PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

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PREFACE

This commentary would not exist without the support and encouragement of many dear brothers and sisters in Christ. First, I want to thank the elders of the East Albertville church of Christ (E.R. Hall, Rex Henson, Sid Rowe, and Gary Chumley). These good men have been and continue to be such a great source of strength to me. I am thankful for the fellowship we have in Christ, the wise and careful way that they look out for my soul, their mentorship, and our friendship. Truly, I count myself as enormously blessed just to have these men and their families in my life.

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Lastly, I want to thank my grandfather, Harry Stewart, for everything he ever did in guiding me to obey the gospel. I doubt I would ever have obeyed the gospel if not for him. I love you and I miss you, Ding. I can only hope you would be proud of the man I am today.

Dylan Stewart (August 31, 2026)

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INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Colossians is considered the "twin epistle" of Ephesians. The Colossian and Ephesian epistles were both written while Paul was imprisoned (**Col. 1:24, 4:3, 10; Eph. 3:1, 4:1, 6:20**), and both letters were delivered to the respective churches by Tychicus (**Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9**). Although the letters share similar themes, principles, and instructions,[1] each letter serves a unique purpose. Whereas Ephesians emphasizes God's eternal plan of salvation made possible through Jesus Christ (**Eph. 1-3**) and the responsibilities we must fulfill in response to the work God accomplished on our behalf (**Eph. 4-6**), the Colossian epistle focuses on refuting false doctrines and defending the deity of Christ.

Regardless of what modern scholars argue, there is zero doubt that Paul penned the Colossian letter. We know confidently that Paul penned the letter because the writer identifies himself three times as the apostle Paul (**Col. 1:1, 23; 4:18**), and we can trust these words since the scriptures are the inerrant word of God (**2 Tim. 3:16**). Specifically, it is believed that both letters were written during Paul's Roman imprisonment (**Acts 28**) in approximately 62 AD. This would date the letter approximately 23-32 years after the death of Christ.

We know Paul taught in-person at Ephesus for at least three years (**Acts 20:31**). We do not know, however, if Paul ever physically set foot in Colossae. Some suggest Epaphras first taught the gospel there, and internal evidence supports this theory (**Col. 1:7, 2:1, 4:12-13**). Epaphras was a Gentile who lived in Colossae (**Col. 4:12**). He is identified by Paul as a faithful servant of the Lord (**Col. 1:7, 4:12**), a hard worker zealous for the cause of Christ (**Col. 4:13**), and a fellow prisoner (**Phile. 23**). Although the name Epaphras is a form of Epaphroditus, the two names in the New Testament are distinct. Epaphras was imprisoned when Epaphroditus served as a messenger of the Philippian church for Paul (**Phil. 2:25, 4:18**).

Some suggest Paul did physically teach in Colossae due to its geographical proximity to areas we know he did visit. For example, Paul traveled through Phrygia (**Acts 18:23**), and Colossae was located within this ancient kingdom. Colossae was also a city in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) located about 100 miles east of Ephesus, a city wherein Paul spent the better part of three years laboring (**Acts 20:31**). Additionally, Colossae was near Laodicea and Hierapolis, which were two cities located along the banks of the Lycus River, approximately within 6-12 miles of Colossae. Both Laodicea and Hierapolis are mentioned by name in the letter (**Col. 4:13-14, 16**). Ultimately, whether Paul set foot in Colossae or not, the apostle clearly had a relationship with the church there and played an integral part in its foundation (**Acts 19:10**).

[1] See *Appendix A: Similarities Between Ephesians and Colossians* on page 60.

It appears Philemon and Onesimus, both of whom had personal relationships with Paul, may have been members of this congregation or at least had some sort of connection with the church based on references to Onesimus and Epaphras in each letter (**Phile. 1:1, 10, 23; Col. 4:7-9**). Many presume the church in Colossae met in Philemon's house based on a statement Paul makes in **Phile. 1:2**, as well as Paul describing Onesimus (Philemon's servant) as "*one of you*" in **Col. 4:9**.

At the time of Paul's writing, there were spiritual problems affecting the church in Colossae. Scholars and historians have surmised that by the first century the city had become a hub for a local angel cult who worshipped angels, specifically Michael.[2] [3] Internal evidence seems to support this assumption (**Col. 2:18**). Additionally, some brethren also appeared to have fallen prey to various deceptive philosophies derived from the minds and traditions of men (**Col. 2:8**). Such deception remains an ever-present danger for Christians of all generations (**Eph. 5:6**).

As was the case with the churches of Galatia, some brethren in Colossae were being led astray by Judaizing teachers (**Col. 2:11-12, 14, 16-17**). Since Colossae was, according to scholars, predominately Gentile in population, these false teachers would specifically try to bring the Gentile Christians under a yoke of bondage by convincing them to obey the Law of Moses (**Col. 1:21, 27**). [4] The issue of Judaizing teachers was a prevailing problem in first century churches (**Acts 15:1-2; Gal. 1:6-8, 3:1-2, 4:9-11, 5:1-4).**

Notably, it appears that a primitive form of the doctrine known as Gnosticism (a doctrine asserting that all flesh is inherently sinful; therefore, Jesus could not have come in the literal flesh) [5] crept into the church, as evidenced by the epistle refuting the two main approaches of Gnostics:

1) Asceticism, i.e. rejecting all fleshly appetites to the point of denying the body of its necessities, such as food, drink, scripturally authorized sexual activity, etc. (refuted by **Col. 2:18-23**).
2) Unrestrained living, i.e. gratifying every fleshly lust because we are free from all law (refuted by **Col. 3:5-7**).

Paul rejected both approaches by plainly stating, "*You are complete in Him*" (**Col. 2:10**).

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[2] Luigi Piccardi (2007). *The AD 60 Denizli Basin earthquake and the apparition of Archangel Michael at Colossae (Aegean Turkey).* Geological Society, London, Special Publications. 273 (1): **95–105**.

[3] Leon of Mt. Athos [Author], D.P. Curtin [Translator] (2020). *The Miracle of St. Michael at Colossae*. Dalcassian Publishing Company.

[4] Although Colossae was predominately Gentile, there was also a considerable Jewish population in the city since Jews from Phrygia were present to hear Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:10).

[5] http://www.gnosis.org/gnintro.htm

Due to Gnosticism not coming into full effect until the early part of the second century, [6] many scholars contend that Paul did not write the letter to the Colossians. [7] While it is true that full-blown Gnosticism was not prominent until the second century, basic principles of this religious doctrine obviously would have existed prior to its maturation. [8] Full-blown false doctrine does not become such unless its roots are first planted before then spreading and growing.

While Paul did not deal with second century Gnosticism in his Colossian letter, he did address an incipient form of it within the epistle. [9] As was common in this doctrine, a Jewish influence can be seen infused into this incipient form of Gnosticism, [10] [11] [12] as evidenced by multiple references to the commandments and ordinances of the Law of Moses (**Col. 2:11-12, 14, 16, 20, 22**).

Arguably, the two primary themes of this epistle are the deity and preeminence of Christ (**Col. 1:15-20, 2:9-10**), and the redemption and hope found in Him (**Col. 1:13-14, 27**), contrasted with the lack of hope found in doctrines and traditions of men. All rebukes of error, defenses of the gospel, and exhortations to live faithfully are written in view of these themes.

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[6] https://iep.utm.edu/gnostic/

[7] Scholars also increasingly reject the truth that Paul wrote Ephesians despite Colossians and Ephesians both being addressed from Paul (Eph. 1:1, 3:1; Col. 1:1, 4:18) and first-person pronouns being used in contexts which identify various activities and relationships of Paul (Eph. 3:8, 13; 4:1; 6:20-22; Col. 1:3, 8-9, 13-14, 24-25, 28-29; 2:1, 4-5; 4:3, 7-8, 10-11, 13, 18).

[8] Gnosticism may not have reached its full potential during the first century, but the doctrine was obviously flourishing in the first century. When John penned his first epistle (approximately 85-95 AD), he labeled false teachers who denied that Jesus came in the flesh as being "*not of God*" and in possession of the spirit of the "*Antichrist*" (1 John 4:2-3).

[9] "Although religion as such could be described as philosophy in the Hellenistic age, it is probable that here we have a reference to that attempted fusion of philosophy and religion known as Gnosticism, which at this stage was not fully developed as in the second century" (Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament,* **324**).

[10] Aldo Magris (2005). "*Gnosticism: Gnosticism from its Origins to the Middle Ages (further considerations)*." Macmillan Encyclopedia of Religion (2nd ed.), **3515–3516**.

[11] "The Colossian error was an amalgam of Judaism (the Essene type) and paganism (incipient Gnosticism). The result was a 'philosophy' in which great emphasis was placed upon mysticism and asceticism" (Walton Weaver, *Truth Commentaries – Philippians, Colossians,* **284**).

[12] "The Colossians heresy evidences a curious mixture of both Jewish and Hellenistic religious and philosophical ideas" (Michael R. Weed, *The Letters of Paul to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon,* **32**).

CHAPTER ONE

Salutation (1:1-2)

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

In this greeting, Paul emphasized his apostleship, as he did in the beginning of most of his letters (**Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1**). Doing so was not indicative of pride but merely presenting a simple fact. Paul saw his apostleship as work, not as a glorified position wherein he could find personal elevation over others (**1 Cor. 9:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:12-16**).

Paul not only emphasized his apostleship here, but also stressed that his apostleship was "*by the will of God*." Any power that Paul possessed was delegated by the will of God. Paul was Christ's apostle, chosen directly by Him (**Acts 9:15-16**), and nothing he taught was of his own authority. Later on in this epistle, Paul expressed his desire for those who read this letter to follow his example in only doing things which were approved by the Lord Jesus Christ (**Col. 3:17**).

In addition to identifying himself in this salutation, Paul also acknowledged the presence of Timothy. Though he mentioned Timothy by name here, there is no reason to presume Timothy co-authored the letter since Paul never identifies him as a participatory writer of the epistle. Evidently, Timothy was with Paul at the time of writing and, therefore, was included in this salutation as a result. It is also worth noting that although we might view Timothy as a "big name" first century Christian and preacher, Paul did not elevate Timothy's status beyond the position of "*brother*."

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The "*grace*" and "*peace*" greeting that Paul used in this salutation is intentionally similar (**2 Thess. 3:16-18**) to the greeting he used in all of his epistles that are available to read within the New Testament canon (**Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phile. 1:4**).

Paul stated that "*grace*" [1] and "*peace*" [2] are derived from both "*God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*." [3] Peace is conjoined with grace in this text, indicating that true peace comes from being in God's grace (**John 14:27, 16:33; Phil. 4:4-7;**

[1] "*Grace*" – Good-will, loving-kindness, favor (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[2] "*Peace*" – The tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[3] "Peace is the harmony and satisfaction which comes into a life that has accepted God's grace, is reconciled to God, and rests in assurance of the forgiveness of sins" (J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **249**).

James 1:17). [4] The fact that grace is derived from both the Father and the Son is a testimony to the deity of Christ.

The letter is addressed to "*saints*" [5] and "*brethren*." The same Greek word for "*saints*" is translated elsewhere as "*holy*" (**1 Pet. 1:15, 2:9; Col. 1:22, 3:12**). In this verse, "*saints*" are contextually defined as being "*faithful brethren in Christ*." Saints "*are*" (present-tense) faithful in Christ Jesus. Therefore, "*saints*" are all living faithful Christians.

Even though some or potentially all of the Christians in Colossae had not seen Paul's face (**Col. 2:1**), the apostle still identified them as his "*brethren*;" he viewed them as part of God's holy family. Being a member of this family is dependent upon being "*in Christ*." Of course, one cannot be faithful "*in*" Christ Jesus unless he is actually in Christ Jesus, which occurs through water baptism (**Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; John 3:3-5**).

There is a distinction made by Paul here between God and Christ. God is identified as the "*Father*" and Jesus is identified as "*Lord*." There is only one God the Father and only one Lord Jesus Christ (**Eph. 4:5-6**). Though God and Christ are one (**John 10:30**), they remain distinct with the Son being subservient to the Father (**1 Cor. 11:3, 15:28**). The Son is how the Father delivers grace and truth to man in these last days (**John 1:14, 17; Heb. 1:1**).

Thanksgiving for Brethren (1:3-5)

[3] We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Paul expressed thanks for the "*faith*" of his brethren in Christ. There ought to be immense joy in knowing that the body of Christ is flourishing, growing, and abounding in faith (**1 Thess. 3:6-10**). Paul also expressed thanks for the "*love*" that his brethren possessed "*for all the saints*." Though Colossae was predominately Gentile, there were likely Jews in the congregation. Therefore, this phrase could possibly be an allusion to the fact that there were no divisions present and the two groups were not partial in showing their love. Whatever prompted Paul to make this statement, it is clear that love for Jesus should prompt us to love others (**1 John 4:20**).

Paul was grateful for his fellow saints, but it is notable that his thanksgiving prompted him to regularly pray for them. When blessed to see or hear of our brothers and sisters in Christ growing in faith and love, thanks is due God (**2 Thess. 1:3**). Paul frequently gave thanks for fellow members of

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[4] "To be in favor with is to find 'grace' with, e.g. Acts 2:47; hence it appears in this sense at the beginning and the end of several epistles, where the writer desires 'grace' from God for the readers" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **277**).

[5] "*Saint*" – Set apart by (or for) God, holy, sacred (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

the kingdom of Christ (**Col. 1:3, 9; Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2, 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phile. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:3**). Therefore, Christians today should follow Paul's example in regularly giving thanks and praying for fellow Christians (**2 Thess. 2:13**).

5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

Paul described the "*hope*" the Colossians had as residing in heaven. God's blessings for man are derived from heaven, lead man to heaven, and await man in heaven (**Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3; Heb. 12:23**). The hope that the Colossians possessed was only present because they were faithful saints in Christ (**Col. 1:1-2**) who heard and responded to "*the word of the truth of the gospel*." However, if a Christian does not remain faithful to the gospel message, then he has no hope (**1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 10:26-27**). One who presently possesses (**1 John 5:13**) the hope of eternal life (**Tit. 1:2, 3:7**), which God has laid up for him in Heaven (**1 Pet. 1:3-4**), must continually seek to purify himself from sin through the means that God provides (**1 John 3:3, 1:6-9**).

Paul's use of the term "*gospel*" differs from those today who call for a distinction between gospel and doctrine. The argument by many today is that we must be united in the fundamental tenets of the gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ), but we are free to differ in our doctrine. Here, however, Paul made no such distinction and, instead, identified the gospel as both "*the word*" and "*the truth*." The gospel involves far more than just the first principles of Christ (**Gal. 2:14; 2 John 9**).

What is to be done with the gospel? It is to be believed (**Acts 15:7**), proudly accepted (**Rom. 1:16-17**), obeyed (**2 Thess. 1:8-9**), preached (**Mark 16:15-16**), defended (**Phil. 1:16**), held fast (**1 Cor. 15:1-2**), and lead people to conduct lives which match its message (**Phil. 1:27**). The gospel, not the philosophies or traditions of men, is what provides us faith, hope, and salvation from sin (**Col. 1:23; Rom. 1:16, 10:17**).

Paul's Gratitude for the Proclamation of the Gospel (1:6-8)

6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

In this verse, Paul expressed gratitude for the fact that the gospel message not only reached the Colossians but, additionally, had come to "*all the world*," echoing the intent of the Great Commission (**Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16**). Paul may here be strictly referring to the known Roman world [6] (I believe it is possible that he does this in **Rom. 1:8**). However, I hold the position that

[6] "'All the world' most likely refers to all parts of the Roman empire" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **250**).

Paul is here teaching that the gospel had truly reached all parts of the world (**Col. 1:23**), not just the Roman world. This does not necessarily mean that every single person on the planet heard the gospel preached, but I do believe it means that first century Christians had brought the gospel into every region of the world by the time Paul penned Colossians.

Many readers will likely scoff at my literal interpretation that the gospel had reached "*all the world*" within only 30+/- years after Christ's death. How could I possibly believe the gospel message could have reached every region of the earth by roughly 62 AD?

Primarily, I believe the gospel reached "*all the world*" by the time Paul penned this epistle due to the work of the apostles converting people on Pentecost (**Acts 2**), who then went back to their home countries and taught what they learned. These actions would be replicated throughout the first century with people such as the Ethiopian eunuch, who, after his conversion in **Acts 8**, could very well have been the first person to bring the gospel to Africa. All who obeyed the gospel during the first century – not just the apostles – needed to do their part fulfilling the Great Commission (**Acts 8:4**) for Paul to be able to assert that the gospel had come to "*all the world*."

Secondarily, the following historical records support the conclusion that the gospel literally reached "*all the world*" by the time Paul penned Colossians.

1) In his epistle to Rome, Paul expressed his intentions to journey to Spain (**Rom. 15:24**). Historical records indicate that other apostles and early disciples made similar journeys that far west. [7]
2) Some historical records describe Thomas as eventually being martyred in India. [8] [9] Some accounts even claim he ventured as far east as China and Indonesia. [10] [11]
3) Traditions passed down for centuries in northeast Europe suggest Andrew possibly traveled into modern-day Ukraine and Russia, although these accounts have been contested as mere legend. [12]
4) Lastly, due to the Romans' rule over the eastern hemisphere, the world was more interconnected during the first century than

[7] https://aleteia.org/2021/10/25/two-jameses-and-a-confusion-of-relics-in-compostela

[8] https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/how-christianity-came-to-india-kerala-180958117/

[9] https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Thomas

[10] Koch, Kurt E. (1972). *The Revival in Indonesia*. Evangelization Publishers.

[11] Bays, Daniel H. (2011). *A New History of Christianity in China*. John Wiley & Sons.

[12] Wilson, Andrew (2000). *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation*, Yale University Press, **33-37**.

ever before in the earth's history, [13] allowing the gospel to be spread more easily than we might realize. Wherever the apostles and the people they converted in the first century journeyed to fulfill the Great Commission likely would have been impossible to reach without the highway systems Rome started creating in approximately 300 BC. These highways went as far west as Spain, north as Germany and the British Isles, east as Iraq (the Silk Road ran to the eastern coast of China), and south as Egypt. [14] [15]

For all of the above reasons, I believe the gospel literally reached "*all the world*" by the time Paul wrote Colossians.

In addition to declaring the gospel had reached "*all the world*," Paul was thankful that the gospel was "*bringing forth fruit*." As was the case with the Thessalonians (**1 Thess. 2:13**), the gospel was working in the Colossians effectively. Today, we may not feel that God's word is bringing forth fruit whenever we try planting the seed, but, ultimately, if the gospel is taught then the seed is being planted (**Isa. 55:11; Matt. 13:18-23**). Whatever fruit that may be produced from this planted seed is ultimately the responsibility of the one who hears the word taught (**James 1:21-25**).

The Colossians knew ("*understood*" NASB) the grace of God. It is not enough to merely know about the grace of God; we must understand it. Sadly, many today – even many of God's people – misunderstand the grace of God, viewing it as a license to freely engage in all manner of sins, which is an attitude that contradicts the truth of God's word (**Tit. 2:11-14; Rom. 6:1-4**). Let us never allow such thinking to take root in our hearts and minds.

[7] as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,

The Colossians were taught by Epaphras, who is here identified as "*a faithful minister of Christ*" and "*fellow servant;*" he directly informed Paul of the Colossians' love. Epaphras was with Paul in Rome at the time of writing (**Col. 4:12-13**), and it is very possible that he began the work in Colossae (**Col. 2:1**). Paul's verbal approval of his "*fellow servant*" may have been intended to emphasize how any doctrine that the Colossians might hear which did not harmonize with Epaphras's teaching was false in nature. Paul's approval could have motivated these Christians to cling to what Epaphras taught rather than what the various false teachers around them were preaching (**Col. 2:6-7**).

[13] https://www.ancientworldmagazine.com/articles/vastness-rome/

[14] https://web.archive.org/web/20200201071552/http://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/silk-road/

[15] https://asiasociety.org/education/belief-systems-along-silk-road

[8] who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

The Colossians' love that Paul earlier praised (**Col. 1:3-4**) is further identified as "*love in the Spirit*." This may mean their love was spiritual rather than fleshly; their love was not insincere but genuine and heartfelt; or their love was produced by the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22-23**). All three interpretations have scriptural merit. Whatever Paul's intentions were in employing this phrase, if Christians love our brethren as we are commanded (**1 Pet. 2:17**), even unbelievers will be able to recognize us as true disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (**John 13:34-35**).

Petition for Blessings on Behalf of the Colossians (1:9-14)

[9] For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

The report that Epaphras brought to Paul caused him to not only be thankful but also pray for the Colossian Christians' further spiritual growth and development. A similar prayer is found in **Eph. 1:17-19**, where Paul also expressed a desire that the Ephesians would grow and develop spiritually. Both of these prayers center around the request that the recipients of each respective letter would be filled with knowledge of the Father's will and gain a spirit of wisdom and understanding. As it pertains to this prayer for the Colossians, all that is described in the succeeding verses is indicative of what happens when one is filled with knowledge of God's will.

Paul's request for the Colossians to be filled with knowledge of the Father's will suggests that all people can know and understand the truth (**John 8:32; Eph. 3:4**). Such knowledge is not miraculously poured out upon us, but is received through diligent study of God's word (**2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 17:11**), accompanied by prayers for wisdom (**James 1:5**).

Paul did not request that the Colossians would have a little knowledge but, rather, he requested they would be "*filled*," or reach maturity, with such knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding. Spiritual maturation is necessary for knowing how to walk worthy (**Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1**) and conduct a life worthy of the Lord (**2 Pet. 1:5-8; Eph. 5:15-16**).

[10] that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

These verses explain what the Colossians needed to do upon being filled with the knowledge of God's will. No person will ever be worthy or deserving of what God has done for man (**Luke 17:10**), but we are still commanded to conduct our lives in such a way that "*pleases Him in all respects*" (NASB).

To walk worthy of the Lord means to conduct oneself in a way that is fitting the name of Christian (**Phil. 1:27; Eph. 5:1-10**). Our goal in life is not to please ourselves or seek the approval of others (**Luke 9:23; Gal. 1:10**). Instead, our goal must always be setting about doing whatever pleases the Lord and is approved by Him (**2 Cor. 5:9; Ecc. 12:13**).

In order to fully please the Lord, one must be productive in his faith by being "*fruitful in every good work*." Man is not at liberty to define for himself what is or is not a "*good work*." Such standards of goodness do not come from man but, rather, God (**2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17**). While good works themselves cannot save man (**Eph. 2:8-9**), they are so vital that God re-created saved men and women specifically to do good works (**Eph. 2:10**). Our works determine whether we know God and belong to Him or deny Him and stand separated from Him (**Tit. 1:16, 3:14; Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; James 2:14-26**).

In order to fully please the Lord, one must also be progressing in his faith by "*increasing in the knowledge of God*." One who has no concern for the will of God is unwise; he is a fool (**Psalm 14:1; Prov. 1:7, 2:6**). Notice that general knowledge (the knowledge of man) is not what Paul specified in this text; he specified "*the knowledge of God*." The knowledge of man and the knowledge of God are two very different types of knowledge (**1 Cor. 1:18, 2:14**). One is spiritually productive while the other is spiritually destructive.

Lastly, in order to fully please the Lord, one must become "*strengthened with all might*." True strength does not come from within man, but comes through God's "*glorious power*" and the power found in His Son (**Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13**). God's power is infinite (**Eph. 3:20**), and His power is evident to all of mankind, even to those who reject Him (**Rom. 1:20**).

The strength referenced by Paul in this text is provided by God to help us obtain "*patience and longsuffering with joy*," even amid various trials (**James 1:2-4**). [16] [17] Though the outward man (the physical body) grows old and weakens, and though various entities wage wars against our souls daily, our inward man finds its greatest strength through the power of God and His revealed word (**2 Cor. 4:1-2, 16**).

[12] giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

When one is filled with the knowledge of God's will and receives from Him the strength that

[16] "The Christian who is strengthened with all might rejoices in spite of the trials, temptation, and ill treatment of others. He will not let either type of problem stir a sour or gloomy heart" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **16**).

[17] **"**The one made strong by God is able to withstand temptations and trials and sufferings with patience and joyfulness" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **256**).

He freely offers to those who are fruitful laborers, this person will be prompted to joyously give thanks to God (**Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16-18**). Such a heart of thanksgiving should abound when we remember that God has "*qualified us to be partakers*" of the heavenly inheritance. Man is not capable of qualifying or justifying himself; only God is capable of accomplishing this marvelous feat (**Rom. 3:23-25, 5:18-19**). It is by the power of God that one can be delivered from the "*power of darkness*" (**Col. 1:13**).

The Colossians are here described as "*saints in the light;*" this stands in opposition to the next verse, which informs us that these Christians were once under the "*power of darkness.*" The Ephesian Christians were described similarly in **Eph. 5:8**. All Christians are known as people who were once consumed by the darkness which sin casts, but changed upon their surrender to the Lord (**1 Cor. 6:11**), who is the source of all light (**Eph. 5:14; John 8:12**).

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

When one acts upon his faith in the first steps of obedience, he is delivered from the punishment of his past sins and "*conveyed*" [18] [19] ("*translated*" KJV; "*transferred*" NASB) into the kingdom (church) of the Son of God (**Acts 2:38, 41, 47**). Jesus's kingdom is not to begin at some point in the future, as premillennialists claim, because according to this passage His kingdom was already in existence by the time Paul penned this epistle. [20] The Colossians had already been transferred (past-tense) into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. The scriptures teach that the kingdom of Christ has been in existence since the first century (**Luke 17:20-21; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:30-33; Rev. 1:9**). To deny that Christ our Lord is now reigning and ruling over His kingdom (**1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20-23**) robs Him of the glory which is presently due Him (**Luke 24:26**).

All children of God are people who were transferred from darkness to light (**1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 26:15-18**). All who have been transferred

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[18] According to W.E. Vine, the Greek word translated as "*conveyed*" in Col. 1:13 carries with it the notion of causing one to be able to stand. The imagery of a person being able to stand as a direct result of what Christ accomplished is also found in Paul's statement to the Romans, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*" (Rom. 5:1-2).

[19] "The word occurs five times in the New Testament: of putting out of the stewardship, Luke 16:4; of the removal of Saul from the kingdom, Acts 13:22; of Paul turning away much people, Acts 19:26; and of removing mountains 1 Corinthians 13:2. A change of kingdoms is indicated" (Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament).

[20] "This passage clearly shows that the Colossians had received conveyance into the kingdom of Christ. It would be impossible for them to be in something that did not exist. Many today are still looking for the kingdom's establishment; yet, this passage tells us that at the time of writing of Colossians, the kingdom was already in existence" (Mike Johnson, *The Kingdom and Colossians 1:13*, https://seekingthingsabove.org/2014/06/13/the-kingdom-colossians-113/).

into the light do not live in the past nor dwell on our past life (**Phil. 3:12-14**), but we dare not forget that prior to becoming "*saints in the light*" we dwelled in darkness, leaving us completely devoid of true goodness and righteousness (**Eph. 4:17-24; 1 Tim. 1:13**).

Upon being transferred from darkness into light, Christians must continually radiate the light of Christ and bring light to the world (**Matt. 15:14-16; Phil. 2:15**). It is impossible to radiate the light of Christ when we fellowship sin.

As "*saints in the light*," every Christian has the responsibility to walk in accordance with what provides light – the holy and inspired word of God (**Psalm 119:105**). Having been reborn as saints in the light ("*children of light*" **Eph. 5:8**), Christians must continually walk in the light and make it our aim to not fall back into darkness (**1 John 1:5-10**). All Christians occasionally fail in our endeavors to refrain from submitting to darkness. The key is recognizing when we do fail so we can repent and confess those failures to God. All people sin (**1 John 1:8; Rom. 3:23**), but all people must repent of our sins (**Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31**) and confess them to God (**1 John 1:9**).

Jesus is identified in this text as the Son of God's love. Jesus as "*the Son of His love*" is not merely indicative of Christ being God's "*beloved Son*" (**Matt. 3:17; Eph. 1:6**), but illustrates how the Son is the representative image and depository in which the Father's love is manifested (**1 John 4:8-10; Tit. 3:4-7**). Jesus Christ is the ultimate manifestation of God's love for man (**John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4-5**).

Without God pouring out His love for man through the offering of His Son as payment for the sins of the world (**John 1:29**), the Colossians and all people of all generations would be without the hope Paul described earlier in the chapter (**Col. 1:5**). No one could become partakers of the inheritance offered by God (**Col. 1:12**), and no person would be able to obtain "*redemption*," i.e. "*the forgiveness of sins,*" [21] [22] unless the Father manifested His love to man through His Son.

Due to sin, man needs "*redemption*" (**Rom. 3:23-24**). Specifically, the "*redemption*" that has been provided is identified as "*the forgiveness of sins*" made possible through the "*blood*" of Jesus Christ. Since the Law of Moses, it has always been true that blood serves as the means for atonement (**Lev. 17:11**), but it was only through the perfectly sinless blood of Jesus Christ that forgiveness of sin was made available to man (**Heb. 9:14, 10:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-19**). It is strictly through Jesus Christ that men can be redeemed from their sins (**Acts 4:12**). Salvation from sin exists in no other name.

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[21] "*Redemption*" – Liberation procured by the payment of a ransom (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[22] "*Forgiveness*" – Release from bondage or imprisonment (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

The question must be asked – how does one first come into contact with the blood of Christ so he can receive redemption, i.e. forgiveness, of his sins? Is this redemption accomplished through faith? Indeed, it is! But redemption is obtained through a specific type of faith bringing one into contact with the blood of Christ. The type of faith that allows one to contact the blood of Christ is one which acts in obedience by submitting to Christ in water baptism (**Acts 22:16, 2:38**). If a person has not been baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, then he has not yet contacted the blood of Christ, which means he is still lost in sin until he submits to the Lord in baptism. [23] Praise be to God for the gift of His Son and the salvation from sin offered through His blood!

Preeminence of Christ (1:15-23)

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

After describing Jesus as the manifestation of God's love for man and the means by which we obtain redemption from sin, Paul here begins a lengthy discourse on the deity of Christ that continues for several verses.

First, Paul identified Jesus as "*the image of the invisible God*." No one has ever seen the Father (**John 1:18, 5:37; Exod. 33:20; 1 Tim. 6:16**); He is "*invisible*." We are, however, able to see God through Christ's "*image*" (**2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Cor. 11:7**). [24] Jesus is the exact representation of God due to sharing His "*form*" (**Phil. 2:5**) and possessing the "*express image of His person*" (**Heb. 1:3**). The Son is both the physical manifestation and visible representation of the invisible Father (**John 14:9**).

Then, Paul identified Jesus as "*the firstborn over all creation*." Many believe "*firstborn*" is used in this passage to indicate that Christ was the first being ever created, denying the eternal deity of the Son of God. However, "*firstborn*" simply indicates Jesus is supreme over all creatures, not that He is a created being. [25] The word refers to Christ being "*firstborn*" in position, not "*firstborn*" in time. [26]

Consider **Jer. 31:9**, where God called Ephraim "*firstborn*." Yet, when we read **Gen. 48:14** we discover that Ephraim was not "*firstborn*" in time but, rather, position. Ephraim's brother,

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[23] For the Christian who succumbs to sin and needs the Savior's cleansing, he need not be re-baptized. Instead, he must repent (Acts 8:13, 18-24) and confess his sin (1 John 1:7-9) to apply the blood of Christ and receive forgiveness.

[24] "*Image*" – Essentially and absolutely the perfect expression and representation of the Archetype, God the Father (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **247**).

[25] We do not deny that Jesus experienced an earthly birth (Luke 2:1-20). Instead, we are contending that He was not created by God because Jesus is God (John 20:28) and He has always existed, even prior to the creation (John 1:1-3).

[26] "*Firstborn*" – Expressing His priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the "first" to be born (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **240**).

Manasseh, was the "*firstborn*" in time. [27] Pair this knowledge with Paul's statement in the next verse and we can easily understand his true intent in describing Jesus as "*the firstborn over all creation*."

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Paul's intent in describing Jesus as "*the firstborn over all creation*" is made evident here. Everything was created both by ("*through*") Jesus and for Jesus; the Lord Christ is supreme. Jesus is declared to be over all creation because He existed before the creation of the world (**Gen. 1:26**; **Micah 5:2**).

It is also asserted that Jesus created "*all things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.*" This statement is all-encompassing and implies the following: anything that can or cannot be seen, anything that exists within the planet earth or beyond this orb, anything that resides within this material world or beyond it in the heavenly and celestial world – everything that does exist owes its very existence to the Son of God. [28]

Paul declared, "*For by Him all things were created*," then reiterated this point by adding, "*All things were created through Him*." Based on the information presented here, if Jesus is a created being, that would mean He created Himself. Yet, Jesus Christ was not created; to the contrary, He is the Creator (**John 1:1-3**).

In this text and in the succeeding verse, Paul identified five facts about the creation in relationship to Christ which serve as proof of His deity and preeminence over the creation. Paul asserted that "*all things*" were created:

1) "*By Him*" – For all of creation to come into existence "*by*" ("*in*" RSV) Christ indicates that everything that was/is created came from the desire of not just God the Father but also Christ, the Son of God (**Gen. 1:26**).
2) *"Through Him*" – For all the creation to come into existence "*through*" Christ indicates Jesus is the agent for whom everything in the world owes its existence (**Heb. 1:2**). As Creator, we owe our very being to Christ.
3) "*For Him*" – For all the creation to come into existence "*for*" Christ indicates that everything

[27] For more examples of the term "*firstborn*" being used not in reference to chronological placement but, rather, a position of superiority, compare Exod. 4:22 with Gen. 25:25-26; Psalm 89:27 with 1 Sam. 16:10-11; and Col. 1:18 with 1 Kings 17:17-24.

[28] "This encompasses all that is in the universe. That includes all on the earth that we can see and all that is in the heavens beyond our sight. Some think that the thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers refer to angels (or ranks of angels). Whether or not it does, angels are certainly included in 'all things' created, for they are created beings" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **19**).

which is created is ultimately intended to serve His divine purposes (**1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 2:10**). We may not always be able to ascertain what exact purpose specific parts of creation may serve, but whether or not we can define the purpose, we can be assured that its purpose is divine and intended to support the cause of God (**Job 12:7-10**).

17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Paul continued his thought from the previous verse by adding two more distinctive markers illustrating the deity and preeminence of Christ over the creation. Paul said of Jesus:

4) "*He is before all things*" – Jesus is "*before*" all things in that "*He existed before anything else did*" (ISV) and possesses authority over all of heaven and earth (**Matt. 28:18**).
5) "*In Him all things consist*" – That is to say, in Him all things hold together. [29] Jesus is the controlling force of the entire universe. The reason the earth is able to stand is because of Him (**Heb. 1:2**).

On a different note, the Lord must also come "*before*" all other matters in our lives. Since Jesus is preeminent over all creation, He requires that we ascribe to Him the preeminence, or the greatest priority, in how we conduct our lives (**Matt. 6:33; Gal. 2:20**). He demands and deserves the preeminence in all things (**Col. 1:18**).

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Though we have made repeated reference to the superiority of Christ, this verse is the first occasion where the word "*preeminence*" [30] has appeared in the epistle. Christ's superiority [31] is seen in the fact that He is the "*head of the body*," [32] which is "*the church*." The church represents the body of Christ belonging to Him. There is only one church built by Christ (**Eph. 4:4**) with only one head over it. Christ is the savior of the body (**Eph. 5:23**). Therefore, it is undeniable that if a person desires to be saved by Christ, he must do what is necessary to become a member of the Lord's body, i.e. His church. [33]

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[29] "To stand with or fall together, to be constituted, to be compact; it is said of the universe as upheld by the Lord, Col. 1:17, literally, 'By Him all things stand together'" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **124**).

[30] "*Preeminence*" – To be first in rank or influence (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[31] The NIV translates Col. 1:18 as follows: "*And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy*."

[32] The subject of headship is a common theme found throughout Paul's writings (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23).

[33] "To be out of the church is to be out of Christ. To be in Christ is to be in the church" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **261**).

The word "*church*," as it is used here, refers to the whole number of saved believers the world-over, not just the church in Colossae (**1 Cor. 10:32; Acts 2:47**). All who are in Christ are "*the church*." This living spiritual body exists as a union of like-minded believers in Christ who fellowship with one another (**Acts 2:38-47**).

Paul looked upon this body as a unit wherein Christ served as its "*head*" (**Eph. 4:15-16, 5:28; Col. 1:18, 2:19**). The church is not the literal physical body of Christ but, rather, a spiritual body attached to her spiritual head. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, but Christ is the chief cornerstone and the One with whom all authority resides (**Eph. 2:20**). Perhaps the greatest compliment ever given to the church is presented here by Paul's statement that the church is Christ's body, i.e. part of Him.

Jesus is "the *beginning*." Jesus is not only "*the beginning*," as is illustrated here, but the Lord is also identified in other scriptures as "*the end*" (**Rev. 22:13**). Given what is stated earlier in the verse regarding the church, it appears Paul's primary goal in describing Jesus as "*the beginning*" is to highlight how Christ is the originator and builder of this spiritual body (**Matt. 16:18**).

Jesus is the "*firstborn from the dead*." [34] As was the case in **Col. 1:15**, the term "*firstborn*" here does not refer to first chronologically because Jesus was not the first person to be resurrected from the dead. At least seven resurrections are recorded in the Bible prior to Christ's resurrection taking place. [35] Jesus is "*firstborn from the dead*" in the sense that, although He was not the first nor will He remain the last person resurrected from the dead (**1 Cor. 15**), He has preeminence over all who were and will be resurrected from the dead.

Further, Christ is the only One who was risen from the dead who did not eventually die a second time. All who remain steadfast in their faith and service to the Lord will be like Jesus in that they too will be resurrected never to die again (**John 5:28-29; Rom. 6:8-9**).

[19] For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,

We find in this verse possibly the greatest claim in support of the deity of Jesus Christ. Paul claimed that "*the fullness*" of God the Father dwells in the Son. That is, all the qualities of deity dwell in Christ. Even when He took on human form and walked the earth, enduring all the afflictions and temptations that come with doing so, Jesus still possessed the fullness of God (**Col. 2:9**).

When this letter was circulated and read among churches (**Col. 4:16**), this verse would cut to the very core of Gnostic doctrines taking root

[34] John ascribed to Jesus the same title in Rev. 1:5: "*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth*."

[35] See *Appendix B: Chronology of Resurrections in the Bible* on page 61.

during the first century. The declaration made by Paul in this verse completely contradicted the Gnostics who denied Christ's deity. However, as Paul contended, not only is Jesus deity, He is the "*fullness*" (lacking in no area) of deity. Whatever makes God deity, Jesus possessed and will forever possess all of the same traits.

Today, there are many who theorize that Jesus and God are the same person. [36] Though Jesus carries the direct image of God, they are distinct persons of the Godhead. The account describing the creation is a testament to the fact that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three distinct beings comprising the Godhead (**Gen. 1:1-2, 26; John 1:1-3**). Furthermore, Jesus is not seated at His own right hand; instead, He is seated at the right hand of the Father (**Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 8:1**). Neither did Jesus pray to Himself; instead, He always prayed to the Father (**Matt. 6:9; Luke 23:34; etc**.). Likewise, when referring to God the Father, Jesus repeatedly referenced the Father as an entity distinct from Himself, the Son (**Matt. 7:21, 28:19; John 10:36; etc**.). The Father and the Son are "*one*" (**John 10:30**), but they are not "*one*" in number. God and Christ are "*one*" in the same sense all believers must be "*one*" (**John 17:22**); they are united.

[20] and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

It was God's will that Christ would "*reconcile all things to Himself*." The mission of God in Christ was to reconcile the entire world to Himself (**2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 8:18-21**). The blood of Christ will bring complete and total reconciliation for all who properly act upon the Savior's atoning sacrifice.

The blood that Jesus shed on the cross "*made peace*." Jesus is the Prince of Peace (**Isa. 9:6**) who provides peace for all of mankind – Jew and Gentile alike – through His sacrifice on the cross (**Eph. 2:14-18**). Peace between Jew and Gentile is possible due to the cross taking away the enmity (Law of Moses) between them, but peace between God and man is also possible due to the cross destroying the enmity (sin) that separates man from God (**Rom. 5:9-10**).

"*Whether things on earth or things in heaven*," Christ's death destroyed all dividing barriers (**Gal. 3:28; Acts 10:34-35; Eph. 3:14-15**). Those who have been reconciled to God are responsible for proclaiming to the world the Lord's ministry of reconciliation (**2 Cor. 5:18-21**).

[36] Although various religious people espouse this doctrine, the group known as "Oneness Pentecostals" are the most prevalent promoters of this false teaching.

[21] And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

Before being reconciled through the blood of Christ, the Colossians "*were alienated and enemies.*" [37] Specifically, they were alienated from God (**Eph. 4:18**) and counted as His enemy (**Rom. 5:10**) due to their "*wicked works*." All sinners, before submitting to Christ in obedience, find themselves in the exact same circumstances as the Colossians.

Contrary to Calvinistic doctrine which states all people are born in an alienated state apart from God (totally depraved), this text proves that a person only becomes alienated from and an enemy of God by engaging in "*wicked works*." Man is not innately born at enmity with God. Instead, man only becomes an enemy of God after using his "*mind*" for purposes which go against the will of the Father, i.e. engaging in sin (**Ecc. 7:29**). Sin makes man an enemy of God and alienates one from Him (**Isa. 59:1-2**). Once man is capable of distinguishing good from evil (**Isa. 7:15-16**) and he chooses to engage in "*wicked works*," he becomes a sinner at enmity with God.

Sinners must transform their minds to understand and comply with the will of God (**Rom. 12:2**). For a man to be "*reconciled*" [38] to God indicates such people were once in a proper relationship with God, not lived without ever having a relationship with Him. This would be impossible if man is born totally depraved.

[22] in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

The reconciliation made possible through Christ was manifested "*in the body of His flesh through death*." The Son of God became flesh (**John 1:14**) in order to taste death for all men (**Heb. 2:9**), offering His blood as payment for our sins (**Matt. 26:28; 1 John 2:2**). This death allows people who were once alienated from God and counted as His enemies to become "*holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight*." [39] [40] [41]

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[37] "*Alienate*" – Shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[38] "*Reconcile*" – Bring back a former state of harmony (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[39] "*Holy*" – Made holy, or made free from sin; compare Luke 20:36 (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **253**).

[40] "*Unblamable*" (KJV) – Not that in themselves they will not be deserving of blame, or will not be unworthy, but that they will be purified from their sins. The word used here means, properly "spotless, without blemish;" see Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 5:27; Hebrews 9:4. It is applied to a lamb, 1 Peter 1:19; to the Savior, Hebrews 9:14, and to the church, Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 5:27; Jude 1:24; Revelation 14:5 (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **253**).

[41] "*Unreproveable in his sight*" (KJV) – They will be free from all accusation. The law will not accuse them - for the death of their Redeemer has done as much to honor it as their own punishment would have done; God will not accuse them -

The blood of Christ is powerful enough to absolve man of all sin and cause people who were once terrible sinners to be pure and clean, totally free from the punishment of past sins. However, such holiness, blamelessness, and lack of reproach is dependent on those who have been reconciled continuing to keep themselves holy, blameless, and without reproach (**1 Pet. 1:13-16, 2:24; James 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:20**). After acting upon the blood of Christ, those who formerly led lives defined by "*wicked works*" must continually purify themselves from these dead works by living for God (**Heb. 9:14**).

[23] if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Continued reconciliation is conditional. To remain reconciled, one must "*continue in the faith*." It is not enough to simply start a walk of faith. We must "*continue*" in our faith to satisfy God (**2 Tim. 3:14**). Likewise, we must ensure that our faith is both "*grounded*" and "*steadfast*."

In order for one's faith to be "*grounded*," that faith must be built upon the proper foundation (**Eph. 2:20; Rom. 10:17**). The source which grounds one's faith is what the Lord and His apostles have instructed the world to do through the inspired scriptures. Only those who are unwavering ("*steadfast*") in this faith produced by the scriptures have the hope provided by the gospel message (**James 1:12; Gal. 6:9**).

To remain reconciled, one also must not allow himself to be "*moved away from the hope of the gospel*." Hope is the anchor of the soul (**Heb. 6:17-19**). This hope brought about by the gospel uniting all believers together (**Eph. 4:4**) should motivate Christians to remain "*grounded*" and "*steadfast*" in our faith because we have been assured that our labors are not in vain (**1 Cor. 15:58**).

In addition to reaffirming that the gospel had been preached to "*every creature under heaven*" by the time he wrote this epistle, Paul identified himself as a "*minister*," which is the same title ascribed to his fellow servant Epaphras (**Col. 1:7**). To be a "*minister*" is to be a servant. Anyone can be a "*servant of the gospel*" (NRSV) in this sense (**Acts 8:1-4**). However, Paul's ministry is different than anyone else's today because he did not need to gradually grow into becoming a "*minister*." Instead, Paul was "*made*" (NASB) a servant of the gospel, showing the Lord's direct involvement in Paul's ministry (**Acts 9:15-17**).

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for he has freely forgiven them; their consciences will not accuse them - for their sins will all have been taken away, and they will enjoy the favor of God as if they had not sinned . . . and even Satan will not accuse them, for he will have seen that their piety is sincere, and that they are truly what they profess to be (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **253**).

Paul's Labor (1:24-29)

[24] I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

Paul expressed joy over the sufferings he endured on behalf of the Colossians and, more broadly, "*the church*" the world over. He endured suffering to "*fill up*" in his flesh what was "*lacking in the afflictions of Christ*." [42]

Paul's sufferings for the sake of Christ were foretold by the Lord when He first appeared to Paul and called him to be a minister of the gospel (**Acts 9:16**). Just as the Lord predicted, Paul's ministry was filled with suffering. The apostle was beaten and stoned (**2 Cor. 11:25**); lashed (**2 Cor. 11:24**); imprisoned often (**Acts 21, 23, 28**); chased out of numerous cities (**Acts 13, 14, 16, 17, 21**); and his life remained in continual jeopardy (**2 Cor. 11:23**). Despite all of this persecution and anguish, Paul still considered it an honor to suffer for the name of Christ, as did the other apostles and early Christians (**Acts 5:40-41**). Do we feel the same sense of joy today when we experience what could only be considered minor (in comparison) ridicule, discrimination, mockery, and persecution while standing for the Lord (**Phil. 1:29, 3:8-11**)?

Paul's humility is evident in this text. He willingly endured suffering for the sake of the body of Christ. Paul was continually concerned with the spiritual health and welfare of the Lord's body (**2 Cor. 11:28; Acts 15:36-41**). While Paul remained in his earthly body, his primary goal was not serving the needs of his own physical body but, rather, the needs of the Lord's spiritual body. [43]

[25] of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

This verse and the next two verses share many similarities with what Paul wrote to the Ephesians in **Eph. 3:1-13**. Paul's "*stewardship*" in preaching the gospel occurred by the grace of God to primarily preach to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:15**). [44] Paul's ministry was the direct result of God revealing to Him exactly what he needed to preach. Paul, like the other apostles, possessed the mind of Christ to impart the wisdom of God (**1 Cor. 2:16; Gal. 1:11-12; Matt. 28:18-20**), as guided by the

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[42] "The sufferings of Paul were in a similar sense a continuation of the sufferings of Christ. This is in close harmony with, and further emphasizes, Paul's constant teaching that Christ's servants share all that Christ is and has and does (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 3:10)" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **267**).

[43] The NET translates Col. 1:24 as follows: "*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my physical body—for the sake of his body, the church—what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ*."

[44] "A steward of the gospel should preach the word and not his own thinking, or human wisdom (2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Thess. 2:13). Today, preachers must preach the word. That means sermons should be filled with scripture. Messages filled with pop psychology, lengthy quotes of men, jokes, stories or illustrations that overshadow the truth being taught is not preaching the word" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **23**).

Holy Spirit (**John 14:26; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 2:6-16**). Paul fulfilled the word of God, which is described in the next verse as "*the mystery*," by proclaiming the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Jesus Christ (**Eph. 3:1-7**).

[26] the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

Broadly speaking, the "*mystery*" is the gospel message itself (**Eph. 6:19; 1 Tim. 3:16**). Even more broadly, the mystery is Christ (**Col. 1:27**). In the Ephesian letter, the "*mystery*" is the inclusion of Gentiles as one with the Jews in receiving equal opportunity and rights in the salvation offered by Christ (**Eph. 2-3**), which was "*hidden*" for generations. [45] Paul alludes to this same truth in the next verse.

The "*mystery*" that Paul referenced had been "*revealed*" to the saints of God. The word "*revelation*" simply means to be uncovered (**Rev. 1:1-3**). Christians have a revelation from God which they can know and understand. This revelation from God is called "*the mystery*" (**Eph. 3:3, 9**); "*the mystery of Christ*" (**Eph. 3:4**); "*the gospel*" (**Eph. 3:6**); "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*" (**Eph. 3:8**); and "*the manifold wisdom of God*" (**Eph. 3:10**). The "*mystery*" was once purposely veiled, but had been unveiled by the time Paul penned the Colossian letter. Elsewhere, we learn that this unveiling occurred through the apostles and various first century prophets (**Eph. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:18-20**).

The "*mystery*" described by Paul was not impossible to understand; it was simply a message once "*hidden*" from man but had been "*revealed*" (**Gal. 1:11-12**). This same message is unveiled to all who read God's word (**Eph. 3:4**). The "*mystery*" alluded to, and the Bible as a whole, can be understood. If not, God is unjust for requiring obedience to a revelation that is impossible to understand. Furthermore, Paul would have contradicted the words of Christ, who plainly stated that the word of God can and must be understood (**John 8:32, 12:45; Matt. 7:21**). When we do not understand God's word, the problem rests with man, not God.

[27] To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The primary aspect of the "*mystery*" that Paul revealed to the Ephesians was the fact that Gentiles were equal heirs and partakers in Christ; in other words, the gospel is for all (**Gal. 3:26-29**). In this Colossian letter, however, the primary aspect of the "*mystery*" unveiled by Paul which is unmentioned in the Ephesian epistle is the fact

[45] The Gentiles being accepted as equals in the kingdom of God was prophesied throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 11:10, 49:6, 60:1-3, 65:1; Hos. 1:10, 2:23). However, this message was spoken in a way that God's people, and likely the prophets themselves, did not fully understand. In this sense, the mystery was "*hidden*," or "*not made known to the sons of men*" (Eph. 3:5).

that Christ is "*in you*." This statement could be in reference to the Gentile Christians in Colossae possessing the gospel which would bring their "*hope of glory*" to completion (**Rom. 8:12-18**), or it could be in reference to Christ, who is the source of hope for man (**1 Tim. 1:1; Rom. 5:1-2**), dwelling in God's people by faith (**Eph. 3:17**). Both conclusions are true in certain respects, but I hold the latter view to be Paul's primary message in this text. Christ – in the fullness of His deity – dwells in His people as long as they abide in Him (**John 14:23; 1 John 4:13**).

[28] Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Christ ("*Him*") is the subject that followers of the Lord must preach. To preach Christ is to preach not just "the Man," but all that He requires from those who desire to follow Him (**Acts 8:35-36**). The whole counsel must be preached (**Acts 20:27**), which includes both "*admonishing*" (KJV) and "*teaching*." [46] "*Every man*" – Jew and Gentile alike – needs to be exposed to the warnings and teachings of the Bible.

If the Bible speaks of a subject, we must speak of it. If the Bible warns of something, we must warn people of it (**Acts 20:31; 1 Thess. 5:14**). If the Bible teaches something, we must teach it. Whatever the Bible rebukes we must rebuke, and whatever the Bible supports we must support (**1 Thess. 5:21**). If we leave out aspects of the word of God in our preaching due to some in our audience viewing these Bible subjects to be too difficult, controversial, or taboo, we will stand before God guilty of their blood on the day of judgment (**Acts 20:26**). The solution to audiences who do not want to hear certain warnings or teachings from truth is not to pacify them by leaving out these subjects. Instead, the solution is to preach the truth anyway (**2 Tim. 4:3-5**)! How else will these people gain "*all wisdom*" provided by the scriptures (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**) and required of them to attain perfection, or maturity (**Eph. 4:13-15; Heb. 5:14**), if we purposely avoid discussing certain Bible subjects?

[29] To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

A shift in pronouns occurs here. The plural pronoun "*we*" was used in the previous verse, but here the singular pronoun "*I*" was used by Paul to describe his own tireless "*labor*" [47] towards the goal of presenting "*every man perfect in Christ Jesus*." Paul did not sit on the sidelines while younger, healthier, or better speaking men did all

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[46] "The difference between 'admonish' and 'teach' seems to be that, whereas the former has mainly in view the things that are wrong and call for warning, the latter has to do chiefly with the impartation of positive truth, cf. Col. 3:16" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **13**).

[47] The NCV translates Col. 1:29 as follows: "*To do this, I work and struggle, using Christ's great strength that works so powerfully in me*."

the work. Paul personally toiled and labored for the cause of Christ, but it was the Lord who provided him the means and ability to engage in this glorious work (**Phil. 2:13, 4:13**).

CHAPTER TWO

Paul's Conflict and Desire (2:1-4)

1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,

Chapter two does not begin a new thought but, rather, directly continues the discourse on Paul's ministry mentioned at the end of chapter one. Paul earlier mentioned that he was "*striving*" to present every man perfect in Christ (**v.28-29**), but he here specifically identified his labors for the Colossians and for all who had not seen him face-to-face. Paul had evidently never seen many of the brethren in Colossae and Laodicea, yet he agonized over their spiritual condition.

Paul endured "*conflict*" [1] [2] during his labors for the Lord (**Col. 1:24**). Specifically, he endured "*great conflict*" on behalf of the Colossians and the Laodiceans. This "*conflict*," or "*struggle*" (NASB), that the apostle endured is likely in reference to Paul's concerns about brethren being led away from Christ by the various human philosophies circulating throughout the area (**Col. 2:8**), such as rejecting the deity of Christ, worshipping angels, binding the Law of Moses, etc. It seems that the Laodiceans were fighting these same battles, hence Paul's desire for the epistle to also be read to the Laodiceans (**Col. 4:16**).

2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

In light of the spiritual battles the Colossians faced, Paul wished for their hearts to be "*encouraged*." The idea seems to be that Paul desired for the Colossians to be strengthened in their faith and for their current knowledge "*of the mystery of God*" to increase (**Col. 1:9**). Requests such as this can be seen throughout Paul's writings (**Eph. 3:16; 1 Thess. 3:6-10**). As we develop a better understanding of the "*mystery of God*," our faith increases (**Rom. 10:17**) and, therefore, we gain more confidence and assurance in the Father and Christ (**Heb. 11:1**).

Paul also wished for the Colossians to be "*knit together in love*." The body of Christ must be "*knit together*" in order for growth and edification to occur (**Col. 2:19; Eph. 2:20-22, 4:16**). Love is described as the bond of perfection which unites believers together (**Col. 3:14**). Love is not the root or foundation upon which a Christian establishes

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[1] The word translated as "*conflict*" is the Greek word "agón," from which the English word "agony" is derived.

[2] "The word is rendered 'conflict' in Philippians 1:30; 'contention,' 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 'fight,' 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7; and 'race,' Hebrews 12:1. It properly refers to the combats, contests, struggles, efforts at the public games; the toil and conflict to obtain a victory. It refers here to the anxious care, the mental conflict, the earnest solicitude which he had in their behalf, in view of the dangers to which they were exposed from Judaizing Christians and Pagan philosophy" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **259**).

his faith; Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which we ground our faith (**Col. 2:7; Eph. 2:20; Isa. 11:1-2**). Yet, love is a necessary condition upon which spiritual growth and the "*full assurance of understanding*" is obtained (**Eph. 3:17-19**).

Love is arguably the most defining characteristic of Christianity (**John 13:34-35; Matt. 22:37-39; 1 John 4:7-11; Rom. 13:8-10**). Is it not strange then that so many Christians, instead of being filled with love, are filled with jealousy, contempt, anger, strife, etc.? If a group of God's people wishes to overcome false teachers, they must ensure that love abounds throughout the body; they must continually work towards the goal of becoming and, subsequently, remaining "*knit together in love*."

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul spoke in the previous verse about the great "*riches*" to be found in understanding the "*mystery of God*." Here, it is emphasized how the "*treasures*" of "*wisdom*" and "*knowledge*" are "*hidden*" in God the Father and Son and are not to be found in man (**Col. 2:4, 8**). The Lord taught that the "*riches*" found in His kingdom are the most valuable treasures one can find (**Matt. 13:44-46**). Do we personally find this knowledge of God's mystery to be as valuable as the Lord described? We should be eternally grateful for this treasure knowing its immense value!

4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

This verse does not picture the blind leading the blind (**Matt. 15:14**), but those who can see clearly deliberately leading people into eternal damnation. Many false teachers, such as the ones depicted by Paul in this verse, are cunning, crafty, and purposefully deceptive (**Eph. 4:14**), often for selfish gain (**2 Cor. 2:17; Acts 20:30; Tit. 1:10-11**). While it is seen as deplorable in our society to even remotely suggest that a religious teacher might deliberately and purposefully spread error, Paul warned here and the New Testament repeatedly affirms that we must beware of those who intentionally handle God's word deceitfully (**2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rom. 16:17-18; Matt. 7:15**).

A person who attempts to deceive with "*persuasive words*" is one who uses subtle approaches to lead people astray, such as the methods mentioned in **Col. 2:8, 18**. These people lie in wait to ambush the easily deceived like the serpent with Eve (**2 Cor. 11:3**). Purposefully deceptive false teachers thrive on those who are spiritually child-like by playing with words to mislead, thereby bringing people down a path towards eternal death. The protection against being deceived by false teachers is developing a "*full assurance of understanding*" concerning the Father's will (**Col. 2:2, 4:12; Eph. 4:13-14**).

Complete in Christ (2:5-10)

5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Although Paul expressed clear concerns regarding the spiritual battles the Colossians faced, this verse highlights the confidence the apostle had in these Christians. Paul was "*absent in the flesh*," yet he rejoiced seeing their "*good order*," which indicates the church in Colossae was "*knit together in love*" at the time of writing. Likewise, the apostle rejoiced knowing the "*steadfastness*" of their faith, which indicates the Colossians were progressing in their efforts to achieve "*full assurance of understanding*."

It is worth comparing the situation in Colossae with the circumstances described in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. Like the Colossians, the Corinthians also faced various spiritual battles, albeit vastly different ones. As he did in this verse, Paul informed the Corinthians that although he was "*absent in the flesh*" he was still present with them "*in spirit*" (**1 Cor. 5:3**). The apostle could not, however, rejoice over the state of the church in Corinth like he did when considering the Colossians' various battles. To the contrary, Paul did not rejoice but experienced sorrow, anguish, and grief over the situation in Corinth (**2 Cor. 2:1-4**). Paul's rejoicing over the Colossians serves as a testament to the strength of their faithfulness (**Col. 1:5**), which was reported by Epaphras (**Col. 1:8**).

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

The Colossians likely "*received Christ Jesus,*" i.e. heard the gospel preached and thus obeyed it, due to the work of Epaphras (**Col. 1:7**). Therefore, in this verse, the idea seems to be that Paul wanted the Colossians to continue in the sound teaching they received from God's faithful minister (**2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:5, 13**).

The phrase "*Christ Jesus*" is a synecdoche (a figure of speech where a part is made to represent the whole, or vice versa) representing the whole of the gospel and doctrine of Christ, as well as His character (**Acts 8:5; Eph. 4:20**). Christianity does not merely consist of discovering who is the Christ but, rather, requires us to apply that knowledge of Him and His doctrine to bring about positive changes in our lives (**Eph. 3-4; Rom. 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:17**). We must continually "*walk in Him*" and strive to walk worthy of Him (**Col. 1:10**).

Earlier, Paul stated that Christ was "*in*" the Colossians (**Col. 1:27**). Here, this sentiment is reversed and we see the Colossians being exhorted to walk "*in*" Christ. When we allow Christ to dwell in us, we will walk "*in Him*" (**Col. 3:16-17; Gal. 2:20**).

To walk in Christ, one must be "*rooted*," [3] "*built up*" [4] in Him, and possess an "*established*" [5] faith. It is not enough to remain fixed on the rudimentary principles of the gospel; we must continually strive for growth to obtain wisdom for fighting against all manner of evils (**Phil. 3:12; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2-4; 2 Pet. 3:14-18**). This process is one that never ends on this side of eternity!

Paul expressed that those who possess strong faith will exhibit an abundance of "*thanksgiving*" as they walk in and work for the Lord. Not only should an attitude of "*thanksgiving*" be a general manifestation of one's faith, but "*thanksgiving*" specifically for the truth of God should be present in the believer. The association between "*thanksgiving*" and understanding the truth of God can be seen throughout this epistle (**Col. 1:12-14, 3:16**). The Psalmist shared this appreciation for being in possession of the truth (**Psalm 19:10, 119:97, 148, 171-172**). Gratitude for the truth should likewise abound among God's people considering the source of truth provides us with the type of faith that pleases God (**Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6**), and we know the outcome of a properly "*rooted*," "*built up*," and "*established*" faith: the salvation of our souls (**1 Pet. 1:9; 1 Cor. 15:1-2, 58**).

[8] Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Earlier, Paul encouraged the Colossians to not be moved away from the gospel (**Col. 1:23**), nor be deceived with persuasive words (**Col. 2:4**). The reasons for those warnings are expounded upon in this verse.

Paul warned the Colossians not to be cheated [6] "*through philosophy and empty deceit*." The three primary aspects of these philosophies and empty deceits that could take the Colossians captive are them being (1) "*the tradition of men*," (2) "*basic principles of the world*," and (3) "*not according to Christ*." Based on the succeeding verses, we can conclude there was a Jewish influence present in these deceptive philosophies, but that is all we can determine for a certainty. [7]

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[3] "*Rooted*" – To render firm, to fix, establish, cause a person or a thing to be thoroughly grounded (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[4] "*Built up*" – In the figurative which likens a company of Christian believers to an edifice or temple; to build upon, build up. . . to grow in spiritual life (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[5] "*Established*" – To make firm, establish, confirm, make sure (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[6] "*Cheat*" – To lead away as booty, i.e. (figuratively) seduce - spoil (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[7] **"**We do not know precisely and in detail what that teaching was. Therefore to us the allusions are obscure, and we can only guess and grope. But every sentence and every phrase would go straight home to the minds and the hearts of the Colossians" (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians*, **161**).

Whatever the specific doctrines might have been, if the Colossians remained steadfast in their faith and dedicated to obtaining a full understanding of God's mystery, they would be successful in thwarting Satan's ministers.

The human philosophies that could draw the Colossians away from Christ were described by Paul as being "*the tradition of men*." Falling prey to the "*tradition of men*" is an ever-present problem for God's people. We are commanded to follow the approved traditions of the apostles and faithful first century Christians (**2 Thess. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 11:2**). Thus, following divine traditions developed and handed down by inspired men is obviously not what Paul condemned here. Instead, Paul condemned traditions developed and handed down by uninspired men. The Lord routinely and strongly rebuked the religious leaders of His day for valuing man-made traditions over the truth of God (**Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13**). Therefore, we must continually heed the admonitions of Christ and His apostles regarding the danger of placing undue importance and authority upon uninspired traditions.

The human philosophies that could potentially draw the Colossians away from Christ were also described as being "*according to the basic principles of the world*." Whatever the false teaching was, it was rooted in the "*rudiments*" of the world (KJV). Debate exists as to whether this expression refers to Judaizing teachers stressing various principles of the Law of Moses (**Col. 2:14, 20-23; Gal. 4:3**), or the worship of angels and celestial bodies (**Col. 2:18**). Whichever the case, the philosophy was "*empty*" because it was not "*according to Christ*." No human philosophy is from Christ (**1 Cor. 2:1-5; Prov. 14:12**).

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

This text likely provides the reason for the teachings referenced in the previous verse being false – they denied the deity of Christ. Paul earlier stated that all the fullness of the Father dwells in the Son (**Col. 1:19**). Here, it is further declared that not only does the fullness of God dwell in Christ, but so too does the "*fullness of the Godhead*" dwell in Him. That is to say, the complete essence of deity resides in Christ. Although Christ, while on earth, took on a "*bodily*" form that can be described as being lower than the angels (**Heb. 2:5-9**), He retained all qualities of deity (**1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8**).

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

All who submit to Christ find completion in Him. All spiritual blessings and providential care are found in Christ (**Eph. 1:3; Matt. 6:33**); likewise, justification, sanctification, and peace with the Father is found in Christ (**Rom. 5:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 2:14-16**); He is the only means by which man can be redeemed (**Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19**); and it is through Christ that a man can be brought to spiritual completion (**Phil. 1:6**). We

have no need to look elsewhere for care and direction than through Christ.

Christ is the "*head of all principality and power*." He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth (**Matt. 28:18-20**); He is head over earthly kingdoms (**Rev. 1:5**); He is head over the spiritual kingdom (**Eph. 1:22**); He is head over all men (**1 Cor. 11:3**); and He is head over all angels (**Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:6**). Such authority would not belong to Christ if not for the fact that the "*fullness of the Godhead*" dwells in Him.

Vain Doctrines (2:11-23)

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Under the dispensation of Christ, there is a spiritual circumcision, but under the Law of Moses there was a literal circumcision ordained by God as a sign of the covenant He made with Abraham and his descendants (**Gen. 17:10; Rom. 4:11**). This physical circumcision was rendered obsolete upon the death of Christ (**Gal. 5:1-4; Acts 15**).

An analogy is used here and in the succeeding verses to illustrate how baptism is a spiritual/figurative circumcision that puts "*off the body of the sins of the flesh*." Apart from Christ, man possesses a sinful flesh and body of sin (**Rom. 8:3, 6:6**). As the next two verses prove, it is only through baptism that a person who is dead in sin can put off this sinful flesh and body to be made alive together with Christ. Whereas only the Jews received circumcision of the flesh, all of the Colossians and all who are baptized have been "*circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*."

12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Paul described baptism here as a burial. The word "*buried*" is both a figurative and literal expression. It is figurative in the sense that a sinner elects to die to self and Satan when he is baptized; his old man tainted by sin is figuratively put to death and "*buried*" in baptism (**Col. 2:11; Rom. 6:1-14**). However, baptism is also literally a burial because it requires a person to be "*buried*," i.e. fully immersed, [8] in water (**John 3:3-5; Acts 8:36-39**). A sprinkling or pouring does not qualify as a scriptural water baptism.

Many claim that baptism is a work of man and, thus, unnecessary for salvation. However, this verse describes the act of baptism and all that is entailed in it as a work "*of God.*" Whereas works of man do not save (**Eph. 2:8-9**), works of God, such as baptism, do save (**John 6:29; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21**). Furthermore, Paul described baptism

[8] "*Baptism*" – Consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion, and emergence (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words).

as an act of "*faith*." It requires faith to believe the blood of Christ washes away our sins in baptism (**Acts 22:16, 2:38**). Likewise, it takes faith to believe God saves us and adds us to His kingdom upon being baptized (**Acts 2:38-41, 47**). When a person submits to the Lord in baptism, he is not earning or meriting his salvation. Instead, he is acting upon his faith and allowing God to save him through His divine "*working*" power. Baptism is worthless without man's faith and God's work.

Since Paul analogized baptism as a spiritual circumcision, some advocates of infant baptism argue that it is scripturally authorized to baptize babies because physical circumcision was performed on eight-day-old male infants (**Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3**). However, as we have already proven, the text shows that baptism is for people who have "*faith*," and Jesus affirmed this same truth in **Mark 16:16**. An infant does not have "*faith*." Therefore, he must not be baptized.

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Paul described the Colossians as formerly being "*dead*" in their "*trespasses*." Those who are in sin are "*dead*." Sin always results in spiritual death (**James 1:15; Rom. 6:23**). All who are accountable have been "*dead*" in sin (**Rom. 3:23, 5:12; Ecc. 7:20; 1 John 1:8**). It is only when we realize that we are "*dead*" that we can become "*alive*" through Christ by means of the spiritual circumcision mentioned in the previous verse. People who are "*dead*" in their sins are spiritually uncircumcised, but those who have been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins have been spiritually circumcised and made alive together with Christ.

The idea of being "*dead*" in sin is used by false teachers to perpetuate the doctrine of total depravity. Those who cling to this doctrine assert that since man is "*dead*," there is nothing a "*dead*" person can do to bring himself back to life; the Holy Spirit must directly intervene. Supposedly, this death has been imputed onto all people due to the sin of Adam. However, this verse makes it clear that the Colossians were not held accountable for Adam's transgressions. Their spiritual death was the result of their own ("*your*") sins. Furthermore, the word "*dead*" simply indicates a separation between man and God (**Isa. 59:1-2**), not the incapability of man to bring himself to God.

The Colossians were not only "*dead*" in their sins before being made "*alive*" with Christ, they were also once "*dead*" in the "*uncircumcision*" of their "*flesh*." This statement would bear special significance for the Gentile Christians. Unless they were proselytes, the Gentiles were uncircumcised due to not having obeyed the Law of Moses. Under the Old Covenant, the Gentiles would be "*dead*" to God since they were uncircumcised, i.e. not citizens of His kingdom. By fleshly birth, the Gentiles were initially excluded from God's holy nation (**Deut. 7:1-6, 14:2**). Due to the Lord's sacrifice on the cross, however, Gentiles could

become equal heirs and citizens of the kingdom of God (**Eph. 2:11-13, 19**).

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross,

This verse shows that the Law of Moses was not binding when Paul penned this epistle. When Jesus died, He "*wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us*."

The phrase "*handwriting of requirements*" refers to the Law of Moses, [9] which was abolished when Christ fulfilled it through His death (**Matt. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:14-15; Heb 9:15-17**). The Law of Moses was "*contrary to us*" in the sense that it pronounced condemnation and death (**Rom. 3:20, 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:7-11**). The Law of Moses was "*wiped out*" because it fulfilled its purpose in leading people to Christ by identifying sin and demonstrating man's need for forgiveness (**Gal. 3:23-25**; **Rom. 7:7-13**), as well as providing a shadow of the true and perfect sacrifice for sins (**Heb. 10:1-4**). When Christ died, the Law of Moses died too; it was "*nailed*" to the cross with Him. There is no life to be found in the Law of Moses today.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Upon Christ's death, He "*disarmed principalities and powers*." There is considerable debate as to what Paul was referencing in this verse. It is possible that Paul was alluding to Jewish religious authorities. [10] It is also possible that Paul was referring to earthly governmental rulers, [11] such as the Romans. [12] Yet, it could be that Paul was speaking of angelic or demonic beings. [13] [14] Then, there is the possibility that Paul

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[9] The Law of Moses was handwritten on stones and in the book of the law (Exod. 34:28; Deut. 27:26; 2 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 3:10).

[10] "Unless rather this is to be understood of Christ's taking away the power and authority of the Jewish ecclesiastical rulers and governors, by abolishing the ceremonial law, and the ordinances of it; declaring himself to be the alone King and Lawgiver in his house, and requiring subjection to his institutions and appointments, which sense agrees with the context" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Colossians, **72**).

[11] The Greek words translated as "*principalities and powers*" appear in Luke 12:11 to identify earthly authorities.

[12] "This is a figure from the treatment of enemies when conquered. Jesus was condemned and put to death by the principalities and powers of earthly governments – Jewish and Roman" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **282**).

[13] The Greek words translated as "*principalities and powers*" appear in Eph. 3:10, 6:12 to identify non-earthly authorities. Rom. 8:38 and 1 Pet. 3:22 also likely refer to non-earthly powers.

[14] "The devil and his angelic rulers and authorities (Eph. 6:12) were all opposing God. But Jesus Christ defeated them by His death, burial, and resurrection (Heb. 2:14-15)" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon,* **123**).

was thinking about some combination of all these authorities, and even more. Whatever the case, the cross provided a public display of Jesus's victory over all authorities, which would include anything terrestrial or celestial. He "*disarmed*" them, made a "*public spectacle*" of them, and triumphed over them.

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

In light of his reference to the Law of Moses in **Col. 2:14**, Paul clearly had in mind here restrictions that the Old Law placed upon food, drink, and special days. "*Food or in drink*" refers to the daily observances, "*festival*" refers to the yearly observances, "*new moon*" refers to the monthly observances, and "*sabbaths*" refer to the weekly observances all required by the Law of Moses. [15] [16]

The Law of Moses implemented very strict regulations concerning food and drink (**Lev. 11**). The Law of Christ, on the other hand, has no such restrictions (**Rom. 14:1-4, 17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5**). Likewise, the Law of Moses had very strict regulations upon special days/observances (**Num. 28-29**). Since the Old Law was taken away and nailed to the cross with Jesus, no person has a right to condemn another for not keeping requirements of the Law on these matters. In fact, if a Christian binds a law from the Old Covenant that is not also required under the New Covenant, he nullifies the death of Christ and loses his salvation (**Gal. 2:21, 5:1-4**).

17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

The ordinances of the Law of Moses were a "*shadow of things to come*." A "*shadow*" is not the "*substance*," or "*reality*" (NIV), because shadows are temporary. The Law of Moses was also a temporary "*shadow*" (**Heb. 10:1**), serving the purpose of pointing to the "*substance*," Jesus Christ (**Gal. 3:19-25**).

Some are confused by the present-tense ("*are a shadow of things to come*") that Paul used in this verse. As a result, many contend that the requirements for weekly sabbath-keeping are still binding today. Such a conclusion ignores that Paul just stated the shadows present in the law of Moses were abolished upon Christ's death (**Col. 2:14**). Additionally, such a conclusion ignores the fact that something can be spoken of as a "*shadow*" without it still being practiced.

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[15] The following scriptures parallel Col. 2:16 to show "*food or in drink*" refers to daily observances, "*festival*" refers to yearly observances, "*new moon*" refers to monthly observances, and "*sabbaths*" refer to weekly observances required by the Law of Moses: 2 Chron. 2:4, 8:12-13; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 45:17.

[16] "The term 'sabbath' appears 60 times in the New Testament. Seventh-Day worshippers admit that 59 of those times it refers to the weekly sabbath, but they want to dodge this one by saying it means the special yearly and monthly sabbaths . . . The term 'sabbath' is the genitive plural in Col. 2:16, which is identically the same form in which it is found in Exo. 20:8 in the Septuagint where the weekly sabbath is meant. The apostle was including all sabbaths" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians*, *Philemon,* **123**).

For example, **Heb. 8:5** says the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament tabernacle "*serve*" (present-tense) as shadows, but that does not mean we still use the Levitical priesthood and tabernacle in our service to God today (**Heb. 7:11-28; Acts 17:24**). Likewise, **Heb. 9:13** tells us the blood of bulls and of goats "*sanctifies*" (present-tense) for the purification of the flesh, but given the writer's point in the next verse, it is obvious that only the blood of Christ sanctifies.

Paul's point in this passage is that the ordinances mentioned in **Col. 2:16** "*are*" (present-tense) a shadow of "*things that were to come*" (NIV). Christ and Christianity have already come, and the shadows/types pointed to that reality. Therefore, all four ordinances listed in **Col. 2:16** ceased being binding at the cross, including weekly sabbath-keeping.

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Paul warned the Colossians to not allow false teachers who were "*vainly puffed*" by "*fleshly*" minds to "*cheat*" them out of their "*reward*." Specifically, the false teachers Paul warned about were people delighting in "*false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen*." This admonition is the fourth such warning in this chapter against being drawn away from Christ by false teachers (**Col. 2:4, 8, 16**). Clearly, Paul was very concerned the Colossians might fall prey to people using the wisdom of men to lead people into eternal condemnation rather than eternal "*reward*."

"*False humility*" was a defining trait of the false teachers in Colossae. Based on **Col. 2:14**, it is possible that this phrase refers to Judaizing teachers who emphasized the various dietary restrictions under the Law of Moses, thereby vainly presenting themselves as having more humility than those who realized these ordinances were no longer binding (**1 Cor. 8:1-2**). The phrase could be in reference to those who practiced Gnostic acts of extreme self-denial. [17] It is also possible that the phrase points to people who were engaged in various acts of "*worship of angels*." [18] [19] Whatever the case, these people presented themselves as having humility, but their humility was "*false*" because it was not informed by a spiritual mind aligned with Christ. They

[17] "They delighted in false humility (cf. v. 23) which probably refers to the ascetic practices of rigid regulations and extreme self-denial" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **33**).

[18] **"**Self-imposed acts of mortification of the body, as service, to God, was the outward evidence of false humility, and points to something blameworthy; a false and perverted lowliness, which deemed that God was so inaccessible that he could only be approached through the mediation of inferior beings" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **283**).

[19] "Some alleged that they were not worthy to worship God directly, therefore they worshipped angels instead as the representatives of God" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians*, *Philemon,* **127**).

presented themselves as having humility but, in reality, they were "*puffed up*."

These false teachers were also guilty of "*intruding into things which he has not seen*." Given the context, this expression likely refers to people claiming to have inspired knowledge/revelations, specifically in regards to angels. Whatever these people claimed to see, Paul plainly stated they saw no such thing. These teachers spoke things that were derived from their own "*fleshly mind*" and not the mind of God (**Jer. 23:16-22; Ezek. 22:28**). Sadly, there are many religious people today who also claim to receive special revelations from God that are not from Him (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**).

19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Ultimately, the root problem of all false teaching is the fact that they do not hold "*fast to the Head*," Jesus Christ. A message preached that is not derived from Christ or His apostles is a perversion (**Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-8**). Instead of looking to teachers who intrude into things they have not seen, we should look to the image of the invisible God for guidance and growth (**Col. 1:13-18, 28**).

The church, which is Christ's "*body*" (**Col. 1:18**), experiences nourishment and growth as long as it continues to hold "*fast to the Head*." We are complete in Christ (**Col. 2:10**), so why would we ever desire to look elsewhere for guidance? If the body roots itself to its Head, any subsequent growth will be "*from God*" (**1 Cor. 3:6**). However, if the body roots itself to those puffed up with fleshly minds who offer human philosophies to provide growth, then any subsequent increase is not "*from God*."

Just as each bone, muscle, joint, ligament, etc. holds the physical body together, so too does each member of the Lord's spiritual body play an important function in holding together the spiritual body of Christ (**Eph. 4:16**). The Lord's body needs every body part, i.e. member, even the weaker parts (**1 Cor. 12:15-26**). The growth and welfare of this body is dependent upon each member doing their job. [20]

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—
21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

Referring to the spiritual circumcision mentioned earlier, Paul stated the Colossians "*died with Christ*." A person dies with Christ when he is buried with Him in baptism (**Rom. 6:1-4**). Having died with Christ, New Testament Christians are, in turn, dead to the "*basic principles of the world*" and "*regulations*." Though Christians live in the world,

[20] "By every member working effectually in his sphere, they all make the increase of the body unto the building up of itself. By this joint and harmonious working of all the parts, the body grow in the well-proportioned body of Christ, all moved and governed by him" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **285**).

the world does not regulate how we live. Paul's statement could be a refutation against Judaizing teachers since Christians are dead to the Law of Moses and the principal elements of that world (**Rom. 7:1-4; Gal. 4:3-5**), [21] or it could possibly be a reference to Gnostic asceticism, given the final verse of this chapter. Whatever the case, the "*regulations*" propped up by the false teachers disallowed people from being able to "*touch*," "*taste*," and "*handle*" certain things. [22] Paul already told the Colossians not to allow anyone to judge them in regards to what they ate or drank (**Col. 2:16**); these verses and the rest of the chapter provide the answer why they should not permit anyone to make those judgments.

[22] which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

The previous two verses showed Paul essentially asking the Colossians, "If you profess to be a Christian, why would you follow and impose restrictions that He has not commanded?" Here, echoing the words of Christ (**Matt. 15:17; Mark 7:15**), Paul added that these self-imposed restrictions were unnecessary because they "*concern things which perish with using*." [23] Additionally, these self-imposed restrictions were not derived from the Lord but were "*according to the commandments and doctrines of men*." Doctrines derived from men are not according to Christ (**Mark 7:6-9, 13**).

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

"*Indulgence of the flesh*" is a sin (**Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:13-26**). However, the means by which the various false teachers in Colossae combatted such indulgence was of "*no value*" because their doctrine had "*an appearance of wisdom*" and displayed "*false*" rather than sincere "*humility*." These religious practices were "*self-imposed*," i.e. derived from the minds of men. People who follow their own will do not follow the will of God. "*Will worship*" (KJV) that denies the body of its necessities (asceticism) may look wise and righteous, but they do not remove temptations to indulge the flesh (**Matt. 6:16**). To remove these temptations, one must continually seek Christ and do His will (**Col. 3:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17**).

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[21] "There were certain things which they prohibited, in conformity with what they understood to be the law of Moses" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **270**).

[22] "The precepts here quoted are those of the false teachers, and are, of course, quoted to be condemned, though their meaning is frequently misunderstood. It is not said what things are thus prohibited, but the context supports the reference to meats and drinks, and is confirmed by μηδὲ γεύσῃ. There is no reason whatever to suppose that there is any reference to a prohibition of sexual relations" (Expositor's Greek Testament, **534**).

[23] "The things that one would touch, taste or handle are consumed in their very use. Thus, the prohibition against them cannot be of any use" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **35**).

CHAPTER THREE

Raised with Christ to Live for Him (3:1-4)

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Having established that the Colossians were complete in Christ (**Col. 2:10**), and having urged them not to be enticed by any doctrines or traditions derived from the minds of men, a shift occurs in chapter three where admonitions are provided to remind these Christians how they needed to practically apply their knowledge of the Lord to their daily lives.

Since the Colossians were "*raised with Christ*" when they were baptized into His death (**Col. 2:12**), [1] they needed to "*seek those things which are above,*" where Christ is seated with God the Father. [2] The word "*seek*" implies that Christians must put forth effort in conducting their lives in a pleasing manner to God. This highlights how sanctification in Christ has two aspects. First, there is what God has done – He provided the means by which we can put to death our sins (**Col. 2:11-13**). Then, there is what man must do – we must take advantage of God's plan of redemption by dying to sin and seeking to live faithfully (**Eph. 1:4**).

God forces no man to "*seek those things which are above*." Man must determine in his heart to "*seek*" these things. Saints have been made to sit together with Jesus in the heavenly places (**Eph. 2:4-7**), but to stay seated with Christ we must continually keep our minds and hearts with Him (**Matt. 6:19-21; Rom. 8:6-8**). Heaven is the ultimate goal of every Christian. Therefore, we must ensure that our minds and hearts are not "*set*," or stuck, in this world but are focused on heavenly things (**Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17**).

3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

The reason for Paul's instruction in the previous two verses is provided here. After once being dead in sin (**Col. 2:13**), the Colossians then bore the responsibility of making themselves dead to sin. Christians are raised to a new manner of living upon submitting to the Lord in baptism (**Rom. 6:1-4**). This new life demands complete and total abstinence from sin (**Rom. 6:5-14, 8:1-4, 13:14**). [3] Our new lives must be "*hidden with*

[1] "Since they had put off the old man in baptism, and had been raised with Christ, and in Christ, carry forward this begun work of conformity to the life of Christ" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, **288**).

[2] "Some use Col. 2:9 to teach that Christ is the same person as the Father; however, within the space of a few words Paul refutes that application by saying that Christ is seated in the exalted position next to the Father. He is certainly not sitting on His own right hand (Psa. 110:1; Matt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 8:1)" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, **132**).

[3] "We must not only give up every evil practice; we must also stifle every evil desire. Nothing less can deserve the name of being dead to sin" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, **289**).

Christ." [4] In other words, having been spiritually resurrected from the death caused by sin, we must conduct our new lives not in service to self but in full service to Christ (**Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:20-21**). Our lives belong to the Lord.

[4] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

There were those in the first century who questioned the certainty of the second coming of Christ (**2 Pet. 3:4**). However, Paul spoke with certainty of the Lord's return. There is no question that the Lord will, indeed, return (**Acts 1:10-11; Heb. 9:28; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:10; etc.**). We simply do not know when He will return (**Matt. 24:36, 44; etc**.). Those who make Christ their "*life*" by hiding their lives with the Lord and setting their minds and hearts on heavenly things will eventually "*appear with Him in glory*." Faithful saints will not only appear "*with*" Christ on that great day but will also appear like Him (**1 John 3:1-2**). Nothing can compare to this "*glory*" that is yet to be revealed (**Rom. 8:18**). It is a necessary inference to conclude that those who do not follow Paul's instructions in the previous three verses will not appear with the Lord in glory.

Put to Death the Old Man (3:5-9)

[5] Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

People who purpose in their hearts to serve Christ must "*put to death*" sinful desires upon dying and being resurrected with the Lord in baptism. Once becoming a Christian, a person must make it their aim to not fall back to their old sinful ways (**2 Pet. 2:20-22**). The life of sin must remain in the past as part of the old man and not remain with the new man (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**). Though this verse is not an all-encompassing list of sins that must be put off with the old man, five specific sins are listed here that Christians must refrain from committing:

1) "*Fornication*" [5] – This term is inclusive of all illicit sexual intercourse, which would include adulterous (extramarital) affairs, premarital sex, homosexual relationships, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual activity outside the bounds of a scripturally married husband and wife (**Heb. 13:4; Matt. 19:4-9**). [6]

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[4] "*Hidden*" – Locked together with (A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, **500**).

[5] "*Fornication*" – Properly, of illicit sexual intercourse in general (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[6] **"**These faithful Christians (Col. 1:2) had at one time lived and walked in the sins specified in these verses. That is, their participation in these wrongs was not a one time or occasional violation. Rather, this was their walk or life . . . Notice that one of the sins they had 'lived in' [v.7] was fornication (which includes adultery). Some who argue for the continuation of a marriage following an unscriptural divorce and remarriage tell us that it is not possible to live in adultery, saying that adultery is merely breaking the covenant. This text shows that it is possible to live in adultery" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **43**).

2) *"Uncleanness"* [7] – This term broadly refers to moral impurity, but it also refers to sexual impurity (**Rom. 6:19**), which seems to be Paul's intent in using the word here. The same Greek word is used in **Rom. 1:24** to refer to homosexual relationships; it also appears in **Gal. 5:19** within the same context as adultery, fornication, and lewdness.
3) "*Passion*" [8] – The term refers to "*inordinate affection*" (KJV), or "*shameful passion*" (NET). Contextually, the term seems indicative of lust, such as what Jesus described in **Matt. 5:28**, which often leads to overt physical acts of "*fornication*" and "*uncleanness*."
4) "*Evil desire*" [9] – This term is closely associated with the previous term. As such, it is difficult to distinguish the two. [10] Ultimately, both "*passion*" and "*evil desire*" are the source of "*fornication*" and "*uncleanness*."
5) "*Covetousness*" [11] – The term is contextually defined as "*idolatry.*" Elsewhere, the root Greek word is used in reference to greediness (**Eph. 4:19**). It is possible that Paul was using the term here specifically in regards to sexually coveting another person. [12] However, all forms of "*covetousness*" must be put off (**Eph. 5:3**), not just the sexually motivated form.

These sins must be "*put to death*." No matter how much we may have engaged in these sins prior to obeying the gospel, we must never allow these acts of wickedness to spring back to life in our earthly "*members*," or body parts.

[6] Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

It is critically important that Christians abstain from the sins mentioned in the previous verse because "*the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience*." All unrepentant people – Christian and non-Christian alike – who engage in

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[7] "*Uncleanness*" – In a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[8] "*Passion*" – Inordinate affection, lust (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[9] "*Evil Desire*" – A longing (especially for what is forbidden) - concupiscence, desire, lust (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[10] "Probably 'passion' is somewhat narrower than 'desire,' and the former represents the evil emotion as an affection which the mind suffers, while the latter represents it as a longing which it actually puts forth" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **291**).

[11] "*Covetousness*" – Greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[12] **"**The covetous man forgets his soul in favor of his desires. He satisfies or gratifies himself at the expense of others. Probably here, Paul had in mind the man who was covetous of a woman he has no right to have. Moses tied covetousness specifically to one's desire for another man's wife as well as for his possessions" (Exod. 20:17) (Colly Caldwell, *Truth Publications – The Book of Ephesians*, **231**).

these sins will receive the punishment of God (**Rom. 1:18**).

People are "*sons*" (children) of the one they imitate. A person can be a son of "*disobedience*" and, therefore, a son of the devil by walking in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind (**John 8:44; 1 John 3:10**). On the other hand, a person can be a son of light and, therefore, a child of God by imitating Him and walking in the light (**1 Thess. 5:5-10; John 1:12; Eph. 5:8-14; 1 John 1:7**). While fear of punishment must not be the sole reason why we conform to God's will, if we recognize "*the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,*" we should be further motivated to continually obey Him (**Heb. 10:26-31; 2 Cor. 5:10-11**).

7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

The Colossians once practiced the vile deeds mentioned in the previous verses, but a change was demanded when they surrendered themselves to the Lord (**Col. 3:1**). The Colossians "*once walked*" in all manner of sin, but they ceased those sins when they chose to serve Christ rather than themselves. The same is required of all people who desire to partake in the blessings of Christ. Though we live in a sinful world, we must not walk like the rest of the world (**Eph. 4:17-24; Prov. 1:15**).

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

In addition to the five sins mentioned earlier, Paul added five more sins that must be "*put off*" by a person whose mind and heart are set on heavenly rather than earthly things. No one will do this for us; we ("*you yourselves*") must make a concerted effort to remove these sins from our characters. As was the case in **Col. 2:5**, this verse is not an exhaustive list of sins that must be put off with the old man, but are five specific sins that Christians must refrain from committing:

1) "*Anger*" [13] – This term refers to a fixed disposition of indignation. "*Anger*" itself is not a sin. However, if our "*anger*" prohibits us from adequately reasoning, controlling ourselves, forgiving others, etc., then we have sinned. Unchecked anger gives Satan an opportunity to enter our hearts (**Gen. 4:1-8; Eph. 4:26-27**). As such, anger should not be lived with continually but dealt with immediately.

[13] "*Anger*" – Properly, desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the mind), i.e. (by analogy), violent passion (ire, or justifiable abhorrence); by implication punishment - anger, indignation, vengeance, wrath (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

2) *"Wrath"* [14] – This term differs from "*anger*" in that it suggests ill-feelings have grown in scale. Uncontrolled "*anger*" can become "*wrath*." [15]
3) "*Malice*" [16] – This term suggests another increase in scale from the previous two terms. When one performs a malicious act, he employs his "*anger*" and "*wrath*."
4) "*Blasphemy*" [17] – This term is an example of how a person can act maliciously. "*Malice*" can cause someone to blaspheme the person who invoked his "*anger*" and "*wrath*."
5) "*Filthy Language*" [18] – This term refers to "*obscene speech*" (NASB). "*Filthy language*" broadly refers to all corrupt communications (**Eph. 4:29**), which includes profanity, crude jokes, sexual innuendos and euphemisms, etc. When a person uses this type of language in his speech, he reveals the corrupt spiritual condition of his heart (**Matt. 12:34-35**). All filthiness, in whatever form it takes, must be put away (**James 1:21**).

Instead of being consumed with these sinful emotions and types of speech, the new man in Christ seeks to be kind and tenderhearted (**Eph. 4:31**), with grace-filled speech (**Col. 4:6**). Such is the golden rule (**Luke 6:31**).

[9] Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

One way a Christian puts off the "*old man*" is by putting away the sin of lying. As with all traits of the "*old man*," deliberate effort is required to "*put off*" because it can be much easier in certain situations to lie rather than tell the truth. In such circumstances, a concerted effort is required to speak the truth.

Deception is sinful regardless of whether it is used for the benefit of the one deceiving or to benefit the one being deceived. Whether by speaking falsely, concealing the truth, or misleading others with purposefully vague speech, lying is a form of deceit, and deceit is a sin (**1 Pet. 2:1; Matt. 5:37**). Therefore, it must be "*put off*." Lying is the work of Satan because he is a liar and the father of lies (**John 8:44**). We take Satan as our father when we sacrifice our integrity to lie.

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[14] "*Wrath*" – Fierceness, indignation, wrath (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[15] "Thumos ['wrath'] . . . is to be distinguished from orgé ['anger'] in this respect, that thumos indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings, an outburst of wrath from inward indignation, while orgé suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge. Orgé is less sudden in its rise than thumos, but more lasting in its nature" (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **26**).

[16] "*Malice*" – Ill-will, desire to injure (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[17] "*Blasphemy*" – Slander, detraction, speech injurious to another's good name (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[18] "*Filthy Language*" – Any kind of 'base utterance,' the utterance of an uncontrolled tongue (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, **237**).

Many have the philosophy that lying in certain situations is acceptable (situation ethics), but lying is never in accord with God's word. It does not matter how big or small we regard a lie to be, whether the falsehood is to family, friends, strangers, employers, or the government, it is always wrong to lie (**1 Cor. 13:6; Rev. 21:8**). Although Christians should be honest in their interactions with all men, contextually, Paul laid special emphasis upon the fact that Christians are not to lie to brethren, just like in **Eph. 4:25**. Christians are members of the same spiritual body; we should have the same goals, interests, and aims. Why, therefore, would Christians lie to each other?

Live as a New Man (3:10-4:6)

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

When one obeys the gospel, the "*old man*" must be "*put off*" and the "*new man*" must be "*put on*." Just as it takes a concerted effort to remove all the negative qualities of the "*old man*," so too is a concerted effort required in putting on the positive characteristics associated with the "*new man*." All positive qualities of the new creature are derived from one's "*knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*." In other words, the "*new man*" reflects the image of his Creator by following His word (**Rom. 12:2**) and imitating Him (**Eph. 5:1; Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:16**).

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

The Greeks ("*uncircumcised*") and Jews ("*circumcised*"), like bondservants and masters, once had very little in common. Likewise, since barbarians and Scythians were seen as uncivilized people who did not speak their language, the Greeks found little in common with these people who did not fit into their society. However, Christ's death destroyed all dividing barriers by bringing everyone together into one body upon obedience to Him (**Eph. 2:11-22; Acts 10:34-35**).

One's position in society is not indicative of his position with the Lord. In Christ, all people are on equal spiritual footing because He "*is all and in all*." [19] If Christ is in a person (**Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:10**), it matters not the color of his skin, nor the language he speaks, his education, gender, [20] financial circumstances, etc. (**Gal. 3:28**); what

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[19] "In the slave Christ is his liberty; in the Scythian, as his civilization and culture. And since Christ includes in himself the whole world of man's need, and dwells in all his servants, all human distinctions have in the new life passed utterly away. National and social barriers there cannot be where Christ is" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, **294**).

[20] Men and women are undeniably on equal spiritual footing. However, there are differing responsibilities between men and women just like there are differing responsibilities between bondservants and masters (Eph. 5:22-33, 6:5-9).

matters is that he is a "*new man*," equal with all others in the Lord's body.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

Paul addressed the Colossians as "*the elect of God, holy and beloved*." False teachers misapply the term "*elect*" to argue that God unconditionally elects certain people to be saved. God has not chosen certain individuals to be saved and certain individuals to be lost. Instead, He chose a path whereby all men must "*elect*" for themselves to follow and, consequently, receive salvation (**Eph. 1:3-13; John 3:16; Rev. 22:17, 3:20**). Since Christ is God's elected way, all who obey Him are "*the elect*" (**1 Pet. 1:1-5, 22-25; Rom. 8:29-30**). The phrase "*holy and beloved*" indicates a person is faithfully carrying out his election in Christ (**Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:2-4**).

Instead of being consumed with all the negative qualities and emotions mentioned earlier in the chapter, Paul exhorted the Colossians to "*put on*" various positive characteristics. A very similar exhortation is found in **Eph. 4:32**. A conscious effort must be made in developing a merciful, kind, humble, meek, and patient character.

1) "*Tender mercies*" [21] – A person with this quality possesses a "*compassionate heart*" (ESV). All people deserve compassion, especially those who are in need, both physically/materially (**Luke 10:25-37**) and spiritually (**Gal. 6:1-2**).
2) *"Kindness*" [22] – This term also speaks to the condition of one's heart. "*Kindness*" is closely associated with love (**1 Cor. 13:4**). People who are unkind do not possess the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal. 5:22-23**). Since God is so kind to us (**Rom. 2:4**), we must be kind to others.
3) "*Humility*" [23] – Whereas a prideful heart causes a *person* to elevate himself above others, "*humility*" leads a person to elevate others over himself (**Phil. 2:3-4**). Paul condemned insincere "*humility*" earlier (**Col. 2:18, 23**). Genuine "*humility,*" however, is an admirable quality.
4) "*Meekness*" [24] – This quality involves mildness and "*gentleness*" (KJV). "*Meekness*" is often described as gentle strength (**2 Cor. 10:1; 1 Pet. 3:15**).

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[21] "*Tender mercies*" – To have pity, a feeling of distress through the ills of others (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words).

[22] "*Kindness*" – Usefulness, that is, moral excellence (in character or demeanor); - gentleness, goodness, kindness (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[23] "*Humility*" – Humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty - humbleness of mind, humility (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[24] "*Meekness*" – Inwrought grace of the soul (Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words).

5) "*Longsuffering*" [25] – This term is closely associated with patience. To be "*longsuffering*" is to be slow in avenging wrongs (**2 Pet. 3:9**). All people deserve to be treated with this type of patience (**1 Thess. 5:14**).

Each of these qualities is rooted in the inward man. When our inward man is properly aligned with Christ and His will, our outward man will bear fruit evident of these positive changes necessitated by our election in God.

[13] bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Two more characteristics of the "*new man*" are added here and are closely associated with the positive qualities mentioned in the prior verse. These qualities serve as outward evidence of the inward changes derived from the knowledge of Christ and His will. These attitudes include a willingness to "*forbear*" (KJV) [26] and forgive.

Forbearance, like patience, requires us to endure the faults of brethren with the attitude of holding up the person, supporting him, and seeking to help rather than tearing down and criticizing (**1 Thess. 5:14**). Forbearance will lead to forgiveness.

The Colossians were commanded to bear with each other and forgive one another. More than that, however, they were commanded to forgive others "*even as Christ forgave*" them. Jesus clearly stated that God's forgiveness is dependent on our forgiveness of others (**Matt. 6:14-15**). We cannot obtain nor retain salvation unless we forgive others. Being willing to forgive people when they wrong us is truly one of the most difficult things God commands His people to do, but if a person is willing to repent of their wrongdoings we are required to forgive them (**Luke 17:3**). [27] We "*must*" have a forgiving heart; there is no other option permitted by God. If we are not willing to forgive one who is penitent, we are unable to have fellowship with God and we are unable to have forgiveness from Him. If we are merciful, kind, humble, meek, patient, and forbearing, we will be much more willing to forgive one another. Likewise, when we remember that we have the opportunity to do for others what

[25] "*Longsuffering*" – Patience, forbearance, long-suffering (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[26] "*Bearing with*" – To sustain, to bear (with equanimity [mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation]), to bear with, endure (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[27] "A man cannot hold one as innocent until he repents of his sin, ceases to sin, and corrects his wrongs so far as possible. God cannot forgive sin in this sense so long as man persists in it. God never forgives sin until it is repented. But while man was a sinner God loved him and was so anxious for him to repent, cease to sin, that he might forgive him, that he gave his own Son to die to lead him to repentance. Man ought to hold himself in a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against him. He ought to be anxious for him to repent that he may forgive him. He should do good to him to bring him to repentance. Man ought at all times to cherish the forgiving spirit and be ready to do good to those who sin against him, that he may bring them to repentance" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, **96**).

God through Christ does for us ("*even as Christ forgave you*"), [28] it will become much easier to forgive others whenever they repent.

[14] But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

"*Love*" is described as being "*above*" each of the previous qualities. This elevation exists because "love" is "the bond*of perfection*." If a person loves as he ought, he will possess all the previous qualities. "*Love*" binds all these qualities together, bringing a person to "*perfection*," or moral maturity (**Matt. 5:43-48**). Godly "*love*" is genuine (**Rom. 12:9-10**); it is more than mere emotion. Godly "*love*" seeks the greatest good for others (**1 Cor. 13**). Our faith must be rooted and grounded in love (**Eph. 3:17**). The "*new man*" cannot satisfy God unless his faith is motivated by and works in love (**Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 16:13-14**).

[15] And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Paul exhorted the Colossian Christians to "*let the peace of God rule*" within their "*hearts*." The term "*peace*" refers to a state of tranquility. Contextually, this "*peace*" is "*of*," or brought about by, God. [29] Elsewhere, Paul described "*peace of God*" as coming through Jesus Christ (**Phil. 4:7**). Those who allow this "*peace*" to reign over their "*hearts*" are the most likely people to exhibit the positive qualities mentioned earlier which make peace with all men more attainable (**Rom. 12:16-18**).

Not only did the Colossians need to allow "*the peace of God"* to reign over their "*hearts,*" but they also needed to "*be thankful*." This gratitude stemmed from the fact that they were "*called in one body*," i.e. Christ's church (**Col. 1:18**). This calling was accomplished through preaching the gospel and the Colossians' subsequent obedience to it (**2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-9**). All today who follow this pattern can be described as the called out people of God (**Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Pet. 2:9-10**).

To be in Christ is to be in His "*body*" (**Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:38, 41, 47**). God did not devise a disjointed "*body*" of Christ. Instead, He designed and implemented a unified body with each member sharing a relationship with the Lord and with each other (**Eph. 4:1-4, 15-16**). This great spiritual community is "*one*." No other spiritual

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[28] "I'll forgive but I won't forget" is a phrase that is commonly used by people today. Many Christians, though they may not outright make such a statement, share this attitude when someone repents of a sin against them. However, if we choose to remember someone's repented sin, then we sin against them by not forgiving as God in Christ forgave us. God remembers our sins no more when we repent (Heb. 8:12), and we are required to imitate Him in this respect (Eph. 4:32-5:1). Humans do not have the option of forgiving but still remembering the repented sin.

[29] **"**The peace of God is the peace he bestows on those who love and obey him. It arises from the consciousness of union and harmony with him." (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, **297**).

"*body*" is authorized or positively recognized by God.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

The "*new man*" allows "*the word of Christ*" to "*dwell*" in him "*richly*." That is to say, a person allows the word of the Lord to fully saturate his heart. Since Christ dwells in the believer (**Col. 1:27**), it is only logical that the "*word of Christ*" should also rest within the believer. Evidence of the indwelling of Christ's word in one's heart can be seen when believers teach and admonish other people via "*psalms*," [30] "*hymns*," [31] and "*spiritual songs*." [32] Though we teach and admonish each other in song, our "*singing*" is ultimately directed "*to the Lord*."

It should be noted that the "*heart*" and mouth ("*singing*") are the only instruments Paul authorized in this verse to be used in worship to God. [33] This truth is consistent with other New Testament passages where we also see believers strictly "*singing*" without any references to mechanical instruments (**Eph. 5:19; Acts 16:25; etc.**). Of course, this makes sense because it is impossible to teach and admonish other people via a mechanical instrument. [34] If Paul intended for the use of mechanical instruments in worship (harp, piano, guitar, etc.), he would not have strictly stipulated the "*heart*" as the instrument which produces our grace-filled [35] "*singing*." [36]

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[30] "*Psalms*" – A set piece of music, i.e. a sacred ode (accompanied with the voice, harp or other instrument; a "psalm"); collectively, the book of the Psalms – psalm (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[31] "*Hymns*" – Sacred song, song of praise to God . . . typically more formal and structured than other forms of musical worship, such as psalms or spiritual songs (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[32] "*Spiritual songs*" – In the New Testament, it is associated with spiritual songs that are sung to glorify God. The word emphasizes the act of singing as a form of worship and expression of faith (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible).

[33] Contextually, Paul is not referring to congregational singing in a church assembly, but his instruction does grant authority for such due to the expression "*teaching and admonishing one another*." Christians have no greater opportunity to teach and admonish other people in song than during a church service.

[34] "No performance of an instrument can possibly grow out of the word of God in the heart; a mechanical instrument cannot speak that word either to praise God or to teach and admonish one another" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **108**).

[35] "As we sing, our hearts should be stirred to be grateful and thankful to God. To do so would require sincerity (as opposed to thoughtlessly singing a familiar song) and focus of mind" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **48**).

[36] The limitation of strictly "*singing*" praise to God without accompanying mechanical instruments not only applies within the church assembly but also applies outside the confines of the worship services because the same language ("*sing*") that is used in Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19 also appears in James 5:13; Acts 16:25. The latter two passages display events occurring outside of a church assembly.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

"*Whatever*" the "*new man*" does, he does so "*in the name of the Lord Jesus*." To do something "*in the name of*" someone is to act by that person's authority (**Acts 4:7; Matt. 28:18-19**). The "*new man*" in Christ does not do anything that his Lord has not authorized. Instead, he only does those things that will glorify the Lord (**1 Cor. 10:31**).

Since Christ is our source of authority, we must do what He says and refrain from doing what He has condemned or not authorized (**Luke 6:46; Matt. 7:21-23**). This truth applies to all areas of our lives ("*in word or deed*"). The Colossians were told earlier that Christ dwelled in them (**Col. 1:27**). If the Colossians, however, elected to act outside the bounds of what the Lord authorized, Christ would cease to dwell in them until they repented (**2 John 9**).

Our obedience to the Lord should not be characterized by begrudging servitude but, rather, thankfulness. All that we do must be authorized by the Lord and all that we do must be done with gratitude in our hearts knowing the grace and mercy of our Lord (**1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:57**). Since Jesus Christ is our mediator (**1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:34**), we should offer "*thanks*" to God "*through Him*" (**Eph. 5:20**).

18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Given societal changes causing women to take leading roles both in and outside the home, many take issue with this text and its parallel passage in **Eph. 5:22-33**. The point of controversy is found in Paul's demand for a wife to "*submit*" to her husband. Many claim that such a demand for submission is both oppressive and misogynistic. However, when a person – male or female – submits to Christ that person begins a life of submission. All people – male and female – are commanded to submit to various rulers, heads, and authorities. Consider several examples:

- Husbands and wives submit to each other by yielding their bodies to each other (**1 Cor. 7:4**).
- Children must submit to their parents (**Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1**).
- Bondservants must submit to their masters (**Col. 3:22; Eph. 6:5-9**).
- All are required to submit to governmental leaders (**1 Pet. 2:13-14; Rom. 13:1, 7**).
- The church submits to Christ (**Eph. 5:23-24**).
- Christians in a local church must submit to their overseers (**1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:7, 17**).
- Christians must submit to fellow Christians (**1 Pet. 5:1-5; Eph. 5:17-21; Phil. 2:3**).
- All mankind must submit to God and Christ (**James 4:7-10**).

The "*new man*" lives a life of submission! When a wife "*submits*" to her husband as this text requires, she displays a defining quality of her "*new man*" in Christ.

A wife is required to "*submit*" to her husband. She is not called to "*submit*" to her husband because God views women as inferior in any way. Men and women are undeniably on equal spiritual footing (**Gal. 3:28**). However, despite clear spiritual equality, God still requires women to "*submit*" to men (**1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12**); He specifically requires wives to lovingly "submit"to their husbands (**Tit. 2:4-5**). God has designed a special order where man is the leader and spiritual head of woman due to Adam being formed first, then Eve (**1 Tim. 2:13; 1 Cor. 11:8-9**), as well as Eve, not Adam, being the one deceived by Satan (**1 Tim. 2:14**). If a wife respects the Lord's authority, she will "*submit*" to her husband knowing his position of authority was given by God.

Wives must "*submit*" to (follow, honor, and respect) their husbands "*as is fitting in the Lord*." In other words, a wife must submit to her husband in the same manner and in the same totality as she submits to Christ (**Eph. 5:23-24**). The exception to this rule is when a husband demands something of his wife that is contrary to the will of God. In such cases, a wife must do the Lord's will rather than her husband's will (**Acts 5:29**). If a Christian woman is married to an unbeliever or an unfaithful Christian, she still must "*submit*" to her unrighteous husband, but she must not "*submit*" to his decisions in such a way that causes her to sin or partake in his sins (**1 Tim. 5:22**). A woman in such difficult circumstances must gracefully and gently "*submit*" to a man who likely has no concern for her spiritual welfare. [37] Yet, her gentle and quiet submission can potentially have a soul-saving impact on her spouse (**1 Pet. 3:1-6**).

After addressing the fact that wives must "*submit*" to their husbands, Paul then commanded husbands to "*love*" their wives and "*not be bitter toward them*." Christ's selfless, sanctifying, and sacrificial affection for the church is the divine example that husbands must follow in loving their wives (**Eph. 5:25-29, 33**). Wives are owed such love (**Eph. 5:28**). A husband is guilty of sin if he does not love his wife as Paul commands or if he harbors bitterness towards her. In fact, such bitterness will cause a husband to lose his soul (**Heb. 12:15**).

A husband must make it his aim to continually love and cherish his wife by providing for her necessities; promoting her physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare; upholding and supporting her; contributing to her happiness; respecting and valuing her contributions; and honoring her as an equal partner (**1 Pet. 3:7**).

[20] Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

[37] "Where the husband and wife are both earnest Christians seeking to do the will of God, in whose hearts there is real mutual affection and esteem, there will be no difficulty whatever in regard to such an admonition as this; but it will require grace to yield loving obedience when perhaps the husband is a carnal, worldly, and unreasonable man" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **302**).

"*Children*" are commanded to "*obey*" their parents. This is one of the rare commands in the Bible strictly limited in application to "*children*." Yet, this command is still broadly applicable because every person is a child of their respective parents.

The Greek word translated as "*children*" is inclusive of offspring who are under the care and responsibility of parents. Therefore, until the time they leave the care of their mother and father, "*children*" must submit to and "*obey*" their parents "*in all things*" because such obedience is right and proper in God's sight (**Eph. 6:1**). The only caveat would be when parents expect their child to obey commands which violate the law of Christ (**Acts 5:29**). When a child sincerely obeys his parents "*in all things*," his obedience "*is well-pleasing to the Lord*."

21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

A father must not "*provoke,*" "antagonize" (NASB), or "*embitter*" (NIV) his children. If a father does parent in such a way that provokes his children, they can "*become discouraged*." [38] A father must not be dictatorial in how he parents but, rather, nurturing as he rears his son or daughter (**Eph. 6:4, ASV**). Elsewhere, special emphasis is placed upon "*fathers*" for training their child in the ways of the Lord (**Eph. 6:4**). It is only logical that this responsibility is placed upon "*fathers*" since husbands are the spiritual heads of their families (**Eph. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 14:34-35**).

When a parent is unjust or unreasonable towards a child, this will lead to discouragement. Below are several practical admonitions that parents should consider as they seek to avoid antagonizing their child:

- Never forget that a child is a child and, thus, will make childish mistakes (**1 Cor. 13:11**).
- Avoid comparing the successes and failures of your child with another child's successes and failures (**2 Cor. 10:12**).
- Ensure that a punishment does not outweigh the act of disobedience (**Prov. 20:10, 16:11**).
- Never engage in corporal punishment while angry (**Eph. 4:26**).
- Do not simply tell a child he is loved; show him he is loved (**1 John 3:18**).
- Lead by example (**Matt. 7:1-4**).

These are just a few of many ways that parents can avoid provoking and discouraging their children.

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[38] "If children are required to 'obey,' it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey . . . It is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for a child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **118**).

22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

It must first be noted that this text does not support the cruel and forced slavery evident in the United States for centuries and still existing in some countries today. This type of slavery violates countless New Testament passages demanding Christ's followers to show love, kindness, and compassion to all people. Additionally, this type of forced slavery violates the attitude required by slave "*masters*" in **Col. 4:1** and **Eph. 6:9**. That being said, slavery itself was not abolished by the gospel of Christ. The commencement of the New Covenant did, however, introduce changes in the attitudes of both "*servants*" and "*masters*" (**1 Tim. 6:1-3**).

"*Bondservants*" are commanded to "*obey*" their earthly "*masters*." For Paul to provide this instruction, it is necessary to assume there were "*bondservants*" in the church at Colossae, as was the case in other churches (**Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Cor. 7:20-24; 1 Pet. 2:18**). Though Paul's instructions in this verse and the succeeding verses specifically applied to slaves and their "*masters*," many applications can be made to the employee and employer relationship that exists in our society today. [39]

Though "*bondservants*" are commanded to "*obey*" their "*masters*," mere obedience was not all that Paul instructed. He also stated that this obedience was to be accomplished "*not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God*." [40] One who serves with eye-service only works diligently if his master's "*eye is on*" him (NIV). In contrast, the type of worker who pleases God is one who serves with humility, sincerity, honesty, cheerfulness, and trust (**Eph. 6:6-8**). Ultimately, by obeying our earthly masters, we do the Lord's will (**Col. 3:24**).

23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

In addition to commanding their servitude be performed sincerely, Paul then added that "*bondservants*" were required to "*heartily*" [41] work for their earthly "*masters*" in the very same manner in which they worked for the heavenly Master. This truth is applicable to our employee and employer relationship in modern society. "*Whatever*" service we provide must be performed "*heartily, as to the Lord and not to men*." We are to serve our fleshly masters earnestly because, in so

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[39] "The word used here [bondservants] denotes one who is bound to render service to another, whether that service be free or voluntary, and may denote, therefore, either a slave, or one who binds himself to render service to another" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **120**).

[40] "All submission must be in the fear of the Lord. He is to stand first in our fear, then his fear to regulate our submitting to each other in the different relations" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **110**).

[41] **"**Literally, 'from the soul.' With a personal interest" (Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament).

doing, we are serving the Lord Himself (**Col. 3:24; 1 Pet. 2:18-20**). Christians should realize that our work is a reflection of our overall work in God's kingdom. We ought to be the hardest workers in whatever industry we are employed. [42]

[24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. [25] But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

A bondservant was expected to serve his earthly master "*as to the Lord*" because, ultimately, his "*reward of the inheritance*" [43] will come "*from the Lord*." Though he was expected to sincerely and diligently serve his earthly master, a bondservant served "*the Lord Christ*." The same is true for an employee working for his employer.

How we serve our earthly masters will be remembered by the Lord, who will recompense us accordingly (**2 Cor. 5:10**). If a servant wronged his earthly master, he "*will be repaid for what he has done.*" If a servant faithfully served his earthly master but was wronged by him, he too "*will be repaid for what he has done*" because "*there is no partiality*" with the heavenly Master (**Eph. 6:9; Acts 10:34-35**). [44] Regardless of earthly rank, the Lord will judge all according to the same standards and without partiality.

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[42] "Christians who were slaves ought to have been the best slaves a man could have. Christians today ought to be the best workers in the workforce" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **52**).

[43] "Slaves received no earthly wages nor earthly inheritance, but through Christ they were assured of an inheritance in heaven" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon,* **140**).

[44] "A master may fail to render suitable recompense to a slave. But, if the servant is faithful to God, he will recompense him in the future world. It is in this way that religion would make the evils of life tolerable, by teaching those who are oppressed to bear their trials in a patient spirit, and to look forward to the future world of reward . . . If their masters do not reward them for their services here, God will; and if they may not enjoy liberty here, they will soon be received into the world of perfect freedom - heaven" (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament – Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, **122**).

CHAPTER FOUR

[Continued] Live as a New Man (3:10-4:6)

1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Though there is a chapter break, this verse and the next several verses are a continuation of Paul's discourse on living as a "*new man*" in Christ that began in **Col. 3:10** and ends at **Col. 4:6**.

As we stated while examining **Col. 3:22**, this verse provides undeniable proof that cruel and enforced slavery, such as what was seen in the United States in prior centuries, is not supported by the Law of Christ. An earthly master is not permitted to act as an unjust tyrant towards his servants (**Phile. 8-17**). Instead, he is commanded to be "*just and fair*" [1] to those who serve him (**Ecc. 5:8**). A master must not demand anything from a servant beyond what he would be willing to do himself if the roles were reversed (**Matt. 7:12**).

Elsewhere, we learn that a master must possess the same characteristics as his servants (**Eph. 6:5-8**). Such is logical since an earthly master, though he has a position of rank on earth, is just like his servants in being subject to the "*Master in heaven.*" Just as the servant will stand before the Lord to answer for how he performed his role of servitude, so too will a master stand before the Lord to answer for how he ruled over his servants. These truths are equally applicable to an employer ruling over his employees.

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

An active prayer life is a must for the "*new man*" in Christ. The Colossians were already active in prayer, as evident by Paul's expression "*continue earnestly in prayer*." [2] [3] However, Paul thought it wise to encourage these Christians to not grow weary in praying but, instead, remain "*vigilant*" and "*alert*" (NASB), or awake, [4] in how they prayed. Furthermore, their prayers needed to be marked by "*thanksgiving*." Ceaseless praise should flood the ceaseless prayers of the "*new man*" in Christ (**1 Thess. 5:16-18**).

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[1] "That which is just and equal: proper food and raiment, which is sufficient and fitting for them; the wages due unto them by law or contract; using them with gentleness and humanity, taking care of them when under affliction, and in sickness; encouraging the diligent and laborious by an addition to their salaries; correcting the disobedient within just bounds, not with too much rigour and severity; and carrying it with an even hand to all, not preferring or indulging one before another, without any reason:" (Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Colossians, **114**).

[2] "*Continue earnestly*" – To give constant attention to a thing (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

[3] The same Greek word [proskartereó] that is translated as "*continue earnestly*" is also used in Acts 2:42: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"

[4] "In our persistent prayers our spiritual faculties must be in active exercise. We must, while we pray, be keenly alive to our own needs and dangers and the promises of God. To be awake is to be alive in the fullest sense, to have all the powers of perception and action in readiness. The activity of the soul in prayer is to be both energetic and incessant" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **307**).

3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak;

Earlier in the epistle, Paul expressed that he and his companions were constant in prayer on behalf of the Colossians (**Col. 1:9**). Now, Paul requested the Colossians pray for them. Given Paul was "*in chains*" as he wrote the epistle (**Col. 1:24, 4:10**), one might think the apostle would request prayers for his deliverance. Yet, such a request went unmentioned. Instead, Paul requested prayers for two matters, both in reference to the spread of the gospel.

First, Paul requested prayers "*that God would open to us a door for the word*." Even while imprisoned, Paul recognized there were great opportunities for him and his companions to teach the gospel (**Phil. 1:12-14; Acts 16:23-34**). He earnestly desired for more such opportunities "*to speak the mystery of Christ*." Through offering prayers as Paul requested, one would think the Colossians would take great joy in contributing to others potentially receiving the same "*mystery*" they received (**Col. 2:1-3**).

Second, Paul requested prayers that he would make the gospel message "*manifest*" by speaking as he "*ought to speak*." In other words, Paul wished to boldly and plainly speak the right things the right way (**Col. 4:6; Eph. 6:20; Acts 9:27, 19:8, 26:26; 1 Pet. 4:11**).

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

Those who have been created anew in Christ must realize how important it is to "*walk*" carefully and with "*wisdom toward those who are outside*." Given our differences in character from the rest of the world, many will seek to falsely accuse us or make accusations out of bad faith to hurt our influence (**1 Pet. 2:11-12**). The world may slander and persecute us, but we must not provide the world any fuel to add to their vindictive fires (**1 Thess. 5:22**). [5] Christians must be very diligent in continually working to maintain a positive influence by walking "*in wisdom*" when around non-Christians. If we do so, we will bring glory to God through our good conduct (**Matt. 5:14-16**). Likewise, we could possibly bring others to Christ in the process.

Furthermore, Christians must ensure that we are properly "*redeeming the time*." The idea is that we must take advantage of the "*time*," i.e. opportunities, that God presents to us (**Gal. 6:10**). Contextually, Paul's point seems to be that we should take advantage of opportunities to spread the gospel to "*those who are outside*."

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[5] "We should use some wisdom in dealing with those who are not Christians. We should stop and think about how our words and actions will be taken. What kind of impression are we leaving by the things we say and do? Even when we do things that are right within themselves, we may leave the wrong impression before others. Good judgment must be used in all our dealings with others" (Donnie Rader, *Truth Publications – The Book of Colossians*, **54-55**).

[6] Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Three points are made here about how we must conduct our "*speech*." As we speak, we must ensure that our "*speech*" is:

1) "*With grace*" – Language that is grace-filled will not be laced with disdain, arrogance, and condescension. Rather, grace-filled speech will be filled with love, humility, and compassion. [6] In contrast to corrupt communications, grace-filled speechcan spiritually edify a person (**Eph. 4:29**).
2) *"Seasoned with salt*" – To season something is to make it more palatable. "*Salt*" preserves rather than corrupts. This expression does not suggest that we should compromise the truth to make the gospel more palatable. Such would be contrary to Paul's exhortations elsewhere (**2 Tim. 4:3-4**). Instead, salt-seasoned speechis indicative of language being spoken in a loving way that is palatable to the listener (**Eph. 4:15**).
3) "*Able to answer everyone in the way you should*" (NCV) – We must determine how we should respond to people on an individual basis. Although there are blanket truths, blanket responses do not necessarily suit the needs of "*each one*." [7] For the Colossians, they would especially need to be able to respond individually to each outsider who sought to draw them away from Christ (**Col. 2:8**). We bear the same responsibility today (**1 Pet. 3:15**). The way we speak is indicative of the wisdom we possess.

Although the previous verse indicates that Paul specifically had in view our manner of speaking with unbelievers, the truth of this verse is equally applicable in how we should speak with fellow believers.

In the age of social media, Christians should pay special care to how they speak to and among "*outsiders*," both in terms of what we personally say and in terms of what we share that was originally penned by another person (**Rom. 1:32; 1 Tim. 5:22**). How effective will we be in spreading the gospel to outsiders if they see our social media accounts riddled with corruptive language (**James 3:10**)? Just as Paul petitioned for prayers to speak as he ought (**Col. 4:4**), we should regularly pray that we too would only speak those things which satisfy God.

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[6] "They will be words that are not abusive or vindictive, but speech that is loving and caring" (Walton Weaver, *Truth Commentaries – Philippians, Colossians,* **587**).

[7] "Each answer must be suited to the specific needs of the person asking the question. The disposition of mind of the one asking the question, the tone of the question, the content of it, as well as its intent — all such matters must be taken into consideration if one is to answer in the best way" (Walton Weaver, *Truth Commentaries – Philippians, Colossians,* **588**).

Final Greetings (4:7-14)

7 Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts,

Paul ascribed three complimentary descriptors to Tychicus. Paul described him as (1) "*a beloved brother*," (2) "*faithful minister*," and (3) "*fellow servant in the Lord*." A similar description of Tychicus is found in the letter to Ephesus (**Eph. 6:21**). Tychicus was responsible for informing the Colossians of the latest "*news*" regarding Paul. He would update the church on Paul's "*circumstances*," as well as "*comfort*" their "*hearts*." [8]

Tychicus was an important figure in the first century church. Specifically, he played an important role in Paul's ministry. Tychicus accompanied Paul during his third missionary journey (**Acts 20:4**); he visited Ephesus on multiple occasions, having delivered Paul's epistle to them, and provided encouragement to the church (**Eph. 6:21-22; 2 Tim. 4:12**); working alongside Onesimus, he delivered the letter to Colossae (**Col. 4:8-9**); and he possibly went to Crete to provide Paul's orders to Titus (**Tit. 3:12**). Paul placed great confidence in Tychicus, sending him to accomplish various important works.

9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are happening here.

We learn here that Onesimus accompanied Tychicus in delivering Paul's letter to Colossae. Like Tychicus, Paul described Onesimus as being "*faithful*" and a "*beloved brother*." He too would inform the Colossians of Paul's plight at the time of writing.

Onesimus was apparently a member of the Colossian church, hence Paul's phrase "*one of you*." Onesimus was a slave who served under his believing master Philemon, who, evidently, was also a member of the Colossian church. Onesimus had fled from Philemon, only to be converted by Paul (**Phile. 8-10**). After his conversion and upon Paul's admonition to do so, Onesimus went back to Colossae to serve under his master (**Phile. 12-14**). When Onesimus returned to his master, Philemon was to receive him as a brother, both in the flesh and in the Lord (**Phile. 16**), showing the equality in Christ between bondservants and masters. It is highly likely that Onesimus's return to Philemon was accomplished during this specific journey with Tychicus to inform the Colossians of Paul's welfare.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you

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[8] "He would comfort their hearts by teaching them the word of God, as well as favorably reporting Paul's condition. The Colossians did not need consolation, but courage to stand against the wiles of the false teachers and be faithful to Christ and the gospel message" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **311**).

received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

Two more men are mentioned in this verse: Aristarchus and Mark, who was the cousin of Barnabas. As was the case here, Paul, in his letter to Philemon, also listed Aristarchus and Mark together as fellow laborers in the Lord (**Phile. 24**). Their association in these two instances may or may not be a coincidence.

Paul described Aristarchus as his "*fellow prisoner*." Debate exists as to whether or not this expression means Aristarchus was literally under arrest like Paul. [9] Whatever the case, although we know very little about Aristarchus, the scriptures show that he was an important figure in the first century church. He was with Paul during the riot in Ephesus (**Acts 19:29**) and he also traveled with Paul throughout Greece (**Acts 20:4**). Aristarchus was a valuable asset to Paul's ministry.

Mark, who we believe penned the Gospel of Mark, is the same John Mark who played a key role in Paul's ministry until eventually departing during Paul's first missionary journey (**Acts 13:2-13**). Mark's departure greatly displeased Paul. Differences in judgment regarding bringing Mark back eventually caused Paul and Barnabas to split their ministries into two separate works. Barnabas and Mark traveled and ministered together in Cyprus while Paul and Silas traveled and ministered throughout Asia (**Acts 15:36-40**). However, the positive reference to Mark in this verse ("*welcome him*") shows the great value Paul saw in him as a minister in the kingdom, which was a sentiment Paul also expressed to Timothy near the end of his life (**2 Tim. 4:11**). Although Paul had once lost confidence in Mark, he clearly regained that confidence.

[11] and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

The man named Jesus, or Justus, is nowhere else mentioned in the Bible. [10] All that we know about Justus is found in the verse. Justus was commended as being a Jewish ("*of the circumcision*") worker alongside Paul in God's kingdom. Highlighting the disdain most Jews had for him, Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus were the "*only fellow workers*" of Paul who were Jewish. All three men provided "*comfort*" to him.

[12] Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you

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[9] It is possible that Aristarchus was a figurative "*prisoner*" by voluntarily staying with Paul and providing assistance during the latter's literal imprisonment in Rome (Acts 27:1-2).

[10] Two other men, one surnamed Justus and another named Justus, are referenced in Acts 1:23 and Acts 18:7, respectively. Given his official name (Joseph, called Barsabas), we know for certain the man surnamed Justus is a different person than the one Paul mentioned in Col. 4:11. It is also unlikely the man mentioned in Acts 18:7 is the same person Paul described in Col. 4:11 because, given what happened in Acts 18:5-6, the Justus mentioned in Acts 18:7 appears to have been a Gentile. Jesus, who was called Justus, on the other hand, was "*of the circumcision*," i.e. Jewish.

in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. [13] For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.

Paul described Epaphras as a "*bondservant of Christ*." He was likely a Gentile [11] and a native of Colossae ("*one of you*"). Some suggest Epaphras was the primary person responsible for the gospel spreading there, [12] and some internal evidence supports this theory (**Col. 1:7, 2:1**). Epaphras was a faithful servant of the Lord (**Col. 1:7**), as well as Paul's fellow prisoner (**Phile. 23**). Although Epaphras was imprisoned alongside Paul, he continued to exhibit "*great zeal*" for his brethren by "*laboring fervently in prayers*." Specifically, he prayed that they would be "perfect and complete*in all the will of God*." Such prayers would be especially helpful given the false teachers who were trying to draw the Colossians and surrounding Christians away from Christ.

[14] Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Two men are mentioned in this verse: Luke and Demas. Paul described Luke as "*the beloved physician.*" [13] We have all reason to assume this Luke is the person who penned both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke traveled with Paul during his second and third missionary journeys (**Acts 16:10-12, 20:5-6, 21:18, 27:1**). Unlike so many others, Luke was a loyal supporter of Paul, having stood by him never to forsake him (**2 Tim. 4:11**). In contrast, Demas, although mentioned here alongside Luke as greeting the Colossians, [14] later forsook Paul (**2 Tim. 4:10**).

Closing Exhortations (4:15-18)

[15] Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

After providing the Colossians with greetings from other brethren, Paul requested they relay his own greetings to the Laodiceans. Laodicea is the same church who later received condemnation from Christ for their lukewarmness (**Rev. 3:16**).

Paul also requested the Colossians send greetings on his behalf to "*Nymphas and the church*

[11] Given the fact that Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus were Paul's only fellow workers who were Jewish (Col. 4:11), it is necessary to assume Epaphras was a Gentile.

[12] It is also possible that Epaphras played a part in establishing the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis since the cities were all located in the Lycus Valley and were settled within 12 miles of Colossae. Even if he did not establish those churches, Epaphras obviously had some association with them given the reference to his passion for them.

[13] Paul did not describe Luke as the beloved "former" physician to indicate that he had given up his work as a doctor. Instead, the phrase "*beloved physician*" indicates Luke was still a practicing physician while also working as a minister of the gospel alongside Paul.

[14] "From the fact that Demas is mentioned here without a word of praise while the others received commendations in various ways, many interpreters have concluded that already his true character was beginning to appear, and that Paul did not have full confidence in him" (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* **317**).

that is in his house." Debate exists as to whether the expression "*church that is in his house*" refers to a church who assembled in Nymphas's home or those in his family who were members of the church. Whomever Paul specifically referenced, he wished for them to receive his greetings.

16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

The epistle addressed to Colossae was also intended to be read to the Laodiceans. Likewise, the letter to the Laodiceans was intended to be read by the Colossians. Many wonder about the canonicity of the Laodicean letter. If this letter was/is a necessary part of the New Testament canon, then we trust it survived and is included in our Bibles via a different name. [15] Whatever the case, we can see from this text that the contents of New Testament epistles would be repeated to Christians in other places. The physical letters would often circulate throughout other churches (**2 Cor. 1:1; James 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Rev. 1:4**). New Testament epistles addressed specific problems in specific churches, but the instructions were/are applicable to all saints everywhere (**1 Cor. 1:2**).

17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

We know very little about Archippus. He was a fellow soldier in the Lord's army (**Phile. 2**). More specifically, he was involved in the "*ministry*" of the gospel. We do not know for certain if he was a preacher who spoke through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. All we know is that the Colossians needed to encourage Archippus to "*finish the work the Lord called him to do*" (NLV), which is a very similar admonition Paul gave Timothy (**1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-4**).

18 This salutation by my own hand—Paul. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. Amen.

Signing off the letter with his signature "*grace be with you*" salutation (**2 Thess. 3:17-18**), Paul, in a very human moment, requested the Colossians to "*remember*" his "*chains*." He suffered as he wrote this epistle, yet all he asked from his brethren was to "*remember*," or pray, for him. He did not request their sympathy, nor did he request they enlist people to break him out of his confinement. Instead, Paul simply asked that they would bring his situation before God the Father in prayer, knowing the power of doing so (**James 5:16**). Such a simple yet powerful closing request from such a simple yet powerful man.

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[15] "Scholars seem to believe that the letter to the Ephesians was intended to be circulated throughout the churches of Asia, and that this is the letter to be read 'from Laodicea'" (Robert Harkrider, *Truth Publications – Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon,* **145**).

Appendix A: Similarities Between Ephesians and Colossians

SUBJECT	EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS
Grace and Peace Greeting	1:1-2	1:1-2
Holy and Blameless Living	1:4	1:22
Redemption in Christ	1:7	1:14
Reconciliation in Christ	1:10	1:20
Position of Christ	1:20-21	3:1
Christ is Head of the Body	1:22-23	1:18, 24
Once Spiritually Dead in Sin…	2:1	2:13
…Now Alive in Christ	2:5-6	2:12-13
Equality of Jews and Gentiles	2:11-13	1:20-22; 2:11
End of the Law of Moses	2:14-16	2:14-17
The Mystery Revealed	3:1-7	1:25-29
The Lowly Character of the New Man in Christ	4:2-3	3:12-15
The One Body of Christ	4:4	3:15
Christ Nourishes His Body	4:15-16	2:19
Put Off the Old Man and Put On the New Man	4:22-32	3:5-15
God's Wrath Against the Sons of Disobedience	5:3-6	3:5-8
Be Filled with the Spirit / the Word	5:18-20	3:16-17
Spirit-Filled Acapella Singing	5:19	3:16
Redeem the Time	5:15-16	4:5-6
Familial Responsibilities	5:22-6:4	3:18-21
Responsibilities of Servants and Masters	6:5-9	3:22-4:1
Paul's Request for Prayers	6:18-20	4:2-4
Tychicus Sent for a Purpose	6:21-24	4:7-8

Appendix B: Chronology of Resurrections in the Bible

ORDER	PERSON	PASSAGE
1	*Widow of Zarephath's Son*	1 Kings 17:17-24
2	*Shunammite Woman's Son*	2 Kings 4:18-37
3	*Israelite Man*	2 Kings 13:20-21
4	*Widow of Nain's Son*	Luke 7:11-17
5	*Jairus's Daughter*	Luke 8:49-56
6	*Lazarus*	John 11:1-44
7	*Various Saints in Jerusalem*	Matt. 27:50-54
8	*Jesus Christ*	Matt. 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:1-21:25
9	*Tabitha (Dorcas)*	Acts 9:36-42
10	*Eutychus* [1]	Acts 20:7-12

[1] It has been argued by scholars and religious people alike that Eutychus did not die and, therefore, was not resurrected. Wayne Jackson provided the following evidences affirming that Eutychus was, indeed, dead and restored to life:

> "A Doctor Testified – Luke, a physician (Col. 4:14) on the scene, unequivocally says that Eutychus was 'dead' (v. 9). Was he not, as an eye-witness, in a better position to judge the matter than a modern commentator, some nineteen centuries removed from the event?
>
> Don't Add Words to the Text – When Paul addressed the situation, he simply said: 'His life is in him.' He did not say: 'His life is still in him,' or 'His life is yet in him.' To add those words to the sacred text manifests a tampering with the word of God.
>
> Alive Again – Luke later comments that Eutychus was brought 'alive' (Acts 20:12). One usage of this term is to describe "dead persons who return to life, become alive again" (Arndt, p. 336; cf. Mt. 9:18; Mk. 16:11; Acts 9:41, etc.). If the lad had merely been injured, why stress that he was 'brought alive?' To merely mention that the youth was brought again to the assembly would have been entirely sufficient. Weren't they all alive who returned to the upper room? What was special about this youth? He had been dead!
>
> Luke Knew the Difference Between Dead and Supposedly Dead – When Paul was stoned at Lystra on his first missionary journey, Luke records that the apostle was dragged out of the city. He adds that the Jews were 'supposing that he was dead' (Acts 14:19). Here's the point. Had Luke wanted to present the idea that the saints in Troas merely 'supposed' that Eutychus was dead, when in fact he was only injured, he certainly was capable of expressing that concept, as he did in chapter 14. But that is not what he wrote in chapter 20.
>
> The resurrection of Eutychus brought 'comfort' to the saints in Troas for two reasons: First, it authenticated their religion as genuine. Only God can effect a resurrection. And secondly, it demonstrated that the grave is not the end of human existence. The Creator is able to bring life out of death" (Wayne Jackson, *The Case of Eutychus*, https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-case-of-eutychus).

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS