

MR. D'S NOTES ON COLOSSIANS



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INTRODUCTION:

Many years ago, before computers, I studied the book of Colossians via hand written notes and a printed Bible - oh the pain that image brings to mind!

In going through my files I ran across these notes and remembered fondly the long trips to the two churches where I taught this series. One was in a little town south of Portland OR, and the other in an even littler town in Northern Nebraska.

Both congregations were hungry to just listen to the Word being taught and to interact with the truths being set forth.

I trust that some might find some joy in looking through these thoughts.

Stanley L. Derickson 2002

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COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION

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Colossians overview:

Paul begins to show Christ's preeminence by showing his pre-existence. Christ not only created everything but he is above everything. Kind of like - FIRST, if you catch my drift.

Christ has reconciled all things unto himself and this should be the impetus to living a Godly life.

In light of these things Paul admonishes several types of people to live properly before their God (individuals, wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters). All of us fit in somewhere in that list.

Paul closes by asking for prayer concerning his captivity. This was quite a letter considering he is captive! One must wonder if his time in prison was bearable only because of his thoughts of others and his Lord.

Probably the key verse would be: Colossians 1.18 "And he is the head of the body, the church; who has a beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence."

The book was written in 61 A. D. by the apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Col. 4.3, 10, 18 speak of his imprisonment) The years of 60-62 seem to cover the suggested time of writing.

To set the stage in history we might read a short portion from the writings of a Roman named Tacitus. He describes the persecution under Nero in 64 which is a little later, but most likely gives us an idea of some of the persecutions that were already in progress.

"But all the endeavors of men, all the emperors' largesse [liberal giving] and the propitiations of

the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire [burning of Rome] had been ordered. And so to get rid of this rumor, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Checked for the moment, this pernicious superstition again broke out, not only in Judaea, the source of the evil, but even in Rome, that receptacle for everything that is sordid and degrading from every quarter of the globe, which there finds a following. Accordingly, arrest was first made of those who confessed; then, on their evidence an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire [after being dipped in oil] to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even towards men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of an individual" DOCUMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH; edited by Henry Bettenson; 1947; Oxford University Press; New York; p 3,4.

The book of Colossians carries the name of the church at Colossae, but was also read by the church in Laodicea and quite probably others in the area.

Some believe that Paul may have taken the gospel to this area while he was at Ephesus (Acts 19.10) but Epaphras seems to be the main personage in the church (2.1) and seems to have been in prison with Paul at some point in time (Philemon 23).

Colosse was built along the Lycus River. It is about one hundred miles east of Ephesus on what was called the royal road from Ephesus to Persia. Colosse was in a valley along with Laodicea and Hieropolous. Their main export was deep blue colored woolens. One of the fabrics was a purple called colloesinus.

Just some stray thoughts for your further study: 1. A very good "pre-existence of Christ" text is seen in 1.15-19; 2. The letter was meant for the church at Laodicea as well (2.1); 3. A proof text for Luke being a doctor is found in 4.17

I think as we progress with this study that we will see that salvation makes us different, salvation makes us see differently, salvation makes us react differently, and that salvation should put us under a new standard and outlook!

Is the world today Christian? No - there are billions of people that have never heard the name Jesus Christ.

Is the United States Christian today? No - in the 1980's some suggested that the nation was close

to 50% evangelical, but most feel that figure was quite high. The nation is not Christian today even though it was founded by Christian/religious men.

Why is the world non-Christian? Why is the United States non-Christian? The answer to both of these questions is lack of truth.

Lack of truth comes from the world rejecting the Bible as truth. Most today reject the possibility of absolute truth and replace truth with variable truth. This line of thought views all truth as coming from the individual - each individual makes their own truth - another person's truth may or may not be my truth.

This philosophy comes to us from the teaching of humanism around the world.

A man named Hegel suggested that thesis/antithesis makes truth. Before this, mankind normally considered there was only truth and non-truth. Hegel taught that thesis/antitheses made a new truth thus there is no real truth or false.

Without the absolute truth of the bible there is no truth for man to follow. This is why Europe and the United States, the show pieces of modern missions are non-Christian today.

Please take a moment and define RELATIVE to yourself or look it up in a dictionary.

Webster hints at it - "comparatively" What something is in relationship to something else. If it is 110 degrees in the shade and you enter a 32-degree room the room is cold. If it is 40 degrees below zero outside and you enter the room it is warm. The room temperature is relative to the outside temperature. It can be warm or cold.

TRUTH is definitely this way in America today. Relative.

According to this thinking, for me to open a bottle of beer this morning and drink it during class would be wrong. For me to open a bottle of beer this afternoon in the kitchen and drink it in the privacy of my own home would be okay in the minds of many Christians.

A "Christian" man's teenage daughter stole alcohol from her father's stock - kids became intoxicated - wreck - no serious injuries - whole town knew - pastor went to talk to the man - man threw pastor out and told him what he did in his own home was none of the pastors business.

A continuation of the thought - if I feel it is okay to drink the beer in church then it is okay - even if someone here thinks it is wrong - you see right is what I see as right.

IS TRUTH REALLY RELATIVE? NO! TRUTH IS TRUTH NO MATTER THE SITUATION OR AGE IN WHICH WE LIVE.

Let's list some things that are true and false and see what we have. Is there really truth?

TRUTH (THESIS)

FALSE (ANTITHESIS)

fetus	not alive till birth
peace	war
holiness	sin
marriage	no marriage
pride in work	no pride
truth	false
Biblical truth	no truth
Heaven	heaven is a lie
saved	all are god's children
law	no law
obedience	disobedience
honesty	dishonesty
God	devil
Jesus - deity	Jesus - man
capital punishment	no capital punishment
love brethren	no love for brethren
don't forsake assembly	forsake the assembly
husbands love wife	don't love wife
children obey	don't obey
accept Christ	reject Christ - hell
morality	immorality
good	evil
no lying	lying
fidelity	adultery
witness	no witness
serve God	no serve God
subjection to God's will	rebellion
subjection to husband	doing her own thing
love your neighbor	no love for your neighbor
prayer	no prayer
bible study	no Bible study
inerrancy of Scripture	Scripture full of mistakes
accept Christ's work	work like mad
hell	a loving God wouldn't send me to hell
discipline	no discipline

Let us look for a moment to Hegel and others to see what has been done to truth, indeed this is where America is today!

The idea of "There is no absolute truths" comes to us from two places in our past.

In America, Charles Sanders Pierce and William James worked on what is called Pragmatism. Slogans from their line of truth are "truth, is what works" and "the true is the expedient" - later John Dewey popularized this and brought it into our educational system - from top to bottom.

In Europe Hegel was playing with truth and decided that he would take thesis and antithesis and mix the two together to form "NEW TRUTH" or as he called it "SYNTHESIS."

Francis A. Schaeffer mentioned, and most would agree with him, that Christianity is based on thesis-antithesis -- truth versus error. Without this concept there is no basis of right or wrong.

Does this help you understand our present society here in America?

In most situations today, if viewed in this manner you will see society and Christians are following a synthesis type philosophy -- no absolute truth or false.

There was a man on television recently that they were interviewing just after the great northeast black out. They were in a room that he had filled with stolen property when the lights were out.

Reporter: "Doesn't it bother your conscience to have ripped off all of this property?"

Man: "I had such an incredible opportunity to get things I never would have been able to get - God must have been in it! I'm just sorry I didn't have a chance to get a color television." (from Daily Bread Dec 19,1978)

Do you see a synthesis of true Christianity and man's unregenerate thinking in this man?

We have absolutes!

The unsaved may choose to live with no absolutes but WE DARE NOT LIVE WITHOUT THEM! WE ARE BOUND TO THE ABSOLUTES OF THE SCRIPTURES! IT IS OUR PLACE TO OBEY THOSE ABSOLUTES!

The Bible is based on absolute truth - anything short of this is wrong in the framework of God's Word.

Another big term that is used is Presuppositions. It means principles of life - Things by which you live. Things that you presume to be true.

We have some presuppositions which we should be living by.

1. We exist to glorify God.
2. God is the most important thing in our lives.

3. His Word is the guide for our lives. It gives us the absolute truth.
4. We will obey that Word in all situations - even when it hurts.
5. We should desire to do His will for our lives.
6. There is nothing We shouldn't do for Him - as He gives us the grace to do it.

Paul in the book of Colossians is trying to straighten out some misconceptions that the believers were struggling under. Someone at Colosse was trying to mix Christianity with what appears to be early forms of Gnosticism, a philosophy of the day.

Gnosticism:

Ryrie in his study Bible introduction says of the heresy at Colosse, "...we can discern some of the features of the false teaching at Colosse. It was a syncretistic, fusing of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation, and Oriental mysticism. Specifics included dietary and Sabbath observances and circumcision rites, the worship of angels, and the practice of asceticism, which stemmed from the belief that the body was inherently evil. In combating this heresy, Paul emphasizes the cosmic significance of Christ as Lord of creation and Head of the Church. Any teaching, practice, or intermediary that detracts from the uniqueness and centrality of Christ, is against the faith." Ryrie Study Bible. p. 359

It seems that the Gnostics were mixing Christ into their caldron of doctrine. They felt that Christ was a spook - a lower God that could occupy a human body.

One author mentioned that they called him a "demi-urge" - a lower god - maybe 13th or 14th down from Mr. Big and Mr. Big was not a shining example of a god - he was created by another that was created but the top god. Christ was a created being - the spook that did not leave footprints in the dust. He left the body of Jesus just before his death.

Encarta Online (2002):

"a pre-Christian and early Christian religious movement teaching that salvation comes by learning esoteric spiritual truths that free humanity from the material world, believed in this movement to be evil"

Years ago while planting a church in Nebraska I stayed up late to study. I often listened to the radio to stay awake. One of the programs was a very excited, emphatic woman preacher from California. Her main philosophy was that God had revealed to her a new language whereby she and she alone could truly interpret the Scriptures. She would go verse by verse through the Bible telling her listeners that the word that was in the verse really didn't mean what we think it means, but that it means something completely different according to her personal revelation and training from God.

I think this portrays the modern day Gnostic philosophy. I don't know if she actually taught the

Gnostic line, but she certainly had the foundation to do so. She and she alone could speak for God, and she and she alone had the knowledge that man needs to be saved from whatever she might think they needed saving from.

The Gnostics have their own website: <http://www.gnosis.org>

They have churches, the one in Los Angeles, CA is called Ecclesia Gnostica. They have bishops, liturgical calendars and all the trappings of other churches. They even have one in Portland, OR.

They seem to have a close affinity to C. G. Jung a heavy hitter in the psychological field of our day. Just a tad of info about him:

Jung seems to teach that our purpose - our need is to become conscious of who we are - become conscious of the world and through this consciousness we can achieve whatever there is to be achieved - each individual has a microcosm of the world within and we need to uncover it. My dumb question is this - if the world is evil and we have a microcosm of it within and we discover what we are, won't we have a bit of a problem with the evil within?

In a nutshell, God is within the person waiting to be revealed. Everything external is evil. Revealing God within is done by exercising your mind and/or feelings. There is nothing external that can guide you in right and wrong - only that which you perceive to be right and wrong from within is right or wrong. Sounds like modern day humanism to me, but that is only my opinion - I would guess they would deny such a comparison.

The idea that they are receiving new revelation from God lends itself to the Charismatic movement and those that have revelations directly from God and the obvious aspect that they feel they are above the normal believer that does not experience all there is to have of the Spirit.

<http://www.carm.org/heresy/gnosticism.htm> states: "A more detailed Gnostic theology is as follows. The unknowable God was far too pure and perfect to have anything to do with the material universe which was considered evil. Therefore, God generated lesser divinities, or emanations. One of these emanations, Wisdom desired to know the unknowable God. Out of this erring desire the demiurge an evil god was formed and it was this evil god that created the universe. He along with archons kept the mortals in bondage in material matter and tried to prevent the pure spirit souls from ascending back to god after the death of the physical bodies. Since, according to the Gnostics, matter is evil, deliverance from material form was attainable only through special knowledge revealed by special Gnostic teachers. Christ was the divine redeemer who descended from the spiritual realm to reveal the knowledge necessary for this redemption. In conclusion, Gnosticism is dualistic. That is, it teaches there is a good and evil, spirit and matter, light and dark, etc. dualism in the universe."

They felt they had a secret knowledge about God, humanity and the rest of the creation - knowledge which no one else is entrusted with. They were tolerant of other religions outside of themselves and did not discriminate against women - it is surmised - as opposed to Christianity.

In Christianity the person is saved by faith and salvation signified by works, but to the Gnostic - people that know - they are saved by simply knowing what God has revealed to them. Is this not America to a point? The people know what they know no matter what that might be and if there is a God He will let them into heaven.

Those in the know list a number of major modern groups as based on the Gnostic foundation, Mormons, Unification Church (Moonies), Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses and some add the New Age movement - an obvious choice in my mind - and Buddhism, Hinduism and most other Eastern religions.

Some suggest that they were one of the three main Christian groups in the first century. They list also the "remnants of the Jewish Christian sect which was created by Jesus' disciples, and the churches started by St. Paul, that were eventually to grow and develop into "mainline" Christianity by the end of the third century." From religioustolerance.org/gnostic.htm 11-9-02 It is of interest that they see Christianity coming from Paul and not the apostles.

They describe themselves as not fitting into theological or philosophical parameters, but rather in the area of myth - not myth as in stories that are untrue, but stories that have a truth within.

They feel that their role today is to help others understand the message of Christ which mainline Christianity has misinterpreted. They felt that Christ brought information to them to bring them back to their spiritual plain with God from the evil world.

There was some spiritual spark or light within that they sought to discover - this spark would allow them to escape the world when they died. The world was not evil due to the sin of Adam and Eve, but rather due to it having been created evil by a less than perfect god.

They hold the snake as a religious symbol, not as a tempter but as a liberator. The serpent brought them knowledge from the fruit they ate and thus completed their humanness.

Gnostic texts varied and were usually New Testament times authors that were not included in the Scriptures. Many of their texts were destroyed by those that sought to stamp out this heresy. It is of note that many have tried to destroy Christianity's Bible with little success.

Due to their acceptance of women as equal to men within their assembly, many of their writings were said to have been by women.

Ancient Gnostic Leaders taught magic, reincarnation, against marriage, free sexuality, celibacy and that the death of Christ was a hallucination because Jesus didn't have a true body.

A possible overlay for your use.

G O D L E S S In essence they are a godless religion in that they reject totally the deity of Christ.

If you deny Christ you deny God altogether.

N E W They believe in new revelation from God on an ongoing basis. Each person receives that which he can to come close to salvation.

O L D Most people say that it predates Christianity. Personally I suspect it wwwwaayy predates Christianity. It smacks of some of the creation accounts from pagan nations. At any rate, it became popular along with Christianity.

S U P E R I O R Those that find salvation are unique and special in that they alone have found their salvation - they are better than and much more knowledgeable than all those that have not achieved salvation.

T E R M I N A L Since they reject the Christ of the Bible as God they also reject any work on the cross that He had done for them. If Christ is not God then they worship foolishly, and are bound for hell.

I N N E R Their salvation is found within, on their own. They have no real need of outside intervention - they basically must save themselves.

C O N F U S E D Today there are many types of Gnosticism. There is no real standard for them to follow. This confusion has followed them through the centuries. This can be seen in the fact that almost every author I read said it is hard to determine just what they believed in any given age. There seems to be different beliefs depending on the group you follow/followed.

This is to be expected. If each person is to find their own way how can you not have multiple methods and doctrines?

PAUL IS SETTING FORTH SOME ABSOLUTES FOR THE COLOSSIANS TO LIVE BY SO THAT THEY COULD SET ASIDE THE SYNTHESIS THAT THEY WERE STRUGGLING UNDER.

Let's apply the synthesis thinking to our list of thesis - antithesis.

TRUTH (THESIS)	SYNTHESIS	FALSE (ANTITHESIS)
fetus	abortion	not alive till birth
peace	let's get along	war
holiness	feel good - do it	sin
marriage	live together	no marriage
pride in work	do your own thing	no pride
truth	gray areas	false

Biblical truth	humanism	no truth
Heaven	new age	heaven is a lie
saved	US church today	all are god's children
God	maybe a god	no God
law	I do what I want	no law
obedience	don't have to obey	disobedience
honesty	anything goes	dishonesty
Jesus - deity	he may have lived	Jesus - man
capital punishment	we need to love them	no capital punishment
love brethren	greeting times	no love for brethren
don't forsake assembly	attend when it's easy	forsake the assembly
husbands love wife	I can love two	don't love wife
children obey	1 - 2 - 3	don't obey
accept Christ	live a good life	reject Christ - hell
morality	everything is okay	immorality
good	its okay	evil
no lying	half truths	lying
fidelity	if they don't know	adultery
witness	lifestyle evangelism	no witness
serve God	I need to be fed	no serve God
subjection to God's will	when I get time	rebellion
subjection to husband	women's lib	doing her own thing
prayer	Christian meditation	no prayer
bible study	listen to tapes	no Bible study
inerrancy of Scripture	Don't matter	Scripture full of mistakes
Christ's work on cross	Love is enough	work like mad
discipline	let's talk	no discipline

How does this affect the church?

I filled out a Senior pastor application years ago. At the close of the application was the following paragraph with a place for me to sign.

"I understand that the _____ church may conduct examinations into my background, including my employment history. I understand that by affixing my signature below that I consent to such examinations, and I understand that my signature certifies that all information in this application and any attachments included are correct and complete, that my employment as Pastor is contingent upon its accuracy, and that false statements on this application may result in termination of employment."

My response:

I must admit I struggled with this last paragraph. I was very disturbed that you have such a low

regard for brothers in Christ. I understand there are people that you must guard against, but they won't care if they lie to you and sign it.

I am not seeking employment - I am seeking God's will as it relates to my life and how my life may, or may not, relate to your church and its ministry. I read I Cor. 9.16 in my devotions today and the paragraph did not compute! (I Cor. 9.16 "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel")

Their response to my response was no response.

I would like to take this a little further and consider this specifically with the church and some of the ramifications.

THESIS - LIFE OF A SUPERNATURALIST	ANTITHESIS - LIFE OF A NATURALIST	SYNTHESIS TRUTH OF TODAY

GOD IS THERE	WE ARE ALONE AND IN TROUBLE	I HOPE GOD IS THERE
CHURCH	NO CHURCH	TAKE THE KIDS, ITS GOOD FOR THEM
SHARING WITH GOD/OTHERS	ALL IS MINE	GIVE A BUCK IF AND WHEN YOU GO
ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE	NO HOPE OF AFTERLIFE	I HOPE THERE IS SOMETHING AFTER DEATH
LIVE FOR GOD	LIVE FOR SELF	DO SOME GOOD AS YOU GO ALONG
GOALS ARE SET ON GOD	GOALS ARE MATERIAL	GOALS ARE IN LIGHT OF MAYBE GAIN THERE
PURPOSE IS PURPOSE SERVING GOD	NO PURPOSE	YOU MAKE YOUR

MORAL LAW	NO MORAL LAW	IF IT DOESN'T HURT DO IT
GOD'S PLAN	DO WHAT YOU WANT	IF IT IS OK FOR YOU - ITS OK
GOD'S WILL	NO DIRECTION IN LIFE	ASTROLOGY TO FIND YOUR WAY
CREATION BY GOD	EVOLUTION PROCESS	EVOLUTION
JESUS IS GOD BECOME MAN	A GREAT MAN	I HOPE HE LIVED

Paul seems, in Colossians, to stick a sword into Gnosticism and then turns it for a little effect.

LOOK - CHRIST WAS GOD.
LOOK - WE HAVE TRUTH - THE BIBLE.
LOOK - WE CAN KNOW GOD.

New Truth is no truth in my mind, and I trust this is true for you as well.

I would like to quote from the Barna Research website <http://www.barna.org> and I think it will tend to back up the thought that the church today in America is in Synthesis mode.

"American's Beliefs

[first % is agree and second % is disagree]

"the Bible can only be correctly interpreted by people who have years of intense training in theology 19% 76%

"praying to deceased saints can have a positive effect in a person's life 51 39

"a being can be under the control or the influence of spiritual forces such as demons 54 38

"God is one being in three separate and equal persons - God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit 79 13

"every person has a soul that will live forever, either in God's presence or absence 79 12

"the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual

truths 44 38

"truth can be discovered only through logic, human reasoning and personal experience 54 43

"the Bible does not specifically condemn homosexuality 27 53

"it is possible to communicate with others after they die 35 55

"a human being can be under the control or the influence of spiritual forces such as demons 54 38

"when He lived on earth, Jesus Christ sinned, like other people 42 50

"the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil 59 34

In case you haven't caught it, synthesis is humanism - there is no right and wrong, there is no black and white, there is only something in the middle - ME.

Two illustrations of synthesis: In the 1970's I was given a tour as part of a class in graduate school of a large Assembly of God church. In the center of the building was a large garden and the assistant pastor mentioned that they had desired to have a large barbecue there for the church folks but decided on a statue of Mary for their Catholic folks. The fact that I suggested to the professor that they could have set a statue of Molech there as well did not sit well with the tour guide.

Secondly in 2002 I was channel surfing and stopped for a moment on a "love" group that thought world peace would come by respect for one another's religion. In their facility they had four sanctuaries for the four major religions, one Christian/Jewish, another for Zen/Veda (I think it was), one for Buddhist and the final for Muslim.

If this isn't synthesis in the organized church I don't think I would know synthesis if I saw it.

How does this affect the church's stance in the world of American society? Barna reported that the things most influential in American society were "movies, television, the Internet, books, music, public policy and law, and family." (from an internet report 11-02) The report went on to mention that the church is not even in the top twelve influences in America.

To illustrate how this thinking affects our youth consider the following:

Barna research of evangelical youth. Barna Research Group, "Third Millennium Teens" (Ventura, Calif.: The Barna Research Group, Ltd., 1999) Quoted in pamphlet by Josh McDowell "Beyond Belief to Convictions" - based on his book by the same name.

Do all religions pray to the same god? 63% believe this to be true.

70% say there is no absolute moral truth.

72% determine right from wrong based on "if it works in my life."

51% don't believe in the resurrection of Christ.

65% don't think the devil is real.

68% don't believe the Holy Spirit is a living entity.

81% believe that "truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances."

The same study stated that kids without a solid Biblical belief system are:

225% more likely to be angry with life

216% more likely to be resentful

210% more likely to lack purpose in life

200% more likely to be disappointed in life

We as believers need to get our acts together!

Some Historical Background

The Jewish religion was acceptable to the Romans - a licensed religion. Christianity had grown out of Judaism and was seen by the Romans as a splinter group. Because of communion they were seen as pagans - cannibals. Rome was on decline - Roman citizens thought the Roman and other pagan Gods were mad at Rome for letting Christians continue on.

There was division between Jewish leaders and the Christians. This caused a splitting away even further and soon Christians were seen as a religious group themselves, only they were unlicensed. Thus they were being persecuted at the time Paul was writing to them. After Rome burned the persecution became more intense.

This introduces us to Nero.

NERO is mentioned in Acts 25:11 and was around from 37-68 AD. He was born in Antium and was adopted by his mother's latest husband Claudius. He married a daughter of Claudius and later was made emperor. He liked getting rid of people and shortly had eliminated a son of Claudius, his mother, his wife and some conspirators that tried to kill him. He also eliminated several prominent Romans. He was very ruff on wives and girlfriends some of which died. When he was dethroned he did himself in as well.

KING HEROD AGRIPPA was educated in Nero's court and was loyal to Rome. Agrippa was eaten by worms in Acts 12:21-23. There is a description of eating by worms in the Apocrypha in

II Mac 9:5-14 in a description of how Antiochus died.

"But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him a fatal and invisible blow. As soon as he had said the words, he was seized with incurable pain in his bowels and with sharp internal torments - a punishment entirely fitting for one who had inflicted many unheard-of torments on the bowels of others. Still he did not in the least abate his insolence, more arrogant than ever, he breathed fiery threats against the Jews. After he had given orders to speed up the journey, it happened that he fell out of his chariot as it hurtled along, and so violent was his fall that every joint in his body was dislocated." "Worms swarmed even from the eyes of this godless man and, while he was still alive and in agony, his flesh rotted off, and the whole army was disgusted by the stench of his decay. It was so unbearably offensive that nobody could escort the man who only a short time before had seemed to touch the stars in the sky." II Maccabees 9.1-12

APPLICATION DRAWN FROM HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. What do we know of suffering for Christ's sake here in America?

NOT MUCH!

2. Knowing the suffering and trials which the early Christians and some Christians since - the torture - the scattering from homes - the death of loved ones by cruel Romans, Dare we call such things as being too busy or "my car broke down" or "I don't have enough money to pay the bills" or "my boss doesn't like me" TRIALS AND SUFFERING FOR CHRIST? We don't know what suffering is.

My wife told a prospective employer she didn't want to work Sundays because of church. The woman started hollering at her. Faith left and as she walked down the hall the woman was still hollering. In comparison to this time period this wouldn't be classed much more that a minor trial.

Christians today are suffering persecution much worse than ours today. In recent years in Romania the witnessing Christian could have his work permit stamped "mentally incompetent" which means that they will never work again. They have their church buildings torn down by the government. They are very poor. That is persecution!

Many are being killed and others are being sold into slavery because they are Christians - this is in 2002!

Some peculiarities of the book of Colossians:

1. The entire book is polemic or is an argument against Gnosticism in its earlier stages.
2. The book deals with Christ the Head of the Church.

3. It is the only epistle except Romans which was written to a church not visited or established by Paul.
4. There are many parallel passages between the book of Ephesians and Colossians. This could be a very interesting study in and of itself.
5. The term "fullness" occurs ten times in the book.
6. The book lists great characteristics of Christ. Redeemer, Creator, Preserver, Head of the Church, Reconciler, Sanctifier, knowable, wise, worthy of our faith, Lord Companion, Our Roots, Builder, Deity, Head over Creation, sitting with God, Rewarder and Master - and most likely others.
7. This book has the only reference to angel worship (2.18)
8. The recipients are told to exchange the epistle with the Laodocians (4.16).
9. The book mentions Luke as a physician (4.14).

As we look into this book may be think about the following points with a new seriousness.
Salvation makes us different!
Salvation makes us see differently!
Salvation makes us react differently
Salvation should put us under a new standard and outlook!

JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD

INTRODUCTION

1. CHRIST OUR SAVIOR

Christ our Savior prepares us to serve (vss. 9-10).
Col. 1.1-23

2. CHRIST OUR PERFECTER

Christ our Perfecter perfects our service (vs. 28).
Col. 1.24-29

3. CHRIST OUR FOUNDATION

Christ our Foundation narrows our work to His Standard of service (vs. 7).
Col. 2.1-8

4. CHRIST OUR COMPLETER

Christ our Completer prepares us for perfect service (vss. 9-14).
Col. 2.9-23

5. CHRIST OUR LIFE

Christ our Life is our purpose in service (vs. 4-17)
Col. 3.1-17

6. CHRIST OUR MOTIVATOR

Christ our Motivator brings us to proper service (vs. 23).
Col. 3.18-4.1

7. CHRIST OUR MESSAGE

Christ our Message directs our verbal service (vs. 3, 6).
Col. 4.2-6

8. CHRIST OUR MASTER

Christ our Master builds us through prayer to service (vs. 12b).
Col. 4.7-18; 1.7-8

APPENDIX ONE

A review of the book

APPENDIX TWO

A study of Epaphrus

CHAPTER ONE

Text: 1.1-23

1. CHRIST OUR SAVIOR

Christ our Savior prepares us to serve (vss. 9-10).

Col. 1.1-23

Vs. 1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus [our] brother,"

"an apostle"= per vine "one sent forth"

Timothy means honoring God.

"by the will of God" is there any other basis for a man to be in a place of leadership in the Lord's work?

NO

There was a Christian college where the board found that they had power they had never known of before. They started flexing their new found strength and started demanding things of the faculty which were not really proper. The entire faculty finally resigned.

The board moved in assuming they would just run the school with the ease with which they had taken it over. One of them was in the office one day several weeks into their take over complaining to others about how much work it was to take care of all the details they had run into.

One of the faculty members that was cleaning out his office across the hall overheard the conversation so he stepped over beside the board member and quietly said, "You know I was called by God to this ministry, how about you?" and walked off.

The board had been called to be a guiding force, not a driving force. The faculty had been called to the mechanics of the school.

Q. Why does he use the term brother here?

We are all children of God. We are brothers and sisters in a perfect family. Too bad we don't always live like it in our churches today!

Vs. 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."

We should note that this letter is addressed to saints not the First Baptist Church of Colosse. This is important in three ways.

a. There were no denominational/fellowship distinctions back then. All believers were Christians, not divided into dozens of groups.

b. This was a letter to individuals rather than to a group or organization. Importance? A letter to a group is easily dismissed as "not for me." When addressed to people I suspect there would be more responsibility taken. So, the Bible is also to individuals not the church.

c. Since it is addressed to the saints then it is possible that there was more than one church in town. Since churches met in homes we might assume there may have been multiple churches in Colosse. The church is made up of people - not buildings - people will be seated at the marriage feast of the Lamb not a bunch of buildings.

"Saints and faithful" are the same people due to a rule of the Greek language called the Granville Sharp rule so I am told by the commentaries.

This however calls our attention to something. If you are a saint you should also be faithful in all things before the Lord.

Vs. 3 "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,"

Have you ever been thankful for a group of saints other than in your own church? Years ago there was a little Bible school in the middle of nowhere. The staff served on missionary support. For many years before serving there myself I found myself quite thankful for those men and women that were committed to training young people for the ministry.

Two actions Paul and Timothy are taking on behalf of the saints - Thanking God for them and praying for them. Yes, one is in the other but giving thanks is part of how we pray.

It would be interesting to know what those topics of prayer might have been. I suspect a good study would be to just read through the book jotting down items that Paul wanted for them. You would then have a good idea what Paul's prayer list might have been like.

Always praying for you - pray without ceasing - Paul must have been quite a man of prayer. (Acts 12.5; Rom. 1.9; I Thess. 2.13; I Thess. 5.17) There must have been something to this prayer thing that Paul thought was positive.

"We give thanks"

Thanks comes from "Euchariseo" or the term that we gain our term Eucharist from today.

Paul later seems to ask for their growth. There are mature and there are babes in Christ. It is the mature that ought to be teaching the babes, not the other way around. If a church is made up of only babes, then the one most mature should be teaching them until others find maturity.

We find that Paul is evaluating the believers - not judging them. It is not wrong for the church leaders to evaluate the believers that God has placed under them. After evaluation there should be a setting of goals for those believers - where does the church desire these people to be spiritually in five years - ten years?

Now that we have said this, we need to add a good warning to the leadership. The evaluation must be objective and based on God's requirements, not personal bias nor personal choice.

As one that might be evaluated, we must be open to the evaluation of the leaders and consider it wisely.

Years ago when just starting a marriage, a family and college we were church mouse poor. I wore the very best I had to church which included a sweater and cowboy boots instead of suit and dress shoes. The pastor took exception with my dress - decided I was being rebellious and told me to wear shoes and a suit. While agreeing with him that shoes and a suit would have been preferable, I had no suit nor money to buy one. I had one pair of footwear - cowboy boots. Rebellious? No. His evaluation was based on personal bias not fact, nor Scripture.

Vs. 4 "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love [which ye have] to all the saints,"

Paul had heard of their faith and love which had caused him to pray for them. Most likely from Epaphrus - he was out telling of his people and their needs.

Love is the agape love. Note their love was for ALL the saints, now if that isn't a problem for many of us I don't know what it is - ALL even those nasty ones you can't stand!

Love is the phrase that everyone likes to use, we are to be more loving, we are to be loving to others, we are to love one another and get along etc. Love comes from the Spirit, not from within us. As we walk with Him his love will be shed forth through us. We don't have to struggle and strain to get that love out of the bowels of our being - walk with the Lord and allow Him to have His way through you.

It isn't the gushy mess that some suggest - it is seeing value in others and treating them as valuable.

Years ago a young woman wrecked her car in front of the store where I was working. She pulled the car into our parking lot, opened the door and proceeded to gusher. She fell completely apart. She told me of the many problems she had already and now this. I am not a loving person as

such, but at that moment I had the encouragement and words that she really needed. She was calmed quite quickly. Now, that was not because of my suave way with women, it was the Spirit of God working through me.

I once heard this description of love in action. Recognize the person's worth before God, desire to benefit that person and take action.

Vs. 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"

Not "I hope I'll be resurrected" but "I'm thoroughly confident that I'll be resurrected." Our hope is to be raised with Christ and so we shall be.

The Colossians hope produced love and faith.

What can a hope like this produce in us today?

First of all what is hope?

From the text it is the confidence that we will live eternally with God.

In light of that concept - if we really believed it what would that hope produce in us?

1. A close walk with the Lord.
2. Desire to be a fruitful Christian.
3. Desire to share hope with others that we meet.
4. Living for things above and future, not for things here and now.

Vs. 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:"

Notice that it is the Gospel that is the one that bears fruit! It's great to know the gospel does bear fruit - many missionaries labor for years before seeing converts - this verse should encourage them.

This also is an encouragement to all that labor for God - we may never see any fruit of our ministries but if we labor with Him then we can know there is fruit.

Vs. 7 "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;"

Some feel that Epaphras was the man that evangelized this valley and the cities of Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. It would fit that his report to Paul was the prompting for Paul to write the letter.

It seems Epaphras may have been sent by Paul to do a work at Colossae. He was working for Paul in some manner. Some see Epaphras as similar to Timothy and Titus - apostolic delegates to do a work that the apostle could not do himself due to other involvements.

Vs. 8 "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

We see that "love" is a fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5.22. "In the Spirit" indicates our love - true love comes from God rather from our magnanimousness. Now some might argue with that, but Paul saw love as proceeding from the Spirit.

Vs. 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;"

Wow, can you imagine the feeling of those hearing these words - Paul has declared he prays for them twice in the early part of this letter. What would it be like to know someone like Paul was praying for you? Pretty great I would think.

As a whole this verse portrays something that is neat. You are so burdened with someone that you begin to pray for them on a daily basis. People you don't know - maybe people you haven't seen in many years.

A missionary family came to our church many years ago and presented their work in Papua New Guinea. For several years after that I would pray for them on a daily basis. The Lord had given me a tremendous burden for them and their ministry. I never saw them again, and never heard from them, but I felt led to pray for them on a continuing basis for many years.

Paul is very concerned with them finding God's will for their lives. Many today spend great amounts of time looking and seeking God's will for their lives.

I see three phases of God's will. Understanding all three will help us find God's will.

a. His overall will - His decrees - His plan for the ages, which includes each of us as individuals. We can do nothing about this - it is set - don't sweat it.

b. His will for our life as revealed in His Word. Baptism, Lord's Table, use of our gift, refraining from sin, being fruitful and many other items. These aren't options - do them - don't wonder if they are for you - they are.

c. His will for our life - what he wants us to do with our life. There may be some aspect to His will in a specific location of ministry and/or your freedom in that sort of decisions. He is usually very clear in this area - you will normally know what he wants.

Someone once asked me how I would answer someone that thought they had missed God's will in their life. I replied that since God is God, it is inconceivable to me that He could not communicate His will to someone unless they were living in sin for a protracted time.

Anyone that is seeking His will, will certainly find it - He isn't running a top secret organization.

Wisdom is a term that appears six times in the book. (James mentions, if we lack it we should ask - James 1.5)

Vs. 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;"

Imagine that - You can live a life that is worthy of Almighty God!

What does it mean to walk worthy of the Lord?

1. Walk with Him would be a simple all-encompassing answer, but a big discussion stopper.
2. The fact that we can - ought to gather our amazement into one place so that we can be totally shocked. For mortal man to walk worthily of almighty God is quite something - not that we are that great, but that He has allowed it in His grand scheme of things. We will look at the tools to achieve this later - He allows it and gives us the where with all to do it.

One possible translation of this word is to be occupied with - that probably tells it like number one states it. Be occupied with God.

The tense of this verb seems to indicate that this walk is a one time thing - this also would give credence to the thought of occupying yourself with Him. I isn't an on/off item as is convenient, but a life long decision.

"knowledge" is the same term as in verse 9 - "epigenosco" The term indicates a precise and correct knowledge (as opposed to the knowledge of the Gnostics I would guess). It is used of ethical and divine knowledge.

Walking with Him - producing fruit - gaining knowledge of Him. Now, that is a tall order, but it ought to be a very pleasing thought to the believer that he could be a part of this with God.

And don't forget good works! They are an integrated part of our Christian walk.

So, how do we gain this knowledge? By being in the Word, in personal study, in preparation for teaching your own children or a class in church, or in other church Bible studies.

Vs. 11 "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;"

We don't want to speak of patience and longsuffering do we? We tend to ignore that sort of thing until we have to confront it.

We are strengthened unto all patience - not by our own power, but by HIS!

Longsuffering - what do you think this is? I used to think that trials were only for a time and then we would be "THERE" and not have any more trials - not quite how it works.

Longsuffering is bad enough, but we are to do it with joyfulness! That is hard at times. I can suffer with the best of them, but I like everyone around to know I'm suffering.

Vs. 12 "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:"

"giving thanks" - this guy is always praying! How does that relate to the church today? Most churches are lucky to muster 15% of their membership on prayer night - indeed many churches don't even have a regular prayer meeting. There seems to be something very wrong about that in my mind.

"Inheritance" This is one case where there can be an inheritance without the person dying!!!! Christ died that we might have it.

It is of note also that HE "hath made us meet to be partakers" - not us - HE! We often act as if we made ourselves worthy by our works to be His sons and daughters, but that is far from reality.

Vs. 13 "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son:"

We were moved from one kingdom to another by Him - not ourselves. This is maybe a bit of a stab at the gnostics self help type religion where they have to do the work.

Took us right out of Satan's hands and domain! Stuck us right into His Son's kingdom – son-ship in the family.

Vs. 14 "In whom we have redemption through his blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins:"

Redemption simply means to buy back or to pay a price. This is what Christ did on the cross - He

paid the price for us. Not only did He purchase us - He made it possible for us to have forgiveness of our sins - both ongoing and past.

Don't mind if I just stop and list some theological studies mentioned here.

Inheritance.

Delivery from Satan.

Translated into the kingdom.

Redemption.

Forgiveness of sins.

Not to speak of the Fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Christ.

No matter how some like to deride theology, the Bible is full of it!

1-15 seems to be looking at our salvation while 16-23 are looking at the provider of that salvation, our Savior. Paul is really laying it out for his reader - Christ is God - that is a sword to the body of Gnosticism. There is a God and He has provided for us.

Well maybe a little more theology. Some points raised to the point of the deity of Christ in the next section.

15. "image of the invisible God"

16. He created everything

17. Pre-existent/sustainer

18. head of the body - the church

19. fullness of God dwells in Him

20. reconciler

22. makes us free from accusation

Vs. 15 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"

I'm sure that the Jehovah Witnesses camp on this passage. It, to some, indicates Christ was a created being. Their translation reads "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;" They and the Gnostics would suggest He is similar to God - a mere image. They would also see Him as part of the creation rather than the creator.

Vine p. 104 states "...His eternal relationship with the Father is in view, and the clause means both that He was the Firstborn before all creation and that He Himself produced creation...."

It means the first one born. The context lets you know first who. It is applied to first child, first raised to life and first group raised to life. In this text it relates to Christ's eternal generation.

"Not a commencement of existence, but an eternal relation to the Father, ... there never having

been a time when the Son began to be, or when the Son did not exist as God with the Father." Systematic Theology; Augustus Strong; The Judson Press; Valley Forge, PA; 1907; p 341

Adam was created mature, creation was created with age, and Christ was always the first begotten.

If, indeed, God is the eternal Father, then Christ must be the eternal Son.

A little logic. If Christ is the image of the invisible God, and if we are to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2.5), and if Christ is to be our example (I Pet. 2.21) then we can be like God - not God, but like God in our lives.

We are growing into the image of God - we can be like Him, all we have to do is begin to make life changes as indicated by the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 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:"

All things were created - all things - all thrones - all authorities. There is nothing that He did not create - how comforting is that? It has to be quite comforting to those under the thumb of dictators. God sets up and takes down governments - this is quite clear in the book of Daniel. All governments are there by His dictates. He will remove them at his discretion. America in all its splendor and power is in existence only at the good pleasure and in my opinion longsuffering of Almighty God.

Hitler bit the dirt, Mussolini bit the dirt, Tojo bit the dirt, and all sorts of others have gone by the wayside even though they seemed to be terrors that were in place forever. Imagine the Colossians - under Rome - under rule from outside - this message had to have been an encouragement to them.

Vs.17 "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

He is caring for all creation. Heb. 1.10-11 mentions that the creation is aging, yet Christ is not - He is able to keep this old creation going even when it is a senior citizen.

Worried about nuclear holocaust? Don't be - won't happen.

Worried about the sun burning out? Don't be - won't happen.

Worried about an ice age? Don't be - won't happen.

None of the disasters of the doom and gloom crowd can come to pass - these things may come, in part, but they will not wipe out the creation! (Read Gen. 8.22 for more proof of this.) We know about global warming - it is in a fight with Christ the sustainer - I think I know the winner.

Vs. 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."

Goodness, more theology.

Christ is the head of the body - you'd never know it to hear some pastors talk - "over at my church" "I've built this church and that church." WRONG it is Christ that builds and maintains His church.

To have a church without Christ as the head is like a chicken that has had its head removed - a body running erratically from one end of the yard to the other. Today churches are going from one fad to another to get people in rather than allow the Lord to grow His church through His methods - jazzercise, gift conferences, greeting times, contemporary music, seminars, concerts - you name it.

He is the firstborn from the dead - if He made it out, then we also will make it out of the grave - no other can hinder us from our escape.

That He might have the preeminence - well he created it all, He is upholding it all, He will outlast it all, why not let Him have his day in the news - HE NOT ONLY HAS THE PREEMINENCE, HE IS PREEMINENT.

He should be first in your life - Romans 12.1-2 tells the believer to give themselves a living sacrifice. Our pastor years ago said of the Romans text, "There's only one problem with a living sacrifice - it keeps climbing down off the altar." He is first - we only need to allow that relationship to develop in our lives.

That He might have first place in everything. Now, just how does that relate to our lives - He deserves as the first fruits from the grave to be first in our lives.

Vs. 19 "For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fullness dwell;"

All of it is for the Father's good pleasure. What a good theological study - the good pleasure of God that caused His Son pain.

The term translated "fullness" is used in classical Greek of the crew of a ship or population of a city - the full number which makes up the whole. It is also used of a patch filling a hole - full to completeness. (see Col. 2.9 also) Christ is all that is needed by man.

Vs. 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."

We saw redemption in verse fourteen (see Acts 20.28; I Cor. 6.20; I Cor. 7.23 for more) and now

we see reconciliation. Reconciliation is the bringing together of two that had previously been alienated. It takes a changing of both minds to bring them back together.

Christ's work on the cross did that which was required for God to turn back to man after sin, however each individual must make their own decision - the decision to turn back to God.

It should be of note that it was God's idea to reconcile, not man's.

II Cor. 5.18-19 mentions "And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation"

Sin is terrible, yet God made the decision to wipe the slates clean. No more - washed away. Not just covered as in the Old Testament, but GONE. That is our message to the world.

Paul has laid out some heavy doctrine in this portion - as he usually does. For those that get disgusted with theology I say they have to throw away their Bibles if they don't want to mess with it.

What is meant by "things in heaven" - is there something in heaven that needs reconciling to God? It seems if it is where God is, there is no way that it is not reconciled to Him already, indeed, there is nothing there that ever needed reconciling.

One must assume that the text speaks of the atmosphere/universe, rather than heaven, God's dwelling place. The term used here is used of all three areas, the atmosphere, the universe, and God's dwelling place. (II Cor. 12.4; Matt. 24.29; Matt. 6.26) Let it suffice that Christ has reconciled everything and everyone that needed reconciling.

Christ has set in motion with his shed blood all that is needed for all of mankind and all of creation to be reconciled to God in one final moment of His completed work.

Vs. 21 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled"

We were enemies of God yet, He brought us to a place where we can face God with all confidence as our God and Father - no longer enemies - now Father and child.

Personal opinion here. I think one of the fallacies in the modern church is the perception that the saints are and always have been great. Wrong, God said we were alienated and enemies - how long has it been since you've heard the testimony of how someone came to know the Lord.

That used to be part of becoming a church member - sharing with the church what Christ has

done in your life. For that matter when is the last time you were in a testimony time? Just believers sharing what God has been doing in their lives during the week.

Vs. 22 "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:"

WOW the theology! HOLY, UNBLAMEABLE, AND UNREPROVEABLE before Almighty God - what a thumb of the nose to Lucifer!

So, what is theology anyway? A study of God. Soteriology is a study of salvation, ecclesiology is a study of the church, and in case you missed it we are in the middle of a brief course in Christology, a study of Christ.

Vs. 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;"

Whoooooops. What is that all talking about. Seems we have to "continue" or keep this salvation that we have gained. Can we fall away? No, but we need to see what this verse is saying.

You need the rest of the sentence. If we continue to the end we will be presented as faultless and holy, but if we step away from holy living we will not be holy and faultless, we will be in sin when we are presented to the Lord. That will be a nasty situation to find yourself in!

In the Greek there is what is called a first class condition - if and assumed to be true rather than if as we use it, maybe it will and maybe it won't. This is the thought - Paul assumes they will follow through with their living.

Gospel is the good news of salvation. Paul is the minister of that news. The term minister is the term for servant, or attendant. It is the same thought of the deacons that ministered to the Helenistic widows in the book of Acts. Does that fit the definition of minister today? Not in my mind.

The thought of being made known to the world is a problem to some. Some state that this is hyperbole - an exaggeration to gain effect, however I think the text is quite straightforward - somewhere along the line the good news was spread to the world.

I suspect this relates to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.5-11) and the time following. There were people from all over the world present and they all knew what was going on in Jerusalem - thus when they went home, they would have been telling everyone about what they had seen. Many believe that Paul went to Spain and tradition tells us that one of the apostles went over into the far east. The known world was covered in Paul's day.

There is also the possibility that it relates to Romans 1.19, "Because that which may be known of god is manifest in them; for god hath shown it unto them."

Personally I think it probably relates to the good news getting out to the known world after Pentecost.

Just some closing thoughts.

Who was Christ according to Paul in these passages?

Image of the living God vs. 15

First born of all creation vs. 16

Creator vs. 16

Preexisted creation vs. 17

Sustains all things vs. 17

Head of the Body vs. 18

Beginning and first born of the dead vs. 18

Fullness of God dwells in Him vs. 19

Reconciled all to Himself vs. 20

Through His blood vs. 20

Does that sound like a spook that doesn't leave footprints in the dust? No. Can you kind of envision the Gnostics scattering as they hear these words from Paul?

One might wonder where Paul received all his information about Christ. Several possibilities.

1. He was a student of the Old Testament (Acts 26.4-5)
2. He was with Christ for three years in the wilderness (Gal. 1.17-18)
3. He may have received further info by revelation or illumination.
4. Possibly from Christ Himself after the wilderness. (Acts 26.16; Gal. 1.12)

Paul's belief in the deity of Christ is in line with Christ's own comments. (Jo. 10.30; Jo. 14.9; Lu. 2.49; Matt. 28.19-20; Mark 14. 61-62; Jo. 14.6-11)

APPLICATION

Let us take some time and just list the items of Christian living that are found in verses 1-14. This is what God wants. It is His desire for our life. (This is not meant to be a complete list.)

Let's consider our place in God's desire.

FAITH: 1.4,7

Faithful: Do you always do everything you can to get along with the neighbor you don't care for? God wants us faithful to his command to "love thy neighbor."

What is faith? Can we have faith in anything? Yes.

Are there limits on our faith?

1. Our faith itself may be small as was that of the disciples - "oh ye of little faith"

2. Our faith should be limited by Scripture.

a. I should not, for example, have faith that God is going to give me a new Lincoln Continental. I don't think it is God's will thus I shouldn't look for it nor place my faith in it. To look for Him to provide transportation? Yes. Maybe He will supply a car, or the bus system or the foot - we should explore the possibilities.

b. I should not rely on faith for provision of my family's needs because I quit my job and decided to loaf for a few years.

Our faith must be in line with Scriptural principles.

3. Some times I decide something is right but really have no faith to trust with. God may limit our faith at times so that we don't do something He doesn't want us to do.

4. Doubt limits faith. Ask Peter the fellow with the wet feet about that.

LOVE: 1.4, 8

How do we really get this down practically? Make it a way of life - be a loving person.

There are two types of love. Agape which is self-sacrificing love and Philio which is brotherly love.

Can you illustrate these two types of love?

Philio: Mowing a sick Christian's lawn. Helping a widow with minor house repairs. Calling when you know a brother/sister is hurting.

Agape: There is an account of three men caught in the wilderness in a blizzard. One needed medical attention desperately. The other two men were friends - one a believer had witnessed to his friend many times. One needed to go for a doctor. The believer volunteered to go. As he prepared to go out into the night his friend asked him why he had offered when he might well die that night.

The believer told his friend that he knew if he died that night he would go to heaven, but that he knew that his friend would not go to heaven and he wanted to give him added time to accept Christ.

The difference usually is a calculated decision to do - even at the cost of one's life.

Hopeful: 1.5

We have a hope laid up - do we really look forward to living in eternity or are we laying up materials here to enjoy till we go?

Someone once said "My hope is built on nothing less than Gospel Light and Scripture press." NO! Build it on Jesus Christ - hope in HIM!

Knowledgeable: 1.5

What's the reference for the streets of Gold? Rev. 21.21 mentions "street" of gold - singular, but I don't know that "streets" is Biblical. Know what you believe!

Is there any way you can really be knowledgeable about God unless you are learning? No. You learn by reading the Word, by interacting with other believers, and by attending teaching sessions of the church.

That has truth in two areas. First the Christians ought to attend to receive that which is prepared. Secondly the pastor and teachers ought to prepare for those that attend to receive.

Open to His will: 1.1, 9

Have you ever taken time to say "God what do you want me to do with my life?" Many today work and labor for their homes and material things. That is not God's will. We are pilgrims - just passing through.

Worthy: 1.10

If Gabriel the angel had a video tape recorder strapped to his back and he followed you around filming your every move would you want Christ to attend the opening of the film?

Are we really walking worthy of His good pleasure? Are we really doing those things that honor Him? What do we watch on television, what do we talk about when we are with the boys or with the girls, what goes on in our minds when we are with ourselves - would you invite Christ into those situations?

Fruitful: 1.6

What are you doing for Christ? John 15 indicates fruitless Christians are taken home - fruit is not just soul winning - other works are involved as well. Take your total time in a week - that is 168 hours a week if my calculator is working - how many hours did you spend in items relating to Christ last week? You tell yourself how you are doing.

Learning: 1.7

How many new spiritual books have you read this year? One of our children was complaining about how much they had been reading in high school. I asked the child how many books they had read relating to spiritual things. None, was the reply.

Strong: 1.11

Are you strong when confronted by temptation? Are you strong when talking to the unsaved? Are you strong on your stand for your convictions?

Patient: 1.11

Remember now - absolute truth - we can be patient, but are we?

Joyful: 1.11

Thankful: 1.12

Have you thanked God lately for your spouse - your family - your health? Bad health is better than no health at all from a physical point of view.

We have seen way too much in this study to have covered it well in this short a time. You could spend many hours looking through this passage and learning.

Remember! We have a list of absolute truth. We have the ability to do these things. We dare not set these things aside. **PUT THEM TO WORK.**

You've heard them today. It is your responsibility to get busy on that list.

FAITHFUL 1.4,7

LOVING 1.4, 8

HOPEFUL 1.5

KNOWLEDGEABLE 1.5

OPEN TO HIS WILL 1.1, 9

WORTHY 1.10

FRUITFUL 1.6

LEARNING 1.7

STRONG 1.11
PATIENT 1.11
JOYFUL 1.11
THANKFUL 1.12

And we have only covered twenty-three verses!

He created us.
He is perfecting us.
He is preparing us.

We are works in progress. He is preparing us for What? What is His purpose in preparing us?

Service is all I can think of. He wouldn't go to all that trouble so we can sit on our beds of ease - He ain't no dumb God.

God didn't send His Son to die on the cross so we could be couch potatoes - He has a plan for our lives - for our service!

Find His will and get busy!

Misc.

Beet on Colossians 1.24:

In what sense are these strange words true? In this sense. When Christ breathed His last upon the cross, all the sufferings needful for the complete establishment of the Kingdom of God had not yet been endured. For the full realization of the purposes of God it was needful, not only that Christ should die for the sins of the world, but that the Gospel should be preached to all nations. This involved, owing to the wickedness of men, hardship to the preachers.

This hardship Paul willingly endured in order to save men. Consequently, just as the life on earth of the servants of Christ is in some sense an extension of His incarnation, (for in them He lives, Galatians 2:20) so the sufferings of Paul where in a similar sense a continuation and completion of the sufferings of Christ. This is in close harmony with, and further emphasizes, Paul's constant teaching that Christ's servants share all that Christ has and is and does: 1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 3:10; Romans 8:17. But it by no means suggests that Paul's sufferings were in any sense propitiatory or that Christ's sufferings were not so. For the one point in common here mentioned and made conspicuous by repetition is suffering 'on behalf of' another. Propitiation for sin is here entirely out of view.

Notice the infinite dignity here given to sufferings endured for the spread of the Gospel. These,

Christ condescends to join with His own mysterious agony on the cross as endured for the benefit of the Church which He recognizes as His own body. 'In' such sacred 'sufferings' well might Paul 'rejoice.' Notice again, as in Colossians 1:18 in conjunction with the same metaphor, 'the Church' Universal. EXPOSITION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS; Beet, Joseph Agar; The Complete Christian Collection CDROM.

Paul's Letter to the Colossians: An Exegetical and Devotional Commentary; Keathley, J. Hampton III; Biblical Studies Press 2002;
<http://bible.org/docs/nt/books/col/jhk3/index.htm#TopOfPage>

The simplest and most logical explanation stems from the mystical union that exists between Christ and that of His people in the body of Christ, the church. When believers suffer, Christ suffers with them. Christ's substitutionary sufferings are finished, complete, but His sufferings in and through His people continue. This concept is expressed in several other passages of the New Testament (cf. Matt. 25:34-40; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 3:10; Acts 9:4-5). Paul never directly persecuted the Lord Jesus, nevertheless, when on the Damascus road, Paul heard these words from Christ, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" So he said, "Who are you, Lord?" He replied, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts. 9:4-5).

... Soon afterwards he heard of further words spoken by Him, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (9:16). Paul had come to understand that everything done in and for the body of Christ was done in and for Christ Himself. He and the body were one. Thus, the sufferings of Paul were the afflictions of Christ, because He suffered in and with Paul (cf. 2 Cor 1:5-7; 4:10-12). Lightfoot's idea of continuity between His afflictions and the church's is valid, too. In fact, the sufferings of Paul, which arose out of persecution, were simply the continuation of the world's quarrel with Jesus Christ (cf. John 15:18-21). It is a very immature theology, then, which claims that all suffering is alien to the will of God, and it reaches its ultimate expression in the blind and foolish request, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt 27:40), and its shattering repudiation in the shout of suffering dereliction, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (27:46).

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

CHAPTER TWO

2. CHRIST OUR PERFECTER

Christ our Perfecter perfects our service (vs. 28).

Col. 1.24-29

Vs. 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:"

So I suppose you are going to call upon me to make a concise and understandable statement as to the precise meaning of the text let it suffice to say:

1. Christ's sufferings on the cross are not lacking in any manner.
2. Paul as well as his readers knew exactly what he had in mind when he made this statement.
3. We need not worry about there being any error in the text for the Holy Spirit was under control as the text was being produced.
4. Paul seems to closely identify his own suffering with that of Christ's indeed, this man was called by Jesus Christ personally. The close affinity would only be natural. Paul also is the apostle that pictures the Lord as the head of the church and himself as suffering for that body the church.
5. Since the term translated "fill up" is only used in this instance and since none of the commentaries mention this item of information, and since there is nothing to indicate what this word means I must wonder why the translators use the term "fill up" in this particular usage.

That was not too concise so let us try and do better. Let's try to rephrase the verse with some of the other possible meanings to the words used.

Lexicon: "the meaning is, 'what is wanting in the afflictions of Christ to be borne by me, that I supply in order to repay the benefits which Christ conferred on me by filling up the measure of the afflictions laid upon me'."

The lexicon says it is a combination of two words. One is anti and the other is anapleroo. The curious item is that anapleroo can be translated "fill up" by itself, so I must wonder why Paul added the prefix anti. Anti is translated for, because, and therefore.

Robertson mentions that this double compound verb - there you can be impressed - is the only occurrence of this type of usage in the New Testament. He states of it "to fill up (\ana\), in turn

(anti\)." He continues with a very clear statement backing up what has already been said "Paul attaches no atoning value whatever to his own sufferings for the church"

Who now rejoice in my sufferings (affliction, passion) for you, and fill up (only usage in New Testament) that which is behind (penury, lacking, want) of the afflictions (tribulation, affliction, burden, anguish, trouble) of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church,

A paraphrase might go along this line. Who now rejoice in my passion for you and fill up that which is want of the burden of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. Christ did not have opportunity to finish the work that He had started.

If you view it as burden or anguish of Christ you eliminate many problems. Christ had the overall desire to redeem mankind. He started the work and made total provision, and then the apostles and all believers that followed are finishing the work.

POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

How did Paul fill up Christ's suffering? What is meant here?

1. Christ's work was not enough - Paul had to finish it in some way. Not acceptable!
2. We all must suffer for our salvation - Christ starts us and we finish it. Not acceptable!
3. Paul and Christ suffer together in mystical union. (Christ indwelling Paul.) Not acceptable!
4. Christ views all done to His children as if done to Himself. This one has some possibility.
5. Paul hadn't suffered as much as Christ so is lacking in his suffering. Could relate but the lack is in Christ's suffering according to the text, not Paul's as the text states.
6. Christ suffered for us eternally but was taken home so couldn't finish the suffering needed to build His church thus Paul was called to fill up or complete the suffering needed for the church's beginnings. This relates. We will develop this later.
7. Misc. views or non-views. These usually use rhetoric to skirt the issue to the point that you are not sure you care what it means.
8. The Romanist view will see merit in the sufferings of the saints and the merit thus would work into the scheme of works. Indulgences find some area of reality in this verse I would assume.
9. Robertson suggests that Christ did not stop suffering in his work on the cross, but that there was suffering left over - plenty for Paul and all of us in turn.

"lacking" relates to "that which is lacking, deficiency, shortcoming"/Vine p 304 I Cor. 16:17 uses the same term. "I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied." It is also translated want, penury, that which was lacking, and lacking.

"affliction" seems to relate to being troubled and is used of sufferings due to circumstances or people that are antagonistic.

The grammar seems to show that Paul is the one that is acting in this verse and that it is something he is doing at the present time (of the verse) and he continues to do it. Thus we must conclude that Paul is rejoicing and filling up on a continuing basis by his own choice and the Colossians can be assured of it. This is a statement of fact. The present action indicates that this "filling up" is something that is an ongoing process and that it seemingly will continue to be needed.

Some might apply this to the idea that all saints are to suffer in some manner to fill up something. The "what" of this something would remain to be seen.

1. To say that Christ's work on the cross was lacking in any way would be to contradict a wealth of Scripture. (Col. 1:20; Col. 2:14-15) This term is never used of Christ's suffering on the cross.

2. The idea that we HAVE TO FINISH something that Christ started is also a contradiction to many Scriptures. (Eph. 2:8-9) The problem with this position is that Paul nowhere, here or elsewhere, indicates that other believers are to do the same thing. The fact of the indwelling of Christ in all believers would almost demand that all be involved in this process if this is what the Apostle is speaking of.

3. Barnes suggests Paul hadn't suffered as much as Christ had suffered so needed to suffer more. The problem here is the fact that the need is in Christ's suffering not in Paul's.

"(1) That he suffered in the same cause as that for which Christ suffered; (2) That he endured the same kind of sufferings, to some extent, in reproaches, persecutions, and opposition from the world; (3) That he had not yet suffered as much as Christ did in this cause, and, though he had suffered greatly, yet there was much that was lacking to make him equal in this respect to the Savior; and (4) That he felt that it was an object to be earnestly desired to be made in all respects just like Christ, and that his present circumstances he was fast filling up that which was lacking, so that he would have a more complete resemblance to Him." P 254 Barnes Notes on Colossians

Those holding this view would read it this way. Now I rejoice in the sufferings (Paul's or Christ's) for you. Now I fill up in my flesh the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ. This thinking has some possibilities yet it has no Scriptural backing.

4. The Romanist view must be rejected on the basis of Eph. 2:8,9 and others as well. There is no

suffering which can account to anyone as merit!

THE FACTS CONSIDERED

1. We don't know if Christ suffering in the text relates to pre-cross or cross suffering or both.
2. Paul does it on a continuing basis.
3. Paul does it for the Church.
4. Paul does it in his body so it is not spiritual or mystical.
5. Afflictions = circumstances, burden, anguish or antagonism.
6. It seems to be connected with Paul's being a minister of the Gospel.
7. The lack is in Christ's suffering not Paul's.
8. Ralph Martin observes that these are sufferings which are not self imposed but those imposed upon him for the churches sake and his ministry to them. Paul's suffering comes as a result of the work he is doing.
9. The term translated filled up according to Robertson has the thought of filled up in turn. It was Paul's turn to suffer. Christ had done His suffering, now it was Paul's turn.
10. Philip 3:10 may shed some light on the apostles feelings. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,"
11. Paul knew that the Lord felt that what was done to His people was done to Him. Acts 9:5 "...I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest;". Paul was persecuting - killing Christians yet, Christ put it in a personal context - you persecute me.
12. Some scholars have tried to phrase this as "sufferings on account of Christ" yet the Greek scholars fail to see this as a possible translation.

It would seem from the verse considered in number nine under facts that there is some sort of suffering in common with the Lord when we suffer for Him. The exact nature of this etc. seems at this point to be hard to see other than that it exists.

Eadie ties in other references which may relate to this thought. (Heb. 13:13; II Cor. 2:10 and Heb. 11:26)

Heb. 13.12 "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered

without the gate. 13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

II Cor. 2.10 "To whom ye forgive any thing, I [forgive] also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave [it], for your sakes [forgave I it] in the person of Christ;" Paul relates to Christ very closely.

Heb. 11.26 "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Another wanting to closely associate with Christ in suffering.

This linked to Christ's question of the apostle on the road to Damascus concerning why Saul was persecuting Him might lead one to feel that this is the thought of the text. He mentions that Christ's personal suffering is over, yet there is much suffering to come within the church for His sake.

There is one further thought along this line which adds weight to such a position. The fact that Christ is the head of the body and if the body suffers so must also the head suffer.

Paul suffered not as a goal but as a natural everyday walk - he realized he was suffering much as Christ did. Suffering shouldn't be a burden - be happy in your circumstance even if it is in the midst of suffering. It's how we react to it that is important to the Lord. Paul rejoiced - how about you?

Let me put this into a theological context by giving it a high class title.

Let us call this study "Sufferology" just to get us thinking in the right direction.

Suffering seems to be an integrated part of the normal Christian life. We in America seem to be blessed with not having to suffer for Christ, though our brothers in other countries where Christians are persecuted feel the church in America would be strengthened with a little suffering.

James 5.10 mentions that the suffering of the prophets is an example for us as we go through suffering. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience."

II Cor. 1.5-7 is a key text in understanding what Paul suggests in Col. 1.24.

II Cor. 1.5-7 "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, [it is] for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope of you [is] stedfast, knowing, that as ye are

partakers of the sufferings, so [shall ye be] also of the consolation."

Notice that the sufferings of Christ abounds in us. In some way we are linked to the suffering that Christ went through. It may only be that we benefit from the suffering, though the passage indicates to me that we participate in some way.

The next verse links suffering of verse five with his own suffering to get the Gospel to others.

And finally in verse seven Paul indicates that those affected by the Gospel will also suffer - it is assumed in the same manner that Paul did.

Christ suffered to provide salvation to all mankind, Paul suffers with Christ to get the Gospel to others, and those Paul reaches will suffer to get the Gospel to others.

Romans 8.17-18 adds to this thought somewhat. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Again, we see that Paul suffered with Christ in some manner. Since we know it was not on the cross the normal thought would be that all of Paul's suffering in his life was with Christ in the same work of redemption - Christ suffered to provide redemptions possibility and Paul as well as those that follow would also suffer in the sharing of that redemption to others. Similar to the Hebrews 11.26 passage.

Some other texts seem to back this up.

Phil. 3.10 mentions the fellowship of His suffering. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;"

I Pet. 4.13 mentions that the suffering under persecution of Peter's readers was suffering with Christ. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

That believers will suffer is made clear in Phil. 1.29 "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"

One final verse relates the same thought. II Tim. 3.12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Is this some mystical suffering that we must go through, no, most certainly not, it is merely saying that as Christ suffered, so we will suffer for the Gospel's sake.

His suffering thankfully provided salvation to all of mankind, but our suffering only provides those we meet the opportunity to receive that salvation.

It seems, based on sufferology he is just picturing what he is doing - suffering to take the Gospel to those that need it. He is doing all he is doing for them. Fill up what is lacking - Christ could not do this part of the work so Paul suffers to fill in what Christ could not do - evangelize.

All is done for the church - and he REJOICES to suffer.

Wow, to suffer with Christ in His work - what an honor! Suffering should be more palatable if we understand these truths.

Vs. 25 "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;" Paul saw himself as one called to minister to the Colossians specifically and to all mentioned in verse twenty-seven.

The term dispensation is translated stewardship in one translation. It is a Greek term meaning to administer as a household or an estate. (Lu. 16.2-4; I Cor. 9.17; Eph. 1.10; Eph. 3.2; Col. 1.25; I Tim. 1.4)

Vs. 26 "[Even] the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:" He is telling them of Christ's revelation to him.

Mystery isn't like Sherlock Holmes or Perry Mason, but means, something that was previously unknown.

Vs. 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:"

Vs. 28 "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:" He is sharing this gospel to all that he might teach to prepare them for sharing the Gospel with others.

Realizing that Paul was an apostle called by the Lord to a specific ministry, I would like to use this passage in a general way and relate it to any minister of the Lord. In fact the passage relates to all of us, but we want to pick on preachers for a little while.

What is the purpose of the pastor?

What is his goal?

What is his goal in life?

What is his goal in ministry?

Let's list some of the duties of a pastor.

Keep the lawn
Teach Sunday School
Preach 2-3 services a week
Work with youth
Weddings
Funerals
Visitation
Janitor
Bulletin
Meetings
Council
Father
Husband
Sometimes outside work
Fix it man (at home and at the church)
Painter
Builder

DO ALL OF THESE RELATE TO HIS GOALS?

What drives the pastor? Keep the church going and growing so that he can have opportunity to do the work described in this passage.

Here we see Paul was aiming at making these people mature, or complete and ready for the ministry that God had for them. This should be the work of pastors and teachers within the church. Even parents with their children should be bringing them toward maturity in the Lord that they might be able to go forth with the work of the Lord.

Isn't this what Ephesians four is talking about? Eph. 4.11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:"

Believers should look to and expect this preparation from their church leadership. If they are not feeling this process, they should consult with the leaders to encourage them to get with the program that God has set before them.

One of our grown children and spouse noticed that their church was just not feeding the flock. Many in the church felt that the church was strong in evangelism, but that there was no depth of teaching for the adults. Some of them approached the pastoral staff. A meeting was set and as it began the staff was on the defensive, but the lay people finally were allowed to share that they were just concerned and that they wanted the staff to be informed.

The meeting progressed and the staff decided that they should move on this information and try to remedy the problem. This is the proper approach - many pastors/staff have not listened in similar circumstances I have observed. This is a sad case when the pastor/staff feels they are above practical criticism.

There is also a responsibility on the believer's shoulder as well. The pastor and teachers often prepare lessons/sermons that will assist some of their people in their Christian walk. If those believers do not show up for that service/lesson, then they have missed out on some of the preparation God has prepared for them.

If you are building a house, you go by a plan. You move along as fast as you can so you can complete the job. When you come to a part that is hard work you don't skip over it you do it. Running a foundation is hard work! You do it because it is necessary.

So, in our spiritual lives some hard spots come along. We shouldn't try to bypass them. They are necessary to bring us to completion.

A good pastor/teacher will see hard spots in your life and try to get you to move through them. It may be a particular sin or it may be a coolness toward church - he is trying to help you.

A pastor/teacher may confront you personally or he may do it in a message/lesson. Listen. Consider what he says in light of the Word. If he is right, then move toward changing your life.

They want you perfect as you stand before Christ. Not for their own pride in saying I did that, but in thanksgiving that he has helped Christ in your life. It is also a desire that you not be found lacking as you face the Lord.

They want to please their Lord, by helping His people please their Lord.

Vs. 29 "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Christ works within us, but we must be a willing participant.

We see in Paul's comments a purpose, suffering, ministering, benefiting revealing and proclaiming. I would like to look into this passage a little further.

What was Paul's purpose in life? Perfecting of the saints would seem to fit the question. He did it even though he suffered many things as he ministered to the church (II Cor. 11.23-29).

He was looking to reconcile all he could to His Lord. He always went to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. (Acts 13.44-47) He did this with the full authority of Christ. (Acts 26.16; Col. 1.25)

He benefited the church in many ways. He was quite prolific in leading people to the Lord. He

assisted by preaching and setting up leadership in the churches he planted. Perfecting of the saints was a key part of his ministry. He sent Timothy, Titus and most likely others to churches to assist with problems and to encourage the believers toward maturity.

What one word might we use to describe the motivating force behind Paul's ministry to the church?

SELFLESS

He gave of himself totally. Whom did he give himself to? Christ and no other, not even himself.

The term translated self in Scripture is where we get our English word "automatic" from. It relates to me or oneself. What is an automatic machine? Once started it does everything for itself. Likewise, the self-centered person, once started does everything for themselves.

Let's look at self for a moment or two.

Self wants its own way.

Self wants nothing for anyone else.

Self wants to possess everything.

Self gives nothing.

Self wants.

Self wants everything to revolve around them.

Self wants everything they think/believe to be implemented.

Actually sounds like a lot of politicians in our day.

Let's describe selfless.

Selflessness wants to go along with the other persons desire.

Selflessness wants others to gain.

Selflessness wants to share with others.

Selflessness wants to assist others.

Selflessness wants to make others feel important.

Selflessness wants to benefit others.

Christ is the perfect example of selflessness, but Paul is a close second it would seem.

Christ never acquired earthly possessions save a robe which was taken from him in the end.

Christ showed mercy to all that came to Him. He helped them physically as well as spiritually.

Christ ministered to near exhaustion.

Christ maintained a proper spiritual atmosphere for the disciples to learn in.

Christ gave Himself to his ministry.

Christ gave Himself to be crucified.

All He did was aimed away from Himself.

Just a few thoughts to assist you in finding selflessness.

Give of your material wealth - money to the church, to missionaries, or maybe to other believers in need.

Give of your food - groceries to the needy - meals for visiting speakers/missionaries.

Give of your transportation - to and from church - to and from grocery store etc.

Give of your time - time to talk with them - time to listen to them - time to help them do things.

Give of your talents - use them for others - fix things for them - assist them to do things.

Use your occupation as you can. When speaking in Nevada at a missions conference I was approached by a man from the church that stated that he had a pair of cowboy boots just like mine (a different pair than those mentioned earlier in the study :-). I replied that I hoped his weren't exactly like mine - holding one boot up to reveal a large hole in the sole.

Later that day I found I was staying in the man's home for the night. The next morning after breakfast he told me we were going for a ride. We ended up at a shoe store - his shoe store. We went in and he presented me with a new pair of boots.

The next morning another missionary ate breakfast with us and mentioned he needed to go shopping briefly to pick up some new shoes - his had come apart the previous evening. As the missionary finished his meal the business man leaned over to the missionary and said something. They left quietly and returned in awhile. The missionary was wearing a new pair of shoes. What a blessing that man was to a couple of missionaries!

Mechanics can assist missionaries/pastors with car troubles, doctors might give some needed medical advice - the possibilities are wide open.

In short give of yourself in any way that you can. Paul gave his all for the church. It might be of note that he did not give his all for the lost, though I doubt he ever ignored their needs as he shared the Lord with them.

Some might ask, but what about those that will take advantage of you. Be sure someone will, then it won't surprise you. Your responsibility is to give, it is their responsibility to take only what is needed - both of you will stand before Someone one day to answer for what YOU did.

The text mentions Paul was laboring. This term labor relates to some real toil. Now if we are speaking of the pioneers we know of the toil they went through just to survive from day to day. On the other hand our toil often isn't quite so hard. Indeed, most of us have a lot of spare time in which we can fill in with tasks relating to ministry.

Strive in verse twenty-nine is the Greek word that we gain "agonize" from. I think we know what that term means - not that many of us get ourselves into that position in our lives.

Paul is not just mouthing words - he is totally given to the edification of others. Why? To present believers to the Lord mature.

To present people perfect - for this Paul labored and strived according to Christ's working in him. Because Christ was working in Paul's life, Paul worked in the harvest field - in other people's lives.

Apply that to yourself today. If Christ is working in your life, you **WILL BE WORKING IN THE HARVEST FIELD**. The more Christ works in your life the more you will be working in the lives of others.

You are the only limitation upon how God uses your life.

CHAPTER THREE

3. CHRIST OUR FOUNDATION

Christ our Foundation narrows our work to His Standard of service (vs. 7).
Col. 2.1-8

Vs. 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;"

The Laodiceans and Colossians had not seen Paul - at least not all of them. He mentions to them of the great conflict he has for them - he is having a struggle. This is probably both physical and emotional. Some authors tie it rightly to 1.28-29. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

To be concerned about a group's spiritual needs causes one both spiritual, emotional and physical struggle. Often the emotional/spiritual carries over into the physical.

It is of interest that he was concerned about people he had never seen. We also should be open to being concerned with people we have never seen. Be burdened, be involved in prayer for them, and give them hope if possible. Along with this thought of becoming involved with others, we ought to give thought to letting them know of our prayer, and concern for them - this would give them the hope mentioned previously.

Knowing the American way of thought, I might add that we should not necessarily stop at involvement and letting them know of the possible involvement - get involved if possible. We often just go the mental step without going the physical step of getting involved in some practical manner with people.

Conflict is the Greek word we mentioned in 1.29 as the predecessor of our word "agony." It is used of the athlete that is striving for the victory. If you have seen marathons you know what some of those folks look like when they cross the finish line - you can see the agony in their faces.

Paul was in heavy conflict about the spiritual welfare of these folks - we also should become involved in the lives of others that we don't know.

We have supported a couple in Holland for years. They finally moved their church along to the point of gaining a national pastor. We had been involved with these folks, the church and then the new pastor, though we had never seen them. When the pastor fell into immorality, the news

hit me as if it were a church that we were attending.

Many people support ministries that minister to people they never see - this is what we are talking about.

Vs. 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;"

"their" includes everyone that hadn't met Paul personally. It seems that he is confident that those that had met him were solid enough in their doctrine to eliminate any concern.

That's confidence in the power of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Comforted is the Greek word "paraklesis" which Vine defines as "a calling to one's aid" - it is the same term used in Romans eight's list of spiritual gifts - it is the gift of exhortation. It is someone that you call along side to assist you either through encouragement or physical assistance.

Paul wants the people to be comforted and to be knit together in love. Knit has the thought of that nasty term unity - coming together as one. Eph. 4.2-5 speaks to the thought of keeping unity in the assembly. There seems to be a conscious effort on the part of the people to be a unified group.

This can be done by keeping a proper spiritual life, keeping a proper prayer life, and keeping a proper attitude. Yes, it takes effort and we should all be about this work within the church.

Years ago we were in a church that had a wide diversity of people and ideas. We would see people coming to odds with one another about what the church should do. We would await the usual fight and hard feelings, but we noticed that this never happened. The problem would begin to raise its head in the congregation, then all of a sudden it would disappear - the people were working at unity within their group.

I am not convinced that it was only a desire to be united - I also believe there was a great love for one another within the church and that this was probably the prime mover toward unity.

What has Paul been driving at thus far in the text - the supremacy of Christ and truth. If we believe that the absolute truth is found in the Bible, and if we believe that Christ is supreme above all others, and if we believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as presented in the Bible, are we not then near to "full assurance of understanding? I think we are.

Vs. 3. "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

This one cuts cross grain to the thinking of some. There are many in our churches that look down

their noses at education. They feel that education is a waste of time, that anyone spending time in college or seminary is not being a good steward of God's good time.

NOTE. Wisdom and KNOWLEDGE are listed as TREASURES. Enough said on the subject. Well maybe just a little more - to bring about the unity we mentioned earlier we need to find a balance between the overemphasis and the under-emphasis we see in Christian circles today.

Does this mean that all is hidden from us and that it can never be known? No, it means that to the lost it is hidden, but to us it is there for the seeking out - we may go to the Word and search out those truths that we need to live our lives. (I Cor. 2.14-16; Eph. 4.17-18; Rom. 3.9-20 show that the lost are under a great burden of not understanding the things of the Lord.)

Vs. 4. "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words."

Paul believes as I do that you the listener should question everything I say. We ought to compare what we hear with the Word of God and be sure that all we hear is true. Paul speaks to the idea of being enticed with false teaching often in his epistles. (Gal. 1.7-9) Be gentle when you disagree with me, but be sure you have Scripture on your side.

Lenski mentions that this phrase could be translated "to cheat by false argument" - I will never attempt this, but be sure you check out what I say anyway - just in case I get side tracked from the truth.

Vs. 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."

The New International Version translates "beholding your order" as "Delight to see how orderly you are." In Luke 1:8 the term is used in reference to the courses of the priests. Hummm you don't suppose we are to have order in our churches do you - order - organization - seems to be the thought of the passage.

Some disdain organization in a church - that is just wasted time - hummmmm, but Paul didn't seem to think so. One of the things I learned many years ago about people is that they like order and they dislike disorder and change. In short, we like our rut. This is not bad, in my opinion. Our personal lives oft times are in such terrible disorder due to our schedules and our commitments, and we just really enjoy the order that we find when we enter the church doors - it is one place where we can feel comfortable and be refreshed.

The term actually is used of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder ready to march.

It is a faith that is fixed or stable. The interest is that they all have this stability of faith. The term "stereotype" a printer's term for a plate ready for the printing press comes from this Greek term. The plate has the image to be printed fixed in its metal.

If we think about it we see that the Colossian Christian's faith was ready to print out lives that were worth the lost world reading!

These two items are very important for any church today!

ORDERLINESS

FIRMNESS OF FAITH

What must we do in our churches to insure these two will be a part of our church for years to come?

1. Good organization to give order to the church. This may be very limited while the church is small but will have to grow with the congregation.

We must be cautious however that we don't get so organized that we become disorganized! We attended a large church in Denver years ago. When they stood to sing in Sunday School they used choruses quite often. Being a fairly new believer as far as singing went, I did not know the songs and could not sing along - not that I could sing either! I made a suggestion at a meeting of getting sheets with the words on them and pasting them in the front of the hymnal.

It was accepted as a great idea, but they decided that they would have to check with the finance committee so that they could purchase the glue, and they would have to check with the building committee to be sure it was okay to do that to the hymnals, and they would have to check with the music committee to be sure that it was okay with them as well. Then there was the pastoral staff that needed to be consulted to be sure they had no problem with it. I'm sure as they checked into it that they would have had to check back with the music committee and possibly the pastoral staff to be sure the sheets they secured were acceptable. One blessing is that at that time an insurance company GAVE THE SHEETS FREELY to churches, so there wouldn't be any further cost.

Some feel constitutions and doctrinal statements are a waste of time. When we went to teach at a school in the midwest I was asked to evaluate and illustrate the documents of the school. As it turned out the board had complete control and the faculty had none. This misapplication of common sense ultimately led to the resignation of the entire faculty. The faculty set up a new school. Guess what they did - you know - they adopted the same constitution - we are awaiting their difficulties.

2. Firmness in the faith can only come as we are in the Word both at home and at church!

3. Firmness in faith over time can be assisted by a good Sunday School Curriculum. Train the young - they are the church of not to many years in the future. Give them the Bible and leadership training now so you don't have to later!

A set curriculum of study will guide each student through a general over-study of the Bible in his/her childhood and youth.

Vs. 6. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, [so] walk ye in him:"

Wuest translates it this way. "In the same manner, therefore, as you received the Christ, Jesus, the Lord, in Him be constantly ordering your behavior"

When you get it together via salvation, keep it together by walking as you ought.

A dear Saint we used to know once said that many people want to clean up their act and then turn themselves over to the Lord, but God would rather that they turn themselves over to the Lord and let Him clean them up. There is a lot of truth there.

7. "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Rooted, built up, and stablished - how - by teaching! There I go again, education and learning seem to be in Paul's vocabulary.

Rooted or grounded - or attached to a good foundation, then built up as if a building being built for a purpose, and built or stablished in a way that it will stand firm on the foundation.

Where do we become rooted and built up? In Bible studies and lessons/sermons at the church - in Bible studies on your own, as well as with other well grounded believers. It can even come from Scriptural fellowship - the sharing in the things of the Lord - not the news, weather, and sports but in sharing from the word and speaking of what God is doing in your life.

WALK IN HIM

How do we walk in Christ.

1. Be in fellowship. Scriptural fellowship can be a tremendous resource of learning, as well as a source of accountability.

2. I get the picture of Christ being the driving/steering force within my life. As I walk along He is guiding my decisions and ordering my steps. This will require our keeping in close contact with Him so that we know where He is going.

ROOTED IN HIM

How are we rooted in Him?

1. Roots draw nourishment from the ground both moisture and nutrients.

We can only be nourished as we feed on the Word of God and commune with Him.

2. Roots hold the plant or tree upright so that it can grow properly.

In Oregon we used to drive past large farms full of Filbert trees. Due to the high moisture content of the soil in Oregon the trees never were required to take deep root for moisture. They received all they needed from the surface. As a result in the very damp weather some of the trees would fall over because the top was too heavy for the simple root system to hold up.

RESULT: a dead tree.

If we aren't deeply rooted then we may fall as well. This is the point of what Paul has said in these verses. The next verse he begins to warn of false doctrines.

BUILT UP IN HIM

How are we built up in Him?

1. Let us turn to Eph. 4:11-16 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"

Notice the similarity in the texts. Both are speaking of being complete or mature or rooted in the Lord and proper doctrine.

Eph 4 tells us that these things come to pass through the ministry of the local church. The pastors and teachers are to building up or edifying the people that they might be sound in doctrine - AND - "for the work of the ministry".

The whole purpose of all of this is that the new convert that is taken into the church is to be trained so that he can be going out and leading others to Christ and become part of the ministering part of the church.

The verse goes on to say "established in your faith"

What is meant by this phrase? Strong indicates it is "to confirm" as in one that validates or assures you of the truth of something.

2. Being confident in your salvation. Sure that your trust in Jesus is all that is needed.
3. Being confident in your security. Knowing in your own heart that you can never lose that which God has given to you through Jesus Christ.

WALK IN HIM.

The commentator Lenski mentions concerning this phrase. "Keep on holding fast to Christ, keep on believing in Him, and then, of course, also keep on obeying Him in good works."

Walk in newness of life. Rom. 6:4
Walk after the Spirit. Rom. 8:4
Walk in honesty Rom. 13:13
Walk by faith. II Cor 5:7
Walk in good works. Eph 2:10
Walk in love. Eph 5:2
Walk in wisdom. Col 4:5
Walk in truth. II Jo 4
Walk after the commandments of the Lord. Col. 2:6
Walk not after the flesh. Rom. 8:4
Walk not after the manner of men. I Cor. 3:3
Walk not in craftiness. II Cor. 4:2
Walk not by sight. II Cor. 5:7
Walk not in the vanity of mind. Eph. 4:17
Walk not disorderly. II Thess. 3:6

I would like to illustrate this unity of purpose by telling you of a church of lost people. A Roman Catholic church in Limerick Ireland. This congregation was truly united and steadfast in their purpose. The point - IF LOST PEOPLE CAN BE THIS UNITED WITHOUT GOD, surely we believers can get together with the Lord's help and guidance.

In the northwest part of the city there was a new housing development and the people were purchasing their land and building their new homes. The people met to define their community to come and determined that they would have two community buildings, one a community center and the other a Cathedral.

As I listened to the man describing the work that the people were involved with, you could just see the excitement and pride and the enthusiasm within. The unity of this people was so great toward their project that some of them stopped working on their homes and assisted with the cathedral. They had a priority of having that building up before their homes were finished.

It is a shame that lost people can out do the believers - In Ezra Nehemiah's time the people left the temple to last. Indeed, in many churches across America the church comes dead last.

Anyway this community of lost people saw to it that their desire was met and it was met due to their unity of purpose.

This is the kind of unity that Paul wanted to come to pass at Colosse.

May we as individual churches find ourselves united in our effort to reach the lost and see them rooted in the Word and always be abounding in thanksgiving for what God is doing in our personal and corporate lives.

Vs. 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"

We have many philosophies around today that may have the Word in them but only enough to make them acceptable to the untaught ear. We find this in the cults. Cults lead even believers astray. We should know some of the marks of the cults.

Lowering of Christ

Uplifting of the leader

Heavy emphasis on giving

Experience oriented

Limiting if not subjugating of women

Emphasis on loyalty to leader and/or group rather than Christ

Overemphasis on the Gospels.

I trust that you understand that all knowledge and truth is centered in God, not the cult leaders - not Roberts, not White, not Moon, not the Pope, and not any human being.

Let's consider some terms relating to philosophy. Philosophy is a system of ethics or thought. The term used here is only used in the New Testament and both are in relation to false doctrine. Many believers love to dig into philosophical thought, but it seems to me that the Word is so straightforward, and so massive that I don't have to spend time in other areas, when I know so little about the Bible after so many years of study.

Philosophy isn't wrong but it does seem to be a side track to some believers. Many through the ages have tried to mix it with Christianity but seldom with any success. Francis Schaffer seems to have done some good with it, yet in all of the thought he presents, it is the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ which must change the person.

The fact that it is with "vain deceit" in the passage indicates it isn't the best.

The word translated spoil according to Robertson means "to carry off as booty a captive, slave, maiden." Not the terminology of someone teaching proper doctrine.

Philosophy is the Greek word "philosophia" which appears only once in the Scripture and here is used of Jewish Christian ascetics to describe their false ways.

Thayer mentions that it means "used either of zeal for or skill in any art or science, any branch of knowledge."

As to the rightness or wrongness of it the context is clear, it will spoil your beliefs, it is the tradition of men, it is of the world, and not after Christ - seems kind of definite - it isn't for the believer that wants to walk with God.

Robertson kindly mentions of this philosophy, "knowledge falsely named."

Merriam-Webster speaks to the word:

"1 a : (1) all learning exclusive of technical precepts and practical arts (2) : the sciences and liberal arts exclusive of medicine, law, and theology <a doctor of philosophy> (3) : the 4-year college course of a major seminary b (1) archaic : PHYSICAL SCIENCE (2) : ETHICS c : a discipline comprising as its core logic, aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology

"2 a : pursuit of wisdom b : a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means c : an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs

"3 a : a system of philosophical concepts b : a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought <the philosophy of war> <philosophy of science>

"4 a : the most general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group b : calmness of temper and judgment befitting a philosopher"

No matter which definition you use, except the fourth you should come away feeling that philosophy is not for the believer. We have the truth, it is not related to theory and is not arrived at through speculation.

Wrong, in and of itself, most likely not, but why bother putting your time into things that are speculative, theory and general when we have the truth that can change our lives?

We've seen some terms in this passage that I would like to look at briefly to be sure we understand just what they mean.

Wisdom: The quality of being wise. The ability to gather information and use it in a proper

manner. Making the better judgment in a given situation.

Knowledge: It is the facts that we gather via ear, eye, taste and touch to help us understand what we observe around us.

Understanding: It is the comprehension of what these facts mean.

Intelligence: The general knowledge that one possesses.

Comprehension: Understanding what the mind contains.

Perception: Consciousness of items we encounter.

Let me illustrate this.

Perception is seeing a ten-dollar bill on the ground.

Comprehension is knowing that it is a ten-dollar bill not a one dollar bill.

Intelligence is knowing you'd better grab it before the man behind you grabs it.

Understanding is what the man behind you doesn't have when you pick up the ten-dollar bill for you see it belongs to him.

Knowledge is when you know he is six foot-five and three hundred pounds.

Wisdom is returning the ten dollars.

Having said all this, when we come up against a need for knowledge, where can we go - the text says that Christ is the repository of all knowledge. We have only to go to Him to seek the knowledge we have need of. It is also a very nice addition - his knowledge is TRUE.

Christ is very much like a computer. He contains all knowledge. I recently gave my pastor a packet of sheets of printed pages. I'd guess it was about eight pages of single-spaced book titles - titles than I have available to me on my computer. Indeed, I have several hundred volumes of secular works that are not on the list. Indeed, if I don't have what I want on my own computer I can go to the internet and find most any older book online.

The point however is this. I must have a method of access to that computer - somehow to connect to all that information. Christ's knowledge is the same. We must have a connection to him to gain that knowledge which we need. We have the written Word to provide much of the needed information, but we also have the link of prayer to access Him personally and directly.

There is a brief study that loosely relates to this passage and the thought of not following the philosophy of man. The topic comes up now and then so I will include it.

Just some thought about do's and don'ts

I used to avoid Pizza parlors which serve beer. I also used to avoid any restaurant which served alcohol. I was challenged on this many many times over several years.

There were some reasons for this stand.

1. Obviously I didn't want to be a stumbling block to anyone that might see me in such an establishment.
2. I feel my position as a minister requires that I be very careful in my living so that I give no one cause to point a finger my way.
3. Most groups that I was with at the time had similar feelings.
4. I love pizza and beer. Since I had a problem with alcohol in my early years, I try to avoid temptation.

This was a personal conviction and decision. I never taught this nor did I require any of my acquaintances to sit through a discourse on the subject. Now, had I at some point started telling people that they needed to take on this standard so that they could walk with the Lord in a proper manner, I would have stepped into error.

Know that the believers around you will be more intolerant about this stand than most unsaved people. Many times I have explained my position to lost people and found great acceptance and understanding from them. With believers the displeasure was often on their faces and in their following attitude/actions.

We will see in a later lesson some do's and don'ts of how to handle this sort of situation.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. CHRIST OUR COMPLETER

Christ our Completer prepares us for perfect service (vss. 9-14).

Col. 2.9-23

Vs, 9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

(from Daily Bread)

"A preacher once met a cultist on the street who challenged his orthodox views. 'You say that Jesus Christ is co-equal with the eternal Father, but He cannot be, for no son is ever as old as the one who has begotten him.' The minister looked at his detractor for a moment and then gave this devastating reply, 'You yourself have just called God the ETERNAL FATHER. Have you ever thought that statement through? Don't you realize that God can only be the eternal Father if He has an eternal Son? If you' rethink your position in the light of the Scriptures, you'd see that ETERNAL FATHERHOOD of necessity demands ETERNAL SONSHIP!'"

Christ is God in the most complete manner. Someone once said, "Christ is just as much God as if He had never been man and He is just as much man as if He had never been God."

ALL THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD not just part of it!

Vs. 10 "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"

We are complete in Him. We have no need of anything else in our lives. He is our all in all.

We are in Him -- the "head of all principality and power;"

He has the position that I want my Lord to have. He is Lord over all there is!!!

Let's look at some terms briefly.

CIRCUMCISION =

1. The Old Testament right of circumcision was done as a sign of obedience to Jehovah. This was a sign for Israel.
2. The New Testament idea that something of our old self or old nature has been cut away.

UNCIRCUMCISION

1. The state of not being circumcised in the Old Testament.

2. The state of not being regenerated or saved in the New Testament time.

BAPTISM

1. Water baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. When the believer realizes the significance of baptism, he wants to be identified with his Lord and Savior.

Some suggest that circumcision in the Old Testament is baptism in the New Testament, both are a sign that you have placed yourself under God's covenant. I have never figured out why only males took the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament and both male and female are told to be baptized in the New Testament.

Baptism is a voluntary step to signify you are Christ's while the circumcision of the Old Testament was a sign of the covenant.

2. Spiritual baptism. The baptizing of the newly saved believer into the body of Christ. This occurs automatically and you never know that it has taken place. We are told in the Word that it happens.

NOW READ VSS. 11-13

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:"

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."

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;"

What is Paul talking about here?

Is he telling the Christians in Colosse to be circumcised?

No. Indeed there is no basis in the New Testament for physical circumcision.

Acts 15 tells of a discussion and decision on the right of circumcision in the early church. Gal. 2:3 is the outworking of that decision in that Titus was not circumcised. Indeed, Col. 2:11 states that this was a circumcision without hands so we know that it is speaking of the cutting away of the old flesh.

"in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" Paul is stating that the flesh is gone due to this operation of Christ.

We can be free from the sins of the flesh if we desire it.

It is up to us to chose which way we want to live:

1. In the flesh serving the Devil.
2. In the Spirit serving the Lord.

In verse 12 what baptism is Paul speaking of? Verse 13 shows that this baptism is related to Spiritual baptism because forgiveness is not linked with water baptism unless you belong to one of the Christian church movements that make baptism a requirement for salvation.

The context is the old nature and it's being put off so water baptism would not fit. (Acts 10:44-48 show water baptism after they received the Holy Spirit.)

In verse 13 we are made alive "together with him,".

He has forgiven ALL TRESPASSES!

Not only did He forgive all our trespasses at salvation, but he also has provided I John 1:9 as the answer to those times when we fall into sin after salvation!

Vs. 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;"

"blotting" has two thoughts to it. First the idea of "erased" and secondly the idea of "cancelled". (New International Version uses "cancelled")

What is meant by the "writing of ordinances"?

1. Law of Moses
2. Divine Decrees of God.
3. The no no's of the day - those things that people thought were wrong. Is Paul trying to say that Christ nailed that sort of thing to the cross so that we wouldn't have to worry about it?

This fits the context quite well as we will see in later verses. The idea that all this is from the world and since we are free from the rules of the world by the death of Christ this idea would fit.

Vs. 15 "[And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Vs. 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]:"

He has set the principalities and powers to naught and is victorious over them all

SO

LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU IN FOOD!

NOW

Let's list some current do's and don'ts.

DO DON'T

Go to church four times a week. Movies

Act holy Dancing

Drinking

Smoking

Now. Why do people hold to these do's and don'ts?

1. They want to be weird.
2. They want to give up fun things.
3. They want to be a killjoy.
4. They want to be as close to what they feel the Lord wants them to be.
5. They want to refrain from things that might be mistaken by others that might cause problems of testimony.

I Tim. 3:2 "an overseer must be above reproach...respectable..."

I Tim 3:7 "He must also have a good reputation..."

They do not want to have anything in their lives that will detract from their testimony.

They are not seeking righteousness -- Christ gave that to them -- they are seeking to live righteously.

Will do's and don'ts vary from time to time? Yes, possibly. The pool table used to be a tool of the Devil! Indeed, in some areas of the country this may well be the case yet today. Yet in most areas it is quite respectable to have a table in your home. Indeed, some Bible Colleges have them for student recreation.

Why was the pool table wrong a number of years back?

The pool room atmosphere was not the type of atmosphere the Christian would want to identify with. Pool is now in many bowling alleys and other public places.

Sunday afternoon baseball was the Devils worst not that many years ago in Nebraska. (1940's I think)

How do you react to a believer that thinks MIXED SWIMMING is wrong?

Ridicule NO!

Make fun of NO!

Admire his conviction YES!

Understand his liberty to believe and practice this YES!

Ask him about his belief and LISTEN YES!

Can you think of why a person might have a strong conviction about mixed swimming?

a. Maybe he or she has a problem with lust.

b. Maybe he or she has a strong belief that the believer should be modest and that the current swim wear is not modest.

Do some Christians close their eyes to don'ts and ridicule to cover up their own conscience?

Some for years saw nothing wrong with smoking. Today we have proof that it is dangerous to your health. Some continue to smoke even though they know that they are to care for the temple of the Holy Spirit - their body.

Many things are held as okay by some Christians yet scripture tells us not to cause another to stumble. The mixture of these two items is hard to determine. Social drinking is again raising controversy in the Church.

Some of the problem may be the fact that we are cold and unresponsive to the sin that is around us.

Many years ago the movie "From Here to Eternity" was banned at most Armed Forces bases due to the beach scene. Today there is T.V. activity in the bedroom far more suggestive on prime time, yet Christians continue so soak up the trash. Some cities have independent stations that are showing movies with nude scenes in prime time.

Several years ago we went to the mountains for the day. As we exited the mountains into the valley, a large billboard was to be seen. A large woman in a bikini was pictured. I was somewhat shocked. It struck home to me that I had seen the billboard many times and didn't think about it. At that point in time after eight hours away from the world I felt uneasy about the picture.

I wonder if we took a month vacation to heaven and then returned if our do's and don'ts might be much changed. I have to wonder if our coldness to the sin around us wouldn't embarrass us!

Were the pastors of the 40's and 50's wrong to preach against the jewelry and makeup? Their approach was wrong often times yet they were dealing with the encroachments of worldliness upon their congregations and it was their place to warn their people.

Were these pastors saying that you had to follow their do's/don'ts to be saved? No, they were trying to teach their congregations as they saw fit. Some call this legalism - no, legalism is teaching a series of items to keep so that you might be saved.

Were the pastors of the 60's and the 70's wrong to condemn the short skirts? No they should have been dealt within many more churches.

I assembled some do's and don'ts relating to how to handle a person that has a questionable belief/practice.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF DOING AND DON'TING

1. Don't offend the person on purpose. (By trying to change their mind with undue pressure.)
2. Don't place the person in a situation where they will have to say no.
3. Don't condemn, judge, or ridicule the person either to their face or behind their back.
4. Don't be a stumbling block. (I Cor. 8.9-13; Rom. 14.13)
5. Do apologize if you offend them and be sure not to offend them again.
6. Do honestly and sincerely seek to understand their reasoning and principles. (They have their reasons and you may find out that they are right.)
7. Do realize that this person is a child of God. (In earthly families different children like to please their father in different ways - one is no less important than the other.)
8. Do realize that if they are wrong it is not sin. It is however wrong for them to do something which they can't do in faith. (Rom. 14.23)
9. Do be sure the person is saved. An unsaved person can not properly distinguish the proper Christian life if they aren't a believer under the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit.

SEE, A DON'T MAN CAN HAVE MORE DO'S THAN DON'TS!

If someone comes with a don't, do check them and their don't out. If they have Scripture then don't. If they hath not Scripture then do.

vs. 17 "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ."

"which are a shadow of things to come"

What is Paul getting at here?

1. These are only a hint of the don'ts that will come through the ages.
2. These are a vague picture of the substance of the things to come in Christ.
3. The New International Version states it this way "These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

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,"

In short don't let someone pull the wool over your eyes, don't let anyone hoodwink you, don't let anyone trick you, don't let anyone fool you into following their methods of being righteous - they are puffed up - full of themselves - arrogant - think they are smarter than the average bear.

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Darby "(which have indeed an appearance of wisdom in voluntary worship, and humility, and harsh treatment of the body, not in a certain honour,) to [the] satisfaction of the flesh."

American Standard Version "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; [but are] not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."

New King James Version "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, [false] humility, and neglect of the body, [but] [are] of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."

New International Version "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."

King James Version "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

This is the only usage of the term translated will worship - it is one word meaning "1) voluntary, arbitrary worship 1a) worship which one prescribes and devises for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of faith which ought to be directed to Christ 1b) said of the misdirected zeal and the practice of ascetics" Thayer

Robertson believes Paul coined the term to describe the self designed worship of angels.

One said it meant sanctimony or unwarranted piety.

Gill takes it in a positive manner and suggests "being what was over and above that which was commanded by God, and so, like the freewill offerings under the law, must be acceptable to him; this was one of their colours, which had some show of wisdom, religion, and zeal:"

I surmised it was worship stemming from the will of the person - Jamison Fausset and Brown likewise suggest: "arbitrarily invented worship: would-be worship, devised by man's own will, not God's. So jealous is God of human will-worship, that He struck Nadab and Abihu dead for burning strange incense (Lev_10:1-3). So Uzziah was stricken with leprosy for usurping the office of priest (2Ch_26:16-21). Compare the will-worship of Saul (1Sa_13:8-14) for which he was doomed to lose his throne. This "voluntary worship" is the counterpart to their "voluntary humility" (Col_2:18): both specious in appearance, the former seeming in religion to do even more than God requires (as in the dogmas of the Roman and Greek churches); but really setting aside God's will for man's own; the latter seemingly self-abasing, but really proud of man's self-willed "humility" (Greek, "lowliness of mind"), while virtually rejecting the dignity of direct communion with Christ, the Head; by worshipping of angels."

It seems that most follow the thought that it is worship coming from the will of the person, rather than something stemming from God.

Since believers naturally worship God, it would take an active change of will to worship other than God.

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."

They reject Christ, the head of the church! Don't you dare follow them and lose out on the reward that you might have from following Christ.

Note the body increaseth not by the work of the people, not by the prayer of the people, not by the giving of the people, not by anything the people can do, but by the will/acts of God Himself. Now, that is not to say that the works of the people aren't used of the Lord to increase the church - He does, but it is He that builds His church not us.

To me that is the biggest relief a pastor could ever have. He needs to be sure he is busy about the Lord's business, but if the church does not grow, it is because God does not have growth in mind for that body for that time.

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?" 23 "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh."

The New International Version states it this way: "Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!""? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."

So, having read that, can we eliminate all do's and don'ts from our life? NO WAY! The Bible is full of do's and don'ts! We need to be very careful to follow them. What we do not have to follow are do's and don'ts set forth by man from their own wisdom and knowledge.

Might I tread on touchy toes for a moment? Can we list some items of worship that are imposed upon congregations as the "in thing" to do?

How about dressing casually?

How about greeting times?

How about taped music?

How about children's church?

How about - you fill in the blank.

Are any of these wrong? No, not in and of themselves. Are any of these right? No, not in and of themselves. Are these things useable in the church? Possibly - but don't let them become the method to reach God - they are not! Nor, are old hymns and customs of the church I might be quick to add before someone reminds me of this.

Christ perfects us - not what we do or don't do. It is that perfecting process than allows us to serve Him in that perfect spot of service.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CHRIST OUR LIFE

Christ our Life is our purpose in service (vs. 4-17)

Col. 3.1-17

Remember the television show "THIS IS YOUR LIFE?"

Ralph Edwards the master of ceremony would come on stage holding a large book. He would introduce the show while the camera panned over the audience. As the camera would begin to focus on the surprise guest the MC would say "This is your life _____."

Then after the guest is revived the guest is seated on the stage in a nice comfortable couch. They would then introduce different people from the guests past to make up a brief life history of the guest.

As these guests of the 1950s were surprised so shall we be one day when God says "this is your life" and begins to examine our life's works.

If we follow the admonition of our text, we will have no embarrassing people showing up in our "this is your life" program.

Let me just list some of those items briefly.

First a couple of do's

KEEP SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE
SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

And of course some don'ts put in do packages.

PUT TO DEATH IMMORALITY, IMPURITY, PASSION, EVIL DESIRES AND GREED
PUT ASIDE ANGER, WRATH, MALICE, SLANDER, AND ABUSIVE SPEECH

The whole section is summed up in the phrase from verse four "Christ Who is our life" There is another section of things that we are to put on (do's).

Let's read through the first portion of the passage.

Vs. 1 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Vs. 2 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Vs. 3 "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Vs. 4 "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."
Vs. 5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"

This text has many implications for the local assembly as well as for the individual, however I want to concentrate on the individuals relationship with Christ. You can do a study for yourself relating to the persons' relationship to the church.

If you have been raised with Christ, if you are born again, if you have accepted Christ, if you are truly a believer, then SEEK things above and SET your mind on things above.

Why should we concentrate on these two items? BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE CHRIST IS AND THAT IS WHERE YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE FOR "CHRIST WHO IS YOUR LIFE" - you have died and have been raised with him. We are to treat ourselves as though we are there even if our old body is holding us here on earth for a time.

Seek, set, put to death, put aside, and put on are not words of insignificance. There are some today that would teach us that when we accept Christ we are zapped into holy purity. No! You have to do it. You don't eat your sugar flavored zappies one morning and get your zap of holy. You must consciously do these things.

The term "seek" is a general term for looking for or going after something with great seriousness. It would seem to be the thought of committing yourself to this seeking with a purpose of completion in mind.

The phrase "Christ Who is our life" really ought to grab and keep our attention. It is a bold statement of the Christian life. Just sit and contemplate the phrase this week.

Paul states this as a fact to the folks he was writing to. This included the mature and the immature - all should understand that this fact should be present in their lives.

The meaning of the phrase might fall along the following lines.

1. Without Him we would have no eternal life. We would all be bound for hell and torment.
2. Without Him we would have no physical life. He sustains all creation.
3. Without Him we would have no meaning in life. Without Christ to serve what goals can we have? None except material goals for this life. It is no wonder people in America are bored, depressed, self centered, self serving, despondent and suicidal - they have no goals or aims in life save material possessions.
4. Without Him we would not have peace of life. I often wonder how lost people face the trials of

life - the loss of loved ones - war - loss of job/retirement etc.

Is this phrase a truth in your life today? Is He really your life? Our lives must merge with His to be truly effective for Him and His plan for our lives.

Now, that we understand this phrase better do Paul's words to the Philippians make more sense to you? "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

"Christ's who is our life" - "to live is Christ"

With this concept in mind Paul walked across geography and history preaching Christ to everyone he could. With this concept he endured persecution, with this concept he endured beatings, with this concept he endured jail, and with this concept he faced everything the Devil could throw at him.

With this concept surely we can face those particular little problems facing us from time to time.

Christ who is our life. Decide on it. Allow it. Live it. Continue in it.

Forenoon and afternoon and night, --
And day is gone, --
So short a span of time thee is
'twixt dawn and evensong.

Youth, - middle life, - old age, -
And life is past, --
So live each day that God shall say,
"Well done!" at last.

Edward Rowland Sill

So love your life, that when Ralph Edwards says "This is your life" - all they have to do is present a portrait of Jesus Christ your Savior.

Christ is our life.

Vs. 1 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

If ye is a first class condition - if and assumed so. Why in the world do we seek the world and what it offers, when we can seek and have all that Christ offers in heaven?

Vs. 2 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

It is said that a woman told Ralph Waldo Emerson that the world was coming to an end - he replied that he could get along quite well without it. That is the concept we need to have - nothing here we can't get along without.

Vs. 3 "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

YOU AIN'T HERE - can you get it? We are and all we are is in Christ in God, in heaven. What in the world is the draw of the world? Why do we allow the world to pull us away from all that God is and all that He has for us?

Vs. 4 "When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Vs. 5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"

Think about "mortify your members." What does that mean - count them dead? That is the thought of the word - treat them as dead - not that we are to walk around with our limbs like spaghetti, but possibly, when we are tempted we are to treat them as if they are in a heap on the floor - that way we won't get into trouble. You can't do any of these things because you are a heap on the floor unable to get up.

In relation to "and covetousness, which is idolatry" you might consider Matt. 6.24 which states that you can't serve God AND mammon - simple - serving mammon is idolatry.

Vs. 6 "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:"

Vs. 7 "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them."

The Colossians were living in a society where these things were probably more prevalent than we encounter, but most of us would have to admit that in our unsaved days we too were involved in some of these problems mentioned in the text.

Vs. 8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

Note that anger is listed with "filthy communication" - guess that might be a reminder to contain our anger. Put them off - seems they are kind of natural for us even as believers, but we are to put them off - stop allowing them to have residence in our lives.

Vs. 9 "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"

Hummm. A believer that lies to another believer - not a pleasant item to contemplate, though it happens all too often in the church today.

Vs. 10 "And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

Vs. 11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all."

It would seem Paul is trying to say, and does so quite effectively, that there is no class within the church - all have value to God and we are all His children - that should be the standard of treatment within the church.

This has been the basis of many unpopular decisions in churches. We had a friend in Nebraska that was approached by a mixed marriage couple seeking membership. It caused great upset to many in his church. He and the board settled on this passage and accepted the couple into the church membership. Some, sadly did not accept the pastor's and board's position.

As my friend was telling me this it crossed my mind - what would have happened had Faith and I presented ourselves for membership - a Swede and an Englishman. How dare we allow such things into the Lord's church.

Vs. 12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;"

Vs. 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."

It is interesting that Paul contrasts quarrels between people to Christ's forgiveness of us or in short our quarrel with God - that is what sin is - an argument with God.

Back to the thought of church unity. Paul tells us how.

Kindness
Humbleness of mind
Meekness
Longsuffering
Forbearing one another
Forgiving one another

If all in a church considered these before raising a ruckus we would have a lot less church problems.

Vs. 14 "And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Charity - love and in the next verse "let the peace of God rule in your hearts" - these items are a

must when hard times come in a church. Love and peace are to be a part of our lives - of our church lives.

1. Realize it is a possibility in hard times - we can have peace.
2. Realize it won't be a surprise when you tell God about your problem.
3. Realize that the key is to give it to God.

I Pet. 5.7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Any crisis in our life is within God's plan and this also can be of great encouragement to us.

Vs. 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."

Vs. 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."

Vs. 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."

Another long list of items to assist us in bringing unity to the assembly.

Let peace of God rule
Be thankful (even for those that differ with you)
Let the Word of Christ dwell in you
Wisdom
Teaching and admonishing one another
Grace in your hearts
Do all in the name of Christ

Can you be too holy of mind? Someone is going to say something like this - you call for so much holiness you won't remember to witness. You can't go over board on being holy. You have to do all of it. You have to witness even if you aren't too holy. Don't put all your time and thought into heavenly things bring your mind down to witness etc.

My answer: Holiness never interfered with Christ's ministry to others. He lived this life perfectly - without sin, yet He was a wonderful witness to all that He met. Can you be too holy to be of use in this life - never.

Be preoccupied with Christ.

1. Realize this text is in the Bible and aimed at us. It is our duty to use it - to obey it.

2. Set heavenly goals and set aside earthly goals. Our daily walk will reveal where our goals are set. Earthly ambition and desire to produce in the worldly realm reveals worldly goals. A desire to do God's work and walk with Him will reveal heavenly goals.

3. Begin the day with a promise from God to be considered all day as you find a spare moment. I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ. Phil. 4.13 God will supply all that I need. Phil. 4.19 Jesus gives me peace of mind and heart. Jo. 14.27

4. One author has suggested that Christians play a game. GINBSE That's "Guess I'll never be spiritual enough" - YOU ARE AS SPIRITUAL AS YOU WILL LET GOD MAKE YOU. There is nothing from without that will keep us from being spiritual giants. Only our saying no to God's working in our lives.

5. Pray without ceasing. Fritz Ridenour in his book "HOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN AN UNCHRISTIAN WORLD" gave this phrase a new perspective in my mind. He was not commenting on that phrase when he made the comments but was trying to get the point across that we should pray in spite of everything. He says we should "pray for it, because of it, about it, through it, around it or in spite of it."

For it - request

Because of it - trials and hard times

About it - asking about all facets of it and finding God's answer

Though it - continuing till it is complete not just till you tire of it

Around it - every aspect - don't leave an avenue of request untrod

In spite of it - don't let the prayer get you down if it remains unanswered for a time

This gives "pray without ceasing" a new angle of view. DON'T STOP UNTIL THE JOB IS COMPLETED.

6. Be careful what kind of programming you give your brain. Computers are programmed and our brains tend to be programmed as well. Beware what goes into your mind from day to day. If all that goes in is trash then all God is going to get out of you is GARBAGE.

7. Set your sights on your goal that you've set and do not waver from it. If you do waver from it then get back on track and continue. The torpedoes of the second world War had a feedback mechanism which constantly reset the course of the torpedo. We do have things which sidetrack us but we need to use God's Word to get us back on track.

8. Reading and studying as often as you can will help you fill your mind with heavenly thoughts and information.

9. Pray as often as you can.

10. Be involved in church activities - all of them.

11. Fellowship with other believers.

12. Include Christ in all you do.

The text wants us to think of Christ sitting on the throne beside the Father. Picture that scene if you can for a moment. The glorious throne of God, and Jesus seated beside Him.

Now place yourself in that scene.

Now realize that is where you are positionally in the spiritual realm.

Now realize that is where we can be anytime we decide to pray.

Consider: What was the worst thing you did last week? God watched you every moment. Apply that to the next time you want to step over the line of right and wrong.

Where are your goals? Are they bound in heaven or are they bound in things of this life?

If we realize what Christ wants of us, our natural response is to serve Him in anyway that we possibly can to the very best that we can.

Christ who is our life.

Now I don't want to get into do's and don'ts, but would "Christ who is our life" allow for the following?

Swearing

Drinking

Adultery

Theft

Speeding

Lying

Half truths

Backbiting

Gossip

Sleeping in on Sunday

Most of what is on television

Off color books/magazines

Materialism

Covetousness

Would "seek those things which are above" allow for the following?

Swearing
Drinking
Adultery
Theft
Speeding
Lying
Half truths
Backbiting
Gossip
Sleeping in on Sunday
Most of what is on television
Off color books/magazines
Materialism
Covetousness

CHAPTER SIX

6. CHRIST OUR MOTIVATOR

Christ our Motivator brings us to proper service (vs. 23).
Col. 3.18-4.1

Remember the context of the following text is doing all as unto the Lord! This is truly important stuff that we are going to cover in this section - this passage gives us other things we can do as unto the Lord. Family life as well as work life - our entire life actually should be lived as unto the Lord.

Vs. 18 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."

Ah, got this one - easy verse - wives submit - the word submit comes from two different words - sub meaning under and mitt meaning hand - under the husband's hand - NO! They are co-heirs - submitting to leadership, but not under his hand (thumb either).

The word indicates the wife is to be under the authority of, or subject to. This definitely goes against some of the current thinking of the world, but then we aren't subject to the world's false teaching.

Not only in the home is she to submit but this seems to be a straightforward command to submit or be subject to, as well as a very definite command against adultery in my mind. You can't commit adultery and be submissive to only your OWN husband.

The term submit is used in Rom. 13.1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God the powers that be are ordained of God.

Why? Because it is "fit in the Lord." One of the thoughts to this word "fit" is "to pertain to what is due, duty, as was fitting" according to Thayer. It is the wife's duty to be submissive to her husband and only her husband - it is her duty because she is in Christ.

The thought crossed my mind, can this "own husband" issue relate to more than adultery. I would assume that might be very possible. Example: In a church situation there might be times when the wife should be sure she follows her own husband's desire rather than some other man in the church. Take some time and see if you can think of other situations that this verse might fit.

Robertson mentions "Wives have rights and privileges, but recognition of the husband's leadership is essential to a well-ordered home...."

Now, that I have made verbiage of the term "own" I might admit that not all translations include the term. Some of the manuscripts omit this word, though logic requires the thought of "own

husband."

I might add that this word submission is not a female only term, it is used of male relationships to others as well. The Bible makes it clear that men are subject to Christ, to powers that be, to employees if they are working men etc. We all are called in Scripture to submit to others - government, teachers, employees, police, etc.

There is also a real point to be made. This verse is addressed to the wife and not the husband. She is the one that brings this to pass. It is not the husband's job to force her into submission even though he might reeeaaalllly want to. It is not the pastor's place either, though both the husband and then the pastor should teach this verse to the erring woman and encourage her before the Lord to make it a part of her life.

Vs. 19 "Husbands, love [your] wives, and be not bitter against them."

The husband is required to love his wife, while the wife is to be taught to love their husband (Titus 2.4).

The husband is to love his wife. What in the world does that mean.

Does it mean that we go seek out some fuzzy feeling in our stomach and call it love?

Does it mean that we submit to their every desire and buy them the world and lay it at their feet? (If that one is true I'm in big trouble.)

Does it mean that we seek their benefit? Yes, this is certainly included.

Does it mean that we seek their peace/unity in the marriage? Yes, for sure this is a needed part of love.

Does it mean setting aside our own desires at times to minister to her needs? Yes, this is also needed.

If they have a physical, emotional or spiritual need we as husbands ought to seek to fill that need at the earliest point in time.

By the way, how can a husband do the afore mentioned and commit adultery? He can't.

"Bitter" can relate to the stomach - guess we as husbands are not to have indigestion because of their actions. Well, maybe more to the point that we should never be bitter over the loving, or the caring of the wife. It is not only our responsibility, but our fortune.

Vs. 20 "Children, obey [your] parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

If you want to please God in your younger life, then follow your parents - the simplest way to please God that I can think of. Elsewhere in the New Testament the same thought is related to long life. I have never taken a widespread survey, but have talked to many older believers and asked them if they obeyed their parents and they said they did. In fact I have never asked one that had not obeyed their parents - may well prove the point - not that the Word needs to be proven true.

Let us consider for a moment this thought of obedience. Do most kids today obey their parents? Maybe on "three" of "one, two, three" but quite often not even on "four" - if they stop on "three" you can almost bet there will be a restart almost immediately.

What is the cost of the lack of obedience?

IN THE FAMILY:

Lack of peace in the home
Lack of unity in the family
Lack of unity within the couple quite often
Dissension between the siblings

IN THE SCHOOLS:

Lack of peace
Lack of learning
Lack of social interaction as it should be

IN THE NATION:

Lack of submission of workers to their employers
Lack of submission to the law
Lack of proper understanding of issues

I might meddle just a little at this point. It could be argued that Paul knew that children would be present in the gathering to hear the reading of this letter. If this is true there could well be direct application to churches today that herd their kids off to all sorts of programs rather than having them in the service.

There are some real things to gain by having children in the services.

1. They learn to be quiet and listen. They may not learn everything that is spoken, but they will pick up things that they will tuck away in their minds.
2. They see mom, dad, pastor, brother, sister, elders and everyone else worshiping God. They will

be more responsive in later years knowing what the service is like. It is said that women in Asia bind their children on their backs when they go to pray. The mothers never have to teach the child the chants/prayers. They pick it up automatically.

We are missing some serious teaching time with our children today in the name of keeping the sanctuary quiet. Even small children can learn to be quiet - without a bag of toys or crayons to entertain them.

A child that can read and write can take notes and I know they can pick up on some of the major points of what is being said.

3. They learn of God, they learn of His desire for them, they learn of His love for them and that can't be bad!

Vs. 21 "Fathers, provoke not your children [to anger], lest they be discouraged."

This is not to say that the kids aren't going to get upset with you from time to time, but the attempt not to bring them to real anger is to be the father's goal - mom's too, if they are in on the discipline/training.

If they do get angry it isn't the end of the world as they will only be discouraged. If you do bring them to anger then it is high time that you ENCOURAGE THEM on the spot so that they do not wallow in discouragement. This is what leads to depression and oft times other troubles.

Provoke seems to relate to nagging rather than the one time incident when you ask them to do something.

Stedman lists three areas where fathers can irritate their child. He has gleaned this list from observing many families in his fairly large church over many years.

1. Ignoring the child
2. Indulging the child
3. Insulting the child

I think a little thinking on these items by most any father would bring them to agree with his listing.

Vs. 22 "Servants, obey in all things [your] masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:"

We might take a moment to consider slavery at the time of the writing of this book. It has been suggested that approximately half the Roman empire was slaves to the other half of the Roman empire.

Now, place this passage in that context. Couple of items. Paul did not rant and rave about the wrongness of slavery - he acknowledged that it existed and taught the Christians how to live within this system.

We might also submit that not all slaves in the Roman empire had Sunday off to go to two services. They attended the services when they could. You can apply that feature yourself to the thought of having to work on Sunday.

Since we have no slavery in most of the world, we would want to apply this passage to the work world - the relationship between the employee and employer.

It seems to me that the order of rank in the work area is Christ, boss, company, and you. Keeping this standard as best, you can is important to your testimony.

Can you keep this ranking if you join a union? Maybe, maybe not, but usually the union becomes the top dog rather than Christ - they can tell you what you are going to do.

We might ask, should you ask for promotions? If that is the norm for the job then go for it.

Should you ask for raises? I never have and have always had what the Lord wanted to provide.

Should you do things you know are wrong because you are told to? No, your Christian standards should not be compromised - you may lose your job, but you will have done right.

You are to do your work as unto the Lord, not to please the boss. Please the Lord and all will be well with your job.

Vs. 23 "And whatsoever ye do, do [it] heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"

This must be our frame of mind in all of life. Anything less is less than what God wants of our lives.

My job as maintenance man/supervisor was not the glory job of my life, but every morning as I walked the three blocks to work I would ask that the Lord would allow me to have a good attitude and that I would honor Him in my job and behavior.

Vs. 24 "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

I know this verse is there, but until recent years I did not labor for the Lord due to its existence - still don't for that matter. Christ died for my sin in my place, thus there is nothing in this life that He can ask me to do that would measure up to his work for me - why in the world would the thought of reward enter into the mix - yet, He in his grace has decided to reward me for doing

what I ought to do anyway.

When working, our company had the very nice custom of taking all employees that had perfect attendance to a free lunch at a nice restaurant. As we were getting up to leave I turned to the manager and said thanks for the lunch and remarked that it was nice for the company to do something nice for us when we did what we ought to do.

Vs. 25 "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

Well, on the other hand we have a down side to all this. If you don't do the do's you will find that God will do for your don'ts! No matter whether a master, a husband, a child, a wife or an employee - do wrong and you will receive.

What will you receive? First of all the grammar lets us know that this will certainly happen and it is yet future. We are to assume that it relates to our future reward since that is the direct context, but I assume the thought of chastisement could enter into it if the fault was grievous enough.

Let it be said, that I desire to walk worthy of the Lord so I don't need to find out what all the verse might mean.

4:1 "Masters, give unto [your] servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Wow, the implications of that verse. The implications are that we are to treat our slaves/employees as Christ treats us.

Let's think about that one for a moment or two. How does Christ treat us?

WITH LOVE
WITH RESPECT
WITH KINDNESS
WITH GRACE
WITH

How many of us would like to work for an employer like that? Most I would imagine.

If you are an employer, be sure to keep this in mind for your future reference - both future in this life and future in the next.

Now, if you are an employee don't expect this sort of treatment as you most likely won't get it unless you work for a believer that has read and understood this passage.

It seems to me that all of the people addressed in this passage are called to obey. The wife is to submit to her husband, the children are to obey their parents, the servants are to obey their masters, the masters are to obey their master in heaven - AND ALL THESE ARE TO DO IT AS UNTO THE LORD!

Unless you are an adult single person, whose parents have died and who is independently wealthy with no children there is something here for you. We should do all as unto the Lord.

ObeY. Such a small word - it is a four-letter word to many in our society today, but it is a word that relates heavily to our relationship to God.

Adam and Eve didn't function all that well with the word did they? Man has a serious problem in being obedient to God - the Bible is quite effective in documenting this problem.

It seems that walking with God is the only way that we can assure ourselves of obedience to all those we relate to. It is not so that we can look good to others, but so that we are good for the Lord.

We might just remind ourselves that there are consequences to disobedience and rewards for obedience in this life as well.

COST REWARD

Disobedient Israelites Two were allowed into the land
died in the wilderness

Lot/daughters made it out of Sodom Lot's wife became salt

Cain was rejected Able was accepted

Flood generation was lost Noah and family were saved

It might be appropriate to remind ourselves that the one we are to pattern our lives after is the perfect example of obeying. Christ was obedient even unto the cross.

Our lives should always revolve around pleasing the Lord and all our labors should be in His name, not our own efforts and desires. If we do all as unto the Lord then our service to Him will be proper.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. CHRIST OUR MESSAGE

Christ our Message directs our verbal service (vs. 3, 6).

Col. 4.2-6

Vs. 2 "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"

Continue - can you continue in prayer if you pray once a month when you get into a bind where you need some help? Doubtful. Continue or be constant in - the term is used of becoming an adherent to a cause - following a particular philosophy. It would seem to indicate a constant daily thing.

Continue in prayer watching - what are we to be watching for? I would guess this goes back to 3.4 and the second coming.

This kind of gives meaning to 3.2 "set your affection on things above."

Continue in prayer seems straight forward - pray without ceasing relates, but the thought surely of praying every chance you get would be the least we could see in the text..

"Watch in the same" may be a little more difficult. Just what is meant? Watch in prayer would be the thought but how do we watch in prayer?

Watch indicates watching that some great calamity does not overtake you or come upon you by surprise. Similar to folks in the coasts of Hawaii are always on watch for tidal waves - they have a warning system. Not that you keep your eyes on the water all the time, but be watchful - take due care.

Now, how do we watch in prayer? I would suggest that this may be in the thought of using our common sense and thinking through what we know as we pray.

Example: If you get a prayer letter from a missionary stating that the man is going to pick up a single lady missionary at the airport sixty miles away. Not to have a nasty mind, but that is asking for idle gossip and is an open temptation to some men/women. That is quite a good time to watch in prayer - pray that God will open the man's eyes to the problem, pray that God will keep the situation from becoming a problem. Pray that the whole situation might become honoring to God.

Vs. 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:"

Paul goes on to ask them to pray for him as well as "us" - others that are with him preaching.

If you want to pray - pray for the church folks - that they will have open doors to speak of the Lord.

In Eph. 3.12 we are told that we can come to the Father with boldness. Heb. 4.16 mentions the same concept. WE CAN GO BEFORE ALMIGHTY GOD IN PRAYER, but we ask for prayer to go before man to witness. Kind of a contradiction actually. What can we learn from this?

1. We are chicken at heart.
2. We fear man more than God.
3. We have a neat relationship with a mighty, yet neat God.

Why is it that we fear man so much? I think it goes back to the thought of selfless. We aren't selfless, we are thinking of self - we don't like

to be the odd person
to be looked down upon
to be rejected
to be thought less of
to be less than we think we are maybe?

Vs. 4 "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

Paul realized the importance of making the Gospel manifest or clear and concise. Let's think about the gospel for awhile.

What is the Gospel? How do you put it precisely and succinctly?

What are the elements of the gospel? That which a person must hear to be saved. I would like for you to take a little challenge. We had a pastor once that passed out three by five inch cards and asked all to put down the gospel in twenty-five words or less. Something we could share with someone that was on their death bed.

Give it a try - the Gospel in twenty-five words or less.

Some things we should understand before we go further.

1. We can't possibly talk a person into heaven.
2. We can't possibly talk the wrong person (or the non-predestined) into heaven.
3. We can't say anything that will cause a person to go into hell. If that person is to be a child of

God HE WILL BE!

4. We may never lead anyone to Christ.

5. We may lead hundreds to Christ.

6. We are only a tool that the Holy Spirit uses to finalize the work that He has already been doing in the life.

7. There is no key verse or phrase that will bring the sinner to his knees before the Lord.

8. There is nothing we can do to save anyone. They must make a decision based on their knowledge.

9. Without the work of the Holy Spirit there is nothing that can be done to draw a lost person to Christ.

Let us imagine now for a moment or two. You have just come upon a very bad car accident. You run up to see if you can help. Someone points to a young man that is obviously near death and says "See what you can do."

As you talk with the man, you feel that he is lost and very concerned about his eternal destiny. Imagine that you have only seconds to share the Gospel with him.

How would you share the Gospel in 25 words or less.

Let's look at some possibles.

Christ was crucified, buried and raised. Believe - ask for salvation. (10 words)

If you've lied you're lost. Christ was God - crucified - buried - and raised for your sin. If you believe this ask Him to save you. (24 words)

Christ was perfect sacrifice for your sin - accept Him. (9 words)

Christ died for your sin. Ask for salvation. (8 words)

Let's consider the twenty-four word try. Would it do the job? It might. How can we improve it?

"If you've lied you're lost. Christ was God - crucified - buried - and raised for your sin. If you believe this ask Him to save you."

If you've lied you're hell bound. (makes it 26 words)

Christ was God - was crucified for your sin - buried & raised. (makes it 27 words)

Accept this & you will be saved. (makes it 22 words)

Would you add to the front of the second line? "If you're sorry" (makes it 25 words)

If you've lied you're hell bound. If you're sorry Christ was God - was crucified for your sin - buried & raised. Accept this & you will be saved.

Does this do it? NO for Christ is God whether they are sorry or not. Yes this is a real challenge!

Are you sorry? might work.

If you've lied you're hell bound. Are you sorry? Christ was God - was crucified for your sin - buried & raised. Accept this & you will be saved.

Give some thought to this idea of setting down your faith in as few words as possible.

What are the essentials to salvation that we need to include in our witnessing?

1. Repentance for example is listed among the required items of witnessing by some, yet others leave it out because great texts of the scripture do not mention it in relation to salvation in the church age.

What are the pros and cons?

John's gospel does not mention the term once while it emphasizes "belief" greatly.

I Corinthians 15 does not mention repentance but states belief is the key. READ I Cor. 15:1-8

What is the answer to this question?

What is repentance?

A change of mind. If I were to leave New York City to drive to California and while crossing Nebraska I decided, this is a dumb idea, and turn around to go back to New York I have had a change of mind.

If a person moves from a position of going to Hell or rejecting God to a place of accepting God and going to Heaven, then that person has had a change of mind. This requires belief and the result is change of direction.

I agree that repentance is a definite part of salvation. It seems that John was viewing those that

believed as having had a change of mind or if you will "repentance." Paul in I Cor. is not laying out a full discourse on the Gospel - only reminding them of some of the things that they had placed their trust in.

Simple belief is not enough for it is possible to have a knowledge of facts in the head but not have a saving faith that those facts are going to save you.

As the driver in Nebraska made a conscious choice to change directions so must the lost person come to a point when he or she says yes - before I was walking against God and now I want to walk with God.

You don't have to beat them over the head with a stick trying to get them to repent - but you should see to it that they have a change of mind toward sin and their previous life. This requires they understand their sin and their lostness.

2. Lordship Some feel that at the time a person accepts Christ he or she must also make Christ the Lord of their life. They must assume a master servant relationship. Others say, No that is an item of maturation and will come later.

What say ye?

Some possible help for the situation:

- a. It would seem natural for Lordship to come, for that seems to be how it was in the early church.
- b. It would seem to be our reasonable service according to Rom. 12:1-2
- c. It would certainly help the persons' testimony before the world.
- d. It says that we are bought with a price - we belong to Him that paid the price.

Is Lordship a pre-requisite to salvation?

I see the Master as purchasing and paying the price. We become a servant of that Master. Whether we serve or rebel is a matter of walk not salvation.

It would seem however that Lordship at the time of salvation would be a very distinct testimony of a true change of mind and turning to God.

3. Hell

Some say that Hell is something that is very negative and that it should not be used in witnessing.

It is a detraction from the real decision of accepting or rejecting God.

Do you think Hell is a needed part of witnessing?

In the New Testament days Hell was an accepted truth as was heaven. Today many do not believe in Hell so they must be told of its existence and reality. Otherwise how can they properly understand the gulf that separates them from God?

We have to get them lost before we can get them saved, so to speak.

Other things that are needed that usually are not disputed:

4. Belief

5. Acceptance/Receiving

6. Sin

Let's have some fun now and take these essentials and put down some scripture that we could use to show a lost person what they must do to be saved.

As we go through this why don't you try to find references in your mind that would work and jot them down for your own information.

HELL:

Rev 20:13-15 21:8b for some description. Also - speaking of the final judgment: 20:13. 21:8b "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

REPENTANCE:

Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

II Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

BELIEF:

Jo 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name;"

Acts 13:38,39 "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Acts 16:30,31 "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Rom. 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

I Jo 5:13 "These things have I wrote unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

ACCEPTANCE:

II Cor. 11:4 "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

RECEIVE:

Jo 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name;"

Acts 2:41 "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Acts 11:1 "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God."

I Cor. 15:1 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and in which ye stand;"

Col. 2:6 "As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him,"

If you have pulled verses from your mind for these topics then you have the tools to share Christ with. If you did not have a verse for each jot down some of these and in the coming weeks take time to work out a few that will be easy for you to use with people.

We could give you a list of things to say and you could memorize it and it would work yet if you have some verses that you are comfortable with then witnessing will be more comfortable for you.

LORDSHIP:

In the concordance there are three columns of references for "our Lord," "the Lord," "the Lord Jesus Christ" and similar terms.

It would seem that He is to be Lord of our lives. This is probably post salvation information however.

Another item that we should mention which definitely is a post salvation item is FOLLOWUP!

Many failures in this area have caused great delays in the spiritual maturing of many Christians.

I was saved as a Senior in high school but was never disciplined. Indeed, I was not told what I was to do as a Christian. I entered the Navy on a four-year enlistment and maintained the typical sailor image. I stood outside of a Christian Servicemen's center in Vallejo, CA one evening but didn't go in because I had no idea what a Christian Servicemen's center was. I tried to read the Bible a few times because I thought that might help me but I started in the genealogies and really wasn't too thrilled with that.

I have often wondered what would have happened if someone had taken only a few hours and told me some of the basics. Maybe I would have sought out a local church etc.

When you lead someone to the Lord take time if at all possible to disciple them. Cover some of the basics of the faith so that they can beware of the cults and wrong isms.

Prayer
Bible Study
Security of the believer
Church
Witnessing

Vs. 5 "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

Walk in wisdom. If we need wisdom we need to ask the Lord (James 1.5). We need to walk in wisdom as we live before the lost.

This passage seems to be saying pray - watch - walk before the lost so that you can reach them as soon as possible. Redeeming the time - redeeming the time God has given you.

Be very wise before the lost lest you lose an opportunity.

I am doing a very in-depth study on wisdom and this verse is using the word in a general way rather than speaking of true wisdom that some have. It is the goal for all believers, but is not

saying that all are wise. I think this is a general use of the term wise and that this relates to all believers - be careful how you walk is the thought of the text.

Don't blunder around and ruin your testimony before the world. Don't do things that might bring dishonor to the Lord, don't say things that might bring dishonor to the Lord.

We are to walk wisely that we might redeem the time. Make the time we have been given here on earth profitable for God, would be the thought of the text.

First of all we have no idea how long we have on this earth. We could be gone tomorrow. The problem is that we don't always live this way. I could list a number of instances where someone has died with no warning at all. In the blink of the eye they were dead and had no more time. One of my wife's friends and her husband were talking over the day in their living room. She heard a funny sound from her husband so she looked up to see him slumping - gone without a sign - without a warning - without having accomplished all he wanted to do in life. Redeem the time.

We have no idea when our time is to be, thus we ought to walk as though we were going to die at the next breath.

I feel this text speaks to the thought that we ought to live correctly so that at any moment we might be able to witness to anyone without worry of having to defend ourselves against accusation.

Vs. 6 "Let your speech [be] always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

This verse lends credence to my thoughts on the last. Watch what you say! However Paul adds a little phrase that is of interest - season what you say with salt. What a neat thing to do.

I would relate this to watch for opportunities to salt the conversation - ways to drop spiritual thoughts into your talk with others.

I have a little trick that I like to show people. It is a properly folded piece of paper that ends up with a proper ticket to heaven.

I was doing this one evening when my wife's folks were there, but I was showing the trick to a neighbor that was over for coffee. As I finished up the trick and showed her the right ticket to heaven, my father-in-law asked quietly, "Ricki, do you have that ticket?"

It was the perfect salt for the time and opened opportunity to witness. This is why we need to use a little salt with our talk.

The rest of the verse seems to bear this thinking out. We need to be ready to give answer for our

faith at any moment, at any place to any that might ask.

If Christ is our only message then we will easily be able to share it, however, if we are living a message that contradicts Christ we probably will find it difficult to share the simple gospel.

THE ROMANS ROAD

I trust that this does not infringe upon someone's copyright! I do not know the source of this method of witnessing. It has been used for many years.

Romans 1:16 The Gospel is for everyone that believes.

Romans 2:11 Everyone is equal before God.

Romans 3:10 God states that no one is righteous.

Romans 3:23 Everyone has sinned - none fulfill God's requirements.

Romans 6:23 Sin requires death - However God has a better way.

Romans 5:8 Christ died for sinners.

Romans 10:9-13 A recap of what has already been shown.

Romans 8:35-39 This text can show assurance of the decision.

ANOTHER SET OF VERSES THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO YOU

Romans 3:23 There is a gap caused by sin between man and God.

Romans 6:23 We will be paid for our sin, however God has provided a gift for our taking.

Revelation 20:13-15;21:8 Speaking of the final judgment Revelation mentions this second death:

Ephesians 2:8-9 There is nothing that we can do to save ourselves - Not baptism, nor good works, nor prayer.

John 1:12 If we believe and receive Christ as the Bible presents him we will become His children.

Leviticus 1:4-5 As the Old Testament saint acknowledged the death of the sacrifice for "HIS" sin so we must acknowledge CHRIST'S death for our sin. His sacrifice was the only sacrifice that could satisfy God.

Hebrews 9:11-15

I John 5:12,13 those that believe can be assured of their salvation.

Romans 8:35-39

CHAPTER EIGHT

8. CHRIST OUR MASTER

Christ our Master builds us through prayer to service (vs. 12b).
Col. 4.7-18; 1.7-8

Vs. 7 "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, [who is] a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:"

That would be a nice thing to have Paul say about you in public. In fact it is probably a fine example of what we ought to do now and then for those that serve in the church. Give them recognition for doing a good job. Giving them due respect for being a fellow servant. Seems many pastors act as though all that goes on in their church is due to their hard work, rather than being the sum of all the work of all the people involved in the church.

Vs. 8 "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;"

Paul is sending him to give report of Paul to the church as well as gather a report of the church for him. Not only is he to observe the church, but he is to give them comfort. This may be indication of the stresses that the believers were facing - Paul thought that they needed comfort.

Vs. 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."

Again we see the thought of a report of what is going on. There is great need for reports from the field. What are some of the reasons for these reports - say from a missionary you are supporting.

1. It gives you some idea if the worker is working. It is obvious that a dishonest worker is going to lie in his letters, but by the time we know we want to support a worker we usually have trust. We can know of what they are doing, what their needs are, and what we might be able to do for them.

2. This gives rise to the thought of prayer. Only if we know their needs can we pray specifically. I know we can pray in general and that is good, but we should have specifics for specific prayer - this is like going to war with shotguns. You can blast and hope you hit something, or you can go with a rifle and know that you are aiming at something specific.

3. Reports hold the worker somewhat accountable even though you are not there. They know that every month or so you are expecting to hear information about their activities for the time period before.

We supported some missionaries with a good mission for years. One of the things I liked about the mission was that each missionary went through a yearly evaluation with their area director. It wasn't an interrogation, but was a setting of goals, desires, and listing of future activities. Each time they met they would go over these and see how things were going.

The area director then gave a written report to the contributors to that worker. This gave additional information about the quality of work that the person was doing. This was not to degrade or uplift, but to inform. A way to help make the worker accountable to their supporters.

Regrettably the mission decided this was not a worthy exercise even though they mouthed a strong local church accountability philosophy.

Vs. 10 "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)"

An encouragement to receive others that may come your way. What a proof text if one is needed to give traveling missionaries welcome.

One of the shocks of our years on deputation was the lack of welcome that pastors gave us. Only a very few times were we offered a place to stay, and those usually when we were going to be present more than one day for a conference. Normally housing was never discussed.

Many are the times that I would present our ministry to a church and have to drive all night to make it to where I was staying or to our home. This usually after presenting an A.M. message as well.

Yep, lived through it, and many were the most beautiful sunrises and early breakfasts that I thoroughly enjoyed. My personality is one that it did not bother me, but I have wondered at how missionaries traveling with families make it through from Sunday services to Wednesday evening services and from Wednesday to Sunday.

It is most important to me that one of the qualifications for elder is "hospitality" and so few pastors practice this today. (I Tim. 3.2; Titus 1.8) In fact Titus says that he is supposed to love hospitality - most love the hospitality shown them, but seldom do they show it to others.

Vs. 11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only [are my] fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."

He shares the reason for mentioning these men - they have been a comfort to him. Again this thought of recognizing those you work with as being profitable to you.

Not only is there application to pastors/leaders, but how about you Christian employers. I have worked for believers in the past and enjoyed a nice working space, but seldom have I received

any real recognition for the good work that they have enjoyed from me - a kind loving word now and then would be beneficial to both the worker and the employer.

I might get theological for a moment - unto the Kingdom of God - Paul preached the coming kingdom all through his ministry. This book is late in his life and he still sees the Kingdom as a primary part of the ministry at hand. In Acts we see that even unto the end he was preaching the Kingdom. "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." 28.31

Vs. 12 "Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Vs. 13 "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them [that are] in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."

As we deal with Epaphras we need to remind ourselves of chapter one's reference to him. 1.7-8 "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

I have challenged many a church to consider this man's life as we can know it from these few verses in light of a pastor's qualities. We often look into a man's qualifications, and overlook his qualities or lack thereof.

Let's just list the qualities of this man as we see them.

From the church at Colosse
Servant of Christ
Interested in the saints (asked Paul to greet them)
Hard worker that never lets up
Prayer warrior
Desires they walk with God
Desires their completeness as believers
He was zealous for them (Zeal is a four letter word, but not a bad word)
Fellowservant of Paul's
Minister of Christ
Observant of the qualities of others
Sharing of good qualities of others

Kind of a hard act to follow. (See appendix two for more on this man)

Vs. 14 "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."

We see Doctor Luke, an educated person following the Lord. There are detractors of the Lord

that call Christianity the crutch for the lame, but we know that educated people can know the saving grace of the Lord as well as their need of it.

Don't be afraid to speak to educated people about the Gospel if you are given opportunity. They need the Lord too, and most are wise enough to know their need if the Spirit of God has been there before you.

Vs. 15 "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."

I applaud this man for having a church in his home. This is one of the most disruptive of occurrences, but probably the most blessed of ministries to have. We had a church meet in our home for several months and even though there were some definite difficulties it was a most rewarding thing to open our home to the believers to assist in their spiritual nourishment.

I believe it gave much more warmth for our fellowship as well as the learning times.

Vs. 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."

This was an instruction to the church so many years ago, but we can know a couple of items from it.

First of all there was a letter from Paul to Laodicea - wouldn't you love to know what he said to them? It was not included in Scripture - we know not why, it could be that it was lost before the Canon was discussed, or it may not have been up to the standard of the books of the Canon.

Secondly we can know that the heresy present at Colosse was also present at Laodicea.

Thirdly by implication we might assume that the heresy was not present at the church at Hieropolis since Paul did not tell them to circulate the letter to them. Laodicea was just a short distance to the northwest of Colossae and Heiropolis (4.13) was just to the north. The three cities make a nice equilateral triangle. Most likely the churches were quite familiar with one another.

Concerning the book of Ephesians possibly being the letter to the Laodiceans:

From the Net Bible at <http://www.bible.org>

"... yet the opening line of this epistle makes little sense without them ("to the saints who are and are faithful..."? or perhaps "to the saints who are also faithful," though with this sense the *ou'sin* [ousin] is redundant and the *kaiv* [kai] is treated somewhat unnaturally). What is interesting is Marcion's canon list which offers the letter to the Laodiceans among Paul's authentic epistles.

This, coupled with some internal evidence that the writer did not know his audience personally (cf. 1:15; 3:2; absence of personal names throughout), suggests that Ephesians was an encyclical letter, intended for more than one audience. Does this mean that the shorter reading is to be preferred? Yes and no. A plausible scenario is as follows: Paul sent the letter from Rome, intending it first to go to Ephesus. At the same time, Colossians was dispatched. Going counterclockwise through Asia Minor, this letter would first come to Ephesus, the port of entry, then to Laodicea, then Colossae. Tychicus' instructions may well have been for each church to "fill in the blank" on the address line. The church at Ephesus would have certainly made the most copies, being Paul's home base for nearly three years. Hence, most of the surviving copies have "in Ephesus" in v. 1. But one might expect a hint of evidence that Laodicea also made a few copies: both Marcion's list and Col 4:16 may well imply this. What is to account for the early Alexandrian evidence, then? These mss were probably made from a very early copy, one reflecting the blank line before each church filled it in. Although it is of course only speculation (as is necessary in a historical investigation lacking some of the pieces to the puzzle), this scenario accounts for all of the data: (1) "in Ephesus" in most mss; (2) Laodicea in Marcion's list and Col 4:16; (3) the lack of an addressee in the earliest witnesses; (4) why the earliest witnesses' reading must be rejected as too hard; and (5) why Paul seems not to know the readership. In sum, is "in Ephesus" original? Yes and no. Some address belongs there; ejn *Efevsw/ (en Efesw) is the predominant address; but several other churches also received this circular letter as their own. For this reason the phrase has been placed in single brackets in the translation."

Schofield's note that introduces Ephesians:

"Col 4:16 mentions an epistle to the Laodiceans. It has been conjectured that the letter known to us as Ephesians is really the Laodicean letter. Probably it was sent to Ephesus and Laodicea without being addressed to any church. The letter would then be "to the saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus" anywhere."

Vs. 17 "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

Might we assume that Paul is helping the church hold someone in their group accountable? Would seem that is the thought. One must wonder why Paul felt this was a necessary comment to make. Spose he had heard something that made him question the work Archippus was doing - seems logical - also a heavy stroke of encouragement to give a guy - set the whole church on him to do a good job.

Vs. 18 "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace [be] with you. Amen."

Just place yourself in the place of Joe Colossian sitting in church hearing this epistle read for the first time. You must wonder how it must have impacted their lives. The encouragement, the teaching, the exhortation - what a heavy load to take home and consider as you went to work the

next day.

I trust that we might want to give serious consideration to some of the principles that we've looked at in this brief study.

Just by observing what we read, what can we learn of Paul in these verses?

7. A believer (called him brother)
Recognizer of qualities of people

8. Interested in condition of others
Compassionate (wanted to comfort them)

9. Busy

10. Devoted to Christ (prisoner)
Recommends others

11. Needy (accepted comfort from others)
Laborer for the Lord

12. Willing to build up others

13. Willing to support others

14. Willing to allow others input to his writing

15. Willing to recognize others

17. Willing to confront others

18. Open to asking others for prayer

SOME ITEMS TO CONSIDER FROM THE BOOK

WE ARE TO DO THE FOLLOWING CHRIST DID THE FOLLOWING

1:1 living by will of God
1:2 faithful
1:3 prayerful - thankful
1:4 love
1:5 hope laid up in heaven

1:9 know His will
1:10 walk worthily, please Him,
bearing fruit, good works
learning about God
1:11 steadfast
patient strengthens with power for work
joyful
1:12 thankful coheirs with Christ
1:13 delivered us from darkness
transferred us to the kingdom
of His son.
1:14 redeemed us
1:16 He created us
1:17 sustains creation
1:20 Christ reconciled all to God
through blood of Christ
1:22 reconciled us to Him
1:25 gave the church men
1:28 teach and admonish to holiness
2:1 struggle on behalf of other
believers
2:5 disciplined, stable in faith
2:6 walk in Christ
2:7 overflow with gratitude
2:8 beware false teaching
2:10 made us complete
2:13 made us alive
forgave all sins
2:14 canceled all debt
2:15 disarmed the rulers
and authorities
2:18 refrain from self abasement
worship of angels
visions
2:20 don't follow worldly standards
3:1 seek things above raised us with Christ
3:2 set mind above not below
3:3 our life is hid in
Christ in God
3:5 consider your body dead to
immorality
impurity
passion

evil desire
greed (idolatry)

3:8 put aside anger
wrath
malice
slander
abusive speech
lying
3:12 put on heart of compassion chose us
kindness made us holy and beloved
humility
gentleness
patience
3:13 bear with one another
forgive one another
3:14 put on love
3:15 be thankful

called
3:16 let Word dwell in us
teach and admonish one another
with thankfulness
3:17 do all in Christ's name
give thanks
3:18 wives submit
3:19 husbands love your wife
3:20 children obey your parents
3:21 father don't exasperate your
child
3:22 slaves do well to master
as unto Christ
4:1 masters do well unto slaves
4:2 devote selves to prayer
thanksgiving
4:3-4 speak of Christ with charity
4:5 conduct self with wisdom to
outsiders
4:6 season speech with salt

HE WILL DO THE FOLLOWING

1:22 present us holy

3:4 will be revealed with Christ
3:6 wrath will come because of those things mentioned in verse five.
3:10 renew us to a TRUE knowledge.

MAJOR DOCTRINES MENTIONED

Adoption Reward
Redemption Resurrection
Reconciliation Security
Creation Predestination
Spiritual gifts Holiness
Ecclesiology Eschatology
Forgiveness Perfecting
Sovereignty of God

MAIN THRUST: SET YOUR MIND TOWARD HOLY, THANKFUL LIVING AIMED TO PLEASE THE ONE ABOVE.

MAIN THOUGHT CONCERNING CHRIST: ALL SUFFICIENT

MAIN THOUGHT CONCERNING GOD: HE'S IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

KEY VERSES:

1:9,10 "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

1:28 "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ."

A REVIEW OF THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

The book was written in 61 A. D. by the apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Col. 4.3, 10, 18 speak of his imprisonment)

The years of 60-62 seem to cover the suggested time of writing.

The book seems to be a refutation of the Gnostic line of thought that Christ was a created being and that we have to save ourselves through inner thought and reasoning.

Paul begins to show Christ's preeminence by showing his pre-existence. Christ not only created

everything but he is above everything. Kind of like - FIRST, if you catch my drift.

Christ has reconciled all things unto himself and this should be the impetus to living a Godly life.

In light of these things Paul admonishes several types of people to live properly before their God (individuals, wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters). All of us fit in somewhere in that list.

Paul closes by asking for prayer concerning his captivity. This was quite a letter considering he is captive! One must wonder if his time in prison was bearable only because of his thoughts of others and his Lord.

Probably the key verse would be: Colossians 1.18 "And he is the head of the body, the church; who has a beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

I. CHRIST FORSHADOWED (in peoples lives) 1:1-14

Paul introduces himself as an apostle of Christ thus setting his authority to speak to them of the truth that he wanted to share with them.

He mentions a coworker, Timothy - a man we know from Paul's letters to him - I and II Timothy.

In this section Paul recognizes the people for what he has heard about them via reports from Epaphrus. He continues by encouraging them by telling them of their good qualities and reminding them that he is praying for them.

He does not mess around with small talk, he gets right to the heavy teaching:

sainthood
brotherhood
Fatherhood of God
Son-ship of Christ
gospel
fruitful/good walk
good works
God's strengthening
inheritance
redemption
forgiveness

He moves into the next section with slippers on his feet so he won't startle anyone - actually he

begins immediately to blast the Gnostic concept of Christ, which that He was a created being or a spook that didn't leave footprints in the dust as they called him.

II. CHRIST PRESENTED 1:15-29

Paul presents Christ as preeminent to the believer. He was before creation, he created all there is, he sustains all there is, and He provided for all there is through His blood.

He is not only the moving force of all creation, but he is also the head of the body - His church.

Paul asserts that all his efforts in life are aimed toward the goal of warning all of the effects of rejecting this Christ, and to teach those that accept Christ so that they might be presented perfect before Christ.

III. CHRIST THE FOUNDATION 2:1-7

Paul expresses his concern that false teaching might lead the folks astray, but tells them that they are grounded in Christ and all that He is. He is wisdom and knowledge, not the Gnostic inner light that they had been hearing about.

He encourages the folks to walk and continue to be rooted in Christ and His teaching.

III. CHRIST NOT THOUGHT 2:8-23

There is further warning of philosophy and false hood to be avoided - it is all counter to Christ and truth.

He gives three areas of warning.

1. Warning against legalism (16-17)
2. Warning against mysticism (18-19)
3. Warning against asceticism (20-23)

V. CHRIST OUR LIFE 3:1-4

We are His, we are in His kingdom, we are as good as in heaven, so we should live like it. We are totally Christ's in fact, and we should be in living.

"Christ who is our life" is the key phrase of the book. All centers around Christ and we are in Him.

VI. CHRIST OUR GUIDE 3:5-4:6

Now that we know who we are in Christ there is practical application to how we should live our life before the world.

Paul goes to some extent to give clear statement of do's and don'ts of the Christian life. These are to be followed, not to bring salvation, but because of salvation we ought to live circumspectly.

The instructions are broken into five areas of relationship.

A. Everyday relationships (5-17)

Live as if you are the child of the King that you are.

B. Family relationships (18-21)

The family is in Christ, and should reflect the love of God for His children.

C. Servant relationships (3:22-4:1)

Servants and masters are in Christ, and should reflect that relationship that the child of God has to the Lord as a bond-slave of his master.

D. Prayer relationships (2-4)

Paul puts the believer's prayer life, in part, on the plain of intercession for the lost. Paul desires open doors for the sharing of the Gospel. This is a worthy endeavor of any prayer meeting.

E. Witnessing relationships (5-6)

The purpose of all these relationships is that we might have a witnessing relationship with the lost around us. A clear statement that the individual Christian is to be a witnessing Christian. It is not the church's responsibility to win the lost, it is the individuals.

VII. Conclusion 4:7-18

Paul closes his epistle with personal greetings and encouragement. He further requests that they deliver the letter to be read to the Laodiceans, and that they should read his letter that he had sent to Laodicea.

Since he wanted both to read each others, it might be assumed that both contained information important to both. It is quite possible that the Gnostics were stirring in both assemblies and that he wanted to be sure to cover all bases with his comments.

Today we would just photocopy or email a copy, but back then it was quill and papyrus and very

slow going, not to mention hard work.

In light of the following list, I believe it is clear that Christ is the center of attention in this short book of Paul's.

CHRIST

- 1.1 He calls to ministry
- 1.2 He is the peace giver
- 1.3 He is the Son
- 1.4 He is the object of our faith
- 1.7 He is worthy of service
- 1.10 He is worthy of our good walk
- 1.13 He will be king
- 1.14 He is the provider of redemption
He is the forgiver of sin
- 1.15 He is the image of the living God
He is the first born of all creation
- 1.16 He is the creator
- 1.17 He was before creation
He is the sustainer of creation
- 1.18 He is head of the body
He is the beginning and first born of the dead
- 1.19 He is the fullness of God within
- 1.20 He is the reconciler of everything
He is provider of the price - His blood
- 1.21 He is the reconciler
- 1.22 He gave his flesh to provide
- 1.24 He was afflicted
- 1.27 He indwells
- 1.29 He will judge
- 2.3 He is wisdom and knowledge
- 2.6 He is Lord
- 2.8 He is truth
- 2.9 He is fullness of the Godhead is in Him
- 2.10 He completes believers
He is over all powers
- 2.11 He is the spiritual circumciser
- 2.13 He quickens the believer
- 2.14 He takes care of sin
- 2.15 He spoiled of principalities and powers
He is victor over all
- 3.1 He is risen

He is sitting beside God
3.3 He hides the believer
3.4 He is our life
He will appear
3.11 He is all in all
3.13 He is the forgiver
3.24 He is to be served
4.1 He is master

A study of Epaphrus: Col 1:3-8; 4:12,13; Philemon 23; Acts 20:28.

TITLE: Qualification may not mean quality - or - A lamb in lambs clothing is a lamb. A wolf in lambs clothing is a wolf. A shepherd in shepherds clothing is a shepherd, unless he's a fink.

Let's consider church leadership for a moment or two. This applies well to church leaders - pastors or missionaries that you are considering.

Please take a moment and read: I Pet. 5:1-5; Acts 20:28

Lets say that you want to buy a car. Let's say that you have enough money to buy any car that you want. Let's say that you are setting out to buy that car of your dreams. Let's say you are standing before the car salesman and you are about to tell him just what you want him to order. Let's do that for a moment and let ourselves be worldly for a moment.

Yes, I'm telling you to be worldly for a moment. ONLY A MOMENT!!!!

What kind of car is it? What color is it? The salesman has a list of all the possible options -- what are you going have him put on the car? What radio will you have? On one of the news magazines they showed cars with stereos in them that cost more than the car. What engine will you get? What color will you order?

Now that the dreaming is over let's think for a moment. If you had the money. If you had the desire. If you were committed to having this car would you accept delivery of a Maroon Chevette? NO! NO! NO!

If you were to set down a list of qualifications and desires for your church leadership would you settle for something less than you ordered?

You say no, but I believe that many churches today are accepting a standard that is much lower than they desire!! Or else their desires are far from Biblical.

The Word gives a great number of QUALIFICATIONS for church leadership and we all hear of these from time to time taught from Timothy and Titus, however the word also sets forth some

Godly men as examples of some of the QUALITIES that these men should have.

I would like to explore some of these QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP with you. I'd like to look for a few moments at EPAPHRUS. NO IT ISN'T A SKIN RASH!!!

Epaphrus was a man of God that the Holy Spirit moved Paul to include in the Biblical record only so very briefly. He is mentioned only three times - only five verses deal with Epaphrus yet we are able to see within these few verses a real man of God.

INDEED, WE WILL SEE A NUMBER OF LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Please turn to the book of Colossians.

This book was written by Paul during a stay in Rome under Roman guard.

It was written about the same time as Philemon, Eph., and Philippians.

Read Col 1:1-8.

QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

1. Soul winner: (vs. 5)

The indications are that he had given these people the Gospel. He may have started the Church. Some think that he may have heard Paul when Paul was at Ephesus in Acts 19:10.

This does not mean that he MUST be at every visitation get together, it does not mean that he is the sole soul winner in the church, it does not mean that he is to win souls from the pulpit. All of these are good things in and of themselves, but are not required.

I have known men that were excellent pastors and won souls only now and then, and I have known men that were excellent soul winners that would not have made good pastors. God fits the man for the job to which He calls him.

2. Teacher or discipler: (vs. 7)

Discipler: (vs. 5-7) (They knew Gospel, love, hope of heaven.)

We see here a pair of qualities which need to be used as a path to maturity for new believers.

Many of the evangelistic organizations today suffer in this area. They lead the person to Christ but never bother to teach them anything of the Christian life nor do they bother to lead or direct them to a sound church.

Recently a large campaign was held in Ireland. Instead of setting up a New Testament Church they turned the converts back to their Catholic or liberal denominational churches.

Indeed, in our churches today there is a real need in this area as well. I must wonder how differently my life might have been had I been disciplined in any manner. The man that led me to the Lord gave me absolutely no information for my new life in Christ. He did not prepare me for anything. I went into the Navy for four years of typical sailor living, because I had no idea what the Christian's life was to be like. I felt I should read the Bible, but started in the genealogies and that did not last long.

3. Faithful Minister: (vs. 7)

One who placed the body of believers as important - always there to help - to minister to needs - not far off or unapproachable. Servant: (Vs. 7)

4. Servant: (vs. 7) This man was a servant of Christ.

(From Exposition of Colossians and Philemon commentary by William Hendriksen; Grand Rapids; Baker Book House; 1964; p 191) "A servant of Jesus Christ is one who has been bought with a price and is therefore owned by his Master, on whom he is completely dependent, to whom he owes undivided allegiance and to whom he ministers with gladness of heart, in newness of spirit, and in the enjoyment of perfect freedom, receiving from him a glorious reward."

This man was a servant of Christ "ON OUR BEHALF"

Some translations read "your" but the concept is the same. He served Christ to THEIR benefit. He wasn't in it for what he could get or be.

We met a man in Oregon that was planting a church. He was making his living pumping gas. He worked at the gas station and worked with the church for eight years. The church was his life and all that he did was to further the church. He was in it so that he could benefit those he ministered to. In this case Epaphrus was ministering to Paul in prison so he was benefitting Paul.

We have four qualities so far.

You might ask, "what is the difference between qualifications and qualities?"

Qualifications = "The act of qualifying, or the state of being qualified." (Funk and Wagnells)

Quality = "that which makes something such as it is: a distinguishing element or characteristic." (Funk and Wagnells)

We had a maroon Chevette. It had the qualifications to be a car but its quality was questionable. It had four wheels, a motor, a body, seats etc. but the dealer had it more in the first 90 days than we did. There is, you see a difference.

Let me illustrate the distinction that I am making, in another way. While in the service I was the only experienced tech on the ship. Indeed the only tech. We received one day fourteen men just out of electronics school. Our ship was only allowed five or six men so I decided that I would have it made with this many men under me. Not so!! These men were qualified as techs -- they had passed all the tests at school indeed some of them were very high in their classes. However, the quality of workmanship was very poor --- in fact within a month the ship was a total mess electronically. We went into the yards for a few weeks and it took me every spare moment to get all of the problems cleared up. One fellow had spliced cables together for me but the unit did not work so I looked at it and found that he hadn't soldered the wires together.

QUALIFIED? YES - QUALITY? NO, NOT FOR MANY MONTHS!!!

5. Boastful of his church: (vs. 8 "also declared unto us your love in the Spirit")

He had been speaking to Paul of his church and its GOOD POINTS!

We were in a small church in Bend, OR a few years ago that we have spoken of to many of our friends. It was a church that had an over abundance of talented, excited, dedicated people. I could mention the fact that they met in an upstairs, that it was too small, or the fact that they didn't have a piano but I didn't. The positive was what was on Epaphrus mind. Indeed if you read the rest of the book you will find that the church had problems which Paul addressed. He was excited about his church. He was telling others of his church.

Our church people today need to get hold of that one!! Dwell on the positive. Do you tell others of your church? Are you making declarations about the great people here? Or do you dwell on the problems?

Let's turn now for a moment to Col. 4:12-13 - Read it.

6. Local boy: ("one of your number") Why haven't we taken this idea to heart in our churches today? When we need someone to work with the youth we so often look outside our own assembly. Our church in Lexington, Nebraska took one of their own on as their youth man. Why not? They are used to the pastor, they fit right into the fellowship, and the kids know them already. They are already accepted in the community. You know their life. Their doctrine - their faults!

The New Testament church operated for the most part on people from their own group. All church leaders came from within not from without.

Not only for youth workers but why not for pastors or elders as your church government dictates? Train the men of your church so that when the pastor moves on you have a homegrown replacement on line. Send him to college if you need to. (Some might argue that he might leave - so what, you've trained a man to serve God. Train another!)

You don't need to totally finance him but help as you can.

One church in Oregon that we've been to has laymen that are so trained by their pastor that they can, and do go out to fill the pulpit of churches without pastors. Their pastor is committed to training his people to do the work of the Lord as Eph 4 tells us to do!

7. Committed to Christ: (Bondslave - "servant of Christ" King James) He had placed himself at his Lords disposal for his Lords use.

Stephen in Acts 6:24 was a deacon. He soon was preaching and died at the hands of the Jews in chapter seven. He was sold out to serve Christ.

Paul seems quite impressed with this man.

Phil 23 "Epaphrus my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus"

Col 1:7 "minister of Christ"

"dear fellow servant"

Col 4:12 "Servant of Christ"

I fear that commitment is a passing thing in our society and in our churches.

I have in recent months heard of several men turning down churches because of financial deficiencies. Finances should be involved in deciding if God is calling you to a church but it should not be the deciding factor.

Someone in chapel where I taught mentioned a man that was leaving his church because he wasn't making enough. His salary was \$48,000 a year.

8. Thoughtful: He knew that Paul was writing to them so he ask him to greet them for him. This shows a certain amount of feeling toward the people. Epaphrus must have liked the people and felt that he wanted to greet them. God is interested in men that are interested in their people - TRULY INTERESTED!!

9. Prayerful: Paul didn't need to mention this in his letter but he was impressed enough with Epaphrus prayers to encourage the people on with the fact that someone was praying for them.

One of the encouragements we've had over the years is knowing that so many are praying for us!

We used to send out over 200 letters to enlist the prayers of the saints when we were missionaries - we needed it!

Paul, to the best of my knowledge mentions no one else as a prayer. He was impressed! By the way can you imagine going to prayer in a prayer meeting with this man and Paul present?

His prayer:

CONSISTENT: "always" - specific choice to do it on a regular basis. Luke 18:1 "Men ought always to pray and not to faint"!!

SPECIFIC: "for you" (from Bib Sac; p60; Jan-Mar 1979) I ran across something in a Theological Journal awhile back. "A story is told about an old pastor who every Saturday afternoon could be seen leaving his study and entering the church building by the back door, and about sundown he would be seen going home. Someone's curiosity was aroused enough to follow one day and watch through a window. It was in the days when the family pew was an institution of the church. The old pastor was seen to kneel at each pew and pray for every member of the family that was to occupy it on the Lord's day. WHAT A PRAYER LIST! He called each member by name as he poured out his heart to God for his flock. His was a ministry of power and his people reflected the grace of God on them. Blessed is that church which has such a praying Shepherd."

We need people committed to pray for the people that they minister to!

I ran across a quote from Charles Haddon Spurgeon that relates well at this point. "The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work must surely be a vain and conceited man. he acts as if he thought himself sufficient of himself and therefore need not appeal to God. Yet what a baseless pride to conceive that our preaching can ever be in itself so powerful that it can turn men from their sins and bring them to God without the working of the Holy Ghost."

I was at a church near Portland, OR years ago where the pastor was preaching on commitment and in his invitation he mentioned that he had prayed for each one in his congregation before the service. That is the type of men we need in our pulpits today!!

I had spoken in a small town church in Colorado and the pastor insisted on filling my gas tank. He filled the tank and we talked for awhile at the station. We said goodbye and he started walking toward his house. I told him I'd take him home. He said, "No, I'd rather walk." I insisted - he said, "No I'd rather walk - I know the people along the way home and I like to pray for them as I walk by their house. Some of them are lost and I want to pray for them."

SINCERE: "striving" This word comes from the athletic arena - used of the athletes intense effort in reaching for the prize. Verbal form of "agony" used of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane (Luke

22:44) just before his arrest.

I watched the iron man triathlon a few years ago and she showed a woman that was near the finish line. She couldn't control her legs and couldn't walk so she got down on her hands and knees and crawled across the finish line - that is agony!

Daniel 9 probably is a prayer which involved striving - read it some time.

This term strive is the term we gain our English word "agonize" from. It was more than just a five minute quiet time. He was agonizing over these people!

PURPOSEFUL: "that ye may stand" He was asking for God's help in this for them.

It has been said, that if the church is ever going to be victorious it will have to learn to advance on its knees. REPEAT PRAYER IS NEEDED TODAY TO SAY THE LEAST!

10. Concern: Note should be taken of Epaphrus great concern for his people. He was very concerned with their need of maturing.

11. Sincere: Paul knew that this man was on the level -- he wasn't just putting on a front to impress the folks.

Some Christians I meet today - church leaders - are so caught up in their airs that they don't listen to the answers you give them to their questions. This is quite evident when you answer the same questions twice in your first conversation.

I recently overheard a conversation between a leader and a not so regular attendee. The leader would ask a question and in the middle of the answer the leader would be interrupted and then when he returned to listening to the man he would ask another question. The man had not finished his first answer. This went on for about four cycles and finally the man walked away. The leader was not at all interested in the man - only in pretending to be interested.

We had a missionary over for dinner. He would ask a question and as you paused between sentences of your answer he would ask another question on another topic. A couple of times I went back and finished an answer then answered the next question in the hope of his picking up on what he was doing. He didn't.

Some today feel a lull in the conversation is a mortal sin. Personally quiet is not all that bad at times indeed sometimes it is appropriate.

I recently heard of "Leather Man" in the eastern part of our country (Pennsylvania.) in the past. He was a man that never talked to anyone. He wore a heavy leather outfit and would not take help from anyone. He would eat from time to time when people offered. He had no known past

and lived in caves in the wilderness. He never was known to speak yet people both children and adults would walk out to his camp and just sit with him by the hour. SILENCE IS GOLDEN AT TIMES!

In Alaska the one of the Indian tribes enjoys just sitting around in a circle in silence. They enjoy one another without talking.

12. I sense also that there is one more quality in this man. He was missions minded. He was on the forefront of missions. He was working with Paul and seemingly involved in church planting.

I fear many today fail to see past the ends of their own lives when they look at the harvest fields.

Few today are directing and leading their churches toward missions. Many are stunting their church's growth and prosperity by stunting missions.

Missions is to be a vital part of all our lives. If you aren't praying for and supporting missions then you aren't in the mainstream of God's program - you are on the outskirts and many churches there are on the outskirts!

Epaphrus was a man of many qualities!

The book of Philemon (vs. 23) tells us that he was a prisoner with Paul in Rome so we can see that he was committed to his Lord all the way.

As I review his qualities the two that stand out most are the qualities of prayer and concern for his people.

He was concerned about the people in his church as well as the people in nearby churches. The other churches mentioned are Laodicia and Hieropolis. These two cities and Colosse formed a triangle. They were only a few miles apart. (about 12) He had probably met these people - maybe had taught them indeed man have started the churches.

In Col 1:7 the term for deacon (minister) is use of Epaphrus. He evidently was a deacon at his church. History and tradition indicates that he went on to become an elder there at Colosse and later was martyred there.

I'm told that his name means "lovely" (from the Open Bible) A shortened form of Epaphroditus meaning "handsome or charming." A fitting name for such a man of God.

SOUNDS LIKE THE KIND OF GUY THAT YOU'D LIKE TO HAVE AROUND YOUR CHURCH! RIGHT?

So many church leaders today are qualified yet I wonder how many of them are of this quality. This was a layman and he had these qualities!!

One of the first elder qualifications is "if a man desire the office." Many church leaders are not there because they DESIRE the office.

We do not have prayer warriors in many of our pulpits today.

We do not have concerned men in many of our pastorates today.

When I told my father that I was going to become a minister he said, "Well I guess there's good money in that." At the time I thought yes, in the liberal denominations but not in the fundamental circles.

Today I feel that it is coming into fundamental circles.

I fear that the ministry is becoming an occupation to many young men. Not a bondslaves life of service for his Lord with his Lord's people but a job and career.

Peter gives a proper picture of an elder in I Pet. 5:1-4. Read it sometime.

Epaphrus had many qualities. Indeed these qualities should be aspired to by all believers, but they ought to be resident in all of our church leadership!

In the years to come I trust that you will look for

men of prayer

men of concern

men of service

men of Christ

men that are desirous of being a shepherd.

Recently I saw an interview of a shepherd here in the western U.S. They ask him of his life and he described the small wagon that he lived in month after month and the danger that he faced to protect the sheep. He spoke of the long months of crying over the loneliness before he finally got used to it. They ask him why he was a shepherd. His reply was this, "The sheep needed to be cared for and I chose to be a shepherd."

We need men in our pulpits and our board rooms that have chosen to be shepherds -- men that

desire to care for the sheep.

May your future shepherds be so dedicated. May your future shepherds be so concerned.

Christ is pictured as a shepherd in the New Testament. May our shepherds be like our heavenly shepherd!

We must take our application one step further before we close.

If you were to compare YOUR life to that of Epaphras how would YOU compare?

Paul chose the term "SERVANT" for Epaphras:

(From Bib Sac; Jan-Mar 1979; p. 57) "The term proclaims the servant's unconditional surrender of himself to do his Lord's bidding. Such a one has learned to say,

"Oh, teach my will, my selfish will, To be completely thine.

"Oh, may I yield my all to thee; It is no longer mine.

"Oh, may my will, my stubborn will, Submissive be to Thine;

"The inward man obey with joy The law of love divine.

"No one who has not yet come to the place of full yieldedness of himself to his Lord will ever know the joy of fruitful service and effective intercession such as Epaphras knew. The yielded will lies at the basis of the God-used life."

If Paul were writing about you today could he use the term "servant" of you?

Can you in your own mind say, "My life is a God-used life."? If you can't say "Yes" then you need to spend time getting to know your Master and seeing what He wants you to do.

Some brief notes on Col 1.4.

The term translated faith is the normal term for faith used in the New Testament. Thayer mentions of faith, "conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the New Testament of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it" (Thayer)

1.6 fruit is "karpophoreo" meaning bear or bring forth fruit. This is not soul winning, though soul winning is a part of it. Fruit in the New Testament would probably have the thought of anything that a believer does that is beneficial to his Lord and God, be it soul winning, be it teaching, be it

pastoring, be it counseling, be it helping someone out, be it janitoring at the church, be it going to work every day with the thought of serving God in whatever manner possible.

1.7 minister is the term "diakonos" which relates to the church office of deacon. The Lord set up a system of church government via the New Testament which ought to be followed.

Church government is in place for a number of reasons:

- (1) to oversee the church business
- (2) to oversee the flock of God
- (3) to assist in protection of the flock
- (4) to assist in the discipline of the flock
- (5) to see to it that God's business is done in a Godly manner in His Church

4.12 servant is the term "doulos" which normally is translated servant. This is not "wife you serve me" servant hood, it is bought and sold servant hood. It is Christ bought, and your normal and reasonable service is to serve Him.

Laboring fervently is "agonizomai" which comes from the term we gain our term agonize from. Epaphras was not just working, he was agonizing for the people in prayer.

