

The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians

Teaching Series Conducted At
West Side Church of God in Christ
Rockford, Illinois
by
Pastor Maurice A. West
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Blessings upon you, people of the most high God! As you prepare to read this study, it is my prayer that it will be a blessing to you. This study was conducted at West Side Church of God in Christ in our Friday evening teaching services. For such a short book, we took a lot of time to dig out what Paul was trying to share with the Church in his final days. I hope this study is a blessing to you and gives you the encouragement you need to dig deeper into the Word of God. I speak blessings into your lives in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Maurice A. West – November 6, 2009

THE LEGAL DISCLAIMERS

There will be various translations of the Scriptures used in our study. If we depart from the King James Version, which will be our standard, what follows are the typical translations used:

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- **Net Bible** – The Net Bible. Copyright © 1996-2003, Biblical Studies Press
- **NIV** – The New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.
- **NKJV** – The New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
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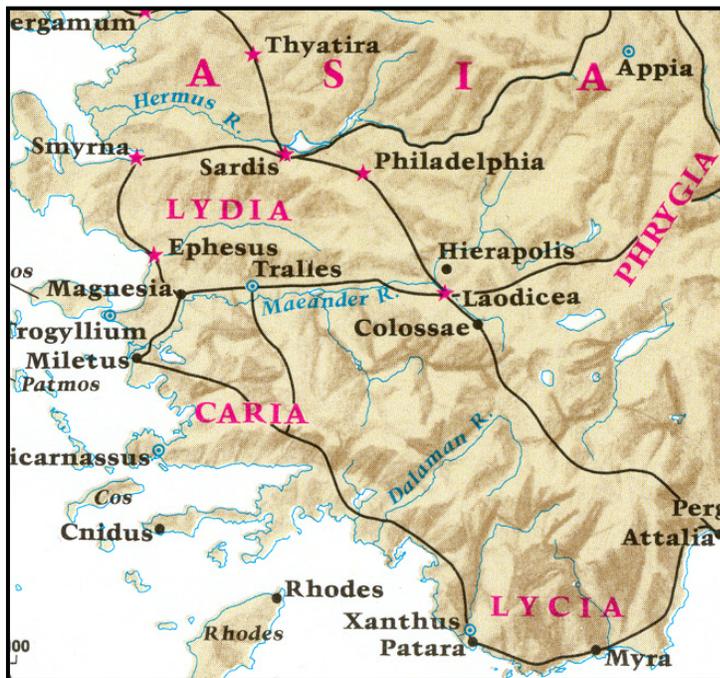
At various times in this study, you may also find the following designations referring to reference material used to assist in putting together this study. Direct quotations will be shown in italicized text.

- {**Adam Clarke**} Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Whole Bible
- {**David Guzik**} Guzik, David. “Study Guide for Colossians.” Enduring Word Ministries
- {**JF&B**} The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary
- {**Matthew Henry**} Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume
- {**Dake**} Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible
- {**McGee**} Thru the Bible Commentary Series by Dr. J. Vernon McGee

If other references, commentators, or Bible translations are used they will be identified in the text.

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL: {JF&B} “*Colosse (or, as it is spelt in the best manuscripts, ‘Colassæ’) was a city of Phrygia, on the river Lycus, a branch of the Meander. The Church there was mainly composed of Gentiles (compare Colossians 2:13).*” Although Paul did not plant this church, it is said that the founder was a convert from Paul’s work at Ephesus so Paul felt a responsibility to this church. As you can see from the map on the next page, the Colossian church was located in a region that is renown in Scripture for the spread of the Gospel. Dr. McGee states that four great epistles left Rome at the same time written by the dictate of Paul: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. They were secreted out of Rome by four different people and, according to Dr. McGee, they represent the “*anatomy of the church – they belong together to make a whole.*” Ephesians focuses on the Body of Christ. Colossians directs us to the head of the Body, Christ. Philippians shows the Body walking here on earth, as Christian living is the main theme. Philemon brings a practical example of that Body living on earth showing us what to do in a unique situation.



WRITER: It is clear from the opening verse that this epistle was written by the Apostle Paul. However, rather than just end with that point, Matthew Henry provides other pertinent information related to this church. {Matthew Henry} “*This epistle, like that to the Romans, was written to those he had never seen, nor had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul’s ministry, but by the ministry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. [It] was a flourishing church and one which was eminent and famous among the churches.*”

DATE: Three different scholars have come up with three different years for the writing

of the Epistle. However, their opinions are so close that we can settle that the book was written between 62-64 A.D.; the first half of that decade. That date is important because this was one of the last epistles of Paul. The great and severe persecution of the church under Nero began in 64 A.D. and Paul was beheaded by Nero between that time and 68 A.D., the time of Nero’s death. Therefore, this book represents one of the final letters in the life of Paul when he was pouring out everything God had given him for the benefit of the church.

- {Matthew Henry} “*It was written about the same time with the epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, A.D. 62, and in the same place, while [Paul] was now a prisoner at Rome.*”
- {David Guzik} “*The author is Paul; he wrote the letter while in prison (Colossians 4:3, 4:10, and 4:18), probably from Rome and around 63 A.D.*”
- {Dake} “*[The epistle was] written from Rome about 64 A.D.*”

STATISTICS: {Dake} *Colossians is the 51st book of the Bible. It contains 4 chapters and 95 verses.*

WHY THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN:

- {Matthew Henry} “*The design of the epistle is to warn [the Colossians] of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their steadfastness and constancy, and encourages them to perseverance.*”
- {JF&B} “*The object of the Epistle is to counteract Jewish false teaching, by setting before the Colossians their true standing in Christ alone (exclusive of all other heavenly beings), the majesty of His person, and the completeness of the redemption wrought by Him; hence they ought to be conformed to their risen Lord, and to exhibit that conformity in all the relations of ordinary life. ‘New moon, Sabbath days,’ shows that the false teaching opposed in this Epistle is that of Judaizing Christians. These mixed up with pure Christianity Oriental theosophy and angel-worship, and the asceticism of certain sections of the*

Jews. These theosophists promised to their followers a deeper insight into the world of spirits, and a nearer approach to heavenly purity and intelligence, than the simple Gospel affords.”

WHY IS THIS EPISTLE IMPORTANT TO US? This epistle was written to the Colossian church, a mostly Gentile church, who were trying to live the Christian life while fighting false teaching that had grown up in that region. (Wow! Doesn't that sound like us today?) To overcome this, Paul focused on the superiority of Christ in all things. When we get side tracked into areas of life not supported by the Gospel, we need to move back to the key to the Gospel and our salvation – Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The small epistle introduces the great doctrine of the pre-eminence of Christ in the first chapter. It reveals the role of Christ now and prior to his incarnation in Bethlehem so that we can understand that He is all we need.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Throughout the text, I have added what I call “**Saints' Principles**.” The intention of these principles is to point out truths applicable to any level in the church, strictly as I see them, based on something that has occurred in the Scripture. I may also add “**Leadership Principles**” if I find something that would be of help to leaders directing God's people to more closeness with Him.

Chapter 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: The most important thing to learn in this chapter, and there are many wonderful subjects, is to grasp the revelation of the pre-eminence of Christ prior to His incarnation and after.

THE OPENING OF THE EPISTLE

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, As is typical of his epistles, the apostle identifies himself as the writer in the first verse. (This is why the identify of the author of the Book of Hebrews is often a source of great controversy and intellectual discussion in the church. It does not follow this pattern.) As I said in our opening, Paul wrote this book from Rome while he was imprisoned for the Gospel.

Because he had never been to Colosse, Paul identifies himself as one of the apostles of the church. He was not an apostle because he chose this name to appear superior to fellow ministers of the gospels but he was an apostle “by the will of God”. Those that truly understand the ministry of the apostle did not embrace it as readily as people do today because of the higher level of suffering involved with that ministry. {Matthew Henry} “*An apostle is a prime-minister in the kingdom of Christ, immediately called by Christ, and extraordinarily qualified; his work was peculiarly to plant the Christian church, and confirm the Christian doctrine.*”

He also identifies that Timothy was with him in Rome and sends his regards with this letter. {David Guzik} “*Timothy was an honored companion of Paul, but he was not an apostle. That title was not passed around lightly in the early church.*” Paul does not identify Timothy as “his son” but as “our brother”. Paul was nearing the end of his ministry and by this time Timothy was a seasoned veteran of the Gospel and known in that region. {JF&B} “*He had been companion of Paul in his first tour through Phrygia, in which Colosse was. Hence the Colossians seem to have associated him with Paul in their affections, and the apostle joins him with himself in the address. Neither, probably, had seen the Colossian Church (compare Col. 2:1); but had seen, during their tour through Phrygia, individual Colossians, as Epaphras, Philemon, Archippus, and Apphia (Phm. 1:2), who when converted brought the Gospel to their native city.*”

What a powerful, small opening Paul has given us! We now know the writer of the letter, his position in the Church, and who sends greetings with him.

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 2, we find out who the letter was written to. It is coming to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse. Just to clear the air, the term “saints” refers to those who have been “set apart” for God. In spite of teaching today that attempts to elevate one group of Christians above another, every Christian is a saint and every saint is a Christian. However, as you go further in that verse, every Christian is not necessarily one that could be called part of the “faithful brethren”. There were some Christians at Colosse that had embraced false teaching and some, the faithful brethren, which had not. We have a similar situation here in churches today. There are church members (the saints) and then there are the “faithful few”. Most services and special events are designed for the saints but could not be executed without the “faithful few”. Now that we know who the letter is written to, Paul provides his “standard” opening, which has opened the door for controversy among church circles because on face value it looks like he is separating the Trinity and making God one person and Christ another person. We will not justify that with a response at this time but I believe it will become clearer later in this chapter.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, I was recently talking with one of the evangelists in our church and she said that she has particular people and positions she prays for on different days of the week. As I thought about this, I found this remarkable and began to embrace this in my prayer time because, in this manner, you can be sure to have the testimony of Paul to anyone you meet that you are “praying always” for them. In addition, Paul was in prison so the things of life did not easily distract him but he only had to be concerned about visits, which were probably infrequent, from other saints. This gave him the opportunity to increase his prayer time. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: When your natural life routine is interrupted, use this time to increase your spiritual life routine.**

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, 5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; NLT For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God’s people, which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. Once Paul and those with him learned of the faith of the Colossians in the saving power of Jesus Christ and the love they show to ALL the saints, this triggered their ongoing prayers for them. {Matthew Henry} “*We must love all the saints, bear an extensive kindness and good-will to good men, notwithstanding smaller points of difference, and many real weaknesses. Some understand it of their charity to the saints in necessity, which is one branch and evidence of Christian love.*” The Colossians obviously did not pick out petty differences in other saints that could be used for reasons of isolation. When we do this, we’re just falling into the enemy’s trap! They understood that we’re ALL going to the Holy City one day (not one for Pentecostal people, one for Baptists, one for Catholics, etc.) and the prospect of heaven changed their life. The church today must have forgotten that this life is only a few minutes when compared to eternity because we’re so busy fighting each other here!

Verse 5 says that the Colossians were consistent in their focus on heaven – they had this since they first heard the truth of the Good News. This is what we must be – consistent in our focus. Once we forget that our goal is heaven, we get too wrapped up in this life.

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: NLT This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace. Paul, in his opening, gives them a quick summary of what is happening in other places. It’s always good to know that the Gospel is being preached and changing lives. That’s the essence of the power of the Gospel. Once we get away from that for ANY reason, how can what we preach about have any type of effect? **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: There’s nothing that compares to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!**

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; {Adam Clarke} “*Who this Epaphras was we cannot tell; only it is likely that he was a Colossian, and became, by the call and grace of Christ, a deacon of this Church, faithfully laboring with the apostle, to promote its best interests. Some think that he is the same with Epaphroditus, Epaphras being a contraction of that name, as Demas is of Demetrius. That he was a Colossian is evident from Colossians 4:12. Some think that he was the first who preached the Gospel among this people, and hence called an apostle. He was raised up among themselves to be their minister in the absence of the apostle, and he showed himself to be worthy of this*

calling by a faithful discharge of his ministry, and by laboring fervently for them all, and pressing them forward, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Epaphras was probably the one who carried this epistle from Rome to the church. He met with Paul in his imprisonment and shared his concerns on the direction of the church, which prompted Paul to write this epistle. He was responsible for originally bringing the Gospel to the Colossians and probably was saved under Paul’s ministry at Ephesus, which was only 75-100 miles from Colosse.

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. Epaphras was, no doubt, proud of his home church and the work the Lord had enabled him to do. Paul also mentions that this love could not exist without the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not emphasized in this book but it is only by the Spirit of God that Paul could receive the great revelation he is about to share beginning starting in verse 13.

MULTIPLE PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE COLOSSIANS

SIDE ROAD: Epaphras has obviously communicated the intimate details of the Colossian Church so well that Paul, in his excitement for their success, has laid out specific things that he wants God to do in blessing them. In the next few verses, we’ll see six requests that he before the Lord for them.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; From the time Paul and those with him heard about the spiritual success of the Colossian Church they went on a prayer mission for them to be blessed. They wanted the Colossians to be: **(1) BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S WILL IN WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING.** The first thing every saint needs to know is the will of God and have the wisdom and spiritual understanding necessary to understand and perform His will. So many have wrecked their lives by moving hastily in things that appeared to be good but that were not necessarily in the will of God. I heard you. You asked, “But isn’t every good thing in the will of God?” Rather than answer that specifically, I’ll direct you to Acts 16:6-7. In these verses, Paul and his group tried to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ (not engage in some secular pursuit) in two areas where the Holy Ghost said, “NO!” Wasn’t that also a good thing? Once we know the will of God and have the wisdom and spiritual understanding to implement that will, we begin to operate strategically with God as He moves us to where He wants and for His purpose. If Paul did not know the will of God, he could have gone into those areas with the Gospel but he would not have had the success he was about to experience later in the same chapter in a different region.

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; **(2) WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD TO THE POINT OF PLEASING HIM.** The writer of Hebrews notes that the testimony of Enoch, the mysterious (because we don’t know much about him) holy man of the Book of Genesis was that he pleased God. The Lord Jesus spoke often of being counted worthy of the Lord. This is not something we often deal with because we feel that we’re automatically worthy because of the blood of Christ. This is true but our “worthy walk” is a demonstration of our allegiance and appreciation to the Lord.

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; **(3) BE STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT BY GOD’S GLORIOUS POWER.** We need God’s power to make it. The enemy is working to wear out the saints but by God’s glorious power, we will be able to persevere and succeed. **(4) BE STRENGTHENED BY GOD’S GLORIOUS POWER UNTO**

ALL PATIENCE. You and I and the whole church have need of patience. The Bible teaches us this. Patience allows us to wait for the blessing that God has for us and the way of escape that He has promised. However, we don't need the world's patience; we need the patience flowing from God's glorious power. **(5) BE STRENGTHENED BY GOD'S GLORIOUS POWER TO HAVE LONGSUFFERING WITH JOYFULNESS.** Yes, I definitely need prayer to get to this point! Longsuffering is to endure injury, trouble, or provocation long and patiently and, in the case of this part of the prayer, with joyfulness. Only by the prayers of the saints can we go through trouble and not lose our joy. In that time of great persecution, which is slowly coming back on the Church, they needed this to not become discouraged.

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (6) GIVE THANKS TO THE FATHER. When we're in the midst of suffering or just overcome by the problems of life, we can still thank God by focusing on the fact that He has allowed to be part of the inheritance of the saints. The New International Version says that the Father has *qualified* us to share in this inheritance. This means it wasn't ours before but, because of His goodness, it's ours now. Therefore, rejoice!

THE PREMINENCE OF CHRIST

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: Look what God has done for us! He has "delivered us from the power of darkness"! {Adam Clarke} *"The apostle intimates here that nothing less than the power of God can redeem a man from this darkness, or prince of darkness, who, by means of sin and unbelief, keeps men in ignorance, vice, and misery."* I like how Adam Clarke put the work of the enemy in the present tense. If all would embrace Christ, the power of darkness would be in the past tense. However, the Lord showed me that bondage, or at least remaining in bondage, is a choice. The alternative is to choose Christ. We don't have to be under the power of darkness but the only choice for escape is to embrace the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

But look what else the Lord has done for us. He has "translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son", Jesus Christ. I love that word, "translated", because it reminds me of how we will ultimately be translated from corruption to incorruption (like Enoch was in Hebrews 11:5). Another translation uses the word "convey" and Pastor David Guzik brings out how that really fits with this verse. *"Conveyed had a special significance in the ancient world. When one empire conquered another, the custom was to take the population of the defeated empire and transfer it lock, stock and barrel to the conqueror's land. It is in this sense that Paul says we have been conveyed into God's kingdom. Everything we have, everything we are now belongs to Him."* Since we have a new Ruler in our lives, it's important for us to understand the pedigree of our new Ruler. By doing so, there will be a better chance that we will not rebel against Him and ultimately return to darkness.

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Not only are we now partakers in a new kingdom, we have the additional benefit of having been purchased through the blood of the Ruler of this kingdom AND we have our sins forgiven. Per Adam Clarke, the forgiveness of sins includes the taking away of sins with all the power, guilt, and infection of sin. All sin of every kind, with all its influence and consequences is included in that forgiveness.

Side Road: Now that we know what we have, which is awesome, let us find out who we serve, Who is also awesome. There are 10 points in the next few verses regarding our matchless and wonderful Savior. When we're complete, we should be convinced of the deity and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ.

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature **Amplified Bible [Now] He is the exact likeness of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible]; He is the Firstborn of all creation. (1) JESUS CHRIST IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD.** The Lord Jesus said in John 1:18a “*No one has seen God at any time.*” How could He say that when the Old Testament is FULL of examples of people having seen God? For example, Isaiah saw Him and said plainly, “I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Ezekiel saw Him and said he saw visions of God (Ezekiel 1:1). Joshua saw Him as the captain of the Lord’s hosts (Joshua 5:15). Many times in the Old Testament, God has shown up but, in every case it was the Image of the invisible God, that is Jesus Christ, who appeared.

To clearly understand what the Lord is saying, we have to go deeper. I believe the Lord is saying that no one has seen the Father at any time. The Amplified Bible brings the words of the Lord out more clearly: **Amplified Bible No man has ever seen God at any time; the only unique Son, or the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known].** Jesus Christ has taken God the Father and revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen. He has done this throughout history. He did this to the extent that when Philip came to Him and asked Him to show him the Father, Jesus gave a clear answer on His role as the image of the invisible God: **John 14:8-9 NIV Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”** Paul is telling us plainly what the Lord Jesus already told us – He is the manifestation of God. The theological term for this is “theophany”. It comes from a Greek word that means the visible appearance of God to a human being. As the image of the invisible God, it was the Word (the pre-incarnate Christ) that appeared to the patriarchs in the Old Testament whenever the Scripture said that God appeared. And we know this because He told us and Paul told us here. Finally, I offer a second Scripture from the unknown author of the Book of Hebrews who agrees with the words of Paul: **Hebrews 1:3a NIV The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation (KJV – “image”) of his being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word.**

The second part of this verse says **(2) JESUS CHRIST IS THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE.** We need to spend some time on this attribute of Christ because Paul is beginning to build the “case” for the pre-eminence of Christ and this attribute is one of the essential building blocks. His purpose was to knock down heresies that were arising in that era (and which continue today) that stated that Jesus Christ was only man and not God. One major “Christian” denomination, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, questions the deity of Christ. They don’t come out and state that they don’t consider Him as God but they present enough points on their view for the confused and weak minded to come to that conclusion (see this article on their web site http://www.watchtower.org/e/20050422/article_02.htm). Let’s be crystal clear on this – **Jesus Christ was born into the flesh at Bethlehem but was ALWAYS the pre-existent God prior to that time and after.** To deny this is to deny the deity of Christ and, with that, the importance and power of His sacrifice. The Apostle John makes this clear in his Gospel – **John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the WORD WAS GOD. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** How much clearer can this be? The Word that was made flesh was, and is now known as Jesus Christ. Don’t be fooled by clever yet

demonic arguments to the contrary! Now how does that fit into this verse? Dr. McGee makes a clear statement of what this verse means. It's long but well worth reading.

{McGee} “‘Firstborn’ indicates His priority before all creation. His headship of all creation does not mean that He was born first. We need to understand what the Scriptures mean by ‘first born.’ Nowhere does Scripture teach that Jesus Christ had His beginning at Bethlehem. We are told in the great prophecy of Micah 5:2 that He would be born in Bethlehem, but that He came forth from everlasting. Isaiah 9:6 tells us, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given....” The child is born, but the Son is given. He came out of eternity and took upon Himself our humanity.

Paul is dealing with one of the philosophies of that day, one of the mystery religions. It is called the **demiurge**, and it held that God created a creature just beneath Him; then that creature created a creature beneath him; then that creature created a creature beneath him. You can just keep on going down that ladder until finally you come to a creature that created this universe. These were emanations from God. Gnosticism taught that Jesus was one of these creatures, an emanation from God. Now Paul is answering that. He says that Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of all creation, He is back of all creation. The Greek word is **proptotokos** meaning “before all creation.” He was not born in creation. He is the One who came down over nineteen hundred years ago and became flesh. He existed before any creation. God the Father is the everlasting Father. God the Son is the everlasting Son.”

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: If you're still living in denial about the deity of Jesus Christ, this verse should clear that up for good.

(3) JESUS CHRIST IS THE CREATOR OF EVERYTHING. How can He be “just a man”, a heresy put forth in the musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, when He is the creator of everything? Paul makes use of a list to emphasize that fact. He goes beyond just looking at humanity but adds every authority and power that ever has been (including the devil, demons, and angels!) regardless of whether these things are seen or unseen. He not only created the earth but He also created heaven. How can He be “just a man” if He created the dwelling place of God? To accept that heresy reduces God to our level if you believe a man created His dwelling. Notice how Adam Clarke puts it (you may have to read it twice like I did because it's so awesome): “Creation is the proper work of an infinite, unlimited, and un-originated Being; possessed of all perfections in their highest degrees; capable of knowing, willing, and working infinitely, unlimitedly, and without control: and as creation signifies the production of being where all was absolute nonentity, so it necessarily implies that the Creator acted of and from himself; for as, previously to this creation, there was no being, consequently he could not be actuated by any motive, reason, or impulse, without himself; which would argue there was some being to produce the motive or impulse, or to give the reason. Creation, therefore, is the work of him who is un-originated, infinite, unlimited, and eternal. But Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, therefore Jesus Christ must be, according to the plain construction of the apostle's words, truly and properly **GOD.**”

One of the heresies the Colossians had begun to embrace was an infatuation with angels. This comes from being so enamored with the spiritual that you move away from the things of the Spirit of God and become content with things that are “spiritual”. **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE: Everything “spiritual” is not holy.** For this

reason, Paul writes that the Lord Jesus even created angels. {David Guzik} *“Paul emphasizes that whatever ranks of spirit beings there may be, Jesus created them all and they all ultimately answer to Him.”*

Now let’s look at the second part of this verse which says that all things were created for Him. **(4) JESUS CHRIST CREATED EVERYTHING FOR HIMSELF.** Everything was created for the good pleasure of the Word of God (Jesus Christ). This makes the promise of John 14:1-2 even more special. When the Lord says He’s going away to prepare a place for us, we shouldn’t be concerned about the end result because He’s well experienced at creation. We also should relish in the fact that we are just that special to Him that He would do additional creating just for us.

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. **(5) JESUS CHRIST EXISTED BEFORE EVERYTHING – HE HAS NO BEGINNING.** Jesus Christ fits the model of the Psalmist when he said, **Psalm 90:2** *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* He is from the everlasting past (no beginning) to the everlasting future (no end). {David Guzik} *“The ancient heretic Arius, who denied that Jesus was truly God, said there was a time when Jesus didn’t exist. Paul’s words here won’t allow for such a false teaching to be true, either in the days of Arius or our own day.”*

(6) JESUS CHRIST SUSTAINS HIS CREATION. But look at this! Jesus Christ is the glue that holds all creation (His creation!) together. He created it and He keeps it going. The minimum distance from the sun to the earth is 91 million miles and the maximum distance is 94.5 million miles. When you consider that the sun is almost a million miles wide, that’s not much to play with. If the earth moved closer than 91 million miles to the sun, the polar ice caps would melt and, in general, we would probably all die from the upheaval in the weather. If it moved farther away than 94.5 million miles, we could be plunged into another ice age. Who makes sure this doesn’t happen? Could it be that it all happens by accident? How foolish! It’s Jesus Christ that keeps everything in place. One web site said that the sun will burn out all of its energy in about 5 billion years and turn from a yellow dwarf to a red giant. When it does that, they speculate, the sun will become so large that its diameter will extend into earth’s atmosphere and we’ll all be burned to a crisp. Why doesn’t the Bible warn us of this? Because, Jesus Christ sustains His creation. I don’t know about you but I put my trust in the matchless power of Jesus Christ before the words of unnamed scientists.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. **(7) JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.** As the head of the church, all of our direction comes from Him. The human head is essential in the managing of our bodies. For example, the autonomic nervous system keeps our blood flowing, heart pumping, and lungs expanding without us doing anything. We sleep and live comfortably because of this. In the same manner, the vitality of the church continues automatically through the Lord Jesus. He knows how to do this because He is already experienced in sustaining all of creation. Therefore, sustaining the Church should be easy by comparison. The brain in our body manages pain, pleasure, sensory matters, and disease invasion. It all comes from the head. As I wrote this, I took a break to read an article from Charisma magazine on line (<http://charismamag.com/index.php/prophetic-insight/18249-prophetic-words-for-2009>). A prophet wrote a prophecy earlier this year of things to come for America and saw that our president will move to more centrist views and embrace his faith more as the people of God pray for him. But what got me were the comments regarding the prophecy. What venom, hatred, and rebuke came from those that name the name of Christ! But as I read this

verse, I'm not going to worry because Christ, the head of the body, will manage any satanic invasion against the body whether it is from the prophet or those that commented on the prophecy. The Church will live on, thrive and prosper because He that is over the church knows what He's doing. The price He's paid is too great and He is also too great to let this happen.

(8) JESUS CHRIST HAS THE PRE-EMINENCE IN ALL THINGS. Pre-eminence comes from a Greek word which means to be first. It is also used for chief, best, and principal in other places in Scripture. If we were to reduce the last part of this verse to a slogan, it would read, "**JESUS FIRST**". This verse really culminates all that has been said before. He has the pre-eminence in nature as the Creator over all things. He has the pre-eminence in the Church as the head of the Church. He has the pre-eminence in heaven as the Creator of the entire heavenly host. If His creation will not recognize Him, His Church must. The companion epistle to this one brings this out so clearly and majestically: **Philippians 2:9-11 NKJV** *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father.* You may embrace the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses now and others that reject the deity of Christ but one day you will have to yield to this Scripture and recognize your eternal mistake. Let us hope this occurs before you stand before God.

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; **(9) JESUS CHRIST HAS ALL OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD.** This verse summarizes everything that has been said prior. Every thing about Christ celebrates God. But, more importantly, everything of God resides within Jesus Christ. {McGee} *"He was 100 percent God—not 99.44 percent, but 100 percent. That little baby that was lying on the bosom of Mary over nineteen hundred years ago seemed so helpless, but He could have spoken this universe out of existence. He is Man of very man; He is God of very God. That is who He is."*

20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. Amplified Bible **And God purposed that through (by the service, the intervention of) Him [the Son] all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him, [the Father] made peace by means of the blood of His cross. (10) JESUS CHRIST HAS COMPLETELY RECONCILED GOD BACK TO HIS CREATION.** {Adam Clarke} *"Peace between God and man; for man being in a sinful state, and there being no peace to the wicked, it required a reconciliation to be made to restore peace between heaven and earth; but peace could not be made without an atonement for sin, and the consequence shows that the blood of Christ shed on the cross was necessary to make this atonement."* Let us not lose sight of what is truly important in understanding the pre-eminence of Christ when it comes to us. Without the blood of His Cross, the previous nine points are interesting but they don't help us really appreciate and grasp them. However, WITH the blood of His Cross, we have access to EVERYTHING that God has for us. We are restored to the fellowship with God that Adam had before he sinned. This reconciliation is so great that it impacts heaven and earth, God and mankind.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled NLT **This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions.** {McGee} *"There is a mental alienation from God as well as a*

moral alienation. A great many people think that men are lost because they have committed some terrible sin. The reason people are lost is that their minds are alienated from God. I think this explains the fierce antagonism toward God on the part of the so-called intellectuals of our day. There is an open hatred and hostility toward God.” Let us not fool ourselves. No matter how wonderful we may be now, we were at one time destined for eternal damnation in hell and our actions supported that judgment. How do I know? The Bible plainly states it in this verse – we were ENEMIES of God because of wicked works. Maybe you didn’t DO wickedly but you THOUGHT wickedly – we were enemies of God in our minds. Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the Cross resolved all of this.

22 *In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: NLT Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: We stand holy before God through nothing but the DEATH of Jesus Christ for our sins – it is not of ourselves!* We must not ever forget that our saved lives, our religious experience, our time with God, or whatever we call it is totally and completely a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Do we have some part in it? Yes we do but that’s coming in the next verse. It started though (and will finish) completely and totally because of Jesus Christ. This passage makes me call to mind a powerful passage from Philippians below. Remember what I told you in our introduction to this Epistle: “Dr. McGee states that four great epistles left Rome at the same time written by the dictate of Paul: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.” Through our text in Colossians combined with this text from Philippians, we see how strongly related they are.

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore GOD ALSO HATH HIGHLY EXALTED HIM (NIV – “exalted Him to the highest place”), and given Him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

23 *If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Amplified Bible [And this He will do] provided that you continue to stay with and in the faith [in Christ], well-grounded and settled and steadfast, not shifting or moving away from the hope [which rests on and is inspired by] the glad tidings (the Gospel), which you heard and which has been preached [as being designed for and offered without restrictions] to every person under heaven, and of which [Gospel] I, Paul, became a minister.* The work of Jesus Christ requires some effort on our part also – consistency. We must continue to trust Him for our eternal salvation and not chase after other things that move us away from that or allow the circumstances of life (or religious doctrines and “new” ideas)

to distract us. Paul will deal more with this in the next chapter. **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE:** Our positive eternal destiny depends on us staying settled, grounded, and steadfast in Christ Jesus and only in Him.

PAUL'S MINISTRY FOR CHRIST

24 *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: **Amplified Bible [Even] now I rejoice in the midst of my sufferings on your behalf. And in my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking and remains to be completed [on our part] of Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church.*** Paul, as an apostle, had a ministry of suffering and affliction. However, he willingly accepted that for the sake of His Body, the Church. This is an amazing characteristic when you think of those today whose only goal is to fleece the Church for their own comfort as compared to Paul who suffered for the Church's comfort. Lord, help me to have this mind also.

25 *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God;* {McGee} *“Paul loved to look back and rest in his glorious privilege of being a minister of Jesus Christ. I consider that the greatest honor that can come to any person. I thank God every day for the privilege that He has given me of declaring His Word—there is nothing quite like that.”* I heard a radio evangelist many years tell of the supremacy of the job of the preacher above every other job, profession, or vocation in the world. He would not leave that job to become President of the United States. What a great honor it is, given by the God of the Universe, to minister the Word of God. We too often get hung up with style versus substance and allow ourselves to be distracted by local issues (women in ministry, who is “allowed” to speak in the pulpit, etc.). This is all foolishness! We have lost sight of the supremacy of the call.

In this verse, Paul also uses the phrase “made a minister” for the second time (see verse 23 for the first time). The minister needs to have some type of educational experience because one of the qualifications from the Word of God is to be “apt to teach”. However, the minister also must have gone through a period of being “made” and this cannot be accomplished in any way except by the hand of God. **LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE: A minister who is not “made” can never be truly effective in handling the Word of Truth.**

26 *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:* In New Testament Bible terminology, a mystery is something that was completely hidden in the Old Testament. The key to the mystery is that, once revealed, it answers questions related to a number of items that were revealed. {Adam Clarke} *“The mystery is this: that God had designed to grant the Gentiles the same privileges with the Jews, and make them His people who were not His people.”* The beauty of this mystery is that it was not revealed selectively to so-called “spiritual” people but it was revealed (“made manifest”) to the Lord's saints.

27 *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: **NIV 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.*** The key to this particular mystery is the indwelling presence of Christ in us Gentiles (every non-Jew is a Gentile) just as He indwells Jewish believers. There is no longer a separation between Jews and Gentiles. They no longer have the opportunity for more than we have. We now also have a hope of future glory. The hope of future glory does not rest in our “holy” living, in the choice of our church, or even in the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. The

hope of future glory is none other than Christ in us, the hope of glory. {Adam Clarke} “*We find here the sum and substance of the apostle’s preaching: 1. He preached Christ, as the only Savior of sinners. 2. He proclaimed this Christ as being in them; for the design of the Gospel is to put men in possession of the Spirit and power of Christ, to make them partakers of the Divine nature, and thus prepare them for an eternal union with Himself...for Christ was among them, to enlighten, quicken, purify, and refine them, and this he could not do without dwelling in them. 3. He preached this present and indwelling Christ as the hope of glory; for no man could rationally hope for glory who had not the pardon of his sins, and whose nature was not sanctified; and none could have pardon but through the blood of His cross; and none could have glorification but through the indwelling, sanctifying Spirit of Christ.*”

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Amplified Bible Him we preach and proclaim, warning and admonishing everyone and instructing everyone in all wisdom (comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God), that we may present every person mature (full-grown, fully initiated, complete, and perfect) in Christ (the Anointed One). The term “perfect in Christ Jesus” seems to be a contradiction to the prior verses. Perfection, as defined today, scares people because it represents something that corruptible mankind cannot attain. However, when I look at a clearer rendering of just that part of this verse from the New Living Translation (“**perfect in their relationship to Christ**”), and mesh it with the Amplified Bible translation (perfection being “**mature (full-grown, fully initiated, complete, and perfect)**”) it makes more sense. The role of the minister of the Gospel is to move the Church to a level of maturity defined as “full-grown, fully initiated, and perfect”. When I combine this passage with Ephesians 4:11-16, the role of the minister becomes more clear – the minister is responsible for the development of the Church of Jesus Christ in preparation for His return. Everything else is secondary but not necessarily unimportant.

29 Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Amplified Bible For this I labor [unto weariness], striving with all the superhuman energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me. {Adam Clarke} “*Whoever considers the original words, [of this text], will find that no verbal translation can convey their sense. God worked energetically in St. Paul, and he wrought energetically with God; and all this was in reference to the salvation of mankind.*” A lot of our problems come from the fact that we are working for ourselves and not for God. We have our agenda and we guide our own steps. Paul was joined in obedience to the Spirit of God and God, because of this gave him supernatural power to accomplish the work that was so fully energized in Paul’s heart. I recently was able to fight off a melancholy spirit when I considered some things in my life and the contradiction of wanting to do more for God but God wanting me in a certain position where I would do less. I fought this off by the knowledge that I was where God wanted me and had instructed me to be nearly 20 years earlier. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: We need a personal Word from God for our lives.** We have to know what God wants for us and we have to know that we’re working within His purpose to bring that destiny to pass. Then God may energize us as He did Paul to bring us to our destiny.

Summary of Chapter 1

In closing this chapter, I'm going to use a quote from Adam Clarke for it most clearly summarizes the tremendous truths the Lord has shared with us through His Word:

1. The preceding chapter contains the highest truths in the Christian religion, conveyed in language peculiar to this apostle; a language never taught by man, clothing ideas as vast as the human mind can grasp, and both coming immediately from that inspiration of the Almighty which giveth understanding.

2. What the apostle says on the Godhead of Christ has already been distinctly noted; and from this we must conclude that, unless there be some secret way of understanding Colossians 1:16-17, which God has nowhere revealed, taken in their sober and rational sense and meaning they must for ever settle this very important point. Let any man of common sense and reason hear these words, whose mind had not been previously warped by any sentiment on the subject, and who only knew, in religious matters, this one great truth, that there is a God, and that He made and governs all things; and then let Him be asked, Of whom doth the apostle speak this? Would He not immediately answer, He speaketh of God? As to the difficulties on this subject, we must consider them difficulties rather to our limited intellect, than as belonging to the subject. We can know but little of an infinite and eternal Being; nothing, properly speaking, but what Himself is pleased to reveal. Let us receive, this with gratitude and reverence.

Colossians 1:16-17 *For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.*

Chapter 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Paul moves from his foundation discussion of the pre-eminence of Christ to begin to deal with the real issues of heresy that had come into the church. These heresies continue to exist so we must also beware of them.

PAUL'S GREAT CONCERN FOR THE COLOSSIANS

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; Amplified Bible For I want you to know how great is my solicitude for you [how severe an inward struggle I am engaged in for you] and for those [believers] at Laodicea, and for all who [like yourselves] have never seen my face and known me personally. I had a struggle with this opening verse because it sounded like arrogance from Paul when he speaks of those that “have not seen my face in the flesh”. It appears that the commentators did also because their opinions vary widely. However, as I thought on this, I can see that Paul was very much in the Spirit in this verse. He has seen, in the Spirit, the plan of the enemy to destroy the enthusiasm and spirit of the Colossians, and those Christians at Laodicea, by heresies. Paul had confidence in his life in Christ and wanted those that had not seen him to know him personally and know the fire that continually burned in his soul. He wanted to impart something to them so that their fire would continuously burn. This is the same conflict that preachers go through when they see Christians in other churches being led astray or being taught improperly. The desire is for the Lord to somehow open a door so that they can help get them back to where they should be.

SIDE ROAD: I believe that the saints of just a few years ago, if they were yet with us, would probably also have this same kind of “great conflict” for the Church today. They would similarly yearn to impart something into us to help us and warn us of the dangers of worldliness and a lack of passion for the Lord.

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. NIV My purpose 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, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Paul’s desire for the Christians at Colosse and Laodicea, who were living in a spiritually dangerous situation, was made very clear in these two verses:

- (1) **He wanted them to be encouraged (“be comforted”).** They were going through trials and tribulations and they were being troubled by heresies but others were also. They were not alone in their quest for the more of God and they were not the only ones being fought to keep them from attaining their goal but they must be cautious that they obtain that goal following the leading of Christ.
- (2) **He wanted them to be unified (“knit together) in a specific manner – in love.** Often churches will unite for reasons other than love. Currently in our city, churches have been united over a grave injustice but once the emotion has settled and time goes on, I’m afraid we’ll return to our denominational, cultural, and geographical barriers. However, if we’re united in love, nothing can tear down this unity down without first tearing down the love.
- (3) **He wanted to full grasp the mystery of God – Jesus Christ.** If we could understand the awesome fact of this God-designed mystery, we will more fully appreciate what the Lord has done for us and we WILL be encouraged, comforted, and unified. One of the keys to this book is to point the Colossians, and readers today, to this truth – ALL THAT WE NEED IS IN JESUS CHRIST.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. The attacks that we face don't usually appear in a face-to-face confrontation with an obvious enemy of the Gospel. No, they are often subtler and come with a pleasant tone and "inspiring" or encouraging words. Make no mistake about it, enticing words are what move us away from the encouragement, unity, hope, and truth of the Gospel. At the time of this study, we are in the midst of a great worldwide recession, however, that does nothing to change the promises of God. Have you found yourself joining in conversations where others complain about their jobs, their lot in life, and other things even though you *know* you have the promises of God behind you? Some in the Church have gone so far as to embrace the fear that comes with a recession and have reduced their contributions to the Church even though they could testify that God has kept them in spite of the recession. Friend, if this is you, you are like Eve. You have been beguiled. Grab hold of Jesus Christ for only in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that you need to recover yourself. Beware, though, the issue is much deeper than this. These beguiling words can take hold of your soul and ruin it just as they eventually ruined the churches in this region. {McGee} *"Philosophy and psychology have been substituted for the Bible, and this is the thing that is enticing to so many young preachers in our seminaries today. I am amazed to find that some of these men with a Ph.D. degree from a seminary know so little about the Bible! They know all about Bultmann and Kant and Plato, but they don't seem to know very much about the Word of God. That is the great problem of our day. There was that same danger in Colosse and also in Laodicea. **I think that is what actually killed the church in Colosse, and it made the church in Laodicea the weakest of the seven churches in Asia Minor.** It was in the worst spiritual condition, and yet the people thought that they were well off. These cities were wealthy. They boasted of their wealth and affluence and also of their knowledge, but they were blind to their true spiritual condition."* Dr. McGee made his life transition over 20 years ago but the words he wrote then are equally true today. **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE:** {David Guzik} **"We should all have the spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17:11), who compared even the teaching of Paul with Scripture."** You are responsible for your soul. You have to make the decision about the teaching and doctrine that you will allow to impact your soul. No one else can do it. The responsibility is yours.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. I want you to remember what Dr. McGee said in the prior verse ("*I think that is what actually killed the church in Colosse*") and then read the words of the commentators:

- {Adam Clarke} *"The whole verse shows that this Church was sound in doctrine, and strict in discipline. They had steadfast faith in Christ, and regular order or discipline among themselves."*
- {McGee} *"Order is a military term, and it means 'to stand shoulder to shoulder.' Steadfastness means 'to have a solid front, to be immovable.'"*

What's my point? The Colossian church was "sound in doctrine", "strict in discipline", and "had steadfast faith in Christ". If, with all of these attributes, they lost their position in Christ, how much more cautious must we be? **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE:** **We have to make up our minds to stand strong in Christ and not allow ourselves to be moved.**

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: How did you receive Christ? I know in my case that at the time I received Christ, He made a dramatic transformation in my life changing my appetites, speech, preferences, and every area of my life. Church teaching didn't do it but a dramatic transformation took place before I came to the church. He did it through His Holy Spirit. Therefore, since I

received Him in this manner, my responsibility is to continue my life and life style in Him fully regulated by His Spirit. If I try to live this life on my own, I WILL fall prey to those with beguiling words.

7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Now here are the details of how you walk in Christ – rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith. You can't be "built up" (showing growth) unless you're first rooted. The rooting process takes as much time as we allow. It involves time in the Word to understand our salvation and a firm commitment to the Lord. However, if we continue to look back to the world, we will NOT be rooted. But once we have made up our mind that there is no turning back, we're on our way to being also established in Christ. Paul taught them this just as every responsible Gospel preacher today continues to teach this to young converts. Once you get to that point, continue with an overflowing heart of thanksgiving.

PAUL EXPOSES THE 1ST COLOSSIAN HERESY – WORLDLY PHILOSOPHY

SIDE ROAD: Before going on, let's be clear about one thing – **heresy** (a doctrine which contradicts the accepted doctrine of the Church) is not just a bad idea or an incorrect interpretation. It comes from the pit of hell and is designed to derail souls into hell. It is included in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 so embracing this can take you to hell.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. NIV See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. According to www.dictionary.com, the word "philosophy" is from the Greek for "love of wisdom." How can loving wisdom, emphasized so much in the Book of Proverbs, be a bad thing to the point that it will "spoil" us or take captive what we have received through Christ? We have to go deeper and look at those that desire truth and wisdom OUTSIDE of the Word of God. Today's universities are filled with faculty members who embrace everything from Plato, Aristotle, Socrates or others of that kind but reject the clear, life changing words of Jesus Christ.

{Adam Clarke} "[The words of this verse signify] to rob, or spoil of their goods, as if by violence or rapine. Their goods were the salvation they had received from Christ; and both the Gentile and Jewish teachers endeavored to deprive them of these, by perverting their minds, and leading them off from the truths of Christianity." This was one of the heresies that had come into the Colossian church – an inordinate desire for knowledge and wisdom that would rival the knowledge of the world. I believe this is why our spiritual ancestors were not as excited by education because they saw that, if not held in check, it would lead to something that could rob them of their salvation and freedom in Christ. This heresy remains a problem today and is especially easily brought into churches where the members have felt disenfranchised in society. Natural wisdom, demonstrated by an inordinate desire for advanced degrees or, at a minimum, the titles associated with those degrees, then makes them equal to those that don't respect them but it does nothing for them spiritually. Soon, they'll focus more on this "wisdom" rather than the truth of the Gospel and ultimately deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ. How interesting it is that one of the most educated men in the Bible should be the one to call attention to this.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Why go after worldly philosophy when all the substance and being of God Himself (with all of His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding) dwell within the One who lives within us? {Adam Clarke} "This is opposed to the vain or empty doctrine of the Gentile and

Jewish philosophers: there is a fullness in Christ suited to the empty, destitute state of the human soul, but in the philosophy of the Jews and Gentiles nothing like this was found; nor indeed in the more refined and correct philosophy of the present day. No substitute has ever been found for the grace of the Lord Jesus, and those who have sought for one have disquieted themselves in vain.”

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Harry D. Loes, a member of the faculty at Moody Bible College for many years, wrote a song in 1915 inspired by a sermon preached at the Moody Church, “All Things in Jesus”. It tells in song what this brief verse says – we are complete in Him.

*All that I want is in Jesus.
He satisfies, joy He supplies;
Life would be worthless without Him;
All things in Jesus I find.*

Dr. McGee goes further in his analysis of this verse, “ ‘Complete’ is a nautical term, and it could be translated in this very vivid way: **YOU ARE READY FOR THE VOYAGE OF LIFE IN HIM.** Isn’t that a wonderful way of saying it? You are ready for the voyage of life in Christ, and whatever you need for the voyage of life you will find in Him. This is where we say that Christ is the answer. What is your question? What is it you need today? Are you carried away by human philosophy? Then turn to Christ. Are you carried away by enticing words? Are you carried away by the systems and traditions of men? Turn to Christ.” Friend, it wearies me that we so often embrace those that don’t love Christ because of their celebrity status, political power, or educational achievement. Make no mistake about it, education takes us deeper into the Word of God but when we use it for any other reason, it can turn us from the real truth.

PAUL EXPOSES THE 2ND COLOSSIAN HERESY – LEGALISM

In preparing to expose the next heresy of legalism, Paul builds a five-point foundation of who we are in Christ beginning with this verse. Who we are in Christ is bigger than a system of does and don’ts. But before we go forward, let’s determine what this term “legalism” means. I found a wonderful definition by Rev. Rob Chaffart on the Internet at www.answers2prayer.org. I’ll give you the high points of his study here and we’ll understand it better as Paul brings out his argument later in this chapter: “**Legalism is trying to earn your salvation through your own efforts and works.**” We Pentecostal Holiness people have to be especially careful of legalism because it seems to be deeply rooted in our churches, our cultures, and in our doctrines. Rev. Chaffart went on to give six points about legalism in churches, which reveal the ugliness of this heresy:

1. *People in a legalistic church are never sure if they are saved or not.*
2. *People in a legalistic church tend to feel empty inside.*
3. *Legalistic churches stress more the importance of rules (Biblical and non Biblical) than the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.*
4. *Legalistic churches do not emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit.*
5. *Legalistic churches tend to emphasize the authority of certain non-Biblical sources such as a certain prophet(s), a founder or a group of leaders in the church.*
6. *People in a legalistic church tend to believe that they are in the only true church.*

Now let's look at Paul's five-point foundation. These foundations points are AFTER the verses that discuss them and summarize the key point of those verses so the first one is from verse 10.

The first part of the foundation for our Christian lives is the fact that we are "ready for the voyage of life" because of Jesus Christ. We are totally complete in Him.

*11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **NLT** When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision — the cutting away of your sinful nature.* Circumcision is a surgical procedure but in Bible days it was also a religious ceremony. For many years, the medical community considered this a necessity for males to undergo at birth because the Bible rite had become accepted as a necessary sanitary operation. Circumcision is the cutting away of the foreskin of a male's sexual organ. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the sign of entry into the family of God. However in the New Testament, Christ performs a spiritual circumcision on those that are His by cutting away our sinful nature. The Colossian church, which was mostly Gentile, was wrestling with those that insisted that they be physically circumcised as a sign of their entry into the family of God. Paul resisted this as unnecessary because the true surgical procedure had been done in the spirit. {David Guzik} *"The Colossian Christians had to deal with a whole smorgasbord of false teaching. Not only did they have wrong ideas about Jesus, but they also had wrong ideas about things like circumcision. Apparently, they were being taught that they had to be circumcised to be right with God. Paul makes it clear that they are circumcised, by putting off the sins of the flesh."*

The second part of the foundation for our Christian lives is that ceremonies from the Old Testament no longer apply because of the complete work of Christ in our lives.

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. We don't concern ourselves with circumcision. {David Guzik} *"Christians don't need to be circumcised, they need to be baptized."* Baptism is a ceremony where we recognize that we are "buried with Him in baptism" or through immersion. As we come out of the water, it is symbolic of being risen with Him in newness of life. This is for Christians though. Those that don't know the Lord and use it as a church practice have no idea what they're doing so it's no wonder that they go into the water a "dry devil and come out a wet devil" (in the words of many I know).

*13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; **Amplified Bible** And you who were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh (your sensuality, your sinful carnal nature), [God] brought to life together with [Christ], having [freely] forgiven us all our transgressions.* We identify fully with Christ through baptism. And look at the last part of this verse – He has forgiven us of ALL of our trespasses. What a wonderful benefit we have in living for Christ that we cannot experience through any heresy!

The third part of the foundation for our Christian lives is that Christ has forgiven us of ALL of our trespasses and sins and has given us new life (quickened us) who were formerly dead in our sins.

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; What were the ordinances (laws) that were against us? It was the Old Testament Law of Moses, which we could never keep. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and closed the book on

it. {David Guzik} “Martin Luther told once how Satan laid heavy condemnation on him because of his sins. Luther told Satan to list them all, and even reminded him of some he had forgotten. Then he told Satan to write across the whole list ‘paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ,’ and Luther rejoiced in the payment Jesus made.” Our focus must be the Cross and we must keep those things written against us on the Cross.

The fourth part of the foundation for our Christian lives is the Cross of Jesus Christ. To the Christian, it must never be offensive because our liberty and freedom is found in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Who are these principalities and powers? These are demon spirits of high rank in Satan’s hierarchy. They had an evil plan, which failed miserably. Look how Paul describes it: **1 Corinthians 2:7-8** *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew (these are the principalities and powers): for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* The devil’s plan failed miserably and Christ made a public display of his failure triumphing over his. **Revelation 1:18** *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

The fifth part of the foundation for our Christian lives is found in the triumph of Christ over the devil. Since we’ve been purchased with His blood, we share in that triumph.

SIDE ROAD: Let’s recap this five-point foundation before we going deeper into Paul’s discussion on the heresy of legalism:

1. We are totally ready for the voyage of life because of Jesus Christ.
2. Old Testament ceremonies no longer apply because of the complete work of Christ in our lives.
3. Christ has forgiven us of ALL of our trespasses and has given us new life.
4. The Cross of Jesus Christ is the only source of our liberty and freedom.
5. Christ triumphed over the devil. Since we’ve been purchased with His blood, we share in that.

Why did Paul bring these things up? Too often, we run after doctrines, ideas, and “new” concepts that don’t benefit us. We also allow people to entice us to run after things to make us “more spiritual” or allow their criticism to control our lives when all we need we already have in Jesus Christ.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: NLT *So don’t let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths.* But this is exactly what we do! We are too often motivated, controlled, and BOUND by the opinions (condemnation) of others regarding whether our lives are “good enough” or whether we can rightfully call ourselves “saved”. The issue in Paul’s day was the food they ate and whether they took care of certain Jewish religious rites. The issue in our day is something else but it’s still an issue. Remember, these people are NOT Jewish so why would they worry about such things? The problem was legalism. Others were trying to put on them a standard that Christ had not put on them. Let me give you a Scripture on this because this is a Pharisee spirit and the sad thing is that

often those that impose these “rules for heaven” don’t follow them themselves: **Matthew 23:4 NLT** *They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.* I chose the New Living Translation for this verse because the key word is CRUSH. **LEGALISM CRUSHES OUT THE PURENESS OF SALVATION AND MAKES THE LIFE OF CHRIST DRUDGERY.** This is exactly why some start out excited but soon return to the world. This is NOT what Christ died for. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE:** **Don’t allow people to manipulate you in areas of your life that are not clearly defined in the Word of God.** My bishop instructs ministers in training for ordination to challenge him and others with these words – Give me Scripture on that. That’s how we overcome legalism; through the Word of God.

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. {Adam Clarke} *“The law was but the shadow or representation of good things to come; none should rest in it; all that it pointed out is to be sought and obtained in Christ.”*

PAUL EXPOSES THE 3RD & 4TH COLOSSIAN HERESIES – ASCETICISM & MYSTICISM

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things, which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, NLT Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, The next problem with legalism is that, in a desire to be more “spiritual”, it births other heresies: asceticism and mysticism. (Don’t you see how one trap leads to another spiraling us downward and making our Christian experience anything but joyful?)

- ASCETICISM (uh-set-uh-siz-uhm) is “*the doctrine that a person can attain a high spiritual and moral state by practicing self-denial, self-mortification, and the like*”. Be careful with this. If the devil can’t make you go overboard in asceticism then he’ll attack those Christian disciplines, practiced by the Lord Jesus and His apostles, and have us to do even less. What do I mean? It’s one thing to go on a fast but it’s something entirely different to restrict certain perfectly acceptable things from your life completely in an attempt to please God or get closer to Him. We have pleased God by giving our lives to Christ. We please Him further by our faith (see Hebrews 11:6), by our charitableness (see Hebrews 13:16) and by our lives (see 1 John 3:22).
- MYSTICISM (**mis-tuh-siz-uh m**), which can be even more dangerous, attempts to get closer to God through Scripturally illegal means. We have no business worshipping angels or communicating with any spirit other than the Holy Spirit of God! An angel sent from God will not accept worship because they understand that they are intruding into a very dangerous area – an area where God Himself has pronounced Himself to be “jealous”. When you move to the level of angel worship, the angel receiving that worship will be a fallen angel – a demon. That’s why this is so dangerous.

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. NLT and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it. So you want to grow in Christ? Allow Him to do it because He holds the Body of Christ (the Church) together and God nourishes it (causes it to grow) as He sees fit. Beware! The key to those that go after these doctrines is found in the first part of this verse – they are NOT connected to Christ. If they were, they would not attempt to replace the pureness of the Cross of Christ with human actions.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? NKJV Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” 22 which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? This passage stands on its own and is a nice summary of what has preceded it but let me give you the West Translation for (hopefully) a little more clarity: Now that we understand that we have died with Christ (as evidenced through salvation and baptism), this action has killed off the principles of the world. Since you’ve done that, why do you allow yourselves to be bound by ordinances (created by men), which concern things that will perish?

I caution you, though, to make sure that those things that you refuse to come under subjection to are not also clearly defined in the Word of God. Some may want to use this chapter to say that they don’t need to listen to anything that man says and everything they do is fine. That contradicts the Word of God (see 1 John 2:6). The Word of God will show you how to handle every situation if you take the time to dig it out.

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. NLT These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person’s evil desires. All of the heresies that Paul has dealt with in this chapter (philosophy, legalism, asceticism, and mysticism) were things that were troubling the Colossian Church and, if we’ll be honest, are troubling the Church today. We’re too concerned about “getting deep” or at least looking deep in our studies and, in the process, making the Word of God no longer applicable to the “common people”. We obey a system of rules and call it salvation but it is just legalism. We restrict ourselves from things that are rightfully ours in a look of being spiritual. And then, worst of all, we try to get “in the Spirit” when we may not be in a position to be in God’s presence inviting a counterfeit from the devil.

The last part of this verse tells the key – none of these things provide any help in conquering a person’s evil desires. That will only come by being crucified with Christ and through Christ only.

Chapter 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: {Matthew Henry} “The apostle, having described our privileges by Christ in the former part of the epistle, and our discharge from the yoke of the ceremonial law, comes here to press upon us our duty as inferred thence. Though we are made free from the obligation of the ceremonial law, it does not therefore follow that we may live as we list.”

INTRODUCTION: Paul has presented to us wonderful truths on the pre-eminence of Christ as well as exposing the heresies of worldly philosophy, legalism, mysticism, and asceticism. Now that we know who He is and the importance of Him over the lies of Satan attacking the church, we need practical steps on how to live the life of Christ without once again embracing those heresies. This is where we are in this chapter.

THE HOLY LIFE IN CHRIST

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. This verse begins with a HUGE little word – “IF”. After all that Paul has presented, you should now have a sure testimony that you are “risen with Christ”. Therefore, you have a responsibility to do some things in response to that testimony. The starting point in this life is to seek (NIV – “set your hearts”) on heavenly things. {Matthew Henry} “*We must mind the concerns of another world more than the concerns of this. We must make heaven our scope and aim, seek the favor of God above, keep up our communion with the upper world by faith, and hope, and holy love, and make it our constant care and business to secure our title to and qualifications for the heavenly bliss.*” Why is this so important? Well, the answer is found in this same Scripture also – Christ is where we are putting our focus. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE:** **If you are risen with Christ, where HE is should be important to you and this is where you heart should be.** Of course, every person will go through a growing process but it’s confusing (especially to the world) to see someone who claims to have been with the Lord for many years to continue to be worldly and carnal minded.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Paul continues in this verse to tell us HOW to seek those things, which are above. The “HOW” is to set our affections on things above (the same place where Christ is). The word “affection” has to do with a gentle feeling of fondness or liking and has a source in love. Those that are about to marry have a strong feeling of affection rooted in their love for each other. We should have affection for the things of God (those things that are above) because it is rooted in our love for Him.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Amplified Bible For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died, and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. This is one of the verses the saints of old really focused on. They preached on it, taught it, and made it a continual focus. Our hidden life and life that is dead to the world is what should motivate us to set our focus above even the more. When you think of all the things that a dead person can’t do in response to what’s done to them, this is the essence of what Paul is trying to get across to us.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. {Matthew Henry} “*At the second coming of Christ there will be a general meeting of all the saints; and those whose life is now hid with Christ shall then appear with Christ in that glory which He Himself enjoys. Do we look for such happiness, and should we not set our affections upon that world, and live above this? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not there to draw our hearts to it? Our head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there forever.*” **1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and**

it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

FOCUS AREAS FOR LIVING THE HOLY LIFE

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: NIV Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. We can't skip this list too quickly without getting a definition of each of these terms. After all, if we don't know what they mean, how do we know that we've stopped doing them? However, we'll soon see that these are things that should have been done away in our past life – the life of sin. (Note: Every reference and definition for the original Greek text below comes from Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.)

- **FORNICATION** – The source Greek word for “fornication” is *porneia* (from which we get our word “pornography”) meaning illicit (forbidden, unauthorized, or prohibited) sexual intercourse and it includes the complete realm of forbidden sexual intercourse including adultery. The dictionary definition is “*sexual intercourse, with mutual consent, between two persons not married to each other*”. (Notice that the world's definition says nothing about the illegality of the action and limits it to single people.) I think we understood this word prior to the above definition but, to be clear, it covers ALL sexual impurity (improper use of that which God has made).
- **UNCLEANNES** – This word is right after fornication for a reason. It covers any unclean action (sexual or otherwise) that people try to slip into their lives with the defense that the Bible doesn't talk about it. One may argue that they didn't DO anything but this word also covers what they THINK. In addition, all of those things that people do to their bodies that ultimately defile the temple the Lord has given are included in this category.
- **INORDINATE AFFECTION** – The source Greek word, *pathos*, means whatever one suffers or experiences in any way; hence, “a passionate desire.” The word was used by the Greeks of either good or bad desires, but it is always used in the New Testament of evil desires. The Greek word yielded our English word, pathological, which means compulsive or obsessive, such as a pathological gambler. In other words, this person is bound. So to summarize, inordinate affection is bondage – you have a driving desire for something that is compulsive or obsessive.
- **EVIL CONCUPISCENCE** – Let's simplify this term. Evil concupiscence is LUST. It differs from the previous term because this is active lust out of control. A person operating in this will steal instead of save; rape instead of wait.
- **COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY** – A person bound with covetousness is inordinately desirous of possessions or wealth or eager to possess that to which they have no right. Why is this idolatry? This person is bound by that thing which they worship. It's the only thing that consumes their mind and takes the place of what Paul told us to do at the beginning of this chapter – *seek those things which are above*.

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. Ah, now we understand what Paul is saying. This is not for our

life now but this is the life we left behind in the world. If you're still bound by any of this, please take special note of verse 6 – these actions incur the wrath of God! **SAINT'S PRINCIPLE:** **Make sure the sins on this list are part of your PAST and not your PRESENT.**

WHAT TO PULL OFF

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. NIV But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. From this point on, Paul is delving deeply into what the Christian life is all about – it's about living like Christ. **1 John 2:6 NIV Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.** Take note of the term he uses for what we're about to deal with – “put off”. It implies that, in spite of our salvation, we have a “garment” that we came into this world with that has to be taken off. Let's get an understanding of those things that we must put off; the things that make up this worldly garment that we still possess. When I read the list in verse 5, it was easy to feel very comfortable with the fact that I had overcome those things. However, this list is for the saints because here are where our issues are now that we have dealt with the “big” sins. {David Guzik} *“Each of these sins are primarily committed by what we say. When Paul calls the believer to a deeper obedience, he tells us to bridle our tongue.”*

- **ANGER** – {Easton's Bible Dictionary} *“The emotion of instant displeasure on account of something evil that presents itself to our view. In itself it is an original susceptibility of our nature, just as love is, and is not necessarily sinful. It may, however, become sinful when causeless, or excessive, or protracted.”* This is a nice definition but everyone knows what anger is. Our responsibility is to move from **Ephesians 4:26a** *“Be ye angry, and sin not”*, which we hide behind a lot, to this verse where we put it off.
- **WRATH** – Wrath takes anger to another level. The dictionary definition refers to extreme anger or outrage. Other definitions speak of anger out of control. Wrath takes anger to the next level of action. One may be angry and follow the directive of Ephesians 4:26 and “sin not” but this cannot be done with wrath. Only God is able to operate in this emotion without sin.
- **MALICE** – Malice is a desire to inflict injury or suffering on another; active or vindictive ill will. When you don't deal with anger or unforgiveness, the next logical step is malice. Malice now wants to get back at the other person and DOES things to show their “ill will” (hatred) of the other person.
- **BLASPHEMY** – Other translations use the word “slander”. We often focus on the classic definition, *“the act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things; profane talk”* but let's look at the last part of the definition – profane talk or slander. In this context, you have taken on the role of the “talebearer” of the Book of Proverbs. You are speaking profane or slanderous things of your neighbor, fellow Christian, church leader, supervisor, or anyone. It's easy to fall into this type of activity but we have to put a guard over our mouths and resist this!
- **FILTHY COMMUNICATION OUT OF YOUR MOUTH** – The prior term dealt with a specific type of filthy communication but now we deal with ALL filthy communication. The original text meant, “foul speaking or low and obscene speech”. The language used by Christians today amazes me. Of course we are bombarded by words on radio and television that used to not be acceptable not that many years ago but that is no reason for saints to pick it up. Recently, a newsperson for a national cable news network interviewed a six-year-old boy. As the little boy was waiting for the interview to begin, not knowing the

newsperson, he asked, “Who the h*** is he?” The internet was abuzz with how “cute” this was and how “precocious” the little boy was. I, on the other hand, was outraged. I’m fifty years older than that child and would be ashamed for my mother and other family members to know that I spoke like that...even before coming to Christ. Let us re-embrace the outrage and not pick up these filthy habits of the world.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; After we have dealt with general communication issues (slander and filthy communication), we must also deal with the integrity of our speech. {Matthew Henry} “[Lying] is contrary both to the law of truth and the law of love, it is both unjust and unkind, and naturally tends to destroy all faith and friendship among mankind. Lying makes us like the devil (who is the father of lies), and is a prime part of the devil’s image upon our souls; and therefore we are cautioned against this sin. The consideration that we have by profession put away sin and espoused the cause and interest of Christ, that we have renounced all sin and stand engaged to Christ, should fortify us against this sin of lying.” As part of putting off the old man, we MUST put away lying.

10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Amplified Bible And have clothed yourselves with the new [spiritual self], which is [ever in the process of being] renewed and remolded into [fuller and more perfect knowledge upon] knowledge after the image (the likeness) of Him Who created it. This new man that we have received through Christ is quite amazing. The new man is continually being renewed, remolded, and re-shaped as we understand more about Christ, the one who gave us this new person. Therefore, the more we stay away from learning the deep things of Christ through Bible study, church attendance, and Christian fellowship, the more we penalize ourselves and don’t experience that renewing, remolding, and re-shaping.

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Amplified Bible [In this new creation all distinctions vanish.] There is no room for and there can be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, [nor difference between nations whether alien] barbarians or Scythians [who are the most savage of all], nor slave or free man; but Christ is all and in all [everything and everywhere, to all men, without distinction of person]. Oh, if we could just embrace the words of this Scripture and not allow the flesh to rule in setting up barriers among the people of God. We can’t allow where we are in this life to separate us in the Church.

WHAT TO PUT ON

SIDE ROAD: I’ve always believed and told people that Christianity is not about what you have to give up (put off) but it’s about what you gain (put on). Now we come to a section in our text where we find out what we gain through Christ!

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; NIV Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Just as we spent a lot of time and space going through the things to put off, we need to give equal time to the things we are to put on using the text from the New International Version.

- **COMPASSION** – The original Greek word for compassion is *sumpathes* from which we get our English word “sympathy”. In the original text, it stood for suffering with or to be affected similarly. The Dictionary says, “It is a sympathetic (there’s that word) or tender emotion created by the misfortunes of another, accompanied by a desire to help.” If there’s no desire to help, there is no compassion. If we just

shake our heads and say, “Tsk, tsk”, we’re no different than those men in the Parable of the Good Samaritan that looked at the victim and went by on the other side. Compassion is an ACTION word.

- **KINDNESS** – Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. Because many have forgotten where they came from, they no longer embrace basic kindness. They’re not friendly, generous, or considerate and, yes, I’m talking about people in the Church. Therefore, since I know this, I must make sure that I do all I can to embrace this attribute.
- **HUMILITY** – Humility is a modest or low view of one’s own importance; humbleness. If you’re not friendly or considerate, it’s unlikely that you’re humble. The humble person never exalts themselves and always remembers where they came from. If you’ve been a Christian for 60 years, never forgot 61 years ago when you were NOT a Christian, how miserable you were, and how miserable you were to be around. Humility does not forget!
- **GENTLENESS** – A gentle person is able, by this trait, make someone else gentle or become gentle themselves. Their demeanor is calming and pacifies the situation. You cannot enjoy the Beatitude of “blessed are the peacemakers” without a spirit of gentleness.
- **PATIENCE** – This word has a lengthy dictionary definition: “*Bearing pain or trial without complaining; sustaining afflictions with fortitude, calmness or submission; waiting with calmness; not hasty; long suffering; persevering; calmly diligent; able to bear.*” I underlined some of the words that really spoke to me out of the definition. If I don’t embrace this attribute, how will I make it? **Revelation 14:12** *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. NIV Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. We saw in verse 11 that we cannot allow the barriers of this life to separate the Church. We also cannot allow circumstances to separate the Church through unforgiveness and bitterness. Paul tells us plainly, “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” How much clearer can it be? Unforgiveness causes barriers and if the Church won’t embrace you, what recourse do you have but to run back to the world? We must be careful to not destroy the brethren by our pride, stubbornness, and unforgiveness.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. NIV And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. No matter how many traits you’ve embraced (“put on”) from verse 13, none of it means anything without LOVE. Love is the glue that has everything working in perfect harmony.

WHAT TO PUT IN

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. After you deal with the things to “put on”, there are things to “put in”. These go in our hearts. The first thing is PEACE. The peace of God takes away depression, discouragement, and defeat, but you must let it RULE (reign, direct, and have power over) in our hearts. The Body of Christ was called to peace; it is part of our “package” as believers. Therefore, let’s take full advantage of the benefit we have received and be at peace. If peace is your issue, make a special effort to find out what things are breaking your peace and root them out of your life actively (for things that you can fix) or through prayer (things that only God can fix).

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. The next thing to put in is the Word of God and put it in us so that it dwells in us “richly”. Wait; doesn’t this say “the word of Christ”? Since Christ IS the Word of God (see John chapter 1), the entire Bible IS the word of Christ. Now how do I allow that Word to dwell in my heart “richly”? {Matthew Henry} “*The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all notion and speculation, to make us doctors, but in all wisdom, to make us good Christians, and enable us to conduct ourselves in everything as becomes Wisdom’s children.*” The richness of our understanding of the Word is demonstrated in the conduct of our lives. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: Poor conduct is evidence of Word starvation.** Once you have that, only then are we able to teach and encourage others through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and encourage ourselves in the same manner.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. {David Guzik} “*The new man lives his life, all his life, for Jesus.*”

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN HOME

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Unfortunately and probably due to the actions of men rather than the times, the word “submit” is an ugly word in the Church. For that reason, I chose to use Pastor David Guzik’s definition: “*Submission does not mean inferiority. Submission does not mean silence. Submission means ‘sub-mission’. There is a mission for your marriage, and that mission is obeying and glorifying God. The wife says, ‘I’m going to put myself under that mission. That mission is more important than my individual desires. I’m not putting myself below my husband, I’m putting myself below the mission God has for our marriage, for my life.’*” Submission in marriage, according to this definition, works similarly to submission in other things. The husband’s role is to be the priest of the house (see 1 Corinthians 11:3). His role is to set the spiritual pace for the family and the family takes its direction from him. If he’s flawed, the family will be flawed. This is another reason why submission is so difficult. Let’s go back to Pastor David Guzik for another quote to help us with my last statement: “*We know that as a person, a Private can be smarter, more talented, and a better person than a General. But he is still under rank to the General. He isn’t submitted to the General so much as a person as he is to the General as a General. In the same way, the wife doesn’t submit to her husband because he deserves it. She submits because he is her husband.*” By the way, the wife is in submission to her OWN husband and not to another and this submission is “as it is fit in the Lord”. This does not define the limit of her submission but the motive of her submission. She does this because this is the desire of the Lord God whom she serves.

19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Now that you’re upset with submission, this verse protects wives in their submission. Since Ephesians was one of the letters written and sent at the same time with this one, let’s go there and find out the extent of the husband’s love: **Ephesians 5:25-29 NKJV** **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.** Wow! Under such a level of love, submission should not be an issue, however, anything the Lord directs, the devil attacks.

20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Children please the Lord in their obedience to their parents. No matter how well they live in other parts of their lives, if they are disobedient to their parents, nothing else matters.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. As the children must be obedient, the parents, especially the father, must be tender. I know from my own parenting skills (or lack thereof) that sometimes parents are too rigid, too strict, or just too much of a lot of negative things. Our goal is to raise our children so that they will love the Lord when they have a chance to make their own decisions and not turn from Him. If we use our religion as a tool to say, “No”, they will later also say no.

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. In the original text, the term “servants” was also translated as “slaves”. For this, Paul has received much criticism but we’re trying to apply a modern travesty (American slavery) to a time many hundreds of years earlier. To apply this now, replace the term “masters” with “employers”. **SAINT’S PRINCIPLE: Christians should be the BEST workers because they work as if they’re working for the Lord Himself.**

Chapter 4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: It takes a commitment to the life of Christ to be a successful Christian. It also takes gratitude for those that help you along the way – never forget the “average” workers that support the cause. Paul brings this out so effectively in this chapter.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN HOME (cont.)

1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. NKJV Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. This verse is a continuation of the instructions to Christian households in the prior chapter. Why the translators chose to make this break here is unknown.

One of the worst things that can happen to us is to forget our past when God begins to bless us. As stated in the prior chapter, look at this verse as an employer/supervisor-employee relationship to gain the full meaning for today. The Christian manager-supervisor **MUST** be fair and equitable in all their dealings. Unfortunately, we too often see in business **AND** in the church those that have forgotten their past and the injustice they received. They then apply the same principles of injustice in their dealings. Christian business owners, managers, and supervisors must be fair and just with those to whom God has given them charge. This doesn't mean to be “soft” or overly lenient because that's equally unfair. The key is that those in positions of authority **ALWAYS** have a Higher One to answer to and He is completely just and fair.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS ON LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; NKJV Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; The New King James Version translation to this verse adds much more intensity than the original translation. Let's paraphrase it focusing on the key terms. {West Translation} “*Keep your prayer life going with **INTENSITY** and **SINCERITY**. Be careful to watch for any dangers (all demonically inspired) that would hinder, distract, or destroy that prayer life. While you're praying, don't just ask all the time but spend the same intensity and sincerity in appreciation to the Lord for what He has already done.*” If the NKJV translation to this verse is what Paul was really trying to get across to the Colossians, then we must likewise be careful and intense in our praying. Remember, the Colossian Church was warned but did not continue on as one of the churches called out by the Lord in the opening of the Book of Revelation. Somewhere they lost their intensity in prayer.

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. As we are completing this last chapter in our study, we just completed the annual month of ministerial appreciation across America. However, I agree with Paul that the most important thing the laity can do for the preacher is to **PRAY FOR US!** What a wicked time we live in. We not only fight the forces of evil outside of the church but we fight forces of evil **INSIDE** the church. Many ministries are on the brink of financial ruin and reputation loss. It's difficult to “cry aloud and spare not” when the preacher sees his family and his children on the brink of ruin because what happens in the church often extends to the home of the preacher. Therefore, we need the intense, sincere, careful prayers of the people of God. If the people of God will pray, we can preach that which is on the heart of God with fervor; we can preach with the intensity and clarity of Paul.

SAINT'S PRINCIPLE: Please pray for those of us preaching the Gospel that we will not be distracted!

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Amplified Bible Behave yourselves wisely [living prudently and with discretion] in your relations with those of the outside

world (the non-Christians), making the very most of the time and seizing (buying up) the opportunity.

This small verse says so much to the verses before it and the verse after it. How shall we conduct ourselves toward those that have not made a commitment to Christ? First, let's stop fooling ourselves. Everyone (or the great majority) has non-Christian friends. However, let's define that term "friends" before going further. Dr. John Maxwell says there are five levels of relationships/friendships. Those levels are, in ascending order: SURFACE, STRUCTURED, SECURE, SOLID, and SIGNIFICANT. Often, when we think of the term "friends", we think in terms of a solid or significant relationship. How can a Christian have a solid or significant relationship with an unbeliever? It can't happen. But we do have non-Christian friends at the other end of the relationship/friendship spectrum. For example, according to Dr. Maxwell, in the SURFACE phase of a relationship, strong friendships are rarely developed or solidified. At this level only surface areas are discussed such as the weather, the latest deals on meat, and the fluctuating price of gas. These may be people that we know "well" at our jobs but a personal crisis in their lives lets us know how little we really know them. These people like you but will not sacrifice their life for you. They know *about* you but don't really know you. How are we to behave ourselves among them? Paul, who also had friends in this category, tells us to behave ourselves wisely in our relationships with them. These are not friends that are going to battle for you so don't set yourself up for disappointment (at best) or betrayal (at the worst) by relaxing too much around them. Use your time wisely around them and remember that they need Christ in their lives so always be a living testimony in their presence. Don't "love" them so much that you allow them to go to hell!

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. If we are to successfully reach those non-Christian friends of ours, we must return to Paul's instructions from the previous chapter and work on what comes out of our mouths. Just as Peter's speech betrayed him as a Galilean as he sat by the fire warming himself when the Lord Jesus stood before Pilate, our speech will betray us as either being a solid Christian or one more uncommitted person "just saying the words". Let us also remember to be prepared, in our speech, with an answer for every person that would challenge or question our Christian relationship. Every Christian must remember that our life is Christ, our "product" is Christ, and we are sales people for Christ. As I stated before, don't "love" them so much that you allow them to go to hell!

SIDE ROAD: As we prepare to complete the letter from Paul to the Colossians, he is about to do something which shows the personal side of the letter and reveals his care for those with him – he sends greetings from those that are with him. Could he have known that these would have the great opportunity of being mentioned in the same breath as this great apostle? I believe he knew he was doing a significant work for the Lord but still wanted to share what the Lord had accomplished through him and give these a chance to "shine" also.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE: **If we are ever to be truly effective in ministry, we must never forget those that enabled us to get there.**

FINAL GREETINGS

7 All my state shall TYCHICUS declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord: 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; This man Tychicus was a wonderful brother. Look at the adjectives that Paul uses to describe him: beloved, faithful, and fellow servant. When we're in the midst of our trials, we don't need friends like Job had, we need men like Tychicus whose very presence makes us happy. He was a man that Paul could count on because he sent him to find out how the Colossians were really doing and to

comfort them regarding Paul's condition. He was a man that Paul trusted and loved! He was also, according to the King James Version footnote, the scribe to whom Paul dictated this book.

9 With ONESIMUS, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. When Tychicus brought this epistle, he brought with him Onesimus, a fellow Colossian and a runaway servant. He was a servant of a man named Philemon and was the subject of the small epistle with the same name. He converted to Christianity through the ministry of Paul. However, he is one that Paul now refers to as faithful and beloved. (He will speak more of him in the Epistle to Philemon.)

10 ARISTARCHUS my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and MARCUS, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) Aristarchus was imprisoned with Paul. We don't know any more about him except that he sent greetings to them. Mark, the writer of the Gospel of the same name, also sent greetings to the church and Paul sent a commendation of him with that greeting. {Matthew Henry} "*Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew, and thought not good to take him with them, because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, Acts 15:38. He would not take Mark with him, but took Silas, because Mark had deserted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himself, but recommends him to the respect of the churches, and gives a great example of a truly Christian forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive.*"

11 And Jesus, which is called JUSTUS, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. {Matthew Henry} "*What comfort the apostle had in the communion of saints and ministers! One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, who were working out their own salvation and endeavoring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take great comfort in those who are their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship [is] a great refreshment under the sufferings and difficulties in their way.*"

12 EPAPHRAS, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Epaphras, who is the same as Epaphroditus, was mentioned in the first chapter of this epistle. Lord, please give us ministers the spirit of Epaphras to labor intensely and earnestly in prayer for those that You have given to our charge that they will stand perfect and complete in the will of God. One of the most frustrating things in the life of the Christian is to endure suffering and not know whether this suffering is part of the will of God or something you brought upon yourself. This was Job's problem throughout his complaining. If he had KNOWN that he was absolutely in the will of God and that the horrible trial he was going through was known by and sanctioned by God, he would have endured better and had even more joy at its conclusion. However, we don't usually have that opportunity. That falls under the category of trust. The will of God and our relative position within it is vitally important to maintain our joy. As others pray for us for stability in the midst of the test, we can find ourselves perfect and complete in the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis. The spirit of Epaphras requires the minister to also have a passion (zeal) for those that God has put under their care. It's the duty of the minister or whoever is involved in Christian service to make sure they do what's necessary (fasting, prayer, consecration, etc.) to maintain that passion. You cannot allow yourself to become faint toward the whole Body or any one part of the Body!

14 LUKE, the beloved physician, and DEMAS, greet you. In this one verse, the apostle has, probably unknown to him, revealed two ends of the spectrum of Christian life. On the successful end is Luke, the beloved physician. His name and work lives on in his Gospel and the Book of Acts. He is an example of loyalty to Paul and devotion to God for he alone was with Paul at the end according to 2 Timothy 4:11. On the failure end we have Demas who, according to 2 Timothy 4:10 forsook Paul and returned to the world. {Matthew Henry} “*Many who have made a great figure in profession, and gained a great name among Christians, have yet shamefully apostatized: They went forth from us, because they were not of us, 1 John 2:19.*” When you’re ready to get “deep” into this walk, you only have two choices.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and NYMPHAS, and the church which is in his house. Nymphas had started a church in his home and he was singled out for commendation and encouragement. Even though Paul was a prisoner, he was a hero to the Church. I’m sure such a small word of greeting would be so comforting to Nymphas and to the difficult work he was doing.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. 17 And say to ARCHIPPUS, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it. We have no indication that Archippus was slack in his duties but, no doubt, as the apostle brought this letter to a close, he received a clear Word of encouragement and exhortation to give to this man.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen. {Dake} “*The salutation was by Paul’s own hand, but the epistle was dictated to a scribe.*”

