, enjoyed a warm place in his affections. Epaphras, one of their number, visited the apostle in Rome, and brought tidings of their welfare and of their love in the Spirit.

From the prison-house he writes to them, and exalts the Person of Christ “who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation (Col.1:15²). “For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell” (Col.1:19³). “In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden” (Col.2:3⁴). “For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col.2:9⁵). Words are piled up so that the Colossians and others may know something of the mystery of God, even Christ.

Apparently the letter was sent by the hand of Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.15>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.19>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.9>

Lord. The apostle had sent him to Colossae so that they, and others, might know all his affairs, and that they might be comforted.

On his journey from Rome to Colossae, Tychicus was accompanied by one of their own number, a runaway slave, Onesimus, returning to his master. We shall deal with this remarkable case when we look at the letter to Philemon.

In the final salutation written with his own hand, and probably chained to the left hand of a Roman soldier, he says, “Remember my bonds”, and adds his usual authentication, “Grace be with you” (Col.4:18⁶).

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.18>

COMMENTARY ON COLOSSIANS 1

Col.1:1¹

Paul only of all the apostles writes of himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus – of Christ who is Jesus, He who has been raised from the dead. His apostleship was “through the will of God,” not through any personal merit on his part. Timothy is described as “the” brother. He is similarly referred to in 2 Cor.1:1² and Philn.1.

Col.1:2³

There are not two classes in view here. The saints or holy ones addressed here were also faithful brethren in Christ. They were not simply believers, they were faithful and stedfast. He refers to their steadfastness in Col.2:5⁴: “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.” He greets them with his usual salutation of grace and peace, but in this salutation He speaks of the Father only. In all other salutations Jesus Christ is associated with the Father.

Col.1:3⁵

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.1.1>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.2>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.5>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.3>

Here Paul and Timothy are seen mingling their prayers with their thanksgiving for the Colossian saints, and how continuous was the flow of their prayers – “praying always for you”! In Eph.1:15⁶,16⁷, we have a somewhat similar statement – “I ... cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” What a beautiful pattern to copy!

Col.1:4⁸

Whether the apostle had any personal acquaintance with the Colossian church seems questionable, though the results of his labours in Ephesus during his two years’ work in that city extended far and wide, inasmuch as we read that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10⁹). Having heard of their faith in Christ, and of their love to all saints, it not only caused him to pray for them always, but it caused him to write this delightful epistle to them. Faith without love would be as a husk without a kernel, but how complementary they are to each other is seen in the statement – “faith working through love” (Gal.5:6¹⁰). Their faith found its sphere and source of life in Christ. Faith is one of a triad- faith, hope and love. Faith in Christ which does not find its counterpart in love to the saints will soon shrivel and die, but faith which draws nourishment from Christ its source of supply must find an outlet in love to the saints.

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.15>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.16>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.4>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2019.10>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.6>

Col.1:5¹¹

Faith, hope, and love, the essence of the Christian faith, are seen joined together in 1 Cor.13:13¹² and 1 Thess.1:3¹³, and are also seen here – faith in Christ, love to the saints, because of the hope which is laid up or stored in the heavens for all who believe. The believer has an inheritance above, which Pet. describes as an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, which is reserved in the heavens (1 Pet.1:4¹⁴). It is not a false hope, but one of which the word of the truth of the gospel speaks. Note how definite is the assertion of the veracity of the good news: it is the word of the truth. There is no fraud in this message, no spurious pretensions of a hope where none exists. This gospel is true and genuine and though saints have not seen the glorious heavenly country, yet their hope rests on truth which is unassailable.

Col.1:6¹⁵

The gospel which reached them is stated to be still present with them. It was no transient message with an ephemeral hope. The word of the gospel is both living and abiding. When it enters it abides in the believing heart. It came not to the Colossians only, it was also in all the world. Whilst the message reaches, blesses and dwells in the individual believer, it is a universal message, it is neither local nor national. It was to be proclaimed to “the whole creation” (Mk.16:15¹⁶) and to “all the nations” (Lk.24:47¹⁷), and

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.5>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.13.13>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.1.3>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.1.4>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.6>

it is constantly bearing fruit in all the world even to this hour. The gospel has that power as a plant whose seed is in itself. It is the power of God unto salvation to every believer. It is characterized in Colossians by “bearing fruit and increasing”. In Acts 6:7¹⁸ we read, “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem.” Again it is said, “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24¹⁹).

And yet again we are told that “so mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed” (Acts 19:20²⁰). Here we see an irresistible power in operation. It is like the working of the leaven hid in three measures of meal (Matt.13:33²¹). In Colossae we have a miniature of a world-wide fact – “as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth”. Theirs was no passing emotion; they knew and thoroughly appreciated the grace of God.

Col.1:7²²

Under the instruction of Epaphras the Colossian saints had learned the grace of God. They had been learners or disciples under the careful and faithful ministry of this minister of Christ, a beloved fellow-servant of the apostle Paul. He is said to have

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.16.15>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.24.47>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%206.7>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2012.24>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2019.20>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.13.33>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.7>

ministered on the apostle's behalf, thus Paul sets his seal to the work of Epaphras.

Col.1:8²³

As he had been a minister of Christ on the apostle's behalf, so he also declared to Paul in Rome the love of the saints. Their love is alluded to in verse 4 – their love toward all the saints – not love to a small coterie of friends, but hope springing from the Holy Spirit's work in the heart which was toward all the saints. How hateful is the love which picks its circle of friends and does not reach to all the saints! Love is one of the “fruits” of the Spirit (Gal.5:22²⁴).

Col.1:9²⁵ “For this cause,” because of their faith and love referred to in verse 4, which Epaphras declared, Paul and Timothy ceased not to pray and make request for the Colossians, and that from the day they heard it. Their prayer was to the end that they might be filled with the knowledge (thorough or full knowledge) of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. “Wisdom is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense.” Spiritual understanding or intelligence is that by which we understand the bearings of things. This is not natural intelligence and is the opposite of what we read in chapter 2:8 – “Philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” This spiritual acumen is the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the mind, for “we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.8>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.22>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.9>

might know the things that are freely given to us by God” (1 Cor.2:12²⁶).

Col.1:10²⁷

The knowledge of the will of God is intensely practical; it is in order that we may walk in such a way as to please the Lord, which means that the whole course of the believer’s life should be regulated by the word of God. If we are to please God we must know His will. To walk in a manner pleasing to God will lead to ever-increasing fruitfulness. “By the knowledge of God” (RVM) seems to be the better rendering here; it shows the cause of the increase referred to. It is like the streams of water which nourish the tree of Ps.1²⁸, which is a picture of the man who meditates in the law of Jehovah day and night, from which he derives the knowledge of his God.

Col.1:11²⁹

The might of God’s glory is the source of the power by which the believer is strengthened or made powerful. The word for “might” here is almost exclusively used of God in the New Testament, the one exception being Heb.2:14³⁰, “the power (might) of death.” The manifestation of Divine Glory to men is the source of their greatest power. The God of Glory appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia. Moses saw the Divine Glory in Mount Sinai.

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.2.12>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.10>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.1>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.11>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.14>

The three apostles saw the glory of the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration: and Paul saw the Lord's glory on the Damascus road. Isaiah too saw His glory and spoke of Him. What power this engendered within these men! Earthly glory seemed to them from henceforth as a faded flower.

These were each strengthened thereby "unto all patience and longsuffering with joy." "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom.8:18³¹). Those who have seen the glory of His grace (Jn 1:14³²) wait for glory of His appearance (Tit.2:13³³). It is wondrously true that the might of His glory makes saints and martyrs strong to endure and suffer – and that with joy; to be joyous sufferers, not murmurers or complainers. Endurance "is the temper which does not easily succumb," and longsuffering "is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong."

Col.1:12³⁴

There may be some measure of diversity of view whether this means Paul and Timothy gave thanks (this view goes back to verse 9, "we ... do not cease to pray ... for you") or whether the subject is "you", the Colossian saints, who were to be strengthened unto patience and longsuffering. The latter view seems to be more in keeping with the context. There is great cause for thanksgiving when we contemplate the Father's work in making

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.18>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.14>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.2.13>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.12>

us meet, competent or capable (not worthy) for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light. There is an analogy between what is stated here and the sharing by the tribes of Israel of their inheritance in the promised land; that was a shadow of the greater and better thing. “In light” shows where the inheritance of saints is.

Col.1:13³⁵

In contrast to “in light” of the previous verse we have here reference to the power of darkness in which we were bound and enslaved, but God rescued us from that thralldom. The power or authority of darkness was great, but the power of our Deliverer is greater. Divine deliverance in the case of Israel from Egypt’s slavery and darkness is a picture of this greater deliverance which is known by all believers. The word for “power” in this verse means authority or delegated power, and delegated power when unlawfully exercised is turned to tyranny; such is the arbitrary tyranny under which all slaves of sin are. When God delivered us from the tyranny of darkness He translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The transportation of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is a figure of the transportation of all who accept Christ, from darkness, from the organized lawless tyranny of darkness, to that happy sphere – the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Every believer is translated into this kingdom at the time of regeneration. This is not the kingdom of God. To enter and maintain one’s position in the kingdom of God requires subjection to the Lord’s authority as revealed in the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, but translation into the kingdom of the Son

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.13>

of God's love is an act done once for all. We are in this kingdom by an act of sovereign grace on the Father's part. The Son of His love is God's only begotten Son. As God is love, love must also be the essence of the Son, and therefore He is the only One who can perfectly reveal God and represent Him who is love, for upon Him rests the Father's love.

Col.1:14³⁶

“In whom” – the Beloved of Eph.1:6³⁷,7³⁸ – the Son of His love, “we have our redemption”. We do not hope to obtain redemption, but we are redeemed, having been delivered by the Father from the power of darkness. The Father's deliverance is through the Son's redemptive work. The Israelites were redeemed by divine power, but they were also redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb. So here God delivered us by His overwhelming power from the power of darkness, but this was effected by the price paid for our redemption by our great Redeemer, the One in whom we have redemption. Redemption is all one with the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness means the sending away of sins, not the passing over of sins as in the dispensation of law (Rom.3:25³⁹, the RV rendering is much more correct than the AV/KJV in this verse).

The believer's sins have been sent away never to return – removed from him as far as the east is from the west (Ps.103:12⁴⁰), so that

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.14>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.6>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.7>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.25>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.103.12>

he stands clear of sin's guilt and bondage. God in His covenant mercy remembers his sins no more (Heb.10:17⁴¹). Of old by redemption God brought His people out of Egypt, and through the blood of atonement, by which sins were forgiven, the high priest entered the sanctuary into the Holy of Holies, so now believers are redeemed from sin's penalty and made nigh to God through the work of the Son of God's Love.

Col.1:15⁴²

Here the Son is seen firstly in relation to God as the perfect Image and visible manifestation of the invisible God; and, secondly, in relation to all created things, as the Firstborn of all creation, though He Himself is nowhere in Scripture ever spoken of as having been created. Image = Gk. eikon "implies an archetype of which it is a copy". He who is the Image of the invisible God is Himself truly God, as Jn 1:1⁴³ says, "The Word was God," and also Heb.1:8⁴⁴ "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," and again verse 10 says, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth. " Other passages show clearly the Deity of the Son. He is the eternal Logos, the true expression of the mind of Deity; for "no man (one) hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (Jn 1:18⁴⁵). It takes a Divine Being to reveal Deity, hence the necessity of the incarnation of the Logos.

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.10.17>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.15>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.1>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.1.8>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.18>

“The Firstborn of all creation” does not mean that He is an essential and integral part of creation, for the following verse says that “in Him were all things created,” and verse 17 says, “He is before all things.” He forms no part of the created things. In Rev.3:14⁴⁶ the Lord says that He is the “Beginning of the creation of God”, that is, that “in Him the whole creation of God is begun and conditioned: He is the source and fountain head”. He Himself had no beginning. “Eternal Being” is as true of the Son as of the Father. The Father says in Rev.21:6⁴⁷, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end,” and the Son says in Rev.22:13⁴⁸, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Had God a beginning or will He have an end? Never! and what is true of God the Father is true also of God the Son.

The name “Firstborn” can have nothing to do with the Lord’s human birth, nor has it anything to do with Him as the Son of the Father, for in that sense He is not the first, but the only begotten Son. His being the only begotten Son admits no relationship to any creature, it shows that relationship in which He stands to the Father. “Firstborn” here does not mean first or eldest born, one who enjoys the priority of birth, but it is used here in the sense in which it is used in Ps.89:27⁴⁹, where David is spoken of by God – “I also will make him My firstborn The highest of the kings of the earth.” David was not related to any of those kings, save in the sense that as God’s first king he was put to the place

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.3.14>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.21.6>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.22.13>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.89.27>

of priority and precedence above all kings. So Christ as Firstborn is one who occupies the position of dignity and precedence, of priority to all creation, as is indicated in the words, “He is before all things ... the Beginning ... that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (Col.1:17⁵⁰,18⁵¹). Christ is “Firstborn among many brethren” (Rom.8:29⁵²), but He was in being throughout all ages. He is also “the Firstborn of the dead” (Rev.1:5⁵³), and here in Colossians “of all creation”. None of these titles describes His origin, but show Him in certain relationships as one who must in all things have the pre-eminence.

Col.1:16⁵⁴

Here we have the reason for the appellation “the Firstborn of all creation”, because in Him were all things created, not because He was created before all things. The latter view of the Firstborn is that taken by some to their own destruction. The Son’s priority to all things is here clearly stated, for “in (not “by” – AV/KJV) Him were all things created”; consequently it follows that “in Him all things consist” (“hold together”, RVM). He is “pre-existent and all including,” for “in Him was life” (Jn 1:4⁵⁵). The fact of creation is plainly stated here by the aorist tense. All things in heaven were created in the Firstborn, as well as all things upon earth, both visible and invisible; the things visible being vastly greater in extent than the visible things of the creation, which de-

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.17>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%201.18>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.29>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.1.5>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.16>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.4>

clare to man God's everlasting power and divinity (Rom.1:20⁵⁶). The whole system of divine government instituted amongst created intelligences has its beginning and source in the Firstborn, who is here seen pre-eminent over all, whether they be thrones, lordships, governments, or authorities; all were created through or by Him and unto or for Him.

The act of creation was His act; it was by His means that all being has its being, and it is unto Him as the end, as giving the reason for its existence. What a sweep of mental vision there is in these three prepositions which are used in this verse, which describe the creation of all things in the Firstborn – in Him, through Him, unto Him! He is the Beginning and the End; the whole cycle of creation is complete in Himself. The highest of created intelligences with the lowest owe their existence to the divine fiat of the Son of God's love, who also upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb.1:3⁵⁷). These are the stupendous facts revealed to us here, and what is more amazing is the fact that this is He who was laid in a manger, yea also, who was nailed to the cross, who died for the sins of the creature.

Col.1:17⁵⁸

Note that it does not say that "He was before all things," but that "He is before all things". This describes the absolute existence of the eternal "I AM", who said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58⁵⁹). It is not that His being simply ante-dates all

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.1.20>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.1.3>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.17>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.58>

things, that He was before them, but He is as the eternal One before all, with an eternity of being that admits of no comparison between the created and the Increate. Here, too, in this verse we learn the reason for the continuance of all things in their present state. "He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos." All things hold together in Him, and this was as true of Him when He was the Child Jesus as now upon the throne of heaven. 'Without beginning or decline, Object of faith, and not of sense; Eternal ages saw Him shine, He shines eternal ages hence. As much, when in the manger laid, Almighty ruler of the sky, As when the six days' work He made Filled all the wondering stars with joy. '

Col.1:18⁶⁰

As the entire universe subsists or holds together in Him, and as He is the Head of all principality and authority (Col.2:10⁶¹), so is He the Head of the Church which is His Body. This Church is comprised of all His members, all the redeemed of this dispensation of grace who are baptized in one Spirit into one Body (1 Cor.12:12⁶²,13⁶³). As Head He is the Centre of its unity, and the Source of its life. He is its Creator, Builder and Preserver, the Centre of its love and sympathy, and its Nourisher and Cherisher. In due time He will present it to Himself in all the sweet loveliness with which He has adorned her, for she will be without spot or wrinkle. Then will she stand complete as a wife to her

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.18>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.10>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.12.12>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2012.13>

Heavenly Bridegroom. “Who is the Beginning” (present tense), not who was the Beginning. This is He who says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega ... the Beginning and the End” (Rev.22:13⁶⁴).

As Head He is the Beginning of the Church, but this statement, I judge, is not limited to the Church, but reveals Him as the One who has absolute priority in a sense which is beyond human imagination. He is the Head of all, whether it be the beginning of Gen.1:1⁶⁵ and Jn 1:1⁶⁶, the beginning of human creation (Mk.10:6⁶⁷), the beginning of the Gospel (Mk.1:1⁶⁸), or the beginning of the Church, the Body (Acts 2:11-15⁶⁹), or if there be any other beginning in time or times eternal, He is the Beginning, and there can be no beginning without Him. “The Firstborn from the dead,” that is, He is the first to rise of that company of which He is the first-fruits – they that are Christ’s, the vast number of the redeemed who shall rise and leave other dead persons in their graves.

He is also “the Firstborn of the dead” (Rev.1:5⁷⁰), of all the dead, both just and unjust. He is Head, Beginning, Firstborn, “that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” “In all things,” how inclusive! and who can doubt it in the face of the testimony of Jn who heard ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain,”

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.22.13>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.1.1>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.1>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.10.6>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.1.1>

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%202.11-15>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.1.5>

and also every created thing ascribing to God and to the Lamb, the blessing, the honour, the glory, the dominion, for ever and ever (Rev.5:12⁷¹,13⁷²)?

Col.1:19⁷³

Who could contain such a content, such a complement, such a plenitude, as the whole fulness of God, but one who is God? and it was God's good pleasure that in the Son of His love such divine fulness should dwell or "have its permanent abode". Pre-eminence, fulness and reconciliation are here seen inter-related. A picture of this is seen in Joseph in Egypt in his position and wise administration in that land. He was raised by Pharaoh to a position of absolute pre-eminence over his whole land and kingdom. In him as governor the entire fulness of the storehouses full of golden grain reposed. "Go to Joseph" was Pharaoh's word to all his people, and of his fulness they received bushel upon bushel. It was by means of his corn, which proved to be salvation for all, that the whole land and people of Egypt were put on a different footing relative to Pharaoh, his rule and portion. "Thou hast saved our lives," said they, "let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants" (Gen.47:25⁷⁴). This is a shadow of the immensely greater fact. All the fulness of the God-head dwells in Christ, and through His cross-work there will be a restitution of things.

Col.1:20⁷⁵

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.5.12>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%205.13>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.19>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.47.25>

“Through Him” is through Christ, and “unto Himself” means unto God. The way in which reconciliation is accomplished is by the peace He made through the blood of His cross. A stupendous change is contemplated here. “Things” in the New Testament frequently means “persons” (1 Cor.1:28⁷⁶), but whether “all things” relates to intelligent beings is somewhat difficult to say. There is in view some radical change in things in heaven and earth in consequence of the work of the cross. There is no reconciliation “of things under the earth”, in hell. We may be perfectly certain that, whatever the “all things” include, and whatever restitution may result from the peace Christ has made, “all things” do not include “the devil and his angels” (Matt.25:41⁷⁷), nor the wicked dead who shall be commanded to depart into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels – eternal punishment – nor those whose part will be in the lake of fire (Matt.25:46⁷⁸; 2 Thess.1:9⁷⁹; Rev.14:10⁸⁰; Rev.20:10⁸¹,15⁸²; Rev.21:8⁸³). Universal restitution of all created things to a state of reconciliation and salvation is nowhere taught in the Scriptures.

Col.1:21⁸⁴

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.20>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.28>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.25.41>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.25.46>

79. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.1.9>

80. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.14.10>

81. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.20.10>

82. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2020.15>

83. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.21.8>

The Colossians before they heard the word of the truth of the gospel from Epaphras were estranged – strangers to grace and to God, an alien folk, and not only aliens, but enemy aliens; they were enemies in their mind and such a habit of mind found expression in their evil works. But they had been reconciled; they were no longer enemies and strangers, they were friends, fellow citizens with the saints. What blessed concord follows reconciliation through the blood of His cross! Peace whispers its message from Calvary – Peace! for Christ has died, and, overawed, perchance, the listener rises to gaze upon the strange spectacle of the Man of Calvary, and perhaps to sing as the pious Newton did long ago – ‘I saw One hanging on a tree In agonies and blood, Who cast His holy eyes on me As near His cross I stood.’

Col.1:22⁸⁵

“In the body of His flesh through death”: this is the base of true reconciliation. To be reconciled describes the renewed condition of the believer toward God produced by the death of Christ. God did not need to be reconciled to man; His attitude to man was one of love. Man was an enemy and hater of God, hence the need of his being reconciled. The heart of man was too hard for anything but the death of Christ to soften it. The death of God’s incarnate Son turns man’s stony heart to tears as did divine goodness to Israel, the rock in Horeb to streams of water. This reconciliation has in view a time when believers will be presented to God. The One who will present those who are reconciled is evidently the Son, and the presentation is to God the Father.

84. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.21>

85. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.22>

This is not the presentation of the Church the Body by the Lord to Himself in His own beauty and worth, without spot or wrinkle (Eph.5:27⁸⁶), but is the same as that of which Jud.24⁸⁷ speaks: “Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy.” To be holy, without blemish and unreprieveable, as mentioned in the verse under consideration, describes a condition which is dependent upon the believer’s obedience, as the following verse shows.

Col.1:23⁸⁸

To be without blemish and unreprieveable is conditioned by “if so be ye continue in the Faith.” Every believer by reason of divine election and saving grace is in a state of being holy and without blemish before Him (God) in love (Eph.1:4⁸⁹), but such in another sense will be blemished and blameworthy if they do not continue in the Faith. In the coming day of Christ there will be a double presentation, (1) the presentation of the Church by Christ to Himself, and (2) the presentation of saints to God, which may be at or subsequent to the judgement-seat of Christ. “Grounded and stedfast” was how they were to continue in the Faith. “Grounded” in the original is a verbal form of the word for foundation. Parkhurst says that it means “to found, settle, or establish on a foundation, in a spiritual sense.” The Faith is the foundation, as we have it also spoken of in Jude 1:20⁹⁰: “But ye,

86. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.27>

87. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude.24>

88. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.23>

89. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.4>

90. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude%201.20>

beloved, building yourselves on your most holy Faith,” etc. This grounding or building on the foundation was to be done steadfastly or firmly.

They were not to be moved away or shifted from the hope of the gospel. Then Paul alludes to what he said in chapter 1:5,6 as to the extensive promulgation of the gospel in all creation under heaven, and he adds, “whereof I Paul was made a minister,” or deacon. Thus he concludes one of the most remarkable descriptions of our blessed Lord to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. He, Paul, the once proud Pharisee, the chief of sinners, was now a lowly deacon of the greatest of all themes – the gospel of God concerning His Son. The Son of His love is here shown to be the Redeemer and Sin-Bearer, the Image of God and the Firstborn of all creation, the Creator and Upholder of all, pre-existent and preeminent, the Head of the Body, the Beginning, and the Firstborn from the dead, the One in whom Divine fulness permanently resides, the Reconciler and Peace Maker. All this with a depth and profundity rolls past our mind’s eye like a mighty river, a depth that no human mind can fathom, but where faith finds waters abundant to swim in. Here may the sons of deepest want Exhaustless riches find. Riches above what earth can grant
And lasting as the mind.

Col.1:24⁹¹

So highly did Paul esteem the saints, the fruit of the gospel, that he rejoiced in his sufferings for their sake. Though they were but of the foolish things in this world, yet by grace they were citizens of heaven, and the excellent of the earth. Paul further says that

91. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.24>

he filled up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh for His (Christ's) Body's sake. The afflictions of Christ must not be confused with the vicarious sufferings of Christ. No believer can have fellowship in such suffering; the afflictions are the sufferings of Christ in this scene at the hands of men when He sought to fulfil the will of God during His earthly ministry. Such sufferings may abound to us (2 Cor.1:5⁹²), and in such sufferings we may share (Phil.3:10⁹³).

Natural children are not born without the pain and labour of childbirth, and spiritual children are not begotten without travail. Members of Christ, once sinners ready to perish, are not brought into union with Christ without those who are used as instruments knowing something of the afflictions of Christ. Alas, how very much may be lacking of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh for His Body's sake! Some have travailed in birth in foreign lands (speaking figuratively) for His Body's sake, that the elect might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Tim.2: 10⁹⁴). Paul said to Timothy, "Take thy part in suffering hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim.2:3⁹⁵, RVM), and he himself said later in the same chapter (verse 9), "I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor" in connexion with what he called "my gospel". We have each our part to play, some greater than others, and each our part to endure of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh, for His Body's sake, but these, also, may be sadly lacking, and in consequence much of our work

92. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.1.5>

93. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.10>

94. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.2.%2010>

95. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.2.3>

will remain undone. Let us take our part in suffering hardship, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.

Col.1:25⁹⁶

Paul was a deacon of the gospel and a deacon of the Body, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what was the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages was hid in God who created all things (Eph.3:8⁹⁷,9⁹⁸). This dispensation, stewardship, or economy (the way in which God has disposed things in this period from Pentecost to the Lord's coming to the air) of God was given to Paul, as he says, to you-ward. "You-ward" primarily means the Colossians, but not these only; it embraces all saints of this dispensation. "To fulfil the word of God" has reference to the will of God peculiar to this dispensation. The Old Testament reveals much relative to the human race, the patriarchs, and the nation of Israel, both as to the past and as to the prophetic future, and the Gentiles in relation to God's ancient people; but the word of God would have been incomplete apart from the revelation of the mystery of the Body of Christ. To the apostle Paul in a very special manner and especially toward the Gentiles was this stewardship committed. Now the word of God is complete; the entire area of His dealings with mankind has been covered and God will in due time implement every promise and fulfil every prophecy.

Col.1:26⁹⁹

96. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.25>

97. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.3.8>

98. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%203.9>

99. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.26>

This marvellous secret has now been revealed which was hid in God the Creator from all principalities and powers during all ages, and from all generations of men in time. We can now look back into the Old Testament and see in type, such as in Adam and Eve, the foreshadowing of that which was yet to be revealed, but to the patriarchs and the prophets, to angels and archangel, Adam and Eve were but Adam and Eve; they saw nothing of Christ and the Church in that pair who were the centre of divine purpose and of earthly government relative to the cosmos which God had brought out of chaos. We, enlightened by the Spirit, see in Eve and certain other brides in Scripture shadows of the mystery of Christ and the Church, this that is now manifested to the saints. It is a privilege to know such a secret and a greater privilege to be partakers of the riches of this great mystery.

Col.1:27¹⁰⁰

What divine favour is shown us here that this mystery should be revealed to us, and that we should be sharers in the wealth of its glory, that Christ should be in us, He who is the hope of glory! To us who are Gentiles in the flesh, once alienated from Israel's ancient commonwealth, has come this abundance of God's grace. Christ is in each member of His Body; His Spirit indwells and His life possesses and flows through the entire organism, producing a unity which is indestructible and giving a hope which the darkest hour cannot efface. Well might Peter write as he did when he thought of the glory of that future day when we shall see our eternal Lover – “whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet.1:8¹⁰¹). “Joy

100. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.27>

unspeakable"! "Full of glory"! do we know by experience what such words mean?

Col.1:28¹⁰²

Here the proclamation of Christ is associated with practical results in the lives of believers, for whilst Christ will present every one perfect in His own perfect work in that coming day, yet Paul anticipated to present, through the effects of his ministry, every man perfect in Christ. He wrote to the Thessalonians and said that they were his hope and joy and crown of glorying before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (1 Thess.2:19¹⁰³), and where saints turned back he spoke of having laboured in vain (Gal.4:11¹⁰⁴; 1 Thess.3:5¹⁰⁵).

Col.1:29¹⁰⁶

What labour! What profit! God working in him supplied the power and with him was the willingness. Such self-sacrificing labour is much like what he wrote of to the Philippians: "Yea, and if I am offered ("poured out as a drink offering." RVM) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil.2:17¹⁰⁷). He truly spent his life for others, but his will be a saved life for eternity.

101. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.1.8>

102. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.28>

103. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.2.19>

104. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.4.11>

105. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.3.5>

106. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.29>

107. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.17>

COMMENTARY ON COLOSSIANS 2

Col.2:1¹

In the previous chapter (Col.1:28²,29³) Paul speaks of his labour and his striving to present every man perfect in Christ, so here he would have the Colossians know how much he strove for them and for those at Laodicea and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. We may safely infer that Paul had no personal acquaintance with the Colossians and the Laodiceans; these with others had not seen him. This striving was in prayer, I judge, as we have it referred to in Col.1:3⁴,9⁵: This should be an incentive to us to strive in prayer for many that we have never seen and may never see on earth. What a service we may render them in this respect, and they also for us!

Col.2:2⁶

“That their hearts may be comforted,” or rather confirmed or encouraged, for the evil in view in this chapter is not that of persecution and suffering, but of being drawn away from Christ by the philosophy and vain deceit of the evil workers who sought to make a prey of the saints. Thus they required to be confirmed

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.28>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%201.29>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%201.9>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.2>

in their faith and knit together in love (for knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up – 1 Cor.8:1⁷, RVM) that they might advance “unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding”. The true wealth of man is in his mind, not his pocket, and this enrichment is definitely associated here with the saints being “knit together in love”. This full assurance of understanding is unto a full or thorough knowledge of the mystery of God, even Christ. We follow the RV here, though there is some difference of mind as to the original text.

That blessed One who is God and Man – Christ – is the Divine Treasury; and what a privilege it is, as Spirit-taught, to acquire a thorough knowledge of Him as revealed in the Scriptures, that is, in so far as we may with our limited capacity. Christ is to be seen in all the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. Paul wrote at this time to the Philippians, when he was such a one as Paul the aged, expressing his intense longing in the words – “that I may know Him”. “I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil.3:8⁸, 10⁹).

Col.2:3¹⁰

Though these treasures are hidden in Christ they are not beyond our reach; they are accessible to the believer who would search for them. Here it is true: “Seek, and ye shall find” ... “for ... he that seeketh findeth.” Treasure is kept in secret, it is hidden. There is a false wisdom, that which is earthly and demoniacal

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.8.1>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.3.8>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%203.10>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.3>

(Jas.3:14¹¹,15¹²), but Christ is the treasure house of all true wisdom and knowledge. He is as a mine from which every kind of gem to adorn the mind may be dug. The most pithy and witty of human sayings are as proverbs of ashes compared with the delectable words of our Lord. Did they come from the end of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon? Well, a Greater than Solomon is here.

Col.2:4¹³

What is in Christ – all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge – was stated in order that no one by false reasoning and persuasive speech might deceive them and lead them astray. Human reason is frequently a menace to the acceptance by simple faith of divine revelation. High sounding words, on the one hand, and the limitations of human knowledge and experience, on the other, are liable to lead away the heart from Christ.

Col.2:5¹⁴

Paul, though absent in bodily presence, yet was present in the spirit (not the Holy Spirit, but his own spirit); this means that he had an accurate knowledge of the state of the Colossian church, this having been communicated to him by Epaphras who was now with him in Rome. In his spirit he beheld, as though he were actually present with them, their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ. It has been stated that the word or-

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.14>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.15>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.4>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.5>

der (Gk.) means “orderly array”, and is a military metaphor. Steadfastness (Gk. *stereoma*) means a “solid front, close phalanx”, also a military metaphor, and shows the order and solidity of an individual church.

Col.2:6¹⁵

This verse has been punctuated thus, “As therefore ye received the Christ, Jesus the Lord.” They received by faith the Christ in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden, and the Christ is Jesus the Lord, and as they received Him by faith they are to walk in Him by faith. It is in the matter of walking by faith that so many fail. The one act of faith in the Redeemer is to be followed by a life of faith. We cannot turn back from the results that this one act of faith has brought us, but we can draw back from the path of faith. “My righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, My soul hath no pleasure in him” (Heb.10:38¹⁶).

Col.2:7¹⁷

Two tenses are used here. “Rooted” is in the perfect participle; they were firmly rooted and remain so. “Builded up” is in the present participle, which shows that building which goes on continually. As having been and remaining rooted in Christ and being builded up in Him, they are to be stablished (present participle) or confirmed in their faith in Him, thus they would remain true to what they had learned from the faithful Epaphras. And

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.6>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.10.38>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.7>

as they viewed their position and portion in Christ it was fitting that they should abound in thanksgiving.

Col.2:8¹⁸

The Colossians were to look out because of a peril which was imminent, against which they must be on their guard, lest any one (dangerous persons of whom Paul had had experience, as to their practice of leading saints away as their prey) should make them his spoil. He warned the Ephesians of similar danger, of being “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error” (Eph.4:14¹⁹). Philosophy, held in high esteem of old in Greece and also by many today, is seen in bad company here. Indeed Paul views “philosophy and vain deceit” as twin brothers. He thought but little of philosophy, which is the product of the human mind and not of the mind of God.

“After the traditions of men”; here is the source of philosophy, it is human and not divine, tradition and not revelation. It is antagonistic to all that is to be found in Christ, who is the Revealer of God. Though highly esteemed by some it is after all but elementary, but the rudiments of the world belonging to the earthly, carnal, material and external sphere of things, and not suited to the spiritual man, who is to find his whole source of supply in Christ. Christ is the source of all spiritual life, of all true wisdom and knowledge, and the perfect rule of faith and conduct.

Col.2:9²⁰

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.8>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.14>

Here we have the reason why such traditional wisdom, such vain philosophy, was to be eschewed, because in Christ abides for ever the fulness of the Godhead. “The fulness” signifies “the totality of the divine powers and attributes”. “Of the Godhead,” Trench in his “Synonyms” writes – “Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fulness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rags of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up His Person for a season and with a splendour not His own, but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the apostle uses Gk. *theotes* to express the essential and personal Godhead of the Son.” This divine fulness dwells eternally in the Son, because He is God. “Bodily” means in Christ’s human body. No wonder the apostle asserts in verse 3 – “In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden”.

Col.2:10²¹

“In Him are ye made full.” Here we have the perfect participle again, showing they were and still are complete in Christ and require nothing supplementary from philosophy, circumcision and law-keeping, or any other source, to make them more complete. Our fulness is in Him in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead. For of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace (Jn 1:16²²). “Who is the Head of all principality and authority.” Every form of heavenly government finds its source of life and energy in Him, for all were created in Him (chapter 1:16). All such are subject to His sovereign authority. He is Head over all things (Eph.2: 21²³,22²⁴).

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.9>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.10>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.16>

Col.2:11²⁵

Circumcision was the great primal rite of the people of Israel. No one could be joined to the nation or partake of the privileges of Israel's religious life who was not circumcised. In this verse, in contrast to Israel's circumcision we have the circumcision of Christ, which is "the putting off of the body of the flesh." "Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away" (Rom.6:6²⁶). We were crucified, and died in God's reckoning, at the time of our regeneration. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal.2:20²⁷). As every believer begins his spiritual life by being regenerated, so every believer is circumcised, the flesh is cut away, and he is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom.8:9²⁸). Israel's circumcision is the type, but Christ is the antitype.

Col.2:12²⁹

Baptism is the grave of the believer. He is buried with Christ through baptism. The old man was crucified with Christ. The regenerated man, not regenerated by water baptism, but by faith in

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.%2021>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%202.22>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.11>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.6>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.2.20>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.9>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.12>

Christ, rises from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom.6:4³⁰,5³¹). Those who have been buried with Him in baptism are raised with Him through faith in the working of God. Baptism is more than a dipping in water for the believer, for as God raised Christ from the dead, he is to realize by faith that he too has been raised by the operation of God.

Col.2:13³²

This verse contains similar truth to that of Eph.2:5³³, where we read, “When we were dead through our trespasses, (He) quickened us together with Christ.” Death here is not because of Adam’s sin, but because of the personal trespasses of the sinner. The consequence of sin is death. The uncircumcision of the flesh describes that state of corruption in which the sinner is by nature, till, having believed in Christ, he has been quickened and delivered from that sinful state, and is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom.8:9³⁴). He has passed from death to life, from being in Adam to being in Christ, from a state of sin to one of righteousness, having had all his trespasses forgiven.

Col.2:14³⁵

It is now impossible to trespass the law of ordinances because God has blotted out the bond written (or handwriting) in or-

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.4>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%206.5>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.13>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.5>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.9>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.14>

dinances or decrees which was against and contrary to us. This bond is undoubtedly the Mosaic law, and through failure to keep it man became a transgressor. The Jewish believer who had been forgiven through the sacrificial work of Christ would inevitably have become a transgressor had he still been under law, and the Gentiles who had believed would have been in like condemnation had truth been on the side of the Judaizing teachers and had they brought them under the law of Moses, for they said, "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1³⁶). Paul shows in Gal.5:3³⁷ that the man who received circumcision was "a debtor to do the whole law", and also if he received circumcision Christ would profit him nothing (verse 2).

This bond to which Israel subscribed at Sinai has been removed; it has been nailed to the cross. The work of Christ on the cross has discharged the bond. There every claim that the law could make has been fully met. He is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom.10:4³⁸). We cannot now become dead through trespasses, for we are not under law. "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom.6:14³⁹). "We have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were holden" (Rom.7:6⁴⁰). Law cannot enact upon a dead man. Now being quickened with Christ we are free from all obligation to the law, so far as our having been justified with the justification

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.1>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.3>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.10.4>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.6.14>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.7.6>

of life is concerned. We are discharged from the law and the law itself has been taken out of the way.

Col.2:15⁴¹

This is confessedly a difficult verse to understand. The American revisers translate it, "Having despoiled the principalities and powers". This practically agrees with the rendering in the Englishman's Greek New Testament, "having stripped the principalities and powers". Ancient Greek commentators viewed the passage as showing how the Lord stripped off from Himself the powers of evil that assailed Him with their temptations during the days of His flesh; over these He was completely victorious. The Latin commentators interpret the verse as signifying the stripping or putting off of His body in the victory of the Cross, which view is followed in the RV marginal reading. The first question that arises is whether the antecedent of this verse is "God" or "Christ". Verse 13 says, "You ... did He quicken together with Him, having forgiven ..." (verse 14) "... having blotted out" (verse 15) "... having put off."

The parallel passage in Eph.2:4⁴²,5⁴³, shows that the act of quickening is God's act, so that the antecedent of this verse we judge to be God. God nailed the handwriting of decrees to the cross, the law which was given through angels (Heb.2:2⁴⁴; Acts 7:53⁴⁵), and in so removing and doing away with the bond He has tri-

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.15>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.4>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%202.5>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.2>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%207.53>

umphed over or led in triumph those through whom the law was given (not fallen angels, but angels who have kept their principality – principalities and authorities). This same word is used in 2 Cor.2:14⁴⁶, which shows God leading men in triumph in Christ. The bond is removed by the cross and the principalities and authorities are stripped or despoiled. God is triumphant in the triumph of the cross; why then should there be the worshiping of angels, as in verse 18, an error into which the Colossians were liable to fall? The foregoing is offered as a contribution to a difficult verse and is made suggestively.

Col.2:16⁴⁷

In view of the fundamental change which has taken place, as is indicated in verses 13-15, in that the law with its ordinances is now removed through the work of Christ, no man is to be allowed to condemn the saints in the matter of eating or drinking, or in regard to a feast day, weekly or monthly. None of the rites and ceremonies of the dispensation of law is binding on disciples in this day of grace: we are free from legal bondage to ordinances.

Col.2:17⁴⁸

Here we have the Substance and the shadow. The body which cast its shadow in the typical ordinances of the past is Christ's. When men reach the Substance they can disengage themselves from the shadows. "In Him the shadows of the law Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw."

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.2.14>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.16>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.17>

Col.2:18⁴⁹

The Colossians are warned against the false teacher who would obstruct and fraudulently deprive them of the prize held out by Christ; the purpose of the false teacher (“of his own mere will,” RVM) was to side-track them into what must be mere pseudo-humility and a worshipping of angels. Angelolatry is but a form of idolatry. Jn wrote of the angel which showed him the things of the book of Revelation; “I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God” (Rev.22:8⁵⁰,9⁵¹). Such a false teacher is said to dwell in or stand upon what he has seen. He is not such an one as the apostle who said, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” The description of his carnal mind shows how truly the humility of this verse is a false humility, for he is said to be “vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh.” He was a proud, carnally minded individual masquerading as a humble and enlightened teacher of divine things.

Col.2:19⁵²

Whilst every member of the body is joined to Christ, the Head of the Body, with indissoluble ties, he is nevertheless responsible to hold fast the Head so that he may receive the spiritual nourishment essential to his growth and development. Only in the

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.18>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.22.8>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2022.9>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.19>

sense of communion and consequent growth can it be said, as in Gal.5:4⁵³, “Ye are severed from Christ.” Our communion with Christ can be severed, but not our union with Him. As to our union with Christ there can be no severance or separation. But as Jn 15:6⁵⁴ shows, a believer may not abide in Christ, and, as a branch severed from the vine, there is no spiritual nourishment, no growth and consequent fruit-bearing. The believer becomes spiritually dead and unfruitful. All the body is supplied from the Head; this is also true of the human body.

As the human body is knit together by joints (the contacts which separate parts make with each other), and bands (the ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves) which bind all together, so in a spiritual sense is the Body of Christ knit together. By the joints and bands spiritual food is ministered to the members which produces the due increase: it “increaseth with the increase of God.” Spiritual ministry essential to growth is to be given by such as are viewed as joints and bands, men who were given by the ascended Christ, for the perfecting of the saints and the building up or edifying of the Body of Christ (Eph.4:11⁵⁵,12⁵⁶).

Col.2:20⁵⁷,21⁵⁸,22⁵⁹

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.5.4>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2015.6>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.11>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%204.12>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.20>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%202.21>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%202.22>

If the believer is complete or made full in Christ he has no need to return to the rudimentary things and to put himself under meaningless prohibitions as though Christian life is to be one of “Don’ts” – “handle not, taste not, touch not.” He is freeborn, and has the living word of God for his food and guidance; he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit; his life is therefore to be vital and aggressive in the service of Christ. Why should he subject himself to mere negative things, to precepts and doctrines of men, mere human prohibitions in regard to externals and leave the things eternal in which he is to find his true occupation?

Col.2:23⁶⁰

Human commands enjoining abstinence and prohibition have a reputation for wisdom and voluntary worship, worship which emanates from the human will and not from divine revelation. Subjecting the body to hard treatment may appear very laudatory, but it is useless in dealing with the corruption of human nature; it is not a true remedy for the indulgence of the flesh. God’s way of dealing with the flesh as to its appetites is not by abstinence, but by death. “If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world” – this is the true remedy. We have died to the things wherein we were occupied, and henceforth it is a new life in Christ that is the vital matter.

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.23>

COMMENTARY ON COLOSSIANS 3

Col.3:1¹

If they, the Colossian saints, died with Christ, as in Col.2:20², to all rudimentary, mundane things, to things below, they are now to seek the things that are above, because of the fact that they were raised together with Christ. In Eph.2:6³ our being raised with Christ has in view the coming display of divine grace – “That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” In Colossians our being raised with Christ is to have a present effect in our lives, we are to seek heavenly things, the things which are where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. Heavenly men should seek heavenly things.

Col.3:2⁴

Heavenly men should also be heavenly-minded; their thoughts should be occupied with heavenly things, as one has put it, “You must not only seek heaven, you must also think heaven.” It is alas only too true that many believers are earthly-minded; they maintain the silence of death when one speaks to them of heavenly things. Novel reading, the radio, and many other undesirable things occupy their time and divert their mind from heav-

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.20>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.6>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.2>

enly things, till their heavenly character is lost and they become like mere worldlings. The believer should be careful about what occupies his mind, for his mind will affect his manners, it hews out his character – and character is imperishable, therefore the thoughts of his mind will affect him both in time and eternity.

Col.3:3⁵

The believer who has died, his life is hidden out of sight. It is a life the world knows nothing of. He has died to the world and its things, and in consequence his life is not in that sphere wherein he formerly lived and found his pleasure. As Paul says here, “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” It is hidden now but the day of manifestation will come.

Col.3:4⁶

“As He (Christ) is, even so are we in this world” (1 Jn 4:17⁷). He died and passed from this world. The world saw Him no more after His body was laid in Joseph’s new tomb. Christ is the hidden life of the believer, for He is alive, raised and glorified, and when He shall be manifested then shall we also be manifested in glory. In a sense it has ever been true that God’s saints have been hidden ones in this world – “They take crafty counsel against Thy people, And consult together against Thy hidden ones” (Ps.83:3⁸). This manifestation in glory is “When He shall come to be glo-

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.3>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.4>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.17>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.83.3>

rified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed” (2 Thess.1:10⁹).

Col.3:5¹⁰

The principle of death and resurrection is to find expression in the life of the believer in the world, consequently he must mortify or kill his immoral members, the members of the old man, which are upon the earth of which there are five – “fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness.” As men ever leave a physical impress of five – five fingers, five toes, even so morally these five forms of sin are in evidence in all humanity. Number “five” in Scripture frequently indicates weakness, and sin ever brings weakness. In these sins we see the gratification of self in the corrupt desires of the human heart. This is especially so in covetousness, wherein the human soul is devoted to the native greediness that is inherent in man, and it becomes a form of worship, a most pernicious form of idolatry. Indeed most forms of idolatry which have blighted this earth are corroded through and through with covetousness. The greediness of priestcraft is proverbial. It is like the horse-leach which says, “Give, Give.”

Col.3:6¹¹

Whilst God punishes men even in this life for their vice, His wrath will eventually come upon all the sons of disobedience. Eternal punishment will be the portion of the disobedient. His wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah for their uncleanness is a singu-

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.1.10>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.5>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.6>

lar proof of God's judgement, and those wicked cities of the plain are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Col.3:7¹²

These things being their members, they formerly lived in them, and they regulated their habits – they walked in them. Were they in a worse case than we? Nay verily! These things have characterized men in all time.

Col.3:8¹³

Not only were they to kill and consequently put away their immoral members, they were to put away the whole crop of the product of fallen nature. Sins of an uncharitable kind are specified by Paul, of the same number as our members which are upon the earth – anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking, all of them sins which are plainly against the terms of the moral law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Anger “denotes a more or less settled feeling of hatred”; wrath, “a tumultuous outburst of passion.” Malice is the “vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others.” Railing (blasphemy) is “evil speaking or slandering.” Shameful speaking is “filthy talking” or “abusive conversation” or “foul-mouthed abuse.” How unbecoming for a Christian man to harbour such guests! They were his friends once, but he must put them away if he would enjoy the Lord's friendship.

Col.3:9¹⁴

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.7>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.8>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.9>

I remember a conversation with a believer who was greatly disturbed about a Christian telling a lie to another, in view of what is said in Rev.22:15¹⁵; “without are the dogs ... and every one that loveth and maketh a lie,” as to whether making a known lie and telling it affected the eternal security of the believer in Christ. Those who understand clearly what it means to be in Christ are not so disturbed, but also it is sadly true for one Christian to tell a lie knowingly to another. It ought not so to be, but if it were not possible there would be no need to be exhorted against it. The reason given here why we ought not to lie is because we have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man. In Eph.4:25¹⁶ we are enjoined to truthfulness because we are members one of another.

Col.3:10¹⁷

Eph.4:22¹⁸ exhorts us to put off the old man as to our former conduct, and to put on the new (Gk. kainos) man. Kainos means fresh, as to quality and condition, in contrast to that which is old, effete, jaded and languid. But in Col.3:10¹⁹ we have to put on the new (Gk. neos) man, one who is new, as being young, a new man who has just been born, in contrast to an old man, which describes our standing in Adam. Neos “refers solely to time”; Kainos “denotes quality also.” Col.3:9²⁰,10²¹ states a fact

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.22.15>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.25>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.10>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.22>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.10>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.9>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%203.10>

that at the time of the new birth we put off the old man and put on the new, but Eph.4:22-24²² exhorts us to put off the old man as concerning our manner of life and to put on the new. The new (neos) man or regenerate man is ever or continually being renewed unto full or perfect knowledge according to the image of God. The divine impress of the image of God upon the soul becomes more and more deepened as the believer increases in the knowledge of God. “This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ” (Jn 17:3²³).

Col.3:11²⁴

In regard to being a new man, in this estate there cannot be national, religious, cultural, or social distinctions. Christ obliterates all these differences, for “Christ is all”; and He permeates the life of all believers, for He is “in all”. Ye all are one man in Christ Jesus (Gal.3:28²⁵).

Col.3:12²⁶,13²⁷

Having put on the new man (verse 10), it is proper that Christians should be arrayed in befitting garments. The elect or chosen ones of God are both holy and beloved. The excellences mentioned in this verse were seen perfectly expressed in Christ, and

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.4.22-24>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2017.3>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.11>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.3.28>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.12>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%203.13>

He being “all, and in all”, all other differences which distinguish mankind, such as Greek, Jew, Scythian, and so forth, having been swept away, so far as believers are concerned, such graces should be seen in all His followers. “A heart (or bowels) of compassion”: heart here is Gk. *splagchna*, which describes the inwards, the seat of sympathetic feelings. In 2 Cor.7:15²⁸ the word is rendered “inward affection”. It is used in Lk.1:78²⁹ in the words, “the tender mercy of our God”, and in Phil.1:8³⁰ in “the tender mercies of Christ Jesus”. “Kindness,” signifies utility, usefulness, beneficence. In Eph.2:7³¹ and Tit.3:4³² we have God’s kindness to us in Christ Jesus, the bestowal upon us of that which we so much needed. This bestowing of what was needed is eminently seen in the story of David and Mephibosheth (2 Sam.9³³). How useful to Mephibosheth were the gifts of David!

“Humility” means to be of a lowly mind, to be humble in thought, which finds its expression in humility of conduct. It signifies modesty. The word is rendered “lowliness of mind” in Phil.2: 3³⁴: “Meekness” is gentleness, lenity, mildness, and is opposed to rudeness, harshness. The Lord is meek and lowly in heart (Matt.11:29³⁵). Moses was more meek than any man on earth in his day. Paul intreated the Cor.by the meekness and gen-

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.7.15>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.1.78>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.8>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.2.7>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.3.4>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Sam.9>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.%203>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.11.29>

teness of Christ (2 Cor.10:1³⁶), and who would not yield on that ground? “Longsuffering” means to be patient, clement, and is the opposite of resentment or revenge. The adverbial form of the word is rendered “patiently” in Acts 26:3³⁷: “Forbearing one another”: forbearing means “to hold self back”, to support, to endure, bear with. Solomon says – “By long forbearing is a ruler persuaded, And a soft tongue breaketh the bone” (Prov.25:15³⁸). “Forgiving each other”: this means to be gracious to, not to exact, to forgive freely. There will always be something to bear and forbear, always something to forgive. The forgiveness by Christians of each other is to be after the pattern in which they have each been forgiven by the Lord, with that freeness and speed and with no harking back on what is forgiven. “Love covereth a multitude of sins” (1 Pet.4:8³⁹).

Col.3:14⁴⁰

Upon all these, over and above all these excellencies “the” love which is or should be proper to the Christian is to be put on. This “outer garment holds all others in their places” and is the bond of perfectness, it completes all the rest.

Col.3:15⁴¹

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.10.1>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2026.3>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.25.15>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.4.8>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.14>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.15>

The “peace of Christ” is what He gave to His disciples ere He left them in the night of the betrayal, when He said, “My peace I give unto you” (Jn 14:27⁴²). This peace is to rule or arbitrate (RVM) in the heart; it is to be the decider or umpire when two or more thoughts are in conflict. If peace gave its decision in the conflict of the mind, and if this applied not merely to one but to all, how harmonious would be the collective life of believers! There would be one heart and one soul. It is to peace we are called in one Body – and there can be no schism in a body (1 Cor.12:25⁴³) – but it is failure to recognize we are members of one Head and members one of another, and that Christ cannot be divided (1 Cor.1:13⁴⁴), that has led to serious disturbances, resulting in self-chosen paths and sectarianism with their carnal warfare and strife and attendant grief and misery. Let us be thankful we have been called in one Body and seek to enjoy the decisions of peace, peace which is given, not as the world giveth.

Col.3:16⁴⁵

“The word of Christ”: this phrase is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It denotes the word Christ spoke and speaks, the inspired word. This word is to dwell in each and all richly. This can only be realized as there is the continual reading of, and prayerful meditation in, the word. There must be an appetite for the word, and a vigorous appetite can only be ours as things harmful to spiritual life are abandoned. The world has many decoys to draw away the Christian from his Bible, many ways of

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.27>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.12.25>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.13>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.16>

swallowing up his time so that there is little leisure for meditation, and often, alas, instead of a rich indwelling of the word there is barrenness of soul. This leads to poverty of thought in ministry, and instead of the scribe bringing out of his treasure things new and old there is much staleness.

“In all wisdom”: there may be difference of mind whether to take these words, as punctuated in AV/KJV and RV, with the preceding clause or with what follows. The believer’s wisdom comes from the word of Christ – Christ is his wisdom, and the more He knows of Him the wiser He will become. But the word which dwells in him richly may in all wisdom be applied in teaching and admonition. How excellent is the word when applied with wisdom! “The heart of the wise instructeth his mouth, And ad-deth learning to his lips” (Prov.16:23⁴⁶). “The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright” (Prov.15:2⁴⁷). “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs: These three definitions would not have been used if one would have conveyed fully the meaning of the apostle, but to define exactly the difference of meaning in the three is not easy. “Psalms.” “Gk. psalmos, from psao, properly a touching, and then a touching of the harp or other stringed instrument with the finger or plectrum, was next the instrument itself and last of all the song sung with this musical instrument ...In all probability the psalmoi of Eph.5:19⁴⁸, Col.3:26⁴⁹, are the inspired psalms of the Hebrew canon” – Trench. See the following places where the word Psalm is used in the New Testa-

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.16.23>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.15.2>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.19>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.26>

ment. Lk.20:42⁵⁰; 24:44⁵¹; Acts 1:20⁵²; 13:33⁵³; 1 Cor. 14:26⁵⁴; Eph.5:19⁵⁵; Col.3:16⁵⁶: “Hymns”:

“Augustine in more places than one states the notes of what in his mind are essentials of a hymn – which are three: (1) It must be sung; (2) It must be praise; (3) It must be of God” – Trench. Besides Eph.5:19⁵⁷, Col.3:16⁵⁸, the word is used in its Greek verbal form humneo in Matt.26:30⁵⁹, Mk.14:26⁶⁰, Acts 16:25⁶¹, Heb. 2:12⁶²: “Spiritual Songs”: A song (ode) may be about any subject, but here the word “spiritual” describes the kind of ode that the apostle signifies. It is concerning spiritual things. In Rev.5:9⁶³, 14:3⁶⁴, 15:3⁶⁵, we read of “a new song”, and “the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb.”

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.20.42>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%2024.44>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.20>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.33>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%2014.26>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.19>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.16>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.19>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.16>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.26.30>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.14.26>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.25>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.%202.12>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.5.9>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2014.3>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2015.3>

The Lord's work in this dispensation and our experience thereof require fitting words of praise and exultation, as truly as did men of a past dispensation find in the psalms and songs of David, Asaph and others, words to express their praise to Jehovah their God. Whatever may be said about the word "Psalm", in this dispensation there is no singing contemplated to the accompaniment of a musical instrument in the assemblies of God's people, for in Eph.5:19⁶⁶ the singing (Gk. *adontes*, from the word *ode*) and making melody (Gk. *psallontes*, from the word *psalmos*) is with the heart to the Lord, and not with either stringed or wind instruments. The singing in Col.3:26⁶⁷ is with grace, that grace which we have received which has produced a spirit of thankfulness within, unto God. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are to have an outward voice to one another in teaching and admonition, and an upward voice to God in our singing with grace to Him.

Col.3:17⁶⁸

The entire activity of the believer in word and work is to be governed by the name of the Lord Jesus. What a moderating influence this would cast on all our speaking and doing, if we remembered that all is to be done in His name! Many words would be left unspoken and deeds undone if this were the guiding principle of our lives. As with our words and works, so with our thanksgiving, it is through Him this is to ascend unto God the Father. Here we have the guiding principle as to thanksgiving, it is to the Father through the Son.

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.19>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.26>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.17>

Col.3:18⁶⁹

In this paragraph we have certain instructions regarding social and domestic relationships. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands. Subjection does not signify inferiority. This subjection is governed by the words “as is fitting in the Lord”. In Eph.5:23⁷⁰ we are told that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is Head of the Church. The headship of the male over the female is dealt with in 1 Cor.11⁷¹, where it is not the married state that is in view, but the relationship of males and females in assembly life. We are told that the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man. The same point is emphasized in 1 Tim.2:11-15⁷², where we are told that Adam was first formed, then Eve, but she was first in transgression; she was beguiled, but Adam was not. Being “in the Lord” is not the equivalent of being “in Christ”.

The latter, as in Rom.16:7⁷³, 2 Cor.5:17⁷⁴, 1 Thess.4: 16⁷⁵, etc., describes what is true of all who are born again and are members of Christ’s Body, but the former describes such as are subject to the will of the Lord, and also that which is done in obedience to His will. We are told that our labour is not vain in the Lord (1 Cor.15:58⁷⁶). We read of those who are over us in the Lord (the

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.18>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.23>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.11>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.2.11-15>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.16.7>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.17>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.4.%2016>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.15.58>

elders or overseers) and who admonish us (1 Thess.5:12⁷⁷). We are taught in 1 Cor.11:11⁷⁸ that neither is the man without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord; that is, in the church of God there are ever males and females. God never contemplates a fellowship of males without females, nor females without males. Marriage is in consequence to be in the Lord (1 Cor.7:39⁷⁹). Where marriage is in the Lord we may expect to see wives in subjection to their husbands, as is fitting in the Lord, and also children obedient to their parents in the Lord, for this is right (Eph.6:1⁸⁰). Onesimus was a brother in the flesh and in the Lord, for he was subject to the same Lord and in the same fellowship as Philemon, and he was a natural brother to Philemon as well, I judge (Philn.16). We read of brethren in the Lord (Phil.1:14⁸¹), and also of a brother being received in the Lord (Phil.2:29⁸²).

Col.3:19⁸³

As the relationship of wife to husband is dealt with in Eph.5:22-24⁸⁴, so the relationship of husband to wife is dealt with at length in Eph.25-33⁸⁵: Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies, even as they love themselves, and if this is so,

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.5.12>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.11.11>

79. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.7.39>

80. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.6.1>

81. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.1.14>

82. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.2.29>

83. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.19>

84. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.22-24>

85. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.25-33>

then there will be no bitter, harsh treatment of the wife by her husband.

Col.3:20⁸⁶

Children here are especially children in the church in Colossae, children in the Fellowship, whose parents were likewise in the Fellowship. Children thus come under the first form of divine government, seen in the rule of parents, and here we are told that obedience to parents is well-pleasing in the Lord. The commandment being exceeding broad (Ps.119:96⁸⁷), the general principle of obedience to parents enjoined in this verse should be observed, whether parents are in the Fellowship or not. The time might come however, when, for the Lord's sake, children might be required by their parents, who may not be in the Fellowship, to do what the higher claims of the Lord forbade; then they would be faced with a peculiarly difficult situation, and would have to beg their parents to excuse them from doing what they could not do.

Col.3:21⁸⁸

Fathers must not be too exacting upon their children, to provoke and irritate them to the extent that they become discouraged and dispirited. Repeated punishment or restriction may cause children to lose heart and may beget in them a sullen, moody disposition. The tendency of the present age is in the other direction. Each child differs from another in a family, and each must

86. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.20>

87. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.119.96>

88. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.21>

be treated according to the build of its mind; the wills of some are more easily bent than others. It is somewhat remarkable that there is no word to mothers in this verse. Though in the previous verse it says, "Children, obey your parents," this verse is a word to fathers in particular.

Col.3:22⁸⁹,23⁹⁰,24⁹¹,25⁹²

The word "servants" here means slaves or bondservants, not hired servants; though such servants also may well find a guiding principle of obedience to masters in such words. Note here the limitation that they are masters according to the flesh, and they must not therefore infringe what properly belongs to the realm of spiritual things. The Christian servant has a supreme Master, the Lord Christ. He is not to give mere eye-service, to work when his master's eye is upon him; he is to work heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, for the Lord's eye is always upon him. As a God-fearing man he ought to be the best of servants, and he has good cause to be, for he shall receive double recompense, such reward as his earthly master gives, though it may have been meagre in some cases, and from the Lord he shall receive the recompense of the inheritance, which means the inheritance.

What slaves could not hope to obtain, an inheritance, will be the slaves' portion from the Lord. See what is said about Eliezer in Gen.15:2-4⁹³: Even for ordinary labour well done, the bond-

89. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.22>

90. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%203.23>

91. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%203.24>

92. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%203.25>

servant shall receive the Lord's reward, if rendered heartily as to the Lord. Servants should remember this, and it will save them from thinking that only work done in the spiritual sphere will be rewarded. The opposite will be true in regard to the slave that wronged or defrauded his master; he shall receive again for the wrong done, perhaps even now, but certainly hereafter.

COMMENTARY ON COLOSSIANS 4

Col.4:1¹

As Christian servants should be the best of servants, so Christians should make the best of masters. They should be just and fair in their treatment of their servants. The laws of Rome treated slaves as chattels, and Greece was no better. The slave had no rights, for him there was no justice. But Christian practice was to be on the basis of what was just. A balance of equity was to be maintained by the Christian master, as to what was due to the slave, in regard to his faithful service to his master. “Equal” does not mean that the slave was to be treated as his master’s equal, even though both were in the Fellowship, but he was to be treated with justice and fairness, and there was to be no partiality in the treatment of the several bondservants a master might have. The conduct of masters to their servants would be regulated and moderated by the fact, as they remembered it, that they had a Master in heaven and that they were His slaves.

Col.4:2²

The Colossians were to persevere or remain constant in prayer. In long-continued prayer we were liable to sag, to become listless or to fall into a state of spiritual inertia, but this exhortation enforces the necessity of watchfulness. The Lord said to the disciples in Gethsemane, “Watch and pray” (Matt.26:41³). David also

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.2>

said in Ps.5:3⁴, “In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will keep watch”. The state of watchfulness in Col.4:2⁵ is to be “in thanksgiving”, in a cheerful, thankful spirit, not in a morbid, grumbling disposition, if answers to prayer seem delayed. We have much to thank God for each day we live. We should be – Thankful for our being, Thankful for our food, Thankful for our clothing – God, our God, is good.

Col.4:3⁶

Prisoners usually long for a door to be opened to let them out of their captivity, but Paul, the prisoner of Rome, is anxious that God would open a door for the entrance of the gospel. The gospel is described here as the mystery of Christ. For this great mystery he was in bonds. His own liberty was of small importance provided that the word of God, which is not bound (2 Tim.2:9⁷), entered and brought life and liberty to those who were dead in, and bound by, sin. To this end he sought the prayers of the saints.

Col.4:4⁸

There is nothing of the spirit of the prison in these words. Bonds and imprisonment had not damped his ardour. His spirit is as free as when he breathed the desert air of Arabia, when he re-

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.26.41>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.5.3>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.2>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.3>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.2.9>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.4>

ceived the revelation of the gospel which he was to preach to Jew and Gentile. He longed to make the mystery of Christ manifest. He had the secret in his bosom of which the most of mankind were unaware, and he earnestly desired to speak as he ought.

Col.4:5⁹

The Christian's behaviour is to be characterized by wisdom. How often a foolish act, or foolish talking, has taken the lustre off the testimony of a believer! The words of the New Covenant which are written on the hearts of saints, should be seen in their exemplary ways, by those who are outside the pale of the churches of God. Every opportunity should be bought up. Seasons for service, and for the sowing of the seed, may never return to us again when once they have slipped away.

Col.4:6¹⁰

There should be a winningness about the speech of a Christian always. A harsh, hard mode of speaking ill becomes a follower of Him who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart". But this pleasant, gracious mode of speaking is not to be merely human niceness; such speech may be too nice to be wholesome. The believer's speech is to be seasoned with salt, that is, in fitting measure the salt of the word of God is to be added to Christian conversation. But we need not overdo references to the Scriptures until we have added salt in such quantity as to make our conversation altogether nauseous to the hearer, as Pollock, the poet, writes of the hypocrite – " ... In sermon style he bought And sold

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.5>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.6>

and lied; and salutations made In Scripture terms.” We should remember that gracious speech is to be seasoned with salt, so that we may be able to answer each one as we ought, whether it be master or servant, parent or child, prince or peasant, friend or foe. The Christian’s speech should be distinctive and characteristic of Him whose he is and whom he serves.

Col.4:7¹¹,8¹²

Tychicus and Trophimus are said, in Acts 20:4¹³, to be of Asia. Trophimus is called, “Trophimus the Ephesian”, in Acts 21:29¹⁴: It is possible that both belonged to Ephesus. The name of Tychicus occurs several times in Paul’s epistles (Eph.6:21¹⁵; Col. 4:7¹⁶; 2 Tim.4:12¹⁷; Tit.3:12¹⁸) . He was with Paul in Rome till almost the close of the apostle’s ministry, and Paul says of him at that time, “Tychicus I sent to Ephesus”. Earlier he had been sent to Ephesus (Eph.6:21¹⁹), and to Colossae (Col.4:7²⁰). The two visits probably took place in the same journey. Then Paul hoped to send Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus in Crete. Paul highly commends this servant of the Lord; he describes him as “the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.7>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%204.8>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.4>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2021.29>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.6.21>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.%204.7>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.12>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.3.12>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.6.21>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.7>

Lord”, honourable titles all of them. He was sent to Colossae for the double purpose, that the saints might know Paul’s estate, and that he might comfort or encourage their hearts, for the apostle’s imprisonment must have had a saddening and discouraging effect upon them.

Col.4:9²¹

The Colossians may have known this man as a worthless fellow, who became at length a runaway slave. But now, instead of being disloyal, as he had been to his master Philemon, he is called a faithful brother and he was also a brother beloved. Paul describes him as “one of you”. The black record of the past may well be forgotten on account of his excellent conduct since grace reached him. He who was a disgrace now adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour. Onesimus would be able to corroborate the facts as Tychicus related them concerning all that was done in Rome. What a story they would have to tell of Rome in those days!

Col.4:10²²

Aristarchus belonged to Thessalonica (Acts 20:4²³). He with Luke accompanied Paul on his journey to Rome (Acts 27:2²⁴). Now he is described by Paul as his fellow-prisoner. Epaphras of whom we read in Col.1:7²⁵; Col.4:12²⁶, is also called Paul’s fel-

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.9>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.10>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.4>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2027.2>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.1.7>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.12>

low-prisoner in Philn.23: Mark is undoubtedly John Mark, who withdrew from the work (Acts 13:13²⁷) and over whom Paul and Barnabas differed so sharply that they, who had been sent forth of the Holy Spirit together (Acts 13:2²⁸), parted company. Barnabas, we are told, took Mark and sailed away to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas, and what is worthy of more than ordinary note is the fact that “Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord” (Acts 15:36-41²⁹). The commendation of brethren is something not to be lightly disregarded. There is a great contrast between “Barnabas took Mk... and sailed away” and “But Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren”. Mark, we are told here in Colossians, was the cousin of Barnabas. How seriously family ties may affect right judgement! It is evident however that past incidents were rectified, and the apostle says – “touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him”. The apostle commends the usefulness of Mark’s ministry in 2 Tim.4: 11³⁰: He is also mentioned in Philn.24 amongst Paul’s fellow-workers. His early disaffection seems to have been entirely effaced in the later part of his life. He has the high honour of being used to write the Gospel which bears his name.

Col.4:11³¹

Aristarchus, Mark and Justus, these only were of Paul’s fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, who were of the circumci-

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.13>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.2>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2015.36-41>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.%2011>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.11>

sion. Many of the teachers of the word who had been converted from Judaism were antagonistic to Paul, but it is comforting to note that Mk.is amongst the few who stood faithfully by Paul in the Lord's work in Rome. Apart from the reference here, we had not known that Aristarchus was of Jewish descent, for he is called a Thessalonian elsewhere, as we have seen. These men, Paul said, "have been a comfort to me". The clear cut teaching of Paul, in which he showed the distinction between law and grace, was viewed with suspicion by many Jewish converts in those days, but Christians now love the man for his teaching, which was so misunderstood by many of them.

Col.4:12³²

Epaphras, one of the Colossians, who was with Paul in Rome, his fellow-prisoner, as well as his fellow-servant, salutes his fellow-Christians through Paul's epistle. He agonized or wrestled with God in prayer always, that the Colossians might stand fast, without vacillation, fully convinced and perfect in all the will of God. They were to be perfect and fully persuaded "in everything willed by God". Well might we copy this godly man's example and so wrestle in prayer for each other!

Col.4:13³³

The original word for labour here is of rare occurrence in the New Testament and "is usual in the toil of conflict in war, thus answering to 'striving'" (verse 12). The toil of Epaphras may be compared to what is said of the Levites. See Num.8:24³⁴, RVM

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.12>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.13>

– “the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to war the warfare in the work”. The Levites did not go forth to war, they went in to war in the tent of meeting. The agonizing and toiling in prayer on the part of Epaphras was not for the Colossians only, but he laboured in prayer for the contiguous churches of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Col.4:14³⁵

Luke the faithful companion of Paul is here described as the beloved physician, and only here do we learn the profession of that great man. As the apostle approaches the close of his life, he writes very touchingly to Timothy, “Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim.4:11³⁶). Medical attendance may have been very necessary to the aged warrior, suffering it may be from many weaknesses. But in contrast to the faithfulness of Luke we have the backsliding of Demas, “for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world (age)”. He forsook Paul at a time of peril and need, when comforters were few; he forsook him because his heart and inward affection had gone wrong; he forsook him having loved this present age. His reward was meagre and momentary, but Luke’s is for ever. Luke and Demas stand together in Col.4:14³⁷, but Luke and Demas, in 2 Tim.4:10³⁸, 11³⁹, are very far apart. This is the story of Scripture from the first, not of men only, but also of women, as witness the decisions of Ruth and Orpah

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num.8.24>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.14>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.11>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.14>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim.4.10>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%204.11>

(Ruth 1). How many in our own time have forsaken the truth and the path of separation and have gone back!

Col.4:15⁴⁰,16⁴¹

Laodicea, a name of ill fame, but it was not always so. They had better days than their last days (Rev.3⁴²). It is a sobering question. Which shall be our best days, our first or our last? The Laodiceans themselves might have said that their last days were their best, for they had become rich and were increased with goods, and had no need. The sun of material prosperity had shone upon them, but it had withered their spiritual life, and they had become as a desert without leaf or fruit. The Colossians were to salute their Laodicean brethren (on the apostle's behalf), and Nymphas one of those brethren – or it may have been a sister, see RVM – comes in for special mention. The church which met at the house of Nymphas is also mentioned specially, which was no doubt part of the church of God in Laodicea. The epistle from (Gk. *ek* = out of) Laodicea is thought by some to have been the epistle to the Ephesians, whilst others have endeavoured to identify this with another of Paul's epistles, such as, his first letter to Timothy. There can be no certainty about the matter, as to which of Paul's epistles is alluded to, but it is an interesting side light to see how epistles, though written to one church were read in others, showing the universality of divine doctrine even in those early days, a thing that we take for granted now.

Col.4:17⁴³

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.15>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%204.16>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.3>

Archippus is also mentioned in Philn.2, as the apostle's fellow-soldier. Here the church in Colossae is taught to admonish this servant of Christ with reference to the fulfilment of the ministry which the Lord had given him. This should be a proper and powerful word to us all as well as to Archippus. What greater monument to failure can there be than an uncompleted tower? (Lk.14:28⁴⁴,29⁴⁵). How useless is a half-done job! Even if we do not do our work as well as we ought, let us complete the task.

Col.4:18⁴⁶

The letter was written undoubtedly by an amanuensis, but here Paul adds his own autograph. This epistle stands in this respect in contrast to the letter to Philemon, written at the same time, but which was evidently written entirely by Paul. The words, "Remember my bonds", not only indicate that he was a prisoner, but also why he was bound, that it was for the sake of the mystery of Christ (verse 3). The reason for those bonds would speak loudly to their hearts, for he was there for Christ's sake and for theirs also. "Grace be with you" is the token of the Pauline authorship of all his epistles – so we are told in 2 Thess.3:17⁴⁷,18⁴⁸: Thus ends this remarkable letter of the great apostle of the Gentiles, one of many which enrich the Book of God and the minds of Believers.

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.17>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.14.28>

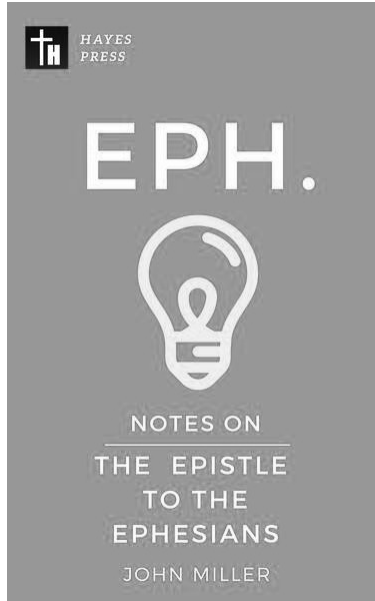
45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%2014.29>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.18>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.3.17>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess%203.18>

Did you love *Notes on the Epistle to the Colossians*? Then you should read *Notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians* by JOHN MILLER!



Bible teacher John Miller provides a helpful commentary on Paul's epistle to the church of God in Ephesus, which contains the famous passage on the armour of God. Hyperlinked references are supplied for all Bible verses quoted.

Also by JOHN MILLER

New Testament Bible Commentary Series

Notes on the Epistle to the Romans

Notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians

Notes on the Epistle to the Galatians

Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians

Notes on the First Epistle to the Corinthians

Notes on the Epistles to the Thessalonians

Notes on the Epistle to the Colossians

Notes on the First Epistle to Timothy

Notes on the Second Epistle to Timothy

Notes on the Second Letter to the Corinthians

Notes on the Epistle by James

Notes on the Epistles by Peter

Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews

Notes on the Book of Revelation

Notes on the Epistles by John

Standalone

The Way of God



About the Publisher

Hayes Press (www.hayespress.org) is a registered charity in the United Kingdom, whose primary mission is to disseminate the Word of God, mainly through literature. It is one of the largest distributors of gospel tracts and leaflets in the United Kingdom, with over 100 titles and hundreds of thousands despatched annually. In addition to paperbacks and eBooks, Hayes Press also publishes Plus Eagles Wings, a fun and educational Bible magazine for children, and Golden Bells, a popular daily Bible reading calendar in wall or desk formats. Also available are over 100 Bibles in many different versions, shapes and sizes, Bible text posters and much more!

