



THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Mike Glover



INTRODUCTION

COLOSSAE

Colossae was a city of Phrygia in the western part of Asia Minor, and the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea were nearby, **Colossians 2:1 / Colossians 4:13 / Colossians 4:16**. The city of Colossae was located on the Lycus River and was about one-hundred miles east of the city of Ephesus.

Colossae was a commercial city that traded in textiles, wool and a precious dye that was unique to the area. It was also a religious centre, being the location of the throne of the goddess Cybele. Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, with Egyptian religious beliefs, abounded in the area.

Because it was on a trade route between Rome and the Far East, the teaching of oriental religions, with their mysticism, infiltrated the area and flourished at the time the letter was written. In the second century before Christ, Antiochus III resettled about two thousand Jewish families in the area of Colossae.

These Jews were brought from the Mesopotamian area, where Judaism had been influenced by religious beliefs of the Far East. The combination of these religious beliefs later led to the development of systematic Gnosticism in Asia Minor in the second century.

At the time Paul wrote the prison epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the beginnings of this philosophy had already been initiated in the minds of the religious people throughout the region. The principal beliefs of the heresy were already infiltrating the church.

Therefore, in this letter to the Colossian brethren, as well as the other prison letters and the letters to Timothy and the Corinthians, Paul mentions those religious philosophies that denied the eternal being of the Son of God and His present existence as God over all.

CHURCHES IN COLOSSAE

The churches in Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea were probably started by Epaphras, **Colossians 1:7 / Colossians 4:12-13**. Though Paul possibly visited Hierapolis and Laodicea during the almost three years he worked with the Christians in Ephesus, **Acts 19:10**.

The church met in at least two houses in Colossae, **Philemon 1-2 / Colossians 4:9 / Colossians 4:15**. The homes of members were the customary meeting place of all the disciples at this time in the growth of the early church.

We must assume that the disciples who are addressed in all the cities of the New Testament, therefore, were meeting in several different homes of the members throughout each city. The church in Colossae probably consisted mainly of Gentile converts, though there were many Jews in the region, and consequently, among the disciples.

Because there is little direct reference to the Old Testament by quotation, it is believed that the church was composed primarily of Gentiles. However, in the letter, there is a strong reference to Judaism, which was a system of the religion of the Jews that they had constructed after their own traditions, **Mark 7:1-9 / Galatians 1:13-14**.

It was this system of religion, in conjunction with the religious influences that the Gentiles brought into the church, that Paul attacks in this letter. He begins first by reaffirming the nature of the being, existence and authority of Jesus.

Since Jesus is who He said He was, this should motivate Christian behaviour. After affirming the nature of Jesus' present existence, Paul then moves into the Christ-like behaviour of those who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus over all things.

AUTHOR AND DATE

The letter of Colossians was written to the churches in the cities of Colossae and Laodicea by the apostle Paul, **Colossians 4:16**, around AD 60-61. It is evident that Paul had never been to Colossae on any mission that is recorded in the book of Acts. However, from the results of his work in Ephesus, he possibly had contact with the disciples in Colossae.

THEME

The theme of this letter is taken from **Colossians 1:16-18**. The key verse would be **Colossians 1:18**. Christ is mentioned twenty-seven times throughout the book, and the words 'in Christ' are found fourteen times. Paul focuses on the present exaltation of Christ.

It's in Christ that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. Therefore, He is over all things since all things were created by Him, **Colossians 1:16**. The theme of the letter, therefore, focuses on the Christ of the church, whereas Ephesians focuses on the church of Christ. Colossians identifies the cause of the church, that is, Christ.

THE CHURCH

The Colossian church, as well as all other churches in western Asia Minor, was located in a religious culture that was greatly influenced by Far East mysticism. A mixture of eastern mysticism with Judaism produced a Judaeo-Gnosticism that had already filled the synagogues when the church was first established in the region.

Jewish converts seemed to have brought some of their gnostic beliefs into the church, and thus, were attacking the nature of who Jesus is in reference to His being and authority as one with the Godhead.

The heresy of Gnosticism is not dealt with directly in the letter. From what Paul says in this letter, there was the prevalent belief that Jesus was at least above the level of man.

It was believed that He was superior to man, but not great enough in deity to qualify Him to be the sacrificial offering of the incarnate God on behalf of humanity. He was superhuman. However, it was believed that He was not a deity like God.

In conjunction with the preceding false concepts that seemed to permeate the worldview of some of the Colossians, a system of legalistic religiosity came into the church as a substitute for salvation by God's grace, **Galatians 1:6-9**. This system of religion was common in the religious institutions of the culture of both the Jews and Gentiles. Those of this system of religion taught that through legal actions of religious obedience, one could place demands on God in order to merit salvation.

Epaphras, who was one of the evangelists of the region, was experiencing the invasion of Judaeo-Gnosticism among the Colossian disciples. The influence of this teaching was possibly affecting the church in the neighbouring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, [Colossians 4:13](#) / [Colossians 4:16](#).

Epaphras travelled to Rome, where he explained the situation to Paul. Realising that the very foundation of the church was under attack by teaching that corrupted the nature of who Jesus Christ was, the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write this letter to the disciples in the region of Colossae.

RECIPIENTS

The letter was directed primarily to the Colossian disciples, though it was to be read to the disciples in Laodicea, [Colossians 4:16](#) and Hierapolis, [Colossians 4:13](#), who weren't far away. Paul's purpose for writing, therefore, was to exalt the preeminence of Jesus over all things, [Colossians 1:15-23](#).

He wrote to explain his apostolic work of preaching the truth of the Gospel in a world of false religion, [Colossians 2:3-4](#), and to exhort the Colossian disciples to maintain Christian principles in their behaviour, [Colossians 3:5-4:6](#).

OUTLINE

Salutation. [Colossians 1:1-2](#)
 Thanksgiving And Prayer. [Colossians 1:3-14](#)
 The Supremacy Of Jesus. [Colossians 1:13-20](#)
 Proclaiming God's Mystery. [Colossians 1:21-2:5](#)
 Jesus' Sovereignty Over Rulers And Powers. [Colossians 2:6-19](#)
 Identity With Christ's Death and Resurrection. [Colossians 2:20-3:17](#)
 Community Living Under Jesus' Sovereignty. [Colossians 3:18-4:1](#)
 Thanksgiving And Intercession. [Colossians 4:2-6](#)
 Closing Greetings. [Colossians 4:7-18](#)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

'Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.' [Colossians 1:1-2](#)

Paul addresses these disciples from the ministry of his Christ-sent apostleship. He was a Christ-sent apostle because he was personally called and commissioned by Christ, [Colossians 1:1](#) / [Ephesians 1:1](#) / [Galatians 1:11-12](#).

Therefore, it was according to his apostleship that he wrote this letter. If we call ourselves after Christ, we must accept that what Paul was teaching in this letter came to him by the Holy Spirit.

We cannot claim to be a Christian and, at the same time, affirm that Paul is here giving only his personal opinions or theology concerning these matters. Paul doesn't write from opinion or personal thought.

He writes by the direct revelation from God and inscribes these words by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He writes those things that God wants the disciples to know, [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) / [2 Peter 1:20-21](#).

Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter, [Colossians 4:3](#) / [Colossians 4:10](#) / [Colossians 4:18](#), and Timothy was with Paul in Rome at the time Paul wrote this letter, [Colossians 1:1](#). He was the young evangelist who was now seasoned with years of experience and was with his father in the faith.

They were saints of God, [Colossians 1:2](#), because they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb, [Revelation 12:11](#). These were faithful disciples who had not turned from their belief that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God who was head over all things.

The word ‘faithful’, [Colossians 1:2](#), is often misunderstood in the present world, where people often see Jesus as only a good teacher. The word used here is in reference to those who were faithful to their faith, which was the foundation upon which Christians remain true to their calling.

They were faithful in believing that Jesus was the incarnate Deity who offered Himself as a ransom for humanity, [Mark 10:45](#). These were those who had responded by obedience to the Gospel to their belief in the revealed grace of God, and so, were washed of their sins.

Grace and peace, [Colossians 1:2](#), were Paul’s common greetings to the churches. Grace is the foundation upon which our salvation rests, and peace with God is the result of grace. It’s a peace that results from knowing that God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, [John 3:16](#).

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

‘We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.’

[Colossians 1:3-8](#)

After the introduction, Paul expresses thanksgiving to God concerning some things about the church at Colossae and straight away he tells them they were well-known for their faith, [Colossians 1:3-4](#) / [1 Thessalonians 1:2-3](#) / [2 Thessalonians 1:3](#).

They had a great reputation simply because they genuinely trusted in Jesus Christ and their faith was firm, [Colossians 2:5](#). They didn’t possess or reflect a wishy-washy faith one week and then a genuine faith the next; no, they remained faithful to Christ and did what He asked of them all of the time.

I wonder what Paul would say about some churches today? I wonder what the real reputation of our churches is today? Not only were they well-known for their faith, but they were also well-known for their love, [Colossians 1:5](#). This is so encouraging to read about a church that not only has genuine faith in Christ but also genuine love towards each other and beyond, [Colossians 1:5](#) / [1 Thessalonians 4:9-10](#).

Both faith and love have legs attached, and when they both move and work together, people are going to notice. If this is an area some churches struggle with, they need to ask for God’s help and encourage each other to do the same, [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#) / [1 Thessalonians 4:9-10](#).

Does the church you belong to have faith with legs attached, where the Christians are trusting in Jesus and obeying His will? Does the church you belong to have love with legs attached that genuinely serve each other and the community around it? If not, why not ask God to help you in this area?

The Gospel, Colossians 1:5, which includes the hope of heaven, was working in and through them, and this was evident because of the fruit it was producing in their lives.

Notice that the Gospel was producing fruit ‘throughout the whole world’, Colossians 1:6. Talk about the power of the Gospel, Colossians 1:23. Because the Gospel produces faith in Jesus and love for the saints, they were demonstrating that they were genuine disciples of Jesus, John 15:8.

Love is the fruit of the Spirit upon which all relational actions are based among disciples of Jesus, Galatians 5:22-23. Love is the bond that holds the community of God together as one body, Colossians 3:12-17. Love holds the community of God together simply because loving disciples are ministering to one another and the communities in which they live.

Notice also that they had been bearing fruit ‘since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace,’ Colossians 1:6. Hearing the Gospel is one thing, but understanding it is another and those who truly understand it are usually those Christians to serve the most. Why?

Because they understood how much grace they needed in their lives. It’s that ‘unmerited favour’ which motivates Christians to serve the Lord, not because they should but because they want to out of appreciation for what God has done for them.

It’s those Christians who truly understand that they were sinners, facing condemnation, Romans 3:23 / Romans 6:23. It’s those Christians who understand that their sin had separated them from God, Isaiah 59:1-2. It’s those Christians who understand that they couldn’t save themselves, 1 John 4:9-10.

It’s those Christians who understand that they need to be right with God, Romans 3:21-26. It’s those Christians who understand that they need to be reconciled to God, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. It’s those Christians who understand that they needed to be made holy, ‘set apart’ to God, Romans 6:17-18 / Romans 6:20-22.

It was through Epaphras that the church at Colossae had heard of this wonderful grace of God, and it was through Epaphras that Paul had heard of their wonderful love, which was the fruit of their responding to this grace, Colossians 1:7.

It could have been that Paul originally established the church in Colossae by teaching faithful men who went forth from Ephesus. One of these men could have been Epaphras. At least in this text, Epaphras is given credit for nurturing the new converts by reaffirming the same good news that Paul had preached.

Whatever the case, Paul either started the church directly or indirectly as a result of his ministry while in the city of Ephesus during the time he was teaching in the school of Tyrannus, Acts 19:9-10.

Notice Paul calls Epaphras his ‘dear fellow servant’, Colossians 1:7. What a compliment, no greater commendation could be given to those who have dedicated their lives to the ministry of the flock of God.

Those who have dedicated themselves to care for the flock of God must be commended for their love and concern for those the Lord purchased with His own blood, Acts 20:28.

Some translations use the word ‘faithful’, Colossians 1:7, and so in the context of this statement, the word ‘faithful’ would refer to someone who is doing something for the Lord, which tells us if we’re not doing something for the Lord, we’re not faithful.

Epaphras was working for others, and so he was considered faithful. Epaphras was Paul’s ‘fellow-servant’ and ‘servant,’ his ‘fellow-prisoner,’ and a ‘faithful minister,’ Philemon 23.

He was also Paul’s representative at Colossae, where he had founded the church and sought, under Paul’s advice, to combat prevalent heresies there. The apostle had affection for Epaphras, who ministered to his need and the need of others. It was Epaphras who told Paul and others of their love in the Spirit, Colossians 1:8. Note that this is the only time in the book where the Spirit is mentioned.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Holy Spirit had created love for Paul in the Colossians. This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in this epistle. In Colossians, Paul ascribed the activities of God that he normally associated with the Holy Spirit to Christ. He probably did this to glorify Jesus Christ before the Colossians, who were being taught that Christ was less than He is.’

It’s in his prayer ministry, however, that Epaphras is great. This is a giant in prayer who knew how to lay all before the Lord, and labouring in secret made the saints perfect and complete in their standing through his kneeling, Colossians 4:12.

He was a prayer warrior, and he wrestled in prayer that they might be perfect in the perfection of Christ and fully assured in all the will of God. Paul also testified to the perseverance as well as the prayers of Epaphras.

He knew how to toil on behalf of the saints of God; he was practical as well as prayerful. His prayers for the stability and maturity of others were numerous, continuous and strenuous.

Epaphras brought to Paul was in Rome when a report of the Colossian church, where he had ministered in Paul’s stead, an account that cheered his heart and resulted in the writing of the Colossian Epistle, which Epaphras took back with him to his flock.

Oh, how we need prayer warriors today in the church, people who will wrestle in prayer to God for the saints in their daily struggles! Romans 15:30.

‘For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.’ Colossians 1:9-14

Even though Paul had heard of their faith and love, He actually hadn’t met many of the Christians in Colossae, and so, in Paul’s prayer for them, we can see what Paul’s and ultimately God’s desire was for each of them. He wanted them to be ‘filled with the knowledge of God’s will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives’, Colossians 1:9.

Vaughan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What rain and sunshine are to the nurture of plants, the knowledge of God is to the growth and maturing of the spiritual life.’

He didn’t want them to be half full or partially filled but filled to the brim with knowledge about God. The Greek word for ‘knowledge’ in this passage is ‘epignosis’, and it means knowledge that is the result of practical and personal experience.

In other words, this isn’t just about knowing and understanding God’s will but it’s putting it into practice and living by it, James 1:22. And to possess a knowledge of God’s will through ‘all wisdom’ requires prayer, James 1:5. And to possess a knowledge of God’s will with ‘understanding’ requires reading the Word, Ephesians 3:2-5.

In other words, prayer and Bible study are essential practices for the Christian. Why? So many times, Christians don’t know what they believe or why they believe what they claim, Hosea 4:6. As Christians, we’re supposed to grow into the likeness of Christ, Colossians 3:8-10 / 2 Peter 3:18.

Paul’s prayer tells us that the Christians in Colossae need to use that knowledge to ‘live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way,’ Colossians 1:10. In other words, don’t tell people you’re a Christian, show them!

To conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Lord reminds us that our calling is a worthy one, and so, our behaviour should be aimed at bringing honour to Christ and not dishonour, [Ephesians 4:1](#).

When we do honour Christ in our lives, this pleases Him, and when we do, we fulfil His will for us, [Titus 2:14](#) / [Titus 3:1](#) / [Ephesians 2:10](#). We do good not because we should but because we want to glorify God in our lives. [Matthew 5:16](#). And what are the good works we're to do? [Matthew 25:37-40](#) / [James 1:27](#).

And so, we must increase our knowledge of God and His will as Christians, [Jeremiah 9:23-24](#). We can know God better when we study His creation, [Psalm 19:1-4](#) / [Romans 1:18-20](#). We can also know God through His Word and especially through Jesus, [John 14:7-9](#) / [Colossians 2:9](#).

Paul desires that the Colossians 'be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,' [Colossians 1:11](#).

Christians need to be strong whilst living for Christ. I understand this can be difficult at times, but nonetheless, we still need to be strong, [2 Timothy 1:7-8](#). There's power available to the Christian, but not just any old power; it's a glorious power.

The kind of power that Paul himself experienced, [Philippians 4:13](#). And the good news is that he wanted others to know all about that power, [Ephesians 1:15-20](#).

This power is still available to Christians today, and we need to use it, [Ephesians 3:20](#). Paul says we need to use it because it has a purpose in our lives, that we, 'may have great endurance and patience,' [Colossians 1:11](#).

This again is one of the purposes of having the Holy Spirit in our lives, [Acts 2:38](#). He's trying to produce these qualities in our lives, [Galatians 5:22-23](#). And whilst we joyfully endure hardships and trials in life, we must continue to 'give thanks to the Father', [Colossians 1:12](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#).

Notice the reasons Paul gives for us being thankful. God 'has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light,' [Colossians 1:12](#). Now there's a reason to be thankful and tell God that we are, [1 Peter 1:3-5](#).

Paul also says we should be thankful because God has 'rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,' [Colossians 1:13](#).

Now there's another reason to be thankful and tell God that we are, [Ephesians 2:15-22](#). This is Christ's kingdom, and Christ is King, [Colossians 1:13](#). He told us this before He died on the cross, [John 18:36-37](#). And after He rose from the dead, He became the supreme Ruler over His kingdom, [Matthew 28:18](#) / [Ephesians 1:20-23](#).

We only need to turn to the Book of Revelation to read about Christ being the King and His kingdom, [Revelation 1:5-6](#) / [Revelation 1:9](#) / [Revelation 2:26-27](#) / [Revelation 3:21](#) / [Revelation 17:14](#) / [Revelation 19:16](#).

Look at what else God has done for us to be thankful, God has given us 'redemption, the forgiveness of sins', [Colossians 1:14](#). How blessed we are and how thankful we should be to have our sins forgiven in Christ, [Revelation 1:5-6](#).

The word 'redemption,' [Colossians 1:14](#), in Greek is 'apolutrosis' which means a release effected by payment of ransom. In other words, Christians have been released from the bondage of sin through the payment of Jesus' bloodshed on the cross, [Matthew 20:28](#).

The word 'forgiveness', [Colossians 1:14](#), in Greek is 'aphesis', which means release from bondage or imprisonment. In other words, in Christ, we have forgiveness of sins and have no penalty to pay because Christ paid it for us, [Matthew 1:21](#).

When was the last time we didn't ask God for anything in prayer but just spent the time giving Him thanks for all the marvellous things He's done and continues to do in our lives?

THE SUPREMACY OF THE SON OF GOD

‘The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’

Colossians 1:15-20

Constable, in his commentary, highlights the following thirteen assertions about Christ in Colossians 1:15-20.

1. He is the image of the invisible God, Colossians 1:15.
2. He is the firstborn of creation, Colossians 1:15.
3. He is the originator of creation, Colossians 1:16.
4. He is the agent of creation, Colossians 1:16.
5. He is the goal of creation, Colossians 1:16.
6. He is the antecedent of creation, Colossians 1:17.
7. He is the sustainer of creation, Colossians 1:17.
8. He is the head of the church, Colossians 1:18.
9. He is the firstborn from the dead, Colossians 1:18.
10. He is the preeminent one, Colossians 1:18.
11. He is the fullness of God, Colossians 1:19.
12. He is the reconciler of all things to Himself, Colossians 1:20.
13. He is the maker of peace, Colossians 1:20.

When Paul first met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he didn’t know at that time who Jesus really was, Acts 9:3-5. But when we come to Paul’s letter to the Colossians, we learn that Paul had come to a much fuller understanding of exactly who Jesus was.

Paul now realises that Jesus is ‘the image of the invisible God,’ Colossians 1:15. The word ‘image’ comes from the Greek ‘eikon’, which means an image, figure, or likeness. No man has ever seen God, but Jesus has shown us Him, John 1:18 / John 14:7-9 / 2 Corinthians 4:4 / 2 Corinthians 4:6 / Hebrews 1:3.

In other words, all these passages quoted above tell us that Jesus accurately and fully expresses the being and perfection of God. By looking at Jesus as He is revealed in the Word of God, we can see and know the Father, who is invisible!

Notice that Paul tells us that Jesus is also ‘the firstborn over all creation’, Colossians 1:15 / Colossians 1:18 / Romans 8:29 / Hebrews 1:6 / Revelation 1:5. Yes, it can mean the first one born or created which some religious groups understand the phrase, but the phrase is also used in the Bible as a metaphor to describe someone who occupies the rank and privilege of being firstborn, without literally being firstborn.

This is the way God uses the term when He’s referring to Israel as a nation, Exodus 4:22-23. This is the way God used the term when He referred to David, who was the youngest of eight brothers, Psalms 89:27. Therefore, any interpretation of this term must be in harmony with what is taught about Christ elsewhere, John 1:1-3 / Colossians 1:16.

Lightfoot, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As the Person of Christ was the Divine response alike to the philosophical questionings of the Alexandrian Jew and to the patriotic hopes of the Palestinian, these two currents of thought meet in the term prototokos as applied to our Lord, who is both the true Logos and the true Messiah.’

Paul clearly says to be the creator of ‘all’ things, Colossians 1:16, but He couldn’t claim that if He were a created being. To stress that Jesus is preeminent over all creation, He has all the rights of one as if He were a firstborn.

There's nothing new in this idea, like we looked at a moment ago, God declared Israel to be His firstborn over the nations of the earth, Exodus 4:22, and He declared David to be His firstborn over the kings of the earth, Psalms 89:27. These powerful declarations concerning Jesus are confirmed by the passages we looked at earlier, John 1:3, and Hebrews 1:3. Jesus was the Creator, not the created and everything was created for Him. And so, as the creator of all things, it only makes sense to understand that He existed before anything that was created, which Colossians 1:17 indicates.

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For centuries, the Greek philosophers had taught that everything needed a primary cause, an instrumental cause, and a final cause. The primary cause is the plan, the instrumental cause is the power, and the final cause is the purpose. When it comes to Creation, Jesus Christ is the primary cause (He planned it), the instrumental cause (He produced it), and the final cause (He did it for His own pleasure).’

Paul continues to describe Jesus as the One in whom ‘all things hold together,’ Colossians 1:17. In other words, in Christ, all things are kept in their present state; their very existence, order, and arrangement are continued in the present form by His power! Hebrews 1:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As all creation necessarily exists in time, and had a commencement, and there was an infinite duration in which it did not exist, whatever was before or prior to that must be no part of creation; and the Being who existed prior to creation, and before all things—all existence of every kind, must be the unoriginated and eternal God: but Paul says, Jesus Christ was before all things; ergo, the apostle conceived Jesus Christ to be truly, and essentially God.’

Paul continues to describe Jesus as the One who is ‘the head of the body, the church,’ Colossians 1:18. The word ‘church’ comes from ‘ekklesia’, which means a congregation or assembly made up of people who have been called out.

It's Christians who have been called out by the Gospel of Christ into His kingdom, Colossians 1:13, who form a great assembly or congregation. The term ‘church’ is used in two senses in the Bible.

1. Universally, the body of saved believers throughout the world
2. Locally, a congregation of saved believers in one locality.

In the context here, Paul is speaking of the church universal. We know that Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth, Matthew 28:19-20, but how much more should He have authority over His church? He is the One who controls the destiny of those in His church! Revelation 2-3. The church is His body, Colossians 1:24 / 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. Paul continues to describe Jesus as the One ‘the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,’ Colossians 1:18. The word ‘beginning’, Colossians 1:18, comes from the Greek, ‘arche’ and has various meanings.

It could mean beginning, origin or the person or thing that commences, the first person or thing in a series, the leader or that by which anything begins to be, the origin, the active cause and finally it could mean the first place, principality, rule, magistracy.

Remember what we looked at a moment ago when we looked at the word ‘firstborn’, Colossians 1:15. It doesn't necessarily mean the first one, but can refer to the ‘pre-eminent’ one.

Jesus wasn't the first person to rise from the dead; there were others, Jairus' daughter, Mark 5:21-43, the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:11-17, and Lazarus, John 11:38-44.

But He is the first to rise, never to die again, Romans 7:9-10 / Revelation 1:18, and is declared elsewhere to be the ‘firstfruits’ of the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

The term ‘firstfruits’, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, suggests the cream of the crop. In other words, that which is pre-eminent. Jesus is both the origin, active cause, the beginning, and the ‘firstborn from the dead’, Colossians 1:18. He is the active cause of the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:22. By His own resurrection, never to die again, He is the firstborn from the dead, the pre-eminent one.

Paul continues to describe Jesus as the One who has ‘God’s fullness dwell in him,’ Colossians 1:19. The word ‘dwell’ in Greek ‘iskatoikeo’ and it means to house permanently.

Clearly, Jesus is the fullness of Deity. We saw earlier that He is ‘the image of the invisible God’, Colossians 1:15, and later Paul will tell us that ‘in Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form’, Colossians 2:9.

Jesus is our fullness because it’s in Him we have ‘redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins’, Colossians 1:14, and in Him we have ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’, Colossians 2:3. In fact, in Christ we are completely filled, ‘In Christ, you have been brought to fullness’, Colossians 2:10.

Paul continues to describe Jesus as the One who was able ‘to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross,’ Colossians 1:20. The Father’s desire is to reconcile to Himself the things on earth, which includes sinful man from whatever nation, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 / Ephesians 2:14-18.

But what does Paul mean when he says, ‘things in heaven’? Colossians 1:20. Paul is simply saying that both the physical world and those of the spirit world were created by Jesus. Paul’s point is clear: Jesus is to be the reconciler of all things to God!

God is able to reconcile all things through Jesus to Himself because He made peace through the blood of His cross. Through the death of His Son, it’s now possible for sinful man to be reconciled to God! Romans 5:10.

‘Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard, and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.’ Colossians 1:21-23

Like all of us, the Colossians had their history before they became Christians, like all of us, they were alienated and enemies of God, Colossians 1:21 / Ephesians 2:1-3 / Titus 3:3. The word ‘alienated’, Colossians 1:21, comes from the Greek word, ‘apallotrioō’ which means to estrange, be shut out from one’s fellowship and intimacy.

The word ‘enemies’, Colossians 1:21, is from the Greek word ‘echthros’ and means something or someone who is hated, hateful, hostile, and opposing another.

In this context, here it means we were at enmity with God by our sin. Why were we this way? Simply because in both thought and deed, they were sinners!

Earlier in Colossians 1:20, Paul mentions that we are reconciled by ‘the blood of His cross’, but now here in Colossians 1:21-22, Paul says we are reconciled ‘by Christ’s physical body through death’, Colossians 1:22. Both of these phrases emphasise that Jesus suffered ‘in the body’, something some people in those days denied, 2 John 7 / Hebrews 2:9 / Hebrews 2:14.

Through the offering of Jesus’ body and blood, we’re now reconciled to God, we are now presented to God as ‘holy’, Colossians 1:22, which means sanctified, set apart for God’s use. We are now ‘without blemish’, Colossians 1:22, which means without being guilty of anything worthy of blame.

We are now ‘free from accusation’, Colossians 1:22, which means guilty of nothing that can be called into account, blameless, this doesn’t mean ‘sinless.’ It’s worth pointing out that we may not see each other that way or even see ourselves that way, but this is the way God sees us.

The word ‘if’, Colossians 1:23, implies choice and the terms and conditions for the reconciliation to remain, 2 Corinthians 5:17 / Philippians 1:6 / 1 John 2:19. In other words, as long as we ‘continue in the faith’, remain

‘established and firm’ and ‘do not move from the hope held out in the Gospel,’ Colossians 1:23, we will remain reconciled to God, Colossians 1:22.

It is possible to get to the point where we are no longer reconciled to God, Proverbs 26:11 / Galatians 5:4 / Hebrews 10:26-29 / 2 Peter 2:22.

PAUL’S LABOUR FOR THE CHURCH

‘Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking regarding Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end, I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.’ Colossians 1:24-29

Paul rejoiced in suffering for his brethren, and as we know, he suffered tremendously throughout his ministry, Colossians 1:24 / 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 / 1 Corinthians 4:9-13.

What is incredible is that Paul was suffering not only for the sake of Christ and suffering for the sake of his brothers and sisters in Christ but yet he still rejoiced, despite being stuck in a Roman prison, Philippians 2:17-18.

How is this possible? How could he still rejoice under these circumstances? He says, ‘I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking regarding Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church’, Colossians 1:24.

Johnson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is no wonder, then, that Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. Seen in the light of his union with Christ, they were transfigured and made an occasion for fellowship with Him, as well as a benefit to the body, the church.’

Paul was willing to continue in the sufferings of Christ, to continue the building and edification of the church, Colossians 1:24. He wasn’t suffering alone, Romans 8:17 / 2 Corinthians 1:5.

As Christians today, and as members of the body, all disciples continue the sufferings of Jesus because the body of Christ continues to be persecuted by the world, Acts 14:22 / 2 Timothy 2:11-12.

Paul gives another reason elsewhere why he suffered joyfully for his brother and sisters in Christ, 2 Corinthians 12:14-15. Children are the parents’ pride and joy, well, sometimes, and the parents will gladly sacrifice for their children. This is how Paul views his Christian family, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. I wonder if we feel the same way about our church family? 1 John 3:16.

Notice how Paul viewed himself; he says he is simply a ‘servant’, Colossians 1:25, which is very humble. The word ‘servant’ in Greek is ‘diakonos’, and it means someone who executes the commands of another. This is exactly how Paul viewed himself and other preachers, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

It’s amazing these days where people want status and titles to show how important they are. Some people claim miraculous spiritual gifts to tell us they are more spiritual or more important than others are, but Paul describes himself simply as a servant. A servant of the church, a servant of Jesus Christ and a servant of the Gospel, Philippians 1:1 / Ephesians 3:6-7.

Paul had received a ‘commission’ from God, Colossians 1:25. The word used in Greek is ‘oikonomia’, which means the management of a household or household affairs, specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other’s property.

In other words, he has been entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And here is this passage, he describes it as a ‘mystery’, [Colossians 1:26](#), in the sense that it had been hidden for ages but now has been revealed to His saints and all the earth, [Romans 16:25-26](#).

I guess the logical question is, what is this ‘mystery’? Paul says, ‘it is Christ in you, the Gentiles, the hope of glory,’ [Colossians 1:26](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God had hidden this new revelation from human understanding for ages past. Paul expounded it more fully in [Ephesians 3:3-9](#), and only gave its essence here as ‘Christ in (among) you (Gentiles)’, [Romans 8:10](#) / [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) / [Galatians 2:20](#) / [Ephesians 1:13-14](#) / [Ephesians 3:17](#).’

Paul considered it his duty as a servant to faithfully share that Gospel to the nations, [Colossians 1:27](#) / [Ephesians 3:8-9](#) / [1 Corinthians 4:2](#). All Christians are servants and have been commanded to preach the Gospel to others, [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [Mark 16:15-16](#).

I wonder if that’s how we really see ourselves? Do we serve each other and others in the world? And are we actively sharing that Good News with others? As we carry on, we see that Paul had one goal in life, and that was to ‘present everyone fully mature in Christ,’ [Colossians 1:28](#).

In other words, Paul wasn’t just out to preach the Gospel, but he went out to make converts; he wanted to make mature Christians who had been complete in Christ. And he did whatever it took to accomplish this goal.

He preached Jesus Christ! [1 Corinthians 1:23](#). He proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ life, teachings, death, and resurrection. This is something preachers should always remember: we need to present Christ to the world, not the church or other preachers.

The preacher’s role is not only to preach but to encourage Christ-likeness, [2 Corinthians 3:18](#). But the preacher simply can’t preach and teach good news all the time, to help Christians grow they have to preach and teach some negative things, when necessary, [2 Timothy 3:16](#).

From this text, we can see that there needs to be a balance between positive and negative preaching and teaching if they want to encourage Christians to grow into Christ-likeness.

Notice what Paul says, he says, ‘to this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me,’ [Colossians 1:29](#). Wisdom helps to determine when and how to preach and teach, but Paul was wise enough to understand that he depended upon God to help him, [1 Corinthians 15:10](#).

If Paul wanted to accomplish his goal, he had to completely rely on God to help him, [Colossians 1:29](#) / [2 Thessalonians 3:1](#) / [Colossians 4:3-4](#).

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.’ [Colossians 2:1-5](#)

Paul has just finished telling the Christians in Colossae that his goal is to help them become fully mature in Christ. Here in **Colossians 2**, he's going to speak about his real concern for them. Remember that Paul is an example of spiritual maturity, and so, he is worthy of our following his example, **1 Corinthians 11:1**.

We also now know that he is always concerned for his brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those he hadn't met personally, **Colossians 2:1 / 2 Corinthians 11:28-29**. We also know that his dear fellow worker, Epaphras, was proven to be mature in his labour for the church, **Colossians 4:12-13**.

Paul says his 'goal is that they may be encouraged in heart,' **Colossians 2:2**. It's the Will of God that we serve Him with hearts that are full of comfort and encouragement, just as Jesus taught, **Luke 21:34 / John 14:1 / John 14:27 / 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**.

In other words, one sign of spiritual immaturity is seen in those Christians who do nothing but worry and stress about life and the future, **2 Timothy 4:6-8 / 2 Timothy 4:17-18**.

Another sign of spiritual maturity is seen in our 'united love' for other Christians, **Colossians 2:2 / 1 Samuel 18:1**. If you remember, this is something the church at Colossae was already practicing, **Colossians 1:4**.

Similar to having hearts that are encouraged, we need to 'have the full riches of complete understanding', **Colossians 2:2**. In other words, a strong assurance concerning ourselves and our salvation.

As a Christian matures, their assurance will increase, which is one of the riches we're blessed with in Christ, **1 John 5:13 / 1 John 3:19 / Romans 15:4**. Paul also says that we should 'know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' **Colossians 2:3-4**.

Geisler, in his commentary, says the following.

'Knowledge is the apprehension of truth; wisdom is its application to life. Knowledge is prudent judgment, and wisdom is prudent action. Both are found in Christ, **Romans 11:33 / 1 Corinthians 12:8**.'

An understanding of the Gospel, which once was hidden, **Colossians 2:3-4**, but has now been revealed, will help us become mature, **Ephesians 3:3-6 / Romans 16:25-26**.

Nielson, in his commentary, says the following.

'In Jesus Christ are hid all the attributes of Deity.'

Notice that as Paul continues, he uses the word 'disciplined', **Colossians 2:5**. This is the Greek word, 'taxis', which is a military term, suggestive of men marching in proper order and precision, as in a drilling exercise. This tells us that a mature Christian is someone whose walk as a disciple is in proper line with what is expected.

The word 'firm', **Colossians 2:5**, is the Greek word 'stereoma', and it means something established, but it's a word that goes right along with this idea of marching in a straight line. So, these are all signs of a spiritually mature Christian, which we all should be striving for, and the way to go about it is very simple.

SPIRITUAL FULLNESS IN CHRIST

'So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.' **Colossians 2:6-8**

Paul says that to first grow in Christ, we need to 'receive Christ Jesus as Lord,' **Colossians 2:6**. This is something the Colossians had done, but in today's society, people just want Jesus as their Saviour but not their Lord, **Acts 2:36**. Christians will never become mature unless they make Christ complete Lord of their lives, **Galatians 2:20**.

Not only do we need to make Jesus Lord of our lives to become mature, but we also need to ‘live our lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as we were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness,’ **Colossians 2:6-7**.

To live with Christ means being rooted in Christ, ‘rooted’, **Colossians 2:7**, means Christ must be the foundation and source of nutrition in our lives. Being ‘built up in Him’, **Colossians 2:7**, means allowing ourselves to become the kind of building He would have us to be.

‘Strengthened in the faith’, **Colossians 2:7**, means well taught and grounded in the teachings of Christ, and living by them and ‘overflowing with thanksgiving’, **Colossians 2:7**, means ever overflowing with an attitude of gratitude.

But, as always, there’s a danger when the Christians want to grow that we need to be aware of, **Colossians 2:8**. This warning assumes that one can fall from their saved relationship with Jesus.

The false teachings to which Paul is probably referring in this context, **Colossians 2:8**, were the Judeo-gnostic teachers who were infiltrating the fellowship of believers.

If the concepts of such teachers were mixed with the truth of the Gospel, the Colossians would be cheated out of their salvation. Any addition to the Gospel of God’s grace would equal no gospel at all, **Galatians 1:6-9**.

The Greek word for ‘captive’, **Colossians 2:8**, refers to being plundered. Any philosophy or tradition of man that contradicts the truth of God’s Word will lead to the spiritual destruction of those who would believe and practice such doctrines.

It’s important what we believe because our beliefs are the foundation upon which our behaviour stands. In this case, the Christian worldview was under attack by philosophies that brought into question the deity of Christ, **1 Corinthians 15:1-2**.

‘Philosophy’, **Colossians 2:8**, is the thinking of man, and so, the more a person obsesses with the thinking of man, the further they move from God. Traditions originate from the behaviour of men, and so, the more someone focuses on keeping the traditions of men, the less he focuses on obeying the Word of God.

Lipscomb, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All the philosophies of men, all the deceits of human wisdom, and all the rudiments of the world discovered by human reason spoil men, ruin their souls, and lead them to everlasting death by leading them away from God and his salvation.’

The ‘spiritual forces of this world’, **Colossians 2:8**, are the traditions that were possibly motivated by the spiritualistic or mystical beliefs of those in the culture of Colossae whose religious beliefs had been affected by human reasoning. Such beliefs work contrary to Christ, for they don’t lead one to Christ. Any philosophy or tradition that doesn’t lead us closer to God is a philosophy or tradition that works contrary to the work of God through Christ, **Galatians 1:14 / Galatians 4:3 / Galatians 4:9-10**.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The one thing that is clear is that the false teachers wished the Colossians to accept what can only be called additions to Christ.’

‘For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.’ **Colossians 2:9-10**

The character, essence, attributes and deity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were representatively manifested through Jesus, **Colossians 2:9 / Colossians 1:19 / John 1:1-2 / John 1:14 / John 10:30 / John 17:11 / John 17:21-24 / Philippians 2:6-8**. Note that the KJV uses the word ‘Godhead’.

Ellis, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Greek word for Godhead or deity is the abstract noun for God and includes not only the divine attributes, but also the divine nature.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Christ in bodily form.

‘This is viewed as a reference to the incarnation of our Lord, his becoming a man and dwelling on earth as a human being. The Gospel of John, **John 1:1 / John 1:14**, is parallel with what is said here, **Hebrews 10:5 / Hebrews 2:16**.’ Those who are in Christ are ‘spiritually mature for God’s eternal purpose’, **Colossians 2:9**, to create beings with characters that are fit for eternal dwelling. They are mature or complete because of the grace of God. Therefore, the saints of God are the ‘completion of the work of God in the creation of all things,’ **Ephesians 2:10**. Jesus is the centre of reference from which all things are controlled in heaven and on earth, **Colossians 2:10 / Ephesians 1:19-23 / 1 Peter 3:22**. Christ is the head of all things for the benefit of the Christian.

‘In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self-ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.’ **Colossians 2:11-15**

Many Jewish Christians felt it necessary for Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in addition to following Christ, **Acts 15:1-5**. This teaching was somewhat like a thorn in the church’s side; it was a problem they constantly had to deal with, **Acts 15:6-27**.

Here in **Colossians**, Paul deals with the problem by pointing out that through baptism into Christ, we experience the ‘true circumcision’, which is a cutting away of the sins of the flesh, **Colossians 2:11**. By His death on the cross, Jesus has taken the Old Law out of the way, **Ephesians 2:14-16 / 2 Corinthians 5:14**.

We were circumcised by Christ, **Colossians 2:11**, when we were buried with Him in baptism, and it is also at our baptism that we are raised with Christ through our faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead, **Colossians 2:12 / Romans 6:3-5**. Notice that ‘baptism is a work of God,’ not man. Baptism isn’t a work of human merit; it’s an act that has been commanded by God.

We were dead in our sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, but God made us alive with Christ and forgave us all our sins, **Colossians 2:13 / Romans 6:4 / 2 Corinthians 5:17 / 1 Peter 3:21**. Paul isn’t speaking about some war in the underworld, but of Christ’s victorious work on the cross, **Colossians 2:14**.

Peake, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Distinction between moral and ceremonial Law has no meaning in Paul. The Law is a unity and is done away with as a whole. For Paul, the hostile character of the Law is peculiarly associated with the moral side of it. The Law which slew him is represented by the 10th Commandment, and the ministry of death was engraved on tables of stone?’

We were all debtors to God because of our sin, but Christ cancelled that debt. How? By nailing it to the cross, **Colossians 2:14**. We are no longer under the law, why? because He nailed it to the cross.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Christ really died as our substitute under the charge of the broken Mosaic Law, not under the supposed charge that He falsely claimed to be the King of the Jews.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Sabbatarians make two profound mistakes: (1) in their understanding of the sabbath day commandment as in any sense a part of the moral law, and (2) in their insistence that the moral portion of the Law of Moses is still in effect;

whereas nothing could be more emphatic than the New Testament declarations that the Law, not part of it, but all of it, has been changed, abrogated, taken away, nailed to the cross, etc.’

This is how Jesus has disarmed the powers: He disarmed the powers and authorities, and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross, **Colossians 2:15**.

The word translated ‘disarmed’ means literally stripped. Some commentators suggest this is speaking of Jewish hierarchy in Jerusalem, while others believe that it is referring to Satan being stripped of his power.

If it is speaking about Jesus disarming Satan, then this implies that He has taken away Satan’s power to hold sinners to the debt of their sins and trespasses, **Colossians 2:14**. Jesus has disarmed the devil and triumphed over all the forces of evil by His death on the cross.

Satan thought Jesus was being stripped of his clothing, and shamed in nakedness at his final trial, and led in triumphal procession to Calvary. But what was really happening was that Satan and his demonic forces were being stripped and shamed.

In Bible times, he was permitted to roam around the earth, and he was permitted to possess people, but Jesus removed that power from him when He died on the cross.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is more natural to view the principalities and powers here as the defeated foes, driven in front of the triumphal chariot as involuntary and impotent witnesses to their conqueror’s superior might.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When Christ came, He explained that the Mosaic Law was no longer binding, **Mark 7:18-19 / Luke 16:16 / John 1:17 / Acts 10:12 / Romans 7:6 / Romans 10:4 / Romans 14:17 / 1 Corinthians 8:8 / 2 Corinthians 3:6-11 / Galatians 3:19 / Galatians 3:23 / Galatians 4:9-11 / Galatians 5:1 / Hebrews 7:12 / Hebrews 9:10**. This failure of the false teachers really amounted to a failure to appreciate Christ.’

FREEDOM FROM HUMAN RULES

‘Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.’ **Colossians 2:16-17**

Paul says, we’re to let no one try to judge or condemn us in matters of the Old Law, **Colossians 2:16**. Why? Because we have died to the Law and Jewish ceremonialism, **Romans 7:1-6**. We’re not to let anyone try to judge or condemn us in matters of the Old Law. Why?

Because of what Paul wrote in **Galatians 5:1**, we’re to let no one try to judge or condemn us in matters of the Old Law. Why? Because of what Paul writes in **Galatians 5:2-4**.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Colossians 2:16**.

‘It is as plain as may well be that Paul is warning his readers against those who were trying to impose the observance of the Jewish sabbath upon them.’

Peake, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sabbath observance is here placed upon the same footing as the other things abolished, and ‘Thus Paul commits himself to the principle that a Christian is not to be censured for its non-observance.’

When we see shadows on a wall, we know that they are simply a reflection of the real thing. In the same way, the Old Testament Law was just a ‘shadow’, but the reality was Christ and found in Him, **Colossians 2:17 / Hebrews 9-10**.

‘Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.’ **Colossians 2:18-19**

Paul says we’re not to delight in false humility, but why would people worship angels? **Colossians 2:18**. Perhaps because they felt angels were needed as ‘intercessors’ or perhaps with ‘a sense of humility’, they felt they couldn’t go to God directly. Angel worship is actually the result of a ‘false humility’ and is based upon a person’s ‘idle notions’, **Hebrews 4:14-16**.

In truth, angel worship takes us away from Christ, who is ‘the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow’. For this reason, angels refused any semblance of worship, **Revelation 22:8-9 / Acts 10:25-26**.

Have you noticed how popular angels and New Age religions have become lately? Do you know why? There’s a real reason for it, because for three hundred years we have lived in the Age of Reason.

When Isaac Newton discovered gravity, man decided that if humanity could unlock the laws of the universe, God’s own laws, why couldn’t it also discover the laws underlying all of nature and society?

People came to assume that through judicious use of reason, an unending progress would be possible. Progress in knowledge, technical achievement, and even in moral values.

The eighteenth-century writers believed that knowledge is not natural but comes only from experience and observation guided by reason. Through proper education, humanity itself could be altered, its nature changed for the better.

A great premium was placed on the discovery of truth through the observation of nature, rather than through the study of the Bible. They saw Christianity as the principal force that had enslaved the human mind in the past.

Human aspirations, they believed, shouldn’t be centred on the next life, but rather on the means of improving this life. Worldly happiness was placed before religious salvation. Nothing was attacked with more intensity and ferocity than Christianity, blaming it for the suppression of the free exercise of reason.

Now we don’t believe anymore that science and technology can fix our problems or make us morally better. If anything, it has made us morally worse, but that’s what we were told for two hundred years. We’ll just study it, we’ll go into a lab, we’ll write a computer program, and we’ll fix it.

And after two hundred years, we’ve decided science and technology cannot fix all our problems, so we turn to spirituality, and that’s why the New Age is so popular right now. That’s why angels are so popular, you see, angels don’t come with baggage.

The spirituality of the New Age is not Christianity; angels don’t demand anything of you. They just show up, they’re cute, they’re nice, they help you, and they leave. Isn’t that wonderful?

You watch the movies where angels are in them. Movies like *The Preacher’s Wife* or *Angels*, where a team of angels come to the rescue of a children’s baseball team when a young boy pleads for divine intervention. You read books that tell you about guardian angels and which one to approach for help.

Let me ask you this, do you ever hear the name Jesus? You see, the vanity of the human mind works like this. I need a mediator to help me get closer to God, but I don't want a mediator with an old rugged cross on their back. I would rather have an angel over a crucified Jew as a means to get closer to God.

And so, we live in the exact same time as the Colossians. Where you have all manner of mediators available to help us get close to God, and Paul says that doesn't cut it.

There is only one mediator between God and man, His name is Jesus. And if you have Jesus, you don't need any more than that. Besides, Paul says, 'you know all these people that have all these experiences in the other world and meet all these angels.'

He says, 'they don't know what they are talking about', **Colossians 2:18**. He says, 'they're making it up in their heads'. There was a TV talk show recently discussing mediums and spiritualism.

Of course, there were sceptics and believers amongst the audience. They asked someone who exposes mediums and a real medium to give a reading, and the audience had to decide who was the fake and who was the real one.

The audience voted unanimously that the fake was the real medium and that the real medium was the fake. Making it up in their heads and taking people for a ride.

The only more that mysticism offers is more self-importance, 'hey, look at me, I'm talking to the dead.' That's why they go into great detail about what they have seen, but the truth is they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind, **Colossians 2:18**.

By the way, most of us don't need any more self-importance; we've got more than enough already. In **2 Corinthians 12:1-4**, Paul says, 'that nobody has ever lived that has had more visions and Revelations than he did.'

He was even taken up into the third heaven and saw paradise, and he can't even talk about it. But Paul says, 'I will never boast about that, I will never try to impress you with how spiritual I am by telling you of the things I've seen.' He said in **2 Corinthians 12:5**, 'What I'll do is boast in my weakness.'

You don't improve Christianity by mixing it with legalism, mysticism, or spiritualism. No wonder they lose connection with Christ, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow, **Colossians 2:19**.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

'Severance from the Head cuts off the supply of spiritual life.'

'Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!' These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.' **Colossians 2:20-23**

Paul tells us that because we died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why do we submit to its rules, **Colossians 2:20 / Matthew 15:9**.

Asceticism has often been offered as a key to 'self-control', things like fasting and other forms of abstinence or beating yourself with a whip. Even today, people walk around saying, 'Do not handle! Do not take! Do not Touch!' **Colossians 2:21**.

It seems like a strange road to Christ's likeness to refuse the blessings Christ has made, and yet for centuries we have tried to measure spirituality that way. Don't eat a certain food, don't drink coffee, if you really want to serve God, don't marry. And we've come along for years and said, 'I'm going to measure your spirituality by what you don't do'.

We have to remember that real transformation comes through ‘renewing the mind’, not afflicting the body, **Romans 12:1-2**. Transformation comes when ‘those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires,’ **Romans 8:5**. Transformation comes when we ‘live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,’ **Romans 8:13**. Transformation is shown when we display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, which includes self-control, **Galatians 5:22-23**.

How many Christians have grown up with an unspoken assumption in the church that Christianity isn’t supposed to be fun? It’s supposed to be grim, and if you put up with it long enough, you get to go to heaven, and only then will you have a good time!

A preacher found the roads blocked one Sunday morning and was forced to skate on the river to get to church, which he did. When he arrived, the elders were horrified that their preacher had skated on the Lord’s Day.

After the service, they held a meeting where the preacher explained that it was either skate to church or not go at all. Finally, one elder asked, ‘Did you enjoy it?’ When the preacher answered, ‘No,’ the elders decided it was all right!

That’s the thinking of asceticism. If you can just deny yourself and keep yourself from enjoying life, then you’ll be more spiritual. It’s easier to deny the body than give up the will.

You can punish your body to the limit and still have your heart filled with all kinds of wickedness. All these man-made forms of religion have the appearance of wisdom.

Doesn’t it just seem more spiritual to keep all these rules, and if you have all kinds of visions and if you deny all these things, doesn’t that seem good? Paul says, ‘They all have the same basic flaw.’ It promotes haughtiness and man-made religion and encourages spiritual competition, it really does.

You start judging each other by things God never talked about. ‘Well, I’ve never eaten raw meat.’ ‘Oh yeah, well let me tell you what I gave up.’ ‘Well, let me tell you about all the rules I keep.’ And we start judging each other on things God never demanded, required, or forbade.

All this man-made religion stuff really does is promote judging, ‘it looks good and sounds good,’ but it doesn’t make the body more loving, it doesn’t make the body more unified.

The only more it does is create more sin; it promotes haughtiness without promoting holiness. Paul says, ‘in fact, they have no value against self-indulgence,’ **Colossians 2:23**.

Man-made religion is morally impotent because an external approach can never change our internal bent. A yolk can temporarily change what I do, but it cannot change who I am. There is only one path to real holiness, Christ in you, as Paul said back in **Colossians 1:27**.

Religion tries to work from the outside in, God works from the inside out through the gift of his indwelling Spirit of Christ, **Galatians 5:16**. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is a river of Living Water and when the Holy Spirit comes into your life. God from the inside out begins to do a work in you and clean you up, that religion from the outside in can never do, **2 Corinthians 3:17**.

The way to God to make people spiritual is slower and messier than the way of man. You take a brand-new Christian, and you give him some rules and stuff to do and stuff never to do. God’s way is so much slower and messier. God’s way is to walk by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, which way makes people more spiritual? Paul says these rules are all destined to perish, and they are based on merely human commands and teachings, **Colossians 2:22**. Paul says, ‘they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence,’ **Colossians 2:23**.

The really spiritual man isn't the person who gave up this or saw that or knows Gabriel on first-name terms. The really spiritual person is the person who practices love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control, the fruit of the Spirit, **Galatians 5:22-23**. There is only one way the fruit of the Spirit will take over your life, and that's when the fruit of the Spirit takes over your life, and you walk by Him.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.’ **Colossians 3:1-4**

LIVING AS THOSE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST

Paul reminds the saints at Colossae that they need to keep their hearts and minds on heavenly things, **Colossians 3:1-2**.

Robertson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Christian has to keep his feet upon the earth, but his head in the heavens. He must be heavenly-minded here on earth and so help to make earth like heaven.’

This is so important, even for Christians today, especially if we want to become mature by being transformed, **Romans 12:2 / Romans 8:5-6**. One way to help us keep our minds on heavenly things is simply to follow Paul's advice in **Philippians 4:8**.

Paul gives us another reason why we should keep our hearts and minds set on heavenly things. He says, ‘we died’, **Colossians 3:3**, this happened when we were baptised into Christ, **Romans 6:3-6**. But what did we die to? We died to sin, **Romans 6:7-13**.

The good news does not only tell us we died with Christ, but we were also ‘raised with Christ’, **Colossians 3:1**, which happened when we come up from the waters of baptism, **Colossians 2:12**. But we were raised with Christ for a purpose, **Romans 6:4**.

Our story will end in glory, and the truth is we've already been glorified; it's just that people haven't seen it yet, **Colossians 3:3-4 / Romans 8:30**. We have already been glorified. Now you might think, well, nobody can see it. Do you know why? Because they can't see Jesus' glory either.

It's impossible, apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, for people to see the glory of God in a man on a cross. And since your life is hidden in Christ and they can't see His glory, **Colossians 3:3-4**, your life doesn't make sense to them either.

Here we are trying to focus on heaven, trying to live by a different preoccupation, and not get caught up in the worry of the things of the world. And our life makes no sense at all to the world because we're hidden in Christ, and they can't see who He is. Paul says, ‘someday that's going to change’, there's going to come a day when the real world is revealed. That day is going to be the revelation of the Son of God.

‘Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices’

Colossians 3:5-9

To keep our hearts and minds on things above, we must get rid of our earthly nature.

Dunn, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Despite the power of their having been identified with Christ in his death, there were still things, parts of their old lives, habits of hand and mind, which tied them ’to the earth’ and hindered the outworking of the ’mind set on what is above.’

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

‘Sexual immorality’, Colossians 3:5. In Greek, the word ‘porneia’ is a general term for any illicit sexual intercourse, which includes adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality.

IMPURITY

‘Impurity’, Colossians 3:5, in Greek is the word ‘akatharsia’, and it means uncleanness in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living.

LUST

‘Lust’, Colossians 3:5, in Greek is the word ‘pathos’, it was used by the Greeks in either a good or bad sense, in the New Testament in a bad sense, it means depraved passion, vile passions.

EVIL DESIRE

‘Evil desire’, Colossians 3:5, in Greek is the word ‘epithumia’, and it means to desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust.

GREED

‘Greed’, Colossians 3:5, in Greek is the word ‘pleonexia’, and it means greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice. Notice Paul says this is the same as ‘idolatry’.

Greed puts things in the place of God. We're to set our minds on things above, where God is, but when we're greedy for material objects, we have our minds on things below, making such objects our idols!

Why is it important to put these sins to death? 'Because of these, the wrath of God is coming,' Colossians 2:6. It's one thing to do these things when we lived in them, but in Christ, we have died to them. They used to walk in this way, they used to live like this, but not anymore, Colossians 3:7.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Such behaviour will bring God's wrath eventually, Colossians 3:6. That is, God will discipline Christians as well as non-believers who practice these things. These activities normally characterise the unsaved, so Christians are to lay them aside, Colossians 3:8 / Matthew 5:29-30 / Romans 8:13 / Ephesians 5:3-14.'

Paul hasn't finished his list of sins that need to be put to death within us. Notice he begins by naming the sins which are related to our emotions.

ANGER

'Anger', Colossians 3:8, in Greek is the word 'orge', which means a movement or agitation of the soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but especially anger.

RAGE

'Rage', Colossians 3:8, in Greek is the word 'thumos', and it means passion, angry, heat, and anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again.

MALICE

'Malice', Colossians 3:8, in Greek is the word 'kakia', which means malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure. Now notice that Paul gives a list of sins that deal with the tongue.

SLANDER

'Slander', Colossians 3:8, in Greek is the word 'blasphemia', and it means to slander, detraction, speech, injurious to another's good name, impious and reproachful speech injurious to divine majesty.

FILTHY LANGUAGE

‘Filthy language’, Colossians 3:8, in Greek is the word ‘aischrologia’, and it means foul speaking, low and obscene speech.

LYING

‘Lying’, Colossians 3:9, in Greek is the word ‘pseudomai’, and it means to lie, to speak deliberate falsehoods, to deceive one by a lie, to lie to. And what is the reason for putting to death all these sins? ‘Taken off our old self,’ Colossians 3:9. God is trying to help us become mature, and sin only hinders us from becoming mature. And let’s be honest, we won’t put to death these sins and other sins not on Paul’s list here, overnight, they may take days, weeks, months or even years in some people’s cases, Colossians 2:11-12.

‘And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here, there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.’
Colossians 3:10-11

Notice what Paul says here to encourage us to put to death those sins. He reminds us that we have put on our ‘new self’, Colossians 3:10. Again, this is a reference to what happens at our baptism, Galatians 3:27.

Those behavioural practices of life that they put off must be replaced with positive actions of righteousness. Now that they were walking in newness of life, their behaviour must characterise the One after whom they called themselves, Philippians 1:27.

We are ‘new’ because of the washing of sin by the blood of Jesus; we are ‘new’ because we decided to maintain direction in our life that’s guided by his knowledge of Christ, Colossians 3:10. We’re continually renewed by the knowledge of Christ in walking the Christian life.

The renewing process is a continual growth in the knowledge of Jesus, 2 Corinthians 3:18 / 2 Corinthians 4:16 / 2 Peter 3:18. Our growth is pointed in the direction of the image of Jesus, Colossians 3:10 / Romans 8:29 / 2 Corinthians 3:18 / Ephesians 4:11-15, and so, we’re continually becoming more like Jesus, 2 Peter 1:3-8.

One identifying characteristic of those who are being conformed to the image of Christ is the fact that they begin to see humanity as God sees all men, Colossians 3:11. God sees no race or social or economic classifications. In Christ, our racism is broken down. Racism is dissolved in the minds of those who grow to understand that we are one in Christ.

Though sociological behaviour between groups of people divides men in societies by cultural characteristics, it cannot divide disciples in the church, Colossians 3:11 / Galatians 3:26-29. Being ‘in Christ’ doesn’t mean that men lose their culture; all men are related to one another in society through their common cultural characteristics. However, when we come into Christ, our culture is moulded by God.

We’re transformed into the image of Christ and so dwell as one man with all who are in Christ.

In the Christian community, therefore, every member is moulded to be able to dwell in eternity with those of other cultures. Fellowship in the church becomes the test as to whether we can dwell in heaven with those who have come from different cultural backgrounds.

We need to remember that ‘Christ is all and in all’, Colossians 3:11. This is one of the greatest statements made in Scripture that declares the fact that it is all about Jesus.

In life and worship, the Christian must proclaim the centrality of Christ to our behaviour. If our worship is focused on what we can get out of it, then we have missed the point.

If we become Christians to see what material blessings we can receive, we don't understand who Jesus is and what we must be in response to His deity. Every disciple must awake every morning and declare that it is a day the Lord has made, **Psalm 118:24**, and thus declare Christ is all in all for the day.

‘Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’

Colossians 3:12-17

Notice that Paul gives us other reasons as to why we should put on these new ‘clothes’. He says we are ‘God’s chosen people, holy, dearly loved and forgiven by Christ’, **Colossians 3:12**.

If these things alone don't encourage us to be transformed, I don't know what will. God has foreseen that in the final judgment He will elect out of the world His children, **1 Peter 1:21 / 1 Peter 2:5 / 1 Peter 2:9**.

From our standpoint, which is confined to time, we haven't realised the action of His future election of the church out of the world. However, since God does know the future and what He will do, then Christians can be referred to in time as the elect of God.

Therefore, since we are the ones who will in the future be called into eternal glory, we must put on the nature of Christ, with whom we will dwell in heaven. The nature that must characterise the elect is developed by loving God and one's neighbour, **Matthew 22:37-40 / John 13:34-35**.

Interpersonal relationships are based on loving our neighbour, **Mark 12:30-31**. Love in action will thus produce the fruit of the Spirit in one's life, **Galatians 5:22-23**.

Paul continues to describe the ‘clothing’ Christians must put on. He begins by reminding us that there are two ways we need to treat others, **Colossians 3:12**.

COMPASSION

‘Compassion’, **Colossians 3:12**, in Greek is the word ‘oiktirmos’, which means pity, mercy, or a heart of compassion.

KINDNESS

‘Kindness’, **Colossians 3:12**, in Greek is the word ‘chrestotes’, and it means usefulness, kindness. Paul continues and gives us two more things that we need to put on in relation to our state of mind.

HUMILITY

‘Humility’, **Colossians 3:12**, in Greek is the word ‘tapeinophrosune’, and it means to have a humble opinion of oneself, a deep sense of one's moral littleness, modesty, humility, lowliness of mind.

GENTLENESS

‘Gentleness’, Colossians 3:12, in Greek is the word ‘praotes’, and it means mildness, meekness. Paul continues and gives us three more things that we need to put on in relation to how we act when we’re being mistreated by others.

PATIENCE

‘Patience’, Colossians 3:12, in Greek is the word ‘makrothumia’, and it means forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs.

BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER

‘Bearing with one another’, Colossians 3:13, in Greek is the word ‘anechomai’, and it means to sustain, to bear, to endure.

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

‘Forgiving one another’, Colossians 3:13, in Greek is the word ‘charizomai’, and it means to do something pleasant or agreeable, to do a favour, gratify, to grant forgiveness, to pardon. Forgiving others is demanded because we have been forgiven by Christ!

LOVE

Paul continues and gives us one more thing that we need to put on, and that’s ‘love’, Colossians 3:14. This is the Greek word ‘agape’, meaning goodwill, benevolence.

Paul says love ‘binds them all together in perfect unity,’ Colossians 3:14. Without love, none of the other virtues can last; with it, the others can be easily maintained.

And when all these are tied together, the Christian can display the character of Christ Himself. But Paul isn’t finished yet, he speaks about ‘the peace of God which must dwell in our hearts,’ Colossians 3:15. Why? Because we were called to be at ‘peace’ in one body, the church, Colossians 3:15.

This is one reason why Jesus came to die on the cross, Ephesians 2:14-18. In other words, if we disrupt the peace of the body, that is, the church, we disrupt the work of Christ on the cross, and so we must be diligent to ‘maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,’ Ephesians 4:3.

Let’s be honest with ourselves, where there is contention and strife, it’s among members of the body who aren’t letting the peace of God rule in their hearts. Peace in the body, the church, begins with peace ruling in our hearts.

And this whole process begins when we follow Paul’s advice in Colossians 3:1-2. And this peace is experienced as we engage in ‘thankful prayer’, Colossians 3:15 / Philippians 4:6-7.

Paul continues with our new ‘clothing’ and tells us we need to ‘let the message of Christ dwell among you richly,’ **Colossians 3:16**. This is possible only through a serious effort to learn it, whether it be through Bible study on our own or in a class or through sermons but as we know learning is one thing but obeying what we’re learning is another, **James 1:22-25**.

Notice also that Paul says that the message is to dwell in us ‘richly’, **Colossians 3:16**. This happens when we add to our study of the Word of God the element of ‘song.’

We know this because Paul says we’re to let the Word dwell in us richly, in other words, by ‘teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit,’ **Colossians 3:16**.

In other words, if the Word of God is going to dwell in us, it doesn’t only involve the mind through Bible study, but it also involves the heart, our emotions, through song.

We have to understand the words of the songs we’re singing and sing with gratitude in our hearts, and when we do, it’s all joy, **Ephesians 5:19**. In both **Ephesians** and **Colossians**, notice the phrase ‘one another’, **Colossians 3:16 / Ephesians 5:19**, is used. Paul is reminding us of what type of music is to be used, and that type of music is congregational singing. Paul mentions three categories of singing.

PSALMS

‘Psalms’, **Colossians 3:16**, were songs that were sung with the sole purpose of praising God; this may include some of the psalms and melodies which we find written by David in the Book of Psalms.

HYMNS

‘Hymns’, **Colossians 3:16**, may well be songs that were composed by the early Christians, which focused mainly on thanksgiving for what God has done in their lives and their salvation.

SPIRITUAL SONGS

‘Spiritual songs’, **Colossians 3:16**, were songs that were sung to encourage and edify the soul in worship; this was the means of teaching and admonishing one another.

All of which are to be sung with the purpose of ‘teaching’ and ‘admonishing’ one another with spiritual truths, **Colossians 3:16 / Ephesians 5:19**. The **Ephesian** passage also tells us that we are to ‘make music in our hearts’, **Ephesians 5:19**.

When we sing, we are teaching and admonishing each other and so filling each other with the words of Christ. This isn’t an outward attitude, expressed with instruments, or by clapping our hands in time with the song; it’s very much an inner attitude.

God says listen, ‘apart from glorifying Him, singing is also a way of getting fed spiritually’. When we’re singing the words to a song, we are feeding each other on the word of God at the same time. And because we are feeding on those words, we are also promoting the purity of the heart within ourselves.

God tells us that we've got four things to think about when we are praising Him in song.

1. We can sing Psalms, spiritual songs, and hymns.
2. Our singing needs to be aimed at Him.
3. We need to sing with gratitude.
4. We need to sing from the heart.

That's why we sing together as a body of believers, and that's why we have to sing together at the same time because when we sing together, we are praising God together, and that's part of our worship to Him.

Have you ever noticed what comes before **Ephesians 5:19**? Yes, it's **Ephesians 5:18**, but what does **Ephesians 5:17-18** say? 'Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.'

Is Paul jumping onto a different subject in **Ephesians 5:19**? Of course not, he's still speaking about our attitude towards other people and the will of God. Being filled with the Spirit means filling our minds with the word of God, and what that does is create gratitude in our hearts, which is expressed in our singing to God. That's why Paul says, 'Don't get drunk on wine', **Ephesians 5:19**. He's saying the Lord's will for us is joy, not alcohol.

He goes on to say in **Ephesians 5:20-21**, 'Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.'

In other words, everything we do in our worship assemblies is done out of gratitude. Paul says it should always be like this; he says we should be thankful for all things, we should be thankful for everything in Jesus' name, and our thankfulness should be aimed at God, **Ephesians 5:20 / Colossians 3:17**.

Singing praises to God is a privilege, it's a joy, and God has given each of us a voice with which to praise Him. Think about it, if our singing comes from our hearts, it goes straight to the heart of God, and that's a wonderful experience.

The word 'singing' in our English translations is from the Greek word 'psallo', which literally means, 'plucking the heartstrings.' When we use our voices to praise God, we are plucking our heartstrings, and so not only is God pleased, but it also brings us great joy.

Paul continues and says, 'and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him,' **Colossians 3:17**.

This is speaking about the authority of Christ. For if we say or do all 'in the name of the Lord Jesus', that is, by His authority, then it's evident that we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Did you know that singing is only mentioned nine times in the New Testament? We have examples of singing individually, **Matthew 26:30**. The word 'hymn' in **Matthew 26:30** is actually the word hymning, which basically means they sang a lot of hymns from the Psalms, probably the Hallel Psalms, which are **Psalms 115-118**.

We also have examples of singing as a congregation, **Romans 15:8-9**, and there are a few more examples we could read but we're going to look at those later. The first mention of any musical instrument in the Bible is found in **Genesis 4:21**, and the first mention of singing with a musical instrument is found in **Genesis 31:26-27**.

Wasn't Moses commanded to make musical instruments? Moses was commanded to make silver trumpets, but not for the purpose of music or worship, **Numbers 10:2**.

What about David, didn't he introduce musical instruments to Old Testament worship? **1 Chronicles 23:5**. Didn't God command the use of instrumental music in Old Testament worship? **2 Chronicles 29:25**.

Remember that Moses nowhere appointed any musical instruments to be used in worship. There was nothing of the kind under the first tabernacle, and that's because God didn't ask for them. The above text is telling us that Hezekiah appointed the Levites in the house of the Lord, and David commanded the use of the instruments mentioned.

What did God command? He commanded through His prophets that the Levites should praise the Lord, but it doesn't mean that the Lord commanded the use of the instruments. It was by the order of David that so many instruments of music should be introduced into the divine service, **1 Chronicles 23:4-5**.

Here's what Adam Clarke, the most renowned scholar of the Methodist Church, wrote about this text.

'I believe that David was not authorised by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the Divine worship of which we read, and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet; and I farther believe that the use of such instruments of music, in the Christian Church, is without the sanction and against the will of God; and that they are 'sinful'.

Yes, David introduced musical instruments into temple worship, but God didn't ask for them. David also introduced the idea of building a temple for God, but God didn't ask for one to be built in the first place, **1 Chronicles 17:1-6**. Musical instruments in worship were David's idea, not God's. Building a temple for God to dwell in was David's idea, not God's.

Why did God allow instruments in worship? One plausible answer to that question is that God permitted it, just like He permitted divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, and their spiritual immaturity, **Matthew 19:8**.

Now, we could go to **Revelation 5:8**, and ask the question, are there harps in heaven? Perhaps there are, and apart from Revelation being a highly figurative book, we need to remember that we're dealing with the here and now, not the future.

There are no examples or commands to use instrumental music in the New Testament, but the New Testament expressly commands us to sing. The New Testament doesn't explicitly condemn the use of musical instruments, but the New Testament doesn't explicitly condemn praying to Mary or baptising infants, does it? We don't go by the things that are not there in Scripture; we go by the things that are there.

Now we can't say that any kind of instruments weren't available to the early Christians because there were, but Christians were directed by the Holy Spirit to use only their voices. They were commanded to pluck their heartstrings rather than pluck the strings of a musical instrument.

Around six-hundred years after the apostles had gone, Pope Vitalian introduced an organ in the Latin Church around 670 A.D. But the opposition was so great that it was removed to preserve unity, and it would be another two-hundred years before it would be adopted into the Latin Mass.

In 1054 A.D. a great division took place between the eastern and the western churches of Europe. While the Western churches, which are Catholic, adopted the use of images, a universal head, Pope, instrumental music, and sprinkling for baptism, the Eastern churches, Orthodox, rejected these things.

To this very day, Orthodox churches, Greek, Russian and Eastern, use only vocal music. Secular history is very clear that the use of instrumental music in public worship did not take place until about the tenth century, which was one of the innovations of the Catholic Church.

It was never a practice in the early centuries of the church; in fact, the renowned musicologist Curt Sachs of Columbia University said, 'All ancient Christian music was vocal.'

When the Protestant Reformation began in the early 1500s, many left the Catholic Church and established other churches. Almost without exception, the leaders of these denominations were opposed to the use of instrumental music in worship.

During the Reformation period, only the Church of England and the Lutherans carried over the use of instrumental music from their Roman Catholic past. In modern-day worship, not only is it common to hear organs and pianos, but full orchestras.

Professional musicians are even employed but again we need to remind ourselves that this may well be pleasing to the ears of men, but Paul said to ‘make melody in your heart to the Lord,’ **Ephesians 5:19**.

It’s not a matter of feelings, it’s a matter of gratitude, everything we do in our worship assemblies is done out of gratitude. Paul says it should always be like this; he says we should be thankful for all things, we should be thankful for everything in Jesus’ name, and our thankfulness should be aimed at God, **Ephesians 5:20**.

Paul doesn’t say that he ‘will sing with an instrument’, he says ‘I will sing with my spirit and my mind,’ 1 **Corinthians 14:15**. The word ‘singing’ in our English translations is from the Greek word ‘psallo’, which literally means, ‘plucking the heart strings’. When we use our voices to praise God, we are plucking our heartstrings, and so not only is God pleased, but it also brings us great joy, **James 5:17**.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, said the following.

‘I have no objection to instruments in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen.’

John Calvin, the forerunner of the Presbyterian Church, wrote the following.

‘Musical instruments in celebrating the praise of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews.’

Charles Spurgeon, the famous preacher of the Baptist church in London, said the following.

‘Musical instruments would hinder rather than help our praise. Sing unto Him. This is the sweetest and best music. We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it.’

They all understood that the whole object of Christian worship is to bring glory to God and worship is not intended to please men, but to please God, **Hebrews 13:15**.

Richard Wagner, one of the great musicians and composers in America, once expressed his opinion about vocal music in these words.

‘There is no doubt but that those qualities absolutely necessary to church music, namely, modesty, dignity and soulfulness, are more inherent in the vocal style than in any other. Vocal music is, in general, more expressive than the mechanically produced tones of instruments, which is undeniable. Religious feeling finds its most natural expression in vocal utterance, for the human heart is the source of both devotion and song.’

The real question we should be asking ourselves is simply this: are we singing and making melody in our hearts or just miming the words? Do the words of the songs move us and put our minds on heavenly things? **Colossians 3:1-2**.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLDS

‘Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.’ **Colossians 3:18**

WIVES

The relationship between a husband and wife can be one of the greatest relationships we have; they can certainly bring out the worst in us, but they can also bring out the best in us, **Ephesians 5:22-24**.

God decided that man needed some kind of companionship in this world, **Genesis 2:18**, and when Adam couldn't find it within the animal kingdom, God went on to create Eve from Adam, **Genesis 2:22**.

When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he said, 'here is someone like me, she's a part of my body, my own flesh, and bones. I'll call her woman,' **Genesis 2:23**.

We know the rest of the story; Eve fell for the serpent's lies and ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. She then offers some of the fruit to Adam, and he ate it, and so sin entered the world, **Genesis 3:6**. We know that Satan was cursed by God, **Genesis 3:14**.

We know that Adam was cursed by God, **Genesis 3:17**, and to Eve He said her desire will be for her husband, **Genesis 3:16**. When God created Eve, He did so by using one of Adam's ribs, **Genesis 2:21-22**.

The word 'rib' is very misleading; the actual text literally says it was a shank that was removed from Adam's side. The point is that the woman wasn't made out of an inferior substance; the woman was a part of him, a very important part of him.

God created an 'ezer,' a helper for Adam. He didn't create a slave; He didn't create a servant. He created someone who would share in the responsibilities of life; he created them as equals.

In many cultures, even today, women are treated no better than slaves. The Greeks believed, 'we have courtesans for the sake of pleasure, we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation, and we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately.'

A Greek author says the following concerning Greek wives.

'Let her live that she might see as little as possible, hear as little as possible and ask as little as possible.'

As far as the Greeks were concerned, a wife's role was simply to run the house and take care of the children, while the husband enjoyed pleasure and companionship from someone else.

When the Romans came on the scene, their view of women wasn't much better; they believed 'women are married to be divorced.' Under Roman law, a wife had no legal rights; everything she was and had came from her husband, and so, she was completely dependent on her husband.

Hebrew women actually had it better than many other women in other cultures, but only just better. We know that by the time Christ came along, divorce was becoming rampant among the Jews, and all the rights lay with the man, **Deuteronomy 24:1**.

By the time Christ came along, the Jews were using the phrase 'something indecent about her,' **Deuteronomy 24:1**, as an excuse for divorce. Some believed it meant adultery, others believed it meant if the wife had burned your dinner or gone out with their heads uncovered. Others believed it meant that the husband found someone more attractive. And so, in the Jewish culture, a woman had more rights than a slave, but only just.

Paul's words in **Ephesians 5:22** are the same words that Paul writes to the Colossian church in **Colossians 3:18**. The wife must submit to her husband, and the husband must love his wife as Christ loved the church at the same time. Remember, the Greeks and the Romans didn't see their wives as a person; they saw them as a piece of property. Their wives weren't allowed to make decisions of their own, especially when it came to religion. It was the husband who decided what everybody's religion was going to be in their household.

The wife had no rights whatsoever, and so, as far as the women, the children, and the slaves were concerned, they were just objects; they had no say in anything. And so, we can imagine the impact the Gospel would have had in that society.

Imagine the impact on the Jews as they are told that God loves the Gentiles as much as them! Imagine the impact on the slaves as they are told that God loves them as much as their owners! Imagine the impact on the females as they are told that God loves them as much as the men!

Imagine the impact the Gospel would have had in that society when Paul declares that males and females are one, **Galatians 3:28**. I'm sure all the women and all the slaves couldn't believe what Paul was preaching.

We can imagine them asking Paul, 'Are you telling us we're all one in Christ Jesus?' I can imagine Paul saying, 'yes you are, it doesn't matter if you're a Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, you're all one in Christ Jesus,' **Galatians 3:28**.

While the women and slaves are rejoicing at this good news, I can imagine the men in that society going absolutely nuts. If these women believe what this Paul guy says, they might think they are just as important as we are!

If these slaves believe what this Paul guy says, they might get too big for their boots, they might try and take over, and we men will lose control of our homes and eventually our society!

That's why Christianity was regarded as dangerous and rebellious at that time. And so, after declaring that all are one in Christ Jesus, Paul has to be very careful about how he teaches these women to enjoy their new freedom in Christ, whilst living within their culture.

There is some good news and bad news concerning 'wives submitting to their husbands', **Ephesians 5:22**. The good news is that the word 'submit' isn't in the original text. The bad news is that it should be, otherwise the text wouldn't make sense.

When the Bible was written, there were no chapters and verses, and so, let's read how it actually reads, 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, wives, to your husbands as to the Lord,' **Ephesians 5:21-22**.

In other words, we don't start with, 'wives submit to your husbands', we start with, 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.' And notice that Paul doesn't say, 'wives submit yourselves to your husbands,' he says, 'wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord,' **Ephesians 5:22**.

Put yourself in the place of a married woman living in Ephesus. Imagine you're sitting there amongst the congregation and suddenly, you hear this letter being read out to everyone, and you realise that Paul is actually addressing you, as a woman!

I'm sure they would be thinking, at last, someone who actually recognises we exist! Someone who acknowledges that we're smart enough to understand what he's saying! Imagine being there when Paul's words were being read out, and hearing those first few words, 'Wives, submit to your husbands'.

We can almost imagine the women thinking, 'oh here we go again, another man putting us back in our place where we belong!' But then they hear the words, 'as you do to the Lord,' **Ephesians 5:22**. Now, what does 'in the Lord' mean? **Colossians 3:18**.

I think the way to figure this out in part is to look at the phrase 'in the Lord' every time it occurs in the Bible. That won't take long because it only occurs three times.

When it's used in **1 Corinthians 7:39**, does it mean that the person she marries must be a Christian? That is certainly one alternative. It's used in **Ephesians 6:1**. Does that mean that if you have Christian parents, you have to obey them, and if you don't have Christian parents, you don't have to obey them? No.

I think it means that children are to obey their parents in the sphere of the Lord's authority. You have to obey your parents the way the Lord says to obey your parents. 'In the Lord' means in the way that the Lord guides you, in the way the Lord teaches you, in a way that shows you are in submission to the Lord.

Does **Colossians 3:18** mean that if the husband is a Christian, you have to submit to him, but if he isn't a Christian, you don't have to submit to him? No. Paul's counsel is to the wives.

Wives, you are to submit to your husbands. How? In the Lord, in the way, the Lord would have you do it. Submit to him in the way the Lord leads you to submit to Him, not in the world's concept, but Jesus' concept. Wives, submit to your husbands in a way pleasing, acceptable to the Lord. 'In the Lord' signifies a realm of authority.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR THE WOMEN?

It doesn't mean they were to submit to their husbands because they had no choice. It simply means they're to submit to their husbands, because the way they respond to their husbands is a powerful demonstration of their attitude towards their Lord.

The husband has been given certain responsibilities within the marriage and family, and if the husband is fulfilling these responsibilities, then the wife is actually responding to the One who made him responsible. I'm sure you would have noticed that I used the word 'responsibility' and not the word 'authority'.

Paul never says, 'the husband is the authority figure in the home, who rules the family with an iron rod, and women better submit!' He doesn't say that he doesn't say that men are superior, and women are inferior.

He's saying that a husband has been given responsibilities by God, and the wife simply needs to recognise those responsibilities and respond to them. When she recognises her husband's God-given responsibilities and responds to them, it's then that she's submitting to her husband as to the Lord.

Peter says, if you were married to someone who isn't a Christian, you can still submit to them, by showing them what it means to submit to the Lord, **1 Peter 3:1**. And he says, you don't even have to preach the Gospel to them, but you can show them the effect the Gospel has had on you, **1 Peter 3:1**. Who knows, because of your Christ-like behaviour, they may one day become a Christian.

WHY SHOULD WIVES SUBMIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS?

Notice that Paul doesn't say, 'the husband is the head of the family', he doesn't say, 'the husband is the head of the house'. Paul says, 'the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour,' **Ephesians 5:23-24**.

The word 'head' here doesn't mean authority as it's used elsewhere. The word 'head' in this verse speaks about the source, the source that brings well-being, the source of supplying one's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, **Ephesians 1:22 / 1 Corinthians 11:3 / Colossians 1:18 / Colossians 2:19**.

In other words, God has given the husband the responsibility of providing for his wife's physical, emotional and spiritual needs, **1 Peter 3:7**. Wives also have some responsibilities too, **Proverbs 27:15 / Titus 2:3-5 / Proverbs 12:4**.

When people get married, they become one, but they both have different roles within that marriage relationship, and when both couples recognise those roles and accept them, that's called submitting to one another.

God wants nothing but the best for both the husband and the wife, which means the husband should want nothing but the best for his wife, and the wife should want nothing but the best for her husband.

And the only way you can really get the best out of each other is by submitting to the Lord and each other. Just as the church submits to Christ as her head, then the wife should submit to her husband, **Ephesians 5:24 / 1 Corinthians 11:12 / Colossians 1:18**.

HUSBANDS

‘Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.’ **Colossians 3:19**

Paul says marriage is all about love, and the Bible gives us the greatest example of all, of how husbands are to love their wives, **Ephesians 5:25-27**. The first example is this: ‘husbands must love their wives sacrificially’, **Ephesians 5:25**, and how did He demonstrate His love for the church? He died for her, He sacrificed Himself for her, He shed His own blood for her, **Matthew 20:28 / Mark 10:45 / Luke 2:11 / John 4:42 / Acts 20:28 / Philippians 3:20**.

Paul says that if husbands want successful marriages, they must look to Christ and what He did by going to the cross of Calvary. When we look at Christ, we see an example of self-sacrificial love, we see Him dying to self, we see Him dying to selfish ambition.

Husbands, we must be willing to sacrifice things that are very personal to them, in order to love our wives as Christ loved His church, **Ephesians 5:25**. Husbands must love their wives intentionally and with a purpose. Christ's dying on the cross wasn't an accident; it was intentional. He died with a purpose in mind, **Ephesians 1:5 / Ephesians 2:4 / Romans 5:8 / Colossians 1:21-22**.

Husbands are to intentionally love their wives; they are to purposely love their wives. Christ loved the church because He wants her to be holy, He wants her to be radiant, He wants her to be blameless, **Colossians 1:22 / Jude 24**.

Patterson, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Ephesians 5:26**.

‘The purpose Jesus Christ had in mind when He sacrificed Himself for His bride, the church, was to set her apart (sanctify, make her holy) for Himself as His own forever, **Hebrews 2:11 / Hebrews 10:10 / Hebrews 10:14 / Hebrews 13:12**.’

Hoehner, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Ephesians 5:27**.

‘The cleansing here is spiritual rather than physical. The Word of God cleanses us in the sense that when we believe the gospel, it washes our sins away as water washes dirt away, **Titus 3:5 / 1 Corinthians 6:11**. Thus, washing is a metaphor of redemption.’

Marriage isn't just about two people; it's about three people. God must be the third chord in our marriage relationship, **Ecclesiastes 4:12**. If husbands want their wives to be like Christ wants His church, then we must remember to keep God in the middle of our marriages.

The husband might put a strain on that marriage, the wife might put a strain on that marriage, but if God Almighty is intertwined within that marriage, it makes it a lot harder to break. There's strength in marriages when God is in the middle of them.

Husbands must see their wives as part of their bodies, **Ephesians 5:28**. Paul said earlier that ‘the body is the church’, which would include our Christian wives, **Ephesians 5:23**.

The last time I looked, everyone I know has a body attached to their head. Paul is saying a head without a body is no good to anyone, a body without a head is absolutely useless, **Ephesians 5:29 / 1 Corinthians 12:17-18**.

Sometimes men get so busy doing a thousand other things, and we jump up at a moment's notice to help other people out, to such an extent that we neglect our own home, **Song of Songs 1:6**.

We need to help each other, support each other, and encourage each other, **Ephesians 5:30**, all of which are driven by Christ's love for His church, **Colossians 3:19 / Colossians 3:21**.

Paul says husbands must not only love their wives but they mustn't be harsh with them, **Colossians 3:19**. If husbands don't treat their wives with respect, and if they don't see their wives as heirs of this wonderful life, God won't answer their prayers, **1 Peter 3:7 / Proverbs 31:10-12**.

Just because a wife submits to her husband doesn't mean she's our personal slave. Peter says husbands are to be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect, **1 Peter 3:7**.

Husbands need to consider their wives' needs, consider her desires, consider her feelings and thoughts, and respect her in all things, respect her opinions, respect everything she does and says. Marriage is about togetherness, completeness, oneness; it's about 'us'.

Husbands need to keep studying their wives, **Ephesians 5:28-30**. Before most people get married, there's usually a courting period that takes place first. It's then that we study each other's spiritual character, we study each other's humour, we study each other's mannerisms and let's be honest, we study each other's physical bodies. But after we had been married for a few years, we stopped studying each other.

Solomon, speaking in physical terms, speaks about studying each other, **Song of Songs 7:1-5**, but Paul is speaking in physical and spiritual terms. If Christ provides everything the church needs, He feeds her, He blesses her, and He protects her, then husbands should do the same with their wives.

What Christ provides for you as a Christian husband, you should provide for your Christian wife. If you're so important to Christ, then your wife should be just as important to you.

In **Ephesians 5:31-33**, Paul, quoting from **Genesis 2:24**, tells us that when a man and a woman come together in marriage, they become one. And he uses that text to describe Christ's relationship with His church, they have become one, **Ephesians 5:31**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Ephesians 5:32**.

'The mystery in view is the truth previously hidden but now brought to light. The relationship that exists between a husband and his wife is the same as the one that exists between Christ and His church. The church has as close a tie to Christ spiritually as a wife has to her husband spiritually. Paul revealed that **Genesis 2:24** contains a more profound truth than people previously realised. The mystery is great because it has far-reaching implications.'

He again reminds husbands that they should protect, defend, and provide for their wives, just as Christ does for His church. And if the husband does all these things, then his wife will truly respect him for it, **Ephesians 5:33**.

But that will only happen when the husband and the wife remember the words of Solomon, 'I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine,' **Song of Songs 6:3**. Someone once said that 'The Song of Songs' is the one book of the Bible dedicated solely to romantic love. They go on to say, 'Isn't it ironic that its initials are SOS!'

Our wives need to know that they aren't just our wives; they need to know that they're the wife of a man who treasures them and builds them up. As Christ is the head of the church, so also the husband is head of the family.

A wife should be submissive to her husband, and a husband should be submissive to his wife. A husband must sacrificially love his wife as Christ did for His church, and as Christ and His people are one, so also the husband and wife are one.

CHILDREN

‘Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.’ Colossians 3:20

So far, Paul has dealt with what it means for wives to submit to their husbands and how a husband should love his wife, and now he goes on to speak about why children need to obey and honour their parents, **Colossians 3:20 / Ephesians 6:1-3**.

Reminding children that they must obey their parents is almost old school these days because we’ve got to the point in our society where children have almost more rights than their parents. But whether society accepts this command or not is irrelevant, because God says, ‘it’s right for children to obey their parents’, **Ephesians 6:1**.

The greatest example of an obedient child is Jesus Himself, **Luke 2:51**. Mary and Joseph weren’t well off; they were poor, **Luke 2:24**, and I’m sure that being poor brought about a lot of financial stress on their family.

And like most parents, I doubt very much if they were perfect parents, but nonetheless, Jesus lived obediently under their roof for around thirty-three years, **Luke 2:51**.

I believe there are times when children shouldn’t obey their parents. For example, if our parents asked us to steal some food from the shop, should we obey them? If our parents fell away from the Lord, and they asked us to stop attending worship, should we obey them?

The Lord is above our parents, and there may come a time when you have to choose between obeying God and obeying your parents, **Luke 14:26-33**. Remember in the Old Testament when Saul asked his son Jonathan to help him kill David? **1 Samuel 19:1**.

There are times when children shouldn’t obey their parents. Jonathan refused to help his father to sin. He chose to obey God rather than his father, Saul, **1 Samuel 20:31-34**. And if children find themselves in a position where their parents want them to do something which goes against the Lord, then the child should refuse to obey them, **Matthew 10:37**.

What does it mean to ‘honour’ your father and mother? **Ephesians 6:2**. The word ‘honour’ basically means ‘heavy,’ which implies that our parents carry some weight in our lives. Our parents brought us into this world, they cared for us, nurtured us, fed us, clothed us, provided for our needs, loved us, kept us safe and watched us.

But it was God Himself who placed our parents over us. And He holds children especially accountable for our relationship with them because they share something of the honour of God Himself, **Ephesians 3:14-15**.

In other words, every family stems its existence, its concept, and its experience from God. We’re in a family and are under a father because God Himself created men and women in His likeness and created marriage and the family.

But how do you honour your parents? You listen carefully to their instructions, and we take any advice they give us seriously. Children often forget that their parents were young once, but now that they are older, they have many years of experience in life.

They’ve lived longer than their children, and they made some great choices in life, but also some bad ones. Children need to understand that their parents don’t want them to make the same mistakes they made, they want them to be wiser and help them make good decisions in life.

It was Mark Twain who said the following.

‘I thought my parents were out of it, that they were way behind the times, that they just didn’t get it, but once teenagers grow up and make it through that stage, there develops a new respect for the wisdom of parents.’

Not only are kids to honour their parents, listen to their parents and take their advice seriously, but they must also understand that God takes their obedience to their parents seriously too, **Deuteronomy 27:16 / Proverbs 20:20**. The Bible says that honouring your parents is a life and death choice.

The people who carry the most weight in a child's life should be their parents. Why? Because they've got a personal interest in their well-being, they've got a personal interest in their soul, and they want them to get to heaven more than anyone else on this planet, **John 10:10**.

Notice the reason Paul gives as to why children should honour their parents, **Ephesians 6:2-3**. Out of all the ten commandments, this is the only one that has the promise 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth,' **Exodus 20:12 / Deuteronomy 5:16**.

This doesn't mean that if children honour their parents, they'll live to one-hundred and get a letter from the king of England. There have been some godly people who've lived long, and there have been some who've died young, despite honouring their parents. Jesus was obedient to His parents, but He still died at thirty-three years of age.

So, what does it mean? The answer is simple, just like God, parents want things to go well for their children, they want them to have a long life. Too many kids' lives have come to an end prematurely simply because they haven't listened to their parents' advice, **Proverbs 15:5**.

FATHERS

'Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.' **Colossians 3:21**

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'This idea would have been revolutionary in its day; in the first-century Roman Empire, fathers could do pretty much what they liked in their families. They could even sentence family members to death, **Genesis 22:1-14 / Genesis 38:24 / Deuteronomy 21:18-21**.'

If fathers want their children to know what God is like, then they must show them through their lives, their speech, and their conduct, **Ephesians 6:4**. The way fathers conduct themselves is a reflection of the way God portrays Himself to us.

Paul says one of the goals of being a good father is to raise our children without discouraging them, **Colossians 3:21**. That word 'discouraged' carries with it the idea of losing heart and being spiritless.

When it comes to raising our children, fathers need to instil hope in their children's lives, and they need to show them what it means to be happy, confident, and courageous.

In today's society, children are being raised to put their hope in their looks, wealth, and popularity, but that's not the kind of hope Paul has in mind. He's speaking about giving our children hope in God, not things.

Fathers shouldn't discourage their children but give them hope in God. Children need to experience happiness, the happiness which can only come from knowing God, **Romans 5:3-4 / Psalm 4:7-8**.

Fathers shouldn't discourage their children but fill them with joy in God by helping them to hope in God. I don't believe there's anything wrong with instilling self-confidence in a child, but there comes a point when they can easily become too self-confident in themselves, **2 Corinthians 1:9**. We need to help them become more God-confident in their lives.

Paul not only says, 'don't discourage your children', but he also says, 'Fathers, do not embitter your children,' **Colossians 3:21**. That word 'embitter' or 'exasperate' carries with it the idea of over-exercising your authority.

Remember, Paul said, ‘children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord,’ **Colossians 3:20**. When we put these two sentences together, it’s clear that God has given parents tremendous authority and responsibility. But Paul’s warning here for fathers is that they shouldn’t misuse that God-given authority.

Fathers, instead of discouraging their children, should train them and instruct them in God’s Word, **Proverbs 22:6**. Solomon says children who learn righteous living in the home will have a standard to which they’re able to return if they wander into a life of sin. Fathers must teach God’s Word to their children, and they must show them an example of what it means to live as Christians.

MOTHERS

Although Paul doesn’t deal with mothers here, let me share a few thoughts on mothers because I don’t know of a more special group of people who have a huge impact on a child’s life than mothers, **2 Timothy 1:5**.

The first thing we learn concerning Timothy’s mother and grandmother is that they were women of sincere faith. Their faith was so sincere that Paul says to Timothy, ‘I see it in you’, **2 Timothy 1:5**.

Now here’s the interesting part about Timothy’s mother and grandmother: we don’t know when these women became Christians, but what we do know is what Luke tells us: ‘Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek,’ **Acts 16:1**.

It’s possible that Lois had been converted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and had come home to tell her daughter. It’s also possible that both women were devout Jews who responded to Paul’s preaching when he visited Lystra. All we know about Timothy’s father is that he apparently was a Greek unbeliever.

Why a godly woman of faith like Eunice would marry a pagan man, no one knows, but Eunice’s story is in the Bible to give hope to women in mixed marriages. If her son, Timothy, could grow up to follow the Lord as he did, then God can do the same for your children, even if your husband isn’t a believer.

God intends for the father to take the lead in the spiritual training of the children, but mothers can still have a great impact even in situations where the father is opposed to God. This must involve having a sincere faith, **2 Timothy 1:5**. Sincere faith means that mothers sincerely live what they believe, they spend time with their kids, reading the Bible and praying together. Sincere faith means that mothers show their kids that they’re not perfect but are always trying to please the Lord.

It means they develop godly character qualities and attitudes of submission, thankfulness, and joy in the Lord, demonstrating that kind of faith will have a huge impact on children’s lives.

Timothy’s father wasn’t the man to instil that kind of faith in his son’s life, but his mother and grandmother did just that. Timothy could see the Lord in them, and it attracted him to the Lord. One of the main ways to instil that faith in our children is by training them in God’s Word, **2 Timothy 3:14**.

This tells us that Timothy was clearly influenced by God’s Word; he was looking at his mother’s and grandmother’s lives and comparing the way they lived with the Scriptures. Over time, he became convinced that the Scriptures were reliable and true. Mothers should never underestimate the power of God’s Word to save.

Godly mothers will not only train their children in God’s Word, but they will also use God’s Word to lead them to saving faith in Jesus, **2 Timothy 3:15**. Children need to know more than just that Jesus loves them and wants to be their friend.

When they get to a certain age, they need to know what God's Word says about the condition of their hearts. They need to understand why Christ came in the first place and died on that cross. They need to understand that they can't earn God's forgiveness but simply receive it.

They need to know that they are sinners in need of salvation. Godly mothers will not only train their children in God's Word and use God's Word to lead them to saving faith in Jesus. But they will also train their children how to live by God's Word, **2 Peter 1:3-4**.

Mothers don't have to go outside of God's Word to teach their children how to live, **2 Timothy 3:16**. We don't know what the lifelong impact Lois and Eunice had on young Timothy.

Yes, he was raised in the Scriptures, yes, he became a Christian and a close friend of Paul, but we mustn't lose sight of the fact that the foundation of his faith was laid by his godly mother and grandmother.

There's an important point which needs to be raised here concerning raising children. Just because mothers raise their children in the Scriptures, just because they showed them what saving faith looks like, just because they've demonstrated to them how the Christian life is, this is no guarantee that they will grow up to become Christians or stay faithful all their lives.

Now, mothers especially feel like they've failed if their kids don't become Christians or fall away, but they're not a failure; not once in the Scriptures does it say parents are responsible for their children becoming Christians or remaining faithful.

If God holds mothers accountable for anything, it's raising their child up in His ways, **Proverbs 22:6**, but becoming a Christian is their choice, and remaining faithful is their choice.

SLAVES

'Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism.' **Colossians 3:22-25**

How do you become a slave? You could become a slave in one of three ways.

1. Your father was a slave, and if his dad was a slave and he was born into that family, he was the owner's property. The owner could sell him and do whatever he wants with him.
2. Maybe he was a thief who stole money, and under Jewish or even Roman law, if you stole and could not pay back, then they could take you as a slave.
3. Maybe he was a murderer, but instead of killing him, they would decide to give him to the victim's family and the family could take him, sell him or do whatever they liked.

For whatever reason, a slave has no rights whatsoever; he was a piece of property, and his masters owned him. And at the slave market, they would auction them off; someone would buy them for so many shekels, and now the slave belongs to him.

Imagine when the slave's new master takes him home. Who is going to supply a bed for the slave? His master is going to supply a place for him to sleep. In the morning, where is the slave going to get food from? The slave doesn't

have any food with him, so his master has to feed him. The master has to feed, clothe and provide a place for his slave to sleep.

The slave depended completely on the master for his life; he had nothing if the master did not provide it for him. That meant that the slave didn't worry because he simply depended on the master, but no matter what the master said, the slave had to do it.

There is a section in Deuteronomy which describes a special rule for slaves and their masters, **Deuteronomy 15:12-17**. On occasion, a Hebrew would end up purchasing a fellow Hebrew as a slave, **Deuteronomy 15:12**.

Can you imagine for a moment that you are a Hebrew, and you have served me for six years? **Deuteronomy 15:12**. And congratulations, it's your seventh year, you've served me, and now you are free to go.

However, when we read on, the text says, 'and when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. Give to them as the LORD your God has blessed you,' **Deuteronomy 15:13-14**.

Now, if this were to apply to today, if I were to give the slave £5, the Lord would ask, is this supplying him liberally? No. Liberally is saying, 'here is a blank cheque, here are the keys to a brand-new car for you, which is parked outside and there is a holiday villa which is yours waiting in Hawaii.'

The slave has just gone from being a slave with nothing to having a charge account, a car, and a place to live. I have supplied him liberally now. Now, any slave is saying, 'this is my lucky day' and most slaves would say, 'thank you very much' when the master says, 'ok, it's all yours, you're free to go'. But as the slave begins to go, he turns and says, 'I don't want to go'.

Deuteronomy 15:16 says, when the servant says, 'You know what, master, I appreciate all of this, but I'd rather stay, you take care of me, you give me life, I don't have to worry, can I stay?'

The Scripture says, 'If he says that, then you take him to the doorpost of your house'. The reason you would go to the doorpost is that there is a strong piece of wood, and then you take an awl, which is a metal object used to poke holes in leather.

You would take his ear, and you would take a hammer, and you would drive it through his ear, piercing his ear. And in that hole, you would hang something from it, which probably had his master's name on it, and for the rest of their life, they were your servant.

Though in this context Paul deals specifically with slave-master relationships that were the common work relationships of the Roman Empire, the principles that he discusses here should also be applied to employee-employer relationships. In such societies, an employee isn't under bondage as a slave, for he can quit the job whenever he so desires, **1 Corinthians 7:17-24**.

However, he is to treat his employer with no less respect and servitude than Paul here enjoins servants to respect their masters, **Ephesians 6:6**. We would conclude that an employee in today's economic structure should treat his employer with even greater servitude in view of the fact that he has the freedom to quit the job.

In all things, the Christian employee must remember that it's his responsibility to make his employer successful. If, through irresponsible conduct, he does not, he will be out of a job and subsequently bring shame on the name of Jesus.

Slaves should obey their masters with a sincere heart, **Colossians 3:23-25** / **Ephesians 6:6**. If they give grudging service, such will bring harshness upon them by their masters. Their service should be motivated by a heart that fears God.

In the Old Testament, the fear of God was in reference to our obedience to God. Those who feared God obeyed His commandments. In this context, when we fear God, we will be the best employees we can possibly be in response to the will of God.

‘Work at it with all your heart’, Colossians 3:23, should be the attitude of all Christians who serve either masters or employers, Ecclesiastes 9:10 / Romans 12:11.

Paul’s point is that Christianity changes the nature of our service to others. Those employees who are in the world may give grudging service to their employers, but not so with Christians.

Their attitude toward their masters and employers should be based on their fear of God, 1 Peter 2:18-25. The service of the Christian is given to others as if they were working for the Lord, and not a master or employer, Ephesians 6:6-7. When the Christian is working for their living, therefore, they are working on behalf of the Lord, Ephesians 6:7. When we become a Christian, our attitude changes concerning our work in making a living. As Christians, we go to work every day for the Lord, not for people. By working to earn a living to support our own necessities, we earn in order to help the poor and to support the Gospel being spread throughout the world, Romans 10:15 / Philippians 4:17. Those servants and employees who do wrong to their masters and employers will reap what they sow. Both servants and masters, employees and employers should work in view of the fact that all men will stand in judgment before God, Ephesians 6:8 / 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Wood, in his commentary, says the following concerning Ephesians 6:8.

‘Like Jesus himself, Paul does not shrink from referring to rewards.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Whatever people may do, Christ will reward all of his workmen at last. It is the consciousness which would enable the workman, even though he was a slave, ‘to work zestfully and cheerfully even for a master who was unreasonable in his demands and impossible to please.’

As Christians, we must remember that all our service in this world to others is in view of the fact that God served our sin problem through Jesus. We all have to remember, whether slave or master, that on Judgement Day, the only people that will walk through the pearly gates are those who respond to the words, ‘well done, good and faithful servant!’ Matthew 25:21.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.’
Colossians 4:1

MASTERS

Paul continues to encourage masters to deal fairly with their servants, [Ephesians 6:9](#) / [Colossians 4:1](#) / [James 5:4](#).

Christian masters must understand that they will also give an account before their Master in heaven.

Therefore, they should deal with their servants or today's employees, in view of the fact that they will stand in judgment for their own behaviour. It's an encouragement that is based on the concept that they should do to others as they would want the Lord to do to them, [Matthew 7:12](#).

We all have to remember, whether slave or master, that on Judgement Day, the only people that will walk through the pearly gates are those who respond to the words, 'well done, good and faithful servant!' [Matthew 25:21](#).

FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.' [Colossians 4:2-6](#)

Paul asks the Colossian Christians to 'devote themselves to prayer,' [Colossians 4:2](#). In other words, pray continually, [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) / [Psalm 55:16-17](#) / [Daniel 6:10](#).

McGee, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is like breathing: inhale by prayer, exhale by thanksgiving.'

This is a request that Paul would often ask of the churches: [Romans 12:12](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) / [Luke 18:1-8](#) / [Luke 2:36-38](#) / [Colossians 1:9](#) / [Colossians 4:12](#). We need prayer warriors today, saints who will pray for everything and anyone.

They are the examples for those who only pray when things get tough. But notice that Paul also says we should be 'watchful', [Colossians 4:2](#). This reminds us of what Jesus taught the disciples in [Mark 13:32-33](#).

But what are we watching out for? We're praying watchfully so that we won't be caught out by Satan and temptation. We're praying watchfully so that we remember that death is a reality and the judgement to follow. We're praying watchfully so that we remember that heaven is our goal and our prize for our faithfulness.

Paul continues and reminds us that we should be 'thankful', [Colossians 4:2](#). Look at how many times Paul has mentioned this just in the Book of Colossians, [Colossians 1:3](#) / [Colossians 1:12](#) / [Colossians 2:7](#) / [Colossians 3:15](#) / [Colossians 3:17](#) / [Colossians 4:2](#). We have much to be thankful for as Christians, which is why our prayers should reflect that thankfulness, [Philippians 4:6](#).

But not only should we be praying regularly whilst watching and giving thanks, but we also need to pray with a purpose in mind. Paul asks for the prayers of the saints, [Colossians 4:3](#). We need to get into the habit of asking people to pray for us, [Romans 15:30-32](#). Notice Paul asks the Colossians for three specific prayer requests.

1. Opportunity, which he calls an open door, [Colossians 4:3](#).

We cannot open doors by ourselves; we need God to open the doors to people's hearts so that they can receive the Gospel and, Lord willing, respond to it, [2 Thessalonians 3:1](#) / [Acts 16:14](#).

Nielson, in his commentary, says the following.

'This reminds us that even though the spread of the gospel is under divine direction, [Acts 16:7](#), it is also subject to satanic hindrances, [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#).'

2. We need to pray that we can explain the mystery of Christ, [Ephesians 1:9](#) / [Ephesians 3:3](#) / [Ephesians 3:9](#) / [Colossians 1:26-27](#) / [1 Timothy 3:9](#) / [1 Timothy 3:16](#), and His message, [Colossians 4:3](#).

This takes wisdom, as everyone we meet is different. Some people need to be approached differently from others; some people know a little about the Gospel, and others know nothing. We should take people from where they're at and lead them to a fuller understanding of the Scriptures, [Acts 8:30-35](#).

3. We need to pray that we can share that message clearly and with boldness, [Colossians 4:4](#) / [Ephesians 6:19-20](#). Paul continues and reminds the Colossians that they need wisdom in the way they act towards others, [Colossians 4:5](#). Sometimes, the best sermons ever preached are preached without the use of words, [1 Peter 3:1-2](#) / [1 Peter 2:15](#). Another reason we need wisdom is that time is precious, Paul says, 'make the most of every opportunity,' [Colossians 4:5](#). Sometimes in life, we waste our God-given time doing things that are irrelevant or arguing over things that are pointless, [Ephesians 5:15-17](#).

Here are the lyrics to a song called 'Life means so much' by Chris Rice. I think they are very appropriate.

Every day is a bank account, and time is our currency.
So, no one's rich, nobody's poor. We get twenty-four hours each.
So, how are you gonna spend? Will you invest or squander?
Try to get ahead Or help someone who's under.
Teach us to count the days,
Teach us to make the days count.
Lead us in better ways,
Somehow our souls forgot,
Life means so much. Life means so much.

Paul continues to remind the Colossians that 'our conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone', [Colossians 4:6](#) / [1 Peter 3:15](#).

McGee, in his commentary, says the following.

'A child of God should have a conversation that deters evil. It should withhold evil rather than promote it. I think it also means that a Christian should not be boring.'

Whether we're aware of it or not, our words can either help someone understand the Gospel or put them off the Gospel for life, [James 3:2-12](#). And so, we all need to learn to speak with grace, [Colossians 4:6](#) / [Ephesians 5:29](#). Paul says our speech should also be 'seasoned with salt', [Colossians 4:6](#). Anything which is seasoned with salt is appealing to the taste. The speech that comes from the Christian's mouth should be of such a nature that it is appealing to those who hear.

Gentle speech that comes from a meek heart draws people to our demeanour. Harsh speech repels people, [James 3:1-12](#). Christians should develop a manner of speech that is pleasant and inoffensive to all with whom they come into contact, [Mark 9:50](#).

Notice Paul says, 'so that you may know how to answer everyone', [Colossians 4:6](#). We need to admit that we don't know the answers to every single conceivable question we get asked.

In some cases, the best way to answer someone is simply by being truthful, and if we don't have the answer, go to someone who does and then go back and share your answer with the person who asked the question in the first place. We especially need to watch our language around those who aren't Christians, [2 Timothy 2:23-26](#).

FINAL GREETINGS

'Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.' [Colossians 4:7-9](#)

If people are important to God, then they should be important to us. Here, Paul introduces us to two men who are described as messengers, which tells us he had a special relationship with both.

TYCHICUS

Tychicus is described as ‘a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord’, [Colossians 4:7](#). We read of him as one of those who accompanied Paul in [Acts 20:4](#).

Paul says he sent him with ‘the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts,’ [Colossians 4:8](#). This was something he did for Paul at Ephesus, [2 Timothy 4:12](#) / [Ephesians 6:21-22](#). And for many years, he continually served Paul as a messenger, [Titus 3:12](#).

ONESIMUS

Onesimus is described as ‘our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you,’ [Colossians 4:9](#). He was from Colossae, and we know from the letter to Philemon that he was a runaway slave who was converted by Paul and sent back to Philemon. The letter to Philemon is heart-warming and full of love. He, too, was serving as a messenger for Paul, [Philemon 1-25](#).

‘My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.’ [Colossians 4:10-11](#)

Paul continues and reminds us of three more men who are described as comforters.

ARISTARCHUS

Aristarchus is described as Paul’s ‘co-workers for the kingdom of God,’ [Colossians 4:10](#). He also had been a fellow traveller of Paul, [Acts 20:4](#). Aristarchus was the one who nearly lost his life to the riot in Ephesus, [Acts 19:29](#). He continued with Paul and went on to Rome with him, [Acts 27:2](#). And was now in Rome with Paul, he’s sending his greetings, [Philemon 1:23-24](#).

MARK

The next comforter mentioned is Mark, [Colossians 4:10](#). He is the writer of his Gospel, probably with Peter’s help, and was the cousin of Barnabas. The church in Jerusalem met in his mother’s house, [Acts 12:12](#).

Later, he started with Paul and Barnabas on their first journey, but then turned back, [Acts 13:1-13](#). He became a problem between Paul and Barnabas. Maybe Paul thought he was too young and inexperienced, maybe Mark was a ‘mummy’s boy’, we simply don’t know what the problem Paul had with him, [Acts 15:36-41](#).

But whatever the reason was, Paul didn't want him on that trip; he eventually proved helpful to Paul for service, 2 Timothy 4:11. Even now, he is included with those who Paul said, 'have proved a comfort to me,' Colossians 4:11. Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

'John Mark is an encouragement to everyone who has failed in his first attempts to serve God. He did not sit around and sulk. He got back into the ministry and proved himself faithful to the Lord and to the Apostle Paul.'

JESUS, CALLED JUSTUS

The next comforter is Jesus, called Justus, meaning 'The Just One', Colossians 4:11. We don't know much about him, except that he was a 'Jew and a co-worker for the kingdom' and, of course, he, too, was a comfort to Paul. Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The 'kingdom of God' here probably refers to the domain over which Christ presently rules in contrast to Satan's domain, Colossians 1:13.'

These guys were all great encouragers and just as Barnabas, the son of encouragement, had been the one to encourage a young man who made a mistake, John Mark and made him helpful, so now that young man with two others were comforting the apostle Paul in his trials, Colossians 4:11. With such comfort, Paul was able to continue his work while awaiting trial before Caesar.

Findlay, in his commentary, says the following.

'The word here rendered 'comfort' comes from a Greek word meaning 'soothing relief,' the same Greek word chosen as the name of a widely used medicine for children, 'paregoric.'

'Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.' Colossians 4:12-13

EPAPHRAS

Paul continues to describe another man named Epaphras, who was a prayer warrior, Colossians 4:12. He was more than likely the man who planted and started the church in Colossae, Colossians 1:7-8. He was from Colossae and cared deeply for them and those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. He, too, was a fellow prisoner of Paul, Colossians 4:13 / Philemon 23.

Many of us stay miles away from other Christians, especially those who are abroad, and so, to a degree, our help is limited, but we can certainly pray for them, as prayer knows no length. This is what Epaphras did: he prayed for his brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter where they were in the world, Colossians 4:12.

The word 'wrestling', Colossians 4:12, in Greek is the word 'agonizomai', and it is used to describe a woman in labour pains in giving birth. It's also a word that was used to refer to a runner who was earnestly striving to finish a race under great determination. Our English word 'agony' comes from this word. With such striving, we should also offer our prayers to God, Luke 22:44.

Notice Epaphras' prayer; it had meaning and purpose. He wants his brothers and sisters in Christ to 'stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured,' Colossians 4:12.

Here is at least one thing that must be mentioned in our prayers for the brethren. We must pray that brethren base their faith and life on the word of God. We must pray that disciples mature in the faith and maintain their assurance in the grace of God, 2 Peter 3:18.

Paul says that ‘he is working hard for you and those at Laodicea and Hierapolis,’ Colossians 4:13. This should be an encouragement for all evangelists today. Our behaviour towards our brethren makes a difference. They should zealously labour on behalf of the church to do the desires of brethren who support and send them out into the world. By saying this, Paul is reassuring these three churches that Epaphras has been a zealous worker on behalf of the saints in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis, who possibly joined together in sending him to Rome, Colossians 4:13. Evangelists need encouragement too, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2.

‘Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.’ Colossians 4:14

LUKE

Paul continues and describes two other men who send their greetings. Luke, the writer of his Gospel and Acts, was Paul’s personal doctor and the beloved physician who was a fellow traveller with Paul on a number of his journeys. The ‘we’ and ‘us’ are referring to Luke, Acts 16:10 / Acts 20:5 / Acts 27:1.

Luke was used by the Holy Spirit to write over half of the New Testament. He wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, and in total volume, they constitute the majority of the New Testament. He was faithful to Paul to the end, 2 Timothy 4:11.

DEMAS

And then Paul mentioned Demas, who was later to desert him, 2 Timothy 4:10. However, during the time Paul wrote this letter, he was a fellow worker, Philemon 1:24.

‘Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you, in turn, read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.’ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.’ Colossians 4:15-18

There was an assembly of saints that met in the house of Nympha as there were no church buildings in Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, Colossians 4:15. Christians assembled in the homes of the members as they did throughout the world at the time this letter was written, Acts 12:12 / Romans 16:3-5 / 1 Corinthians 1:11 / 1 Corinthians 16:19 / Philemon 1-2.

It was a natural environment for the assembly of the disciples, an environment in which close relationships could be established and maintained. Meeting in small groups in homes exemplified the nature of the fellowship that God intended should be maintained among His people when they encountered one another. We must assume that the church in every city was larger than any single group of disciples who could meet in a single house.

We don’t have anything about ‘the letter from Laodicea’, Colossians 4:16, and it’s difficult to determine what letter is here referred to by Paul. Some students believe that this letter was a specific letter that was written to the saints in Laodicea and was eventually lost.

Other Bible students believe that Paul refers to the Ephesian letter, which was a general letter in the sense that it was written to saints in the area of western Asia Minor. This cannot be definitely confirmed, though this was probably the case. But we do know what the church in Laodicea was like, Revelation 3:14-22.

ARCHIPPUS

Paul here encourages Archippus to complete the work of an evangelist to which he had committed himself to do, Colossians 4:17 / 1 Timothy 4:6 / Philemon 1:2. He was to do the work of evangelism, 2 Timothy 4:5. Archippus may have become discouraged, and so, he needed this Spirit-inspired admonition to get on with the work that he had determined to do.

Paul concluded in the greeting of this letter that he personally wrote the letter, Colossians 4:18. He also concluded by asking for their prayers since he was in prison on behalf of the Gospel and was facing possible death.

We're assured that this prayer of the Colossian saints on behalf of Paul was answered, for it seems that he was released from prison in order to continue his ministry, Acts 28:30-31.

Paul finished his letter, Colossians 4:18, using the very words he began them with, Colossians 1:2. He wanted them to be blessed with God's grace, God's continuing unmerited favour.