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“Lessons from the Epistle to the Colossians”

by
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About the Author



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INTRODUCTION (1)

The writer of the epistle to the Colossians claims explicitly to be the Apostle Paul. In Colossians 1:1, he writes, “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...*” He refers to himself again as Paul in Colossians 1:23, “...*whereof I Paul am made a minister.*” And at the closing verse (Col 4:18), he once again identifies himself as Paul, “*The salutation by the hand of me Paul.*”

There are obvious connections between the epistles of Colossians and Philemon, and most agree that they are both Pauline epistles.

- a. The writer mentioned Timothy in the opening of both epistles (Col 1:1; Philem 1).
- b. Onesimus and Archippus were mentioned by the writer in both letters (Col 4:9; Philem 10; Col 4:17; Philem 2).
- c. The writer also named five persons as his companions towards the end of both letters: Aristarchus, Marcus, Epaphras, Lucas and Demas (Col 4:10-14; Philem 23-24).

In addition, there are also external evidences that Paul is the writer.

- a. Irenaeus (AD 140-203) regarded Paul as the author of Colossians. He wrote (as he compared 2 Timothy 4:11 with Colossians 4:14): “Paul has himself declared... ‘*Only Luke is with me*’ (2 Tim 4:11)... And again he (Paul) says in the Epistle to the Colossians, ‘*Luke, the beloved physician... greet(s) you*’ (Col 4:14).”
- b. Many other early writers like Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius also referred to or quoted from Colossians in their writings and accepted the Apostle Paul as the author.

THOUGHT: God chose Paul to bear His Name before the Gentiles.

PRAYER: O Lord, I thank Thee for I have the gospel through Paul.

INTRODUCTION (2)

Colossians is one of the four prison epistles written by the Apostle Paul (the other three are Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon). It was written to the church at Colosse (Col 1:2), probably between AD 60 and 63.

It was written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:17-31; Col 4:10, 18).

What was the occasion of the writing of this epistle?

Epaphras visited Paul in his first Roman imprisonment (Col 1:7-8). He brought some good news concerning the Colossian church (Col 1:4-6, 8; 2:5). But his primary purpose for visiting Paul was that he needed help from Paul to deal with certain false teachings that were being taught in the Colossian church and that were threatening to invade the church.

Paul was therefore prompted to write this epistle to the Colossians to refute these heretical teachings (termed “Colossian heresy”) so that the Colossian believers might not depart from the correct teaching of their faithful pastor, Epaphras (Col 1:5-7; 4:12-13).

THOUGHT: Mark those who cause divisions and are stumbling blocks.
PRAYER: O Lord, may Thou remove such evil people from my church.

INTRODUCTION (3)

There is no formal statement from Paul regarding the exact nature of the “Colossian heresy” he was opposing. But Paul responded to it in Colossians chapters 1 and 2. Based on his response in these two chapters, the heresy may be characterised by the following errors:

1. Defective Christology (1:14-20; 2:9).
 - a. Undermining the full deity of Christ (1:14-20).
 - b. Undermining the humanity of Christ (2:9).

2. False man-made philosophy (1:18-19; 2:3, 8, 18).
 - a. Denying the all-sufficiency and preeminence of Christ (1:18-19).
 - b. Claiming to have superior knowledge (2:18).

3. Jewish legalism (2:8, 11, 14, 16, 17, 21).
 - a. Traditions of men (2:8).
 - b. Ritual circumcision (2:11).
 - c. Dietary laws (2:14, 16, 17, 21).
 - d. Observance of holy days (2:16, 17).

4. Mysticism – worshipping of angels (1:16; 2:10, 15, 18, 19).

5. Asceticism – going beyond the Mosaic Law (2:21-23).

The heresy was a syncretism which combined Jewish and pagan elements with the Christian gospel.

THOUGHT: “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God...*” (2 Tim 2:15)

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to rightly divide the Word of truth.

INTRODUCTION (4)

Paul’s approach in dealing with the heresy was firstly to exalt Christ in His person and work (Col 1), and secondly to warn and correct (Col 2). Then in Colossians 3 and 4, Paul instructed the Colossian Christians to live their Christian lives in the light of Christ’s sufficiency.

Paul’s message for the Colossians and for us today is that we are complete in Christ. He is our all-supreme and all-sufficient Lord and Saviour.

There is no need for us to have or to add anything else for our salvation and sanctification – no need for man-made philosophies, Jewish legalism, mysticism, asceticism, etc.

The fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the 100% God-Man Saviour, the Creator, and the Sustainer of all His creation is all that we need now and ever.

If the one and only Christ is in us, we have the hope of glory. Let us preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

THOUGHT: *“...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”*
(Col 1:28).

PRAYER: O Lord, make me and help me to be perfect in Thee.

THE AUTHOR AND HIS AUTHORITY

Paul, the author of Colossians, introduces himself as “*an apostle*” (Col 1:1). The term “*apostle*” refers to one who is sent under authority as a commissioned delegate, messenger or ambassador. He is authorised by another as his representative and has the responsibility to carry out the orders of the one who sent him. Thus, Paul’s authority is clearly stated at the beginning of his epistle.

Paul is not an ordinary apostle. He is “*an apostle of Jesus Christ.*” With this title, Paul is specially known together with the Twelve. It means that Paul is writing in his official capacity as a commissioned ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Whatever he has to say is therefore with authority from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why must Paul affirm his authority in Jesus Christ?

- a. The reason is that he is writing to the church in Colosse to deal with the “Colossian heresy.” The church was exposed to issues of humanism, legalism, mysticism and asceticism. And the people were so engrossed with all these problems that the glory of Christ and His self-sufficiency were ignored.
- b. Paul was informed about the problems in the church through the visit of Epaphras who shared the burdens of the church with him in Rome.
- c. Being a good pastor and teacher, Paul responded by writing the epistle to remind the people concerning the preeminence and all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d. Also, since Paul did not personally found the church, it was appropriate that he states his authority as a specially chosen messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that he may instruct the Colossians.

THOUGHT: God is able to make me always sufficient in all things.

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be mindful of Thy all-sufficiency in everything that I do.

BY THE WILL OF GOD

Besides identifying himself as "*an apostle of Jesus Christ,*" Paul further qualifies that he is "*an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*" (Col 1:1). This added qualification shows that Paul's apostleship is not by his own choice or by men's persuasion but by divine appointment (Gal 1:1, 15). He is indeed specially set apart for this leadership by God's will (Acts 9:6, 15-16). It is not by his own self-will nor by the will of man that he is writing to exhort and to admonish the church in Colosse, but it is solely by the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, the preeminent and all-sufficient Son of God.

It is important that every one of us who is saved becomes a servant of the Lord by God's will, not by our own will. Being appointed by God's will to be Christ's official representative, Paul is therefore fully qualified to deal with the matters discussed in the letter. It is as if the Son of God was sent there personally to deal with the problems in the church in Colosse as He addressed the church through Paul's holy writing that is inspired, inerrant and infallible.

His writing is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is therefore the infallible and inerrant Word of God. When the epistle is read to the people in the church, they would be given the message from the Lord Himself. The writing is therefore "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Paul also mentions Timothy, his "*own son in the faith*" (1 Tim 1:2), and a trusted helper and "*minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ,*" (1 Thess 3:2). Timothy is also referred to as "*our brother,*" an honourable title which acknowledges Timothy as a true Christian brother, a sharer along with Paul of new life from their heavenly Father.

THOUGHT: Am I serving God by my strength, wisdom and will?

PRAYER: O Lord, humble me before Thee and let Thy will be done.

SAINTHOOD

Paul addresses his epistle to “*the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse*” (Col 1:2). He recognises the spiritual position of the recipients as believers who are set apart from the world by the Lord to live holy lives to serve and to glorify God.

While calling the faithful believers in Colosse “*saints*,” Paul is not referring to a certain elite class of believers who have achieved a high standard of holiness. Every believer is called a saint or a holy one (1 Cor 1:2; Eph 2:19; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2, 12; 1 Thess 3:13).

Sainthood is not conferred only on some extra holy Christians. A Christian does not become a saint as a result of his excellent character in his spiritual life.

The word is always used in the plural in the New Testament, except in Philippians 4:21 when it is used in the singular. There it is used to refer to every believer in Christ Jesus. One will not find the word used as a title for any believer, e.g. Saint Paul or Saint Peter.

Sainthood speaks of a believer’s spiritual position in being set apart for God through the work of the Holy Spirit and by the redemptive work of Christ. A Christian is a saint not because of his spiritual conduct, but because he has been sanctified and separated from the world unto God and by God. He is able to live as a saint, that is, a life that is consecrated, separate and set apart unto God because of the work of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his redeemed soul.

THOUGHT: “...*Be ye holy; for I am holy.*” (1 Pet 1:16)

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be holy in all manner of conversation.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

COLOSSIANS 1:2

COLOSSIANS 1:16

*“...all things were created
by him, and for him.”*

A SAINT TOWARDS GOD

Every Christian should humbly and gladly accept that he is a saint in Christ Jesus. Having had his sins forgiven, the Christian is set apart from the world. He has a new life and as he lives his new life daily, he is drawn further and further from the world and made more and more holy unto the thrice holy God. He must be a saint towards God.

Every believer must realise that God has chosen him to be a saint to show forth the praises of Him as the Apostle Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 2:9-10, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”*

As saints in Christ Jesus, we are to live holy and set-apart lives. The Apostle Peter’s exhortation in 1 Peter 1:14-16 says, *“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*

We who are saints must therefore be followers of God, *“and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks”* (Eph 5:2-4).

THOUGHT: All truly born-again Christians are saints.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live a holy life to serve and glorify Thee.

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

Paul also refers to his readers as “*faithful brethren in Christ.*” Believers are separated from the world by having faith in Jesus. Having been set apart, they are to demonstrate steadfastness in faith in their new life in Christ. By calling them “*faithful brethren in Christ,*” Paul is in a way encouraging the brethren to remain faithful to their high calling in Christ Jesus.

Read the account in Luke 19:12-26: “*He (Jesus) said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, *Be thou also over five cities.* And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.*”*

THOUGHT: “... Well done, thou good and faithful servant...” (Matt 25:21)

PRAYER: Lord, give me grace to serve Thee as Thy faithful servant.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

COLOSSIANS 1:2

COLOSSIANS 1:18

“...in all things he might
have the preeminence.”

GRACE AND PEACE (1)

Paul greets his readers with a double blessing: “*grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Col 1:2).

“*Grace*” is from the Greek word “*charis*.” A form of this word is still used in the modern Greek language as a greeting. It means both “hello” as well as “thank you.”

Grace is God’s unmerited favour bestowed upon men. And it is by the gracious love of God the Father that we are saved through faith in the redemptive work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is that grace in Ephesians 2:8, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith.*”

“*Peace*” (“*shalom*”) is the Jewish greeting.

One aspect of peace is that peace is the result of God’s grace in reconciling us with the Father through the blood of the Son. Colossians 1:19-20, “*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...*” Another aspect of peace is that it is that which the Lord Jesus graciously leaves with us that we might not be troubled or be afraid. John 14:27, “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*”

Note the order of this wonderful couplet of divine blessing. Biblically, peace follows after grace. The order is fixed according to Scripture (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philem 3; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; 2 John 1:3; Rev 1:4). Peace comes from growing in the grace and knowledge of God in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:2). And grace must abound with knowledge (2 Cor 8:7; 2 Pet 3:18).

THOUGHT: By the grace of God, I am what I am.

PRAYER: Lord, give me grace to be gracious towards others.

SATURDAY, JULY 11

COLOSSIANS 1:2

COLOSSIANS 1:20

“...having made peace through
the blood of his cross...”

GRACE AND PEACE (2)

When we receive the grace of God the Father, we will also experience peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. When we respond to the grace of God through faith, we will receive the “*peace of God, which passeth all understanding*” (Phil 4:7), which only God can give through Christ, who Himself is the manifestation of God’s grace as our Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6).

This twin benefit of grace and peace are absolutely needed in our lives and ministries. Grace and peace are what we need for strength and encouragement (Ps 29:11; Dan 10:19; 2 Cor 12:9; 1 Pet 5:10). This is the Christian greeting that we should greet each other with: “grace and peace be unto you,” rather than to wish for ourselves and our friends health, riches and honours. It is consistent with our Lord’s command in Matthew 6:33, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*”

There is a “*peace with God*” that people can have. Romans 5:1, “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

There is also the “*peace of God*” which is possible to have for those who first have received “*peace with God.*” Philippians 4:6-7, “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”

If you are a Christian, “*peace*” must be defined as “the tranquil state of the soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God, is content with its earthly lot of whatsoever state that is” (Waite).

THOUGHT: The peace of God passeth all understanding.

PRAYER: Lord, please keep my heart and mind by Thy peace.

THANKSGIVING (1)

“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Col 1:3). In nearly every epistle of the Apostle Paul, his first words are those of thanksgiving to God.

This is Paul’s obedience to the command in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*”

The phrase “*give thanks*” in the verse in Thessalonians is in the imperative, which makes it a command to be obeyed. So if you want to know what God’s will for you is, it is to give thanks in every thing.

Paul is exemplary in his obedience to the exhortation to give thanks in all things. He clearly gives us an example of a thankful attitude. He writes in Ephesians 5:20, “*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” not only for others but also for himself. And so in writing to the Colossians, the apostle remembers to express his gratitude to God for what the Son of God has done in the lives of the brethren in Colosse.

Remember that the epistle to the Colossians was written by Paul while he was in prison. Paul’s thanksgiving was not dependent on his personal circumstances. Despite many hardships in his life and ministry (2 Cor 11:23-28), he continued to give thanks unto God.

Will you still give thanks to God, and in all things, during difficult times? Will you still encourage others in their troubles when you are facing the same troubles?

THOUGHT: Count my blessings, name them one by one.

PRAYER: O Lord, forgive me when I forget to give thanks.

MONDAY, JULY 13

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

"In every thing give thanks..."

THANKSGIVING (2)

In the New Testament, the word *"thanksgiving"* occurs mostly in the epistles of Paul. Paul does not simply give thanks. Giving thanks, to Paul, is a duty.

He writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, *"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet."* It means that "it is our duty to thank God always for you" or "we ought to keep on giving thanks unto God for you." Giving thanks unto God for His saints is therefore not optional but mandatory, not a choice but compulsory.

Having shown the good example of giving thanks to God, Paul exhorts his readers in Colosse to have the same response (Col 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2).

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:12)

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Col 2:7)

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col 3:15)

"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." (Col 3:17)

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." (Col 4:2)

THOUGHT: What can I thank God for today?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, O Lord, for saving my soul.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

“Pray without ceasing.”

PRAYING ALWAYS

“We give thanks... praying always” (Col 1:3). Paul always connects thanksgiving with prayer. He is always very spontaneous in giving thanks unto God in his prayers for the saints of God.

Paul begins his prayer by giving thanks. He then presents his petitions, and concludes with thanksgiving again (Col 1:12). Is he following the pattern set by our Lord when He taught His disciples how to pray? Yes, for the Lord teaches the disciples to begin and end their prayers with praise.

When we come to God in prayer, we should always count our blessings before the Lord, and praise Him for His goodness, grace and mercy, before we submit to Him our petitions and supplications. A guide to this pattern of prayer is seen in the acronym, A.C.T.S. “A” is for adoration, “C” is for confession, “T” is for thanksgiving, and “S” is for supplication.

Paul encourages the brethren that he is praying always for them. The extent of our thanksgiving and prayer should be *“always.”* Thanksgiving and prayer must be our constant attitude all day long, seven days a week, lest we become weak and fall into temptation (Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38). Note how many times this is emphasized in Paul’s epistles (Rom 1:9; 1 Cor 1:4; Eph 1:16; 5:20; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3; 4:12; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3, 11; 2:13; Philem 4).

Having set the good example to continually pray for them, Paul exhorts the Colossians to *“continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* (Col 4:2). He also desires their prayers for him as he ministers the Word of God (Col 4:3, *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ...”*).

THOUGHT: Did I think to pray?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to pray without ceasing.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

1 JOHN 4:7

“...every one that loveth
is born of God...”

FAITH AND LOVE

“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints” (Col 1:4).

The reason Paul is praying with gratitude unto the Lord for the Colossians is because of their faith in Christ Jesus and their love one for another.

Faith belongs to every believer who has put his trust for eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8, *“for by grace are ye saved through faith.”* We are *“justified by faith”* (Rom 5:1), and *“without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb 11:6).

Paul is assured that the Colossians have this faith in Christ Jesus and hence he is glad that they have received the gift of eternal life (1 Tim 6:12).

The faith they have in Christ Jesus not only blesses them with an eternal relationship with the Lord, but it also brings them together as faithful brethren, loving one another.

Look at how Paul connects faith and love in several of his writings (Gal 5:6, 22; Eph 1:15; 3:17, 6:23; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8; 1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 1:13; Titus 3:15; Philem 5).

How can a church exist without love one for another? There are churches which have believers actively serving the Lord, giving big offerings, busily participating in many activities, but some of the saints do not talk to each other. Is there a brother or sister you cannot look in the eye? Do you have a forgiving spirit? Or do you have a wrong attitude towards anyone? Then go to that person or write a letter, and see that the matter is made right with that person, as well as with God (see Matt 5:21-24).

THOUGHT: Jesus said, *“...love one another; as I have loved you...”* (John 13:34)

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to obey Thy commandment to love.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

COLOSSIANS 1:23

“...be not moved away
from the hope of the gospel...”

HEAVENLY HOPE

Another reason which calls for thanksgiving is the heavenly hope which the Colossian believers possessed. *“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven”* (Col 1:5a).

Believers are blessed with these three primary virtues: faith in Christ Jesus, love for all the saints, and hope for eternal life. And all these three are linked and they affect one another (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8).

The faith of the Colossians was dependent on the hope they had in the Lord. By faith they had hope in something wonderful laid up for them in heaven which they had not seen. *“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* (Rom 8:24). *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Heb 11:1).

As the Colossians longed for the blessings of their eternal hope, their faith in Him increased, and this in turn caused them to grow more in their love for their fellow brethren who were partakers of the same hope.

So Paul was not only thanking God and praying for the saints. He was also thanking God for the hope which is laid up in heaven for the saints. Truly, there is hope beyond the grave for those who are saved.

When born-again Christians die, they go to heaven. That is what Paul is talking about. That laid-up hope is set aside, reserved, in heaven.

Peter also wrote about this inheritance in heaven in 1 Peter 1:4, *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”*

THOUGHT: O, the blessed hope of the glorious return of Christ!

PRAYER: O Lord, lift me up to look ahead to that blessed hope.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

What is the Christian hope? The Christian hope is not the kind of hope that the world has. It is not some human-generated emotions. It is not a temporal or earthly wish.

The Christian hope comprises of a future resurrection and glorification, sinless perfection, freedom from suffering, eternal happiness in heaven, and the complete redemption of our salvation. This is made possible because of the work of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He has completed His saving work of salvation on the cross for us, bodily resurrected from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Almighty, interceding for the children of God as they make their pilgrimages through this sin-filled world heading towards heaven.

The Christian hope is “*laid up*” (or reserved) for them in heaven as they put their trust in the saving work of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our hope is laid up in heaven. It is not kept on earth, for it is not an earthly treasure. The earth is perishing everyday, what hope is there in the earth? It will be burnt up in the last days. Our hope is not stored in this earth. Our hope is stored in the heavens. Our hope is a heavenly treasure. It does not rely on some world system, any man of the world, or in the power of the world. Our hope is fully dependent upon God and His works.

The term “*laid up*” means “stored away.” This is the same phrase used by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:8 where he says, “*Henceforth (in the future) there is laid up (stored away) for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*”

THOUGHT: “...*why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God...*” (Ps 42:11)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to remember the hope I have in Thee.

THE BLESSED HOPE

Our hope is in the future: Christ’s glorious return or when we see Him face to face in glory. And so Titus 2:13 tells us, “*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

Our hope is laid up, stored away, reserved, awaiting us in heaven. What did the Lord advise in Matthew 6:19-20 concerning laying up treasures? He says, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*” Heaven, not earth, is the best place to lay up our treasure. And that is where we are to store away our hope. There, it is in a safe place. No moth or rust will corrupt it. Every Christian has a future hope, a heavenly treasure, laid up in heaven for him. Do you have this hope?

Let us lay hold on the hope set before us. Hebrews 6:19-20, “*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*”

The doctrine of the Lord’s return is precious to believers who are not dwellers of this earth but are only sojourners in this world. Is this world your home? Do you look forward to the return, at any moment, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? If you do not, may you be reminded always of the blessed hope of the Lord’s return. Let us be eagerly anticipating and looking for the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be ready for the Lord’s return (see 1 John 2:28; 3:2).

THOUGHT: Will I be found so doing and be blessed at Christ’s return?

PRAYER: O Lord, give me grace to occupy till Thou come.

TRUE GOSPEL, TRUE HOPE

Paul goes on to note that the Christian hope possessed by the Colossian believers is based on the true gospel which they have heard. Colossians 1:5b, “*whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.*”

Paul tells the Christians in Colosse that their hope is what they have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Our hope is a true hope because it is based on the true gospel. It is not a mere wish, desire or dream. It is not tentative. But it is true as the Word is truth (John 17:17), and as the gospel is truth (Gal 2:5, 14).

The Christian hope is a true hope of salvation. It is hope in Christ, and it is our only hope. It is a future hope of glory, but not only in the future. It is also a living hope which causes us now to live out a life of faith in Christ and love one for another.

It is a hope of the resurrection of the dead. And this hope is true. If it is not, and our only hope is in Christ alone, then we are of all men most miserable. But this is not so, because according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “*Christ (is) risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*” Therefore our hope is true.

It is a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet 1:3). And this hope means that we have “*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*” (1 Pet 1:4).

It is a hope of righteousness, and by faith we wait, and the time will come when the crown of righteousness which is kept for us in heaven will be given.

THOUGHT: There is a true gospel. And there are also false gospels.

PRAYER: O Lord, help us to guard against any false gospel.

MONDAY, JULY 20

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

1 TIMOTHY 1:15

“...Christ Jesus came into
the world to save sinners...”

A GUARANTEED HOPE

As children of God, we have a guaranteed hope. Because of the truth of the gospel, we are guaranteed a place in heaven. We can keep on hoping and the day will come when our hope will materialise. If our hope is based on this world and not based on truth, and our hope is not a heavenly treasure, we have no hope really, as it will be false and perishable. We can have a confident expectation in our Christian hope, but not so if our hope is like that of the people of the world who are without Christ.

Since the gospel has to be true, why must Paul emphasize “*the word of the truth of the gospel*”?

The apostle is contrasting the true gospel with the false teachings of Jewish rituals, angel worship and asceticism. These heretical teachings have infiltrated the church at Colosse, and Paul is preparing to deal with them in his epistle. This is Paul’s way of dealing with error: to counter it with the true teaching of the Word of God.

Paul is driving across the point that only the true gospel of salvation in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gives true eternal hope. Many religions and religious leaders of the world offer their devotees false hope that they are on a hopeful way to heaven. No, our hope for a place in heaven is in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, in His atoning work and in His resurrection power.

The Solid Rock

(Words: Edward Mote)

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.*

THOUGHT: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

PRAYER: O Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner. Save me.

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL THE WORLD

In verse 6, Paul reminds the Colossians believers that the true gospel “*is come unto you, as it is in all the world.*”

The phrase “*is come*” means that it is in existence. Romans 10:18 tells us: “*Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*” So the hope of the Christian has been given to the world through the gospel.

Today, we do witness that the gospel has wonderfully come into all the world—by missionaries, publications, radio, television, the Internet and satellite. The gospel is being preached all over the world. It is truly amazing, especially with the Internet, that the gospel can get to all parts of the world, as almost every country of the world, if not all, has access to the Internet.

Praise God! The gospel has come and it bears “*fruit.*” The “*fruit*” may be manifested in the salvation of those who were once lost and now have been delivered from sin as they hear the gospel and believe. The “*fruit*” may be seen in believers growing and strengthening their faith in Christ as they read, study and/or hear the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

But the gospel makes some people angry when it is preached, as light is shed on the darkness of this world and it exposes the wickedness of the world. The world largely still rejects this only hope of the gospel of truth. This hope is preached to every creature under heaven. But it is not well received by many. As long as the gospel of truth (the only hope of deliverance) is not received, there is still no hope. God has in time past already offered the gospel of truth. The world, no matter how hard it tries, has no hope until and unless it accepts the gospel of truth.

THOUGHT: “...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel...”
(Mark 16:15)

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be always ready to share the gospel.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

MARK 16:15

“...preach the gospel
to every creature.”

BE WITNESS FOR CHRIST

Paul adds that the true gospel “*bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*”

The gospel has been bearing fruits. It has been constantly bearing fruit and increasing among believers who have heard the gospel, have received the knowledge of the Saviour, have learned of salvation in Jesus Christ, and have believed. These are those who have real hope because their hope is founded on the true gospel which they embrace.

True hope is found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only this can bring deliverance to a world lost in sin. Do you have this hope already? Has the gospel borne fruit in you? Have you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Do you acknowledge that you are a sinner, that you need to be saved, and that only the Lord Jesus Himself can save you? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

For those who have the eternal hope, do not keep quiet. Trust in the power of the gospel to bear fruits of salvation. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those who would hear and believe. We who have at one time heard and now know this hope and grace of God, let us share it with our friends and loved ones who have yet to hear and know the grace of God.

Our hope is indeed truly hopeful because it is a heavenly treasure and is a gospel truth. And we can therefore have the confidence to share our hope. The Apostle Peter exhorts us to “*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet 3:5). Do we not have a hope to share with every man?

Let us be prepared and be ready always to share the hope that we the children of God have in Christ Jesus. There are many who are still lost and searching for hope in this world, where there is no real hope.

THOUGHT: How active am I in sharing the gospel of truth?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the courage to be a witness for Thee.

A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST

From whom did the Colossian believers hear and receive the glorious and true gospel of Jesus Christ? It was from Epaphras, for Paul wrote about him in Colossians 1:7-8, “*As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*”

Epaphras visited Paul and sought help from him to deal with the problem of false teachings invading the church in Colosse.

Paul called Epaphras “*our dear fellowservant*” and “*a faithful minister of Christ.*” By doing so, Paul was commending and approving the ministry of Epaphras for having faithfully given the glorious gospel to the Colossian church. Paul was very glad that Epaphras had taught the Colossian believers the one and only true gospel of Jesus Christ in contrast to the many false teachings that were confronting the church.

Epaphras was a servant (*doulos*), i.e. a slave belonging to Christ, having been redeemed by His precious blood. And so he was a minister (*diakonos*) who voluntarily and faithfully served the Lord and His people. Are we servants of the Lord and faithfully performing and fulfilling the ministry which the Lord has given to us (Col 4:17)?

The word “*learn*” is the root of the Greek noun “*disciple.*” Epaphras was a faithful pastor and teacher who made sure the Colossian believers learned the true message of God’s grace.

Paul was also full of gratitude when he heard of the presence of the “*love in the Spirit*” among the believers. This was an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (Gal 5:22; Rom 5:5).

THOUGHT: Am I a good and faithful servant of my Lord Jesus?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be Thy faithful servant.

FRIDAY, JULY 24

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

COLOSSIANS 1:9

“...do not cease
to pray for you...”

PRAYING FOR ALL

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you” (Col 1:9a).

The Apostle Paul counted it a good cause to pray without ceasing for the Colossian brethren from the day he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, their love for the saints, and their heavenly hope.

And on behalf of the brethren, Paul’s prayer request was for the Colossian Christians to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will. And the purpose for them to know God’s will is that the brethren might *“walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10).*

Is the purpose of your life to please God? Then pray always with a desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will so that you may live your life in obedience to God and be all pleasing to Him.

We need to be praying always and to keep on praying until the Lord comes again. Do you pray for someone who is in need of a job or one who has lost a job? For someone who has special needs in the family? For a home with tensions between husband and wife and between parents and children? For someone who is addicted to drugs or computer games? Remember these people and pray without ceasing for their particular needs until they see the deliverance from the Lord and experience God’s peace.

Here Paul is praying for believers who are well spiritually and walking with God. He is not praying for people facing problems. The point is that we also need to remember to pray for people who are walking well with God and are in fellowship with Him, and not just for those with special needs or those who are hurting. We need to pray always so that the spiritually healthy believers may continue to grow and be strong in the Lord.

THOUGHT: Keep on praying for the sick and those with difficulties.

PRAYER: Lord, I commit to Thee also those who faithfully walk with Thee.

FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD’S WILL

“...and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9b).

Paul the Apostle desires that the Colossians should be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.

The term “*be filled*” has the meaning of to make full, to fill up, that is, to fill to the full. It means that we are to be so full of God’s will in our mind and in our heart that our way of living, decision-making, way of thinking, are all guided and influenced by God’s will.

God’s will involves God’s direction, design, purpose, plan, intention and instruction for us. When we are filled to the full with the knowledge of God’s will, we will inevitably experience what God wants for us to experience — living our lives under the complete guidance of God.

This means that in all things that you do – business transactions, making choices like your studies, career, friends, marriage partner – all these will be under the direction of God. You will not go ahead to do anything without first seeking God for His leading. And this is because you want to live right for God.

Paul also prayed to the Lord that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will “*in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*” We must receive the Word of God (which is where the will of God is found) in wisdom. It is not enough to have head knowledge of God’s Word. There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is information. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. As we study God’s Word, there must be the application of the truth in our lives that we may be truly wise in all things. The knowledge of the Word of God must be with spiritual understanding, that is, we must be taught by the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scripture.

THOUGHT: Knowing and doing are two separate things.

PRAYER: O Lord, let me be a hearer and doer of Thy Word.

WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD

The true knowledge of God always has practical effects. The knowledge of God's will is desired for the believers so that they may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. This is precisely what Paul is praying may happen to the believers as a consequence of them knowing God's will, that they “*might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*” (Col 1:10).

What does it mean to “*walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*”? It means that we are to live our lives as worthy Christians and please Him at all times. Note that it is to please the Lord at all times. Some have wrongly interpreted it to mean to please all men.

To “*walk*” means to regulate one's life, to conduct one's life, to pass one's life.

To be “*worthy of the Lord*” here means to be deserving of, to be suited to, to be in keeping with Christian values.

Christians are to live responsibly for Christ's sake, and all the more so because we bear the name of Christ. A believer is called a “Christian.” Are we responsible Christians walking worthy of the Lord? If we walk unworthily, that is a bad testimony for the Lord. He will not be pleased.

How do we walk worthy? It is by following the prescriptions of the Word of God. The Bible is where we find how we can walk worthy of the Lord. By reading the Bible, studying the Bible and meditating on the Bible, we find out what is worthy of Him, even to the point of anticipating what pleases Him.

THOUGHT: Am I conducting my Christian life appropriately?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to walk worthy of Thee to please Thee.

MONDAY, JULY 27

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

HEBREWS 13:21

“Make you perfect in every good work to do his will...”

FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK

Paul goes on further to offer four ways in which believers *“might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”* (Col 1:10).

Colossians 1:10, *“...being fruitful in every good work...”*

Are we *“being fruitful in every good work”*? Are we doing good works and are our lives bearing fruit?

We do not do good works to earn salvation. Salvation is all of grace. We do not get to heaven by doing good. It is Jesus Christ who saves us and makes it possible for us to go to heaven.

But we are saved to do good works here on earth. Christians are expected to do good works for this is well pleasing to God. Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...”* God has saved us to do good works.

In Titus 3:1, Paul exhorts us *“to be ready to every good work.”* And the apostle also wrote to Titus in Titus 3:14 to ensure that the helpers in the ministry *“learn to maintain good works...that they be not unfruitful.”*

Notice that Paul also mentions every good work. It is not some good work, but every good work. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 9:10, *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might...”* Philippians 2:14, *“Do all things without murmurings and disputings.”*

Let us put our heart and soul to every work that the Lord has given us to do, and to do it well, that it may bear fruit to the glory of God the Father. Do not despise any work that we are given to do for the Lord.

THOUGHT: What is my attitude in doing a job for the Lord?

PRAYER: O Lord, in whatever work that I do, help me to do it well, for Thy glory.

TUESDAY, JULY 28

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

2 PETER 3:18

“...grow in grace, and in the
knowledge of our Lord...”

GROWING TO KNOW GOD MORE

Colossians 1:10, “...*increasing in the knowledge of God.*”

Paul’s figure of speech depicts a fruit tree which yields its fruit and keeps on growing, in contrast to grain which produces its harvest and then dies. As the fruit tree continues growing, it can yield even more fruit, and thus is a fine illustration of the believer, who should be demonstrating spiritual fruit in increasing quantity as his spiritual capacity enlarges through his growth in grace. (Kent)

Are we increasing or growing in our knowledge of God? We are living in a world where knowledge is increasing very rapidly. This was prophesied in Daniel 12:4, “*even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*”

Or are we busy acquiring knowledge that is good only for our physical livelihood, our advancement in our career, etc? What about increasing in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we growing in grace and knowledge of Him? Have we been reading His Word faithfully? Have we been taking all opportunities to study the Bible? Why do we not attend Sunday school? Why do we not read Christian books? Do we want to please the Lord? Let us increase in our knowledge of Him!

Our increase in the knowledge of God comes about by getting into His Word, and asking Him to lead you, guide you, and give you understanding and spiritual discernment. There is no end to this “increase” because God is infinite. Our knowledge is finite because we are finite. Therefore, we must continue to increase in the knowledge and power of God. (Waite)

THOUGHT: Do I have more knowledge of earthly things than of God?

PRAYER: O Lord, may I grow to know Thee more and more.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

“...that the excellency of
the power may be of God...”

GOD’S STRENGTH

Colossians 1:11, “*Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.*”

As we try to live our lives worthy of the Lord, we need much spiritual strength. We need to be strengthened by the mighty power of God, and not depend on our own strength, for often times our spirit may be willing but we are overcome by the weakness of our flesh.

Paul says in Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” It is the Lord who gives us strength to do all things. Paul himself has gone through much suffering and afflictions in his ministry. He is therefore able to comprehend how God’s strength can help him to tide through difficult situations in life.

We need the strength from the Lord to overcome all things in our Christian walk. Paul exhorts in Ephesians 6:10, “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*” He follows this with the illustration of putting on the whole armor of God to fight against the devil. Christian living is a spiritual battle. We are not fighting against flesh and blood. We need spiritual strength from God Himself. We need “*to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...*” (Eph 3:16-17).

Our flesh may be weak, but the Lord’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. As we walk in our Christian life, we will meet with many setbacks. It is not smooth sailing. But “with Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm,” because He has promised that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Are you weary and disheartened in your Christian walk? Be comforted by the Lord’s words, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Cor 12:9). Paul tells us that the strength that God gives us is so powerful that we can endure any difficulty, trial, unpleasantness, etc., with patience, longsuffering and joy.

THOUGHT: Have I been using my own strength to live for God?

PRAYER: O Lord, strengthen me according to Thy glorious power.

THANKS TO GOD

Colossians 1:12, *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”*

Are we giving thanks unto the Father who has made us *“saints in light”*? Do we thank God for our salvation?

None of us deserves to go to heaven when we die. But by the grace of God, He has *“made us meet,”* (i.e. we are made fit) for heaven. Do we give thanks for this wonderful gift of God? It is well pleasing to God for us to do so.

Colossians 1:13-14, *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”*

Do we give thanks to God the Father for delivering us out of darkness *“into the kingdom of his dear Son”*?

The verb *“delivered”* means “rescued.” Men, being sinful, are lost to the power of darkness. They cannot save themselves. They need to be rescued from the power of darkness which is full of sin and evil (John 3:19; 1 John 1:6; 2:11). It is God the Father who rescues sinful men from the power of darkness. Believers have been transported from Satan’s kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ.

To “redeem” means to release from bondage via a payment. Believers are released from the bondage of sin by the precious blood of Christ. And on the account that Christ has paid the full redemption price, God the Father cancels the debt of our sins.

THOUGHT: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for saving my soul.

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

1) Christ is the Creator (Col 1:15-17)

a) Christ “*is the image of the invisible God*” (Col 1:15a), i.e. Christ is the exact representation of God. He is the “*express image*” of the person of God (Heb 1:3). No one can see the invisible God; but through Christ we can see God perfectly (John 1:18).

b) Christ is “*the firstborn of every creature*” (Col 1:15b). This does not mean that Christ was the first of God’s creation. Christ Himself is the Creator of all things and so He occupies the position of “*firstborn.*” “*Firstborn*” here does not refer to time, but to superiority of rank. It means that Christ is of “*first rank.*”

c) “*For by him were all things created*” (Col 1:16a). Because Christ created all things, He cannot be the first of God’s creation. Rather “*all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*” (John 1:3).

d) “*All things were created by him, and for him*” (Col 1:16b). Christ is the goal of all creation. He reigns over all of His creation. He is Lord of lords and King of kings (Phil 2:10-11; Rev 19:16).

e) “*And he is before all things, and by him all things consist*” (Col 1:17). The Lord Jesus Christ created all things, He is in control of all things, and by Him all things are being held together. Christ’s pre-existence is before the whole of creation, the whole of creation was begun by Christ, and it continues to exist by Christ.

2) Christ is the Head of the Church (Col 1:18)

a) Christ is the “*beginning, the firstborn from the dead.*” His is the first true resurrection from the dead. Through His resurrection, His people are also ensured a future resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23).

b) “*That in all things he might have the preeminence*” (Col 1:18b). Christ is first in creation, and He is first in the Church.

Is Jesus Christ first in your life?

THOUGHT: “...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness....” (Matt 6:33)

PRAYER: O Lord, may Thou be on the throne in my heart.

THE WORK OF CHRIST

- 1) Colossians 1:19, “*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*”

The apostle says here that all fullness, the sum total of all the divine power and attributes, can be found in Christ. This again is proof that Jesus Christ is God in that God the Father is pleased to let all the fullness of the Godhead reside in Christ. Colossians 2:9, “*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*”

- 2) Colossians 1:20, “*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.*”
- a) The fact that Jesus Christ is God means that He is able to reconcile lost sinners to the thrice holy God. The reconciliation between fallen man and God must be initiated by God Himself. It is in Christ that God reconciles sinful mankind unto Himself (2 Cor 5:19).
- b) God has made peace through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ, in order to reconcile all things unto Himself.
- c) What does it mean to reconcile? To reconcile is to make two or more parties friends again after their friendship has been broken or disrupted. It is to make things right with one another again. It is to make peace again.
- d) God loves mankind and wants to reconcile fallen mankind to Himself. And He took the initiative to bring about reconciliation by putting in place a salvation plan.

THOUGHT: Christ Jesus came to reconcile sinners unto God.

PRAYER: O Lord, I thank Thee for the reconciliation and the peace in Christ Jesus.

PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD

God reconciles us to Himself by making peace through the blood of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. God sent His only beloved and begotten Son to the cross to shed His blood in order to make peace with mankind.

Why must God send His Son to shed His blood on the cross to reconcile us to Himself?

- a) The Bible says, “*without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Heb 9:22). This means that blood needs to be shed in order that sins can be forgiven.
- b) Leviticus 17:11, “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*”
- c) Only the blood of Christ who is without spot (i.e. without sin before God) is acceptable to God for the cleansing of sin. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash a sinner clean from the stains of sin.

God has accepted the blood of Jesus Christ as the payment for the forgiveness of our sins, because Christ in all His holiness, righteousness, purity and sinlessness, has shed His blood for us. God has accepted His sacrifice and forgiven our sins. Christ has therefore made peace between us and God.

Are you at peace with God? Are you reconciled to God? Are your sins forgiven by God? You need to believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has shed His precious blood on the cross for the cleansing and forgiveness of your sins.

THOUGHT: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me from all my sins.

PRAYER: O Lord, wash me and cleanse me of all my sins.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

JAMES 4:4

“...a friend of the world
is the enemy of God.”

NO MORE AN ALIEN AND ENEMY

Colossians 1:21, “*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.*”

The apostle reminded the Colossians that they were all “*sometime*” (i.e. at one time) not saved, alienated and enemies to God.

To “*alienate*” is to be estranged, to become strangers, to become unfriendly, to depart from intimacy, to stop fellowshiping. It is like two persons who used to be very good companions, but because they quarrelled with each other, they stopped being friends, stopped communicating with each other, and have become strangers to each other.

Believers were at one time “*alienated*” from God. We were not His friends and did not have fellowship with Him, all because sin kept us away from Him. Sin is like a barrier blocking us from getting near to God. We were held under Satan’s sway and had no relationship with God. But by the grace of God, we have been reconciled with Him through the precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. We, who were once unbelievers, must remember with gratitude what Christ’s grace has accomplished in delivering us from our former servitude to sin (Eph 2:11-12).

And not only were believers at one time “*alienated*” from God, we were even His enemies. We were enemies of God through the hostility of the mind which found its natural expression in our evil deeds (Eph 2:2ff; 4:18). Thank God that we have not remained in that spiritual condition. This is because we have acknowledged our need for Christ’s death on the cross as the final payment for our sins. We were once estranged from God and hostile to God by our wicked works, but now we have trusted in Jesus to save us. Have you?

THOUGHT: “*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*” (John 15:14)

PRAYER: O Lord, give me grace to obey Thy commandments.

CHRIST RECONCILES US TO GOD

The apostle also reminded the Colossian believers that they were at one time not God’s friends but His “*enemies in your mind by wicked works.*” They were wicked, evil, immoral and corrupt in their thinking, feeling, desires, understanding of the things of God, works and deeds.

If in your mind you do have some knowledge and understanding of the living and true God, but you do not acknowledge God to be your God and choose not to worship and serve Him, you are not His friend, but are His enemy.

Before salvation, all our works are wicked works. All our righteousness are filthy rags. All men have come short of the glory of God, the standard of righteousness of God. And so nothing “good” that we do can be good enough to make us friends of God. No matter what good works we do, we are still enemies of God.

Although believers were at one time not friends of God, but His enemies, God has now reconciled us to Himself. Paul says, “*yet now hath he reconciled*” (Col 1:21).

We (who at one time hated God extremely, wholly and willingly) have received the greatest gracious favour from God. The apostle wrote in Romans 5:8, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*”

God Himself wants to be our friend. He does not want us to remain His enemies. And so He took the lead to restore the loving and wonderful relationship that we were supposed to have with Him. And He reconciled us by making peace through the blood of His dear Son.

THOUGHT: “I’ve found a friend in Jesus, He’s everything to me.”

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thou will never leave me, nor forsake me.

JUSTIFIED IN GOD’S SIGHT

In Colossians 1:22, Paul emphasized again how the Lord reconciled believers to God. The death of Christ has made it possible for us to appear holy before God: faultless, blameless, beyond reproach.

- a) Holiness is a quality we must have in order for us to stand in the presence of the holy God. The Bible instructs us to be holy for God is holy (1 Pet 1:16). We must be morally pure and upright before God (Heb 12:14).
- b) To be “*unblameable*” is to be without fault, morally blameless.
- c) To be “*unreproveable*” is to be without accusation, not accused of any wrong, void of offence.

We (who have acknowledged that Christ died in our place on the cross to save us from our sins) will then be able to stand holy in the sight of God. This is because when Jesus died on the cross, He did it for Paul, for the Colossian Christians, for you and for me. He took upon Himself all our sins. And those who believe in Christ for salvation have the imputed righteousness of Christ. We therefore appear before God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And as God looks upon us, washed in the blood of Jesus and clothed in His righteousness, He sees us as holy. He can find no more fault in us. He cannot accuse us of any offence. And when we see God face to face, He will say to us, “I have nothing against you because all your sins have already been paid for by the blood of My dear Son. You are holy and unblameable and unreproveable in my sight. You are free from condemnation.”

THOUGHT: “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...*” (Rom 8:1)

PRAYER: I thank Thee, O Lord, that I can stand before Thee justified.

PREACH THE GOSPEL

Colossians 1:23, *“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...”*

Paul did not say, “If you hang on, you will get to heaven. If you work hard enough and live a good enough life, you will make it to heaven.” No, he said that your continuing in the faith is evidence that you are trusting Jesus Christ to be your Saviour.

A person is not saved by his own efforts to please God; neither is he kept secure by human determination and perseverance. But the saved person will persevere because he has been made *“a new creature”* in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), and the new life implanted by Christ will be developed by the Spirit and brought to completion (Phil 1:6). He whose *“faith”* does not continue with appropriate works reveals that he never had true saving faith at all (James 2:14, 17; 1 John 2:19).

A true Christian who is grounded and settled in his faith, and is not moved away from the wonderful hope of the gospel, has the blessed assurance of being pronounced holy, blameless, and void of offence before the Lord God Almighty. He believes very firmly, and without wavering, that Christ died to save him from his sins. And this is the true Christian’s glorious eternal hope.

But Christians are not to keep this hope to themselves. This wonderful gospel of hope must be shared so that many can hear and be saved.

Many have yet to hear the gospel. Remember the Great Commission of our Lord in Matthew 28:19-20. We must share the gospel of hope to every creature (Mark 16:15).

THOUGHT: The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation.
PRAYER: Lord, help me not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Paul suffered much in his endeavours to fulfil the ministry which God has given to him. But he was never ashamed of his sufferings. On the contrary, he rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ's sake (Col 1:24).

In another prison epistle, the apostle wrote: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”* (Phil 3:10). Paul counted it an honour to partake in the sufferings of His Lord and Saviour, like the other apostles. Acts 5:41, *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”*

The Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:15-16, *“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”*

Recall the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:10-12, *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*

Paul also rejoiced in his suffering for the sake of the body of Christ, i.e. the Church. Are we prepared to count it a joy and an honour to suffer for the sake of the body of Christ? As we serve the Lord in the ministry which He has given to us, we must be prepared to endure sufferings. Let us count it all joy when we suffer for Christ's sake and for the sake of His body, the Church.

THOUGHT: *“...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”*
(James 1:2)

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for Thy all-sufficient grace to endure.

STEWARDS OF GOD

Colossians 1:25, “*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.*”

The word “*dispensation*” (Greek: *oikonomia*) has the meaning of the management of a household or of household affairs. As a minister of God, Paul was like a steward who was given a great responsibility by God to manage His household.

Paul’s responsibility was to benefit the Colossians which included the fulfilling of the Word of God, i.e. to “fully teach and promulgate the gospel.” It means that he was to carry out fully the proclamation of the true gospel of Jesus Christ so that everything else became secondary.

This was Paul’s commission (“*dispensation of God*”) at his conversion (Acts 9:15-16; 26:16-18) and he devoted his life to carrying out this stewardship that he was called to and given to do for the Lord. The same expression occurs in 1 Corinthians 9:17, “*For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*”

As a servant of Christ, Paul was also a steward of the mysteries of God and must be prepared to render an account to the Lord who demands faithfulness. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*”

As we serve the Lord, are we fulfilling our responsibilities? Are we faithful as stewards of God?

THOUGHT: Have I been praying for God’s faithful stewards?

PRAYER: O Lord, may Thou bless Thy many faithful stewards.

THE HOPE OF GLORY

Colossians 1:26, *"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."*

The Word of God is here described as a *"mystery."* False teachers use this word to refer to the inner secrets of their false religions.

But in the New Testament, the word *"mystery"* is used in connection with *"making known"* or *"speaking"* the mystery (1 Cor 2:7; 13:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3; 6:19). It refers to a revealed sacred secret, a truth hidden in the past and formerly not known to men, but now has been revealed by God and made clear to His saints.

Colossians 1:27, *"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."*

This mystery is amplified in a parallel passage in Ephesians 3:3-9.

Paul's readers were mainly Gentiles. The mystery is now made clear even to them, and to us all: *"Christ in you (the Gentiles), the hope of glory."* The apostle is saying that it is because of Jesus in the heart of a believer which provides the hope of glory. Christ is our hope (1 Tim 1:1). In Him, we have the assurance of a future glory when we will be with Him and be like Him forever and ever. 1 John 3:1-2, *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."*

THOUGHT: O the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of Christ!

PRAYER: O Lord, let me focus upon Thy imminent return.

HEART WORK (1)

Colossians 1:28, “*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*”

In order to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, we need to preach by warning and teaching in all wisdom. It involves heart work.

The word “*perfect*” has a sense of lacking nothing necessary to completeness. It is not lacking any moral quality. It means to present a man before God in moral uprightness. This includes salvation and spiritual maturity.

Perfection is what is required of every man when he comes into the presence of God on the day of judgment. We need to be perfect or complete, i.e. complete in Christ, fully clothed in His righteousness, and completely free from sin, spot or blemish.

But every man is born a sinner. Who then can appear in the presence of God as a perfect soul? No one can. This is precisely why we need to preach and warn every man that every man may be acceptable before God Almighty when he sees God face to face.

For a man who has not yet known the Lord Jesus Christ as His Redeemer, we need to warn him about the consequences of facing God on the judgment day without having his sins washed away by the blood of the Lamb. Only when a man is clothed in the righteousness of Jesus (by acknowledging that he is a sinner and that Jesus has paid for all his sins on the cross) can he appear before God holy, righteous and perfect.

THOUGHT: “*For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*” (Matt 18:11)

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to have a burden for the lost.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

COLOSSIANS 1:28

GALATIANS 6:1

“...restore...in the
spirit of meekness...”

HEART WORK (2)

Colossians 1:28 teaches us that we are to continue to warn the believer. The “*warning*” here involves admonishment, giving instructions in regard to belief, behaviour, advice, exhortation. It is warning him to take heed lest he falls.

Warning is ever so helpful to us that we may become a “*perfect*” (i.e. spiritually mature) person. Let us therefore not despise the warnings we receive from the preaching of God’s Word to us. Paul says, “...*preach, warning every man....*” It is heart work.

Now Paul also says that we need to teach every man in all wisdom that a man may be perfect in Christ Jesus.

To teach is to provide instruction, to feed with understanding, to impart knowledge. And in order to help a child of God grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and unto perfection in Him, we need to teach him how.

We are to teach “*every man in all wisdom.*” This “*wisdom*” is wisdom given by the Holy Spirit. It is not the wisdom of men. It is not worldly wisdom. It is spiritual wisdom given by the Holy Spirit that we may discern spiritual things.

We are to teach every man in spiritual wisdom that they may be able to discern the will of God to live by His ways and His precepts. Did not the Lord Jesus command in the Great Commission that we are to go and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded Christians to do? We are to teach the laws, the statutes, the judgments and the commandments of God in order that disciples of Jesus may learn of them and do them.

THOUGHT: Open rebuke is better than secret love.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to accept loving admonition.

HARD WORK (1)

Colossians 1:29, “*Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*”

Thus far, we have considered the heart work of perfecting man through preaching by warning and teaching in all wisdom. Next, let us consider the hard work involved in perfecting man.

The Apostle Paul warns us in verse 29 that it is not going to be easy perfecting man through preaching, teaching and warning. He warns of the need to labour. The word “*labour*” gives the idea that we have to engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble. It means to toil, to labour with wearisome effort.

Paul is telling preachers, teachers, and workers of the gospel who proclaim and promote the kingdom of God to expect to put in toilsome efforts.

Do we not find this so true? Those of us who are ministers of God’s Word, engaged in sharing the gospel and in warning and teaching from God’s Word, are we not involved in toilsome labour? We face the weakness of our flesh. We encounter the rejection of people. We receive criticism and insults. We are challenged not only by unbelievers by reason of our faith, but also by Christians who feel offended by the warnings and teachings of God’s Word.

But still the Apostle Paul says we are to keep on “*striving.*” To strive is to do something with great intensity and effort, to do everything possible, to make every effort, to engage in intense struggle, to fight on, to try very hard, even though the difficulties and troubles are around. The spirit of God’s servant is never to give up even under great pressures and persecutions. Pray for your pastor.

THOUGHT: The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.

PRAYER: Lord, may I be willing to labour for Thee.

HARD WORK (2)

It is a great comfort to know that we are not striving alone or in our own strength. We strive according to the working of God, which works in us mightily. Colossians 1:29 is enriched with meaning and motivation for all of us. What Paul is saying here is that we do not engage in our own struggle, in our own fight by our own abilities and strength. Rather our focus and source of strength is the supernatural divine energy and power operating in us. The phrase “*according to his working*” means according to God’s supernatural and divine working in us.

And this supernatural divine working works in us with great might, great power and great strength. This supernatural divine energy causes us to function and perform with great ability. The divine working grants us the ability to do what God wants us to do. It helps us to operate and be in action for Him with His strength. It is God working in and through us. On our own we will fail, we will fall, we will easily give up, we will not be able to do and we will not measure up to the task.

However, with God’s energy working in us, we are empowered by the power that created the heaven and the earth, the power that brought to life again the Lord Jesus from the dead. It is with this power that we labour and strive for Him. We have His dynamite power (this is the meaning of the word “*mightily*” in verse 29) in us to do great and mighty things for Him (cf. Jer 33:3).

Our striving is in accordance with the working of God, the supernatural divine power of God working in us. It is He who enables us. It is He who grants us the ability to do the work powerfully and mightily. Let us go on preaching, warning, teaching, labouring, striving, working hard and heartily till the Lord comes again!

THOUGHT: (Read Philippians 4:13.)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, never to depend upon my own strength.

CARE AND CONCERN

Paul says in Colossians 2:1: *“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.”* This shows that Paul had great conflict for the sake of the believers in Colosse and Laodicea (including those whom he had not met).

The word *“conflict”* does not mean that the apostle had a fight or some struggle with them. Rather, it means that he was struggling for them with great fear, care and concern for their spiritual lives.

Although he did not meet up with the Christians in Colosse in person, he (like a loving father) cared much for their spirituality. He cared for their spiritual growth in their faith in Christ. He was concerned that if they were not strong in their faith in Christ, they would be deceived by false doctrines. He was afraid that false teachings might inhibit them from maturing in their faith.

Paul’s fear was not unfounded. Colosse was situated near Laodicea, and Paul was just as concerned for the believers in Laodicea as well. The believers in Laodicea had been rebuked for their lukewarmness. Revelation 3:14-16: *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”*

Paul was deeply concerned for the believers in Colosse who were surely in great danger of being influenced by false teachers and their doctrines which had already affected the believers in Laodicea.

THOUGHT: Have I shown enough care and concern for the weak?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to really care and be ready to show concern.

KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE

Paul had been praying for the Colossian Christians “*that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (Col 2:2-3).

In order that the believers be not affected by false teachings but grow strong in their faith, they need to be united in love one for another. And if they are united together in love, their hearts will be comforted.

Like the Colossians, all Christians are doubtless exposed to trials and persecutions. In the church, we do not live alone. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We therefore have to be knitted together in love, care and concern. We need to come together in unity of love one for another and for others outside our church. We need to have our hearts comforted. And one way in which we can help one another to be comforted is to be knitted together in Christian love. It means that we are to come together and be in firm union. Let our hearts be one, beating with the same heartbeat. It means that we are to comfort each other by our solid Christian friendship. We are to be cemented together with love. It is not enough that we tell one another that we are Christians, and that we have the same faith in the same God. We need to have a union of affection. This will help each member to tide through thick and thin in his walk with Christ in this life on earth.

Paul tells us that if we are knitted together in love, our hearts will be comforted. In turn, we will be able to comfort others. If we are not united in love, we will be discouraged in our hearts, and naturally we will not be much of an encouragement to others.

THOUGHT: By our love all men will know we are Christ’s disciples.

PRAYER: O Lord, enable Thy Church to be knitted together in love.

FULLNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST

Paul went on further to show the Colossian Christians how they can have fullness of life in Jesus so that their faith may be strengthened and that they may not fall or be swayed by false teachings.

1) Receive Christ Jesus the Lord (Col 2:6)

In verse 6, Paul says, “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord...*” He rejoices in that the Colossians have received the Lord as their Saviour. The word “*received*” is in the Greek aorist tense, meaning their receiving is done once and for all, and there is no need to keep on receiving.

To live a full life in Christ, we need to first receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, that is, we need to be born again. We need to become a child of God before we can talk about living in God.

A man is born physically only once, but he continues to live. A person is born spiritually (i.e. “born again”) when he receives or accepts Jesus as Saviour once and for all. Following his salvation in Christ Jesus, he must keep on living in Christ.

Note that the importance of the human messenger is not emphasized here, nor is the manner of reception stressed, as though the apostle meant to say that even as they received Christ by faith they are to walk by faith (see John 1:12). That is true enough in itself, but it is not the focus of attention here. The stress is on the fact that they actually received the Person of the Lord as He was offered to them in the gospel, when the knowledge of the Saviour was faithfully transmitted to them. So they have more than just a store of knowledge about Him, for He Himself has been taken into their hearts (Harrison). Have you taken Jesus into your heart?

THOUGHT: He that has received the Son of God has life.

PRAYER: O Lord, may those who hear Thy gospel receive Thee.

WALK IN CHRIST

2) Walk in Christ (Col 2:6)

Paul exhorts the Colossians to “*walk ye in Him*” (Col 2:6). He counterbalances the historic, once-for-all reception with the necessity of continuing to live in Him, that is to exercise their faith, so to speak, in terms of consistent, obedient conduct (Harrison). The Greek word for “*walk*” here is an imperative, i.e. a command, an exhortation. And it is in the present tense, i.e. after we have received Christ (or born again), we are to keep on walking in Christ.

In the Scriptures, the word “*walk*” is used to denote the manner of life; and the sense here is that Christians should live and act wholly under the influence of the understanding which they have of the Lord when they first embraced Him as their personal Saviour. This means to live or to conduct our Christian lives in accordance to with the Holy Spirit’s leading. It means no more walking after the flesh, but walking in the Spirit.

We are to keep on growing in our faith, keep on trusting, keep on depending on Him to live our Christian lives. We must carry on with the journey to heaven by living a life that is well pleasing to Him.

John exhorts his readers in 1 John 1:5-7, “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*”

How is your walk in Christ?

THOUGHT: How have I been conducting myself as a Christian?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

ROOTED IN CHRIST

3) Rooted in Christ (Col 2:7)

Colossians 2:7, “*Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*”

Paul is glad that the Colossians have been rooted in Christ. The word “*rooted*” is a perfect passive participle. It means that believers have been rooted in Christ when they received Him as Saviour, and they continue to be rooted.

Believers who have been rooted or strengthened in Christ will have the strength to walk in Christ who gives them strength to do all things. Paul himself has testified in Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*”

Just as plants draw nourishment from the soil through their roots, so believers must draw life-giving strength from Christ. Just as a tree sinks its roots deep into the earth, so our faith must sink deep into the doctrines of our faith in our Saviour.

How are we rooted in Christ? By faith in Christ and by the love of Christ. A Christian who has faith in Christ and knows the love of Christ shall never be moved by anything because he is firmly rooted. The greater his faith is and the greater his understanding of God’s love in his life, the deeper his roots are in Christ, and so the stronger a Christian he is. And when the storm comes beating hard on us, if we are firmly rooted, we will not succumb to it. The more firmly we are rooted in Christ, the more closely we shall walk in Him.

A Christian who is rooted in Christ must not only be firm, fixed and established in his faith in Christ, he must also be thoroughly grounded in love (cf. Eph 3:17-19).

THOUGHT: Will I stand firm when a storm of life comes?

PRAYER: Lord, let me not be uprooted nor topple in any adversity.

BUILT UP AND STABLISHED

4) Built up in Christ (Col 2:7)

Here Paul uses the analogy of erecting a building on a firm foundation. After the foundation is laid, the building is then built upon it to finish the structure. How is a Christian to be “*built up*”? The phrase “*built up*” is a present passive participle.

A Christian needs to be given constant teaching to help increase his Christian knowledge and he has to keep learning continuously. The writer of the book of Acts says in Acts 20:32, “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*” We are being built up by the constant feeding upon the very Word of God.

Another way of making progress in our building is given in Jude 20-21, “*...beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God...*” The sense here is that we are to be resting on our most holy faith as the foundation, and make progress to raise up our building higher and higher through praying in the Holy Ghost, and keeping ourselves in God’s love.

5) Established in the Faith (Col 2:7)

Paul uses another present passive participle. We are being strengthened inwardly, we are being made unwavering, and we are being made to be more and more firm and established in our faith and beliefs. In so doing, we will not be “*carried about with divers and strange doctrines*” (Heb 13:9). We will be made steadfast and constant in our soul.

Examine your foundation and your building.

THOUGHT: I must be built and established on Christ the Solid Rock.

PRAYER: Lord, let me not sink by trying to stand on other grounds.

BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHINGS

In Colossians 2:8, the apostle warns the Colossians: “*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.*”

The word “*beware*” is a command. Here Paul instructs the believers to watch out and not be swayed by the wisdom of the world, or its superstitions and customs under the pretense of inspiration, or the ceremonies of the Law with the gospel. All these, Paul says, are not after Christ.

The Colossians have to be on guard. Paul strongly warns about the effects of heresy on those who believe it. They would be taken captive. The word “*spoil*” means “to kidnap” or “to capture and take away.” The false teachers use seductive tactics; the believers have to see to it that they do not allow themselves to let their guard down and be captured by worldly wisdom.

The false doctrines are also after the tradition of men in accordance with the traditions of the Pharisees (Col 2:16) which nullify the commands and teachings of Scriptures. They are not according to true Christian tradition (2 Thess 2:15; 3:6; 2 Tim 2:2; 1 Cor 15:3ff).

The phrase “*after the rudiments of the world*” has reference to religious regulations and practices, particularly ceremonial observances, which the false teachers are promoting (1 Tim 4:1-3).

And they are “*not after Christ.*” The false teachers seek to bypass the person and work of Christ which Paul wrote about earlier. They removed Christ from His rightful place of preeminence.

THOUGHT: Beware of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing.

PRAYER: O Lord, protect us and the church from these evil men.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

In Colossians 2:9-10, Paul gives an antidote to the false teachings. He says, “*For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.*” Jesus Christ is the fullness of God, and that fullness dwells continually and permanently in Him bodily. As the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ embodies the fullness of God.

We see His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His omniscience, His love, His power, His righteousness, His perfection, His impeccability or sinlessness, and every other attribute of Deity in Christ in all of its “*fulness.*” The Unitarians, the Christian Scientists, the Jews, the Muslims, the apostate Modernists, etc. demote and denigrate the Lord Jesus Christ, teaching that He is only human. This is the doctrine of Antichrist and is serious blasphemy. (Waite)

The marvellous thing is that we are complete in Jesus. A believer draws complete fullness from Christ alone, and he is filled with the fullness of God (Eph 3:19, “*And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*”), for Christ is the very fullness of God.

To recap, receiving Christ as Lord of our lives is the beginning of fullness of life with Christ. Since we are complete in Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour, we do not need human wisdom. We do not need to live on the husks of the world’s wisdom when we have the infinite wisdom of God written down for us in His perfect Word. But we must not stop at only receiving Christ as Saviour. We must want to grow. We must continue to follow His leadership by walking in Him, by being rooted, built up, and strengthened in the faith. Also, we need to beware and be on guard, lest we fall prey to false teachings and be swayed from our faith in Christ.

THOUGHT: Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All.

PRAYER: O Lord, I Thee adore, make me love Thee more and more.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Our lives must be controlled by our Lord, our Master. Let no man control our lives. Let no man dictate how we should live or how we are to conduct ourselves. Paul in Colossians 2:16 commanded, “*Let no man therefore judge (dictate, criticise or condemn) you...*” and in verse 18 again, “*Let no man beguile (cheat or mislead) you....*”

There were many Jewish ceremonies connected with the Mosaic Law laid down in the Old Testament, and they were there for the Old Testament saints to follow and to obey; and when they did so, they did so by faith looking forward to the coming of the Messiah to save them. They looked forward to the cross. The Old Testament ceremonies were a shadow of things to come (Col 2:17), pointing to the salvation plan to be carried out by the first coming of our Lord and Saviour.

When Christ came and died on the cross, He fulfilled all the requirements of the Law which men in their flesh can never satisfy. The Lord says in Matthew 5:17, “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*” Christ saved us not just by His death only. He saved us also by His life. By right, we are to keep the law perfectly. But we know we are unable to do so. And so, Christ came to live a perfect, sinless life fulfilling 100% the requirements of the law for you and me. In doing so, we (who believe in Him that He has done that for us) are saved (cf. Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10). It is as if we ourselves have fulfilled the law and have not sinned against God. That is what is meant by being justified. It is as if we have not sinned, that we have not violated the laws of God.

We thank God that today we do not have to live by those OT religious regulations which are powerless to save apart from faith in Christ. We are now free in Christ who has come to save us from sin. In verse 20, Paul tells us that Christ by His death has set us free.

THOUGHT: “Would you be free from the burden of sin?”

PRAYER: There is power in Thy blood, O Lord, so I am set free.

ALIVE WITH CHRIST

When we believe that Jesus died for us, it means also that we are dead with Christ. In Colossians 2:12-14, Paul wrote: *“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. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 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.”*

When we believe in Jesus, we have died with Him, buried and risen again like Him. We are quickened, we have a new life, we are a new creation (cf. Rom 6:3-4). All our trespasses are forgiven.

In forgiving sinners and making them alive, God wipes out the debt we owe Him in not being able to achieve the perfect demands of the moral law. Christ has taken the condemnation (due to our failure to meet the demands of the law) out of the way. He has nailed them to His cross. We are free from the condemnation of the law.

Of course, God's unchangeable moral law has not lost all its significance for believers. It does not mean that believers can now forget about loving God and their neighbour. No, the moral law still serves as a perfect mirror, daily showing Christians their sins and their need for the Saviour's forgiveness (Kuschel). (re: Rom 6:15).

THOUGHT: “Once far from God and dead in sin, now Christ liveth in me.”

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for quickening me who was dead in sins.

PHARISAICAL HYPOCRITES

Living to please God by man-made regulations and ceremonies is precisely what the other religions in the world are doing. They still strictly obey many man-made religious rules and regulations thinking that by doing so, they are pleasing God and have a way to God.

Titus 3:5-7 speaks against doing good works to gain salvation: “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*”

There are those religious people who say, “*Touch not; taste not; handle not*” (Col 2:21). These are the rules and regulations of the world’s religions. The focus is on rule-keeping. How we thank the Lord that we are free in Christ. We need not live like some “neo-Pharisees” who restrict themselves from eating out on Sundays, from going to church to worship the Lord on Christmas Eve, on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday.

Let us not be like those Judaizers and Pharisees of old. They were false teachers attempting to teach their own ideas as doctrines. They placed their regulations and rules on par with God’s commands. They tried to make their regulations a condition of God’s acceptance of us for salvation. They are wrong on all counts. Christ rebuked the Pharisees as hypocrites because they came to Jesus with many things to say, appearing rather pious and religious, but their hearts were far from God. God calls these Pharisees hypocrites.

THOUGHT: The Pharisee boasted, “*I am not as other men are...*” (Luke 18:11)

PRAYER: O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.

FOCUS ON CHRIST

Paul tells us in Colossians 2:23 that people who glory in following man-made rules are only putting up a "*shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility (false humility), and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*"

What they do is not to honour God, but to gain self-glory and to satisfy their pride. It is carnal, of the flesh. It is a show of "*will worship,*" i.e. a self-imposed piety, a man-made religion. Their humility is a false humility. Deep down they are proud. They enforce strict and severe discipline to their fleshly desires. They neglect the natural needs of their bodies (eg. by fasting), and even to the extent of not getting married, like the monks and nuns, but all these are done for self-satisfaction and self-glorification. They feel very spiritual because they think that they are able to fulfill the demands of a long list of religious requirements that demand strong self-discipline.

Such forms of legalism still attract many people today. Let us be warned. If we are so engrossed and entangled in legalism, we cannot focus on Christ. We will fail to honour God because when a Christian is legalistic, he concentrates on keeping the rules and regulations (imposed by man and himself) by his own strength. And the more successful he is, the more satisfied and spiritual he feels. Do not be deceived!

The humility supposedly shown by these rule-keeping fanatics is false humility. In reality, their ability to keep the rules and their harsh treatment of the body as they attempt to carry out the regulations cause them to be proud and to place themselves above others. Often they have a holier-than-thou attitude. Everyone else is less holy and less spiritual than them. They become hypocritical.

THOUGHT: We are unclean, all our righteousness are filthy rags.

PRAYER: Not my own righteousness, O Lord, but of God by faith.

WORSHIP ONLY CHRIST

All this man-made religious piety is worthless. No amount of religious rules can change a person’s heart; they have no value in satisfying the flesh (Paul says in Colossians 2:23) or in restraining sensual indulgence and self-indulgence. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:18-19: *“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, 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.”*

Paul also warns that we are not to be deceived in the worshipping of angels. They are not gods. The angel in Revelation instructed the Apostle John not to bow to him in worship but to worship only God (Rev 19:10). Do not be deceived by many who worship people who have done so much good for society and exalt them to be equal with God. Whom should we worship and honour? Only the Lord Jesus Christ. He should rightly be our Head (Col 2:19). We must hold fast to Him as our Head in all aspects of our lives.

If Christ is truly our Head, our spiritual Head (and not man, the world, or legalism), and He is controlling our religious beliefs and practices, we will then be truly able to increase in wisdom and knowledge and grow in God.

We need to free ourselves from men’s control. We must free ourselves from the world of false religion, with all the rules and regulations which are not sincere piety but a form of rebellion against accepting what Christ has done for us. Christ has died to free us from all this bondage of rules and regulations. Let Christ be the Head of our lives. Only then will we be able to grow in Him. He has set us free to grow in grace and faith in Him.

THOUGHT: Is there any preacher who can uplift me more than God?

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me for I have sinned in worshipping a man.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

2 CORINTHIANS 4:18

*“...things which are
not seen are eternal.”*

SEEK HEAVENLY THINGS

Paul commands that we are to seek those things which are above. Why are we to seek those things which are above?

Because we have been risen with Christ! Paul says in Colossians 3:1, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...”*

Because we should be walking in newness of life. The Apostle tells us in Romans 6:4, *“... that (we) like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

Because Christ is living in us. The life that we have is not our own, but the life of Christ in us. In Galatians 2:20, Paul tells us that *“...Christ liveth in me (us): and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God...”*

Because we will be with Christ in heaven. We have a place reserved for us in heaven. In Ephesians 2:6, God *“hath raised us up together (with Christ), and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*

Because God has made us alive together with His Son. Colossians 2:13 says, *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he (God) quickened together with him (Christ), having forgiven you all trespasses.”*

Because we are not to live as if we belong to this world anymore. Colossians 2:20, *“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.”*

THOUGHT: My Lord Jesus is coming again to bring me to heaven.

PRAYER: Lord, this is my blessed hope. I look forward to that day.

KEEP ON SEEKING

Do we seek those things which are above? As we tread our way here on earth to heaven, we are expected to walk in newness of life. We must no more walk in our past sinful way of life. As we walk, we look heavenwards and not down on earth. We want to do things which prepare us to be with Christ in all His glory in heaven. We are to keep on seeking things above.

To keep on seeking has the sense of to keep on searching, keep on looking, keep on striving for, keep on deliberating, keep on considering. One who seeks for something has the determination, the goal, the push, the urge to get that which he is seeking for. He does not give up easily. He seeks until he finds or gets what he is seeking for. And the apostle commands us to seek things above, not things on earth.

Our Lord taught the people in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:19-21, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

The Lord Jesus spoke about a shepherd who left his ninety-nine sheep to go searching for one lost sheep until he found the sheep. True seeking has a sense of importance, a sense of urgency, a sense of need. Do we long for things above? See Luke 15:3-6.

Another story the Lord told was that of a woman who lost a coin and turned on all the lights and swept the whole house in order to seek diligently for that lost coin. Meaningful seeking has a sense of diligence. Are we diligently seeking for things above? See Luke 15:8-9.

THOUGHT: Where my treasure is, there will my heart be also.

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to lay up for myself treasures in heaven.

APPEAR IN GLORY

1) Set Affections on Heavenly Things (Col 3:2)

Paul commands that we are to set our affection on things above in heaven (Col 3:2). Literally, it is to set your mind, to care for, to be concerned with the things of heaven.

Paul is instructing believers to let their minds dwell on things which are above. That is to keep on giving serious consideration to the things of heaven, to ponder, to let one's mind dwell on, to keep thinking about, to fix one's attention on things of glory.

2) Be Dead to Earthly Things (Col 3:3)

Paul takes us further in verse 3. If we want to be with Christ in glory, we should be dead to the things of the earth. Paul says, “*For ye are dead.*” He means that we are dead to the things of the earth. They no longer attract us as they used to. Our life is in Christ, not in the things of the earth.

If we are to heed what Paul has commanded us to do (to seek and to set our affection on things above, and not on things on the earth, which we are dead towards because we are alive unto Christ), then our reward is as he tells us in verse 4: “*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*”

The Apostle John adds in 1 John 2:28, “*And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*” And in 1 John 2:6, “*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*”

THOUGHT: What a glorious day when the Lord descends in the clouds!

PRAYER: Lord, may we comfort one another with this blessed truth.

OLD SPIRITUAL GARMENTS

Paul orders in Colossians 3:5, “*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,*” and then he gives a list of sins which we, who were by nature children of disobedience, used to have committed (fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry).

He reminds us that these sins make God angry (Col 3:6). And the indulgence in these sins is an act of disobedience to God (Col 3:6). Do we still indulge in these sinful ways?

Paul says that we used to conduct ourselves in some of these sinful ways before we were saved. That is what Paul means in verse 7, “*in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*” He says that we used to practise all those sinful things.

But living in these sins should not be our way of life now. These sins should not continue to be part of us. They should be dead in our new life. And we should be dead towards them. Paul instructs that we are to once and for all put to death these sinful behaviours, no more to conduct our lives in accordance with them.

We have died with Christ (Col 2:20; 3:3), been buried with Him in baptism (Col 2:12), and risen again with Him (Col 2:12). These old sinful practices should also have been nailed to the cross of Jesus. We must not be living in them anymore. Once and for all they have been put to death. They must no more be alive in our new life.

THOUGHT: I, a believer, have no business walking in sins anymore.

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to live a life that pleases Thee.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

COLOSSIANS 3:5-9

ROMANS 6:6

“...the body of sin
might be destroyed...”

MORTIFY OUR MEMBERS

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

When Paul uses the word “*mortify*,” he is ordering that we are to put to death once for all our sinful practices which he has listed and that they should not be allowed to continue living anymore with us in our new lives in Christ.

Paul commands that we are to mortify. It is an imperative, an order. We must do it. There is no argument about it. To “*mortify*” is to bring your sinful inclination under control and treat them as though they are dead.

Why did Paul have to give such a command? This was because in the Colossian church, there was a wrong teaching that the physical body is evil. And since it is evil and the evil cannot be eradicated, we might as well continue on with doing evil.

God forbid! We Christians have died with Christ positionally, and we ought to kill off the desires and lusts of the old flesh and its attraction to sin.

If our “*members*” are put to death and rendered like the illustration of the wood and the magnet, sin cannot attract them. Steel can be magnetized. If you have a powerful magnet, a steel poker could be lifted up; but not with wood, because there is no attraction. If we “*mortify*” our “*members*” (our old nature), these five sins enumerated will not bother us. We should treat them as if we were dead. Then they could not attract us. (Waite)

THOUGHT: He that commits fornication sins against his own body.

PRAYER: O Lord, enable me to flee fornication and also fleshly lusts.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

COLOSSIANS 3:5-9

EPHESIANS 4:31

“...put away from
you...all malice.”

“PUT OFF ALL THESE”

Paul says in Colossians 3:8, “*But now...*” This is an indication of a big transition, a drastic change. Once we were children of disobedience doing things that made God angry (Col 3:6), but now that we are children of God, we are to “*put off all these*” sinful acts. Colossians 3:8, “*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.*”

Paul says that Christians once lived in the sins mentioned in verse 5. Now, in verse 8, there are five more sins. They are to put them off just like taking off a coat, a shirt, or some other garment. The phrase “*put off*” again has the sense of an order to be obeyed once and for all.

We are to put off, put away, be done with, throw off, get rid of, give up, cease from, keep a distance away from “*anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication.*”

We are to put off “*malice.*” The Greek word means “malignity, ill-will, desire to injure; wickedness, depravity; wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws.” If one writes something about another and it harms that person in some way, it could have been written in “*malice*” or hatred. “*Malice*” is evil intent. It is a wicked and shameful thing for a believer to do. This is what God tells believers to put off.

Also, “*lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds*” (Col 3:9). Paul admonishes believers to mortify their sinful ways, and to put them away now. The filthy garments which are marked by sins are to be thrown away. And they are not to continue in these or any sinful ways anymore. Paul says they (and we too) are to quit lying one to another.

THOUGHT: Have I been malicious and have I approved those who are?

PRAYER: O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner and help me to repent.

“PUT ON PUT ON”

A believer in Christ has become “*a new creature*” (2 Cor 5:17). He therefore must live a life that is well-pleasing and honouring to God, his heavenly Father.

Paul says in Colossians 3:10, “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*” The believer, as “*the new man,*” must live a life that is befitting of God who has made him “*a new creature.*”

Our heavenly Father wants us to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. Romans 8:29, “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*”

We are to live our lives in the righteousness and holiness of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Father’s will. It will be to His honour and His glory.

Paul instructs us in Colossians 3:12-14: “*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*”

The “*elect of God*” are described as “*holy and beloved.*” Although we have been saved by grace, we are still sinners. But God by His great love for us has elected us, and He expects us to be holy, to be separated, to be sanctified that we might become more and more like His only begotten Son.

THOUGHT: Am I truly a new creature?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to show forth the virtues of a new creature, even as I am a new creature.

MEEKNESS AND LOWLINESS

God expects “*the elect*” (i.e. believers of Jesus Christ, children of God) to display these virtues in their lives: bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another and above all charity (Col 3:12-14).

“Bowels of mercies” (or bowels of compassion): If the love of God dwells in us, we must have active compassion and an inner sympathy. We must have an inner feeling of pity which outwardly manifests itself in helping others with mercy.

“Kindness”: This means to be gracious, good, and gentle, not harsh. We may not always be able to help others in deed, but we must always show the gentle spirit of Christ in us.

“Humility” (or humbleness of mind): We must have a mindset that correctly estimates our true worth in our being and in our possessions. It means that we must consider ourselves as being lowly. We must therefore submit to those above us as well as care for those below us. Without this virtue of humility, we may begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

“Meekness”: We must exercise discernment when approaching any situation, especially with regard to our own importance and the true needs of others. But meekness is not weakness. Neither is it never to be angry. Meekness involves getting angry for the right reason, at the right time, and in the right measure. And this was perfectly demonstrated by our Lord when He was angry with the Pharisees for their hardness of hearts as they tried to accuse Him for healing the sick on the Sabbath. Our Lord went on to heal the sick.

THOUGHT: Jesus wants us to learn to be meek and lowly in heart.

PRAYER: O Lord, give me grace to learn of Thee in meekness.

“PUT ON CHARITY”

God expects us to display these virtues: bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, and above all charity (Col 3:12-14).

“Longsuffering”: Unlike patience which is a passive attitude, longsuffering involves actively trying to win others to Christ without discouragements. It means that we must never give up on anybody because God Himself in His longsuffering has not given up on us. If God gave up on us, where would we be? 2 Peter 3:9, *“The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

“Forbearing one another”: It means tolerating or putting up with another person. Just as we expect others to tolerate our imperfections, we must put up with theirs also. We need to support one another for we are all equally frail or weak. Colossians 3:13, *“...forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you...”* The meaning here is to provide grace. Just as Christ extended His own grace toward us, securing our redemption, so must we put under grace the sins done by others against us. We may have the right to be angry, but by exercising our grace, we forfeit our rights in order to show the love of Christ both to the members of the body of Christ and to the watching world.

“Charity”: This is the crowning virtue of the new man in Christ. Charity is love or “agape” which is that type of love that considers others in light of what we can do for them and not what they can do for us. Such love *“is the bond of perfectness”* (Col 3:14), holding all the other virtues of the Christian life together so that they can reach their divinely intended goal. Without love, all the other attributes that we display will contribute nothing to the glory of God.

THOUGHT: Love sees through the imperfections that all of us have.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to love, to forbear and to be longsuffering.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

In Colossians 2, Paul gave instructions on doing our part in the Christian church. Now, we will look at doing our part in the home. Just like the church where there are many members, and each member has to fulfil his obligations in order to make the body of Christ a loving and edifying organism; a home is made up of the father (or husband), the mother (or wife) and the children. Each member of the home has his duties towards God and towards other members in the family. Everyone has to do his part so that the home will be a loving and edifying place for the family members living under the same roof.

Why is it so important to ensure that our church members have right relationships with their families? If members come from homes that are filled with love and peace, there is greater likelihood that the order and harmony will be extended to the church family. Remember that one requirement of a church leader is that he must be able to rule his own house, because if he rules his family well, then he will also be able to run the church well. But sad to say, we do not see this particular and very important spiritual qualification in some of our church leaders. They have children who are not submissive to the leadership of the church. It is a sign that the fathers do not rule their homes well (cf 1 Tim 3:4, “*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.*”) They cannot control their children and do not correct them when they rebel against the authority of the church leadership. Such children are riotous and unruly in the church and their fathers support their actions.

Now let us examine from Paul’s instructions how we are to relate to one another in the family. We note that Paul gives two sets of household relationships: (1) husbands and wives, (2) parents and children. In each case, there is mutual responsibility to submit and love, to obey and encourage.

THOUGHT: Is Christ the Head, Counsellor and Guide in my home?

PRAYER: O Lord, may my home be built upon Thee and Thy Word.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WIVES

The Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:18, “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.*” The wife is to subject herself to her husband (Gen 3:16), to take a subordinate place, to obey him. This means that she is not to usurp her husband’s authority over her (1 Tim 2:12). She must honour her husband, reverence her husband, not undermine her husband, but respect her husband. It means she has to humble herself and recognise that her husband is her head and the head of the family (1 Cor 11:3). She is to love her husband and support him in performing his role as a husband and father (Titus 2:4).

The Greek word for “*submit*” is in the imperative, present tense and middle voice. This means that Paul is commanding that wives are to keep on submitting themselves willingly to their husbands. It is a commandment which wives must always obey voluntarily. A woman (who considers herself as “not a submissive type by nature,” and finds it very difficult to practise these instructions of submission) ought to take note that it is a commandment. God has commanded that wives are to submit to their husbands.

A wise and Christ-honouring wife will do her utmost to obey these instructions. She will not undermine her husband’s leadership if she does not wish to cause disunity or friction in her marriage, or cause a broken family. Submission on the wife’s part is not a matter of choice or a matter of reasoning. It is a matter of obedience. A wife may choose not to obey this order, but she has to be prepared to bear the consequence that her marriage and family relationship will suffer because of her disobedience to submit herself to her husband.

If we do not want our marriage or family relationships to be on the rocks, let us be sure to stand firm on the Rock and obey Him. Let wives submit themselves to their own husbands, in the Lord.

THOUGHT: Submission of wives to husbands is not the teaching of the world.

PRAYER: O Lord, help our Christian wives to be obedient to Thee.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

COLOSSIANS 3:18-21

1 TIMOTHY 2:12

“...nor to usurp
authority over the man...”

SUBMISSION IS FIT IN THE LORD

Why must wives submit to their husbands? Paul says “*it is fit in the Lord*” that wives are to submit to their own husbands.

In a similar passage in Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul says more, “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*”

Here he says that wives are to submit to their husbands “*as unto the Lord,*” and then he explains that it is because the husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the Head of the Church (His bride). So wives are to subject unto their husbands as the Church is subject to the Lord.

The wives who serve the Lord lovingly, obediently, willingly, reverently and sacrificially should do the same in serving and loving their own husbands. This is how God intends wives to conduct themselves in their relationship with their own husbands.

Paul also says that wives are to be subject “*to their own husbands in every thing.*” The Word of God commands that the submission is in every thing, i.e. not in some things only, but in every thing; not only in things which wives think they should, but in every thing, always and in every respect, as long as it does not contradict God’s Word.

A wife who is submissive to her own husband in every thing will not go about undermining, insulting, criticising or condemning her husband in any way.

THOUGHT: The wedding vow includes submission and obedience.

PRAYER: O Lord, may wives be obedient to their own husbands.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HUSBANDS

Paul’s instruction to husbands in Colossians 3:19 reads, *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”* It takes both husband and wife to make the marriage work. Wives are to do their utmost in submitting, but husbands also have their part to play in order that the marriage relationship may not encounter any friction or difficulties.

In conjunction with the wife’s submissive love, the husband must show active love towards his wife. The Greek word for *“love”* here is the same Greek word used in John 3:16. It is a love based on choice, the will and action. Husbands must choose to love their wives with this type of love. This type of love is not just a feeling. Feeling comes and goes.

By this act of love, the husband highly regards his wife and is loyal to her. He appreciates her deeply, values her, considers her important in his life, and places his wife first in his affections.

In fact, the apostle uses this Greek word in the imperative and present tense and active voice to show that it is a command that husbands are to actively love their wives always.

A perfect pattern for husbands to follow in loving their wives in the way that is demanded of them is to look at how Christ loves the Church – His bride.

The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it,”* and then in verses 28-29, he continues, *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”*

THOUGHT: Husbands are to love their wives even if they are unlovely.

PRAYER: Lord, help husbands to love their wives as Thou love us.

CHRIST LOVES HIS BRIDE (THE CHURCH)

How does Christ love His bride? He gave Himself for her! It is a sacrificial love. It is a love which led our Lord to the cross.

Paul says this is how men ought to love their wives – as their very own selves. What do we do with our own selves? We do not hate or disregard or despise, but we nourish and cherish our selves.

To nourish is to provide food that is needed. To cherish is to take care of, to show tender love, to show warmth, to comfort, to foster, encourage, promote a relationship, to help in the development.

This is how a man is to love his wife. But a man may have the wrong perception of love. To him, if he works very hard to earn a living and to provide physically or materially for his wife and family, he has done his duty as a husband and father. This is not what the Bible teaches. Paul did not say that the husband is to nourish his wife only. But he is to nourish, to cherish, and not to hate or disregard her.

And so, providing for the wife and family is important and necessary. But that is not all the duties of a husband. He has to spend time with his wife and has to cherish the relationship as well. This is what it truly means to love the wife as far as God has meant it to be.

Paul also commands that the husband is not to become bitter against his wife. Note that Paul uses the words “*be not bitter*” in the passive voice. The phrase is also a present imperative. This means that though the wife may do something undesirable, the husband must obey the command here not to allow himself to become indignant, angry, resentful, be harsh, be irritated, be exasperated (annoyed and upset), or to allow himself to foster bitter feelings towards his wife.

THOUGHT: Not just providing with the hands, but with the heart.

PRAYER: O Lord, may every husband have a loving heart always.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN

Paul instructs children in Colossians 3:20, “*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*” It is not a choice here. The word “*obey*” is an order. It is also in the present tense. This means that children are to obey their parents always and actively, and in all things.

What does it take to obey actively and always in all things? It means to be subject to, to submit to, to accept and adhere to instructions and advice, to listen and to hearken to them, to respond and to answer when called, and to attend to things when told to do so.

Children may not agree with their parents, but they must obey them anyway. You may not like what they are telling you to do. You may not want to do all those jobs around the house. Do them anyway. It is your obligation, as children, to be obedient to your father and mother. This is tough at times, but do it in obedience to God’s commandment.

What if the parents instruct their children to do something which the children know is not well pleasing to God? Example: Should a child obey his father if his father tells him to lie?

In understanding Paul’s instruction to obey in all things, we have to use the principle of “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Paul also wrote in Ephesians 6:1, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*” Paul’s instruction is for children to obey their parents in all things in the Lord, for this is right and well pleasing to the Lord.

Again, if parents tell their children to harm somebody or allow them to do something that is contrary to the clear teaching of the Scripture, the children ought “*to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29b).

THOUGHT: Some curse their father and bless not their mother.

PRAYER: O Lord, may our children truly obey their parents.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FATHERS

Just as the relationship between husband and wife is balanced with love and submission, the relationship between parents and children is also balanced with encouragement and obedience. And so Paul balances the instruction given to children with his instruction for fathers in verse 21, “*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*” It is an order here again, to not provoke them to anger. Do not vex them, annoy them, make them feel upset, stir up their anger, or irritate them. This is lest they become discouraged, or lest they lose heart and hence lack motivation in life and want to give up.

Parents beware! If we note that our children are behaving strangely or are disheartened, could it be that we have not been an encouragement to them but have been provoking them to anger?

Children have their part to play, too. They are to be obedient to their parents in all things in the Lord. But parents are to encourage them, to nurture them and to admonish them in the Lord.

Paul’s instructions must be taken seriously by each and every one of us. Consider our part and do our part well. Do not think of changing the other person. Attempt rather to change ourselves first. If every member of the family has such thinking, it will do all well. The relationships within the family will be in order and harmonious.

Let us all heed Paul’s instructions: the wife to submit to her own husband, the husband to love his wife and be not embittered, children to obey and honour their parents, and parents not to provoke their children to wrath, but to encourage, nurture and to admonish them in the Lord. If we disregard this teaching, be warned that the consequence of a broken marriage and poor family relationship can become a reality.

THOUGHT: Children trained up in God’s way will not depart from it.

PRAYER: May parents train their children in the way they should go.

DIRECTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES (1)

Paul’s directions for employees are given in Colossians 3:22-24, *“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”*

Paul gives similar directions in Ephesians 6:5-8, *“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”*

The apostle admonishes us that if we would be responsible Christian workers, enjoying our working lives, having good relationships with our employers and fellow colleagues, having good standing and integrity at our work places, and seeking to glorify God in all that we do at work, it is necessary that we be obedient servants. We must not serve only for people to see or to please men. We must be single-hearted, fearing God only in our service, and heartily perform our service to man as service unto God.

We must be obedient to our employers, and not set our own wills against their instructions. Obedience means that we are to do what is required of us. If we do not comply with the stipulations of our employers but divert from them, we are not being obedient.

THOUGHT: The labourer is worthy of his reward.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be worthy of my salary that Thy name may be glorified.

DIRECTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES (2)

Mark the apostle's words in Titus 2:9-10, *"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."*

And also in 1 Timothy 6:1-2, *"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit..."*

As employees, let us work with singleness of heart, and with the fear of God in us. Can we be trusted to do our best even when the boss is not around? Do we work hard and with enthusiasm? Remember that no matter who we work for, the One we ultimately should want to please is our Father in heaven. So do our best in our service to our earthly employer. Christians should be the best employees. Work with grateful hearts, using the best of our mind and muscle to serve both man and God. Give of our best devotion to our job and be not divided in our attention at work. The Lord who watches our devotion and knows the sincerity that is from our hearts will reward us accordingly.

Let us heartily see ourselves as the Lord's servants, and our work as His, and do all as to the Lord, and not only for man. Christian employees must do their jobs as if the Lord Jesus Christ were their Employer. Christians work first for the Lord Jesus Christ and second for the companies that write their paychecks. No matter what the job, our first goal is serving Jesus. Know that it is from the Lord Himself that you will receive the reward for your labour.

THOUGHT: Have I been a faithful employee to my employer?

PRAYER: Lord, let me not cheat on my employer.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

COLOSSIANS 4:1

DEUTERONOMY 24:14

“...not oppress
an hired servant...”

DIRECTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

Paul instructs employers in Colossians 4:1, “*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*”

And similarly in Ephesians 6:9, “*And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*”

Employers are to be just and fair to their employees. They are not to show favouritism. They must reward each employee according to his performance. In fact, Paul instructs masters to do the same thing which he instructs servants to do to their master: to be honest in their dealings. Do not cheat. And masters are not to threaten their servants.

Paul warns that earthly masters too have a heavenly Master who is the same Master for both employers and employees. And He is One who is no respecter of persons. He is fair, He is just, He rewards accordingly, and He punishes accordingly as well.

We have learned from Paul how we must conduct ourselves at our workplace, whether as employees or employers. Let us not be Christians only on Sundays when we come to church. We must be Christians also, if not even more conscious of being one, when we are at work the rest of the week. How is our testimony at our workplace?

Christian employees, our employers are looking at us. Christian employers, our employees are watching us. But remember that we all have a heavenly Master who is looking at us always. Remember that no matter who you work for, and no matter who works for you, the One you ultimately should want to please is your Father in heaven. Are you able to account to Him for your attitude at work?

THOUGHT: Employers must treat workers with justice and fairness.

PRAYER: Lord, help our Christian employers to act justly and fairly.

PRAYING ALWAYS

The Apostle Paul exhorts in Colossians 4:2, “*Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*” There are three things in this verse that we can learn concerning praying actively.

Firstly, we must “*continue in prayer;*” i.e. pray with steadfast continuity. We are to keep on devoting ourselves to prayer. Be steadfast, be faithful, be diligent, do not quit. Paul is urging that we persevere in prayer. We are not to lose heart when our petition is not immediately answered. Sometimes God “delays” the answer to our prayers to increase our faith and devotion and to accomplish His purposes at the right time. God’s “delays” are not always denials. As we continue to pray, our own hearts must be prepared for God’s answer. We can grow in grace even before His answer comes, and we can have all sufficient grace to accept His answers to our prayers.

How and when do you pray? Do you pray only occasionally? Or only when you feel like it, or when there is a crisis? We are to pray without ceasing, praying always, continuing instant in prayer. These are God’s commands for us (1 Thess 5:17; Eph 6:18; Rom 12:12).

This does not mean that we are to walk around muttering prayers under our breath or that we must be on our knees at all times. Rather, it means that we are to be constantly in fellowship with God so that prayer is as normal to us as breathing.

It means that we must have a prayerful attitude at all times. Such an attitude acknowledges our dependence upon God at all times. And we must realise His presence with us always, and be determined to obey Him at all costs. If we have such an attitude, we will naturally and frequently be able to make spontaneous and short prayers anytime and anywhere.

THOUGHT: Do not stop praying!

PRAYER: O Lord, teach me to pray, and to pray without ceasing.

WATCH AND PRAY

Secondly, we must pray with watchfulness. Paul says, “*Watch in the same,*” that is “watch in prayer.” Pray and be wide awake, alert and vigilant. Paul is saying, “Do not neglect in any way this very special ministry of prayer. Be spiritually alert and pray. Lay hold on all opportunities to pray. Keep the mind lively in the duty of prayer.” In the Book of Nehemiah, when the people were rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem, they made prayers unto God and set a watch against the enemy day and night (Neh 4:9).

Jesus admonished the disciples to take heed and to watch and pray while they await His return (Mark 13:33). At Gethsemane, He also requested the disciples to watch and pray with Him, but He found them sleeping, not able to pray even for an hour. He admonished them to watch and pray, lest they fall into temptation (Matt 26:38-41).

We must always pray with undivided interest and attention. Beware of opposing spiritual forces. We are not wrestling with flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. The devil is most unhappy when we are engaged in prayer, but he is also watchful to see if we are sober and vigilant. Be aware, alert and awake, for he is waiting like a roaring lion to devour us (1 Pet 5:8).

Thirdly, we must pray with a thankful spirit (Col 4:2). Thanksgiving is important in faithful and watchful praying. If all we do in prayer is ask, and we never thank God for all that He has given and done for us, we are selfish. Let us always pray with sincere gratitude to God. It does not mean that we cannot make known our requests to God. But we must do so with a thankful heart (Phil 4:6). Remember that Paul wrote both the epistles to the Philippians and Colossians in a prison cell. He was in an adverse situation. Yet, he could still encourage the saints to pray with thanksgiving. He is indeed a living testimony. Note his emphasis on thanksgiving in Colossians (Col 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2).

THOUGHT: Why do I not attend the church prayer meeting?

PRAYER: O Lord, forgive me for taking prayer so lightly.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

1 THESSALONIANS 2:4

“...put in trust
with the gospel...”

PRAY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

The apostle now pleads for prayer on behalf of his companions and for himself. He directs the Colossians in Colossians 4:3-4, “*Withal (i.e. at the same time) 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: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*”

Paul did not miss the opportunity to ask his friends to pray for him. He needed prayer support for himself and his ministry. If a great Christian like Paul felt the need for prayer support, how much more do you and I need this kind of spiritual help.

What were Paul’s specific prayer requests? There were two requests:

Firstly, he asked that God may open to them a door of opportunity for effective evangelism. Note that Paul was in prison, and interestingly, when he requested for prayers, he did not ask his friends to pray for God to open the prison doors so that he could be released. Rather he asked that God would open the doors of ministry of the Word. His chief concern was for the gospel, which Paul refers to here as the “*mystery of Christ*” and in Ephesians 6:19 as the “*mystery of the gospel.*” He would rather be a faithful man than be a free man. In all of Paul’s prison prayers, his concern was not for personal safety or material help, but for spiritual character and blessing.

Here in this situation, he did not request prayer for himself to have good health or mental attitude toward his imprisonment. But his desire was that despite his restrictions, he might have the opportunity for the declaration of the gospel. He was looking for ways to be effective even while he was a prisoner.

THOUGHT: Why do I not join the church in evangelism?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be a diligent witness of the gospel.

PRAY WHEN YOU SHARE THE GOSPEL

Secondly, Paul asks that he be able to speak the gospel clearly, plainly and evidently.

Paul knows that the manner in which the gospel is presented is highly important. He requires God’s grace to do justice to the ever important gospel message.

If Paul knows that the lack of prayer can make his preaching of the gospel of non-effect, what must every one of us do when we minister the gospel of Jesus Christ? All the more, we must be praying and request for much praying before we share the gospel.

The proclamation of the gospel is empowered by prayer. Acts 6:4 tells us that God’s servants are to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. These two ministries go hand in hand. We must never separate the preaching of the Word of God from prayer.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God as we come to the throne of grace to ask God for His blessing. When our pastor and elders minister the Word of God, we must continually pray for them, that they may faithfully, effectively, clearly, and powerfully make known the Word of Truth.

What have we learned from the Apostle Paul regarding prayer? We learn that we must pray with steadfast continuity, pray with watchfulness, and pray with thanksgiving. In whatever adverse situation which we may be in, we must pray for a door of opportunity for effective evangelism. We must pray for the clear ministering of the Word. God will empower the preaching of the Word with our fervent prayers for the preacher.

THOUGHT: Do I pray for the preacher? Or am I busy judging him?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to pray for our evangelistic outreaches.

WALK IN WISDOM

In Colossians 4:5, Paul admonishes us with these words, “*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.*”

Paul urges Christians to be wise in our conduct towards unbelievers. The phrase “*them that are without*” refers to those who are outside the family of God.

What does it mean to “*walk in wisdom*”? For the context here, it means that we are careful not to say or do anything that would make it difficult to share the gospel. The reputation of the gospel depends to a large extent on the conduct of those who claim to believe it. People may not read the Bible, but they read the way Christians live.

Note that the unsaved watch us Christians constantly and with scrutiny, and they are very critical of us. We must be careful not to do anything foolish or dishonouring that will jeopardize our testimony. We have a great responsibility in helping the unsaved to see the gospel in a good light.

“*Walk in wisdom*” also means that we are to do our work faithfully, eg. pay our bills, be conscientious, be diligent, be honest and keep our promises.

Paul admonishes us in 1 Thessalonians 4:12, “*That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without,*” again referring to our walk towards those outside the kingdom of God. And here he says we are to walk honestly.

THOUGHT: Do I bear a good testimony among unbelieving friends?

PRAYER: Lord, may I watch my ways so I can share the true way.

REDEEMING THE TIME

In general, all Christians are to observe their conduct towards unbelievers. But if you are a Christian leader, be especially careful with your conduct towards unbelievers whom you are in contact with. Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:7 regarding a quality of a church leader, *"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without..."*

Let us have a good report from those who are outside God's family. What will our unbelieving bosses, colleagues, parents, siblings and friends say concerning our conduct if they were asked to give a testimonial of us to the church?

Paul says in Colossians 4:5 that we are to walk in wisdom towards the unsaved, redeeming the time. What does he mean by *"redeeming the time"*? It literally means "buying up the opportunity." This is a commercial term and it is a picture of the Christian as a faithful steward who knows an opportunity when he sees one. Just as a businessman seizes a good deal when he finds one, so a Christian seizes the opportunity to win a soul to Christ.

As Christians, we have a duty to our unbelieving neighbours. The days are evil. The battle is difficult. The Lord is coming soon. Time is running out. We must therefore seize every opportunity and use it to the fullest for the witnessing of the Christian faith. Let us waste no time. The lost are perishing. Let us make haste to share the gospel.

Are we buying up opportunities? Psalm 90:12, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* We do not know when that *"number"* is going to be our last. If we are numbering our days, we will redeem the time. We will buy up the time for the work of the Lord and not waste it. The opportunities are there. We do not know when our time will be up.

THOUGHT: Work for the night is coming when man work no more.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to buy up opportunities to share the gospel.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

COLOSSIANS 4:6

JAMES 3:5

“...the tongue...
boasteth great things...”

SPEAKING WITH GRACE

It is not enough simply to walk wisely and honestly before unbelievers. We must also talk with them and share the gospel message with them. Our testimony may attract them to become interested in our faith. But to embrace this saving faith, they must hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17, “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”

But we must take care that our speech is controlled by grace, points others to Christ and glorifies the Lord. The apostle gives counsel to believers with regard to their speech or conversation in Colossians 4:6, “*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*”

The Greek word for “*grace*” is “*charis*.” It means “that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech.”

Gracious speaking is speaking that imparts grace to those who hear it. It is conversation that results from the operation of God’s grace in our hearts. With grace in our hearts and on our lips, we will be faithful witnesses, not judges.

Our speech will then be characterised by the same kind of grace wherewith God has dealt with us. Love, patience, sacrifice, and undeserved favour will be displayed in our conversation.

But often times our speech is not with grace. Is that true of you? A lot of speech does not attract people to want to hear about our Saviour. We need to be gracious in our speech as we share Christ.

THOUGHT: “Be careful little tongue what you say.”

PRAYER: Lord, help me not to turn people away with my speech.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

COLOSSIANS 4:6

LUKE 4:22

“...gracious words which
proceeded out of his mouth...”

SAVOURY SPEECH

Christians are not only to commend the gospel by their lives but also by their lips (Luke 4:22). They must always be distinguished by the winsomeness of their speech, which is to be further enhanced by being “seasoned with salt.” (Hendriksen)

Paul reinforces Colossians 4:5 with “*let your speech be always... seasoned with salt*” (Col 4:6). Salt is a seasoning. It is also used to make food more savoury, palatable and taste better as it brings out the flavour of the food.

To let our conversation be seasoned with salt is to let our words be encouraging to the hearers, useful and helpful to build them up. When our speech is seasoned with salt, it will also be gracious to the hearers. They will then be more willing to hear us when we speak.

Salt is also used as a preservative to prevent decay and corruption. Speech that is seasoned with salt is the type of speech Paul describes in Ephesians 4:29, “*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*”

That is, do not let our conversation be corrupt, be impure or be a half-truth (which amounts to a lie). When you put two facts together, and the result is not true, you are lying. So be careful, do not twist and turn your words. You will be caught lying. The Lord instructs us in Matthew 5:37, “*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*”

So, our “*speech*” must be of “*grace, seasoned with salt.*” In this way, it will be meaningful and useful to those who are listening to us, especially when we reason and share with them the gospel truth.

THOUGHT: The Lord says, “*Ye are the salt of the earth.*”

PRAYER: O Lord, let me not lose my saltiness so that I may be useful.

BE READY ALWAYS

Next, we see the reason why Paul admonishes us to converse graciously and with Christian flavour. He adds, “*that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*” As we consistently exhibit Christian flavour in our conversation, as we speak graciously like our Master, as we talk much about our heavenly hope, we will attract opportunities for witnessing.

The unsaved may become interested as they see the difference in us and raise questions and ask us about God. We must therefore be ready to know how to answer every one who asks us concerning our Christian faith.

Apostle Peter writes in his epistle in 1 Peter 3:15, “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*”

Sometimes when people want to know about Christ, it is couched in a circuitous conversation. They talk about church, their children having problems, and thus they are setting up a context for us to offer the solution to their problems. The solution is found in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We need to cultivate the sensitivity of being alert and ready when people bring up the subject of the things of God. They may not verbalize it directly though they may be seeking the Lord. Let us be ready always to answer them with the Word of God.

Let us be responsible to conduct our affairs and to speak always in such a way that our lives provide a consistent witness of our Christian faith in the midst of a world that is largely unbelieving. May our Christian walk and talk be consistent with our Christian faith. May our conduct and conversation work together that we may be a powerful witness for the Lord.

THOUGHT: The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

PRAYER: O Lord, let me not be ashamed but be ready to speak.

LABOURING TOGETHER

God does not intend for man to work alone. If you look at the organisation of a company, you will notice that there are various positions held by different people. This is for effective management. No one person can be managing everything. People are needed to help out in one way or another for the proficient functioning of the organisation. And that is why we are employed by our company to help the bosses fulfil the mission of the company.

Similarly in the Christian ministry, God does not expect us to be working all alone. Co-workers are needed to fulfil the ministry that God has given to us. We have come to the end of the epistle to the Colossians, and we note that Paul is not alone in the service to God. He has many faithful fellow workers and he refers to them as beloved brethren who are labouring with him. And Paul describes the different work that each of his fellow workers is involved in.

As the apostle brings his epistle to a close, he introduces the messenger who is bringing the letter to its destination. He then shares final greetings from his associates to the Colossians and his personal greetings to the various members of the congregation. It is a special feature of this epistle that Paul mentions a rather large number of fellow Christians and co-workers. Only here and in the last chapter of Romans does he send such extensive greetings. (Kuschel)

Here, nine names are mentioned, including seven men with whom Paul was in contact during his imprisonment. By studying these verses we can discover a little bit more about the men that surround the apostle during the difficult, yet productive days of his imprisonment. We can also gain a little insight into the intimate and cordial spirit that prevails among the Christians and particularly among those who laboured together for the cause of the gospel in the early days of the church. (Kuschel)

THOUGHT: The Lord appointed seventy and sent them to preach.

PRAYER: Lord, let me be part of the ministries in the local church.

A FELLOWSERVANT

Firstly, we have Tychicus. Colossians 4:7-8, “*All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.*” Paul begins by commending Tychicus who was not an ordinary fellow-helper for Paul.

Paul calls him a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. He was a beloved brother who was willing to stay with Paul even though the situation was difficult. How encouraging it is to have a beloved Christian at your side when everything seems to be against you!

Tychicus was also a faithful minister. His love revealed itself in action. He ministered to Paul and assisted him in his many situations. Paul could depend on Tychicus to get the job done.

Tychicus was beloved and faithful to Paul even in difficult times. Be like Tychicus!

He was rather close to Paul because Paul writes, “*All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you.*” He was a man who knew Paul’s state: all his needs, burdens and struggles in the ministry. He was Paul’s personal representative, Paul’s fellowservant.

Though he was not an apostle himself, he was assisting Paul in his Apostolic ministry. Paul and Tychicus worked together in the service of the Lord. Since Paul was in prison and could not avail himself, he was highly dependent upon Tychicus.

THOUGHT: Can the church and her leaders count on me?

PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be a fellowservant serving faithfully.

A USEFUL BROTHER

Secondly, we have Onesimus. Colossians 4:9, “*With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.*” Paul also called Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother. Together with Tychicus, Onesimus was to share with the church concerning Paul’s situation.

Onesimus was a slave who escaped from his master Philemon in Colosse and fled to Rome. In Rome, he met the Apostle Paul, heard the gospel and became a Christian. Now Paul was sending him back to his master under the protection of Tychicus. Tychicus also carried a personal letter to Philemon, urging Philemon to forgive Onesimus and receive him back, not just as a returning slave, but as a fellow believer.

Here Paul commends Onesimus to the entire congregation, underscoring to them what he has personally written to Philemon. By permitting Onesimus to stand with Tychicus as an informant concerning his affairs, the apostle visibly demonstrates to the congregation that he regards the converted Onesimus as a faithful and dear brother. Onesimus was one of them, not just in a physical sense because he is a native of their city, but one of them in spirit, a fellow believer in Jesus. (Kuschel)

Although Onesimus was a young convert of Paul, yet he was faithfully and lovingly serving, and was of great help to Paul.

Do we use the lack of spiritual maturity to excuse ourselves from serving God? Sometimes, it is not a question of spiritual maturity. Rather, it has to do with faithfulness and having a loving heart towards the workers of God and the work of God.

THOUGHT: How can I be useful to the Lord and to my fellow brethren?

PRAYER: O Lord, use me for Thy purpose.

FELLOWWORKERS OF COMFORT

Thirdly, we have Aristarchus, Marcus and Justus. Colossians 4:10-11, *“Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) 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.”*

Aristarchus, Marcus and Justus were Paul’s beloved brethren. He called them his fellowworkers for the kingdom of God.

These three companions of Paul were of Jewish birth and they sent greetings to the Colossians. They, too, were concerned about the Colossians’ spiritual welfare. They wanted the believers in Colosse to know this, and they wanted them to know that they concurred with everything the apostle had written. (Kuschel)

Aristarchus was a Jewish native of Thessalonica. He was with the apostle at Ephesus in his third missionary journey. Paul called him a fellow prisoner because he was someone who volunteered to be with Paul and to assist him during the apostle’s imprisonment. (Kuschel)

Mark, also known as John Mark, had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey but then turned back. Because of this, Paul refused to take him on the second journey. By the time Paul wrote these words, however, Mark had nobly redeemed himself. The apostle no longer regarded him as a liability but commended him warmly as one who had been a comfort to him.

And so not only were these three Paul’s faithful fellowworkers in the ministry, not only were they a great help to him in the ministry, they were also a great source of comfort to him.

THOUGHT: Am I a comfort to fellow brethren or a threat to them?

PRAYER: O Lord, may Thou use me to be a comfort to others.

A PRAYERFUL SERVANT

Fourthly, we have Epaphras. Colossians 4:12-13, “*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. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.*”

Paul moves on and talks about Epaphras whom he calls “*a servant of Christ, ...always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” (Col 4:12). Note that besides calling Epaphras a dear fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ (Col 1:7), Paul refers to him as a servant of Christ.

Epaphras is also a prayer warrior for his labour of love is to pray always and fervently for the believers in Colosse. As a regular part of his daily routine, Epaphras, who is perhaps the one person most aware of the spiritual dangers facing the Colossians, wrestles in prayer with the Lord on the Colossians’ behalf. He engages in zealous praying for them that they may be perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Paul also tells us that Epaphras has great zeal for the Christians at Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul speaks warmly of the man and his work as Epaphras beseeches the Lord to help his brethren so that they may not be led astray but may stand firm in the true faith. He does not want his brethren who are dear to his heart to be deluded by error. He cares that they must remain true to their confession of faith in the all-sufficient Saviour Jesus Christ.

This faithful servant of Christ, out of concern for the Colossians’ spiritual welfare, brings Paul the report that prompts him to write this epistle.

THOUGHT: Am I prayerful for the spiritual state of the brethren ?

PRAYER: Lord, give me the burden to pray for my brethren.

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

Fifthly, we have Luke and Demas. Colossians 4:14, *“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.”*

Paul mentions Luke first in verse 14 with a good commendation. Most of us are familiar with Luke, a Gentile Christian who is a frequent travel companion with Paul. Luke too is noted for his faithfulness. He is an educated man, a *“beloved physician,”* universally loved and admired by the Christians of his day. Luke has been faithfully serving the Lord with his medical expertise which is of great assistance to Paul during his missionary trips and his imprisonments. Luke is a remarkable person, always loyal to Paul, to the gospel, and to his Lord. In fact later on in his final imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote these touching words in 2 Timothy 4:11, *“Only Luke is with me.”* Luke and Paul are kindred spirits. Both are educated, sympathetic, committed and faithful to the gospel’s cause. (Kuschel)

Then Paul mentions Demas without any commendation. This is the last of Paul’s associates to greet the Colossians. He has a less honourable history. Demas would one day prove to be a great disappointment to Paul. During the apostle’s second and last imprisonment he would write, *“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica”* (2 Tim 4:10). Has Paul already seen signs of that fatal weakness when he wrote these words to the Colossians? We do not know. But the fact that in the close circle of Paul’s associates there is someone who proves to be unfaithful, just as there was one traitor among the Lord’s twelve disciples, is certainly a warning to every Christian against overconfidence. (Kuschel)

THOUGHT: O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end.

PRAYER: Lord, give me grace to follow Thee no matter what happens.

TAKE HEED

Colossians 4:15-18, “*Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 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. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.*”

Now we come to the end of the epistle and here let us note the admonition of the Apostle Paul in verse 17, that we are to take heed of the ministry which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it.

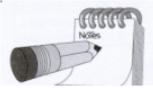
In verse 17, Paul encourages Archippus to make sure that he completes the work he has received in the Lord. There are many ways for us to leave our work unfinished. We can easily get sidetracked morally, we can become exhausted and stop, we can get angry and quit, or we can let it slide and leave it to others. We should see to it that we finish God’s assignments, completing His work.

The Lord Jesus says in Luke 9:62, “*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*” Once we pledge our time and life to serve God in whatever ministry, let us be a faithful servant in the ministry. We are never to give up until the work is done.

We are also reminded of Paul’s exhortation in 1 Corinthians 3:10, “*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*” And also in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” Let us take heed.

THOUGHT: It is important that we fulfil the ministry for the Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, enable me to fulfil whatever service Thou would have me to do.



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