

PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
PHILEMON

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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

PHILIPPIANS-COLOSSIANS
PHILEMON

A New

- Commentary
- Workbook
- Teaching Manual

Wilbur Fields

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TO LOUISE

PREFACE

This book is written to help
MAKE YOUR BIBLE PLAIN!

and

MAKE YOUR BIBLE COME ALIVE!

To help you have a plain clear understanding of the Bible, this book provides the following:

(1) *Helpful introductory studies* of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. These give the facts about the recipients of the books, the background of each book, and outlines of each book.

(2) *A clear new translation and paraphrase* of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. This is first of all a literal translation of the Greek text. Then helpful words have been added to relate the verses together more clearly, and make the original meaning as complete as possible. The words that are added (the paraphrase) are enclosed in parentheses.

(3) *Notes on every phrase in every verse.* The learning and wisdom from many commentaries has been gleaned to make these notes reliable.

To help your Bible come alive to you this book provides the following:

(1) *Many devotional and practical thoughts* and exhortations within the notes.

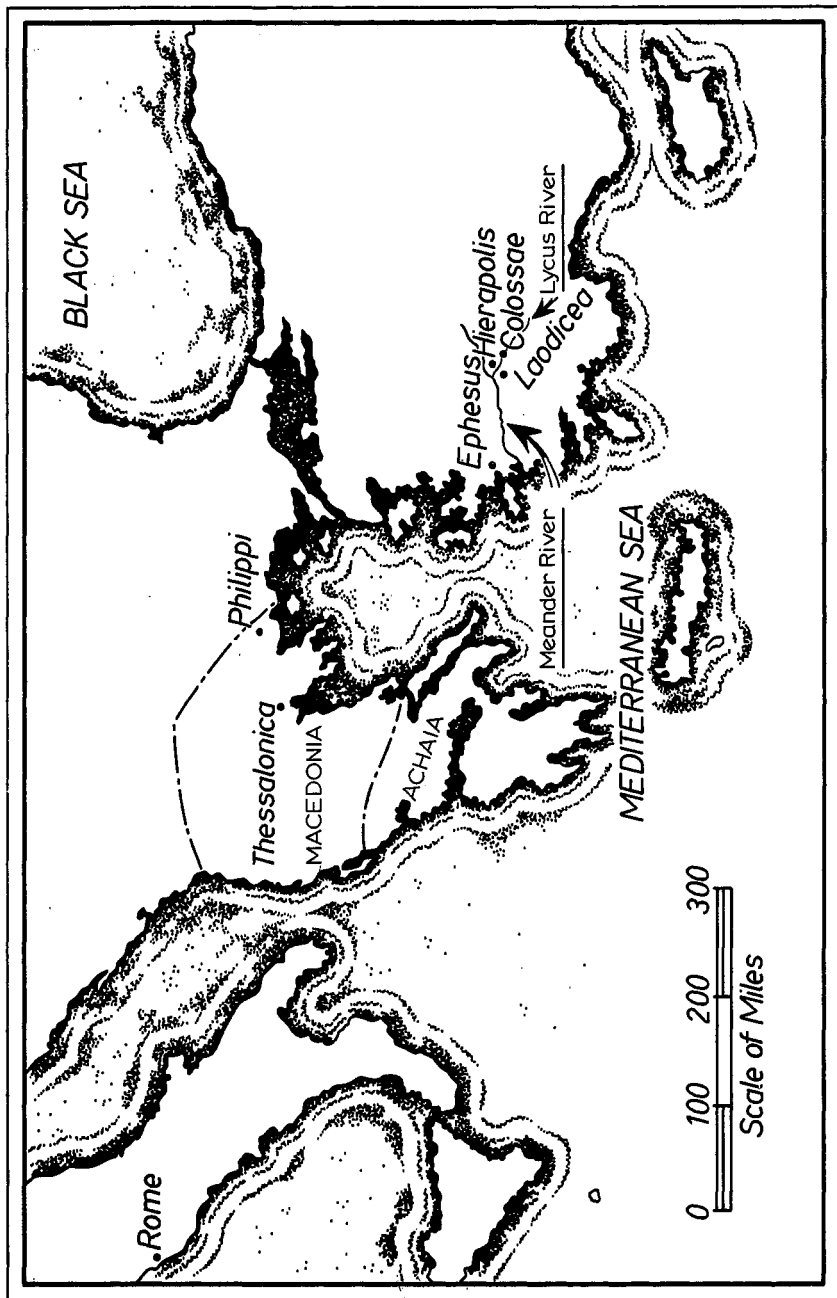
(2) *Questions at the end of each section* of the outline. Answering these will compel you to think about the text and direct you to the main ideas.

(3) *Brief expository outlines of each chapter* at the beginning of the studies on the chapters.

Now we urge you, "Search the Scriptures."

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INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS
ON
PHILIPPIANS

- A. General facts about Philippians.
- B. The Apostle Paul in Rome.
- C. Philippi and Macedonia.
- D. Paul's experiences with the Philippians.
- E. Critical Questions about authorship.
- F. Outline of Philippians.
- G. Questions over the Introductory Sections.

INTRODUCTION

A. GENERAL FACTS ABOUT THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

1. Philippians was written by the apostle Paul from Rome, 62/63 A.D. Paul was a prisoner at the time of writing. Philippians is one of four epistles written during the first imprisonment of Paul. The others were Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.
2. Philippians is probably the most affectionate letter Paul ever wrote. The letter shows Paul's strong attachment to the church at Philippi.
3. Many descriptive expressions have been coined to describe Philippians.
 - a. *The epistle of joy.* Such words as "joy" and "rejoice" occur no less than sixteen times in the letter. (If Paul could rejoice after two years of Roman imprisonment, why cannot we be joyful?)
 - b. *A thank-you letter.* The letter was written to acknowledge a much appreciated gift sent to Paul from the Philippians by the hand of Epaphroditus, one of their members. Phil. 4:18. Interestingly enough the word "thanks" does not occur in the letter. Paul knew how to express thanks without being sickeningly sugary about it.
 - c. *The epistle of excellent things.* Phil. 1:10; 4:8.

The value of thinking on excellent things certainly commends itself to everyone.
 - d. *The epistle of right-mindedness.* There are several references in Philippians to the mind. See Phil. 2:2, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:7-8. Nothing is more important to us than to have the right kind of mind.
 - e. *An epistle of unity.* See 2:1-11; 4:2.

It appears that the possibility of faction, disunity, and contention was Paul's greatest concern for the Philippians. Paul approached this problem by urging them to consider the deepest realities of their faith and the example of Christ.
4. Philippians does not expound on doctrinal issues in the manner used in Romans, or Galatians, or Hebrews. The doctrinal sections in Philippians are presented as matters of allusion rather than as systematic intentional teaching. When the points of doctrine are discussed, they are invariably given with a view to their practical application. Ideally this is the way all Christian doctrine should be presented.

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5. Philippians is very emphatic about holy living, holy thinking, dedication to God—in a word, about Christian ethics. The doctrinal section 2:5-11 was written to enforce the command to have humility. Paul's discussion about justification in 3:8-11 is intertwined with thoughts about our counting everything loss for Christ.
6. In Philippians the gospel is not reduced to a mere code of morals. The living Christ is at its heart. (1:21). Christ is neither a subject of controversy, nor simply a pattern of life. He IS Paul's life. Paul presents himself in the epistle as a disciple of Jesus, who lived only to know Christ and be found in Him, and even to share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death.

B. THE APOSTLE PAUL IN ROME

Since Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians were all written from Rome, it is necessary to give the background of Paul's experiences in Rome.

1. When did Paul arrive in Rome?

He arrived in early spring A.D. 61, following the shipwreck on Melita (Malta). Acts 27:12; 28:1, 11, 16.

Paul's arrival in Rome brought about an inevitable collision between pagan Rome and Christ. Until then Christianity had been persecuted by the Jews, but scarcely at all by the Romans. The Romans had even protected Paul from the Jews. After Paul's arrival in Rome the empire soon became not the ally of the gospel but its enemy. This was not, of course, purely the result of Paul's work. The conflict was inevitable, and just happened to take place at that time.

2. How long was Paul in Rome?

Over two years, Acts 28:30. He evidently left Rome before July 64, for Rome was burned at that time, and a great persecution against the Christians there arose. There is no indication that Paul was present in Rome at that time. Paul probably left Rome late in 63.

3. Under what circumstances had Paul come to Rome?

He was brought to Rome as a prisoner. He had been accused by the Jews in Jerusalem and in Caesarea of raising insurrection among the Jews, of profaning the temple, and of

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being a ringleader of the hated sect of the Nazarenes (that is, the Christians). Acts 21:28-30; 22:30; 24:5-6.

Paul had appealed his case, requesting to be tried before Caesar himself, rather than before the prejudiced Roman governors in Judea, who often sought to please the Jews more than they sought justice. Acts 25:9-12.

Paul had planned and hoped to go to Rome for a long time. Romans 1:10; 15:22-24. Paul concentrated his labors in the important cities of the world, and Rome as the capital city of the empire was the most important city of all.

4. Were there Christians in Rome before Paul arrived there?

Definitely yes. Sojourners from Rome were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when the church began. Acts 2:10. No doubt some of these were converts, and took their new faith home with them.

Paul wrote the lengthy and profound letter to the Christians at Rome before his arrival there. This was probably written from Corinth during his third missionary trip, about 57 A.D.

Christians from Rome met Paul on the road as he approached Rome. Acts 28:14-15.

The epistle to the Romans contains a long list of names of Christians to whom Paul sent greetings. Romans 16:3-16.

5. Where did Paul live in Rome?

He lived in his own rented dwelling. Acts 28:30. This was possibly located somewhere near the camp of the Roman Praetorian guard, because Paul was under the guard of Roman soldiers constantly.

6. Was Paul's situation in Rome comfortable?

Yes and no, probably more no than yes. Paul was a man who could be quite content in any situation. Phil. 4:11. However, he was confined to his house; visitors came to him; he couldn't go to them. Acts 28:17, 30.

He also constantly wore a long chain (an *alutis*, a coupling-chain), which coupled him to a Roman soldier, who was constantly with him. Eph. 6:20; Acts 28:16, 20.

7. Could Paul continue his preaching and teaching in Rome?

Definitely yes. Acts 28:31. His teachings there were so successful that his bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest. Phil. 1:13. Some of the soldiers guarding him became believers. The word

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of God even spread to Caesar's own household, where some became saints. Phil. 4:22.

8. How did Paul's presence in Rome affect the Christians there?

Most of them became much bolder. Phil. 1:14. However some preachers in Rome became envious of Paul, and tried to bring additional misery upon him. Phil. 1:15.

9. What letters did Paul write from Rome?

He wrote four letters that we know about during the period of his first imprisonment. They are Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, and Philemon.

10. What guests and companions did Paul have in Rome?

Epaphras from Colossae came. Col. 4:12. *Luke*, the beloved physician, was there. Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11. Also *Demas*, who later forsook Paul. Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:10. *John Mark* was present for a time. Col. 4:10. *Tychicus* came from the province of Asia (the area around Ephesus in Asia Minor), and carried back the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians from Paul. Col. 4:7-8; Eph. 6:21. *Onesimus*, the runaway slave of Philemon, met Paul and was sent back with Tychicus to his master Philemon in the city of Colossae. Col. 4:9. *Timothy* was with Paul. Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1. *Aristarchus* of Macedonia (Thessalonica) was there. Col. 4:10; Acts 20:4. Perhaps *Priscilla* and *Aquila* were still in Rome when Paul came there. A congregation of Christians in Rome had met in their house for a while. Rom. 16:3-5.

Paul had relatives in Rome, *Andronicus* and *Junius*, who probably visited him, if they were not themselves detained as prisoners. Romans 16:7.

11. How did Paul get along with the Jews in Rome?

Not very well. When Paul arrived many non-Christian Jews visited him and heard him. They had had no word from Judea about the accusations against him, but after hearing him they disagreed among themselves concerning him and departed. Acts 28:21-28. They would have listened to the claims of a false Messiah, but not the apostle of the true Messiah. It is barely possible that the people to whom Paul refers in Phil. 1:15-17 as being those who preached Christ in such a way as to deliberately bring affliction to Paul were Judaizing Christians, that is, Jewish believers in Christ who taught that we must keep the law of Moses as well as have faith in Jesus.

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Col. 4:10-11 indicates that only three of the Jewish Christians with Paul—Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus—remained faithful with Paul. This has a sad sound to it.

12. Who ruled Rome when Paul was there?

Nero was emperor A.D. 54-68.

13. What was Nero's character?

He started his rule very well, but ended as one of the most monstrous, cruel, extravagant, and insane rulers in all history.

He became emperor through the scheming of his mother, Agrippina, when Claudius died.

Two good counsellors—Seneca, the Stoic philosopher who had been his tutor as a boy; and Burrus, the firm but fair Praetorian prefect (commander of the Praetorian guard)—guided Nero well during his first eight years.

Nero poisoned his step-brother in 55 A.D.

He became associated with a shameless woman named Poppaea. Agrippina and Poppaea fought for control of Nero and Poppaea won. Nero divorced and later put to death another wife, Octavia. Agrippina also was slain.

Burrus died in 62 (Paul was then in Rome), and Seneca was forced into retirement. Seneca was later put to death because Nero suspected him of a plot. Without the restraint of these wiser and better men Nero rapidly became an unrestrained tyrant.

Nero taxed the people heavily. He gambled at 100,000 sesterces a throw of the dice. He played musical instruments, and people flattered and applauded his playing out of fear for their lives.

After her earlier shameless career Poppaea later became a convert to Judaism! She successfully argued the causes of the Jews several times before her husband. Later Nero killed Poppaea in a fit of rage. Poppaea's being a Jewish proselyte certainly did not make Paul's position more favorable.

In A.D. 64 two-thirds of Rome burned, while Nero (according to tradition) played the fiddle. He himself may have had the fire started. The Romans became suspicious and angry toward Nero after the fire. To shift blame from himself Nero accused the Christians ("Atheists!") of this crime, and slew thousands of them, covering them with pitch and then burning them as human torches, and throwing them to the lions in the Coliseum.

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Nero's persecution was the first of ten great persecutions instigated by Roman emperors against Christians.

Heavy taxation and misgovernment caused a revolt against Nero. Roman troops from Spain under Galba led the revolt and marched on Rome. When Nero's bodyguard joined the rebels, he fled to the country and committed suicide. A brief civil war followed his death.

Not even a hint of the scandals and cruelties of Nero's reign appears in Paul's epistles. If Paul could live in Rome, where he could not have been unaware of the evils of the court of Nero, and still write a letter like Philippians, he truly was in the world, but not of the world.

14. Why was Paul's trial in Rome so long delayed?

Paul's accusers from Jerusalem do not seem to have shown up in Rome. They may never have arrived. As long as Paul was detained far away from them in Rome they were to a degree satisfied. Also there may have been a backlog of cases before the Roman court that delayed Paul's hearing.

15. What was the outcome of Paul's trial, or hearing?

Apparently he was released. He surely should have been. The Roman army officer in Judea had no real charge against him. Acts 23:29. Neither did the governor nor King Agrippa. Acts 25:25; 26:31.

Paul expressed optimism to the Philippians that he would soon be released. Phil. 2:24; 1:19. Then he would have opportunity to visit them.

16. What happened to Paul after his release?

Only traditions and implications from the epistles to Timothy and Titus give us information about this. Paul and Titus made a trip through the island of Crete. Titus 1:5. Paul perhaps visited Philippi and Colossae. Phm. 22; Phil. 2:24. He seems to have visited Spain. Apparently he returned to Rome about A.D. 67, was rearrested, and beheaded.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:21.

C. PHILIPPI AND MACEDONIA

1. Philippi was a city in northern Greece, the area called Macedonia in Paul's time. Philippi lay near the seacoast, eight miles inland from its seaport, Neapolis. Acts 16:11-12. It was on a

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plain to the north of a ridge of hills, and east to Mt. Pangaeus. Its site lay between the rivers Strymon and Nestus .

2. The position of Philippi in the plain dominated the road system of northern Greece. It commanded a pass on the road from Europe to Asia (the Via Egnatia). Paul generally chose such strategic locations as centers for his work, although, of course, he went to Philippi as the result of a divine call. Acts 16:6-10.
3. In ancient times the site of Philippi was called Krenides, which means "little fountains," from the numerous springs which arose in the mountains on the north, and ran into the neighboring marsh.
4. The mountains adjoining Krenides once contained rich deposits of gold and silver. However the gold and silver mines were mostly depleted before Paul's time.
5. In the earliest times of history Macedonia was part of Thrace, which was regarded as comprising all of Europe north of Greece. Ancient Macedonia did not reach to the sea, and its language was not Greek. By the seventh century B.C. various areas of Macedonia had fused and Edessa had become its center.
6. An exiled family of Greeks took over Macedonian rule about 520-500 B.C. They conquered to the coast of the Thermaic Gulf.
7. Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, assumed the throne in 360 B.C. He conquered several places, among them Krenides. He introduced colonists into the city and renamed it Philippi, after himself. Philip received an annual revenue of a thousand talents from the gold mining industry in the area.
8. The Romans defeated the Macedonians in 197 B.C. and again in 168 (at Pydna). Macedonia was subjugated and the whole country divided into four districts.
9. After a revolt against the Romans in 146 all Greece south of Macedonia and Epirus was formed into a Roman province named Achaia. Macedonia and Epirus were merged into a province called Macedonia.
10. Philippi became involved in the power struggle within the Roman empire during the first century B.C. The battle of Philippi (42 B.C.) was a decisive battle of history. Here Mark Anthony and Octavian (Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius and decided the future history of the Roman empire.
11. Octavian (Augustus) constituted Philippi a Roman *colony*,

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housing there partisans of Mark Anthony. He regarded these men as being undesirable in Italy. Acts 16:12.

12. Cities like Philippi which became Roman colonies were miniatures of Rome, using Roman coin, laws, and customs. They spoke Latin. They were self-governed, their affairs being regulated by their own magistrates. They were peopled by Roman army veterans on pensions and their families.

Note the eagerness of the Philippians to declare, "We are Romans." Acts 16:20-21.

13. Philippi flourished under the Romans. While Amphipolis was the capital, Philippi outstripped its rival and became the first city of the district. Acts 16:12. This happened in spite of the fact that the Romans never got as much from the mines around Philippi as the Macedonians had.
14. The number of Jewish residents in Philippi was small. There was no synagogue, only a place of prayer by the river. Acts 16:13. The residents regarded Jews as outsiders and trouble-makers. Acts 16:20.
15. There was a school of medicine in Philippi. This is interesting since Luke, the physician who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, seems to have lived in Philippi.
16. The name Philippi has now disappeared from the location, and most of the old city is only ruins.

D. PAUL'S EXPERIENCES WITH THE PHILIPPIANS

1. Paul first came to Philippi about 52 A.D., during his second missionary trip. Acts 16 relates the story of this visit to Philippi. Philippi has the distinction of being the first city in Europe where Paul preached.
2. Paul came to Philippi with Timothy, Silas, and Luke.
3. Lydia was Paul's first convert in Philippi. Later at Philippi Paul cast out an evil (python) spirit from a girl. This touched off accusations against Paul, which were aggravated by local prejudice against Jews. Paul was beaten and imprisoned, but following an earthquake his jailor was converted. He was released the next day.
4. Paul's converts in Philippi reached into three levels of society: the lowest, the slave girl; the middle class, the jailor; the upper, Lydia.

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5. After Paul's departure the Philippian Christians experienced persecutions, as Paul had. Phil. 1:7, 28-30.
6. During his third missionary trip Paul revisited Philippi and other churches in Macedonia. This was about five years after his second trip. Luke rejoined Paul then, Acts 20:1-6.
7. A deep and true affection grew up between Paul and the Philippians, closer than that between him and any other church. Paul calls them, "My beloved, my joy and crown." Phil. 4:1.

This church supported Paul financially on numerous occasions, even when he went to Thessalonica just after leaving Philippi the first time. Phil. 4:15-16; II Cor. 11:9. They had a reputation for liberality, even though they and their land were in deep poverty following the civil wars. II Cor. 8:1-5.

8. Acts 20:6 is the last Biblical reference to Philippi until Paul's imprisonment, and the dispatching of the letter to the philippians.
9. The Philippians sent Paul another offering while he was in Rome, sending it by the hand of one of their members named Epaphroditus. Apparently they intended that Epaphroditus should remain with Paul in Rome to minister unto him. However, Epaphroditus became deathly sick in Rome, and only recovered because of God's mercy. Phil. 2:25-27.

The Philippians heard of his sickness, and Epaphroditus heard that they had heard of it. This worried him, for he feared they would worry over him.

This chain of events was the immediate occasion of Paul's writing Philippians. Epaphroditus was sent back with the letter, which included a gracious explanation as to why Paul had sent him back. Phil. 2:25-30.

E. CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT AUTHORSHIP

1. What has been the prevailing view as to the authorship of Philippians?

It has been generally accepted as a genuine epistle of Paul, even by the critics who would question Paul's authorship of Ephesians.

2. What section of the letter has caused some questions about the unity of the letter?

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There is a sharp break in the tone of the letter at 3:2. Paul jumps from the reassuring news in chapter two into a stern condemnation of "dogs" and evil workers. This has caused some to say that the letter as we have it is really a composite of two ancient letters by Paul.

However, this is only a guess, and is not a necessary conclusion. The informal and unsystematic character of the letter helps to explain the sudden change of tone in it. Perhaps as Paul was writing it over a period of several days, bad news about these "dogs" in Philippi came to Paul, and the change in tone in the letter reflects a change in his own feelings.

3. What did the ancient Christian writers indicate about the authorship of Philippians? They indicate an acquaintance with it and an approval of it.

Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (about 120 A.D.) appeals to the epistle or epistles of Paul to the Philippian church.

Philippians is included in the Syriac New Testament called the Peshitto, of about 175 A.D. Also it is in the Old Latin version, about 200 A.D.

It is included in the list of Bible books accepted by Marcion about 150 A.D. (although Marcion admittedly was a heretic), and by Hippolytus (about 230 A.D.). It was used at the close of the second century by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.

F. OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

1. Philippians is a difficult book to outline because it is intensely personal, and does not attempt to give a logical and progressive presentation of some particular subject. However certain large sections can be given separate headings
2. Outline (Memorize)
 - Salutation: 1:1-2 (Author, destination, greeting)
 - A. Thanks and prayer for the Philippians; 1:3-11.
 - B. Progress of the gospel in Rome; 1:12-18.
 - C. Paul's hopes; 1:19-26.
 - D. Exhortation to a worthy manner of life; 1:27—2:18.
 - The example of Christ; 2:5-11.

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- E. News about Timothy and Epaphroditus; 2:19-30.
- F. False teachers contrasted with Paul's example; 3:1—4:1.
- G. Final exhortations and thanks; 4:2-23.

- 1. To individuals to be in harmony; 4:2-3.
- 2. To joy; 4:4-7.
- 3. To right thinking; 4:8-9.
- 4. Thanks for their gift; 4:10-20.
- 5. Salutations; 4:21-23.

3. Although the above outline does not show much of a systematic development of ideas in Philippians, there is still a oneness about the book. Every chapter reflects of the unifying topic of RIGHT-MINDEDNESS, the good mind!

PHIL. 1—*A mind of thanks.*

Paul was thankful for the fellowship of the Philippians (1:3-11), for gospel victories (1:12-18), and for the hope of salvation (1:19-26).

PHIL. 2—*The mind of Christ.*

All of the feelings and acts that Christians should have and do are motivated by having the mind of Christ within us.

Timothy was commended because his mind was set on seeking the things of Christ. (2:19-21).

PHIL. 3—*A mind of right values.*

Paul counted everything loss for Christ (3:8). His superb Hebrew ancestry and training was counted refuse that he might gain Christ. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." (3:15).

PHIL. 4—*A mind of many virtues.*

The last chapter contains several paragraphs not directly related to one another, but all reflecting the good mind. They seem to be fruits growing on the tree of a good Christian mind.

Unity—"Be of the same (a united) mind." (4:2)

Joy—"Rejoice in the Lord." (4:4)

Clean thinking—"Think on these (virtuous) things." (4:8)

Contentment—"In whatsoever state I am, therein (I am) content." (4:11)

Thankfulness—(4:18)

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G. QUESTIONS OVER THE INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS

A. *General facts about Philippians.*

1. Who was its author?
2. What was the date and place of composition?
3. What was the feeling between Paul and the Philippian church?
4. Give four descriptive expressions that describe the epistle to the Philippians.
5. What act of the Philippians caused Paul to send the epistle?
6. Who was Epaphroditus?
7. How are the doctrinal sections in Philippians presented?
8. Does Philippians emphasize holy living, or is this one of the less prominent subjects in the book?
9. What (or who) is at the heart of the gospel and of life, as it is presented in Philippians?

B. *Paul the apostle in Rome.*

1. Why is it necessary to know something about Paul's experiences in Rome to understand Philippians?
2. When did Paul arrive in Rome?
3. How long was Paul in Rome?
4. Under what circumstances did Paul come to Rome?
5. Were there Christians in Rome before Paul arrived there?
How do you know?
6. Where did Paul live in Rome?
7. Was Paul's situation in Rome comfortable?
8. Could Paul continue preaching and teaching in Rome?
9. How did Paul's presence in Rome affect the Christians there?
10. What letters did Paul write from Rome? (Name four.)
11. Name six guests or companions that Paul had in Rome.
12. How did Paul get along with the Jews in Rome?
13. Who ruled Rome during the time when Paul was there?
14. What was the character of this Roman ruler?
15. What hints of the scandals and cruelties of the Roman emperor appear in Paul's epistles?
16. Why was Paul's court trial so long delayed?
17. What was the outcome of Paul's trial or hearing?

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C. *Philippi and Macedonia.*

1. Where was Philippi?
2. What was the name of the area, or province, wherein Philippi was located?
3. Why was the location of Philippi strategic?
4. What was the ancient name for Philippi?
5. What mineral resources once were obtained around Philippi?
6. Who gave Philippi its name? About when did this occur?
7. What nation took over Macedonia during the second century B.C.?
8. Who made Philippi a "colony"?
9. What were the Roman colonies like?
10. Were there many Jews in Philippi?
11. What "first" in the experiences of Paul can the city of Philippi claim?
12. What physician seems to have lived in Philippi?

D. *Paul's experiences with the Philippians.*

1. During which missionary trip did Paul first visit Philippi?
2. Who accompanied Paul on that trip?
3. Name three converts to Christ in Philippi.
4. Did the Philippian church have pleasant or harsh experiences?
5. When did Paul revisit Philippi?
6. Where did the Philippians send offerings to Paul following his first visit with them?
7. Were the Philippians poor or rich?
8. Who bore the Philippians' offering to Paul in Rome?
9. What happened to this messenger in Rome?

E. *Critical Questions about Authorship.*

1. What has been the prevailing view as to the authorship of Philippians?
2. What point in, or portion of, the letter has caused some to question the unity of the letter.
3. What did the ancient Christian writers indicate about the authorship of Philippians?

F. *Outline.*

1. Write the outline of Philippians from memory, including the Scripture references.

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2. What unifying topic is reflected in every chapter of Philippians?
3. What are the topics suggested for each of the four chapters?

Memory Work

The following passages should be memorized as the epistle is studied:

1:3-6, 21-24, 27.

2:1-11, 12-18.

3:7-14, 20-21.

4:4-8, 13, 19.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER ONE

A MIND OF THANKS

The things we commonly think about and the way we feel are the most important thing about us. The apostle Paul gave us an example of right-mindedness. In Philippians chapter one he exhibits a mind of *thanks*.

1. *Personal thanks*; (1:3-8)

Paul liked people. He liked the Philippians. He was not thankful merely for God's blessings in an abstract way, but for people individually and particularly. He appreciated the Philippians for their partnership with him in his work. His thankfulness for them led him to feel a confidence about their future deeds and ways of life.

2. *Prayerful thanks*; (1:9-11)

Paul prayed that their love might abound (overflow) more and more, leading them to better knowledge and more fruitfulness.

3. *Optimistic thanks*; (1:12-26)

Optimistic thanks for *past* events—In the confinement of arrest in Rome Paul had won many to Christ, even from the Praetorian Guard. Other Christians had been made bolder. Even the few Christian preachers who were envious of Paul and tried to bring misery upon him, were still preaching the gospel, and Paul rejoiced in this. (1:12-18)

Optimistic thanks for *future* hopes—Whether Paul lived or died made no real difference to him. If he died, that was gain to him. If he lived, his life would bring progress and joy to Philippians. (1:19-26)

4. *Concerned thanks*; (1:27-30)

Paul was concerned that their manner of life be worthy of the gospel, and that they be not frightened by enemies and by suffering.

Outline of 1:1-2

Salutation; 1:1-2

1. Senders; 1:1
2. Recipients; 1:1
3. Greeting; 1:2

1:1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; 2. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

1:1. Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, (send this epistle) to all the saints (the holy brethren) in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, (along) with (your) bishops (overseers or elders) and deacons (ministers or servants). 2. (May) grace (be) to you (all) and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah).

Notes

1. In New Testament times letters were started by giving the author's name first, and then the recipient's name.

Paul usually wrote an expression of thanks and prayer for his readers right after the salutation. This was followed by the body of the letter, which was closed with such concluding items as greetings from various people, and the benediction. Paul followed this pattern in Philippians.

2. Paul does not refer to himself as an *apostle* as he begins Philippians. The omission of this title is in keeping with the affectionate character of the letter. The Philippians were believers. Paul did not need to approach them with the tone of apostolic authority.
3. Timothy's name is added as co-sender of the epistle. Timothy was well-known to the Philippians. He came there with Paul on both visits to Philippi. See Acts 16:11-40; 19:21-22; Phil. 2:22.

Timothy seems to have grown up in Lystra (in Asia Minor), under the instruction of a godly mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois). II Timothy 1:5; Acts 16:1. He joined Paul and Silas when they came through Lystra during Paul's

second missionary trip. Timothy continued with Paul during his third missionary trip, and was with Paul in Rome during his first imprisonment, and afterwards. He was a loyal, constant, beloved, and effective helper to Paul.

4. While Timothy's name is joined with Paul's in the greeting, the frequent references to *my* and *me* instead of *our* and *us* in the book show that Paul was indeed the primary, if not the sole author. 1:3-4.
5. While Paul and Timothy sent the letter, in the truest sense Philippians is Christ's letter to the church.
6. Paul calls himself and Timothy *bondservants*; that is, slaves. While Paul was not servile, he was utterly a bondservant of Christ, bought, completely dependent, and undividedly loyal. Romans 1:1; Gal. 1:10.
7. The expression "servants of Christ Jesus" points back to the Old Testament, where the prophets are often called *servants* of God. See Amos 3:7; Jer. 7:25; Ezra 9:11; Daniel 9:6; Joshua 1:2.

Also Jesus himself was called the servant of God. Isa 42:1; 52:13; Matt. 12:15-18.

Thus the use of the title *servant* by Paul associates him with such honored servants of God as the prophets and with Christ himself.

8. The *saints* at Philippi were the *holy* ones, or the *separated* ones at Philippi. All Christians are saints. They are not called saints because they do not sin (See I John 1:8), but because they are set apart to God. The fundamental meaning of the word *holy* is that of setting apart, of being devoted to God. Compare Exodus 19:5-6.

In Christ Jesus we are set apart from the world, acquitted of all sins, and called to a life of good works.

9. Such expressions as "in Christ Jesus" are exceedingly common in Paul's writings. *In Christ Jesus* occurs 48 times; *in Christ* 34 times, and *in the Lord* 50 times. The doctrine that we are in Christ was a favorite of Paul's, and is accentuated in Philippians.
10. The Philippian church was organized with bishops and deacons. When these officers were selected for the Philippian church is not known. The churches of New Testament times seem to have selected their own elders and deacons, after the qualifications had been laid down for such offices by the inspired apostles and prophets.

11. The bishop (this word means overseer or superintendent) is the same officer as the one elsewhere called *elder*. Compare Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7. Several elders were appointed for each individual church. Acts 14:23. The practice of having one bishop as overseer over a number of churches, or over some vast area, is a work of the devil.
12. Deacons (this word means servant, attendant, or minister) were men selected to do various services required by the church, as needs arose. Study Acts 6:1-6; I Timothy 3:8-13.
13. Paul began and ended every epistle of his (except Hebrews) with a wish for *grace* upon his readers.
Grace means favor, undeserved favor. It also refers to the good effects that God's favor brings to us. To gain a sense of our debt to God for His grace, and our total dependence on this favor, is to make a giant stride toward Christian maturity. See Hebrews 4:16.
14. In Paul's view *peace* was the state of tranquility and blessedness which rose out of reconciliation with God. We can experience peace amidst persecutions and poverty. Those not reconciled to God have inward strife and discontent, even in wealth and ease.

Outline of 1:3-11

- A. Thanks and prayer for the Philippians; 1:3-11
 1. Thanks; 1:3-8
 - a. Thanks given always; 1:3
 - b. Thanks given with joy; 1:4-5
 - c. Thanks given with confidence; 1:6-8
 - (1) Confidence that the Lord will perfect them; 1:6
 - (2) Confidence is the correct attitude for Paul; 1:7-8
 2. Prayer; 1:9-11
 - a. Requests; 1:9-10a
 - (1) That their love may abound in knowledge; 1:9-10a
—The result of knowledgeable love is that they will approve excellent things.
 - (2) That they may be sincere and void of offence; 1:10b-11a
—Unto the day of Christ.
—Being filled with the fruit of righteousness.
 - b. Purpose of the prayer—the praise and glory of God; 1:11b

3. I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, 4. always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy,

Translation and Paraphrase

3. I give thanks to my God in all (my) remembrance of you, 4. always in every supplication of mine in behalf of all of you making my supplication with joy,

Notes

1. These verses are easy to understand. They need more to be imitated than to be interpreted. Paul gave thanks for his brethren. Do we give thanks for our brethren?
2. The word *supplication* used here means a prayer emphasizing the aspect of need. Even in such prayers as supplications the Philippians were mentioned with thankfulness. Paul's prayers in behalf of his needs were not selfish nor self-centered. They were joyful prayers involving others.

5. for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now;

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (I give thanks for you) because of your fellowship (your share in, and your participation) in (and for) the (work of) gospel, from the first day (when you received Christ until (right)now.

Notes

1. The word *fellowship* is from the Greek *koinonia*, which refers to the share one has in anything, participation, association, or communion. It may refer to the act of sharing a thing in common, or to the thing shared. The word is variously translated as *communication* (Phm. 6), *communion* (I Cor. 10:16), *contribution* (Rom. 15:26), *distribution* (II Cor. 9:13), and *fellowship*.

The cognate verb (*koinoneo*) is variously rendered "be made partakers of," "be partakers of," "communicate," "distribute."

2. In Christ we have fellowship in ministering to people's needs (II Cor. 8:4), fellowship of the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 3:9), fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1), fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil 3:10), fellowship with God and one another (I John 1:3).
3. The Philippians had a fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel with Paul. The preposition *in* in 1:5 is the Greek *eis*, which suggests that their fellowship was not just *in* the gospel, but was *directed toward* the goal of the gospel. The Philippians' part in the gospel had been continual from the first day they received the Christ until the time Paul wrote this letter to them.

6. being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Translation and Paraphrase

6. (I am thankful for you because I am) persuaded (and convinced) that he who (God) began in you (plural) a good work (the work of transforming and using you) will carry it out to completion, (even) until the day of Christ Jesus (when he comes again).

Notes

1. God is at work in the Christian. See Phil. 2:12-13. God will continue his work within the Christian until the end of his life. God prunes us like a vinedresser prunes grape vines, that we may bear more fruit. John 15:2. We are transformed to become like Christ. (II Cor. 3:18).
2. A day is coming called the day of Jesus Christ. It will be HIS day. Every eye shall see him. (Rev. 1:7). Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess. Phil. 2:10. Saints will marvel and glorify Him. II Thess. 1:10. Sinners will wail because of him. Rev. 1:7. Satan and the enemies of Jesus had their day long ago on Golgotha. But we may say of the day of Christ that "His day is marching on!"

7. even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace. 8. For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. (I have this confidence concerning you), just as it is befitting for me to think (in) this (way) about you all. (And why is it befitting that I have this confidence about you?) Because I have you in my heart (and isn't it natural for us to have confidence in those we love?), since you are all partakers with me in the grace (of God); (you have been partakers) both in my bonds (imprisonment), and in the verbal defence, and (in the work of) making firm the gospel.

8. For (as surely as) God is my witness, I long for you all with the (very) heart (lit. bowels) of Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. Paul's reasoning in vs. 7 is a little hard to follow. Verse 7 is an explanation as to why he felt confident that God would continue to work within them (stated in vs. 6). The explanation is that it was right, or just, for Paul to feel this way. And why was it right? The implied answer seems to be that anyone should have confidence in those who are as dear to him as the Philippians were dear to Paul.
2. Paul and the Philippians had been joint-partakers of God's grace. Though 700 miles separated them, God's power was as close to the Philippians as it was to Paul.
3. The word *partakers* (Gr. *sugkoinos*) comes from the same root as the word *fellowship*. It means a joint sharer, or one who partakes with another. In three respects the Philippians had been partakers with Paul:
 - a. Partakers in *bonds*. Their contribution to Paul while he was in bonds identified them with Paul. Compare Heb. 10:32-33! Furthermore some of them may actually have been placed in bonds after Paul's departure. Phil. 1:29-30.
 - b. Partakers in the *defense of the gospel*. This refers to the verbal defense, or speech, as that given at a trial. Paul often defended the gospel by giving answers to those who spoke falsely about the gospel. Phil. 1:16; Acts 24:10; 26:1.

Sometimes people say, "The gospel does not need defending; it only needs preaching." This is not completely true. Paul defended the gospel. Often it is true, however, that the clear presentation of the gospel is its best defense.

- c. Partakers in the *confirmation* of the gospel. Confirmation is the act of making firm. This is done by teaching and by exhorting. The Philippians shared with Paul in doing this.
4. In verse 8 Paul seems to assert that his love for the Philippians is so great that it can hardly be believed. Therefore he calls upon God to witness to the truth of what he said.

Paul longed for them with the very same kind of longing that is in the heart of Christ himself. Do you have any Christian brethren that you can truthfully say you love like that?

The words "tender mercies" in vs. 8 (KJV *bowels*) is, literally *bowels*. Ancient people spoke of the bowels (the nobler bowels, stomach, liver, lungs, etc., rather than entrails) as being the seat of the affections. Actually this makes just as much (or more) sense as it does for us to speak of the *heart* as the center of the emotions and affections.

9. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; 10. so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; 11. being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Translation and Paraphrase

9. And I pray this: (first) that your love may abound (overflow) yet more and more, in (ways directed by) precise knowledge and all discernment;

10. (And may this knowledgeable love bring you to the point) that you may test the things that differ (in this world with its conflicting values, and approve the things that are excellent); (then, secondly, I pray) that you (all) may be (as) sincere (as sunshine) and without offense unto the day of Christ,

11. being filled (not merely with inward sincerity but) with (the outward) fruit of righteousness (which comes) through Jesus Christ; (and all of these things will work out) unto (the) glory and praise of God.

Notes

1. Vss. 9-11 contain Paul's prayer for the Philippians. Basically this is a prayer that they may have an educated love and that they be sincere. Note that their educated love was to lead them

to approve the things that are excellent, not the trashy things in this world. Note that the things that Paul prayed for were all to result in glory and praise to God.

2. If there was any one problem that especially beset the Philippian church, it seems to have been the problem of dissension and lack of love between some of the members. This seems to be suggested by Phil. 2:3-4 and 4:2. Therefore Paul prayed that their love might abound (that is, not be merely adequate, but enough to overflow).
3. This love was not only to be abundant, but it was to be a knowledgeable love. It was to abound in knowledge (*epignosis*, precise love) and all discernment. Love without knowledge is useless sentimentality and self-defeating. We must discern what is truly good for those we love, as well as have a loving feeling toward them.
4. The first part of 1:10 may be translated in two ways, both of which, however, come out with about the same idea:
 - (1) that you may approve the things that are excellent (Gr. *diaphero*).
 - (2) that you may distinguish (or test) the things that differ (A.S.V. margin).

The verb *diaphero* in both classical and New Testament Greek meant (a) to excell (Matt. 6:26; 10:31; 12:12; Luke 12:7), and (b) to differ (I Cor. 15:41; Gal. 4:1; 2:6. Thus either of the above translations is suitable.

5. In our lives we find ourselves confronted with MANY differing things, and we must choose what we shall accept. As Christians we ought to choose the things that are excellent and not those that are trashy. This applies not only to food, but to everything—to reading, to entertainment, to music, to clothing, to art, to friends, etc., etc.
6. Paul prayed that we might be *sincere*. The etymology of this word (*heilikerimes*) is uncertain. Some think that it comes from *heile* (meaning sun), and thus we are to be as sincere as sunshine! Others say it comes from the verb *eilo* meaning to turn. According to this meaning we are to be sincere enough to stand being rotated about and inspected in every part.
7. "Void of offence" means "Not causing others to stumble."
8. The word *fruit* in 1:11 is singular, like *fruit* in Gal. 5:22. The fruit of righteousness may be single, when thought of as a whole, but it does come in many forms and flavors.

9. If the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ, it is easy to see why the world is such an unrighteous place. The people of the world either don't know of Christ or have rejected Him. Either way the world is deprived of the fruit of righteousness.

Outline of 1:12-18

- B. Progress of the gospel in Rome: 1:12-18
1. Report of Progress; 1:12
 2. Ways in which progress has occurred; 1:13-18
 - a. His bonds became manifest in Christ; 1:13
 - b. Most of the brethren are bolder to speak; 1:14
 - c. Christ is preached, even though insincerely; 1:15-18
 - (1) Some preach from envy and strife
 - (2) Some preach from good will
 - (3) Paul rejoiced in all the preaching; 1:18

12. Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel;

Translation and Paraphrase

12. But I (do) want you to know, brothers, that the things (which have happened) to me have come (along in such a way that they have worked out) for the advancement of the gospel.

Notes

1. Philippians has more of a newsy quality about it than Paul's other epistles. Yet the news is such that it builds up the soul, rather than merely satisfying the curiosity.
2. The word translated "furtherance" (or progress) is *prokope*, and refers to that which cuts open a way for an army or any forward-moving thing.

13. so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest;

Translation and Paraphrase

13. (The result has been) that my bonds have become plainly recognized (as associated with my being) in Christ—(This has become known throughout the whole Praetorium (the imperial guard) and to all the rest (who are around me)).

Notes

1. Paul reports that now in Rome the chains and bonds he wears are plainly recognized as being "in Christ," that is, that the wearer is in Christ and the bonds are the result of his being in Christ. They are not looked upon as bonds worn by one caught in a crime, but they have become a badge of Paul's being in Christ.
2. The phrase *in Christ* goes with *manifest*, rather than with *bonds*. The bonds were manifest as being the bonds of one in Christ. Paul's imprisonment became a matter of notoriety for his being in Christ. Confinement for such a cause would attract attention and inquiry.
3. Even the Praetorian guard (KJV, the *palace*) had come to realize that Paul was in bonds for being in Christ.

The Praetorium was the imperial guard. Originally this body was instituted by Augustus Caesar with 10,000 select soldiers. They were stationed in Rome and in nearby towns. Tiberius Caesar concentrated them all in Rome in a permanent strongly fortified camp. The name Praetorium nonetheless refers to the soldiers themselves, and is not used in a local sense of their camp. These soldiers had special privileges and double pay. In later years they became king-makers, with power to install and depose emperors.

Paul's gospel made a deep impression even among this rough body of men. The soldiers guarding Paul heard him teach his visitors, or conversed with him themselves at other times. When off duty, the guards would relate to others their experiences with Paul.

4. Paul's bonds were not only manifest to be in Christ among the Praetorian guard, but to all the rest, to all who saw or heard of him.

14. and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. And (I want you to know also that) the greater part of the brethren in the Lord (here), being persuaded by (the example of what I have done in) my bonds, are (now) daring more

abundantly to speak the word of God fearlessly (than they ever did before).

Notes

1. Still more good news! Because of Paul's presence and example, many (that is, more, the greater part) of the Christians in Rome were now more confident and bold to speak of Christ without fear than ever before.
2. The power of one person who is courageous and faithful to stir up many who are willing but hesitant can be plainly seen in this verse.
3. This verse sounds very up-to-date. We are mostly fearful and hesitant to speak boldly of Christ in daily conversation with unbelieving associates. Yet the presence of one committed Christian who does this naturally and effectively will stimulate others greatly. Which are you, the bold example, or the hesitant follower?

15. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will; 16. the one *do it* of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; 17. but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. (It is regretfully true that) some indeed are proclaiming Christ because of (their) envy (of me) and (because of their love of) strife; but some also (are preaching) through good will.

16. The one (group do what they do) out of love, realizing that I am appointed for (the) defense of the gospel,

17. but the other proclaim Christ out of factiousness, not sincerely, thinking to stir up affliction (upon me) in my bonds.

Notes

1. Paul's report about those in Rome who preached in such a way as to make people dislike Paul, while at the same time they were (at least supposedly) preaching Christ, sounds like bad news for Paul. But Paul took an utterly unselfish view about it, and rejoiced that Christ was being preached, even by these envious and factious speakers.

2. The question as to who these preachers are who preached Christ from motives of envy and strife has exercised the minds of commentators very much. Many suggest that they were the Jewish Christians who tried to force Gentile Christians to keep the law of Moses in addition to their faith in Christ. Such people were called Judaizers. Paul strongly condemned these Jewish legalists in Phil. 3:2-8.
3. The truth of the matter is that we just do not really know who these troublesome preachers were. It is hard for us to believe that Paul could rejoice that *Christ* was preached when the preaching consisted of demands to keep the law of Moses. Such Judaizing preachers are called "evil workers" and "dogs" in Phil. 3:2. The book of Galatians had been written several years before, and it in Paul had passionately condemned the binding of the law upon Christians.

All of this makes us feel that the Roman preachers who gave Paul trouble were not the Judaizers, but only certain unknown brethren, possibly Gentiles (since few Jewish brethren were with Paul in Rome; See Col. 4:11), whose hearts were deeply infected by envy and party-spirit.

4. If this be so, it is not necessary to conclude that Paul approved of half-false denominational-style preaching, or that we should do the same. There was nothing wrong, as far as we can tell, with the content of this preaching, except the statements of personal selfishness and envy that got into it. Paul gladly overlooked these, even he was the victim of the evil-speaking.
5. The factitious Roman preachers who through envy belittled Paul were like the Pharisees who through envy delivered Jesus to Pilate. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10.

However, let us not condemn these brethren too harshly, until we are utterly sure that we have never spoken about (or against) some brother so as to belittle him and exalt ourselves. If we have been the victims of such remarks, let us pray for grace to look upon them as Paul did.

6. Paul was set for, that is, appointed or destined for, the *defence* of the gospel. Compare Phil. 1:7. Not every man has the ability to make conspicuous public oral defence of the gospel. Such people become prominent, and frequently are the objects of criticism by their brethren who are less conspicuous, but are jealous of their prominence.

We must ever be cautious not to tear down the "big men" God has set in the church in order to exalt "little men" like most of us. They have too many enemies outside the church to need critics from their own brothers in Christ.

7. "Preaching Christ of faction" means preaching Christ in such a way as to build up our own little faction, clique, or denomination. *Faction* is party spirit, electioneering, and promoting our loyal (sic!) group. Too often church members will work harder to elect their special friends to some church office than they will to tell sinners of Jesus.
8. Those proclaiming Christ out of factious motives were indeed *thinking*, Paul says, but oh such thinking! Their thinking was based largely upon feeling alone, and was controlled by their own personal desires. Such thinking as this sought to raise up more affliction for Paul, even when he was already in chains.

18. What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. What (is my reaction to this)? Only (this) that in every manner—whether in pretense or in truth—Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I am (sincerely) rejoicing, and what is more I shall keep on rejoicing.

Notes

1. What then indeed? What if it is true that some men here in Rome are preaching Christ in such a way that I am getting more affliction because of their words? Suppose this is so, so what?

Paul leaves this annoying side of the case to itself, and passes on to the encouraging aspect. Christ is being preached and in this he rejoices and will continue to rejoice.

Outline of 1:19-26

- C. Paul's confidence in life or death; 1:19-26
 1. Confidence that his experiences would turn out to salvation; 1:19
 - a. Through your supplication.
 - b. Through the supply of the Spirit.

2. Confidence that he would always magnify Christ; 1:20-26
 - a. He would not be put to shame; 1:20.
 - b. He would magnify Christ either by life or death; 1:21-23.
 - c. He felt sure he would remain with them; 1:24-26.

19. For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Translation and Paraphrase

10. For I know that this (that is, my experiences) will turn out for me unto salvation (by salvation I mean my preservation and deliverance, both now and hereafter), through your prayer (of supplication) and (through the assistance provided in the) supply of (benefits given by) the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Notes

1. Salvation means (1) safety, that is, deliverance from difficulties; (2) general health and well-being; and (3) eternal life in heaven.

Paul's reference to salvation here seems to refer more to the first two meanings than to the third. He expected to be acquitted of the accusations against him and to be released.

2. Paul had two helps that gave him confidence that he would get salvation.

(1) The prayers of his brethren, the Philippians in particular. Prayer is powerful.

(2) The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (This is only a name for the Holy Spirit. Compare Romans 8:9.) This can mean either that the Holy Spirit himself is supplied to us to strengthen us (which is true), or that a supply of strength and intensity of faith is given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Whether the *supply* referred to is the Spirit himself, or to the various forms of assistance supplied by the Spirit, the net result is the same. Either meaning is satisfactory. We prefer the latter interpretation, but there is negligible difference.

20. according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. 21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Translation and Paraphrase

20. (My confidence in salvation is) in accord with my constant expectation and hope, (and my expectation is this,) that (1) I shall in nothing (ever) be put to shame (never silenced, defeated, nor shown to be in error!), but (2) that (on the contrary) while (I continue to live) in all boldness as (I) always (have, that) Christ shall exalted (and magnified) in my body, whether through life or through death.

21. For to me to live is Christ (His life lives in me), and to die is gain.

Notes

1. Paul's confidence that he was going to be released from imprisonment in Rome, and come back to see the Philippians as a free and effective preacher, was no new feeling for him. He always had optimistic expectations about the course of his life. His present optimism was in full accord with his normal earnest expectations and hope.
2. The true man of God is never discouraged and pessimistic, gloomy and inwardly defeated. He knows that the Lord will win the victory, and he knows that he is on the Lord's side.
3. The root meaning of the word *expectation* (Gr. *apokaradokia*) means an intense watching, with the head turned from all other objects. May God help us to have such a magnificent confidence in His direction in our lives that nothing else will look important to us.
4. Paul's constant confidence led him to have two particular hopes, one negative and one positive:
 - (1) In nothing would he be put to shame, never being silenced by adversaries, nor shown to be in error.
 - (2) Christ would be magnified, that is, honored and exalted and made to appear great by the things which Paul did in his body. See Acts 19:17: "The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
5. Paul's hope that Christ would be magnified in his body was Paul's confidence whether he lived or died, because to Paul to live was Christ, and to die was gain.
6. Wm. Barclay, in analyzing the ways that for Paul it was true that "to live is Christ," says that Christ is the beginning, the continuing, the end (or goal), the inspiration, the task, the

strength, and the reward of life. Each of these ideas deserves a lot of meditation.

7. For the Christian dying is gain, because we depart and be with Christ. Compare Phil. 1:23. The Christian is only two or three heartbeats from being with Christ forever. The sinner is only two or three heartbeats from being separated from the Savior forever in torments.
8. Phil. 1:21, 23 are two of numerous passages throughout the Bible that rather clearly teach that the spirit of man continues a conscious existence after death, even before the general resurrection of the bodies of all men.

If there is no conscious existence after death, it was foolish for Paul to desire to depart (die) and be with Christ. If we know nothing after death, and will not see Jesus until the resurrection, Paul could not have hastened his being with the Lord by dying. The doctrines of soul-sleeping and annihilation just do not fit Paul's teachings.

9. Other passages which give evidence of conscious existence after death include:

II Cor. 5:6, 8-9. To be absent from the body means to be at home with the Lord.

Luke 16:19ff. The story of the rich man and Lazarus. There is no convincing reason for not taking this story rather literally.

Acts 7:59. Stephen, as he was dying, called, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Stephen expected to go where Jesus was, and so do I.

Matt. 17:3. Elijah and Moses were alive and recognizable thousands of years after their presence on earth.

Genesis 25:8; Num. 21:24; Deut. 32:50. Many Old Testament saints "were gathered to their fathers," when they were not buried in the tombs of their fathers, or anywhere near them. When, then, did this gathering take place? Unless the expression is purely figurative, it seems to be best to understand that they were gathered together in that realm beyond the grave.

Ezekiel 32:31. Pharaoh in Sheol (Hades) sees the multitude of his host and speaks with them.

II Samuel 12:23. David expected to go unto his dead son.

10. Such passages as Psalm 115:17 and Eccl. 9:5 are set forth by some as presumably teaching that the dead know nothing and are unconscious. Since the Scriptures never contradict them-

selves, and such a meaning contradicts other plainer passages, this cannot be the true teaching of the passages referred to.

It is true that the *bodies* of the dead know nothing, and differ in no way from the dead bodies of beasts. This is probably the point of these verses. Also these verses may simply reflect the fact that in the Old Testament dispensation that God had not yet fully revealed the facts about life and immortality as He has now revealed them through Christ. For it was Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. II Tim. 1:10. Note that He did not bring it into existence; he brought it to light.

22. But if to live in the flesh,—if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall chose I know not.

Translation and Paraphrase

22. But if (it happens to be my lot) to continue living in (the) flesh, (well) this (will produce) to me fruit of labor; and (therefore) I cannot make known what I would (really) choose (as my lot, since I really do not know myself!).

Notes

1. Paul found himself in a quandry, wanting both to die and to live. So he weighed the alternatives. If he lived, that would bring to him further fruit of his labor on earth. This to him was as appealing as the idea of dying and going to be with the Lord. So he says, "What I should choose I know not."
2. Paul had no uncertainty about what would happen if he lived, as the inclusion of the italicized *if* in the American Standard Version might suggest. He took it for granted that fruitfulness would follow if he continued living on earth. We need not ever be in doubt that we shall bear fruit, if we speak forth our gospel clearly and regularly. See Gal. 6:9 and Isaiah 55:10-11.
3. Every saint must come to this condition of mind-willingness to die, and yet desire to stay on earth and work.
4. Perhaps we may wonder how Paul could assume that by wishing it he could influence the course of events, and determine whether he lived or died. In truth he probably couldn't; none of us can. And yet a "death wish" very frequently leads people to give up their interests in life, and to give up trying, and to pine themselves to death. Paul did not yield to this. He

retained his zest for life, and his confidence that he could do something worthwhile, even when he was old and in prison. He did not join the duet of Jonah and Elijah, "We wish we could die." (Jonah 4:3, 8; I Kings 19:4).

23. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: 24. yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. I am hard pressed (from the two sides), having the desire to depart (that is, to die) and be with Christ, for this is very much better (Gr. more better by much),

24. but to continue (or remain) in the flesh (is) more necessary for you (plural).

Notes

1. Paul was in a *strait*. A strait is a narrow place, as a neck of water between two land areas (e.g., the straits of Gibraltar and the straits of Magellan). He was close to both sides, to living and to dying. He found both directions appealing. He was pressed, squeezed in by both alternatives.
2. The expression "to depart" means to break up, as the breaking up of a camp; also to loose, as of loosing the mooring ropes of a ship so it can sail. Thus in Paul's use it meant to break up the camp in this life, and loose life's moorings so as to move to another world.
3. See notes on 1:21 about our departing to be with Christ. The doctrine of immortality is very precious to God's saints.
4. To Paul to depart and be with Christ was better by much than to remain on earth.

But just at that time he was needed on earth, and was emotionally and intellectually drawn toward living and helping the Philippians, since that was more needful for them than his death.

The courage of the Philippians might have faltered if Paul had just then died in bonds. The mystery of lawlessness was already working, and Paul was needed to help them resist this apostasy.

25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith; 26. that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.

Translation and Paraphrase

25. And being persuaded of this (the necessity of living to help you) I know that I shall remain and continue near to you for your progress and joy in the faith,

26. So that your exultation (and joy) may abound (and be overflowing) in Christ Jesus by means of me, through my coming again to you.

Notes

1. Paul's conviction that he was needed assured him that he would continue living in the flesh. What was best for man was the thing that God would cause to happen.
2. Paul would not only just abide (Gr. *meno*), but abide with (Gr. *parameno*) them.
3. Paul himself experienced progress in the gospel (Phil. 1:12), and joy (Phil. 1:3). His presence with the Philippians would cause them to share such progress and joy.
4. Progress and joy are necessary things in the lives of Christians. Without them our motivation and energy lags, and we soon lag all over.
5. "Glorying" means "our cause or ground for glorying," rather than the act of glorying or boasting.
6. Evidently the Philippians were praying for Paul's release. Compare 1:19. When this release came to pass, they would glory in Christ because their prayers had been granted.

Outline of 1:27—2:18

- D. Exhortation to a worthy manner of life; 1:27—2:18
1. Plea for steadfast striving; 1:27-30
 - a. Do this whether I come or be absent.
 - b. Stand fast in one spirit.
 - c. Do not be affrighted by adversaries; 1:28-30.
 - (1) This is to them a token of perdition.
 - (2) This is to you a token of salvation.
 - (3) Follow my example in this.

2. Plea for unity and humility; 2:1-4
 - a. Motives for unity; 2:1-2a
 - b. Attitudes and actions of those in unity; 2:2b-4
3. The example of Christ; 2:5-11
 - a. He did not grasp his original state; 2:5-6
 - b. He became an obedient servant; 2:7-8
 - c. Honors that Christ received because of his obedience.
 - (1) Exaltation;
 - (2) A name above every name.
 - (3) Universal submission to him; 2:10-11
4. Commands; 2:12-18
 - a. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 2:12-13
 - (1) Do this whether I am present or absent.
 - (2) God is working in you; 2:13
 - b. Do all things without murmurings; 2:14-15

Purposes—That ye become blameless and harmless.
That ye become children of God without blemish.
 - c. Hold forth the word of life; 2:16
 - d. Paul's place in their worthy life; 2:17

—A drink-offering poured out upon their service.
 - e. Rejoice. 2:18

27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;

Translation and Paraphrase

27. Only live as citizens (of God's kingdom) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you, or am absent, I may hear the news concerning you, that you (plural) stand fast with one (united) spirit, with one soul striving together (like athletes in training) for the faith (which is) the gospel.

Notes

1. While the Philippians were to glory in the progress and joy of their faith, they needed to take care that their lives were *worthy* of the gospel (or good news) of Christ. *Worthy* means of equal weight or value.

2. There is a figure of speech in 1:27 which is not apparent in the English translation. When Paul said, "Let your manner of life (KJV *conversation*) be worthy," he was literally saying, "Behave as citizens in a manner worthy of the gospel." The Greek verb *politeuo* means "to be a citizen, or exercise your citizenship." The metaphor of heavenly citizenship is found again in Phil. 3:20.
3. Paul exhorts them not to allow their faith to fluctuate with his circumstances or presence. Live lives worthy of the gospel whether he is present or not.
4. The Philippians should stand fast in one spirit, that is, in one disposition, one frame of mind. The word *spirit* here probably has no direct reference to the Holy Spirit, but to their own spirits, which would, of course, be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

It is very important that Christians *stand fast* in what they believe, and in their determination to live according to this belief. Compare Ephesians 6:11, 13-14.

5. The expression "with one soul" probably means "with one mind or feeling." It seems to be nearly an exact synonym of "in one spirit." The collective "soul" of the whole group was to be ONE soul, one mind. Compare Acts 4:32.
6. The Philippians were to be *striving* for the faith of the gospel. *Striving* (Gr. *sunathleo*) means striving *together*. The figure refers both to athletic games and to contending in battle. The Christian life requires effort, and discipline, and exertion.
7. Our striving is to be done for the faith, or in the faith (a dative of interest). There are many good causes in this world, but the striving of Christians is to be exerted for the faith.
8. "The Faith of the gospel." The faith is the gospel. (It is a genitive of apposition.) The faith is the full sum of what we believe and practice, as revealed by Christ.

28. and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God;

Translation and Paraphrase

28. And be frightened by nothing (which may be done) by the opposers. (Your boldness will make an impression on them, as being) and evidence of (their impending) destruction; But (on

the other hand your boldness in the face of opposition will to you be an evidence) of your salvation, and (that) this (salvation is) from God (himself).

Notes

1. 1:28 elaborates the command in 1:27 to *stand fast*. Two participial phrases expand this idea of standing fast: We stand fast (1) striving together; and (2) being frightened in nothing by the adversaries.
2. Generally the adversaries of the gospel would rather frighten us from our faith and Christian work, than try to convince us logically that we are wrong, or physically prevent us from serving Christ. Those who are frightened by threats are defeated before the battle ever starts. Christians in many lands today face threats of loss of jobs or other troubles. "Be frightened by nothing."
3. The boldness of Christians in the face of threats and persecutions is for the unbeliever an evident token of perdition, a plain sign that they face destruction by God. Compare II Thess. 1:4-5. *Perdition* means destruction, or ruin, and refers to the punishment of hell.

When persecuting unbelievers see Christians boldly continuing in their faith in spite of threats and harm, they instinctively feel, "If this Christian faith means so much to these people, there must be something to it after all. And if there is something to it, then I'm on the wrong side, and God will surely punish me for fighting against the truth." Paul seems to have felt that way before his conversion. Compare Acts 26:14, 22:19-20.

4. Whereas the boldness of Christians is to sinners an evident token of destruction, it is at the same time an evident token (a plain indication) of salvation to Christians. When Christians experience trouble victoriously, they sense that the power to endure came from outside of them, from God, and not from their own puny will power or strength of character.

Also the boldness of Christians serves as an evident token of salvation in that it fulfills the words of Christ to us that we both shall suffer, and that He will help us at such times. See Luke 12:11-12.

5. The expression "and that from God" refers back to the word *salvation*. We have not merely a token of salvation, but a token of salvation which comes from God.

29. because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: 30. having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Translation and Paraphrase

29. (Do not think that your sufferings indicate that you are not saved,) because it has been graciously granted to you to suffer on behalf of Christ, and not (merely) to believe upon him. (The privilege of suffering for Christ is a gift from him to you.)

30. (You shall be) having the same struggle (and agony) which ye saw was in my life, and now hear is my lot.

Notes

- 1:29 enlarges on the idea expressed in 1:28 that the boldness of Christians is a plain indication to them of salvation. This is true because Christ has granted to us the privilege of suffering for Him as well as believing on him. The fact that we suffer confirms the truth of his words and confirms that we are His.
- The word *granted* (KJV *given*) in 1:28 means to grant as a favor, or bestow graciously. How seldom do those who suffer look upon this as a gracious grant! But the early Christians so viewed it. Acts 5:41.
- The troubles of the Philippians were like those that they had observed Paul to experience, and like those which they now heard that Paul was enduring. This fact doubtless strengthened their backbone, and took away their self-pity.

The word *conflict* in 1:30 is from the Greek *agonia*, from which we get our word *agony*. It refers to painful types of struggle and to extreme mental anguish.

Study and Review

Questions Over Philippians Chapter One

(Give Scripture references with your answers if none are given in the questions.)

1. What heading is suggested for Philippians chapter 1? Suggest another topic for the chapter if you wish.

CHAPTER ONE

2. What two individuals joined in sending the epistle?
3. Does the fact that Paul did not use the official title *apostle* at the start of the letter (as he did in Gal. 1:1) suggest anything to you? What?
4. How do the two senders describe themselves? (1:1). What is the meaning of this term?
5. To what class of people in the Old Testament was the title *servants of God* often applied?
6. By what word are the Philippians described in Paul's greeting? What is the meaning of this word?
7. What does the word *bishop* mean?
8. What other names are applied in the scripture to the same offices as the bishop?
9. What does the word *deacon* mean? What briefly was the work of deacons?
10. How many of Paul's epistles begin with a request for grace to be with his readers?
11. What is grace?
12. What else did Paul wish for them besides grace?
13. What were Paul's feelings as he remembered the Philippians in prayer? (1:3-4)
14. What had the Philippians done that Paul described as *fellowship in the gospel*? (Compare Phil. 4:14-16.)
15. What does the word *fellowship* mean?
16. What was Paul's confidence concerning the good work done by the Philippians?
17. What is the *day of Jesus Christ*?
18. Why did Paul say in 1:7 that it was meet (or proper) for him to feel toward the Philippians the confidence he expressed in 1:6?
19. In what three ways were the Philippians partakers of grace with Paul?
20. What does *confirmation of the gospel* mean?
21. How greatly did Paul long after the Philippians?
22. Explain the phrase *bowels of Jesus Christ* in KJV of Phil. 1:8.
23. What three things did Paul pray that the Philippians might do or be? (1:9-11)
24. What results occur when our love abounds more and more in knowledge and judgment? (1:9-11)
25. Revised version margin translates part of 1:9, "So that ye may

PHILIPPIANS

- distinguish the things that differ." (Similarly Barclay). Discuss the meaning of this rendering.
26. Explain the term *offence* in 1:10.
 27. What is the source of the fruit of righteousness?
 28. How had Paul's prison experiences generally affected the progress of the gospel?
 29. Where did Paul lodge while in Rome as a prisoner? (Acts 28:30)
 30. Where had Paul's faith and reputation become known? (1:13)
 31. What was the Praetorian Guard (the "palace")?
 32. What sort of bonds did Paul wear? (1:14; Compare Eph. 1:20; Acts 28:20)
 33. How had Paul's presence in Rome affected many of the brethren there?
 34. What did Paul mean by saying, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife"? Is this a description of heresy or of bad attitudes?
 35. Who were those who were guilty of preaching Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to Paul's bondage?
 36. What was Paul's feeling toward those who preached the gospel contentiously?
 37. Does Paul's attitude toward insincere preaching indicate that we should approve of preaching mixed with denominational doctrines? Why or why not?
 38. What two things gave Paul assurance that his experiences would turn out to his salvation?
 39. What does the word *salvation* in 1:19 mean?
 40. How did Paul feel about the possibility of his being put to shame, that is, being humiliated into silence? (1:20)
 41. What does *magnify Christ in my body* mean?
 42. In what circumstances did Paul expect that Christ would be magnified in his body?
 43. Explain the phrase *For me to live is Christ*. What does Christ have to do with the Christian's life?
 44. What advantage was there for Paul to continue living in the flesh?
 45. What advantage in dying? Which was preferable, living or dying?
 46. Where do Christians go when they depart from this life? (Compare II Cor. 5:6, 8)

CHAPTER ONE

47. Did Paul conclude that he would remain alive or die?
48. What purposes would be served by Paul's future presence with the Philippians? (1:25)
49. What sort of manner of life (KJV *conversation*) were the Philippians to live?
50. What did Paul hope to hear about the state (or affairs) of the Philippians?
51. What is the relation of the gospel to the faith as indicated by the expression *the faith of the gospel*?
52. How were the Philippians to feel about their adversaries?
53. Explain the expression *an evident token of perdition*. (Compare II Thess. 1:5)
54. How is a Christian's boldness before adversaries an evident token of perdition to the adversaries?
55. How is a Christian's boldness an evident token of salvation to the Christian himself?
56. Does Paul speak of suffering as a privilege, or as a necessary evil to be endured?
57. Who is set forth as an example of suffering with joy? (1:30)

PHILIPPIANS



The apostle Paul gives two letters—Ephesians and Colossians—to Tychicus to deliver.

Travelling with Tychicus on the thousand-mile trip to Colossae is the slave Onesimus, who clutches to himself a letter from Paul to his master Philemon.

Though Paul was under house arrest in his own rented dwelling, and chained always to a Roman guard, he was inwardly joyful, and thanked God for the faith and love of the Colossians and Ephesians.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER TWO
THE MIND OF CHRIST
(in you)

1. *Motivations to the mind of Christ; (2:1)*
 - Being in Christ.
 - Consolation of love.
 - Fellowship of the Spirit.
 - Tender mercies and compassions.
 - Personal appeal from Paul.
2. *Attitudes of the mind of Christ; (2:2-4)*
 - Unity and harmony.
 - Freedom from factiousness and vainglory.
 - Lowliness.
 - Concern for others.
3. *Christ's own example; (2:5-11)*
 - He did not grasp onto His divine form.
 - He became an obedient servant.
 - Honors He won by obedience.
4. *Commands for those with the mind of Christ; (2:12-17)*
 - Work your salvation to completion; 2:12-13
 - Don't murmur or question; 2:14-15
 - Hold forth the word of life; 2:16-17
 - Rejoice; 2:18
5. *Paul's helpers who had the mind of Christ; (2:19-29)*
 - Timothy; 2:19-24
 - He sought only the things of Christ; 2:21.
 - Epaphroditus: 2:25-29
 - He hazarded his life for the work of Christ; 2:30.

2:1. If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, 2. make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; 3. *doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself*; 4. not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

Translation and Paraphrase

2:1. If there is any exhortation (and consolation for us) in Christ (and I know there is), if (there is) any persuasive message in love (and there is), if any participation in (and fellowship of) the (Holy) Spirit, if (there are) any heart-felt emotions and (any) compassions—

2. (then, for the sake of these precious things,) make my joy full (and complete. You can do this if you take care) that you (all) think the same (way), having the same love (not some of you loving and some hating), (being) of one soul (one mind), thinking the one (way, the way of Christ);

3. (Do) not (be) thinking about how you can further (your own little) faction, or about empty self-glory, but (rather) in lowliness of mind (let every one) regard one another as better than themselves,

4. not each (one of you) looking (and concentrating) on his own (affairs), but each (one) also (looking upon) the things of others.

Notes

1. This section (2:1-4) contains Paul's plea to the Philippians to be of one accord, to be united.
2. Verses 1 and 2a give five motives for being of one accord:
 - (1) The exhortation (and consolation) of being in Christ.
 - (2) The persuasive power of love.
 - (3) The fellowship, or participation, we have in the Holy Spirit.
 - (4) The tender mercies and compassions, both those which we feel within ourselves, and those we receive from others.
 - (5) A personal appeal from Paul: "Make full MY joy."
3. Verses 2-4 contain a list of attitudes and actions that are done (or at least should be done) by those who are of one accord.
 - (1) They are of the same mind. They seek to be impartial and view every-one in the same manner, trying in all circumstances to think as Christ would think.

- (2) They have the same love. They seek to prevent a situation wherein some folks are hating and some loving.
 - (3) They are of one accord, literally "souled together." Perhaps the best commentary on this is Acts 4:32: "The multitude were of one heart and soul."
 - (4) They are of one mind, "thinking one (thing)." This is nearly a repetition of (1) above.
 - (5) They do nothing through faction or vainglory.
 - (6) They count each other as being better than themselves.
 - (7) They are more concerned about the sins and burdens of others than about their own pleasures, and wishes.
4. The motives for unity given by Paul in Phil. 1:1-2a are not the motives we often consider uppermost. We often feel that we can only be united when we have by fiery debate overwhelmed our religious adversaries, and subdued them into conformity to the truth as we see it.

However, this approach has not worked. Since all of us are quite confident that we have the truth and everyone else is at least a bit misguided, we are not likely to arrive at unity by controversy. The fruitful motives for unity are those that Paul suggests: our being in Christ, our common love, etc. Unity, wherever it comes at all, comes more readily as a result of heart-feelings than of intellectual conquest of the adversaries.

This is not to belittle the necessity for religious discussion or of defending the faith. These things we must do, and not leave the other undone.

5. The word *exhortation* (*paraklesis*) in 2:1 carries a double significance. It indicates both an urging, or exhortation, and a consoling. As Christians we do have both consolation and exhortation. We are stirred up to holy lives and hard labor by the truth of the gospel; we are at the same time consoled and reassured by the promises of the gospel.
6. The word *consolation* (*paramuthion*) in 2:1 literally means persuasive speaking. There are many many persuasive messages in the gospel. We need to act upon this persuasion.
7. *Fellowship* (*koinonia*) in 2:1 means a share in, a participation in something. Christians have a share of participation in the Holy Spirit. He is given to us as a gift when we repent and are baptized. Acts 2:38. He lives in our body as his temple. I Cor. 6:19. He brings to us much desirable fruit. This participation in the Spirit should lead us to unity.

8. Phil. 2:1 mentions *tender mercies* (KJV *bowels*) and *compassions*. As Christians we do share many kind feelings and actions, both within ourselves and from others. There are dear friends who come to our need when we are in distress, who speak kind and encouraging words, who frankly but kindly tell us when we are doing something wrong.

Such tender mercies and compassions should create within us an overwhelming desire to be ONE with our brethren.

The word *bowels* in KJV is just exactly the meaning of the Greek word *splanchna*. The ancients regarded the nobler bowels (heart, liver, lungs, etc.) as the seat of emotions. It is really just as logical (or more so) to say, "I love you with my bowels," as to say, "I love you with my heart. We say the latter only because it is the modern idiom.

9. Alas, faction and vain glory motivate many Christians more greatly than do Christ and our tender mercies. Some people will come to a church election to vote for their friends when they will not come often at other times. *Faction* means self-seeking, electioneering, promoting our own little party or clique.

So often when one church or one faction in a church does something successful, another church or faction will feel constrained to do the same or to do something to top their neighbor. It is good to be stirred up by the example of others to love and good works, but the desire to promote ourselves or our faction at the expense of others is sin.

Vain-glory, that is, empty glory, useless desires to glorify ourselves, leads many to seek church offices, to make public performances that are not edifying, to show off before the church, and to run others down that they may feel superior to those they criticize.

Vain-glory, the pride of life, is one of the strongest and most basic temptations we experience. I John 2:16. You and I are both tempted by it, and yet we often will not even admit this to ourselves. Such vain-glory hinders our having the unity we should with our brethren.

10. Is it really possible that we in lowliness of mind can count each one better than ourselves? Phil. 2:3. Perhaps this seems impossible; however a mere recognition of the reality that every person on earth knows some things we do not know, can reach and influence people we can scarcely affect at all, can do things we cannot do—mere acceptance of these facts

will cause us to admit that others are indeed better than ourselves.

God is not impressed with our education, our wealth, our physical beauty, nor our possessions. We must not scorn the lowly or despise the mighty; let each count other better than himself.

This does not exclude the necessity for self-respect and recognition of our own abilities; these feelings are necessary too. However, self-respect and self-pride usually need much less cultivation than respect for others. Self-respect and self-pride are like weeds that grow naturally. Respect for others must be given lots of cultivation.

11. Verse 4 exhorts us to look not upon our own things, our own affairs, worries, and plans, but also to the things of others. This cannot mean that we are to be meddlesome or nosey in the affairs of others. Other scriptures forbid this. I Pet. 4:15.

Rather it means that we are to be concerned with the affairs, failings, and needs of others which we may be able to help without intruding upon their strictly private affairs.

5. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Translation and Paraphrase

5. Let this way of thinking continue among you, (that same feeling) which also was in Christ Jesus (when he came to earth).

Notes

1. The final and strongest appeal for unity is the example of Jesus Christ.
2. 2:5 can either be read as the closing verse of the paragraph 2:1-5, or as a starting verse to 2:5-11. Either way it is rich in meaning.
3. This verse introduces 2:6-11, which is a paragraph with some of the deepest theological thoughts in the New Testament in it.
Notice carefully, however, that Paul did not employ theology to satisfy our curiosity about divine secrets, but to get us to live lives in which discord, selfish ambitions, and disunity are excluded.
4. We hear much about heart transplants. Christians must have mind transplants; the mind of Christ must replace our old sinful minds.

6. who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7. but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; 8. and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

Translation and Paraphrase

6. (Though Christ) was existing (before he came to earth) in the (very) form (the intrinsic nature) of God, he did not consider (this) being equal with God a thing to be grasped (and clutched onto),

7. but (rather) he emptied himself (of much of his divine glory), taking (upon himself) the (very) form (the intrinsic nature) of a slave (or servant), being (temporarily) made in the (outward) likeness of men.

8. And being found (by those who lived with him on earth) in the (outward) fashion as a man, he humbled himself, (even to the point of) becoming obedient unto death, (yea) death upon a cross.

Notes

1. To understand this section, the exact meaning of the words used must be understood.
 - a. *Existing* (KJV, *being*; Gr. *uparcho*). This term means *being*, but it has the deeper implication of pointing to that existence which is our basic essence, the innermost nature. Thus the fact that Christ was *existing* in the form of God suggests that the form of God was his basic essence, his innermost nature.
 - b. *Form* (Gr. *morphe*). Form is that which is intrinsic and essential about anything. It is the opposite to the outward and changeable fashion. See the notes that follow concerning FORM and FASHION.
 - c. "Counted (it) not . . . a *thing to be grasped*." The Gr. word *arpagmos* used here means both the act of seizing (or robbery, as in KJV), or the thing seized (as in ASV and RSV). We prefer the latter meaning, because equality with God was not something Christ might have obtained by seizure, but it was already his. He might have clutched onto it because it was already his, but he did not do so.

Such readings as that in the New English Bible, "He did not think to snatch at equality with God," suggest that Christ was not equal with God. This is contrary to the whole paragraph, which has its point that Christ gave up his equality with God.

Numerous other Scriptures teach that Christ had the full nature of deity before He came to earth, before He was conceived in Mary. (See John 1:1, 2; 3:13; 17:5, 24; Col. 1:15-16).

- d. *Emptied* himself. The Gr. verb *kenoo* used here means to empty out or drain. When Christ came to earth, He submitted Himself to limitations which He had not had in glory before then. On earth Christ could become weary (John 4:6), but God is never weary (Isaiah 40:28; 45:11-12). Christ became hungry (Luke 4:2), but God is not hungry (Psalm 50:12-13). Some things Christ did not know (Matt. 24:35), but God knows all things (Heb. 4:13). Before Christ came to earth he dwelt in a realm described as "ivory palaces." (Ps. 45:7-8). But Christ emptied himself to a great degree of such glory when He came to earth.

The doctrine of Christ's emptying Himself is sometimes called the *kenosis*. This is a great mystery, and it has caused much disagreement in the church throughout the centuries. Exactly what was the nature of Christ while He was here on earth? To what degree did He empty Himself? Was He fully divine, or fully human, or both, or a mixture? Did He have one nature or two? Such questions can never be perfectly answered. We cannot understand human nature. How can we comprehend the divine nature?

It is enough for us to know that when Christ was on earth He was both the son of God and son of man (Matt. 16:13-17). As son of man he lay exhausted in a boat. As son of God he could rise and command the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee to become calm. (Luke 8:23-24).

- e. *Likeness* (Gr. *omoiotoma*; 2:8). That which is made, a likeness, image. This term refers to Christ's outward appearance while on earth. It is somewhat synonymous to the term *fashion*.
- f. *Fashion* (*schema*). This refers to outward appearance of anything. As such it may be changed from time to time. Thus, the *fashion* of the world passes away. (I Cor. 7:31).

FORM and FASHION

1. Christ existed in the *form* (Gr. *morphe*) of God. Phil. 2:6. He took the *form* of a servant. Phil. 2:7. He was found in *fashion* (Gr. *schema*) as a man. Phil. 2:8.
2. *Form* is that which is intrinsic, essential, and unchangeable about anything. *Fashion* is that which is outward, incidental, and transitory about anything.
3. Christ had the form, or true nature of God. Also he took the actual nature or form of a servant. However, his *fashion*, or appearance, on earth was not necessarily his *fashion* in glory after leaving the earth. Thus the appearance of Christ as described in Revelation chapter one is considerably different from that of the lowly son of man on earth.
4. The meanings of *form* and *fashion* can be illustrated and confirmed by the uses of these words and their related words in the New Testament. Note the ways the words are translated in King James version.
 - A. FORM—3 times translated as *form*; Mark 16:12; Phil. 2:6, 7.
 1. *Metamorphoo* (a related word)—Translated "be changed" (II Cor. 3:18), "be transformed" (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2; Romans 12:2). "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Let your mind actually be made into something intrinsically new.
 2. *Summorphoo* (related word)—"being made conformable unto;" (Phil. 3:10).
 3. *Summorphos* (related word; an adjective)—"conformed to" (Rom. 8:29); "fashioned like unto" (Phil. 3:21).
 - B. FASHION—2 times translated "fashion." (Phil. 2:8; I Cor. 7:31). "The *fashion* of this world passeth away."
 1. *Metaschematizo* (a related word)—"Be transformed" (II Cor. 11:13, 14). Satan transforms himself. He can change his outward appearance, but not his true nature and form. "Change" (Phil. 3:21); Christ shall change our vile body. "Transfer in a figure" (I Cor. 4:6). "Transform one's self" (II Cor. 11:15); Satan's ministers transform themselves, but they only change their outward appearance, not the real form.
 2. *Suschematizo* (a related word)—"Be not conformed" (Rom. 12:2); Christians should not adopt the *fashion*

of this world for this is contradictory to their true nature. "Fashion one's self according to" (I Peter 1:14).

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2. The King James rendering of Phil. 2:6, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," is satisfactory if it is understood to mean, "Since Christ was already equal with God, he considered it not robbery to claim equality with God."

If you or I should claim equality with God and demand to be worshipped, that would be robbery. We would be claiming honors that belong only to God. But Christ did not look upon being equal with God as robbery by him. How can one steal that which is already his?

3. The fact that Christ existed in the *form* of God shows that he had true godhood. The fact that he took upon himself the *form* of a servant shows that he had true servanthood. Both as God and as a servant in the likeness of men, Christ's form was genuine.
4. The fact that Christ *took upon himself* the form of a servant shows that He was truly God before then, and that He was not a created being. All created beings are servants of God by the very fact of their being created by God. "All things are thy servants." Psalm 119:91. Christ was not a servant as a result of his being created, but rather because he took upon himself the form of a servant.
5. Christ was made in all respects like as we are, except that he never sinned. Heb. 4:15. He partook of flesh and blood, since we, the children of God, are sharers in flesh and blood. Heb. 2:14. He came to earth with the command to die as men die. John 10:18. Christ was fully obedient to this command. Heb. 10:7. He was always obedient to the will of His father. He learned obedience, as we have to learn it, by the things which He suffered. Heb. 5:8. His obedience and sufferings extended to the ultimate degree of submission and agony, to the very death upon a cross.
6. As we consider this example of Christ, how could we be high-minded toward other people, or be factious, or proud, or seek our own advantages to the hurt of other people?

9. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10. that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven and *things* on earth, 11.

and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Translation and Paraphrase

9. Therefore (because of the obedient self-sacrifice of Christ) God has given to him (as a gift) the name (which is) above every name, (the name of LORD),

10. So that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, (the knees) of the things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth (the dead).

11. (Not only will every knee bow, but also) every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.

Notes

1. Most probably the name given to Christ because of his obedience is LORD. After Acts 2:36 Jesus is constantly called LORD. See Acts 7:59-60; 9:1; 10:36.
2. Christ's new name represented new glory and new offices for Him. Abraham and Jacob received new names when their life situations changed. We receive a new name—Christian—when we come into Christ.
3. Out of appreciation for the things Christ has done we worship Him. We bow the knee, both literally and figuratively.
4. Everyone and everything will confess Christ Jesus as Lord, ultimately if not now, involuntarily if not willingly. The dead shall rise, and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced him on the cross, and all tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Rev. 1:7. May it be even so, Lord Jesus. Yea, come quickly, Lord. Rev. 22:20.
5. The "things under the earth" probably refer simply to those who are dead. This does not suggest that there is some large subterranean cavity in the earth where a great group of souls dwell. But rather that those buried under the earth shall rise again and confess with the living that Jesus Christ is LORD.
6. The confession that Jesus Christ is Lord was really the only confession of the church in the time of the apostles. I Cor. 12:3; I John 4:2; Acts 8:37; Mart. 16:16. In those glorious times before the church was corrupted by human doctrines, the disciples of Christ did not recite any "apostles'" creed, Nicene creed, or Athanasian creed. Such human writings should be forgotten and thrown into the dump heap. The apostles never

wrote the apostles' (sic!) creed, and in its final form it was not completed until three or four centuries after the last apostle was dead. The Biblical confession that Jesus Christ is Lord is unifying. The creeds of men are destructive and divisive.

7. God is glorified when Jesus Christ is confessed. See John 5:23.

12. So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13. for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.

Translation and Paraphrase

12. So then, my beloved ones (seeing how God has exalted Christ, I exhort you now that) even as you have always obeyed, not (just) as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, (that you) work out to completion your own salvation, with fear and trembling.

13. For God is the one working in (the midst of) you (all), both (motivating you) to desire (that which is good) and (enabling you) to work for his good pleasure.

Notes

1. This section (2:12-18) gives some commands for the worthy Christian life. These commands include commands to steadfast work (2:12-13), contentment (2:14), purity (2:15a), evangelistic zeal (2:15b-16), and rejoicing (2:17-18).
2. The "so then" at the beginning of 2:12 indicates that the good acts called for in 2:12-16 are motivated by the obedience and exaltation of Christ described in the preceding paragraph.
3. Some Christians are faithful Christians only when the preacher is nearby. Paul expected the Philippians to be just as obedient in his absence as in his presence, and he indicates that they had done this previously.
4. "Work out" (Gr. *katargadzomai*) means to work to completion. When we work out a contract, we work it till it is done. Likewise we must work out our salvation until the end.
5. 2:12 does not suggest that by work we earn our salvation, but that our salvation must be followed by steadfast work to the end. Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5. While our salvation is not gained by our works of righteousness, we must be zealous of good works and careful to maintain them. Titus 3:5; 2:14. Failure

to follow through with good works after we receive Christ is both evidence and cause of our not having salvation.

6. Christians need to feel fear and trembling because of the danger of forsaking Christ and displeasing God is so near to all of us and so deadly. "We are become partakers of Christ *if* we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." Heb. 3:14.
7. 2:13 teaches us that God motivates us (causes us "to will") to do his good pleasure; and then also He enables us to do it ("to work"). This thought should bring great delight to the servant of God. Our dedicated desires and labors represent the very desires and labors of God expressed through us.

If you find yourself desiring to do something for the Lord—to write a song, a poem, a book, a letter, a tract; to make a call; to do a helpful deed; to pray for a particular person or project; to give money for some specific need—then, brother, you should do it, and do it quickly. That desire within you may be God's working within you, causing you "to will." As God furnishes the willingness, so also will He furnish the ability "to work."

14. Do all things without murmurings and questionings; 15. that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, 16. holding forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. Do all things without murmurings or disputings,
15. so that ye may become blameless and pure (unmixed with evil), (being) children of God without blemish in the midst of (our) crooked and distorted generation, among whom you (all) shine as lights in the world;
16. (You shine by) holding forth the message (word) of life; (I pray that you will always do this) so that I may have something to glory about in the day of Christ, (namely) that I did not run (my race of life) in vain, neither have I toiled wearisomely in vain.

Notes

1. God's people have been forbidden to murmur against Him in both the Old and the New Testament (I Pet. 4:9; I Cor.

10:10; Numbers 11:1-3). Murmuring is one way of questioning God's reality, His power, and His care over us. It is tempting God.

2. Similarly *questionings* (KJV *disputings*), whether they are directed toward God or men, are a serious offence. Disputings with men usually reflect the view that God will not punish evildoers, or that God does not care about us enough to do anything. Disputings with God may be direct challenges of His wisdom. There have been cases when God's saints asked Him why He did certain things. Thus Habakkuk (2:1), Jeremiah (12:1), Abraham (Gen. 18:23-25), and others. But these men asked out of a heart of trust and faith. To question God because we do not like his judgments, or doubt that He is doing anything is another matter. Let us lift up holy hands to God, without wrath and *disputings* (I Tim. 2:8).
3. *Blameless* (Gr. *amemptos*) means not subject to blame, deserving no censure. Luke 1:6; I Thess. 3:13.
4. *Harmless* (Gr. *akeraios*) means unmixed, pure, free from evil, without mixture of evil. Matt. 10:16.
5. Our generation is called crooked and perverse, and it certainly is. *Perverse* means turned aside, distorted, corrupted, perverted. Our generation is backwards in its thinking on many things. They call evil good and good evil. (Isaiah 5:20). It calls true religion fanaticism and superstition, while it calls alcoholism and fornication freedom! The whole world lieth in the evil one. I John 5:19. It is still, as in Christ's time, a faithless and perverse generation (Matt. 17:17). Christians are sheep among wolves. (Matt. 10:16).
6. In the midst of this evil generation we are to become children of God without blemish, without moral flaw, or rebellious minds. Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:22; Rev. 14:5.
7. We are to be seen as lights in the world. Compare Matt. 5:14-16; I Peter 2:9; Eph. 5:8, 11-13. An old proverb says, "It is better to light a candle than to complain about the darkness." May the Lord raise up a new generation of committed Christians, who will give their light without flickering and without fear.
8. 2:16 indicates that we shine as lights in the world only when we hold forth the word of life. The light is not in ourselves, but in the divine message we bear.

Our message is the word of LIFE. See Acts 5:20. It is a living (quick!) message. Heb. 4:12. Those who hear and believe it are made alive. John 5:24-25. Do you really believe that our gospel is the only source of life and light for the world? Then, brother, let it shine; let it be heard.

9. Numerous passages teach us that as Christians our works will be remembered and rewarded on the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment. Paul's words in 2:16 suggest this again. See I Cor. 3:14-15; I Thess. 2:19-20; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12; Matt. 25:28-29.
10. The day of Christ Jesus is the day of His second coming, the time of the last judgment. See notes on Phil. 1:10. Compare II Cor. 1:14.
11. Paul did not want to stand before Christ on the day of judgment with no victories won, no souls he had saved, no record of accomplishment. Like a runner who raced to win, or a worker who labored to get a job done, Paul did not want to have run in vain or labor in vain. I Cor. 9:25-27. If the Philippians did not remain true to Christ, then Paul's labors would have been in vain. Isaiah 49:4; 65:23.

17. Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all: 18. and in the same manner do ye also joy, and rejoice with me.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. But (I hasten to assure you that I do not ask you to hold forth the word of life just so I can have easy victories for myself. For even) if I (should lose my trial here and give up my life, and) be poured out like a drink offering upon the sacrifice and the service of your faith (those things being the sacrifice and I being the drink offering), I rejoice (personally) and rejoice (jointly) with you all.

18. And (now) in the same way, you (yourselves) also be rejoicing (personally), and rejoicing (jointly) with me.

Notes

1. These two verses are like a jewel set at the peak of a crown. Paul has given a stirring exhortation in 2:12-16. Now he crowns the paragraph with a magnificent statement of his own self-sacrifice. He uses a bold figure of speech, and tells of

his own complete dedication without affection, boasting, or insincerity.

2. The Gr. verb translated *offered* (*spendomai*) means "to be poured out as a drink offering, or libation." According to Old Testament law a drink offering of a cup (about a quart) of wine was poured out upon the carcass of each burnt offering. Numbers 15:4-5.

Paul compares the service and sacrifice of the Philippians to a burnt-offering, and his own life to a drink-offering poured out upon their sacrifice, as a final enrichment of that sacrifice.

The self-sacrificing dedication of the great martyrs like Paul is indeed the crowning enrichment and glory upon whatever sacrifices we as disciples of Jesus may make.

3. By his reference to the possibility of his life being offered, Paul raises (in 2:18) the sobering reality that he might not be acquitted and released from Rome, but might be executed. If this happened, his career would close, like a poured-out drink offering is thenceforth never used again.
4. Paul refers to the *service* (Gr. *leitourgia*) of the Philippians' faith. The service referred to by this word is divine service, the service or ministry of priests relative to the prayers and sacrifices offered to God (Thayer). Outside the Bible the term was used to refer to various types of public service, but in the Bible it always has reference to divine service, and suggests again the truth that every Christian is a priest unto God to offer spiritual sacrifices well-pleasing to God. I Peter 2:5.
5. Paul rejoiced to think that his career, however it might end, might be like a drink-offering poured out upon the sacrifice of the Philippians' faith. He called upon them to rejoice with him in this thought. There was nothing morbid about it; it was a glorious point of view. He rejoiced in their triumphant sufferings, and wanted them to rejoice with him.

Outline of 2:19-30

- E. News about Timothy and Epaphroditus; 2:19-30
 1. Timothy; 2:19-24
 - a. Paul hoped to send Timothy to them; 2:19, 23
 - b. Paul had no one else like Timothy; 2:20-22
 - c. Paul himself trusted to come soon; 2:24

2. Epaphroditus; 2:25-30
 - a. It was necessary to send Epaphroditus back; 2:25, 28
 - b. Experiences of Epaphroditus; 2:26-27
 - (1) He longed after the Philippians.
 - (2) He was sick.
 - (3) He recovered.
 - c. Receive him in the Lord; 2:29
 - d. Honor him for his work and courage; 2:30

19. But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know of your state. 20. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. 21. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. 22. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child *serveth* a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. 23. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me; 24. but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.

Translation and Paraphrase

19. But I hope in the Lord Jesus (—he being the basis of my hopes, his glory the goal of my hope, my association with Him being the supreme thing in my life—) to send Timothy unto you speedily, so that I may be of good courage, knowing of your affairs (and not being uneasy because of uncertainty.)

20. For I have no one (with me) of like mind (with a soul like his), who will (just) naturally be concerned with (and really anxious over) your affairs.

21. For all (the others) are seeking their own affairs (their own interests and desires), not the things of Christ Jesus.

22. But you (all) know what Timothy has proved out to be, that as a child (serves) a father (so) he serves with me in the gospel (and for the sake of the gospel).

23. I hope therefore to send him (to you) soon, (as soon as) I see (how) my affairs (work out here).

24. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall be coming (to you) soon.

Notes

1. For a brief summary of Timothy's life see notes on Phil. 1:1-2.
2. Paul several times sent Timothy to visit churches that needed some personal guidance when Paul himself could not go. He sent him to Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:1-2). He sent him on

ahead to Macedonia from Ephesus (Acts 19:22). On another occasion he left Timothy at Ephesus while he himself went into Macedonia (I Tim. 1:3). (Compare I Cor. 16:10). Many great preachers like Paul owe some of their accomplishments to their "second team," to those like Timothy.

3. Although Paul faced the possibility of losing his case and losing his life (being poured out like a drink-offering; Phil. 2:17), the Philippians would not be bereft of guidance. He planned to send Timothy to them.
4. Paul hoped "in the Lord." (2:19). As Christians we hope in the Lord, trust in the Lord (Phil. 2:24), receive one another in the Lord (Phil. 2:29), rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 3:1; 4:4), glory in the Lord (Phil. 3:3), stand fast in the Lord (Phil. 4:1), use our minds in the Lord (Phil. 4:2), labor in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. (Rom. 14:8).
5. Paul's purpose for sending Timothy was that he might be cheered (literally *well-souled*) when he heard the news from Timothy about their activities. Good news from faraway places is like waters to a thirsty soul. Prov. 25:25.
6. Paul's statement that he had no one like Timothy who would naturally care for their welfare sounds like a rather harsh judgment upon Paul's other associates. But this need not be so. Perhaps at this time none other of Paul's associates were with Paul. The others had been sent out from Paul, and only Timothy was left of the devoted ones. This is somewhat indicated by the fact that Paul does not list at the close of Philippians a number of associates who sent greetings, as he does at the end of some other epistles (See endings of Colossians and Romans.)

Also perhaps this condemnation(?), or evaluation, is only a matter of degree. Timothy had such a high degree of devotion to Christ and to his brethren that Paul could truly say, "I have no man likeminded," and still not really be implying that the other co-workers were deficient in devotion. Paul's high praise of Epaphroditus in the following paragraph certainly suggests that he was not lacking in dedication to Christ.

7. "Naturally" (or "truly;" Gr. *gnesios*) means "as a birthright, or as an instinct derived from spiritual parentage" (Thayer). A similar word is used in Phil. 4:3 to describe Paul's *true* yokefellow.

8. The temptation to seek our own affairs rather than the things of Jesus Christ has always been strong. (The world says, "Do your own thing.") Even some of Paul's associates were affected by it. It is quite natural to seek our own honor, our own positions of authority and prominence, our own enrichment. To *naturally* seek the things of Christ as Timothy did, is unnatural, that is, unnatural by human standards.
9. The Philippians really did not need Paul's praise of Timothy. They knew Timothy quite well themselves. They knew the *proof* of Timothy. *Proof* means the test by which something is shown to be good, as gold is proved by fire. I Peter 1:7. Our deeds and words soon furnish a proof of our real nature to all who know us.
10. The concerns of the man of God; Phil. 2:20-22.
 - (1) Concern over the things of Christ.
 - (2) Concern over the spiritual state of his fellow Christians.
11. Paul's statement that Timothy served him as a son serves a father expresses the ideal father-son relationship. However, children frequently rebel against parents and are disobedient. Always the hearts of children should be turned to the fathers, and vice versa. Also the hearts of younger ministers should look toward older ministers with respect and assistance. Malachi 4:6.
12. Paul closes the paragraph about Timothy's visit with the note that he himself is confident that he will get to come to them soon. This news of a proposed visit by Paul would strengthen Paul's preceding exhortations to a worthy life. (1:27—2:18).

25. But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need; 26. since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because ye had heard that he was sick; 27. for indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.

Translation and Paraphrase

25. But I regarded (it as) necessary to send Epaphroditus (back) to you. (He is to me my) brother, and fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier; and (certainly he is) your messenger (apostle!) and minister to my need.

26. (I am sending him back now) because he has been longing for you all, and (has been) distressed (like one away from home—

homesick!), because you heard that he was sick (and he did not want you to be worrying about him.)

27. For indeed he has been sick (so sick he was) near to (the point of) death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but also upon me also, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow (the sorrow of his death heaped upon my other burdens).

Notes

1. This section about Epaphroditus reaches an apex in Christian courtesy. It is so worded that Epaphroditus did not need to feel any embarrassment in returning, and the Philippians could receive him back with appreciation for what he had done in their behalf for Paul, and with no resentment at his returning. Courteous and true words like these of Paul are always befitting.
2. Evidently when the Philippians sent Epaphroditus to Paul to deliver their offering they intended for Epaphroditus to remain there with Paul to serve Paul on their behalf. For Epaphroditus to return home after a short time would raise many questions and perhaps some misunderstandings (they are always easy to raise!). Paul therefore wrote this paragraph to explain his sending Epaphroditus back.
3. Observe the complimentary titles bestowed upon Epaphroditus: brother, fellow-worker, fellow-soldier, your messenger, your minister to my need. (The Gr. word for *messenger* is *apostle*, meaning *one sent*.)
4. Epaphroditus longed after the Philippians, and was distressed. He was "full of heaviness." (The Gr. word has the derivation of "away from home," suggesting homesickness. But it probably merely means "distressed" or "sore troubled.")

The reason for his distress was that he had heard that they had heard that he was sick, and he did not want them to be worrying over him. In this Epaphroditus showed some sterling quality. He was less worried about his own critical illness, than he was about anxiety that the news of his illness was causing to his friends.

5. Indeed Epaphroditus had been sick, so sick that he was near to death. He had recovered, but the fact remains that he had been deathly sick.

Our being Christians does not guarantee that we shall never have sickness or injury. Paul left Trophimus at Miletus

sick. (II Tim. 4:20). Paul himself was not delivered from his grievous thorn in the flesh. (II Cor. 12:7-9). Epaphroditus came near to death during his sickness.

Such Scripture portions as these show that it is wrong to allege that we can pray for and receive miraculous healing of all sicknesses. It is true that such favors are sometimes bestowed, but they are not our inalienable heritage in this life. Some might argue that James 5:15 says that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. The scripture in James 5:15 probably refers to those who had miraculous gifts of faith and healing such as were in the early church. No one, not even Paul the apostle, claims 100% healings for those he prays for, as this verse promises. Therefore James 5:15 seems to refer to those having miraculous gifts of faith and healing.

Note that in James 5:15 it is the faith of the one praying that saves the sick. So often fake modern "healers" blame their failures upon the lack of faith on the part of the sick, but James 5:15 indicates that it is the one praying who exercises the faith. Thus if the "healer" cannot heal, he is at fault, not the sick.

6. Paul was relieved that God had had mercy on Epaphroditus, so that he recovered. Paul felt that this was an act of mercy upon him, as well as upon Epaphroditus. For Epaphroditus' recovery spared to Paul added sorrow (the sorrow of Epaphroditus' death) upon sorrow (the other griefs and sorrows he was already bearing).

28. I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy: and hold such in honor: 30. because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

Translation and Paraphrase

28. I am therefore sending him the more speedily (to you), so that (by) seeing him (safe and sound) you may rejoice again, and I (myself) may be less sorrowful (no longer being worried because I know you are worried.)

29. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and regard such (men) as worthy of honor,

30. Because he came near unto death, risking his life for the sake of the work of Christ, so that he might fulfill that which is lacking in your service to me.

Notes

1. Paul's returning Epaphroditus would accomplish two objectives: (1) It would cause the Philippians to rejoice upon seeing him again safe and sound. (2) It would make Paul himself less sorrowful, to know that the anxieties of the Philippians were relieved. The pain in their hearts hurt Paul's heart.
2. The Philippians were to receive Epaphroditus with joy, not reluctantly as if he were a quitter or a failure. He was neither. Rather he was to be held in honor.
3. We wish we knew all the details of Epaphroditus' activities in Rome with Paul, so we could know just how he had risked his life to serve Paul. We can ask Paul or Epaphroditus about this in the New Heaven and Earth.
4. There was a class of Christians in the ancient church called *parabolani* (a word meaning those who cast themselves aside in disregard of danger and risk). These people risked their lives going among the sick, and into the houses where the plague was rampant to minister and serve others.

A related word (*paraboleuomai*) is used to describe Epaphroditus' deeds in Rome. He risked and hazarded his life to serve Paul. We do not know the details as to what risks he ran.

There are times when Christians must be willing to lay down their lives that others may be saved and served. Acts 20:24; 15:26.

5. The *Preacher's Homiletic Commentary* gives the following outline, based on 2:25-30, of Heroic Devotion to Christ:
 - (1) It is wholly absorbed in the work of Christ; 2:30.
 - (2) It risks life in serving the cause of God.
 - (3) It should be held in highest esteem; 2:29.
 - (4) It is fully of sympathy for the anxieties of people; 2:26.
6. Phil. 2:30 suggests that the Philippians owed Paul a debt of service. Compare Philemon 13, 19. Converts do owe a debt of service to those who win them to Christ. The Philippians had sent one of their members, Epaphroditus, to Paul to help pay their debt to Paul.

PHILIPPIANS

Study and Review

Questions Over Philippians Chapter Two

1. What four motivations does Paul use to urge the Philippians to be likeminded? (2:1)
2. What personal appeal does Paul make to the Philippians to be likeminded? (2:2)
3. Why, probably, did Paul stress the topic of unity to the Philippians?
4. Nothing was to be done through *faction* (or strife) or *vain-glory*. What is faction, and what is vainglory?
5. How were the Philippians to regard one another? (2:3)
6. What were the Philippians to look upon, and what were they not to look upon? What does *look upon* mean? (2:4)
7. Who had a mind like the mind we should have?
8. What was Paul's purpose for relating the information in 2:6-8?
9. In what form did Christ exist before he came to earth?
10. What does the word *form* in 2:6 mean? What is the difference between *form* and *fashion* (in 2:8)?
11. (Question based on King James Vers.) Why would Christ not have thought it robbery to be equal with God. Is claiming equality with God robbing God?
12. (Question based on American Stand. Vers.) How did Christ look upon (or count) his being on an equality with God?
13. Did Christ actually have equality with God, or was this only something he might have seized? Give reason for your answer.
14. When did Christ empty himself (or make himself of no reputation)?
15. Define the word *kenosis*.
16. What does the statement, "He took upon himself the *form* of a servant," indicate about Christ's human nature? What does it indicate about His nature before He came to earth?
17. How greatly did Christ humble himself? (2:8)
18. What was the result of Christ's humiliation and obedience?
19. What is Christ's name that is above every name?
20. What response to Christ shall every knee make?
21. What response to Christ shall every tongue make?
22. What effect is there upon God when men confess Christ? (2:11)
23. Had the Philippians been an obedient group of disciples? (2:12)
24. What is the meaning of the expression *Work out* your own salvation?

CHAPTER TWO

25. How can we work out our salvation when salvation is not of works? (Eph. 2:8-9)
26. What feelings should we have as we work out our salvation? Why should we have such feelings?
27. What two things does God work to bring about within us? (2:13)
28. What is wrong with murmurings and questionings (KJV, *disputings*)?
29. What type of children of God are we to become? (2:15)
30. How did Paul describe the generation in which he lived? (See 2:15). Is our generation any different?
31. What are Christians to be seen as (or shine as)?
32. What would give Paul opportunity to glory on the day of Christ?
33. What could cause Paul to have labored in vain? (2:16)
34. In 2:17 what does Paul compare the Philippians' service to, and what does he compare his own life to? Did this make him happy or sad?
35. Whom did Paul hope to send to the Philippians quite soon, and why was he being sent?
36. What was distinctive about Timothy's attitude toward the Lord's people and the Lord's work?
37. To what did Paul compare Timothy's service with him?
38. Whom had Paul sent back to Philippi, presumably with the letter to the Philippians?
39. Where did Paul feel that he himself would soon get to come?
40. In what five ways did Paul describe Epaphroditus? (2:25)
41. What had Epaphroditus been sent to Rome to do?
42. What feelings had Epaphroditus been having about the Philippians? Why?
43. What do Epaphroditus' experiences indicate (if anything) about miraculous healings?
44. How did Paul want the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus back?
45. How much had Epaphroditus risked? For what purpose was this risk?
46. What was lacking as far as the Philippians' relation to Paul was concerned?

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER THREE

A MIND OF RIGHT VALUES

Paul counted everything as being loss for Christ (3:8). His superb ancestry and training was regarded as refuse that he might gain Christ. He devoted himself to one thing, to stretching forward unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." (3:15).

1. *Right values about the law-keepers— beware!* (3:2-16)

1. Lawkeepers are not the people of God; 3:2-3.
 - a. They are dogs, evil workers, concision.
 - b. Christians are the true Israel.
2. Paul could glory in the law more than they, but he did not; 3:4-16.
 - a. Paul's many grounds for confidence under the law; 3:4-6
 - b. Paul's attitudes; 3:6-16
 - (1) He counted gains under the law as loss; 3:7
 - (2) He counted all things loss for Christ; 3:8a
 - (3) He desired only Christ; 3:8b-11
 - (4) He did not consider himself perfect; 3:12a, 13a
 - (5) He pressed on; 3:12b, 13b-16

2. *Right values about Paul—be imitators!* (3:17-21)

1. Imitate Paul; 3:17.
2. Reasons for imitating Paul; 3:18-21
 - a. Many are enemies of the cross; 3:18-19
 - b. Our citizenship is in heaven; 3:20-21

CHAPTER THREE

Outline of 3:1-21

Rejoice; 3:1

F. False teachers contrasted with Paul's example; 3:2—4:1

1. Why beware of the law-keepers; 3:2-16

a. Because they are not the true people of God; 3:2-3

(1) They are dogs, evil workers, concision; 3:2

(2) We are the circumcision; 3:3

(a) We who worship by the Spirit of God

(b) We who glory in Christ Jesus

(c) We who have no confidence in the flesh

b. Because Paul had more to place confidence in than they, but he sought only Christ; 3:4-16

(1) What Paul could have placed confidence in; 3:4-6

(a) Being circumcised eighth day

(b) Being of the stock of Israel

(c) Being of the tribe of Benjamin

(d) Being a Hebrew of Hebrews

(e) Being a Pharisee

(f) Being zealous unto persecuting

(g) Being blameless according to the law

(2) Paul's attitudes; 3:7-15

(a) Counted gains under the law as loss; 3:7

(b) Counted all things loss for Christ; 3:8a

(c) Desired only Christ; 3:8b-11

—To gain Christ; 3:8b

—To be found in Him; 3:9

—To know Him; 3:10a

—To know the power of His resurrection;
3:10b

—To know the fellowship of his sufferings;
3:10b-11

(d) Did not consider that he was perfect; 3:12a, 13a

(e) He pressed on; 3:12b, 13b-16

—Let us all be thus minded; 3:15

—Let us walk as we have attained; 3:16

2. Why be imitators of Paul: 3:17-21

a. Command to imitate Paul; 3:17

b. Reasons for imitating Paul; 3:18b-21

(1) Because many are enemies of the cross; 3:18-19

(2) Because our citizenship is in heaven; 3:20-21

3:1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe.

Translation and Paraphrase

3:1 (As for) the remaining (considerations), my brothers, (just continue to) rejoice in the Lord. (If it sounds repetitious for me to say this, well) to me it is not (at all) irksome to keep writing the same things to you (that I have declared in previous communications. I do not do it because I am lazy or have nothing else to say), and (furthermore) for you this is (the only) safe (course I can follow).

Notes

1. Chapter three opens with "Finally," although it is only about half way through the epistle. The word "Finally" does not here mean "In conclusion."

This expression "Finally" (Gr. *to loipon*) is used frequently by Paul to begin some new subject in his writings. It is various translated as "finally" (II Cor. 13:1), "henceforth" (Mark 14:41; I Cor. 7:29; Heb. 10:13; II Tim. 4:9), "For the rest," "besides," or "as to what remains." (I Thess. 4:1; II Thess 3:1).

The "finally" in 3:1 is resumed, or perhaps repeated, at 4:8.

2. The obligation to rejoice in the Lord is stated several times in this epistle. See Phil. 2:18; 4:4. Compare II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:16.
3. "Rejoice" is a present tense form, signifying continuous action: "Keep on rejoicing." The joy of Christians is continuous and indestructible because it is joy in the Lord. Our earthly circumstances may change, causing us to feel elated or sad, but the Lord never changes. We can always rejoice in Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35-39). So, no matter what your troubles, "Rejoice!"
4. Christian joy is more often hindered by minor inconveniences than by major tragedies. Learn not to react to a five-cent annoyance by a five-dollar surge of adrenalin and anger.
5. In this verse (3:1) Paul sets forth the necessity for repetition in our teachings. Preachers must not fear to repeat themselves. In the four gospels we find several identical statements by

Christ placed in different situations. Obviously Christ repeated himself frequently. After all we have only one message, and men cannot hear the old truths too often.

Paul did not therefore find it irksome, or grievous, to him to repeat himself. On the contrary he viewed repetition as the only safe course for the Philippians.

6. The "same things" that are referred to could be the things written earlier in this book (we prefer this view), or things spoken orally before, or a repetition of things written in some earlier letters. There is no real evidence that Paul ever wrote an earlier letter to the Philippians.
7. There is a sudden change of tone after 3:1. 3:2 begins a section that is harshly critical of certain men. However, we need not conclude, as some have, that the sudden change in tone indicates that our book of Philippians is a composite production, made of parts of two letters unskillfully combined by someone long after Paul's time. See introductory sections, page 12.

2. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. (Now, my brothers,) Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the (flesh-) cutting, the slashing-cision!

Notes

1. "Beware of the dogs; beware of the evil workers; beware of the concision." The "dogs" referred to here were the Judaizers, those who insisted that Christians must keep the law of Moses, with its laws about circumcision, not eating meats, etc.
2. The word *dog* had a very ugly connotation to ancient Jews. They did not think of dogs as we think of our prized household pets. To them the word *dog* brought to mind the unclean, half-wild, roaming, pack-running, scavenging pariah dogs of that part of the world.
 "Dog" stands for a homosexual in Deut. 23:18. Dogs are outside of heaven. (Rev. 22:15). Give not what is holy to dogs. (Matt. 7:5). Gentiles are called "dogs" (Matt. 15:27).
3. Why should Paul call these Judaizers evil workers and dogs? They taught that people were saved by doing ceremonial works

like circumcision, and by keeping the law, and fulfilling the works of the law. By doing this they placed themselves completely at odds with God's will as revealed through Christ. Of course they would have denied this, but Paul's evaluation of them must be accepted as true. Therefore in our own time anyone who insists that we must keep the law of Moses, wholly or in part, must be included in Paul's condemnation.

4. The word *concision* (Gr. *katatome*) is a play on the word *circumcision* (Gr. *peritome*). In Old Testament times circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants, and was absolutely necessary. Under our Christian dispensation circumcision is of no importance at all. (Gal. 6:15) Paul uses the rather derisive name *concision* to refer to compulsory circumcision in our times. Concision means a cutting, a slashing, a pagan mutilation of the flesh which served no purpose. That which the Judaizers called circumcision—a mark of honor—was to Paul on a concision—a meaningless mutilation of the flesh. Compare Gal. 5:12 for a similar thought.
5. *Concision* is used in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) in several very unflattering connections;
 - Lev. 21:5—"Make not cuttings in their (the priests') flesh."
 - I Kings 18:28—The prophets of Baal slashed themselves as they prayed for Baal to send down fire upon his altar.
 - Isaiah 15:2—The Moabites cut their beards in grief.
6. How could Paul refer to these Judaizers as evil workers? Basically because they insisted upon forcing their false doctrine upon Gentile converts to Christ, and would not listen to Paul's message of truth. Paul truly loved his fleshly kinsmen the Jews (Romans 9:1-2); nonetheless they fiercely and fanatically opposed him everywhere he went. Even the Christian Jews showed antagonism toward Paul. In doing such actions they made themselves evil workers.
7. 3:2 begins a new section in our outline, which we entitle "False Teachers contrasted with Paul's example" (3:2-21). The first subtopic in this section is 3:2-17, which deals with the topic "Why beware of the law-keepers." Two reasons are developed for this: (1) Law-keepers are not the true people of God; and (2) Paul had more to place confidence in than they had, but he sought Christ only.

3. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

Translation and Paraphrase

3. For we (Christians) are the (people who are the true) circumcision, (we) who worship by (the guidance and instructions of) the Spirit of God (and not through the law of Moses), and (we who) rejoice in Christ Jesus (as our only hope), and do not put (our) trust in the flesh (like those who place their confidence in circumcision do);

Notes

1. In this verse Paul gives a reason why we must beware of those who try to force the law upon Christians: They are not the true people of God. Christians are the true people of God.
2. In the Old Testament God told Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nations, that he and every male with him must be circumcised. It was the token or sign of the covenant between God and Abraham. This was to be done by all of Abraham's descendants after him. The uncircumcised male was cut off from his people because he had broken God's covenant. Gen. 17:10-14.

Because of this command to Abraham, the Jews became a circumcised race, and the "The Circumcision" came to refer to the Jews.

3. Paul asserts that this has now been changed. The Jews who practice fleshly circumcision are no longer the true circumcision, the true people of God. We Christians who worship by the Spirit of God and place no confidence in the flesh (like the Jews did in this circumcised flesh) are now the real circumcision. A similar thought is given in Romans 2:25-29. Compare Gal. 6:15-16 and Col. 2:11-13.

Because Christians are the true circumcision it is proper to refer to the church as Israel. Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Rev. 3:9.

4. The idea that fleshly circumcision is of no value unless it is accompanied by true faith and a godly life was not original with Paul. Deut. 10:16 and 30:6 speak of an uncircumcised heart, that is, a heart not yielded and obedient to God. Jer. 6:10 speaks of an uncircumcised ear, an ear not receptive

to God's commands. Ex. 6:20 speaks of uncircumcised lips, that is, unworthy lips. These references were all spoken about people who practiced fleshly circumcision. From these references it appears that circumcision had always been a matter of the heart, rather than of outward fleshly form. This is further confirmed by the fact that Abraham received the sign of circumcision AFTER he had already been declared righteous before God as a result of his faith. See Romans 4:9-11; Gen. 15:6; 17:11.

5. Three signs of the true circumcision: (Phil. 3:3).

(1) Worshipping by the Spirit of God.

(2) Boasting in Christ Jesus.

(3) Having no confidence in the flesh.

6. Worshipping by the Spirit of God involves several things:

It involves worshipping according to the new covenant laws, which were given by the Holy Spirit beginning on the day of Pentecost, when the church began. See II Cor. 3:3, 6; Acts 2:4, 16-17.

It involves worshipping with the righteousness, peace, and joy that is produced by the Holy Spirit within us. See Romans 14:17. We serve God in our spirits (Rom. 1:9), which have been made free from the law of sin and death by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

The Holy Spirit was not given to all men until after the death of Christ and His glorification. Therefore those under the law before Christ could not really have worshipped by the Spirit. Neither can those who now try to worship according to that system of law in force before the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all flesh. John 7:39; Gal. 3:2.

To relapse back to a pattern of life which followed the law of Moses after having once began to serve Christ would be the height of folly. Paul said to the Galatians, who were doing this, "O foolish Galatians . . . having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Gal. 3:1-3).

7. Christians, the true people of God, glory in Christ Jesus; that is, they have Christ as their basis for boasting (that is, glorying or confidence), and not the law. Paul gloried in nothing except the cross of Christ (with all that that involved). (Gal. 6:14; Compare II Cor. 1:31; 10:17).

Philippians chapter three elaborates at great length about how Paul had more grounds for glorying in fleshly distinctions than many Judaizers who gloried in them, and yet Paul counted all these things loss that he might gain Christ. (Phil. 3:7-8)

8. Christians, the true people of God, have no confidence in the flesh. The fact that they are negro or white, circumcised or uncircumcised gives them no confidence whatsoever. We know that God can, if He should desire, raise up circumcised children of Abraham from stones. (Luke 3:8). We put our trust in the living God and in His son, and not in our flesh.

Worship involves all of our lives. It is not limited to acts done in group assemblies. Worship involves the feelings in our hearts, toward God, our constant prayer contact with God, and the deeds and words that we do because we are God's

9. All the religious teachers in modern times who try to convert people to keep the law, wholly or in part, fall under Paul's condemnation here in Phil. 3:2-3. This includes all those who try to make us keep Saturday as a Sabbath day, to reject certain meats or foods, to keep the feasts of the law like the feast of Tabernacles, etc. See Col. 2:16-17.

It is odd that in our generation that is generally so lawless, that some should yet seek to bind an extreme and obsolete system of law upon us. While we are not without law before God, we are not under the law given through Moses. I Cor. 9:20-21.

4. though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: 5. circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6. as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

Translation and Paraphrase

4. although I myself could have confidence in the flesh (if that were the source of confidence). (Indeed) if any other man thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I (have even) more (than he has).

5. (I was) circumcised when I was eight days old. (I was not some Ishmaelite or off-branch from Abraham.) (I am) of the race of Israel (not a proselyte). (I am) of the (distinguished!)

tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews (so completely Hebrew that I speak the Hebrew tongue). With regard to the law (I was) a Pharisee (holding their strict ideas about the law, and not the compromising position of many Hellenistic Jews).

6. With regard to zeal (I was) persecuting the church (of Christ); with regard to (the) righteousness (which) is (revealed) in the law, (I was) blameless.

Notes

1. Phil. 2:4 introduces a second argument as to why we must beware of the law-keepers (those Judaizers who try to make Christians keep the law of Moses): These people had less grounds for confidence in their physical distinctions than Paul had, and yet he placed no confidence in such things. Paul could denounce the Jewish view, for he once shared it to the fullest.
2. To emphasize that he had more grounds for confidence in Jewish ancestry and Jewish honors than other people who gloried in such things, Paul itemized his own distinctions:

(1) He had been circumcised the eighth day of his life. (Cf. Luke 1:59). This distinguished him from Gentiles, or proselytes, or Ishmaelites (who performed circumcision at age thirteen). Paul had lived all of his previous life in the Jewish faith.

(2) He was of the stock of Israel, of pure racial ancestry. See II Cor. 11:22.

(3) He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1). This tribe was famous for its military prowess (Gen. 49:27; Judges 20), and for such honored names as King Saul and Mordecai (the cousin of Queen Esther). Paul was not from one of the ten renegade tribes.

(4) Paul was a Pharisee, as far as the law was concerned (Acts 23:6; 26:5). The Pharisees were a strict denomination of Jews. Their very name means "Separated." There were never more than 6000 of them. In spite of the hypocrisy of many of them, they were basically a strict, God-fearing group, accepting the entire Old Testament, and also the traditions which had developed around it. They refused to take part in the compromising life of many Jews of their time. Paul was not an apostate Hellenistic Jew (favorable to Greek culture) but a Pharisee.

(5) Paul was a persecutor as far as zeal was concerned. Details of Paul's (Saul's) persecutions of the church may be read in Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1-2, 13-14; 22:3-5, 19-20; 26:9-11.

Zeal for a correct cause is good. Phinehas the priest was commended for his zeal. (Numbers 25:11-13). Christ had such zeal that he drove the money changers from the temple. (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17). However, zeal for a false cause is useless, perhaps even deadly. See Rom. 10:2. Saul's zeal was like that.

(6) Paul was a blameless man, as far as the righteousness of the law was concerned. He had kept all the ceremonies and rituals of the law so faithfully that no one could find fault with his performance.

Strangely enough, however, Paul looked back upon this time when he was "blameless according to the law" as being a time when he was the chief of sinners. See II Tim. 1:13-15. This shows that people can be self-deceived about their standing before God. Also it shows that the law really made no one righteous (Hebrews 10:1-4).

3. These six descriptions of Paul's life and attainments were written to show that he could have claimed, if he had so desired, more honors from the Jewish point of view, than any of those who did place their confidence in Jewish background and attainments.

7. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. Nevertheless (in spite of all the Jewish distinctions which I can legitimately claim), whatever things had been gain to me (that is, sources of honor and distinction) I have come to regard (these things) as (just so much) loss because of Christ (Jesus).

Notes

1. When did Paul count all those things which had appeared to be gain to him as loss?
 - (1) at his conversion (3:7)
 - (2) continuously thereafter (3:8)

2. Note what all Paul counted loss:
 - (1) Fleshly honor (his noble ancestry); (3:5)
 - (2) Education (Ph.D. equivalent!); (3:5)
 - (3) His office (Pharisee); (3:5)
 - (4) His social respectability (blameless); (3:6)
3. Observe the past tense (Gr. perfect) of "I counted" in this verse, which contrasts with the present "I count" in 3:8. (The Gr. Perfect tense indicates a past action with present effects.)
4. Paul counted his past honors as *loss*. If a modern businessman should unintentionally buy a load of merchandise that he could neither sell nor send back, he would write it off as so much loss. Thus Paul wrote off as loss his past beliefs, and in his case with no regrets.
5. Paul had found the pearl of great price. (Matt. 13:45-46). It was Christ. For Christ's sake he was willing to give up all else he ever had or gloried in. "For Christ count everything but loss."

8. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

8. Indeed I verily (still) count all things (to be) loss for the overwhelming gain of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them as only (items of) refuse (dung, or filth), so that I may gain (or win) Christ.

Notes

1. Paul's past decision (stated in 3:7) to count all things loss for Christ was still his present attitude, as stated in 3:8.
2. How shall we describe the excellent knowledge of Christ which so entranced Paul? It is extensive, useful, cheering, satisfying, profound, authoritative, uplifting, purifying, helpful, transforming! (The expression "the knowledge of Christ" includes both the knowledge about Christ and the knowledge we gain through fellowship with Him.)
3. What things did Paul gain in Christ?
 - (1) He gained the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. (3:8, 10a). "This is life eternal that they should *know* thee,

the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Christ Jesus." (John 17:3)

(2) The justification (or righteousness) that comes through faith. Compare Romans 1:17; 3:21-22.

(3) A knowledge (experimental knowledge) of the power of Christ's resurrection (3:10).

(4) Partnership in Christ's sufferings (3:10).

(5) Identification with Christ in his death (3:10).

(6) Assurance of the resurrection unto eternal life (3:11).

4. Paul surely suffered the loss of all things. He lost his job, his reputation, his safety, his former friends, and finally his life. However, he also gained many things that were worth far more to him than all he lost.
5. "Refuse" (Gr. *skubala*, pl. of *skubalon*) means dung, filth, refuse. (Lidell & Scott's Lexicon).
6. Paul's supreme wish now was to gain (or win) Christ as his own, and to be found in Christ. We should endeavor to make Paul's feelings our feelings. To gain Christ and be found in him involves much more than merely to receive Christ as savior. It seems to have meant to Paul that he wanted to be absorbed completely into the nature, work, fellowship, and presence of Christ. May God help us to desire to gain Christ to the degree that Paul desired him.

9. and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10. that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; 11. if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.

Translation and Paraphrase

9. (I desire not only to gain, or win, Christ, but also that) I may be found in him (—found by God, and found by Christ himself, and by my brethren, and by those who oppose me—and when I am thus found that all may behold me,) not as (having) a righteousness of my own (which is) the (righteousness) based on (keeping) the law, but (as having) that (righteousness which comes) through Christ, the (righteousness) from God (which is given) upon the basis of faith.

10. (And I desire) to know him (that is, to know Christ—to know him in all the limitless experiences of fellowship available to us in the gospel), and (to know) the power of his resurrection (with that power working in my life), and (to know the) fellowship of his sufferings (to have a share in them, if need be, even to the point of) being made to conform to his death (along with him),

11. so that I may, if possible, attain unto the resurrection from the dead, (that is, unto the resurrection unto eternal life).

Notes

- 3:9-11 expresses some of Paul's desires as they related to Christ. He desired to gain Christ, to be found in Christ, to know Christ, to know the power of Christ's resurrection, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings. All of these things involve Christ.
- Paul wanted to be *found* in Christ. (No secret discipleship for him!) He wanted anyone who might care to investigate him, or who might accidentally cross his path, to find that he Paul was *in Christ*.
- Paul desired that those who "found" him would find out quickly that his righteousness was not the righteousness commanded in the law—a righteousness which consisted of doing or not doing a long list of things that were contained in the law (Gal. 3:12)—but that his righteousness was that which is given through faith in Christ. This is a bestowed righteousness. God says, as it were, "I know that you have sinned, but because you believe in and desire to serve my Son, I declare you to be righteous, as righteous as if you had never sinned in your life." (Romans 1:17; 3:21-24). Out of the joy and inward peace that comes from this bestowed righteousness, we live lives of obedience, holiness, love, and good works, not because we are under the law of Moses, but because we desire to obey God's will and desire to do good unto all men to the utmost of our power. (Titus 3:8; Eph. 3:10).

A synonym for righteousness is *justification*, or acquittal. When God declares a man righteous, he is justified and acquitted of all guilt, just as if he had never sinned. Then he is furthermore aided by the Holy Spirit to live a life of true personal righteousness.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4. Our own righteousness— | The righteousness from God. |
| a. Based on the law. | a. Based on <i>grace</i> . |
| b. Requires meritorious works. | b. Requires faith. |
| c. Earned. | c. Free. |
| d. Brings glory to me. | d. Brings glory to Christ. |
| e. Impossible to attain | e. Freely available. |

(Romans 3:20)

5. Paul desired to *know* Christ. Compare Eph. 1:19. *Knowing* in Biblical usage, often means more than mere acquaintance. It signifies knowing intimately by experience and devoted association, (Eph. 4:13; John 17:3; Jer. 9:23-24). Sometimes *know* means to *approve*. (Matt. 7:23). Do you truly want to know Christ as Paul wanted to know him, or would you rather keep Christ off at a safe distance?

Paul seems to have come to feel in later years that he really did know Jesus. "I know him whom I have believed." (II Tim. 1:12).

6. Paul desired to know the power of Christ's resurrection. Compare Eph. 1:19-20. This power that brought Christ back from the dead is available to us as Christians. God will assist us with the same power with which he raised Christ. Romans 6:3-5 emphasizes that in baptism we are united with Christ in the likeness of his resurrection, as well as in the likeness of his death.
7. Paul desired to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, even to the point to becoming conformed to Christ's death.

Paul did not deliberately try to bring troubles upon himself; on several occasions in his life he took steps to prevent trouble from coming upon himself. But he accepted trouble and even death as a reality, and looked upon it as a means of identification with Christ.

Certainly Paul did experience a full fellowship (or share) in suffering for (and with) Christ. Acts 9:16; II Cor. 11:23-28. Paul has revealed to us that we enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Also that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (I Tim. 3:12).

But in all of these things Paul kept himself joyful and expectant. "If we died with him, we shall also live with him." (II Tim. 2:11-12). That which God appoints for us, though

it seems grievous for a moment, at last produces wonderful fruit in our lives.

8. Paul's statement in 3:11, in which he says, "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead," is a bit hard to understand.

Paul cannot have meant that he needed to work for Christ to a certain point to be assured that his body would rise from the dead. This notion conflicts with Paul's own plain statements that he believed in a general resurrection of both the just and the unjust (I Cor. 15:23; Acts 24:15; 26:8). Christ also spoke of the coming general resurrection (John 5:28-29).

It would appear, then, that Paul meant that he hoped to live in such a way that he would be worthy of the honor of being raised from the dead, even though our worth has nothing to do with the certainty that we shall be raised. Or perhaps Paul meant that he wanted to be sure to be raised in the resurrection with the just. A resurrection unto eternal punishment is hardly an inviting "resurrection."

12. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

12. (I certainly am) not (implying) that I have already taken (hold of my goals), or (that) I have already become fully grown (and perfect); but I am pursuing (the goals), so that I may lay hold (upon them, the same goal) for which I was also laid hold upon by Christ. (He laid hold upon me at the time of my conversion, and directed me toward the goal, which I now long for and labor to take hold of.)

Notes

1. Paul here reveals yet more of the attitudes which he held, attitudes which distinguished him from the false teachers who gloried in their Jewish background.

Paul did not consider himself yet to have laid hold on the goals he had stated in 3:9-11. Compare 3:13a. He did not feel that he was yet perfect, even though Christ had given him that righteousness which comes through faith (3:9).

There was more he yet desired to attain. The word *attain* in 3:11 (Gr. *katantao*) is a different word from *obtained* in 3:12 (Gr. *lambano*), even though the KJV translates them as *attain* and *attained*. The former word means to arrive at; the latter means to take.

2. *Perfect* means full-grown, or mature in mind, complete. It does not suggest the idea of absolute sinlessness.
3. Though he did not feel that he was perfect, Paul nevertheless was always pressing on (Gr. *dioko*, pursue). This should be a lesson against letting down in our efforts, even in old age! Paul was no longer young when he wrote these words. Compare Philemon 9.
4. Paul sought to lay hold on the thing for which Christ had laid hold upon him and had directed him to seize. Christ had laid hold on Paul for a purpose, and now Paul sought to lay hold on that same purpose. We see here an illustration of the cooperation necessary between the divine will and the human will.

The idea that God and Christ lay hold on us, and direct our lives into certain paths for certain goals, is frequently found in the scripture. But in all such cases the human will and human effort had to cooperate with the divine directions, or the job did not get done. Note the cases of Moses (Ex. 3:10; 4:10-11), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10). John the baptist (Luke 1:15-17), and Paul himself (Acts 26:19; Gal. 1:15-16). Compare Phil. 2:13. Perhaps God is laying hold on your life for a special service. Will you accept this direction, and strive to lay hold on the goal for which you were laid hold on?

5. R.S.V. translates 3:12b, "because Christ Jesus has made me his own." The Gr. prepositional phrase *epb' ho* (translated *for which in* KJV and ASV) does indeed sometimes mean *because* (Thayer's Lexicon), in accord with this reading. But most of the other principal versions (New English, Phillips, Amplified, New A.S.V., Confraternity, etc.) render the verse by a meaning similar to our familiar KJV and ASV. This would seem to be the preferred reading.

13. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold; but one thing *I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, 14. I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

13. Brothers, I do not count myself (yet) to have laid hold on (my goal). But one thing I (am doing): forgetting (disregarding) the things (that are) behind (in my past) and stretching forward (like a racer) to the things ahead,

14. I pursue (onward) toward the mark, unto the (great prize and) award of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus, (that prize which God, the great umpire, awards to all of those who press ever onward and upward—to all those who obey the calling of God, which comes to us in Christ, and leads us ever upward toward God.)

Notes

1. Paul repeats in 3:13 the thought first stated in 3:12, that he did not yet count himself to have laid hold (perf. infin. of *katalambano*, the word used also in 3:12, meaning to lay hold on so as to make one's own). The goals Paul desired to lay hold on were stated in 3:10-11.
2. Paul was dedicated to *one* thing. Neither past failures and persecutions, nor fears about the future kept him from seeking this. The *one thing* which Paul did was to keep reaching and stretching out further toward things ahead, toward his goal.
3. *Forgetting* is a present tense, indicating continuous linear action. *Forgetting* here expresses the idea of disregarding, or refusing to be influenced by something.
4. "I press toward the mark, the goal." A goal is an object upon which the eye is kept fixed, so that it can be attained through constant attention and effort.
5. "Unto the *prize*." The *prize* referred to here is an award such as is given to a victor in athletic competition. Paul here compares his attainment of the fullest fellowship with Christ and his reward in heaven to a trophy such as an athlete might win.

Do you really desire this heavenly prize, or do you prefer the decaying award of this world?

6. The prize is described as the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The term "high calling" may also be rendered as the "upward calling." Everything about the services of Christ leads us upward—upward in service to others, upward in kindness, upward in joy, upward in helpfulness, etc.

15. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you: 16. only whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. Therefore let as many of us as are full-grown (mature, perfect, fully developed in Christian attitudes) think this same (way about our progress as Christians). And if any one (of you) think otherwise (about your Christian progress) God will reveal this (truth) to you (in due time, and convince you that I was right about it).

16. But (whatever your feelings about our goal for life may be, I urge) only (this, that we) live by the same (standard) unto which we have attained—(live in accordance with the best knowledge and feelings you have gained).

Notes

1. Verses 15-16 form a concluding exhortation to the preceding material. Paul urged those who considered themselves spiritually perfect (mature, or full-grown) to realize that they had to continue pressing on toward the heavenly goal, even as he did. If there were some among Paul's readers who did not feel about this as Paul felt, and thought that they were already fully attained, Paul did not quarrel with them, but only urged them to live according to the best knowledge and best feelings they then had. He adds the mild, perhaps half-humorous, rebuke, that if in any respect they did not now agree with Paul's views about the Christian life, that God would in due time reveal to them the truthfulness of Paul's position.
2. Most of us would be much better Christians if we only lived fully up to the things we now know we should do. How much more would we be excellent servants of God if we had a dedication like Paul's, who said, "One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on . . ."

17. Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. Be ye (all of you) fellow-imitators (imitators together) of me, (my) brothers, and be keeping your gaze upon those who are

walking in this manner, according to (the manner which) ye have and see in us (as) a pattern.

Notes

1. 3:17-21 forms a new subtopic in our outline, which we entitle "Why Be Imitators of Paul." This section further develops the topic of chapter three, "False Teachers Contrasted with Paul's example."

Two reasons in 3:18-21 are given for imitating Paul and marking (taking notice of) those who live by Paul's example:

- (1) Many people are enemies of the cross;
- (2) Our citizenship is in heaven.

We could say that 3:2-16 warns us to beware of the law-keepers, and 3:17-21 warns us to beware of the lawless.

2. The Philippians were urged—both as individuals and as a group—to imitate Paul. They were to be imitators *together* (KJV *followers*) of Paul. Paul could say what few preachers can: "Imitate me." Compare I Cor. 11:1; II Thess. 3:9.
3. They were furthermore to mark (that is, note, or observe, or behold) those who were walking (that is, living) according to the example of Paul.

We should be very selective about our friends and the people we imitate. This might seem to contradict Matt. 7:1, which says, "Judge not." However, Matt. 7:1 by no means forbids us to observe the conduct of people and to evaluate it. It only forbids us to form critical opinions of people on the basis of feelings and prejudice. Our instinctive emotional reactions toward people must be kept in check. However, observation of their deeds is necessary. "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:16). "He that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that doeth sin is of the devil." (I John 3:7-8) Let us therefore mark (note) those who so walk as Paul walked for our example.

4. *Ensample* means a pattern, type, or example. *Ensample* and *example* are close synonyms.

18. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19. whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. For many are walking (that is, living—people of whom) I have spoken many times, and (of whom) I now speak even (with) weeping—(that they are) the enemies of the cross of Christ (and all that the cross stands for).

Notes

1. Paul warned his Christian converts about evil men. He warned them often (3:18), and repeatedly. The idea that we must be so polite that we never speak out against evil-doers is not found in the Holy Scriptures. Christ himself exposed the Pharisees; Peter and Jude wrote warnings about ungodly men (II Peter 2; book of Jude); Notice the warnings of Paul in II Tim. 4:14 and I Tim. 1:19-20. Such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah (22:15ff), Jeremiah (20:1-6), and Amos (7:14-17) spoke out against ungodly men.
2. The word *walk* in 3:18 means to live. Comparing the Christian life to a walk is very common in the New Testament. See Eph. 4:1, 17; 5:15.
3. According to Paul there were *many* who walked in such a way as to be enemies of the cross. Still today many are going down the broad way of life to destruction, but only few up the narrow road that leads unto life. (Matt. 7:13-14).

As to who these *many* people to whom Paul referred were, we frankly cannot say. It could be that they included the Judaizers, or the Gnostics (an ancient denomination which thought that salvation comes by knowing certain mystical knowledge), or the heathen, or even some professed Christians. It probably would have been obvious to the Philippians that the heathen were ungodly, but perhaps not so apparent that some professed Christians were.

4. The very act of thinking and speaking about these ungodly people affected Paul strongly: "I tell you (of them) even weeping." Although it is sometimes necessary, we should also find it painful to warn about ungodly people.

If we really feel grieved over the sins of people, they will be less likely to be offended when we warn them, than they will if we adopt a superior, "holier-than-thou" (Isaiah 65:5). One preacher lost his job because he told his church that if they did not repent they were going to hell. A later preacher

before the same church said the same things, and was graciously accepted. One of the church members said, "The new preacher said the same things the old preacher said, but he acted like he was sorry about it."

5. "Enemies of the cross of Christ." The cross is central in Christianity. See Gal. 6:14; 5:11; I Cor. 1:17-18; 2:2; Eph. 2:16. The word *cross* in 3:18 probably refers to all the doctrines of Christ, which focus upon the cross. (*Cross* is therefore a metonymy, a part used to refer to a whole.)

Even most unbelievers admire the teachings and the holy life of Jesus. But the cross is a stumbling-block to them. The cross tells us that we are unclean sinners, so foul that the perfect one had to die for us. It sweeps away all our pride in human wisdom and knowledge. The cross says, "All your knowledge and morality does not impress God a bit. You must come to the cross in sincere recognition of your utter sinfulness if you want to be saved." Such implications are foolishness to the worldly-wise, and are stumbling-blocks to those who place confidence in their religious ceremonialism (I Cor. 1:18, 23). But the cross is still the only approach to God.

6. Probably those who were the very enemies of the cross of Christ thought that they were good, educated, wise, and perhaps even godly people. It so often happens this way. The wolves in sheep's clothing do not realize that they are wolves. "He that killeth you thinks he does God a service!" (John 16:2). Sincerity is no proof of salvation.
7. "Whose end is perdition." *Perdition* (Gr. *apoleia*) means destruction or ruin. It refers to the eternal punishment of hell fire. (Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Rev. 20:15; 14:11).
8. "Whose god is the belly." The Greek word translated "belly" may refer to the whole belly, upper and lower; or just the lower belly (including its back side; or to the gullet; or the womb. In the light of these definitions it would appear that any person whose major interests are eating, drinking, or sex makes his belly his god. (II Pet. 2:18-19).

Anything that habitually occupies our minds and vocabularies is a god to us.

9. "Whose glory is their shame." Many people glory in and boast of things of which they should be ashamed. They glory in

acts of fornication, in how much alcohol they can consume, in money gained by gambling, and such things.

The term *antinomian* is sometimes applied to those who refuse to live according to any law, including God's. Those who glory in their shame are antinomians in the worst sense.

10. "Who mind earthly things." Christians should set their hope completely upon the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:13). We should be laying up treasures in heaven, not upon earth. (Matt. 6:19-21).

Some unbelievers (and even some church members!) deride Christians who have this attitude, as being too "otherworldly," or being "irrelevant" in this modern world. But the fact remains that the people who are most interested in the life to come live the present life in the best way. "Everyone that hath this hope (the hope of seeing God and being like God) set upon him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." (I John 3:3).

20. For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21. who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.

Translation and Paraphrase

20. (We must not be like these,) for our state (wherein we have our citizenship) is in the heavens, from whence we also (steadfastly) look for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21. who (Christ) shall change our lowly (physical) body (so that it will be like in form to his glorious body), and this he will do (in a manner) in accord with the working which he powerfully exercises (all of the time), (even to the point of) subjecting all things to himself.

Notes

1. "Our citizenship (KJV *conversation*) is in heaven." This is given as another reason for our imitating men like Paul (3:17). Paul lived by the laws of the kingdom of heaven; we are also citizens of heaven; therefore we should imitate Paul.

(The term *conversation*, as used in the KJV, does not mean speech. It has the meaning of conduct, or of turning to and fro in life's activities.)

2. The word *citizenship* (Gr. *politeuma*) means a system of laws governing a state, or the state or commonwealth itself. Thus the translations in R.S.V. and A.S.V.m. render it "commonwealth." Phillips' version, and the New English render it "We are citizens of heaven." James Moffatt has a famous translation of the verse: "We are a colony of heaven." Our citizenship is not to be in heaven in the future; it's there now.

3. The Philippians would find such terms as *citizenship* and *colony* meaningful, because Philippi was a Roman colony and the people there prided themselves on being Roman citizens.

As the Romans colonized and took over the world of their time, so Christians need to colonize and take over the cities and nations of the earth by gospel infiltration.

4. From heaven, where our citizenship is, we look for a savior to come back, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the Christian Christ will come as a savior; to the world he will come as the judge.

The word *look* (*apekdechomai*) means to assiduously and patiently wait for.

5. The hope of Christ's second coming is a dominant theme in the New Testament. Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:13—5:2; Heb. 9:28; Titus 2:13. It should be the dominant hope of every Christian.

6. Christ "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation." "Fashion anew" (KJV "change;" Gr. *metaschematizo*) means to change the appearance of. (See p. 52). While the expression "fashion anew" does not in itself carry the idea of transforming the intrinsic nature of anything, it is here followed by the word "conformed" (KJV, "fashioned;" Gr. *summorphos*) which does indicate a basic transformation in the nature of the thing being referred to. Our bodies are to be thus changed.

Our bodies are now "vile" objects of humble character. (See note 7 below.) Christ will soon change them both externally and inwardly that they will become like his own glorious body. (See Rom. 8:29 and note 8 below). "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (I Cor. 15:51-52).

7. Our "vile" body (KJV) is a description of our bodies as they now are, lowly and humble. This Biblical use of the word vile does not carry the connotation of evil that we now associate with it. It only means lowly.

Certainly our bodies now are lowly bodies of humiliation. They are subject to disease, to old age, to cancer, to infections, to allergies, to sores, to disfigurement, and to death. At the time of Christ's coming our bodies will become glorious, powerful, honorable, spiritual, and immortal. (I Cor. 5:42-44, 53-54).

8. Christ's own glorious body, which he now has, and which ours will be made like, is described (at least to a degree) in Rev. 1:13-16. He is no longer a disfigured root out of dry ground, with marred visage, and no beauty that we should desire him, the man of sorrows. (Isaiah 52:14—53:3).
9. The transformation that Christ will make in our bodies will be done easily and powerfully. It shall be done in a manner corresponding to the working which Christ customarily does as he subjects all things in the universe unto himself.

Therefore the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of human bodies need not surprise us. These acts will be in perfect harmony with the power that Christ is now using, and shall continue to us as he triumphantly subjects all things unto himself. (I Cor. 15:25-27; Heb. 2:6-9).

4:1 seems to be more of a conclusion to chapter three than an introduction to chapter four. Nevertheless, it will be discussed in the notes on the next chapter.

Study and Review

Questions Over Philippians Chapter Three

1. What does *finally* in 3:1 mean?
2. What was Paul's final (?) exhortation in 3:1?
3. In what (or in whom) are we to rejoice?
4. To what things did Paul refer when he said, "To write the *same things* is not grievous"?
5. Did Paul mind repeating himself? What did he say about this?
6. Explain the expression, "For you it is safe".
7. Who were the *dogs* of whom the Philippians were to beware?
8. Is the term *dog* complimentary?
9. Explain the word *circision*. What is its relationship to *circumcision*?
10. What people are the true "Circumcision" at the present time?

PHILIPPIANS

11. What do people do when they worship by the Spirit of God? (3:3)
12. Explain what Paul meant by saying that Christians have no confidence in the flesh.
13. How well could Paul have compared with other men in fleshly distinctions and honor?
14. From what Hebrew tribe had Paul descended?
15. Explain the phrase *a Hebrew of Hebrews*.
16. How did the Pharisees regard the law of Moses? (3:5)
17. How zealous was Saul (Paul) before his conversion? (3:6)
18. How righteous was Saul before his conversion? (Acts 23:1)
19. Harmonize Saul's righteousness under the law as described in 3:6 with I Tim. 1:15.
20. Define *count* in 3:7, 8.
21. How did Paul regard those things that were gain to him under the law?
22. How did Paul regard ALL things when he compared them to Christ?
23. What are the tenses of the verbs *counted* and *count* in 3:7-8? What do these tenses indicate about the times when Paul counted all things loss?
24. Explain the term *righteousness* in 3:9. Give a synonym for it.
25. Why is the righteousness of the law described as *mine own righteousness*? Is such righteousness really attainable?
26. Through what does the righteousness which Paul sought come?
27. Why should Paul have been seeking to *know* Christ when he was already a devoted follower of Christ? (3:10)
28. What is involved in knowing the power of Christ's resurrection? When may this power be known? (Compare Eph. 1:18-20)
29. Why did Paul desire to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings? What benefit would this have been to him? (3:10)
30. Why did Paul strive to attain unto the resurrection from the dead, when the resurrection is a certainty? (Compare Acts 24:15). Does the *resurrection from the dead* connote more than the resurrection of the fleshly body?
31. Had Paul attained his life's objectives? (Give scripture for your answer)
32. Who had apprehended (that is, laid hold on) Paul?
33. What did Paul seek to apprehend (lay hold on)?

CHAPTER THREE

34. What was the *one thing* Paul sought to do? What did he constantly forget (disregard)? (3:13-14)
35. What is the prize of the high calling of God?
36. By what rule, or standard, must we walk (conduct ourselves)? (3:16)
37. Whom were the Philippians called upon to imitate? (3:17)
38. Define *ensample*.
39. Whom were the Philippians to mark (that is, take note of)?
40. Who, possibly, were the people who were enemies of the cross of Christ? (3:18)
41. How much emotion did the ungodly lives of some people stir up in Paul?
42. Why was the cross the focus of the enmity of the ungodly? (3:18)
43. Define *perdition*. (3:19)
44. How can a person's belly be his god?
45. What do people do when they "mind earthly things"?
46. Explain the phrase: "Whose glory is their shame."
47. Define *antinomian*.
48. Explain the word *conversation* in KJV 3:20.
49. Where is our *citizenship*?
50. How did the colonial status of Philippi illuminate the thought of 3:20.
51. What do we look for, or await, from heaven?
52. Explain the word *vile* in KJV 3:21.
53. What will Christ do with our bodies when he comes back again?
54. What will our bodies be made to be like?
55. What activity of his power will Christ use to change our bodies? (3:21)
56. What can Christ's working, or ability, do? (3:21)
57. Our expository outline of Phil. 3 on p. 68 calls the chapter "A mind of Right Values." Suggest another title for the entire chapter if you can.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER FOUR A MIND OF MANY VIRTUES

The fourth chapter contains several paragraphs not directly related to one another, but all reflecting the good mind of Paul and the Philippians. They seem to be fruits growing on the tree of a good Christian mind.

1. *Virtue of standing fast*; 4:1.
 2. *Virtue of harmony (being of the same mind)*; 4:2-4.
 3. *Virtue of joy and prayer*; 4:4-7.
 4. *Virtue of right thinking*; 4:8-9.
 5. *Thanks for the Philippians' gift*; 4:10-20.
 - a. Paul's feelings—joy and contentment; 4:10-13.
 - b. The Philippians' fellowship with Paul; 4:14-16.
 - At the present; 4:14
 - In the past; 4:15-16
 - c. Paul's feelings (resumed); 4:17-20.
 - He sought fruit from them; 4:17
 - He was now well-supplied; 4:18
 - God would supply their needs; 4:19-20
-

Salutations and Benediction; 4:21-23.

Outline of 4:1-23

- G. Final exhortations and thanks: 4:1-23.
1. Exhortation to stand fast; 4:1.
 2. Exhortation to two women to be in harmony; 4:2-3.
 3. Exhortation to joy (4:4), forbearance (4:5), and prayer (4:6-7).
 4. Exhortation to right thinking; 4:8-9.
 5. Thanks for the Philippian's gift; 4:10-20.
 - a. Paul's feelings; 4:10-13
 - (1) He rejoiced in their act; 4:10
 - (2) He did not speak because of want; 4:11-13
 - (a) He could be content in any state; 4:11-12
 - (b) He could do all things in Christ; 4:13
 - b. The Philippians' fellowship with Paul; 4:14-16
 - (1) They did well in their present act of fellowship; 4:14
 - (2) In the past also they had fellowship with Paul; 4:15-16
 - c. Paul's feelings (resumed); 4:17-20.
 - (1) He did not seek their gift; 4:17
 - (2) He sought fruit for them;
 - (3) Because of their gift he now had sufficiency; 4:18
 - (4) God would supply all their need; 4:19
 - (5) Glory be to God; 4:20

Salutations and Benediction; 4:21-23

4:1. Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved.

Translation and Paraphrase

4:1. So then, (in view of the glorious future that we look forward to,) my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and (my) crown (of glory), stand firm thus in the Lord, (my) beloved.

Notes

1. "Stand fast in the Lord." This is the main message of 4:1. Christians all need to stand firm, and not be swept away into sin or into accepting doctrines not plainly taught in the

scriptures. Compare II Thess. 2:15; I Thess. 3:8; I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:12-14; Col. 4:12; I Peter 5:12.

2. The "Wherefore" at the beginning of 4:1 refers back to things stated in the preceding verses, that give us reasons for standing fast. We stand fast because Christ is powerful (3:21), and because he will transform our lowly bodies when the dead are raised, and because our citizenship is in heaven (3:20).
3. "My brethren." We should look upon our fellow Christians as brothers, for they truly are just that. Also we should call one another "Brother." This practice appears a bit queer to worldly people (who after all do not have much brotherliness between one another!); but the very fact that we call one another "Brother" serves to emphasize the relationship and to assist us to practice brotherliness.
4. "Beloved". Notice the two occurrences of this word in 4:1.
5. "Longed for" suggests the pain felt by Paul because of his separation from the Philippians.
6. "My joy". Christians should find a basic joy in fellowship with other Christians, as Paul did. I Thess. 2:19.
7. "My crown". There are two Greek words translated *crown*: (1) *Diadem*; a king's royal crown. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the book of Revelation. (2) *Stephanos*; This is the word used here. It refers to a woven crown such as was awarded to victors at races, and was made of such materials as olive branches, laurel, parsley, pine, myrtle, etc. This type of crown was also sometimes placed upon the heads of banqueters at feasts. Compare I Thess. 2:19; Prov. 12:4.

The fact that the Philippians were Christians at all, and especially the fact that they were such good Christians was an adornment to Paul's reputation. On the day of judgment our converts will cause us to "shine . . . as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3. Thus they will be our crown.

8. We stand fast in the Lord. (Phil. 4:1). We are of the same mind in the Lord. (Phil. 4:2). We rejoice in the Lord. (Phil. 4:4).

In this world with its cruelties, conflicting interests, and conflicting ideas, we either stand *in the Lord*, or we probably do not stand at all, but rather are like the waters that are blown about by shifting winds. Eph. 4:14.

2, I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. I urge (our sister) Euodia and (our sister) Syntyche to be in agreement (as Christians) in the Lord (all the time).

3. Yes, and I request you (also, my) sincere (and genuine) brother who bears the yoke (of Christ) with me, (take hold of this problem, and) help these women, who have labored with danger and suffering in the (work of the) gospel with me, and (with) Clement, and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Notes

1. 4:2-3 is an exhortation to two women at Philippi, named Euodia and Syntyche, to stop their quarrelling and to agree together in the Lord. Paul further calls on the preacher (?) at Philippi to help these women get along better with one another. (The KJV spelling *Euodias*, a masculine form of the name, is incorrect.)
2. Paul urged Euodia and Syntyche separately to be of the same mind. This indicates emphasis.
3. "Be of the same mind," that is, be harmonious. Compare Phil. 2:2; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; II Cor. 13:11.
4. It is a bit tantalizing to realize that we know almost nothing about Euodia and Syntyche except that they were having a disagreement. Besides this we know only that they had previously labored in the gospel with Paul and certain others.

So very often the Bible tells only a few facts about people. Yet strangely these few facts often give us vivid impressions about the character of these people. We wonder what might be written about us if an inspired writer were to write a one-sentence summary of our lives. It might not be flattering!

5. The reference to Euodia and Syntyche reminds us that women played a prominent part in the activities of many local churches in New Testament times. We read about the womenfolk in Macedonia in Acts 16:13-14; 17:4, 12. There is no real reason to believe, however, that the women in Macedonian and Greek

churches took a more prominent part in the church life than the women did elsewhere.

6. Paul's true (that is, sincere, natural-born) *yokefellow* was called upon to help Euodia and Syntyche to come to agreement. Paul mobilized the whole church to help mend a quarrel.

The term *yokefellow* means one joined with another under a yoke. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you." (Matt. 11:29). All who take His yoke are yokefellows.

Some scholars have suggested that the Greek word for yokefellow (*suzugos*, or *sunzugos*) is a proper name, Synzygus. This is a possibility, although the word is not known as a proper name elsewhere in contemporary literature. Some have speculated that he may have been the husband of Euodia or Syntyche. Others have thought that he might be Timothy or Epaphroditus. No one knows.

It seems to us that most likely the "true yokefellow" was simply the local preacher or evangelist at Philippi. The church at Philippi had more than one elder and more than one deacon (Phil. 1:1), so obviously the particular yokefellow in mind was not one of these officers.

7. Euodia and Syntyche had labored (Gr. *sunathleo*) with Paul in the gospel. This verb indicates activity attended with danger and suffering. It is used only here and in Phil. 1:27. The related verb *athleo* is used elsewhere, and refers to contending in athletic games (II Tim. 2:5), and also to contending in battle.
8. A little contention can cause so much distress in a local church that it outweighs a lot of good service. Compare Eccl. 10:1. Thus the good work that Euodia and Syntyche had done was being clouded over by their later disagreement.
9. The Clement to whom Paul refers was some familiar Philippian Christian, judging by the familiar way he is referred to. We know nothing else about him besides the incidental reference here. He is not the famous Clement of Rome, who lived much later (about 95 A.D.), and certainly not the great Clement of Alexandria, who lived about 190 A.D.
10. The names of Paul's fellow laborers ARE (not might be) in the book of life.

The book of life, elsewhere called the Lamb's (Jesus') book of life) is the book which contains the names of all saved

people. It is elsewhere referred to or alluded to in Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; Luke 10:20; Ex. 32:32, 33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Ezek. 13:9 (?); Isa. 4:3 (?).

11. Life in an early church:

- (1) Involved toil; (4:3)
- (2) Gave a prominent place to women;
- (3) Centered about personalities;
- (4) Was not always harmonious.

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. 5. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Translation and Paraphrase

4. Be rejoicing in the Lord (Jesus) always. Again (after considering all the possibilities of sorrow in this world,) I (still) say, Be rejoicing.

5. (By kind deeds) let your gentle, reasonable nature be known to all men. The Lord is near (unto us always; yea, his visible coming is always near too).

Notes

1. Wm. Barclay describes these verses as "Marks of the Christian Life." The two marks are joy and moderation.
2. *Rejoice* is present tense: Be rejoicing!
3. We rejoice in the Lord. Only in the Lord is constant joy possible. Paul could rejoice in the Lord even in chains in the dungeon at Philippi. Acts 16:23-25.
4. Paul repeats the command to rejoice. It seems as if he said, "After considering all the possibilities for sorrow in this world, I repeat with emphasis, REJOICE." Compare Phil. 2:17, 28; 3:1; 4:10.
5. Let your forbearance (KJV, *moderation*) be known. This word means reasonableness. It implies a quality of gentleness and mildness; a nature not unduly rigorous, not overly strict, not judging people severely. Some related forms of this word are translated *gentle*. (It is thus rendered in I Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; I Pet. 2:18; James 3:17).
6. Forbearance must be shown to all men, not just to church members.

7. "The Lord is at hand." This can either mean that the Lord is always near, always close at hand (which is true; Matt. 28:20); or it has also been interpreted to mean that the Lord's second coming was thought to be near. (James 5:8). Either meaning is a good reason to cultivate the quality of forbearance, as the Lord desires.

To the Christian the second coming of the Lord is always looked upon as near. I Thess. 5:2-6; Matt. 24:42-44. In this sense the Lord is always near.

However, to allege that Paul was under a delusion common in the first century that Christ was definitely going to return in that generation is a serious accusation against an inspired apostle of God. The simple statement that the Lord is near does not necessarily imply such a far-reaching conclusion.

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- 6. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.**

Translation and Paraphrase

6. Do not be anxious (and worried) about a thing; instead (of worrying) let your requests be made known to God in everything (you do) by prayer (of devotion) and supplication (for your needs), with thanksgiving.

7. And (if you will do this) the peace of God which exceeds all (human) understanding will keep guard over your hearts and thoughts (protecting both your emotions and your mind, and keep them safe) in Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. These verses tell of the peace that comes through thankful prayer.
2. "Be careful for nothing" means "Be anxious (or worried) about nothing." "Be full of cares over nothing."
3. These verses sound like an echo of the sermon on the mount. See Matt. 6:25-34. Compare Psalm 145:18-19.
4. The remedy for anxiety is prayer (this word give prominence to the element of devotion) and supplication (gives prominence to the expression of personal needs). Compare Luke 18:1; I Peter 5:8.

In prayer, however, we must not forget to let our requests be made known with *thanksgiving*.

5. God likes us to offer specific requests in prayers. Vague generalities are usually meaningless formalism.
6. The peace of God here promised is that inward peace of soul which comes from God, and is based on God's presence and promises. Compare Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:9.
7. "Peace which passeth all understanding" is peace that transcends the power of the human mind to understand it. It can also mean that the peace that God gives surpasses all human understanding as a means of bringing tranquility to the heart. (We prefer the first meaning.)
8. God's peace guards our hearts and thoughts. The Biblical *heart* includes such inward qualities as the intellect, the will, the conscience, and the emotions.

By *thoughts* Paul refers to the mental perceptions, the things that proceed from the heart.

When the heart and the thoughts are protected, a man's whole being—even to a great degree his physical being—is safe. Prov. 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

Christians should be able to live above emotional tension, nervous breakdowns, mental illness, and anxiety symptoms. The reason that many do not is simply that they do not pray. They seem to feel, "Why pray when you can worry?"

9. Notice that the protection is in Christ Jesus. This promise is not extended to everyone, but only to those in Christ.

8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Translation and Paraphrase

8. (And now) finally, (my) brothers (as for what remains on my mind, I urge you to set your minds on the good things)—whatever things are true, whatever things are worthy of reverence, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are truly pleasing, whatever things are well-spoken of—if there is

any virtue (in life), and if there is any praise (that is due to anything, then) think about these (good) things.

9. (The things I want you to think about are those things) which you learned and received, and heard, and saw in me (in my life); do these things and the God (who is the creator) of peace will be with you.

Notes

1. We could entitle the paragraph made up of these two verses "The Homeland of the Christian Mind."

Every human mind sets itself upon something. When the mind has dwelt long enough in any line of thinking, it can (almost) never get out of it. Therefore it is important that the Christian keep his mind in the true homeland of the godly mind, upon those things that are true, honorable, just, pure, etc.

2. Be careful of thoughts; they have a way of popping out in words and deeds.

What you are thinking writes lines on your face.

Actions, places, reading materials, and ways of thinking that excite evil thoughts should be shunned, if for no other reason than that they do this.

Evil thoughts defile a man. Mark 7:21.

Let the meditations of my heart be acceptable; Psalm 19:14.

Bring every thought and imagination into captivity to the obedience of Christ; II Cor. 10:5.

Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts; Isa. 55:7.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind; Romans 12:2.

3. "Finally" does not mean "In conclusion," but "In consideration of another remaining matter." See notes on 3:1.
4. Note the six descriptions of the things we are to think about: (1) true; (2) honorable (Gr. *semnos*, worthy of respect and reverence, revered, worshipped); (3) just (Gr. *dikaios*, upright, righteous, agreeable to justice and law); (4) pure (Gr. *hagnos*, pure sacred, free from fault); (5) lovely (Gr. *prospbilos*, acceptable, pleasing, exhibiting love toward all); (6) of good report (Gr. *euphemos*, sounding well uttering words of good omen).
5. Paul appeals to the Philippians to think on good things by saying, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Everyone of us has some things in our memory and acquaintance that are dear to us, some things that are inspiring, that call us to a more virtuous way of life, that are worthy of praise. If there are such things, then we ourselves ought to direct our minds to good thinking, such as will lead us become like that which is praiseworthy in others.

6. 4:9 gives four methods of exposure to the truth:

(1) Learning; True teaching is learned. It does not develop in us naturally.

(2) Receiving; True teaching is received. This implies a fixed body of beliefs that are to be handed down from generation to generation. It implies also that part of our education is the response of the will as well as the response of the intellect.

(3) Hearing; (4) Seeing; The truth may be heard (Rom. 10:14) and seen exemplified in a person's life and actions.

7. "The God of peace shall be with you." God is only with us when we do what he commands us. "The Lord is with you while you are with him." (II Chron. 15:2; Isa. 55:6; 59:1-2; James 4:8). Peace comes to those who are in a right relationship to God.

8. Regarding the expression "God of peace," see Rom. 15:33; II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:23. God's nature is peace-loving. He is the creator of peace (Isaiah 57:19), and the giver of peace.

10. But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity.

Translation and Paraphrase

10. But I rejoice in the Lord (very) greatly, because now at length your thought for me has blossomed anew. (I realize, of course, that) you have indeed been thinking of me, but you lacked opportunity (to show it).

Notes

1. 4:10 begins a new paragraph in the outline, "Thanks for the Philippians' gift (4:10-20). In spite of the fact that the paragraph is obviously a section expressing thanks, the word *thanks* is not in it. Paul expressed this thanks without being fawning, or condescending, or conventional. His thanks are

all the more meaningful because they do not contain a trace of such superficiality as "I just don't know what I'd have done without your wonderful gift."

2. How did Paul feel when the Philippians sent money to him? He *rejoiced* in the Lord greatly. (The Greek verb is actually a past tense form; but this was frequently used as a literary device wherein the writer placed himself in the reader's position, and expressed his feelings as past, even though the action may have still been in progress when the reader read of it. Thus Paul *rejoiced*, but he doubtless was still rejoicing.)
3. How long had it been since the Philippians had sent help to Paul? It had been a long time: at length.
4. "Ye have revived your thought for me." *Revive* (Gr. *anathello*) means "shoot up again, sprout again, grow green again." The New English Bible translates this well: "Your care for me has now blossomed afresh."
5. Had the Philippians temporarily forgotten Paul? By no means: "Ye did indeed take thought (a Gr. imperfect tense form, indicating continuous past action), but ye lacked opportunity" to show it. Paul had been in several prisons in Judea, and on a long ship trip, and marooned on the island of Malta, etc. Mail was slow where it existed at all in those times. For a long time the Philippians could hardly even have known whereabouts of Paul.

11. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. 12. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. 13. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

Translation and Paraphrase

11. (It is) not because of want (and need) that I speak. For (personally) I have learned to be content in (any) circumstances (wherever) I am.

12. I know both (how) to be lowly, and I know (how) to have abundance. In everything (individually) and in all things (collectively) I am fully instructed (by my experiences) both (how) to be full and (how) to be hungry, (how) to have abundance, and (how) to suffer need.

13. I can do all things through (Christ) who (always) empowers me.

Notes

1. In 4:11-13 Paul declares that he does not write about his joy over their gift because he had been in want (although as a matter of fact he was in real affliction). Paul knew how to endure all things, both abundance and poverty, through Christ Jesus.
2. Paul's expression of joy was not uttered because his personal needs had been met, but because of something else. That "something else" is identified in 4:17.
3. Paul had learned to be content in all situations wherein he found himself. *Content (autarkes)* means "sufficient for one-self; independent of external circumstances; contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest." (Thayer). This word was a favorite of the Greek Stoics. The Stoics sought to be content by eliminating all desires, all emotions, and feelings by a deliberate practiced act of the will. Paul was not self-sufficient in this way, but self-sufficient because he was in Christ, and Christ was in him. This is the grand secret of true contentment.
4. In 4:12 Paul itemized some respects in which he had learned to be content:
 - (1) He knew how to be made low (economically and socially).
 - (2) He knew how to have abundance, more than he needed, without becoming proud or overconfident.
 - (3) He knew how to be full (well fed).
 - (4) He knew how to be hungry.
 He asserts that in everything individually and in all things collectively he had been initiated into a knowledge of how to bear up. (He belonged to the Order of Contented Saints! The Greek verb *mueo* used here is mostly used in classical Greek to refer to initiation into the Greek mystery religions.)
5. Christ strengthened Paul. The verb *strengthen* is in a present tense form, indicating continuous action. II Tim. 4:17.
6. Notice that Paul makes no formal expression of thanks beyond his recognition and commendation of the moral and spiritual significance of their act, in which he acknowledges a benefit to

himself. He was far from being unthankful, but he chose this means to express his feelings.

14. Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction. 15. And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; 16. for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. Yet, you (Philippians) did well (in your act of) sharing with me in my affliction, (in sending your offering to me here at Rome, which Epaphroditus delivered).

15. Now you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, (that is, when you first heard the gospel and accepted it,) when I departed from (you folks in Macedonia, that) no church had a part with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone.

16. (How very greatly you have participated in giving is very plain) because even in Thessalonica, (the first place I preached after leaving Philippi,) you sent (assistance) for my need once, and (then) again.

Notes

1. 4:14-16 contains a commendation of the Philippians' giving, both at the present (to Paul in Rome), and in the past for their giving to Paul right after he left Philippi and went to Thessalonica.
2. The "Notwithstanding" or "Howbeit" in 4:14 makes a contrast between Paul's state of self-sufficiency (described in 4:11-13), and the fact that the generosity of the Philippians was truly beneficial both to Paul and to them.
3. *Communicate* in KJV 4:14 is a suitable translation, if it be understood in the old meaning of *share*, or have in common. See Romans 12:13. The Philippians had made common cause with Paul's affliction by sending help to him, and by sending Epaphroditus to assist him. In doing these things they had done well. See Heb. 10:33.
4. The reference to *affliction* in 4:14 indicates that Paul was in dire need before the gifts from the Philippians came.

5. Paul did not often address his churches by name as he does here. (4:15; Compare II Cor. 6:11). The times when he did so express special earnestness, or affectionate remembrance. Paul usually preferred to refer to provinces, rather than to individual cities. (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:15; II Cor. 2:13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:2).
6. "The beginning of the gospel" in 4:15 obviously refers to Paul's first preaching tour in Macedonia and Philippi.
7. There are many ways that we as Christians can have fellowship with one another. See notes on Phil. 1:5. The Philippians had fellowship (a participation) with Paul in the matter of giving and receiving.
8. We should here recall the list of places visited by Paul during his second missionary trip right after leaving Philippi. (They are narrated in Acts 17-18). Philippi, Amphipolis, Appolonia, Thessalonica, Beroea (all of these were in Macedonia); Athens, Corinth (these last two were in Achaia). Thessalonica is about a hundred miles from Philippi, in a generally southwest direction.
9. "No church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only." In that period of time right after he left Philippi for the first time, Paul did not receive nor request offerings for his personal needs from any church except that at Philippi. (Compare II Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13—very important verses.) Paul does not say that he had never previously accepted offerings from other churches, or that in later times other churches had not helped him. But at that particular time none except the Philippians did help. The church at Antioch had previously helped him. Acts 15:3, 40.

We do not know all of Paul's reasons for refusing to take money from other churches at that time. But in the case of the Corinthians Paul felt that there was a need of cutting off any opportunity for the pretended apostles to say that Paul was just like them in preaching for money. Therefore Paul would take no money from the Corinthians for himself. He did later request money from them to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

As a general rule the more the leaders can be led to give, the better it will be with that church. "Where your treasure is there will your heart also." Matt. 6:21. By giving, fruit increases to your account. Phil. 4:17. Paul himself wrote to the Corinthians about how he had taken no money from them,

and then adds, "Forgive me this wrong." (II Cor. 12:13). We recognize that these words might have been spoken in sarcasm, but then again they may have been at least partly serious.

10. "Fellowship in the *matter* of giving and receiving." *Matter* here (Gr. *logos*) means an account, a reckoning, a score. The word *logos* has the same meaning in 4:17. Paul here by a charming figure of speech refers to the gifts of money which the Philippians gave him as being entered into their book-keeping records as expenses, while he himself enters them in the account of receipts.
11. The Philippians sent offerings to Paul in Thessalonica at least twice. These cared for his need, which was apparently then quite acute. We know from II Cor. 11:9 that while Paul was at Corinth (during his second missionary trip) that brethren from Macedonia (presumably Philippi) came down to Corinth and supplied the measure of his want. In these actions the Philippian church was unique at that time.

Besides the gifts to Paul personally, they also contributed "beyond their power" and "out of their deep poverty" for the poor saints in Judea. II Cor. 8:1-4.

12. All of this giving had been done by the Philippians in the face of grinding poverty.

The district of Macedonia had suffered three civil wars, and had been reduced to such poverty that Tiberius Caesar, hearkening to their petition, had lightened their taxes. But in addition to this general poverty, the churches had been made poor by persecution.¹

17. Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. (I do) not (write this) because I am seeking (or have ever sought) the gift; on the contrary I am seeking (for YOU) the fruit that will overflow to your account (as a result of your sacrificial giving).

1. J. W. McGarvey, and P. Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans*, (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co. 1916, p. 210.)

Notes

1. Paul denied in 4:11 that he wrote about the Philippians gift because he had been in want. So here in 4:17 he denies that he writes about it because of covetousness, because he sought the gift.
2. Instead of seeking the Philippians' gift for himself, Paul encouraged their giving because it would bring fruit to their account. (Compare note 10 under 4:14-16.)
3. The fruit Paul refers to is the recompense which the gift would bring to the givers. Compare II Cor. 9:6. Generous giving brings us the fruit of sufficiency (II Cor. 9:8); and the means to give more (II Cor. 9:8-10); and the fruit of thanksgiving from others (II Cor. 9:12ff); and of hearts set in the right place (Matt. 6:21).
4. This fruit "increaseth," or is abounding. This is a present tense form, indicating continuous action. Every act of Christian ministering develops and enriches him who performs it.
5. The generosity of a good church:
 - (1) Sympathetic generosity; 4:14.
 - (2) Repeated generosity; 4:16.
 - (3) Fruit-bearing generosity; 4:17.

18. **But I have all things and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.**

Translation and Paraphrase

18. Nonetheless (as a result of your gift) I (now) have all things (which I need) and (indeed) I have more than enough. I (who have at times been hungry am (now) filled, because I received the (gift) from you (which was delivered) by Epaphroditus. (Your gift is) an odor of a sweet smell (like the Old Testament sacrifices), a sacrifice acceptable (and) well-pleasing to God.

Notes

1. The Philippians' gift must have been generous and substantial, for Paul writes that he now has all things, and even abounds (that is, he has some left over).
2. Regarding Epaphroditus and his work, see notes on Phil. 2:25-30.

3. When giving is rightly done, it can be a sacrifice much like the Old Testament sacrifices. Except that it is not a blood sacrifice, it can resemble the ancient sacrifices in nearly every way. Compare Heb. 13:16.

The expression "an odor of a sweet smell" is frequently used in the Old Testament to refer to animal sacrifices. Compare Eph. 5:2; Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; 1:9, 13, 17.

19. And my God shall supply every need of your according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Translation and Paraphrase

19. But (though you have given so much, you need never worry about having your needs provided, for) my God will fill all your need (just as you have filled mine; and he will do this) in a glorious way, according to his (limitless) riches (in glory, which are dispensed) in Christ Jesus.

Notes

1. Lest any of the Philippians should be fearful as to how they could now get along since they had given such a large gift to Paul, Paul assures them that God would supply ALL their needs.

The Philippians lived in a depressed, poverty-stricken area. See note 12 under Phil. 4:14-16.

2. Phil. 4:19 is one of a number of precious verses that assures us that God will always care for the physical needs of his children. Matt. 6:33; II Cor. 9:8.
3. Paul speaks of God as MY God." He is very near and real to Paul.
4. God will supply our need "according to his riches." God owns everything. (Ps. 24:1; 50:10-12). His glory fills the whole earth. (Isa. 6:3). This promise is too vast for us to comprehend even in part. But it is a promise that we can rejoice in to the very utmost of our capacity to grasp it.
5. The phrase "in glory" probably refers to the manner of God's supplying ("He will gloriously supply"), rather than to the location or nature of the riches ("riches up in glory").

20. Now unto our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Translation and Paraphrase

20. And now (may) the glory (be) unto our God and father for ever and ever. Amen (Truly!).

Notes

1. Paul's epistles are full of doxologies such as this one. When Paul reached the conclusion of some exalted line of thought, he burst forth with "Glory to God!" Here his doxology was produced by the wonderful thought that God will supply all our need. For other doxologies see Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; I Tim. 1:17.
2. The word *doxology* is derived from two Greek words, and literally means "A word of glory" or "An expression of glory." Let us not be too stiff and formalistic to burst forth into an occasional doxology.
3. "For ever and ever" is (literally translated) "unto the ages of the ages." This is an expression frequently used in the scriptures to describe eternity.

We cannot comprehend the length of eternity. We can only conceive of one age, followed by another, and yet more and more. This is the view of eternity presented in the Bible by the expression "for ever and ever." It presents eternity as a succession of ages (Gr. *aion*, or eon), going on as far as we can perceive and then farther yet.

21. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren that are with me salute you. 22. All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household.

Translation and Paraphrase

21. Greet all the saints (the holy ones) in Christ Jesus (all that you meet). The (Christian) brethren with me (my special helpers and associates) greet you.

22. (Yea) all the saints (here in Rome) greet you, in particular those from the household of Caesar (send greetings).

Notes

1. Paul closed a number of his epistles, as he does this one, with salutations or greetings. Romans 16:3; I Cor. 16:19, 21; Col. 4:10ff.

2. The Philippians were requested to greet every saint in Christ Jesus individually. ("In Christ" may go either with *salute* or with *saint*.) There is a great blessing in Christians' knowing one another well and greeting one another as brothers.
3. Except for Timothy we do not know the names of any of the brethren who were with Paul. Paul spoke about his associates back in 2:20 in a manner which (at first glance anyway) does not appear very complimentary (but see the notes on that verse).
4. All the church members (the saints) in Rome sent their greetings to the Philippians, along with Paul.
5. The reference to Christians in Caesar's household thrills us. There were a few godly people in King Ahab's court and kingdom. There were a few Christians in Caesar's (Nero's) household. Compare Phil. 1:13. There are Christians today in Communist and Mohammedan lands.
6. The expression *Caesar's household* probably refers not to the imperial family, but to employees in the house—slaves, cooks, guards, and such.
7. The "especially" in 2:22 seems to point out that the Christians in Caesar's household particularly wanted the Philippians to know of their existence in such difficult surroundings, and wanted the prayers and fellowship of the Christians elsewhere. In many places it is hard enough to be a Christian even when you have encouragement from brethren elsewhere. How much harder it is to be faithful without their fellowship and prayers.

23. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. May the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
(Amen)

Notes

1. Paul closes Philippians with his characteristic closing wish that the favor (grace) of the Lord Jesus Christ may be with our spirit. Compare Gal. 6:18; II Tim. 4:22; Philemon 25. Our spirit needs the help of Christ's favor even more than our physical nature, for we have many unseen spiritual enemies. Eph. 6:12.

2. The reading "with you all" in KJV is not as well supported by the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament as the American Standard version reading "with your spirit," which we follow.

Study and Review

Questions Over Philippians Chapter Four

1. How many times in Philippians four do such phrases as "in the Lord," or "in Christ," or "in him" occur? How many times altogether in the whole book of Philippians?
2. What descriptive terms does Paul use in 4:1 to refer to the Philippians?
3. What are the two Greek words translated *crown*? Which word is used in 4:1? What do the two words mean?
4. What small phrase is repeated three times in 4:1-4? What is the phrase applied to in each case?
5. Name two respects in which Christians should stand fast? (4:1)
6. Who were Euodia and Syntyche, and why, apparently, are they mentioned in 4:2?
7. How prominent were the womenfolk in the churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea)? Acts 16:13, 14; 17:4, 12.
8. Explain the term *yokefellow*. To whom may it refer?
9. What resources and efforts were mobilized by Paul to mend a quarrel in the church at Philippi?
10. What commendable thing had Euodia and Syntyche done?
11. Who was Clement?
12. What is the book of life?
13. How emphatic is the command to rejoice? In what respect can we always be rejoicing?
14. What is forbearance (or moderation)? To whom is our forbearance to be made known?
15. Does the statement that *the Lord is at hand*, mean that his second coming is near, or that he is always close to us?
16. What is to cause us anxiety or care?
17. What is the remedy, or alternative, to anxiety?
18. What will be the result of telling our requests to God?
19. What connection is there between godliness and sanity?
20. What is to crowd out falsehood, dishonesty, impurity, etc. from our minds? (4:8)

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21. What appeal was used to urge us to think on things true, honest, etc?
22. From whom had the Philippians obtained a proper knowledge of godly living and thinking?
23. What deed of the Philippians had caused Paul great joy?
24. Had the Philippians previously been unconcerned with Paul's needs?
25. Why had the Philippians neglected Paul?
26. Did Paul express joy because his wants had been supplied?
27. What valuable attitude had Paul learned? (4:11-12)
28. What were some of the circumstances in which Paul had learned to be content?
29. What was the source of Paul's strength to do all things in all circumstances?
30. If Paul was relatively insensible to want, what made the Philippians' generosity so pleasing to him? (4:14, 17)
31. What does *having fellowship* (or communicating) *with my affliction* mean?
32. To what does Paul refer by the expression *the beginning of the gospel*? (4:15)
33. How many other churches had given to Paul as the Philippians had?
34. Were the Philippians a wealthy people? (See II Cor. 8:1-3)
35. What is the *fruit that increaseth to your account*? (4:17)
36. Why did Paul desire the fruit that increased to their account?
37. Where, in particular, had the Philippians sent money to Paul previously? How many times?
38. What is the action, or event, or thing alluded to in the figure of speech, an *odor of a sweet smell*?
39. Can a financial offering be like a sacrificial animal offering? If so, in what ways?
40. How will all a Christian's needs be supplied?
41. According to what measure will God supply all our need?
42. What moved Paul to utter the doxology of 4:20?
43. What does the word *doxology* mean?
44. What does *salute* mean? (4:21)
45. Who were some of the brethren with Paul? (4:21)
46. In what astounding place did some of the Roman Christians reside?
47. What is Paul's characteristic benediction in this letter?
48. Suggest, if you can, a title for this whole chapter that more fully sums up its contents than our title, "A Mind of Many Virtues."

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INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS
ON
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- A. Importance of the Epistle to the Colossians.
- B. Facts about the Epistle to the Colossians.
- C. Facts about Colossae and the Lycus Valley.
- D. Facts about the Church in Colossae.
- E. The Colossian Heresy.
- F. Gnosticism.
- G. Relationship of Colossians to Ephesians.
- H. Christ in Colossians.
- I. Outline of Colossians.
- J. Questions over the Introductory Sections.

INTRODUCTION

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

1. Colossians is the most Christ-centered epistle in the New Testament. Colossians enables us to see clearly what it means to be in Christ. No other book is so concerned with the exaltation of Christ. With its emphasis upon the supremacy of Christ Colossians contains the very heart of the Christian message.

With the modern day pressure of non-Christian religions and of non-religious civilization, we need to see clearly the place of Jesus Christ in God's plan. (See study H, Christ in Colossians.)

2. Colossians presents a strong criticism of the heresies current in Asia Minor in the first century. We could accurately say that the theme of the book is "Christ's supremacy vs. Heresy." We do need to know why some teachings are wrong, as well as why some are right.

In our age with its emphasis upon ecumenicity, and its deemphasis upon fixed beliefs, we need to look again at books like Colossians, to see what the apostles of Christ really taught, and to see if we have surrendered the true foundation of Christianity.

To many people today such concepts as the authority of Christ and the finality of the Christian faith are myths. The book of Colossians is a powerful rebuttal to such an attitude.

B. FACTS ABOUT THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

1. It was written by the apostle Paul.
2. It was written from Rome, about A.D. 62/63.
3. It was delivered to the Christians in Colossae by Tychicus. (Col. 4:7)
4. Tychichus delivered the epistle to the Ephesians on the same trip during which he delivered the epistle to the Colossians. (See Eph. 6:21-22)
5. Tychichus travelled with Onesimus when he delivered the Ephesian and Colossian letters. (Col. 4:9)

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Onesimus was a runaway slave, who had fled from his master Philemon. Philemon lived at Colossae. Paul won Onesimus to Christ in Rome, and sent him back to his master Philemon, bearing the short letter to Philemon. (See Introductory Sections on Philemon.)

6. While Paul was in Rome he had learned from Epaphras, the preacher from Colossae, about the affairs of the Colossian church. The church there was being disturbed by false doctrines. (See Study E, The Colossian Heresy.). This was Paul's primary reason for writing and sending the letter of Colossians.
7. "Christ's Supremacy Vs. Heresy" is the overall theme of the epistle.
8. Some objections have been raised to Paul's authorship of Colossians. However the book itself says that Paul wrote it, and there are no really solid grounds for objecting to Paul's authorship.

(1) Some scholars have said that the vocabulary in Colossians includes numerous words not used elsewhere in Paul's writings. This is true; however such other epistles of Paul as Ephesians and Romans also contain words not used elsewhere in Paul's epistles. The reason in each case is that Paul was discussing matters not dealt with in other epistles, and hence different words were required.

(2) Also some have objected to the authorship of Paul because they feel that the false teachings condemned by Paul in Colossians are apparently Gnostic ideas, and these teachings did not become very influential until the second century (100-200 A.D.). It is true that Gnosticism reached its height in the second century, but some of the basic ideas of Gnosticism were being sown in the first century, long before they made their greatest growth in the second century. Furthermore the heresy at Colossae was by no means limited to Gnostic ideas. (See Study F, Gnosticism.)

(3) Some have further objected to Paul's apostleship on the grounds that the theology in Colossians is too advanced to have been written in the mid-first century. These people feel that such sublime ideas as Christ's being the creator (1:16), and the one through whom God will reconcile all things (1:20) took a long time to evolve in the thinking of the early church, and did not develop until after the time of Paul.

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Those who believe that Paul received his message by revelation from God (as we do) will have no difficulty in accepting "advanced" ideas from the pens of tentmakers like Paul or fishermen like Peter. The ideas did not have to evolve in men's thinking; God revealed them.

C. FACTS ABOUT COLOSSAE AND THE LYCUS VALLEY

1. Colossae ((pronounced Ko-LOSS-ee) was a city in what is now called Turkey, in Asia Minor. See map, p. x.
2. It lay about 100 miles east of Ephesus, which was on the western seacoast of Asia Minor (called Asia in New Testament times). Colossae was about 1000 miles from Rome by the route that ships had to follow.
3. Two prominent nearby cities were Laodicea and Hierapolis. (Col. 2:1; 4:13, 15-16; Rev. 3:14.)
4. Colossae straddled the Lycus river (also called the Little Meander). About twelve miles downstream lay Hierapolis and Laodicea, on opposite sides of the river, about six miles apart.
5. The Lycus river ran into the Meander river, which flowed on eastward and emptied into the Aegean Sea just beyond Ephesus.
6. The region around Colossae is very mountainous. The Cadmus range rose behind Colossae.
7. Colossae was very important in ancient times because it commanded the roads leading to the mountain passes.
8. The area of the Lycus valley was known for earthquakes. Severe earthquakes still frequently occur in Turkey.
9. The area had a rich volcanic soil. Its rich soil made sheep-raising profitable. Laodicea was famous for its production of fine woolen garments.
10. The waters of the Lycus river carried much powdered chalk. this caused several effects: (1) It deposited curious white formations and encrustations, which could be seen from far off. (2) It was not good for irrigation because it destroyed some vegetation. (3) It caused the waters of the river to be extra good for dyeing. The chalk in the water made the dyes take hold of fabrics well.
11. Colossae was in the ancient country of *Phrygia*, located in central Asia Minor. (Acts 2:10; 16:16; 18:23). The name Phrygia was derived from a Thracian tribe that in early times

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invaded and drove out (or absorbed) the earlier inhabitants (including Hittites). Many Phrygian ruins remain in the area today, including tombs bearing the names of kings Midas and Gordius.

12. The Phrygians absorbed many religious superstitions from the Asiatics they contacted. Almost every known pagan religion could be found in Phrygia. This may be the reason why the Colossian heresy was such a mixture of ideas.
13. The Phrygians were known as a lazy race, and were sometimes referred to as a race worthy only of being slaves.
14. The Syrian king Antiochus the Great imported 2000 Jewish families into Phrygia about 170 B.C. These Jews multiplied until it is estimated (by the amount of money they sent annually to the Jerusalem temple as taxes) that there were 50,000 Jews in the area in New Testament times. Paul encountered much Jewish opposition in this general area during his missionary trips.

The presence of so many Jews in the area may explain why the Colossian heresy included some Jewish ideas, and also why the nearby Galatian Christians were affected by Judaism.

15. In Roman times (the New Testament period) there was no country of Phrygia as such. The land of the Phrygians had been divided so that part of it (the larger part) was in the province of Asia and the rest in Galatia. However the line was not sharply drawn between them.
16. Also by New Testament times Colossae had dwindled in importance until it was a very insignificant city. It has been called the most insignificant city to which Paul ever wrote a letter. Hierapolis, and particularly Laodicea, had far overshadowed it. Hierapolis had a famous spa. Laodicea had become the highway center, the trade center, the center of the wool business, and the government administrative center of the district.
17. Not a trace of the city of Colossae remains visible today.

D. FACTS ABOUT THE CHURCH IN COLOSSAE

1. Paul himself had never visited Colossae or Laodicea. (Col. 2:1)
2. Possibly some Colossians were included among the Phrygians

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who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when the church was established. (Acts 2:10)

3. During Paul's third missionary journey, during which he spent three years at Ephesus, all those that dwelt in Asia heard the word of God. (Acts 19:10). Probably the effects of this ministry extended to some of the area around Colossae.
4. The Colossians had learned of Christ from a minister named Epaphras. (Col. 1:6-7)
5. Epaphras had labored in Hierapolis and Laodicea, as well as in Colossae. (Col. 4:13)
6. Apparently Epaphras was still their minister when Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians. (Col. 1:7; 4:12-13)
7. The Colossian church was mainly made up of Gentiles. (Col. 1:21, 27; 3:5-7)
8. One of the Colossian Christians was Philemon, the master of Onesimus the slave. Apparently the church in Colossae met in Philemon's house. (Phm. 19)
9. The Colossian church had faith and love. (Col. 1:4, 8). They also had order and steadfastness. (Col. 2:5)
10. The Colossian church had been infected by the many religious ideas being circulated in their area. (See Study E on the Colossian Heresy.)
11. Apparently Epaphras had gone to Rome for some cause. There he visited Paul and reported to him about the situation in Colossae. (Col. 1:7-9). Paul wrote his epistle to them following this visit of Epaphras.

E. THE COLOSSIAN HERESY

1. The Colossian heresy was apparently a mixture of Jewish, Greek, and pagan ideas. We really know nothing about it, except from the implications in the epistle itself. We suppose that the ideas and practices criticized by Paul in Colossians are indications of beliefs and practices actually current among the Colossians.
2. Basically the Colossian heresy was a denial of the adequacy and perfect supremacy of Christ. See Col. 1:15, 19; 2:2, 9. Thus Paul attacks the heresy by telling of Christ's true nature, glory, and work.

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- Every heresy that has ever existed has involved in some way a denial of Christ's perfection and adequacy. Can you think of any heresy that has not in some way downgraded Christ, or rejected part of what the scriptures say about Him?
3. It denied Christ's part in creating the material world (1:16-17). It denied that Christ came in a physical body (1:22; 2:9).
 4. It had numerous Jewish teachings: circumcision (2:11); laws about meats, drink, feast days, new moon, and Sabbath days (2:16).
 5. It had an emphasis on Philosophy, a Greek emphasis no doubt. (2:8). It exalted human wisdom and knowledge. (2:3).
 6. It had an element of snobbishness in it (1:21, 28). It gave its devotees a feeling of superiority over the rest of the poor unenlightened masses. This is a natural feeling for any people who adopt a religion based on human wisdom and philosophy.
 7. It included various forms of asceticism. Asceticism is deliberate severe treatment of the body for religious purposes. Thus fasting (not eating), or wearing uncomfortable or nonconformist clothing, or placing oneself in painful positions for long periods of time, are all types of asceticism. The Colossians thought there was religious merit to be gained by obeying such human laws as "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." (Col. 2:16, 21, 23). They had forgotten that the only merit we can claim is the merit of Christ.
 8. In the fact of the real snobbishness produced by the Colossian heresy, there was a deliberately practiced false humility, which was exhibited by acts of severity to the body. (Col. 2:23).
 9. There was a worship (or devotion to) angelic and demonic beings. (Col. 1:16, 10; 2:15, 18).
 10. There was a lowering of moral standards, a rejection of God's laws about holiness. This is evident from the great emphasis given to holiness in 3:1-17. This idea that we are not under any laws and can live as we please is sometimes called *antinomianism*.
 11. Some interpreters (e.g., Wm. Barclay) say that the Colossian heresy included astrological teachings and worship of the heavenly bodies. They maintain that the word *rudiments* in 2:8, 20 refers to the signs of the zodiac. This is by no means a proved fact. The term *rudiments* may just as probably refer to the Jewish law (as it does in Gal. 4:3), or to pagan

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religious ideas, which are very rudimentary when compared to divine truth, even though they are expressed in big philosophical words.

F. GNOSTICISM

1. Gnosticism was a terrible heresy that infected the church very deeply in the first century after Christ, and even more so in the second century. Those who believed in Gnosticism were called Gnostics (pronounced NAHSS-tix). The Colossian heresy resembled Gnosticism in some respects, and that is our reason for considering it here.
2. The name Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. Thus the Gnostics considered themselves the knowing ones, the enlightened ones. To them salvation was not a matter of faith, obedience, and holiness, but came by knowing certain mystical information. It was purely an intellectual approach to life and religion.
3. The primary idea of Gnosticism seems to have been that spirit and matter are opposed to one another. Spirit (to them) was all good, and matter completely evil. The two could never come into direct contact.
4. Matter was eternal, they thought.
5. God, being spirit, is all good. He can have no contact with material things, for they are matter. God cannot have been the creator, for that would have involved him in contact with the material world.

The supreme God was sometimes called the *pleroma*, or fulness. Compare Col. 1:19.

6. Jesus, being divine, could not really have come in a human body, for that would have involved mixing spirit and matter. He only seemed to have a material body. Some of the Gnostics were later called Docetists, from the Greek verb *doeko*, which means to *seem*; for they said that Christ only seemed to have a material body. (Observe that this teaching is apparently condemned in Col. 2:9; 1:22; I John 4:2-3; II John 7.)
7. Between God and man there was supposedly a long series of intermediary beings, which were called *aeons*. These intermediary beings became less and less spiritual, and more and more material the farther they got from God. Christ Jesus

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was supposedly one of these aeons, a high one evidently. The lowest aeon, called the *demiurge*, was the creator of the earth and material things.

You will observe that Colossians contradicts these ideas, and affirms that Christ was both the very image of God, and yet also the creator of everything. (Col. 1:15-19).

8. Because matter is evil, and because our human bodies are matter, they are evil. Therefore God, being spirit, is not involved with our bodies.

This idea produced two quite opposite practical results:

(1) It produced *asceticism* in some. Some Gnostics said that since the body was evil it should be abused and subjugated by fasting and self-denial. This seems to be reflected in Col. 2:20-23.

(2) It produced *licentiousness* in others. These Gnostics said that since God is not concerned with the body, we could do with it as we pleased. Thus they freely committed sins of all types. This belief and practice seems to be condemned in Colossians, chapter three.

9. Several second century Christian writers (e.g., Irenaeus) wrote strongly against Gnosticism. Recent archaeological discoveries of Gnostic writings in Egypt have given us a clearer idea of the actual teachings of Gnosticism, and have shown us why Paul and the faithful early Christians opposed it so bitterly. (See the *Biblical Archaeologist*, Feb. 1961, pp 10-13, for revealing information.)

G. RELATIONSHIP OF COLOSSIANS TO EPHESIANS

1. Colossians and Ephesians contain many phrases, sentences, and expressions that are much alike.
2. Here is a list of some of the parallel passages:

Ephesians	Colossians
1. 1:7	1:14
2. 1:10	1:20
3. 2:5-6	2:12-13
4. 3:2	1:25
5. 4:2-4	3:12-15

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Ephesians	Colossians
6. 4:16	2:19
7. 4:22-24	3:9-10
8. 4:32	3:13
9. 5:6-8	3:6-8
10. 5:15-16	4:5
11. 5:19	3:16
12. 5:22	3:18
13. 5:25	3:19
14. 6:1	3:20
15. 6:4	3:21
16. 6:5-8	3:22-23
17. 6:9	4:1
18. 6:19-20	4:3-4
19. 6:21-22	4:8-7

2. The fact that there is so much similarity between the two books could be accounted for by one of the following explanations:

(1) Some later author borrowed quotations from one of the books to write the other. Edgar Goodspeed¹ expressed this idea, saying that Ephesians is a book written long after Paul's time by some writer (Onesimus is suggested as possible author) who borrowed expressions from several of Paul's authentic letters, particularly Colossians, to produce a grand summary of Paul's writings, which we call Ephesians.

This contradicts what the book of Ephesians says about its own authorship; it contradicts the unanimous testimony of the early Christian writers, who all held that Paul wrote Ephesians; it raises far-reaching suspicions against the accuracy of the Holy Scriptures and the honesty of their writers. We reject this idea.

(2) More probably Colossians resembles Ephesians simply because they were written by the same author (Paul) at nearly the same time. We have frequently written several friendly letters to people to be sent off at the same time, and found ourselves writing about the same subjects, and using similar expressions in all the letters.

3. In spite of the similar phrases in Ephesians and Colossians we must assert emphatically that Ephesians and Colossians are

1. Edgar A. Goodspeed, *The Key to Ephesians*, (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press 1956), v-xv.

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quite different books. Ephesians deals with the unity and glory of the church. Colossians deals with the supremacy of Christ and the heresies and opposed it. Ephesians and Colossians both present material that the other book does not touch upon at all.

H. CHRIST IN COLOSSIANS

1. Colossians is the most Christ-centered epistle in the New Testament.
2. Our outline of the book (See Study I, Outline.) shows that every topic in the book is a discussion of how Christ relates to various subjects.

For example the purpose of Paul's ministry (1:24—2:5) was to make known the mystery of God, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory (1:27).

Furthermore the antidote to the false doctrines of men is Christ, "for *in him* dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (2:9)

Also Christ is the basis of the Christian's holy new life. "Ye died and your life is hid *with Christ* in God." (3:3).

3. Other particularly outstanding verses in Colossians about Christ are:
 - (1) 1:18—"That in all things he might have the pre-eminence."
 - (2) 2:10—"In him ye are made full."
 - (3) 3:11—"Christ is all, and in all."
 - (4) 3:17—"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

4. An analysis of the teachings about Christ in Colossians:

I. The Nature of Christ.

1. God is the father of Christ; 1:3.
2. Christ is God's beloved son; 1:13.
3. Christ is the image of the invisible God; 1:15.
4. Christ is the firstborn of all creation; 1:15.
5. He is before all things; 1:17.
6. In him all things consist (hold together); 1:17.
7. He is the beginning; 1:18.
8. He is the firstborn from the dead; 1:18.
9. He has preeminence in all things; 1:18.
10. In him all the fulness dwells; 1:19.

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11. In him are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge; 2:3.
 12. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him; 2:9.
 13. He is head over all principality and power; 2:10.
 14. He is the body, of which rituals were shadows; 2:16-17.
 15. He is at the right hand of God; 3:1.
 16. He is all and in all; 3:11.
- II. The Work of Christ.
1. Past:
 - a. Redemption; 1:14.
 - b. Forgiveness of sins; 1:14.
 - c. Created all things; 1:16.
(Created in him, through him, and unto him.)
 - d. Gave us the circumcision not made with hands; 2:11.
 - e. He despoiled the principalities and powers; 2:15.
 - f. He made an open show of the principalities; 2:15.
 2. Future:
 - a. He will reconcile all things; 1:20.
 - b. He will present us holy and without blemish before God; 1:22.
 - c. He will present men perfect; 1:28.
 - d. He shall be manifested; 3:4.
 - e. We shall receive just recompense from the Lord; 3:24.
- III. Christ and the Church.
1. We are translated into Christ's kingdom by God; 1:16.
 2. Christ is head of the body; 1:18, 24.
 3. We may suffer for Christ, like Paul; 1:24.
 4. Christ is our hope of glory; 1:27.
 5. Our task is the reveal Christ among the Gentiles. Christ is God's revealed mystery; 1:27; 2:2; 4:3.
 5. We preach and admonish every man in Christ; 1:28; 4:3.
 7. All the body is supplied from the head; 2:19.
- IV. Our Relationship and Responsibility to Christ.
1. Relationships:
 - a. We are made full in Christ; 2:10.
 - b. We are buried with him by baptism; 2:12.
 - c. We are raised with him; 2:12; 3:1.

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- d. We died with Christ; 2:20.
 - e. Our life is hid with Christ in God; 3:3.
 - f. Christ is our life; 3:4.
 - g. We shall be manifested with him in glory; 3:4.
 - h. All relationships (wife-husband, slave-master, etc.) are based on our relationships with Christ. 3:18—4:1.
2. Responsibilities:
- a. Faith; 1:4.
 - b. Walk worthily of the Lord; 1:10; 2:6.
 - c. Steadfastness; 2:5.
 - d. Order; 2:5
 - e. Receive Christ; 2:6.
 - f. Be rooted and builded up in him; 2:7.
 - g. Beware lest any make spoil of us, by human traditions that are not after Christ; 2:8.
 - h. We must hold to our Head; 2:18-19.
 - i. Seek the things in heaven where Christ is; 3:1.
 - j. Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts; 3:15.
 - k. Let Christ's words dwell in us richly; 3:16.
 - l. Do everything in Christ's name; 3:17.
 - m. Wives, be in subjection in the Lord; 3:18.
 - n. Servants be obedient, fearing the Lord; 3:22, 24.
 - o. Work as unto the Lord; 3:23.

I. OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

Introductory; 1:1-13.

- 1. Author-receipients-greeting; 1:1-2.
- 2. Thanksgiving; 1:3-8.
- 3. Prayer; 1:9-13.

I. CHRIST—His supremacy and work; 1:15-23.

II. CHRIST—The goal of Paul's ministry; 1:24—2:5.

III. CHRIST—The antidote for false doctrine; 2:6-23.

IV. CHRIST—The basis of a new life; 3:1—4:6.

Conclusion (personal notes); 4:7-18.

(More detailed outlines of each of the outline sections given above are given in the commentary at the starting points of each of the sections. You should memorize the above outline.)

INTRODUCTION

J. QUESTIONS OVER THE INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS

- A. Importance of the Epistle to the Colossians.
1. How prominent is Christ in the epistle to the Colossians?
 2. Should heresies be exposed? What evidence to support your answer can be given from Colossians?
- B. Facts about the Epistle to the Colossians.
1. Who is the author of Colossians?
 2. Where was the letter written from? Date?
 3. Who delivered Colossians?
 4. What other letter did this man deliver on this same trip?
 5. Who travelled with this man?
 6. From whom had Paul learned of things in Colossae?
 7. What was the primary reason for writing and sending Colossians?
 8. What is the overall theme of the epistle?
 9. Give three reasons why some people have questioned Paul's authorship of Colossians. Is there really any solid ground for objecting to Paul's authorship?
- C. Facts about Colossae and the Lycus valley.
1. Where was Colossae located?
 2. How far was Colossae from Ephesus? From Rome?
 3. What two prominent cities were near Colossae?
 4. What river ran through Colossae?
 5. Was Colossae in a plain, or a mountainous region?
 6. For what natural events was the river valley known?
 7. What was peculiar about the waters of the river?
 8. What type of soil was around Colossae?
 9. Colossae was in what ancient country?
 10. What religious background did Colossae have?
 11. How had Jews come to be in the area?
 12. How many Jews are estimated to have lived there?
 13. How was the ancient country containing Colossae divided in New Testament times?
 14. What was the social, economic, and political status of Colossae in New Testament times.
- D. Facts about the Church in Colossae.
1. Had Paul ever visited Colossae? (Give evidence for your answer.)

COLOSSIANS

2. From whom had the Colossians learned of Christ?
 3. Was the Colossian church predominantly Jewish or Gentile?
 4. What slaveowner was a member of the Colossian church?
 5. What had infected the Colossian church?
 6. Who had reported to Paul concerning conditions in Colossae?
- E. The Colossian Heresy.
1. Of what was the Colossian heresy a mixture?
 2. Where do we obtain information about the Colossian heresy?
 3. What was the Colossian heresy basically a denial of?
 4. What Jewish elements were included in the heresy?
 5. What Greek elements were in the heresy?
 6. What is asceticism?
 7. What is antinomianism?
 8. What effect did the Colossian heresy have upon moral behavior?
 9. Did the Colossian heresy include astrological teachings?
- F. Gnosticism.
1. Where do the words *Gnosticism* and *Gnostic* come from?
 2. Why study Gnosticism in connection with Colossians?
 3. How did the Gnostics think salvation came to people?
 4. What was the Gnostic notion about spirit and matter?
 5. What did the Gnostics teach about God's creating the earth?
 6. What did *pleroma* mean to the Gnostics?
 7. What did the Gnostics teach about the body of Jesus?
 8. What (supposedly) was between God and material world?
 9. What created the earth, according to Gnosticism?
 10. What two quite opposite practical results came from the Gnostic view about the human body?
 11. How did faithful Christians in early centuries react to Gnosticism?
- G. Relationship of Colossians to Ephesians.
1. How extensive are the similarities between Colossians and Ephesians?
 2. How can you account for the similarities between the two books?
- H. Christ in Colossians.
1. How prominent is Christ in the epistle to the Colossians?
 2. Make a list of all the references to Christ in Colossians. Then group these references under various headings, and produce an outline that will clearly show what the epistle

INTRODUCTION

to the Colossians teaches about Christ. (In listing your references you will need to write down a few words from each of the references to help you keep in mind what the references say about Christ.)

I. Outline of Colossians.

1. Write from memory the brief outline given.

Memory work.

There are many verses and paragraphs in Colossians worthy of being memorized. We suggest that the following definitely be memorized:

1:12-18, 19-22, 27.

2:8-10, 16-17.

3:1-4, 12-17, 18-21.

4:5-6, 8-10, 15-16.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER ONE

PRAYER

Greeting; 1:1-2

1. *Prayer of Thanks; 1:3-8*

- a. For their faith; 1:4a
- b. For their love; 1:4b
- c. Their faith and love were produced by the hope they had learned in the gospel; 1:5-8

2. *Prayer of Request; 1:9-13*

- a. That they be filled with knowledge of God's will; 1:9
- b. That they walk worthily; 1:10-13
 - (1) Bearing fruit; 1:10a
 - (2) Increasing in knowledge of God; 1:10b
 - (3) Being strengthened; 1:11
 - (4) Giving thanks to the Father; 1:12-13

3. *The Preeminence of Christ—the motivation to prayer; 1:14-23*

- a. We have redemption in him; 1:14
- b. He is the image of God; 1:15
- c. He is the firstborn of creation; 1:15b-16
- d. He is before all things; 1:17a
- e. In him all things hold together; 1:17b
- f. He is head of the body; 1:18a
- g. He is the beginning; 1:18b
- h. He is the firstborn from the dead; 1:18c
- i. What God's good pleasure decided about Christ; 1:19-23
 - (1) All the fulness to dwell in him; 1:19
 - (2) Christ to reconcile all things; 1:20-23

4. *Paul's Ministry; 1:24—2:5.*

(See next outline)

Outline of 1:1-13

- A. Introductory; 1:1-13
1. Author; 1:1. Recipients; 1:2a. Greetings; 1:2b.
 2. Prayer of thanks; 1:3-8
 - a. When we give thanks—always; 1:3
 - b. Why we give thanks; 1:4-8
 - (1) Because we hear of your faith; 1:4a
 - (2) Because we hear of your love; 1:4b
 - (3) Your faith and love are caused by the hope you learned in the gospel; 1:5-8
 - (a) The gospel is come to you; 1:6a
 - (b) The gospel increases and bears fruit; 1:6b
 - (c) You learned the gospel from Epaphras; 1:7-8
 - He is a faithful minister; 1:7
 - He declared unto us your love; 1:8
 3. Prayer of request; 1:9-13
 - a. Why we make request; 1:9a
 - b. When we make request—without ceasing; 1:9b
 - c. What we request; 1:9c-13
 - (1) That you be filled with knowledge; 1:9c
 - (2) That you walk worthily; 1:10-13
 - (a) Bearing fruit; 1:10b
 - (b) Increasing in knowledge; 1:10c
 - (c) Being empowered; 1:11
 - (d) Giving thanks to the Father; 1:12-13
 - [1] He made us meet to partake of the inheritance; 1:12
 - [2] He delivered us into the kingdom of his son; 1:13

1:1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2. to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Translation and Paraphrase

1:1. (A letter from) Paul, an apostle (one especially commissioned) of Jesus Christ through the will of God (with God's special approval and help), and Timothy the brother (so well known to all),

2. to (all) the saints (the holy ones) and (the) faithful (Christian) brothers in Colossae (who are) in Christ (Jesus—in his church, his service, his care): May favor (that is, grace,) be unto you, and peace (also) from God our father (and the Lord Jesus Christ).

Notes

1. Paul opened his epistle to the Colossians with a greeting that both asserts his apostolic authority and his good will toward the Colossians.
2. Paul calls himself "an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God." He needed to emphasize his office to these Colossians, who had never met him. The word *apostle* means one who is sent, or one specially commissioned. Paul was not merely one sent by some church, but he was one of the special messengers of Christ, on a par with the original twelve apostles of Christ. (Luke 6:13; II Cor. 12:11-12). Paul had divine approval and divine commission for everything he wrote to the Colossians. Compare I Cor. 14:37.
3. Paul's entire work and office was "through the will of God." We also need this sense of divine sending, of doing our service through the will of God, even though we cannot claim the authority that Paul had. As long as we serve God according to the New Testament teachings, we are serving according to the will of God.
4. Timothy is named as co-sender of the epistle, although the composition of the letter was solely the work of Paul. Timothy was also co-sender of II Corinthians, Philipians, I and II Thessalonians, and Philemon. See notes on Phil. 1:1 concerning Timothy.
5. Timothy is referred to as "our brother" (Gr. *the* brother). Evidently the Colossians had sufficient acquaintance with Timothy or his work with Paul to need no further introductions.

The title "the brother" is also applied to Quartus (Rom. 16:23), Sosthenes (I Cor. 1:1), and Apollos (I Cor. 16:12).

The Colossians could read this letter with assurance, for it came from those who referred to themselves as their brothers.

6. Paul addressed the Colossians as *saints*. Our generation (even most church members) seems to be afraid to be saints, or be

called saints. *Saints* means holy ones, sanctified ones, those set apart unto God. Many people are bold to speak evil and do evil. Let us be bold as saints.

7. The expression "saints and faithful brethren" refers to just one group of people, the Colossian Christians. One Greek article relates to both descriptions.
8. Paul addresses this epistle to individuals, rather than to a church. Paul did sometimes address letters to churches in particular cities or areas, but his letters were directed to these smaller groups—to individuals, to saints in particular places, to particular churches. Paul would not approve of the practice of many in our generation who seek to use the whole church everywhere as a corporate pressure group for social revolution.
9. The Colossian Christians lived in two realms. They were *in Christ*, and also *in Colossae* at the same time. Colossae was an ungodly place, like nearly every city. But in the midst of Colossae the Christians had their real residence in Christ. They had not been taken out of the world, but yet they were not of the world. John 17:14-15.
10. Paul wished for the Colossians; (1) grace (outward favor) and (2) peace (inner content). Here in Colossians as in all of Paul's epistles except Hebrews he begins with a wish for grace to be with his readers. Compare Rom. 1:7; Phil. 1:2; Eph. 1:2.
11. Paul's greetings in Col. 1:1-2 reveals much about him. It reveals his firmness as an apostle; his willingness to share the honor of authorship with others like Timothy; his sincere high regard for the Colossians as saints and faithful brethren; his good wishes toward them.

3. We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4. having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints.

Translation and Paraphrase

3. We give thanks (continually) to God (the) father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah), always praying for you,

4. because we have heard of your faith (and faithfulness) in Christ Jesus, and (of) the love which you (always) have toward all the saints.

Notes

1. Most of Colossians chapter one is a prayer. Some of it (like 1:12-23) consists of thoughts that grow out of Paul's remarks about his prayers; but it still relates to prayer.
2. In 1:3-8 Paul expresses his constant thanks for the Colossians. Compare Eph. 1:16. He was primarily thankful for their faith and love.
2. In 1:3-8 Paul expresses his constant thanks for the Colossians. In all cases his thanks were sincere. He did not say he was thankful just because that was a psychologically good approach.
4. Paul expressed his thanks in prayer. Prayer was the constant habit of Paul's life. Compare I Thess. 1:2.
5. The Colossian church had faith, love, and hope, the three great virtues. Col. 1:4-5. Compare I Cor. 13:13 and I Thess. 1:4-5.
6. Colossians 1:4 indicates that the Christian life is primarily directed toward two people: (1) toward Christ Jesus; and (2) toward the saints.
7. Paul was particularly thankful for the faith and love of the Colossians. We in our generation with its organized and militant unbelief should also feel very thankful to God for our brethren who have faith, wherever they are and however imperfect their faith may be.
8. Faith comes first, and then love. Love without faith is only sentimentality and perishable humanitarianism. However, faith without love is cruel; yea worse than that it is utterly nothing. I Cor. 13:2.
9. Paul had heard of the faith and love of the Colossians from their minister Epaphras, who visited him in Rome. Col. 1:4; Cf. Eph. 1:15.

5. because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (You have cultivated this faith and love) because of the hope (that is) laid up (and reserved) for you in the heavens. (This hope is the hope) which you heard about previously in the message of the truth, (that is, in) the gospel.

Notes

1. The message of the gospel tells us about the *hope* laid up for us in the heavens. This hope produces faith and love within us, as it did in the Colossians.

If we expect people to have faith and love as the Colossians did, we must tell them of the hope laid up for us. How long has it been since you preached a sermon or taught a lesson about heaven?

2. Our hope is laid up in the heavens. Compare I Peter 1:4, 13; Titus 2:13; Heb. 6:18-19. This is the "one hope" of Eph. 4:1.

Our generation has largely repudiated every religion based on a hope in the world to come, on "pie in the sky." Even many theologians and clergymen (and surely God despises both of these titles) openly scorn the hope of a heavenly home.

But the fact remains that those who believe most earnestly in the world to come live the present life in the best way. Heaven-loving Christians are not lawless anarchists and revolutionaries.

If heaven has lost its appeal to you, go and study Revelation 21 and 22 and John 14. Study these chapters on your knees; meditate; pray over them until the light of heaven's glory crowds out the last bit of love for the world's gaudy glare.

3. The gospel is the word of *truth*. Eph. 1:13; II Pet. 1:12; I Thess. 2:13. We have the gospel in written form, but it is still *truth*. This is indicated by the honesty and sacrifice of its authors; by the endorsement of Christ; by the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Scriptures; by the consistent close agreement in the wording in ancient Bible manuscripts; and by the power of the gospel in our lives.
4. The Colossians had heard of their heavenly hope sometime previously, when the gospel had first been preached to them.

6. which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Translation and Paraphrase

6. (The truth of the gospel is) present among you, just as it is (present with saints) in all the world, bearing (good) fruit and increasing (everywhere), just as it also (does) in (the midst of)

you, from the day you (first) heard and accurately knew (of) the grace of God in truth (until now).

Notes

1. Col. 1:6 gives a description of the spread of the gospel: (1) It had come even unto the Colossians. (2) It bore good fruit wherever it spread. (3) It was increasing rapidly. (3) It had done these things consistently among the Colossians, ever since the day they heard the gospel and knew the truth about God's favor.
2. The rapidity of the spread of the gospel in the first century is indicated by Paul's remark "as it is also in all the world."

Compare Col. 1:23, where we are told that the gospel was preached in all creation.

We understand this to mean "in all the known world," and not necessarily as far away as the North American continent at that time.

If the gospel could spread into all the world in the first century with its limited means of communication, we should be assured that it can yet be spread over all the world in our generation with its improved communication and transportation facilities.
3. The gospel bears many fruits, all of them good. See Gal. 5:22-23; Isaiah 55:10-13.
4. The gospel has been increasing ever since it was first preached. "Of the increase of his (Christ's) government and of peace there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:7). We may sometimes forget that there are more Christians in the world today than there have ever been before. Proportionally the percentage of Christians in the world's population may be less because of the population explosion, but the increase in number is still real.
5. The nature of the gospel: (Col. 1:5-8).
 - (1) It is good news (*gospel* means good news).
 - (2) It tells of a heavenly hope.
 - (3) It is truth.
 - (4) It spreads rapidly.
 - (5) It bears fruit.
 - (6) It tells of God's grace.
 - (7) It is humanly transmitted.

7. even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8. who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. (All these things about the hope in the gospel, and the way it is increasing, you know. They are realities to you,) just as you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-slave (of Christ), who is a faithful servant (or minister) of Christ in your behalf.

8. (Epaphras is the one) who also made known to us your love in the Spirit (the love produced by the Spirit within you).

Notes

1. The servants, or ministers, of God from whom we learned the truth of God are worthy of honor. "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things." (Romans 10:15; Isaiah 52:7). Therefore Paul reminds the Colossians that Epaphras had taught them of the grace of God in truth.
2. Epaphras is referred to in Col. 1:7-8; 4:12-13; and Philemon 23. From these verses we learn the following about him:
 - (1) He first had taught the Colossians of the grace of God.
 - (2) He was a faithful minister.
 - (3) He was one of Colossians.
 - (4) Paul loved him.
 - (5) He was a servant (bondservant) of Christ Jesus.
 - (6) He prayed much for the Colossians.
 - (7) He labored much for them.
 - (8) He also labored for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.
 - (9) He told Paul about the love of the Colossians, and presumably other things about them also.
 - (10) He was a fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus with Paul in Rome. We do not know any details about this imprisonment.
3. The ancient manuscripts are divided on whether 1:7 says "on *our* behalf," or "on *your* behalf." With some hesitation we choose the reading "on your behalf." Besides the fact that this is the reading given in many old Greek manuscripts, it is also given in the Latin New Testament. But perhaps most convincing to us is the fact that it seems to make better sense than the reading "on our behalf." Epaphras was not a minister

on behalf of Paul, but he was definitely a minister on behalf of the Colossians.

4. Epaphras was Paul's fellow-servant." This title means "fellow-slave" (Gr. *sundoulos*).
5. Epaphras was a faithful minister. *Minister* here is a translation of the Greek *diakonos* (from which we derive *deacon*), which means servant, attendant, waiter, minister, etc. The word should probably not here be taken in a professional sense. Epaphras was a servant (or minister) in the way every Christian should be a minister. He may have been a business man of some type. His job was preaching Christ; he may have made his living at some trade.
6. Epaphras had told Paul of the Colossians' love in the Spirit. Probably we ought not to attempt to dissect and examine this expression "love in the Spirit." It is better to exemplify it in our lives than to examine it minutely. Doubtless it refers to the love which they had in their hearts and displayed in their lives because the Holy Spirit was in them, and they were in the Spirit, yielded to his control, assistance, and guidance. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. Gal. 5:22.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10. to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Translation and Paraphrase

9. On account of this (love which you have) we also, since the day when we (first) heard (about it), do not cease praying and making request (to God) in behalf of you, that you may be filled with the precise knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10. (And that you may have the motivation and strength) to walk (and live) worthily of the Lord, (making it your goal to attain) unto ever (thing) pleasing (to God), bearing fruit and increasing in the precise knowledge of God.

Notes

1. 1:9-13 contains Paul's prayer of request for the Colossians. His prayer contains two requests: (1) that they be filled with the

knowledge of God's will; (2) that they walk (that is, live) worthily of the Lord.

These are comprehensive requests. They sum up everything that is of real importance in the Christian life. What more could we ask than that we know God's will and that we do it? Physical needs will be cared for if we know and do God's will.

2. Paul not only had a constant gratitude (1:3), but also a continuing prayer (1:9). Compare Eph. 1:15-19.
3. Let us join Paul in prayer that we all may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We all have a long way to go to attain this. There are vast portions of the Bible with which most of us have almost no acquaintance. Furthermore it is probably pure presumption to say that we really know the parts with which we are acquainted.

Until we sense how very little we know, we really know nothing at all. I Cor. 8:2.

We should stop trying to make God listen to us, and begin listening to God.

4. Paul's prayer that they might know God's will was perhaps a dig at the Gnostics, who thought that they knew all. See Introductory Study on *Gnosticism*.
5. We are to be filled with precise knowledge of God's will. The Greek word for knowledge here is *epignosis*, a somewhat stronger word than *gnosis*, basic knowledge. Compare II Tim. 3:7.
6. The implications of the phrase "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" are very broad. These words recall to our minds the introduction to Proverbs, which says that that book was written so that we might "know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding." (Prov. 1:12.) Thus it seems to us that Paul was praying that the Colossians might know all of the practical godliness portrayed in Proverbs and other parts of God's word.
7. Paul wanted the Colossians to walk (live) worthily of the Lord. They were to translate the knowledge of God into human situations. How sad it is to see a man who is a master of theology and a failure in living.

The concept of a worthy *walk*, a worthy way of life, is very common in Paul's writings. Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; I Thess. 2:12.

8. To walk worthily . . . "unto all pleasing" means simply "unto every pleasing thing." To arrive at the point where pleasing God is more important to us than pleasing ourselves should be our goal.
9. There are four participles or participial phrases in Col. 1:10-12 that describe what Paul meant when he said that we were to walk worthily of the Lord:
 - (1) being fruitful; 1:10.
 - (2) Increasing in the knowledge of God; 1:10.
 - (3) Strengthened with all might; 1:11.
 - (4) Giving thanks; 1:12.
10. "Bring fruitful in every good work" is a primary goal for every Christian's life. A plant or tree lives for the purpose of blooming and bearing fruit and reproducing itself; likewise fruit-bearing should be the purpose of our existence as Christians. The fruit of a Christian's life includes such things as holy living, a good influence, relief of human misery, and soul won to Christ. See Rom. 1:13; John 4:36; 15:4-5, 16; Phil. 1:22; Col. 1:6; II Pet. 1:8.
11. Paul's phrase in 1:10 about "increasing in the knowledge of God" seems at first glance to be a repetition of the prayer in 1:9 that we be filled with the knowledge of God, and in truth it is a repetition. (Both verses use the word *epignosis*, meaning precise knowledge.) In 1:10 increasing in knowledge is mentioned as a part of our worthy walk, and not as something distinct from it. Christian knowledge and Christian living are in one way distinct items (as in 1:9), and yet in another way they are inseparable (as in 1:10).

11. strengthen with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy;

Translation and Paraphrase

11. (and) being strengthened by all (the) strength (from God), according to his glorious manifested power, (until you attain) all endurance (in your own life) and patience (toward others) with joyfulness.

Notes

1. An essential part of walking worthily of the Lord lies in our being strengthened by the Lord's strength, literally "being made powerful by all power." Other scriptures also stress this point. Eph. 1:18-19; 3:16.
2. The degree of power available unto us is indicated by saying that the power is "according to the might of his glory," or "according to his glorious might." The might available unto us is therefore as unlimited as God is unlimited.
3. The strengthening of God is to bring us unto all patience and longsuffering. *Patience* (Gr. *hupomone*) means the ability to endure and bear up and remain faithful under every assault. *Longsuffering* (Gr. *makrothumia*) refers to our ability to keep a forgiving, hopeful attitude toward people, to avoid hastily retaliating a wrong.
4. Our longsuffering is to be with joyfulness, rather than with Stoic submissiveness.
5. Col. 1:11 raises the question as to how God's power is to be released to work in our lives. How do we get hold of God's power, and experience the strengthening that He gives? The world and much of the church too is crying for the answer to this question. People want to see a display of divine power rather than to hear a sermon. This explains in part the appeal of many "Pentecostal" religions. They loudly claim that they have found the secret of loosing God's power suddenly into people's lives, and this is appealing.

However the matter is usually neither simple nor quick. Observe that even when we are empowered with all power we still must have patience and longsuffering. We shall always be faced by opponents, critics, and doubters. Tribulation is never taken from us in this life (Acts 14:22). God never seems to be in a hurry from our point of view of time. He may take centuries to fulfill His objectives (though sometimes He does things so quickly that we are astounded). To us it may appear that God's longsuffering means either that He has no power or does not care to use it. Both of these ideas are totally false. Again, our own sins (even our marital incompatibility! I Pet. 3:7) may keep God's power from working within us. (Isa. 59:1-2). God did tremendous things through Abraham, Jacob, and David. But think of the years God took to do the

great things through their lives and think of the trouble these men had. God always works in such a way that his people must have faith in him at every stage for the future. God's use of his power in our lives does not instantly solve all mysteries, remove all obstacles, and leave us triumphant and crowned. The best approach to gaining the strength from God seems to be: (1) Believe in God's promises always; (2) Work as if everything depended on you; (3) Pray as if everything depended on God; (4) Leave the results to God.

12. giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints, in light; 13. who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love;

Translation and Paraphrase

12. (Also let us be) giving thanks to the father who made us worthy to obtain a share of the inheritance of the saints (who dwell) in the light (of God);

13. (Also we thank the father, for it is he) who drew us to himself out of the authority (and power) of (Satan's kingdom of) darkness, and transferred (us) into the kingdom of his beloved son (which is the church).

Notes

1. The final, and probably climactic, part of walking worthily is to be giving thanks unto God the Father. God certainly deserves our thanks because: (1) he qualified us to be sharers in the inheritance of the saints; (2) he delivered us out of Satan's power into the kingdom of his son.
2. Giving thanks must be a continual process. I Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20. Gratitude is the foundation of Christian character. We should not have one day each year for thanksgiving and 364 for complaining. It would be better to have 364 for giving thanks, and one (or none!) for our gripes, grumbles, grunts, and groans.
3. The Father has made us *meet* to be partakers of the inheritance. *Meet* means fit for, or qualified, or good enough for, or adequate, or sufficient for. We are God's workmanship. Eph. 2:10. He makes us meet for the inheritance.

4. We rejoice to share in the inheritance from God with the saints in light. See Acts 20:32.

The "saints in light" are those both living and dead who have come to have fellowship with God, for God is light. (I John 1:5; II Cor. 4:16). "Light" refers to holiness (Acts 26:18), to divine revelation and truth (II Cor. 4:4, 6), to love (I John 2:9, 10), and glory (Isaiah 60:1-3).

5. God *delivered* us from the power of darkness. "Delivered" is in the Greek aorist tense, indicating an action at one point, as opposed to a continuous action. Thus our deliverance is a once-for-all deliverance.
6. God has *translated* us into the kingdom of his son. *Translated* here means transferred. The Gr. is *ruomai*, which means to draw to oneself, to rescue, to deliver. In ancient times conquering generals oftentimes transported conquered peoples from their homelands to other lands. Similarly God, having defeated Satan in our lives, has transferred us to a new realm.
7. Note that Paul speaks of "us" and not of "you." Paul himself was a partaker in the work of God, so that he could not write of salvation abstractly.
8. The "power of darkness" or the "dominion of darkness" refers to the world, or Satan's kingdom. (Acts 26:18; Matt. 4:16; John 8:12; 12:35, 46; I John 1:5-6). The fact that the darkness has *power* (Gr. *exousia*, authority) shows that there is a personal quality about it; a personal devil has the power in the domain of darkness.
9. We are transferred into the *kingdom* of God's beloved son. This is one of numerous verses in the New Testament that teach that Christ's kingdom already exists, that it is practically synonymous with the church, and that we do not have to wait unto Christ comes back for the establishment of His kingdom. See Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:9; Mark 9:1.

Study and Review

Questions Over Colossians 1:1-13

1. What title does Paul use for himself as he begins Colossians? (1:1)
2. Whose will was it that Paul be an apostle?
3. Who was co-sender of the epistle with Paul?

4. How is the co-sender described?
5. What two terms does Paul use to describe the Colossians? (1:2)
6. What does grace *mean*?
7. In what two places, or realms, were the Colossians?
8. What two things did Paul wish for the Colossians?
9. When did Paul give thanks for the Colossians? (1:3)
10. How did he express his thanks?
11. What two things about the Colossians had Paul heard? (1:4)
12. What caused the faith and love of the Colossians? (1:4-5)
13. Where was their hope laid up?
14. Where had the Colossians heard about their hope?
15. What is referred to as "the word of the truth"?
16. To where had the gospel come (two areas)? (1:6)
17. What two things did the gospel do when it came to any place?
18. From whom had the Colossians learned the gospel? (1:7)
19. What does the word *minister* in 1:7 mean?
20. What particular thing about the Colossians had been declared to Paul? (1:8)
21. To what cause does Paul refer in 1:9?
22. What did Paul not cease to do after hearing about the Colossians?
23. What two things did Paul pray for and request concerning the Colossians? (1:9-10)
24. What sort of knowledge did Paul want the Colossians to have?
25. What does "to walk" in 1:10 mean?
26. What are the four participles (or participial phrases) in 1:10-12 which describe the worthy walk?
27. In what are we to bear fruit? (1:10)
28. In what are we to increase?
29. With what are Christians strengthened? (1:11)
30. Unto what two things are we to be strengthened?
31. What two facts are told about the father in 1:12-13 that should cause us to give thanks?
32. Define the word *meet* in 1:12.
33. Of what are we made partakers?
34. What is meant by the expression "the saints *in light*"? How are the saints in light?
35. What has God delivered us out of?
36. What is the power of darkness?
37. Give a synonym for the word *translated* in 1:13.

38. Into what are we translated?
 39. What is the kingdom of God's son?

Outline of 1:14-23

- B. CHRIST—His supremacy and work; 1:14-23
1. In Christ we have redemption; 1:14
 2. Christ is the image of God; 1:15
 3. Christ is the firstborn of all creation; 1:15b-16
 - a. Because in him all things were created
 - b. Through him and unto him all were created
 4. Christ is before all things; 1:17a
 5. In Christ all things consist; 1:17b
 6. Christ is head of the body; 1:18a
 7. Christ is the beginning; 1:18b
 8. Christ is the firstborn from the dead; 1:18c
 9. What God's good pleasure decided concerning Christ; 1:19-23
 - a. All the fulness would dwell in him; 1:19
 - b. He would reconcile all things; 1:20-23
 - (1) Who?—Things in heaven and earth; 1:20
 - (2) Need for reconciliation—alienation; 1:21
 - (3) How?—By Christ's death; 1:22
 - (4) Goal of reconciliation—To present men perfect; 1:22-23
 - (a) Condition for presentation: that we continue in the gospel; 1:23
 - [1] The gospel was preached in all creation
 - [2] Paul was made a minister of the gospel

14. in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

Translation and Paraphrase

14. (The Son is he) in whom we have redemption, (we are bought back from the slavery of sin; and our redemption is provided to us by) the forgiveness of (our) sins;

Notes

1. Col. 1:14 begins a new section in our outline (1:14-23), which deals with the supremacy and preeminence of Christ. Many things are listed which indicate his supremacy. Some of these involve his work; some involve his nature; some involve

his offices. They all show that in all things he has pre-eminence. (Col. 1:18). Here we see very plainly what was stated in our introductory studies, that Colossians is the most Christ-centered epistle in the New Testament.

2. We have *redemption* in Christ, and from no other source. *Redemption* is the act of buying back something that has been sold. We sold ourselves into condemnation in order to practice sin. (I Kings 21:20). Christ bought us back, not with decaying material wealth like silver and gold, but with his own precious blood. I Peter 1:18-19. He gave his life that we might live with God.
3. All of this Bible teaching about redemption sounds ridiculous to modern modes of thinking. Instead of accepting the truth that we are sold into sin, this generation thinks it owns and controls everything. But our need for redemption is solidly based on the infinite holiness, justice, and love of God. God's holiness cannot tolerate our sin. His justice and law requires that a life be given for a life forfeited by sin. His love caused him to send his only begotten son into the world to suffer the penalty due to sinners, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
4. Our redemption is identified as being "the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness of sins stands in apposition to redemption. Redemption and forgiveness of sins are the same work of Christ, viewed from two points. When we speak of redemption, we emphasize our helpless condition and Christ's act of buying us back. When we speak of forgiveness, we emphasize our own guilt in the matter. Eph. 1:7.

15. who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16. for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him;

Translation and Paraphrase

15. (Yea further, the Son) is the (very) likeness (—the picture, the manifestation and representation—) of the invisible God; (and he is) the firstborn of all (the) creation (having authority over all creation as the firstborn in a tribe rules the tribe).

16. (Now Christ occupies this rank of the firstborn, not because he was the first being created by God, but) because all things were created by him, (the things) in the heavens and (the things) upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether (they be) thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities (these being titles and offices among the unseen hosts in our universe), all (these) things have been created through him, and for him.

Notes

1. Christ is so close to God that he is God's very *image* (Gr. *eikon*). *Image* means likeness, or figure. The word has the added suggestion of representation and manifestation. (Thayer). II Cor. 4:4.
2. One ancient letter preserved for us tells how a man sent a artist's small sketch of himself to his family, saying that he was sending them an *eikon* of himself. This illustrates the meaning of the word *image*. Christ is the picture of God, his very likeness.
3. Christ is the image of the invisible God. No one has ever seen God. John 1:18; I Tim. 6:15. Christ has declared and revealed unto us what God is like. (Because no one has ever seen God, no one can make an idol of Him.)
4. The Gnostics regarded Christ as one of the intermediaries between God and men, and as inferior to God. Jesus was to them by no means unique. They further felt that if he was divine, he could not have had a material body, for divinity had no contact with material things. For the same reason Christ could not have had been involved in the creation of the universe. Note how emphatically Paul asserts that Christ was both the creator, and also the very image of God at the same time. (See the Introductory Study on *Gnosticism*.)
5. Note Christ's relationships to creation: (1:16)
 - a. All things were created *in* (or by) him.
 - b. All things were created *through* him.
 - c. All things were created *unto* (or for) him.
6. Christ is the *firstborn* of all creation. This title has little to do with time. It is more a title of rank and honor. See Psalm 89:27 and Ex. 4:22. The firstborn in a nomadic desert tribe is the ruler of the tribe. Rom. 8:29.

Observe carefully that Paul says that Christ is the firstborn of all creation NOT because he was the first thing God created, but because he, Christ, created all things. (John 1:3, 10; Heb. 1:2). If Christ created ALL things, he is therefore not a created being himself. He was himself "in the beginning with God" (John 1:2), and he thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6).

7. Rev. 3:14 is sometimes set forth as proving that Christ is a created being. There he is called the *beginning* of the creation of God. The word *beginning* in Rev. 3:4 is a translation of the Gr. *arche*, which is the same word used in Luke 20:20, where it is translated "power" (KJV), "rule" (ASV), or "authority" (RSV). (*Arche* is also applied to Christ in Col. 1:18, where it is translated *beginning*.) Thus it appears that both Colossians and Revelation teach that Christ has authority over creation, but that definitely neither indicates that he is a created being.
8. As if to stress the completeness of Christ's part in creation, Paul itemizes the things that Christ created: things in heaven and things on earth; things visible and things invisible; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. (Compare Eph. 1:10; I Tim. 1:17; II Cor. 4:18). We suppose that the last four terms refer to ranks and offices within the unseen hosts of angels and spirits in the universe.
Observe that Christ's supremacy embraces the entire universe. When astronauts land on the moon and other heavenly bodies, Christ will still be the Lord and creator of those bodies.
Note that Christ's supremacy is particularly opposed to all heretical teachings that degrade him.
9. Paul's remark that all things were created through Christ and for Him recalls the description of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31. There Wisdom speaks as God's master workman in creating the world. Since Christ is God's wisdom (I Cor. 1:30), the passage in Proverbs may well picture Christ's description of His part in the work of creation.
10. Some scholars feel that Col. 1:15-20 is a unit, and was either a hymn written by Paul himself, or one used in the early church. Certainly its thoughts are presented in concise lines (stichs) like poetry, and this contrasts with the more extended paragraph 1:19-23. It has been argued that 1:15-17 is one stanza,

emphasizing Christ's preeminence in creation; and 1:18-20 is a second stanza, emphasizing Christ's preeminence in redemption and the church. The "who is" in 1:15 and 1:18 are alike. Both verses 15 and 18 use the title "firstborn." Verses 16 and 20 both mention the heaven and the earth, though in reverse order. These similarities point to a purposeful pattern of resemblance in the verses.

In spite of these arguments the words of 1:15-20 still must be considerably forced to be made to fit a song or chant. We really do not feel that anyone has proved that this is a song.

11. As supreme creator of the universe and as firstborn of all creation, Christ can deliver us, though we face bombs, space invaders, communism, old age, financial hardship, or the day of judgment!

17. and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. 18. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. (Yea) and he exists before all things, and all things hold together in him (by virtue of his will and power).

18. And he is the head of the body, (that is,) the church. (It is he) who is the beginning (the ruler), the firstborn from the dead (the first to rise never to die again), so that he might have the preeminence (first place) in all things.

Notes

1. Col. 1:17 refers to the *pre-existence* of Christ. By this we mean his eternal existence with God before he emptied himself of much of his divine glory and was conceived in Mary. Many other Bible verses refer to his pre-existence. John 1:1-2, 10; Phil. 2:6-7; Micah 5:2; Heb. 1:8-12.
2. Col. 1:17 says that Christ *is* before all things, not that he *was* before all things. To God and Christ all events of all time are eternally in the present tense. Christ himself said, "Before Abraham was, I *am*." (John 8:58).
3. In Christ all things *consist*, that is, all things hold together. There is a wonderful cohesion in the universe. Atoms resist breaking apart with awesome energy. Gravity and other laws

of physics regulate the heavenly bodies with astounding order. No one really knows why gravity works, except that the supreme power so wills it. There is an interdependence among natural creatures that defies naturalistic explanations as to its origin. Even history and the social order, as chaotic as man's sinfulness has made it, seems rushing on to a foredetermined conclusion—perhaps to self-destruction, Armageddon, and (definitely!) to a new heaven and earth.

4. Christ is supreme to the church. He is its head and it is his body. Compare Eph. 1:22-23. As the head of a human body rules the body, so Christ rules the church.

Note that there is one head and one body, one Christ and one church of Christ. Let us be loyal to HIS church, and not to human churches.

5. Christ is the *beginning*. This term signifies the first in a series of things. Thus of all the sons that God has drawn from among men unto himself, Christ is the beginning, the first, the unique son. He is the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29.

In Luke 20:20 the term *arche* (here translated *beginning*) means *rule* or *authority*. According to this meaning of the word, Christ is the ruler; and truly he is.

6. Christ is the firstborn *from* the dead. He was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again. Christ himself resurrected Lazarus (John 11) and some others; there were a few resurrections in Old Testament times (e.g. II Kings 13:21). But all these died again with no recollection of their former experiences after death. But death has no more power over Christ. Romans 6:9; Rev. 1:5.

In the time to come all the dead shall rise, and shall never face physical death again. (Some, alas, shall face the second death of hell. Rev. 20:14-15). John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:22. Even then Christ will always be the firstborn from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. I Cor. 15:20.

7. The last phrase of 1:18 may also be translated, "That he might have the preeminence among all," referring to Christ's preeminence among the dead as well as the living. Christ has preeminence both among all things and among all people, living and dead alike.

19. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;

Translation and Paraphrase

19. (Christ has this universal preeminence) because it was well-pleasing (to God for) all the fulness (of God-hood) to dwell in him;

Notes

1. With the beginning of Col. 1:19 a new style of composition appears. The short independent clauses of Col. 1:16-18 cease, and the new section comes as an extended paragraph (through 1:23) relating the things which God's good pleasure decided concerning Christ.
2. Col. 1:19-20 says that it was well pleasing (pleasing presumably to God) for Christ to have two honors:
 - (1) All the divine fulness would dwell in him.
 - (2) All things would be reconciled through him.
3. Those using modern translations like the R.S.V. will quickly notice a difference in translation of 1:19 between the newer versions and the older King James and American Standard versions.

King James: "For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all the fulness dwell." (The A.S.V. is similar)

Revised Standard: "For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell."

The difference in translation does not indicate any variation in the ancient manuscript readings. The difficulty lies in the fact that Col. 1:19 in Greek has no subject clearly stated, unless the term *fulness* is taken as the subject, which is done in the R.S.V. But the word *fulness* seems to be the subject of the infinitive "to dwell," and it further seems a bit incongruous as a subject for "was pleased." The Gnostics used the word *fulness* as a title for God, and the Colossians were probably familiar with this usage. But its basic meaning is abstract, signifying a full quantity, the full character, the full measure, an abundance. There is no indication that Paul used the word in any sense other than its usual meaning. Fulness is a quality rather than a person. How can a quality "be pleased"? The R.S.V. reading makes it sound as if the quality

of divine fulness is to be thought of as apart from God himself. The R.S.V. reading, while grammatically unobjectionable, leaves us somewhat unsatisfied with the meaning.

To get around this difficulty the K.J.V. and A.S.V. supplied the words *the Father* as a subject for "was pleased." This was done because it apparently is the father who, according to 1:20, is reconciling all things through Christ. The same subject seems to go with "was pleased" in 1:19 that goes with "to reconcile" in 1:20.

It probably would be simpler and safer just to render the verb in 1:19 as having an impersonal subject: "It was well-pleasing for (for) all the fulness to dwell in him." This is quite literally the way the Greek text has it. Also the particular verb here (*eudokeo*) often is used with an impersonal subject.

4. It was well-pleasing (presumably to God and everyone else involved) that in Christ should all the fulness dwell. All the qualities of God-hood dwell in Christ to a fulness. There is no jealousy or rivalry in heaven.

20. and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. 21. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, 22. yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before him:

Translation and Paraphrase

20. And (it was also well-pleasing) to reconcile all (the alienated things in our universe) to (God) himself through him (that is, through Christ; and Christ does this work of reconciliation as a result of his) having made peace (between God and man) through the blood of (his sacrifice upon) his cross; (Yea, this reconciliation is made) through him (between God and all beings,) whether (they be) the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens.

21. And you (yourselves), though you were formerly alienated (and estranged) and enemies (toward God) in (your) mind by the evil works (which you did),

22. (Yet) he has now reconciled (you) by (offering) his fleshly body through death (upon the cross), to present you holy and without blemish and blameless before him.

Notes

1. God's good pleasure decided that the alienated things in our universe should be reconciled to God through Christ. No other means is provided for this reconciliation.
2. Sin has ruined and alienated our universe. Romans 8:21. The natural world is full of suffering and disorder. Men on earth and the things in the heavens are alike out of harmony with God because of sin. We do not know what (or who) those things are that are in the heavens which need to be reconciled to God, but Col. 1:20 indicates that there are such alienated celestial things. Compare Phil. 2:10.
3. The teaching of Col. 1:20 that God desires to reconcile all things unto himself could be used as an argument that God will ultimately take everybody and everything to heaven. This notion is called universalism. Some theologians have even argued that Satan himself will ultimately be reconciled. But this teaching so utterly contradicts many other Scriptures concerning eternal punishment that it simply cannot be true. Mark 9:43-48; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:11; 20:10, 15.

Apparently, while it is God's good pleasure that all things be reconciled, many people simply will not cooperate with God that it be so. God has never forced anyone to accept His blessings, although we cannot escape the consequences of refusing to accept the blessings.

4. Our evil works alienated us from God in times past and made us enemies in our minds toward God. But this enmity was one-sided, and existed only in *our* minds. God *loved* the world. The world because of its sins hated Him. Any time someone wrongs someone else (a child its parent, a pupil his teacher, a workman his employer, a criminal society, a husband his wife, etc.) hostility and estrangement grow up within the one who has done the wrong. This seems so backward; it seems that the one who has been wronged should be offended. But human nature works the other way. The one doing the wrong is alienated, even if the one wronged has forgiven him.

God himself was confronted with this situation. In order to convince man's alienated heart that God truly loved him, God made the supreme sacrifice. He gave up his own son. If the sacrifice of God's own son cannot bring our hearts to

love God, nothing can. See II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:13-17. God has made peace between man and himself through the blood of Christ's cross. Eph. 3:16, 14.

5. When once we have been reconciled to God by the message of Christ's death, then it is God's further goal to present us holy, and without blemish, and blameless before Him. There should be a constant process of growth, and self-purification, and service following our conversion until our death (or the Lord's return).

On the day of judgment Christ will deliver those on his right hand unto the father. (Matt. 25:34; I Cor. 15:24). Let us labor to be ready for that day, so that we may be presented holy, without blemish, and unprovable. (The word *unprovable* is Gr. *anegketos*, a word which is often translated as *blameless*, and means "that cannot be called to account." I Tim. 3:10.)

23. if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. (While Christ has reconciled you and designs to present you faultless before God, this will happen only) if you preserve in the faith, builded upon the foundation, and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you heard about (and which has been) preached in all (the) creation under heaven, (and) of which I Paul was made a minister, (that is, a minister of the gospel).

Notes

1. If we desire to be in that number "when the saints go marching in" and to be presented before God holy and without blemish, there is a condition that we must meet: we must continue in the faith. Compare Heb. 4:14.
2. The necessity of continuing in the faith is the theme of the whole book of Hebrews. It is stated briefly here in Col. 1:23. If we shrink back from the faith, we shrink back unto perdition (destruction). Heb. 10:39.

3. The aim and obligation of reconciliation:
 - (1) Aim—holiness.
 - (2) Obligation—steadfastness.
4. Paul describes the condition of those who continue in the faith as "grounded" (which literally means "built upon a foundation"), and "steadfast" (immoveable), and not moved away from the hope of the gospel (the hope presented in gospel). I Cor. 15:58. Concerning the hope in the gospel, see notes on Col. 1:5.
5. Paul's allusion to the hope of the gospel caused him to make two observations about the gospel:
 - (1) It was preached in all creation under heaven.
 - (2) Paul himself had been made a minister of the gospel. (Paul's reference here to his ministry led into the following section, 1:24—2:5.)
6. The fact that the gospel was preached "in all creation under heaven" in the first century alone, shows that the gospel can be spread over the world in one generation. We seem to lack the faith or the courage to attempt to do this. Compare notes on 1:6.

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come." In view of the fact that Paul said that in his generation alone the gospel had been preached in all creation, we cannot say that the end cannot come yet because the gospel has not been preached in all nations.

Study and Review

Questions Over Colossians 1:14-23

1. What is the topic of 1:14-23 that is given in our outline?
2. In whom do we have our redemption? (1:14)
3. Define the word *redemption*. From what are we redeemed?
4. What is the relation of redemption to forgiveness of sins?
5. What does the word *image* mean? (1:15)
6. Why is it impossible to make an idol of God?
7. What rank does a *firstborn* have?
8. According to Col. 1:15-16, why is Christ the firstborn of all creation?
9. Explain the phrase "the firstborn of all creation."

10. Where are the things which Christ created located? (1:16)
11. To what do "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers" refer?
12. What is the difference in meaning between the assertions that all things have been created *through* Christ, and created *unto* him?
13. How far back did Christ exist? (1:17)
14. What do we mean by the *pre-existence* of Christ?
15. What is the tense of the verbs in 1:17? What significance can be attached to this?
16. What does *consist* mean in the clause "in him all things consist"?
17. What is Christ's relation to the church? (1:18)
18. What does the assertion "who is the *beginning*" indicate about Christ?
19. Why is Christ called the firstborn from the dead? Were not others resurrected before Christ arose?
20. What is Christ to have in all things? (1:18)
21. Is Christ preeminent just over those things now living? Give the Scriptural statements that prove the answers to this question.
22. Define the word *fulness* in 1:19. What did the Gnostics mean by this word?
23. In whom does all the fulness dwell? Is this a grudgingly granted concession to him? How do you know?
24. Through whom are all things to be reconciled?
25. Does 1:20 teach that ultimately everybody and everything will be reconciled to God and saved? Give a reason for your answer.
26. Through what has Christ made peace.
27. Where do those who are to be reconciled live? (2 answers)
28. What was our mental attitude in the times before we received Christ? (1:21)
29. What had caused us to be in this frame of mind? (1:21)
30. Where was this alienation and enmity that formerly existed? Was it in God's heart?
31. To what event does the phrase "in the body of his flesh through death" refer? (1:22)
32. What does Christ intend (or hope) to do with us, now that we are reconciled?
33. What is our condition to be when we are presented unto God?

34. What condition must we meet if we are to be presented as holy unto God? (1:23)
35. Explain the term "grounded." (1:23)
36. From what must we not be moved away?
37. Where did we learn of our hope?
38. Where had the gospel been preached within Paul's lifetime?
39. To what does the *whereof* in 1:23 refer? (Or, to put it in another way, Of what had Paul been made a minister?)

PAUL'S MINISTRY

(1:24—2:5)

1. *Attitudes in Paul's ministry; (1:24)*
 - a. Joy
 - b. Dedication to suffering
2. *Source of Paul's ministry; (1:25)*

(It was a stewardship from God given to him.)
3. *The new message in Paul's ministry; (1:26-27)*
 - a. It had been hidden for ages; 1:26a
 - b. It was now manifested to the saints; 1:26b-27a
 - c. The message is Christ in you; 1:27b
4. *Activities in Paul's ministry; (1:28a)*
 - a. Proclaiming Christ
 - b. Admonishing and teaching
5. *The effort in Paul's ministry; (1:29—2:1)*

(It was a striving, according to Christ's working within him.)
6. *Goals in Paul's ministry; (1:28b; 2:2-3)*
 - a. To present every man perfect in Christ; 1:28b
 - b. That their hearts be comforted; 2:2
 - c. That they be knit together;
 - (1) Knit in love.
 - (2) Knit unto the riches of full understanding.
 - d. That they know God's mystery, which is Christ; 1:3
(In him are all treasures hidden.)
7. *Paul's personal involvement in his ministry; (2:4-5)*
 - a. He desired that they be not deceived; 2:4
 - b. He was present with them in spirit; 2:5

Outline of 1:24—2:5

C. CHRIST—The goal of Paul's ministry; Col. 1:24—2:5

Observe in this section how every facet of Paul's ministry was related to Christ:

- (1) Paul sought to fill up the afflictions of CHRIST in his flesh. 1:24.
- (2) The message which Paul was given to preach was, in brief, CHRIST in you, the hope of glory. 1:27.
- (3) Paul labored to present every man perfect in CHRIST. 1:28.
- (4) In CHRIST are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, about which Paul worked to tell people. 2:3.
- (5) Paul rejoiced to see the steadfastness of people's faith in CHRIST. 2:5.

This section (1:24—2:5) is impossible to outline in twentieth century outline forms, if a purely grammatical analysis is used as a basis for the outline. Therefore we give only the expository outline on page 160.

24. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;

Translation and Paraphrase

24. Now I rejoice in the sufferings (I endure) in behalf of you; and (by my sufferings) I fill up the things that are lacking of the sufferings of Christ (which he appointed unto me, that I may repay in turn the benefits which Christ conferred on me by filling up the measure of the sufferings appointed unto him. These sufferings I fill up) in my flesh for the sake of his (Christ's) body, which is the church.

Notes

1. Col. 1:24 begins a new section, in which Paul discusses his ministry of the gospel. In this Paul discusses his privilege (the privilege of suffering for Christ) and his task (the task of making known the mystery of God among the Gentiles).
2. Paul characterizes his ministry first of all as a work of joyful sufferings for the sake of the Colossians. When we are experiencing the joy of serving others, we scarcely notice the exertions and strains that are often required. Thus Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. Eph. 3:13; II Tim. 2:10.

3. Paul considered his various sufferings as part of a necessary and welcome process of filling up the quota of the afflictions of Christ that had been appointed unto him.

Col. 1:24 does not indicate that Paul felt that he had to endure as much suffering as Christ himself endured. This is so obviously beyond human attainment (even for Paul!) that the very idea smacks of mental imbalance.

Rather Paul indicates that he knew that Christ had appointed unto him to endure certain things in his flesh, and he joyfully sought to fill up his cup of sufferings. Jesus once said of Saul (Paul), "I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:16). Thus the expression "the afflictions of Christ" means "the afflictions appointed to me by Christ."

Paul felt that he yet lacked some in filling up the sufferings that he ought to bear, and he joyfully faced any difficulty for the sake of Christ's body the church. Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18.

4. Paul describes his own sufferings as the afflictions of Christ. While this phrase refers to Paul's own sufferings that Christ had appointed for him, it also has a deeper meaning. That which hurts Christ's body the church (of which Paul was a member) also hurts Christ. Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Acts 22:7; Heb. 4:15. When Paul suffered, Christ suffered; when we suffer, Christ is afflicted.
5. The verb *fill up* (*antanapleroo*) means "to fill up in turn." Paul speaks here of suffering as if it were measured out in cupfuls. Christ by his life filled up his cup of suffering; he endured all that was required of him, so that we might be saved. Now we in turn fill up our cup of service and suffering for the sake of Christ and his church to repay (in a small degree) what Christ did for us.

25. whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to youward, to fulfill the word of God,

Translation and Paraphrase

25. I was made a servant (or minister of the church) in accordance with the (gracious terms of the) stewardship (entrusted to me) of God, (which was) given to me for your sake, to make fully known the word of God.

Notes

1. Paul indicates in 1:25 that his ministry was a gift to him. He was *made* a minister. He did not choose the office himself.

Furthermore the nature of the work that God laid out for Paul was chosen not according to what Paul might have thought best, but it was rather a dispensation, or stewardship, from God.

2. The word *dispensation* here means "that which is dispensed by God." It is a translation of the Gr. *oikonomia*, which is often translated *stewardship*. Stewardship is the managing of the goods or property of someone else. A steward might operate a farm or a vineyard for the owner.

God gave Paul a particular stewardship, or dispensation, a special privilege and responsibility. Paul's ministry then consisted of that which GOD had given him to do. It was a challenging stewardship and occupied every bit of the time and talent Paul could give to it, but it was still God's choice for Paul, not Paul's choice for himself. Eph. 3:2, 7-9.

3. Paul's stewardship was given him "for you." It was designed to help others. Our service to the Lord should always be done to help others, rather than to make ourselves appear outstanding.
4. Paul's ministry was given to him "to fulfill the word of God," that is, to cause the word of God to abound, to carry it into effect, to carry it through to the fullest.

26. *even the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, 27. to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

Translation and Paraphrase

26. (For the word of God is) the mystery (the revealed secret) which has been hidden from the ages (past) and from the generations (past), but has now been made manifest to his (God's saints;

27. To them (the saints) God was well pleased to make known that which (makes up) the riches of the glory of this mystery (which is now being spread) among the nations—(and that mystery, simply and marvelously stated, is this:) Christ in you, the hope of glory (glory now, and glory hereafter)!

Notes

1. Paul had been chosen by God to reveal to many nations the marvelous mystery that God had held back from human knowledge in preceding ages. That revealed mystery was the very secret of glory. It is, simply stated, CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory! Compare Col. 2:2.

Paul in Eph. 3:6 adds the further explanation about the mystery, that it consisted in the revelation of the fact that the Gentiles could now be fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

HISTORY'S
MOST GLORIOUS SECRET
NOW REVEALED!

CHRIST IN YOU,
the hope of glory!

(Colossians 1:27)

1. Glorious power to live a godly life.
2. Glorious power to work victoriously.
3. Glorious joy available.
4. Glorious peace for your soul.
5. Glorious comfort in troubles.
6. Glorious victory over death.
7. Glorious eternal life with God.

2. Paul declares that the word of God which he was sent to fulfill (1:25) was a *mystery* which God had hidden from previous ages and generations. Rom. 16:25-26; I Cor. 2:7-8; Eph. 3:2-5.

The term *mystery* in New Testament usage means a *revealed secret*. The mysteries of a lodge are the secrets that are revealed when one is initiated into it. The gospel was a

mystery in that it once was not revealed, but is now made known. The term *mystery* does not carry the ideas of incomprehensibility, or obscurity, or mysteriousness, or profundity. It is just about the absolute opposite of all of these.

3. Why should God have hidden his glorious mystery from preceding ages and generations when there was so much sin and suffering in the world during those times? We cannot know all of God's reasons for doing what he does. But we believe that God knows best, even when we do not know why He does as He does. As for God's choice of time for revealing His grand secret of the ages, we can only state this: by the time the gospel was revealed, man had had full opportunity to learn by hard experience that he could not save himself nor his world by laws, by philosophy, by military might, by economic progress, by any inherent goodness within man, by idolatry, by magic, by great architecture and culture, or by any other means imaginable to man.

It is a fact that at the time when Christ came that many people felt an intense longing for God to send a savior, and were looking for his coming. See Luke 3:15; Matt. 2:1-2; John 12:20-21. Perhaps this was the reason God waited as long as He did to send Christ and reveal the gospel.

4. Now finally God has revealed his glorious mystery unto his saints. God has not revealed it to the philosophers, the emperors, the theologians, the professors, the generals, the economic executives, the lawmakers. He revealed it to his saints—to shepherds, to fishermen, to tax collectors, to tentmakers, to slaves, to the lowly, to babes!! Luke 10:21; I Cor. 1:26-29.

There have been a few learned, wealthy, and powerful in every generation who have opened their hearts to God's revealed mystery. But even today most people in these categories do not comprehend the truth, riches, and importance of the gospel.

5. God sent the news of His revealed mystery out into all nations, among the *Gentiles*. God has always planned to do this, even though many of the Jews in ages past wrongly came to feel that they were the exclusive people of God. See Isaiah 49:6; 42:6; Luke 2:30-32; Acts 14:46-47.
6. Paul's ministry among the Gentiles, along with the ministries of others since then, has been the most wonderful thing that has ever happened among the Gentiles in human history.

Christian doctrines have changed the world, its music, its laws, the attitudes of its peoples, its customs, its architecture, its morals, and all changes have been for the better. All men now have the benefits of divine wisdom freely available. Most people are not wise, but Christ is wisdom for all. The laws and prophetic messages which made the Jews a devout people are now equally available and significant to the Gentiles; and to these laws are added the even greater words of God's own son and the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. God was *pleased* to make known among the Gentiles the divine mystery. God is utterly good, gracious, and generous.
8. God made known the *riches* of the glory of the divine mystery. God did not grant us a small sampling of his blessings, but the riches of them. Rom. 9:23; Eph. 1:18.
9. The hope of glory in God's mystery is primarily the hope of glory in the life to come. See Rom. 8:18; I Cor. 15:42-43; Rev. 21:23. However, there is glory in the mystery that is available to us NOW also. See I Peter 1:8; II Cor. 3:18.
10. There have been various arguments advanced that supposedly prove and guarantee to us glorious things from God. But all such arguments break down when confronted with the realities of life. There is only one hope of glory that is certain to deliver the glory: Christ in you.

It has been argued, for example, that God never creates within men basic desires without providing fulfillments for those desires. Since we have a desire for everlasting life, this indicates that we should obtain it. While it is true that God has granted many fulfillments of our desires, life still overflows with unfulfilled desires. There is only one guarantee of glory: Christ in you.

28. whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; 29. whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Translation and Paraphrase

28. (Yes, God's mystery is Christ,) whom we are proclaiming (by) admonishing every man and teaching every man with all (the) wisdom (we can muster), so that we may present every man perfect in Christ (Jesus).

29. Toward this (goal of presenting every man perfect in Christ) I toil, contending (against all obstacles in a manner) according to his (Christ's divine) working, which works in me with (great) power.

Notes

1. In Col. 1:28-29 Paul assured the Colossians that he taught and labored with much effort to tell every man about God's glorious mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
2. Paul's proclamation of Christ consisted both of admonitions (warnings) and teachings.
3. Paul admonished and taught *in all wisdom*. He recognized that people come from many backgrounds, and have many different prejudices. He became all things to all men that he might by all means save some. (I Cor. 9:19-22)
4. The goal of Paul's teaching was that he might present every man *perfect* in Christ. This is the goal also of Christ Jesus himself. Col. 1:22. It is a goal too huge for human power. Our generation with its immortality, its selfishness, its violence, and lack of moral principles needs to be converted, and transformed, and presented perfect in Christ. This was what Paul set out to do for his generation. Will we attempt it for our generation?
5. Three times in 1:28 Paul repeats "every man," as if to emphasize the universal appeal of the gospel, the free offer of salvation for all, and the need of all humanity for the gospel.
6. Paul *labored* (Gr. *kopiaō*) to present every man perfect in Christ. This word means to grow weary and exhausted; to labor with wearisome effort; to toil. I Tim. 4:10; I Cor. 4:12; 15:10.
7. Paul describes his toil as "striving". "Striving" (Gr. *agonizomai*) refers to contests, contending against adversaries, struggling with difficulties and dangers. The point is that there are opponents to be subdued.
8. Paul was able to strive as he did against all obstacles because Christ helped him. Paul was striving "according to his (Christ's) working, which worketh in me mightily." He could do all things in Christ who strengthened him. Phil 4:13. Compare Col. 1:11; Eph. 1:19; 3:7. For examples of how Christ helped Paul see Rom. 15:18-19; Acts 23:11; 27:23-24.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER TWO VAIN DOCTRINES VS. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST

Paul's Ministry; (1:24—2:5)

1. *Walk in Christ as you received Christ;*
(2:6-7)

2. *Vain doctrines Opposed to Christ; (2:8-23)*
 - a. *Philosophy; 2:8-10*
 - (1) It makes spoil of you; 2:8a
 - (2) It is after the traditions of men; 2:8b
 - (3) Christ has the fulness of God-hood; 2:9
 - (4) Christ makes us complete; 2:10a
 - (5) Christ is head over all; 2:10b
 - b. *Judaism; 2:11-17*
 - (1) Christ gives us perfect circumcision; 2:11-12a
 - (2) Christ gives us perfect life; 2:12b-13a
 - (3) Christ gives forgiveness; 2:13b
 - (4) Christ has nailed the ordinances to the cross; 2:14
 - (5) Christ made a complete triumph; 2:15
 - (6) Let no man judge you over Judaistic ceremonies;
2:16-17
 - (a) Ceremonies are a shadow
 - (b) Christ is the body
 - c. *Angel worship; 2:18-19*
 - (1) It robs you of your prize; 2:18a
 - (2) Its devotees are puffed up; 2:18b
 - (3) It does not hold fast the Head; 2:19
 - d. *Ordinances about self-denial (Asceticism); 2:20-23*
 - (1) You died with Christ from such ordinances;
2:20-21
 - (2) The ordinances deal with perishing things; 2:22
 - (3) The ordinances have no value against fleshly in-
dulgence; 2:23

2:1. For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Translation and Paraphrase

2:1 (My striving against all the obstacles to the gospel concerns you Colossians in particular;) for I want you to know how great is the striving which I have (in my heart) for YOU, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face in the flesh.

Notes

1. Paul wanted the Colossians to know how much intense striving he endured in his spirit for their sake. It is so easy to hurt those who love us, and often we do this simply because we do not sense how much they care about us. Paul hoped that they would hold fast their faith more zealously if they knew how much he cared about them.
2. Paul's strivings for the Colossians has been called "Love's struggle". "Strife" (Gr. *agon*; KJV, "conflict") means intense solicitude and anxiety.
3. The wording of 2:1 relates back to 1:29. In 1:29 Paul declared that he was striving (Gr. *agonizomenos*) according to God's working. In 2:1 he asserts that they should know what great strife (*agona*) he had for them.
4. Paul's struggle was for people he had never seen, for such as the Colossians, and the Laodiceans, and for all who had not seen his face in the flesh. The uncertainty about the actual condition of such people would add to Paul's anxiety over them.
In 1:28 Paul spoke of teaching and admonishing every man. He did this even for those he had not seen.

Concerning Laodicea, see Introductory Study C, *Facts about Colossae and the Lycus valley*. The Laodiceans appear to have been infected with the same heresy that disturbed the Colossians.

5. Paul's struggle was probably first of all a struggle in prayer. Fervent prayer is a struggle, as anyone who has tried it will know—a struggle with self, and sin, and Satan. Compare Col. 4:12. We can struggle in prayer as painfully as Jacob prayed and struggled with the angel. Hosea 12:4; Gen. 32:24-28.
6. Also Paul's struggle involved his own efforts to be holy and faithful and steadfast in his difficult circumstances. If he had

lost heart and compromised his life, he would have discouraged the brethren everywhere.

7. Paul's striving indicates that he considered the Colossian heresy to be dangerous, and was striving to do something about it. False doctrines are always dangerous.
8. Ministerial anguish; Col. 2:1-4.
 - (1) Intense; 2:1.
 - (2) Impartial; applies to all.
 - (3) Holy;
 - Desires their comfort;
 - Desires their unity;
 - Desires their comprehension of truth.
 - (4) Expressed in warnings; 2:4.

2. that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ,

Translation and Paraphrase

2. (I agonize) that their hearts may be comforted (and exhorted), being knit together in love, and (knit together in such a way that they will come) unto all the riches of full assurance in (their) understanding. (Yea, further I agonize that they may be so knit together that they come) unto a precise knowledge of the mystery of God, (which is, stated very simply,) Christ (alone).

Notes

1. What were the goals which Paul sought in his striving? He sought: (1) that the Colossians might be comforted; (2) that they might be knit together in love; (3) that they might be knit together unto all riches of understanding, that is, knit together so they could come unto the full riches of understanding.
2. The verb *comfort* (*parakaleo*) has the double meaning of comfort and also to exhort, or urge. Our comfort in Christ should be an exhortation to us to serve Him better. Tychicus was sent to the Ephesians and the Colossians to comfort their hearts. Eph. 6:22; Col. 4:8.
3. The Colossians were to be *knit* together in love. The word *knit* means "to cause to coalesce, to join together, to put together, to unite." (Thayer). We think of broken bones being

knit back together until the pieces are one again. In this manner Christians should be knit together in love. Col. 2:19. Without love a church is not a true church.

4. The goal for which Christians are knit together is that they may come unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding.

Our pleasant association together as Christians is a marvelous teacher. Better than any words it reveals to us the riches of our faith and gives us assurance.

5. The expression "unto the riches of the full assurance of understanding" is a bit complicated.

Paul frequently used the word *riches* to describe the blessings of Christians. Eph. 1:18. The abundance of God's grace is also spoken of as the riches of his grace. Eph. 1:7. Compare Eph. 3:16.

The term *full assurance* (Gr. *plerophoria*) means fulness, abundance, most certain confidence. I Thess. 1:5: "Our gospel came unto you in much assurance." (Compare Luke 1:1 in Gr.)

"Understanding" (Gr. *sunesis*) refers to the mind insofar as it understands things. The term indicates an understanding of the bearing of things on one another.

Using the definitions of the words as given above, it appears that Paul desired that the understanding of the Colossians should develop until it was aware of the great riches that lie in full assurance.

When we reach the point where we have utterly no doubts about the truths of the Bible, no doubts about our salvation, and no hesitation in trusting God fully at all times, we feel good! We have riches!

6. Paul gives a summary or climax of his desires for the Colossians at the close of 2:2: "That they may know the mystery of God, (which is) Christ. John 17:3.
7. In 2:2 we again have a reference to God's mystery that is now revealed. That mystery, simply stated, is that Christ Jesus is now the unailing hope of all nations for glory from God. See notes on 1:26.
8. There is considerable variation in the ancient Greek manuscripts on the phrase "the mystery of God, *even* Christ." Even the King James text follows a slightly different reading than the American Standard. The King James use of Father after God

is obviously unnecessary. The reading of the American Standard version exactly translates the wording of the best current editions of the Greek N.T., those of Nestle-Aland (1956) and the United Bible Societies (1966).

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

Translation and Paraphrase

3. (For) in him (that is, in Christ) are all the treasures of (divine) wisdom and knowledge hidden (though they are not hidden to any who seek them in Christ; they are wholly hidden from those who seek elsewhere.)

Notes

1. We all desire to know the ultimate and unchangeable truths of the universe. We crave reliable information. We want to know the right way to live, the way that will really help us. In Christ all of these treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
2. Col. 2:3 is a sharp dig at the Gnostics. Their very name indicates that they thought they were the knowing ones. In their self-assumed wisdom they shunted Christ to a lower place. Paul asserts that the true wisdom they were seeking is to be found in the one they thrust aside. (See Introductory study on *Gnosticism*.)

Also Paul's remark about all wisdom being hidden in Christ would be contrary to those who loved the human philosophy, mentioned in 2:8.

3. Wisdom is *hidden* in Christ. Perhaps it would be more accurate to state simply that it is found only in Christ. The wisdom in Christ is not hidden from anyone, except those who are too proud to seek it in Christ. Those who seek it in him find it readily.

4. This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech.

Translation and Paraphrase

4. I speak this (way about my agony of soul for you) so that no one may deceive you by persuasiveness of speech. (I hope my extreme emotion over you will stir you to be on your guard.)

Notes

1. Paul was deeply concerned that the Colossians not be deluded by the persuasive speaking of false teachers. There are glib tongues advocating every imaginable religious idea. Many people are easily misled by eloquent speech. See Eph. 4:14.
2. Paul hoped that by telling the Colossians about the striving in his soul that he could put them on their guard against false teaching, against any teaching which differed from that which he had received by revelation from God and taught to them. Eph. 3:3-5.

5. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

5. (Please do not think that my absence from you makes me indifferent about your Christian life,) for (even) if I am absent from you in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, rejoicing (in your faith and love), and beholding your (good) order (in organization, worship and association together), and the firmness of your faith toward Christ.

Notes

1. When the Colossians were confronted with persuasive speaking by someone with "new light" on religion, they could very wisely in their imaginations picture Paul as being in their midst, perhaps shaking his head in disapproval at the doctrines that downgraded Christ and upgraded human knowledge.
2. Paul though physically absent from the Colossians, was always with them in spirit—in desire and in remembrance. The truth of his teachings was always with them.
3. When Paul imagined himself as being with the Colossians, he found himself rejoicing, and visualizing in his mind their good order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.
4. A good church needs order—order in organization, in their public meetings, and other dealings together. There is no inflexible pattern in the New Testament that constitutes good order for all the churches. What is good in one church might

not work in another. "Let all things be done decently and in order." I Cor. 14:40. Order in a church is as necessary as order in an army. A good church needs soldierly discipline.

5. Unpretended stedfast faith in Christ is one of the grand goals of our labors for Christ. I Tim. 1:5.
6. Features of a faithful church:
 - (1) Comforted, courageous hearts; (2:2)
 - (2) Unity (knit together).
 - (3) Love.
 - (4) Full assurance.
 - (5) Understanding.
 - (6) Power to resist alluring teaching; (2:4)
 - (7) Good order; (2:5)
 - (8) Stedfast faith; (2:5-6)
 - (9) Thanksgiving; (2:7)

Study and Review

Questions Over Colossians 1:24—2:5

1. What attitude did Paul have in his sufferings? (1:24)
2. For whom did Paul Suffer?
3. What did Paul seek to fill up?
4. Does Paul say in 1:24 that he was trying to suffer as much as Christ suffered? If not, what does he mean by "fill up . . . that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh"?
5. What does the "whereof" in 1:25 refer back to?
6. According to what was Paul made a minister: (1:25)
7. What was it that was given to Paul? (1:25)
8. Define the word *dispensation*. What word is a synonym for it?
9. For what purpose was the dispensation given to Paul?
10. The "word of God" in 1:25 is identified in 1:26 as being what?
11. Define the term *mystery*. (1:26)
12. When had the mystery been hidden?
13. How did God feel about making the mystery manifest? (1:27)
14. Among what people is the mystery made known?
15. What is the mystery said to be? (1:27)
16. What hope does the mystery bring?
18. Who is the *whom* referred to at the beginning of 1:28?
19. Paul says that his proclaiming was accompanied by two types of speaking. What are they? (1:28)

20. In what way did Paul teach every man?
21. What was the goal of Paul's teaching?
22. To what does the *whereunto* of 1:29 refer?
23. According to what did Paul strive? (1:29)
24. What worked within Paul?
25. From information given in 1:29, where would you say Paul obtained the ability to do the great labors he did?
26. What did Paul want the Colossians to know about his work? (2:1)
27. How could Paul strive for the Colossians when he was nowhere near them?
28. For people in what places besides Colossae did Paul strive?
29. Had Paul seen the Colossians face to face? How do you know?
30. What did Paul desire about the hearts of those he had not seen personally? (2:2)
31. In what were these people to be knit together?
32. Explain the term *knit*.
33. Unto what were these brethren to be knit together?
34. What does 2:2 indicate about the value of a full understanding?
35. What did Paul want these brethren to know?
36. What does 2:2 say the mystery of God is? (Please use American Standard version wording here.)
37. Who is referred to by the *whom* in 2:3?
38. What is hid in Christ?
39. How did 2:3 specially apply to the Gnostics?
40. Why did Paul speak to these people as he did about his strivings? (2:4)
41. What may delude us?
42. What connection can you make between 2:4 and 2:5?
43. In what way was Paul with them? (1:5)
44. What were Paul's feelings as he imagined himself being with the Colossians?
45. What two things about the Colossians did Paul behold with joy?
46. In what respects (possibly) did the Colossians have order?

Outline of 2:6-23

- D. CHRIST—The antidote for false doctrine; 2:6-23
1. Walk in Christ as you received him; 2:6-7
 - a. Rooted and builded up.
 - b. Established in your faith.
 - c. Abounding in thanksgiving.
 2. Reasons to beware of men's traditions and hold to Christ; 2:8-15
 - a. Philosophy is vain; 2:8
 - (1) After the traditions of men.
 - (2) After the rudiments of the world.
 - b. Christ has perfect God-hood; 2:9
 - c. Christ gives perfect completeness; 2:10a
 - d. Christ has perfect authority; 2:10b
 - e. Christ gives perfect circumcision; 2:11-12
 - (1) A circumcision not done by hands; 2:11
 - (2) Done in baptism; 2:12
 - f. Christ gives perfect life; 2:13-14
 - (1) Done in forgiving our trespasses; 2:13
 - (2) Done by blotting out the written ordinances; 2:14
 - g. Christ has perfectly triumphed; 2:15
 3. Things to let no one do to you; 2:16-19
 - a. Judge you concerning rituals; 2:16-17
 - (1) Rituals are shadows.
 - (2) The body is Christ's.
 - b. Rob you of your prize; 2:18-19
 - (1) By voluntary humility and angel-worship; 2:18
 - (2) By not holding to Christ the Head; 2:19
 4. Reasons for rejecting ordinances of men; 2:20-23
 - a. Ye died with Christ from worldly rudiments; 2:20
 - b. All ordinances are to perish; 2:21-22
 - c. Ordinances have no value against fleshly indulgences; 2:23

6. As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.
 7. rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Translation and Paraphrase

6. In the same manner as you (pl.) received Christ Jesus (as) the Lord, be (thus) walking in him,

7. (being) rooted (like a tree), and (constantly being) builded up in him (as a building under construction), and (being) made (more and more) firm in the faith (of Christ), just as you were taught; and (be) overflowing in thanksgiving.

Notes

1. Col. 2:6-7 is a bridge which leads us from the discussion of Paul's ministry into the discussion of false doctrines that are opposed to Christ. These verses may be construed either as a close to the preceding discussion of Paul's ministry, or as the opening words of the discussion of Christ vs. false doctrines. In our outline we treat them as the opening words of the new section.
2. As children of God we all once received Christ as our Lord and savior. This is necessary and glorious. But having done this, we must then walk in Christ in the same sincere obedient manner as we once received Christ. A faithful walk is as necessary as a good beginning. Eph. 4:17.
3. Christ Jesus is LORD. If he is not the Lord of our lives, he is probably not the savior of our souls.
4. The walk, or daily conduct, of the Christian must be deep-rooted and builded up. Eph. 3:17. Trees grow well only when they have a good root system. Transplanted pine trees with their close-trimmed roots do not thrive until a new root system has developed. How deeply is your life rooted in Christ? How much do you love him and think about him? How much have you studied the gospels to learn about Christ's words and deeds? These are necessary things if we are to be rooted in Christ.

Being built up (Gr. *epoikodomeo*) describes us as if we were buildings. A big building has piles driven deeply in the ground beneath it, or strong footings. It rises solidly with strong walls. Our Christian walk is grounded upon unchanging principles in God's word, and is built up by solid deeds of goodness, that never have to be removed as undesirable stones. Jude 20; Eph. 2-20-22.

5. "Rooted" is a perfect participle, indicating a past action with present effects. "Build up" and "established" (or "stablished") are present participles, indicating continuous action.

6. We are built up not *upon* Christ, but *in* Christ. It is not a physical act of building, but a spiritual development. We are established (or made firm) *in our faith* (or *by* our faith.)
7. The increasing firmness that we should gain as we are established in the faith, must match up with the way we were *taught* at the beginning of our Christian experience. We dare not abandon the basic truths by which we were saved as we increase in knowledge. Too many in our generation have left their earlier child-like faith when they went to some seminary or university for advanced learning. This is a curse to a man's soul. We cannot outgrow the true faith; we may, however, be deceived into departing from it.
8. One mark of a faithful church is that it is abounding in thanksgiving. To *abound* is to have overmuch, to overflow, to have excess. Does your thanksgiving overflow?
9. All of these thoughts about walking *in Christ* and being rooted *in him* are a necessary consideration as we go into the discussion about false doctrines that immediately follows. If we do not have the solid foundation of Christ to stand on, we have no criterion for judging false doctrine, nor any alternative to it.

8. Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

Translation and Paraphrase

8. Watch (carefully) lest anyone (deceive you and) be carrying you off like (conquerors carry off) spoils (of war), through (their) propagandizing of (human philosophy and) wisdom, and (their) vain (fruitless) deceit, (all of which is) according to the traditions of men, (and) according to the rudimentary principles of (this) world, and not according to Christ.

Notes

1. In 2:6-7 Paul laid down a true positive foundation for life. Now in 2:8 he begins to speak of the negative, undesirable, worldly, false doctrines that are opposed to Christ.
2. As we read Col. 2:8ff, we are confronted with many allusions to the heresy at Colossae. Many of the allusions are obscure to us, but to the Colossians Paul's words struck home plainly.

The Colossian heresy was basically a group of additions to Christ. They wanted to add philosophy (2:8), perhaps also circumcision (2:11), rules about Jewish ceremonies (2:16), worship of angels (2:17), and rules about self-denial of the body (2:20).

3. Paul warned, "Take heed lest anyone be carrying you off, like conquerors carry off the spoil of war." All of the additions to Christ were endangering the Colossians. By these human ideas, men were about to deceive the Colossians, and when that happened it would be just as if some conqueror made spoil of them.

As we think of *spoil*, we think of captives of war being carried away, and paraded before crowds in victory processions. The conquered peoples were treated as spoils of war and led away into slavery.

The teachers of human philosophy and human religious ideas around Colossae would boast whenever they made a convert and deceived someone into accepting their ideas, like conquering generals gloried over their vanquished opponents.

4. The *philosophy* which Paul warned against is not exactly what we ordinarily mean by philosophy. The word *philosophy* literally means "love of wisdom." It was used by the Greek writers for either zeal for or skill in any art or science, or any branch of knowledge. (Thayer). Philosophy refers to any moral system. We could speak of the philosophy of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Greeks, etc. Here in Colossians *philosophy* seems to refer to the theology (or theosophy) which concerned itself with Jewish rituals, and honoring angels, and rules about self-denial of the body. Paul calls all of these things vain deceit (or empty, fruitless deceit). Eph. 5:6.
5. Paul describes the vain deceit and philosophy of men in three ways:
 - (1) It is after the tradition of men.
 - (2) It is after the rudiments of the world.
 - (3) It is not after Christ.
6. *Traditions* are ideas or teachings handed down from one generation to another. They may be good traditions (II Thess. 2:15; 3:6), or undesirable traditions originated by men alone (Mark 7:8-9; Matt. 15:2).

7. By *rudiments* Paul refers to the basic, first, primary, simple elements of anything. The letters of the alphabet are the rudiments of writing. The elements are the rudiments of the material universe. II Pet. 3:10. Numbers are the rudiments of mathematics.

Paul here refers to the philosophy and vain deceit of men as being rudiments. Compared to the boundless, profound, unsearchable wisdom in God's word, men's ideas are like A-B-C's. They are but the rudiments of truth. Philosophy, though it is usually thought of as very profound, is rudimentary because it is only the teachings and traditions of men.

8. In Gal. 4:3 Paul also refers to the *rudiments* of the world. The reference there is obviously to the law of Moses. It was called *rudiments*, not because it was not given by God, but because it was an imperfect, incomplete, temporary system, given "to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24).

It is very possible that the rudiments Paul refers to in Col. 2:8 may be the same as, or similar to, those in Gal. 4:3, the reference being to the law of Moses in both places. The reference in Colossians does seem to apply to other things as well, however.

9. Many interpreters have understood the rudiments referred to in Colossians to be the stars and planets and signs of the zodiac. They feel that the Colossian heresy included astrological ideas, perhaps even a worship of the heavenly bodies. The Revised Standard version sets forth this idea in its translation: "the elemental spirits of the universe."

Certainly Christians should shun astrology as a guide for their lives. The Old Testament prophets thundered the message that God's children should not worship the host of heaven nor seek guidance from them. (Jer. 8:2; Zeph. 1:5; II Chron. 33:3, 5). Why should we seek the heavenly bodies rather than the God who made them? Usually the people who follow the Bible the least are the people who look to things like astrology for guidance the most. When men reject the word of God, they turn to superstition.

As true as all of this is, there is no real indication that Paul was referring to the heavenly bodies by his references to *rudiments*. Even those who think that Paul was referring to

heavenly bodies differ widely in unfolding the meaning of this passage.

10. How tragic that men's ideas are "not after Christ." But that is utterly true. No man has ever thought up out of his own intellect and knowledge the truth about God, His will, and promises. These things are things which we have either learned from God's revelation of Himself, or we do not know them. I Cor. 2:9-12.

9. for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, 10. and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

Translation and Paraphrase

9. (It is essential that you follow Christ only,) because in him dwells all the fullness of God-hood in a bodily manner. (It dwelt in his body on earth, and is now in his present glorious heavenly body.)

10. (Also) in him (Christ) you are made complete in every particular; (this is possible only in Christ, the one) who is head over every rule and authority (in heaven and on earth).

Notes

1. Col. 2:9-10 continues a list of reasons why we should beware of men's traditions and hold only to Christ. (See outline.) The reasons given here are that Christ has perfect God-hood (2:9); Christ gives perfect completeness; Christ has perfect authority. Why should we turn away from Christ or add anything to what he has said when his nature and works are so perfect? All things that are necessary for life and godliness have been given in Christ. II Peter 1:3.
2. Christ has perfect Godhead, or God-hood. The Greek word (*theotes*) translated Godhead refers to essential God-quality. A similar word (*theiotes*) is used in Romans 1:20; it refers to divinity as reflected in various ways. All the fulness—the abundance, the full measure—of God-hood dwells in Christ. The verb *dwelt* here is from the Gr. *katoikeo*, meaning to settle or dwell, as opposed to *paroikeo*, to sojourn or dwell temporarily. God-hood is a permanent quality in Christ.
3. God-hood dwells in Christ bodily, that is, in a bodily manner. Col. 1:19. This reference to a bodily manner probably refers

both to Christ's body that he had while on earth, and his present exalted and spiritual body in heaven, visible only to the inhabitants of heaven. John 1:14.

No matter what body is referred to, the teaching of Paul that divine fulness dwelt in a *body* specially struck at the Gnostic doctrines. They did not think that spiritual and material things could be in contact.

This idea is not some remote historical curiosity. Some scholars today are arguing that we can hold to spiritual truths from Christ, while we at the same time deny the reality of the historical Jesus who is portrayed in the gospel. This is nothing but a modern version of Gnosticism.

4. There is no more glorious declaration in all the Bible than the statement that "in him ye are made full (or complete)."

This is an echo of John 1:16: "And of his fullness have we all received."

We all long for a full life. We want to be a complete person with nothing lacking that is of real worth. Contrary to the feelings of most of us fullness of life comes altogether from our association with Christ, and not from any *things* we may acquire. Luke 12:15.

5. Christ has perfect authority. He the head over all principality and power. The terms *principality* (Gr. *arche*, beginning or rule) and *power* (Gr. *exousia*, authority) apparently refer to high ranking angelic beings, both good and bad. Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:21-22; 3:10; 6:12. The terms may also include all authority among both angels and men.

The Gnostics emphasized angels; but Christ is head over all angelic forces. Heb. 1:4-8; Col. 2:18.

11. in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; 12. having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Translation and Paraphrase

11. And (to show you why we must hold only to Christ and reject the traditions of men,) in him you were circumcised by a circumcision not done by hands, (but brought about) by putting off

the (deeds of your sinful) body of flesh; (and all this made possible for you) by (your participation in) the circumcision of Christ.

12. (Your putting off the body of flesh, and participating in the circumcision of Christ took place in your) being buried with him by baptism, in which (act) you also were raised up (to a newness of life) through (the means of your) faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Notes

1. Col. 2:11-12 teaches us that Christ gives us perfect circumcision, and that this is accomplished in baptism.
2. The rather unexpected reference here to circumcision suggests that among the Colossians circumcision had been discussed, if not absolutely demanded.
3. Among the Jews there had always been two conflicting views of circumcision: (1) Circumcision by itself made a man good; (2) Circumcision was a sign of the good already in a man. When circumcision was first introduced among the Hebrews, it was a sign of the righteousness a man possessed before the circumcision was done. Thus Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, was first declared righteous (Gen. 15:6), and much later circumcised (Gen. 17:10-11) as a token of God's covenant with him. (Rom. 4:9-11).

However, after the time of Abraham Jewish infants were circumcised when eight days old. Therefore their circumcision could not have been a sign of their righteousness prior to circumcision, but only of their relationship to God through Abraham. Nonetheless if these circumcised individuals did not live righteously as they grew up, their circumcision alone did not make them acceptable to God. The Old Testament and the New alike speak of uncircumcised hearts, and ears and lips: hearts, ears, and lips that were not acceptable to God, even though the individual was circumcised. (Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:25, 29; Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4.)

To sum this up, we observe that circumcision was an essential act to be in covenant relationship with God, but the act was rendered worthless if the person's life was ungodly.

4. The Jewish-Gnostic-pagan-Christian heretics at Colossae were saying, "You must be circumcised." Paul says that in Christ we already have this honor. We are circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands.

As circumcision in former times marked a child as being in covenant relationship with God through Abraham, in a like manner Christians are circumcised and marked as being in covenant relation with God through Christ.

5. The question that comes to our minds as we think about this circumcision not made with hands is this: How can we obtain this wonderful circumcision? Three answers are given by Paul to this question:

(1) *By putting off the body of the flesh.* (Rom. 6:6). This seems to refer to our putting away the sinful deeds done by our bodies. (This is a figure of speech in which the body doing the sinful acts stands for the acts themselves.) We must repent of our sins done in the body. Paul in Romans 8:4-7 warns us that we cannot do the sins of the flesh and please God. So also in Gal. 5:17, 19, 23.

(2) *In the circumcision of Christ.* When Christians enter into their union with Christ, His death becomes their death; His resurrection becomes their resurrection; His circumcision becomes their circumcision; His righteousness becomes our righteousness. We are circumcised in that He was circumcised. (Luke 2:21).

(3) *By baptism.* Baptism is the third factor that causes us to experience the circumcision not made with hands. (I Pet. 3:21).

As a result of these three things, Christians become the true circumcision, the people who are in covenant with God. See notes on Philipians 3:2-3.

6. The expression at the start of 2:12 "buried with him in baptism," refers back to "circumcision" in 2:11. Baptism takes the place of circumcision for us. Circumcision could be said to be a type of baptism. (By *type* we refer to some Old Testament person, event, or thing which foreshadowed some similar New Testament person, event or thing. The N.T. thing which was foreshadowed is called the *antitype*.)
7. The comparison between circumcision and baptism follows the same pattern as the comparisons between all the O.T. types and their N.T. counterparts: in some respects the types are like the antitypes, and in some other respects they differed.

The failure to recognize the differences between baptism and circumcision as well as their similarities has led to a grievous error: many interpreters argue that as infants were

circumcised, so infants should now be baptized. As infants were brought into God's covenant by circumcision, so now infants are brought into God's covenant by baptism. This argument is used by almost every advocate of infant baptism. (For an example of it see Wm. Hendrickson's commentary on *Colossians and Philemon* p. 116, footnote.)

This argument cannot be true. Note the plain statement in Col. 2:12 that in baptism we are raised with Christ through FAITH in the working of God. Obviously then those who are baptized (and thereby circumcised) are those who have faith. This eliminates infants.

Also Col. 1:11 says that we are circumcised by the putting off of the body of flesh. No eight-day old infant is capable of fleshly sins, nor of repenting and putting off the body of flesh.

We wonder why those who insist that baptism is for infants because circumcision was for infants, do not insist that baptism be done on the eighth day of a child's life, since circumcision was to be done on that day. Even Wm. Barclay affirms that baptism in New Testament times was for adults only. (Wm. Barclay, *Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians*, pp. 167-168.)

8. CIRCUMCISION	(Col. 2:11-13)	BAPTISM
1. For the O.T. age.		1. For the N.T. age.
2. Related men to Abraham and God's covenant; Gen. 17:9-10.		2. Relates us to Abraham and God's promise; Gal. 3:27, 29.
3. A physical putting away of flesh.		3. A putting away of sinful deeds of the flesh.
4. A sign (token) of God's covenant; Gen. 17:11.		4. Not called a sign of anything. It is not "an outward sign of an inward grace."
5. Righteousness required of those circumcised; Deut 10:16.		5. Righteousness required of those baptized; Romans 6:4, 6.
6. For infants; Gen. 17:11.		6. For those who have faith; Col. 2:12.
7. For males; Gen. 17:12.		7. For all; Gal. 3:27-28.
8. Essential; Gen. 17:14.		8. Essential; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4.

9. Col. 2:12 tells us that we are *buried* with Christ and *raised* with him by baptism. This thought is discussed at length in Romans 6:1-11. This thought seems to be introduced here in Colossians as an explanation of how we share the circumcision of Christ. In 2:11 Paul said that we are circumcised . . . in the circumcision of Christ. Then in 2:12 he indicates that this is brought about by our having been buried and raised with Christ in baptism. In being raised with Christ we share all the triumphs of the risen Christ, including the privileges that came in the O.T. age to those circumcised. These included all the promises to Abraham concerning how his seed would bless the world. (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17-18).
10. The allusion to *burial* by baptism recalls to our minds that in the primitive church baptism was done by the act of immersion, or completely dipping the body of the one baptized under water for an instant. We are buried in the water as he was buried in the tomb. Many old baptistries designed for immersion still remain in the Holy Land and surrounding countries; examples can be seen in Capernaum, Nazareth, and dozens of other places.
- However, the burial Paul alludes to in Col. 2:12 is a spiritual burial. Our old man, our old nature, is buried, done away with, and disposed of as we are united with Christ. His death and burial becomes our death and burial. We are released from sins by death. (Rom. 7:7).
11. Baptism alone has no magic, no power. It **MUST** be accompanied and preceded by faith in the working of God. Note that it is not enough to believe that God exists. We must believe that he works, and works for us. (Phil. 2:13). Do you believe that God works in our world and in your life? God has always required faith of his people, faith that he will work for them and save them. The great failure of the Israelites in the desert under Moses was that their knowledge of God was not accompanied by faith that God would use His power for them. (Heb. 4:2).
12. Paul reminds us that God raised Christ from the dead. We must believe this fact to be saved. (Rom. 10:9). Christ's resurrection is a historical fact, but it is also a part of our experience. When we receive Christ, his resurrection becomes

our resurrection unto a new life. Note that Col. 2:12 refers to two resurrections: Christ's and ours. The same God accomplished both resurrections.

13. In summary, Col. 2:11-12 teaches us that Christ gives us perfect circumcision, and that this is accomplished in baptism, in which we are both buried and raised with Christ, if we have faith in God's working.

13. And you; being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses;

Translation and Paraphrase

13. And (to make clear what I refer to by your being raised up by baptism,) when you were (spiritually) dead because of the trespasses (you had once) and (because of) the uncircumcision of your flesh (you being outside of the covenant), he (God) made you alive together with him (Christ; and this he did by) graciously forgiving you all your misdeeds.

Notes

- Col. 2:13 gives us a word picture of Christ making dead people alive. It grows out of the remarks in 2:12 about our being raised with Christ. The resurrection Paul speaks of is not the resurrection of the body from the grave, although it is plainly taught in numerous places in the scripture. The resurrection under discussion is the new life we live following our baptism.
- Two things are mentioned by Paul as having caused us to be dead spiritually:
 - (1) Our trespasses (or sins, or misdeeds); Eph. 2:1, 5.
 - (2) The uncircumcision of our flesh. In O.T. times uncircumcised people were cut off from God's covenant with Abraham. (Gen. 17:14). Thus the Gentiles, who were uncircumcised, were outside of God's covenant, and in this sense DEAD. Death in the scripture never implies an end to existence, or unconsciousness, or annihilation. To be cut off from God, who is life, is to be dead, whether we are in sin in this world, or in the lake of fire to come. (Rev. 20:14-15.)
- Paul identifies our being made alive with Christ as being caused by, or synonymous with, or simultaneous to, God's having for-

given us our trespasses. Too few people sense the DEAD-liness of sin, or the resurrection-reality in salvation. Compare notes on Col. 1:11.

14. having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;

Translation and Paraphrase

14. (Christ could make us alive as a result of his) having obliterated the handwriting consisting of decrees (meaning the law of Moses!), which was against us (because it condemned us without providing a way of justification), (and) which was contrary to us (not being of such nature that it could help us); and he took it away from (our) midst when he nailed it to the cross.

Notes

1. Col. 2:13-14 discusses how Christ gives us perfect life when once we were dead. This He did by: (1) forgiving us our trespasses, and by (2) blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us.
2. To *blot out* (Gr. *exaleipho*) means to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out. God delights in wiping dirty slates clean.
3. What was it that Christ blotted out? Admittedly He blots out our sins (Acts 3:19). But the reference here is to something else. It is called the "handwriting of ordinances." This cannot refer to the later pagan Gnostic ordinances that the Colossians were observing (2:20-21). The ordinances that Christ blotted out were blotted out when he died on the cross. Obviously the thing blotted out was the law of Moses. It was handwriting on stones, and consisted of ordinances. (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 12:1; II Cor. 3:7; Eph. 2:15).
4. The law of Moses, handwritten and composed of ordinances, was against us, because it listed very many acts that were sinful, and then pronounced judgment on all who disobeyed it, while offering no certain way of escape from this condemnation. See Gal. 3:10-12.

The law was also contrary to us. Its nature was such as to condemn us rather than help us. It promised no Holy Spirit to all believers. It set the standard high, as high as God's

holiness. We sinners could not live up to it. The apostle Peter declared that the law was a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. (Acts 15:10). Paul in Romans the seventh chapter gives an agonized monologue of how he found himself unable to live up to the law. (Rom. 7:14-24).

5. Because of careless study of the Bible, and the grip of habit in our thinking, many well-intentioned people have never grasped that we do not live under the law and covenant given through Moses, but live under the new covenant enacted by Christ. The old Mosaic covenant is done away. Large portions of the books of Romans, Galatians, II Corinthians, and Hebrews are devoted to expounding the fact that we are not under the law. Note Romans 6:14; II Cor. 3:6-11; Gal. 3:19, 24-25; Heb. 8:6-7, 13; 9:15; 10:1; etc.

Certainly the Bible teaches that the law was holy (Rom. 7:12), and that it was given by God. But it was only designed to be in force until Christ came, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. See Gal. 3:19, 24.

6. The statement that Christ nailed it (the law) to the cross adds a new dimension to Christ's statement upon the cross: "It is finished." (John 19:30). Many things were finished: his sufferings, our sins, the Old Testament predictions concerning him; and (as we learn here in Colossians) the handwritten ordinances of the law of Moses. (Rom. 7:4).
7. The point Paul makes here in Colossians by referring to the blotting out of the written ordinances of the law of Moses, is that Christ made us alive by doing this. The law condemned us without really helping us. Christ took the law out of the way. We are thereby released from condemnation, and given needed help. In that sense we are made alive. (I Peter 2:2⁴)

15. **having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.**

Translation and Paraphrase

15. (And then) having (wholly defeated, disarmed, and) despoiled those beings in first rank and the authorities (those Satanic and angelic powers that oppose us), he exhibited them openly (every spiritual being in the universe perceiving His victory), having triumphed over them by it (that is, by the cross).

Notes

1. Col. 2:15 is a difficult verse, probably because we know almost nothing about the events to which Paul alludes. Also it is hard to decide exactly what the participle "having spoiled" at the beginning of the verse refers back to. It can refer to Christ's having made us alive (2:13), and thus be another explanation as to how Christ made us alive. Certainly Christ could not have made us alive unless He had triumphed over Satan and his principalities and powers; for these held rule over our souls. See Mark 3:27.

The "having spoiled" at the start of 2:15 may refer clear back to 2:8, to the warning to beware of men's traditions. In our outline we have treated it as so referring. (The verse fits well either way, and may well apply to both points.)

We should beware of men's traditions and hold to Christ, because Christ has perfectly triumphed over the principalities and powers.

2. "Spoiled" (or "despoiled") here means (as it did in 1:8) "to lead away captive, to parade in triumph as a conqueror exhibiting victims and spoils of war, to lead captives into slavery, to disarm."
3. We are told that Christ despoiled the principalities and powers. These beings (as stated in the notes on 2:10) are angelic rulers and authorities, evidently strictly evil ones in the reference here. We are told that Christ made a show (or exhibit) of them openly, and "led them as captives in his triumphal procession." (New English Bible).

We are further told that Christ made this triumphal exhibit of them in it (that is, in the cross.) This could also be translated "by it."

4. We believe everything this verse says although we do not understand it all. We do not know when, where (or if) Christ made any open spectacle of defeated angelic opponents. Any such exhibition would of necessity have followed his crucifixion, burial, and ascension. See Luke 11:22.
5. In view of the fact that Christ made his triumphal exhibition over enemies *in it* (the cross), and in view of the fact that a Julius Caesar-type victory parade exhibiting conquered captives seems to us out-of-character for our savior, we prefer to think

that the triumphal show of Christ was limited to the implications of his triumphal death on the cross.

By that death Satan and his angels were deprived of all claim upon the souls of sinners. By that death men who once were loyal to Satan, were touched and reconciled to God. (Col. 1:21). By that death Christ attracts all men to him. (John 12:32). Christ's death threw consternation into the camp of the devil. He knows he is defeated, and his angels know it too, though in their wrath they are yet determined to drag as many with them into the everlasting fire as possible. (Rev. 12:12; Matt. 25:41).

We therefore prefer to think that Christ organized no victory parade in heaven, but that his triumph consisted in his spiritual victory on the cross, a victory that was clearly perceived by Satan and his principalities and powers, and by every other spiritual being in the universe.

6. Since Christ has triumphed over the most powerful spiritual beings in the universe, we should hold fast to Him, and beware lest anyone lead us away captive by his philosophy and deceitful traditions.

Those who lead us to accept science, or philosophy, or socialism, or communism, or evolution, or government regulations, or decrees of church councils, or psychology, or riot and revolution, or any other thing, as being more important than Christ—these have triumphed and made spoil of us.

Christ has totally triumphed. Why should we let men triumph over us by taking us from him? (Col. 2:8, 15).

16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: 17. which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.

Translation and Paraphrase

16. Therefore (because Christ is triumphant) let no one judge (and condemn) you concerning (religious laws about) food and drink, or in regard to a feast day, or (the feast of the) new moon, or a sabbath day (a day of rest).

17. (Let no one judge you about your observance or non-observance of these Jewish rituals,) which are (only) a shadow of

things (that are) coming, but the (solid) body (that casts the shadow before it appeared itself) is Christ's. (He is the fulfillment of all of these Old Testament ceremonies.)

Notes

1. Col. 2:16-17 are the first verses in a new section, which gives practical applications of the truths in the foregoing paragraph. In the preceding section (2:8-15) we saw reason after reason why Christ is the perfect antidote to false doctrine. Now, beginning at 2:16, there are practical applications made of that fact. The first is: Let no one judge you concerning Jewish rituals.
2. Let no one judge you (and condemn you) on the basis of the food you eat (or don't eat), or about drink, or in regard to a feast day, or any such thing.
3. The word *meat* (Gr. *brōsis*) refers to food generally, and not to meat or flesh specifically, although meat is included. The law of Moses gave extensive regulations about food. See Lev. 11. Most religions have some sort of dietary laws: kosher regulations; abstinence from meats on Fridays and during Lent; strict vegetarian rules; etc.

Nothing is more plainly taught in the N.T. than that all dietary restrictions are abolished by Christ. Mark 7:19; Romans 14:2-3, 17; I Cor. 6:13; 8:8; I Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 9:10. Of course, however, our liberty to eat does not do away with instructions against gluttony, intemperance, waste, or causing others to stumble.

4. With regard to *drink* this verse teaches us that we are to let no one judge us. All things are lawful for us to use (I Cor. 6:12). Nonetheless we must beware lest we be brought under the power of anything, and we must beware lest our liberty be a stumbling-block to others (I Cor. 6:12; 8:9). Strong drink is particularly likely to get us under its power, and its use is particularly liable to cause others to stumble into drunkenness. Drunkenness will keep us out of the kingdom of God. (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21). It would surely be right and wise for us to apply Paul's words about eating meats to strong drink also: "If food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall." (I Cor. 8:13; RSV).

5. Christians are liberated from bondage to a set of rules. No man can judge us about non-observance or observance of a feast day. Leviticus 23 lists numerous feasts, such as the Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.
6. The New Moon was an observance of the first day of each month as calculated on a lunar basis. The Hebrews celebrated the start of each new month by blowing trumpets and extra sacrifices. See Numbers 10:10; 28:11; I Chron. 23:31; II Chron. 31:3; Neh. 10:33.
7. The sabbath day was the seventh day of the week, or Saturday. It was a day of rest kept by the Hebrews in remembrance of God's rest on the seventh day of creation (Ex. 20:11), and also because God delivered them from bondage in Egypt (Deut. 5:15).

In the primitive church some Jewish Christians continued for a time to meet on the sabbath days, and to observe Jewish hours of prayer. Gentile Christians met together on the first day of the week, and this day was called the Lord's Day. (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). This was done under the oversight and evidently with the approval of the inspired apostles. However it is significant that no New Testament scripture commands us to honor or observe Sunday as a greater day than any other, or as the only acceptable day for group worship. One day is not greater than another day. In Christianity the whole universe is God's temple, and every day is a holy day.

8. In our times there are urgent radio broadcasts crying out that we must be keeping the Sabbath day, the feast of tabernacles, and other such rituals to please God. Paul says that no man has the right to judge us about such things.

This is in harmony with his teachings in Romans 14:5ff. If we regard a day as being worthy of honor, we regard it unto the Lord. If we regard it not, we do this also unto the Lord. Let us not judge our brother, or set at nought our brother on the basis of these things. (Rom. 14:10).

9. Paul's teachings about not judging one another concerning ordinances runs contrary to the ideas of some, that anything that is added to the explicit teachings of the scripture is automatically bad and damning. These may be perfectly harm-

less and only become bad when we try to force everyone else to adopt our ways of doing things.

10. Many professed Christians of our day fix attention on legalistic taboos and lists of do's and don't's, that will supposedly guarantee that we shall make it into glory, even if barely so. But Christians do not live under a system of law, but under grace. The handwritten ordinances have been blotted out and nailed to the cross. (Col. 2:14).
11. Many, if not all, of the O.T. ceremonies were types of spiritual realities in our present Christian age. (For the meaning of *type*, see notes on Col. 2:11-12.)

Christ is our Passover. (I Cor. 5:7). The Sabbath was a type of our eternal heavenly rest. (Heb. 4:9). The feast of tabernacles reminds us that we also are pilgrims and sojourners upon earth. (Lev. 23:42-43; I Peter 2:11).

The O.T. ceremonies were like shadows in the evening. They stretched out far ahead of the body that cast the shadows, revealing that the body was near or approaching, and revealing its general shape. The body that cast its shadow in the Old Testament ceremonies was Christ. He is the reality of which they were but foreshadowings.

18. Let no man rob you of your prize, by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19. and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. Let no one pass judgment against you (as if he were an umpire), or deprive you of your prize, (while he himself is) delighting in (an outward show of pretended humility (and self-abasement)), and in a worship of angels, involving himself in things which he (claims he) has seen, proudly puffed up in his fleshly mind without just cause,

19. and not holding fast unto (Christ) the Head, from whom the entire body (the church), being supplied (with its essential nourishment) and coalesced together through the joints and ligaments (as its individual members have close contact with one another), is growing the growth of God (the growth which God intends).

Notes

1. A second thing we are to let no one do to us, is to let no one rob us of our prize. *Rob* here (Gr. *katabrabeuo*) means to deprive of a prize; or give adverse judgment; or disqualify us as an umpire might disqualify a victory or point in athletic competition. This is somewhat similar to the statement in 2:16: "Let no man judge you."
2. We are disqualified and robbed of our prize from Christ when we let men talk us into making ourselves "humble" and into falling down to worship angels.
A "voluntary humility" is a self-willed humility, a humility that is shown by outward acts of self-denial to the body. It is a false humility that covers overbearing inward pride. Col. 2:23. True humility can neither be voluntarily put on nor put off.
3. Those who insist on outward exhibitions of humility and worshipping of angels are usually those who say a great deal about what they have seen, about their visions. They dwell on these things, investigating them, entering into the study of them, and going into details in narrating them.
4. Those who insist on outward exhibitions of humility and worshipping of angels are usually those who are vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds. *Vainly* means "without just cause." They have no real basis for pride. Their minds are fleshly, being concerned only with themselves and their fleshly desires for honor.
5. There are some variations in the ancient manuscripts as to whether Col. 2:18 says "what he hath *not* seen" (as in KJV), or "which he hath seen" (ASV). The explanation probably is that the person who tells about his visions really thinks he has seen them, but is probably deluded. Thus ancient copyists of Paul's letters found it easy to insert *not* in the clause "He hath seen." Probably the visionaries had not really seen what they claimed, but they thought they had. The ASV reading without the *not* is better supported by manuscript evidence than the other.
6. Those who insist on outward exhibitions of humility do not hold fast to Christ the Head. (Eph. 1:22). They imagine that they have seen visions, and this makes Christ less important to them.

The theme of the whole book of Colossians is that Christ is supreme. He is everything to the child of God. False teachers do not hold fast the Head.

7. To emphasize the importance of Christ as Head, Paul says that from the head (Christ) all the body (the church) increases with the increase of God (literally, "is growing the growth of God"). In other words if we do not hold on to Christ as head, we cut ourselves off from the marvelous growth that God can cause us to achieve. (Eph. 4:15-16).
8. In order for the church to grow Christ causes the church to be supplied and knit together through its joints and bands. This is a rather complicated description of the growth process of the church, as compared to a human body.

The church is *supplied* by Christ with all the essential food and gifts and help it needs, just as a body is supplied by wholesome food. The church owes its entire growth to Christ. There is no other source of strength and nourishment.

The church is *knit* together, that is, closely joined and coalesced together. Its members, though coming from many backgrounds, are harmoniously joined together in one body, until their relationship is as solid as two pieces of a broken bone that have knit back together.

This process of knitting men together in one body is done "through the joints and bands," that is, through the joints and ligaments. Any nutrition that passes to our feet to cause them to grow along with the rest of our body, has to go through the knee joint and ligaments. Similarly any growth that one member of the church makes comes about through his contact with other members. Each member has to function in the measure that is due for the whole body to grow. (Eph. 4:16).

20. If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, 21. Handle not, nor taste, nor touch 22. (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?

Translation and Paraphrase

20. If you died with Christ (as indeed you did when you were baptized, and were thus made free) from (bondage to) the rudimentary things of the world, (then) why, as if (you were still)

living in the world, do you subject yourselves to (this world's religious) ordinances?

21. (I refer to such ordinances as): "Touch not," and "Taste not," and "Handle not"—(ordinances commanding celibacy and abstinence from food and drink).

22. (These ordinances of) which (I speak) are all (leading people) unto corruption (and eternal misery) by (their) misuse according to the precepts and teachings of men. (Conceivably they might have some use, but as they are being used, they are an abuse.)

(Note—See two alternate paraphrases of this verse in the following notes, section 11.)

Notes

1. Col. 2:20-22 contains Paul's warning against asceticism. (Asceticism is the voluntary self-denial or abuse of the body for religious reasons.)
2. The reason for which we should disregard all rules about self-denial of the body is that all of these are man-made, and we Christians have died to all the rudiments of this world. We hold only to the things Christ has commanded. (Isaiah 29:13; Matt. 15:9).
3. We died to sin and to men's ordinances when we repented and were baptized. See notes on Col. 2:12.
4. Once again here in Col. 2:20 (as in 2:8) all the religious ordinances in the world (excepting, of course, those given through Christ, and in harmony with Christ) are called *rudiments*. No matter how wise, mystical, and benevolent these ordinances may sound, they are like the A.B.C.'s, mere rudimentary concepts, when compared to the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8).
5. The ordinances Paul refers to in 2:20 are the ordinances like those listed in 2:21: "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." Paul is not here referring to the ordinances of the law of Moses, as he was back in Col. 2:14.
6. Some people have quoted Col. 2:21 without referring to the verses before and after it. Such a use of the verse might make it sound like we were indeed to "Touch not; taste not; handle not." But Paul meant that these were the type of ordinances which we were to shun. We have no laws that forbid us to handle, taste, nor touch wholesome normal things.

7. The command "Handle not" (KJV, "Touch not;" Gr. *hupto*) may refer to sexual relationships and marriage. It is from the same word as "touch" in I Cor. 7:1, which obviously refers to this. Sex within marriage is approved of God, necessary, and desirable. (I Cor. 7:1-5; Prov. 5:18-20; I Peter 3:7). Any religion that forbids marriage and normal sex relations is a doctrine of devils. (I Tim. 4:1-3).
8. The difference between *handle* and *touch* in Col. 2:21 is not great. *Handle* (*hupto*) is the stronger term, indicating to lay hold of or hold fast. *Touch* (*thiggano*) is a more delicate term, signifying to touch, particularly as a means of knowledge, or for some purpose.
9. Col. 2:22 is a difficult verse, and has been variously interpreted. The difficulty lies in the fact that we are not sure what the "all which" at the start of the verse refers back to—to the ordinances, or to the food and drink involved in the ordinances?
Also we cannot be certain whether 2:22 is a continuation of the quotation of the false teachers, started in 2:21, or whether it is all Paul's parenthetical observation concerning the ordinances referred to in 2:21.
10. We must observe here that the word *using* in 2:22 (both in KJV and ASV) comes from the Gr. *apochresis*, which actually means "abuse" or "misuse." The translation "using" represents an interpretation (maybe a legitimate one) of the text, rather than a precise translation.
Also the term *perish* is from the Gr. noun *phthora*, which is usually translated *corruption*, and refers variously to: (1) decay and decomposition of material things (as in I Cor. 15:42); (2) to moral decay and corruption (II Pet. 1:4); or (3) to the loss of salvation and to eternal misery (Gal. 6:8; Col 2:22).
11. Our own interpretation of Col. 2:22 may be seen in the translation and paraphrase given above. To us it appears that it is the ordinances of men that are leading people into corruption and misery, because of the abuse of them after the teachings of men.

We give here two alternative paraphrases of Col. 2:22, and leave the matter to the reader to consider which seems to him to be correct. Undoubtedly the Colossians, who had heard the false teachers give their speeches, knew exactly what Paul referred to in Col. 2:22. To us it is somewhat indefinite.

Alternate Paraphrase A: "(These ordinances deal only with physical things like food and drink) which are all (soon digested) unto destruction by the (normal) using (of them. And furthermore these ordinances are only) according to the commandments and teachings of men."

(This interpretation is similar to the idea expressed in Matt. 15:7; I Cor. 6:13.)

Alternate Paraphrase B: (Paul speaking: "To quote the false teachers, they say,) "Touch not (food or women), Taste not, Handle not; (for these things which you touch and taste and handle are things) which are (doomed) unto corruption by (their) abuse (and you cannot use them without it being an abuse).'" (With reference to all of this, I say it is only) according to the commandments and teachings of men."

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

Translation and Paraphrase

23. (The ordinances of) which (I spoke do indeed) have a speakable appearance of wisdom in (the respects of) self-chosen worship, and (apparent) humility, and (in impressive demonstrations of) severity to the body; (but they are) not of value for the satisfying of the flesh (and restraining indulgence).

Notes

1. Paul concludes his warnings against human ordinances and asceticism by saying that the way that some people carry out such ordinances makes an impressive show, but that the ordinances are of no value when it comes to satisfying the basic desires of the flesh, and giving us contentment.
2. Paul concedes that the human ordinances named in 2:21 indeed have an appearance (or show, or matter, or word; Gr. *logos*) of wisdom in *will-worship*. It takes a lot of will power to live up to them. *Will-worship* is voluntary, arbitrary worship, worship which one devises and prescribes for himself.

Also these ordinances make those who observe them very humble-appearing. The humility, however, is outward, and not genuine. Compare 2:18. Some religious people wear dark-colored, peculiar-looking, uncomfortable clothing. Such an act does not make the person really humble.

Also the ordinances make quite a show of severity to, or neglecting the body. Any man who lives without meat, or fasts for days, or wears odd uncomfortable clothing, or takes a vow to remain unmarried, or sleeps on spikes, or walks on hot coals, or crawls on hands and knees for great distances in acts of worship—such people are looked upon as especially holy by multitudes of unthinking people. They really are not.

3. In spite of these outward appearances Paul says that the ordinances of men have no value against the indulgence of the flesh (KJV, "to the satisfying of the flesh"). A monk in a monastery living on bread and water may make an impressive show of self-denial, but he still oftentimes may experience discontent with his lot, and crave a more normal life.
4. The word *indulgence* (KJV, *satisfying*; Gr. *plesmone*) refers to the state or quality of being full and satisfied; satiety. Christ satisfies.
5. The Christian life is not a life primarily based on the denial of the body. We may freely enjoy food, and drink, and marriage, and a home, as long as these things do not rule our lives and desires, or injure us, or cause other to stumble. We may choose to deny ourselves of something, so that we can make a sacrificial gift. This too is excellent, but we cannot demand that others do as we do in these actions.

Study and Review

Questions on Colossians 2:6-23

1. What is the topic of Col. 2:6-23 in the outline?
2. How are we to walk in Christ? (2:6)
3. By what title is Christ Jesus called in 2:6?
4. What does *walk* mean in 2:6?
5. To what do the expressions *rooted* and *built up* compare Christians? (2:7)
6. Explain *established* (or *stablished*) in the phrase *established in your faith*.

CHAPTER TWO

7. In what are we to abound?
8. What are we to take heed to prevent? (2:8)
9. Explain the verb *spoil* in 2:8.
10. What does *vain* mean in *vain deceit*?
11. Philosophy and vain deceit are said to be *after* two things. What are they?
12. To what does the word *rudiments* in 2:8 refer?
13. What does Godhead mean in 2:9?
14. In what manner does the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Christ? (2:10)
15. How does 2:9 specially apply to Gnostic doctrines?
16. Where are we made full (or complete)?
17. Of what is Christ head (besides the church)? (2:10)
18. What (or who) is "all principality and power"?
19. Wherein are Christians circumcised? (2:11)
20. What sort of circumcision do Christians have?
21. What must Christians put off to be truly circumcised?
22. How does Christ's circumcision relate to us?
23. In what act is our "circumcision" done? (2:12)
24. What two experiences of Christ do we share when we are baptized?
25. What is accomplished through our faith when we are baptized?
26. What are we to have faith in? (2:12)
27. What two things caused us to be dead? (2:13)
28. Why would the uncircumcision of our flesh cause us to be spiritually dead?
29. What act of God is associated with his making us alive in Christ? (2:13)
30. What has Christ blotted out? (2:14)
31. What is the handwriting (or bond) of ordinances?
32. In what way (or ways) were the ordinances against us and contrary to us?
33. When (or where) did Christ take the ordinances out of the way?
34. Explain the term *spoiled* (or *despoiled*) in 2:15.
35. What did Christ despoil? What are these things (or beings) which Christ despoiled?
36. When (if we can tell) did Christ make an open show of those he spoiled?

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37. What is the *it* in which Christ triumphed over the principalities and powers?
38. About what are we to let no man judge us? (2:16)
39. What religion emphasized such ordinances as those named in 2:16?
40. Does 2:16 indicate that all types of drinking are acceptable? Give a reason for your answer.
41. What is the *new moon*? Compare Numbers 10:10; 28:11; I Chron. 23:31; II Chron. 31:3; Neh. 10:33.
42. What day of the week is the Sabbath? (Compare Ex. 20:10)
43. What does 2:17 mean by saying that the ordinances were a *shadow* of things to come?
44. Explain "the body is Christ's." (2:17)
45. Of what are we to let no man rob (or beguile) us? (2:18)
46. What is "voluntary humility"? (2:18)
47. How could a worshipping of angels rob us of our prize?
48. In 2:18 the Amer. Standard version says "dwelling in the things which he *hath seen*," and the King James version says "things he hath *not seen*." Suggest a reason to account for this variation.
49. Explain the phrase "dwelling in the things which he hath seen."
50. What is the mental condition of those who do such things as angel worship? (2:18)
51. What (or whom) do the angel-worshippers not hold fast? (2:19)
52. What does the Head do for the body? (2:19)
53. What is the subject of 2:19, and what is the verb?
54. What sort of increase should the body (the church) make?
55. When did we die with Christ? (2:20)
56. From what did we die? (2:20)
57. What are the rudiments of the world which Paul refers to? (2:20; Cf. 2:8)
58. What were the Colossians submitting themselves to? What did this make them look like they were living in?
59. Are the commands stated in 2:21 approved or disapproved?
60. What specifically do the commands in 2:21 forbid?
61. To what may the "all which" at the beginning of 2:22 refer back?
62. What is to be the end or fate of things associated with human ordinances?
63. Where did the ordinances originate? (2:22)

CHAPTER TWO

64. What do the ordinances have a show (or appearance) of? (2:23)
 65. In what three respects may ordinances make a show of wisdom?
 66. What is will-worship?
 67. Does severity to (or neglecting of) the body have any value? Does it have any appearance of value?
 68. Do the ordinances of men have any value (or honor) against the indulgence (or satisfying) of the flesh?
 69. Suggest a title or topic of your own for Col. 2:6-23 (Col. chapter 2).
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COLOSSIANS CHAPTER THREE
YOUR LIFE IN CHRIST

“Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ.” (3:3)

1. *Point toward things above*; 3:1-4
2. *Put to death earthly members*; 3:5-11
3. *Put on the works of Christ*; 3:12-17
 - a. Mercy, kindness, etc.; 3:12-17
 - b. Forbearance and forgiveness; 3:13
 - c. Love; 3:14
 - d. Peace; 3:15
 - e. Music; 3:16
 - f. Thanks; 3:17
4. *Practice serving the Lord in your particular position*; 3:18—4:1
 - a. Wives and husbands; 3:18-19
 - b. Children and fathers; 3:20-21
 - c. Slaves and masters; 3:22—4:1

Outline of 3:1—4:6

- E. CHRIST—The basis of a new life; 3:1—4:6
 Duties of those raised with Christ:
1. Be dedicated to things above; 3:1-4
 - a. Seek them; 3:1
 - b. Set your mind on them; 3:2
 - c. Reasons for dedication to things above; 3:3-4
 - (1) Ye died;
 - (2) Your life is hid with Christ in God;
 - (3) Ye shall be manifested with Christ in glory; 3:4
 2. Put to death your earthly members; 3:5-11
 - a. What the members are: fornication, etc.; 3:5
 - b. Why put the members to death: God's wrath; 3:6
 - c. Our relationships to earthly members; 3:7-8a
 - (1) Once we walked and lived in them; 7
 - (2) Now put them all away; 3:8a
 - d. More such sinful members: anger, etc.; 3:8b
 - e. Lie not to one another; 3:9-11
 - (1) Seeing ye have put off the old man; 3:9
 - (2) Seeing ye have put on the new man; 3:10-11
 - (a) The new man is renewed; 3:10
 - [1] Renewed unto knowledge
 - [2] Renewed after the image of God
 - (b) In the new man are no social distinctions; 3:11
 3. Put on good new things; 3:12-14
 - a. Heart of compassion, etc.; 3:12
 - b. Forbearance and forgiveness; 3:13
 - c. Love; 3:14
 - d. Peace of Christ; 3:15
 - e. The word of Christ; 3:16

—Express this by music—
 - f. Every act done in Christ's name; 3:17
 4. Instructions for special groups; 3:18—4:1
 - a. Wives—Be in subjection; 3:18
 - b. Husbands—Love your wives; 3:19
 - c. Children—Obey your parents; 3:20
 - d. Fathers—Provoke not your children; 3:21
 - e. Slaves—Obey your masters; 3:22-25
 - (1) Not with eye-service; 3:22a
 - (2) In singleness of heart; 22b

- (3) Work heartily; 3:23
- (4) Knowing ye shall receive the recompense; 3:24-25
- f. Masters—Give what is just; 4:1
- 5. Continue stedfastly in prayer; 4:2-4
 - a. Watching therein; 4:2a
 - b. With thanksgiving; 2b
 - c. Praying for us; 4:3
 - (1) That God may open a door; 4:3b
 - (2) That I may speak as I ought; 4:4
- 6. Walk wisely toward outsiders; 4:5-6
 - a. Redeem the time; 4:5
 - b. Let your speech be gracious and salty; 4:6

3:1. If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. 2. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.

Translation and Paraphrase

3:1. Therefore since you were raised with Christ (at the time of your baptism, from your state of spiritual death), be seeking the (holy and spiritual) things that are above, where Christ (now) is, seated at the right hand of God.

2. Set your mind on (the) things that are above; (be earnest about them); and (set) not (your minds) upon the things upon the earth (which are disappointing and perishing).

Notes

1. Colossians chapter three begins a new section in the outline, dealing with our new life in Christ. It is a practical application of the preceding discussion of Christ's supremacy over false doctrine. In all of Paul's epistles to Gentile churches, he wrote a section of practical instructions in the closing parts of the epistles, following the doctrinal sections. See Romans 12:1ff; Gal. 5:16ff; Eph. 4:1ff; Phil. 3:17ff; etc.
2. Col. 3:1-4 reminds us again that we are not made right with God by keeping ordinances, or abusing the body (Col. 2:20-23), or any other such works. We are saved because we have been raised with Christ through faith in the working of God.

Then, having been thus saved, we are called upon to seek heavenly things, and to do good works (Col. 3:1, 12ff). Our new life and good works follow our being raised together with Christ. The works are not the cause of our being raised with Christ; they follow it.

Through our deliberate decision to put off our sins, and through faith in God's working, and through baptism (2:11-12), we are raised with Christ from the dead. Having thus been raised, we are made alive, and all our trespasses are forgiven. Then we can apply ourselves to the development of Godly character and to good works, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved.

Multitudes of people are not sure they are saved, because they feel that they are to be saved by works. They wonder, "Do I attend church enough times each week? Do I pray long enough each day to satisfy God? Does God require that I wear black clothes, or long-sleeved garments? Have I given enough money to pay what is due?"

To such people salvation hinges on what they DO, rather than upon accepting the promises of Christ. We can never do enough to merit the forgiveness of our sins. The Colossians had a mistaken idea about this. To them salvation was conditioned upon keeping the sabbath day, or not eating certain meats, or upon voluntary acts of humility, or on abusing and neglecting the body in various ways. Abuse of the body, seeing visions, and keeping regulations—these are not the gospel method of obtaining, nor of holding onto salvation.

3. Col. 3:1-4 is a positive paragraph, which tells us to set our minds on things above, where Christ is. It is followed by a negative paragraph (3:5-11), which lists sins to shun. This is the proper order to achieve victory in our lives. Unless we are given positive things to believe and do, we cannot succeed in keeping negative and unwholesome deeds out.

Some preachers make the mistake in their sermons of giving overly candid descriptions of sins, and then denouncing these. The denouncing may be good, but the descriptions may do little except to arouse sinful imaginations. It is better to major in the positive alternatives to sin, and minor in detailed descriptions and condemnations of sin.

4. "If then ye were raised together with Christ . . ." This clause is a simple conditional expression, which assumes that what is stated is true. We are assuredly raised with Christ. Col. 2:12, 30 has already revealed to us that we died and rose in the act of baptism. Compare Rom. 6:1-4.

It should be as great a surprise to see a Christian living in sin, as it would be to see a man who died walking about in the midst of living people.

5. We are to seek (literally, "Be seeking") the things above. The things above would include such things as the Holy Spirit, a Godlike character, and treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-20, 33). All of these things we seek, not to discover them, but to obtain them for ourselves.
6. "Above" does not refer to any particular upward spot in space, but to where Christ is. Anything that is away from the earth may be legitimately spoken of as "above."
7. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, the place of honor. (Psalm 110:1; Matt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1). The teaching of Christ's ascended glory is one of the great doctrines, truths, and comforts of the church. (Acts 1:6-11; 2:33-36; Mark 16:19; I Tim. 3:16).
8. The statement in Col. 3:2 that we are to set our minds on things above, points out that we are not to seek the things above (3:1) as a legalistic duty, which we must do or be damned; but that we seek them because we have truly set our hearts and minds upon them; we truly desire to obtain these things. We do not seek the Lord because we must do so, but because we love Him. We have our minds set upon Him.

To achieve this state of mind, we may at first have to deliberately discipline and direct our thinking. But soon the glory of the things above will possess us, and dominate every desire and meditation within us.

9. We are not to set our minds upon things that are upon the earth—its honors, offices, wealth, learning, material possessions, and comforts.

Yet in another sense we should set our minds upon the things on the earth—upon its lost condition, the sorrows of people, its hunger, pain, war; its deluded state of mind. Only by thinking about these things will we be moved to try to do something about them.

We know many Christian brothers who have left houses, wives, brethren, parents, children, for the kingdom of God's sake (Luke 18:29). These have both set their minds upon the world, so as to help it; and at the same time have not set their minds upon the world, not seeking its comforts and honors.

3. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

Translation and Paraphrase

3. (It is necessary that you seek the heavenly things,) for you died (both in your sins and unto your sins), and your life is now hidden with Christ in God, (that is, it is kept laid up in heaven by God alongside Christ; you are raised with him).

4. When Christ (he who is) our life shall be manifested (at his second coming), then shall you also be manifested with him in glory. (You will be raised in glorious immortal bodies like his.)

Notes

1. Col. 3:3-4 gives some reasons why we should seek the things above, and set our minds sincerely upon them. The reasons are: (1) We are dead to the world; (2) Our life is hid with Christ in God; (3) We shall share openly in Christ's magnificent glory when He comes back.
2. "Ye died!" Yes, we died to sin and to the world on that day when we truly believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and truly repented. We died when we said, "Lord, I'll do whatever you want me to do, and I'll quit doing what you do not want me to do." Having made that decision, we were baptized, buried with Him by baptism; and in that same act we were raised with Christ. (Col. 2:21; Rom. 6:2-5).

Have you died unto sin and the world, and been buried with Christ?

3. Our life is not *hid* with Christ in God, that is, it is kept laid up with God in heaven. It is hidden only to the world, which does not comprehend that we are truly children of God himself. "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved now are we children of God, and it is

not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that when he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is." (I John 3:1-2).

4. The fact that our lives are *hidden* with Christ brings to our minds the fact that we are spiritually secure in Christ. No one can take us out of God's hands. Jesus said about His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28-29). Many other Scriptures testify to the security of the child of God. (See Jude 24). Christ will not cast us out (John 6:37). No one can separate us from God's love. (Romans 8:38-39).

We are keenly aware that it is possible for us to depart from the living God and be lost. (Heb. 3:12). But we are persuaded from the scriptures that this never needs to happen. God will do His part to see that it does not take place. We need only hold fast to Him.

5. Paul's observation that our life is *hid* with Christ is possibly an allusion to the Gnostic claims that they had found the *hidden* wisdom. What they thought they had found apart from Jesus Christ, is all concentrated in Him.
6. When Christ comes back, our bodies are instantly going to be changed, to become powerful, glorious, immortal. (I Cor. 15:51-53, 42-44; Phil. 3:20-21). This hope is so marvelous that "the earnest expectation of the (whole) creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God." Creation waits, as it were breathlessly, for your revealing! (Rom. 8:19).

At that time many a lady with crippled limbs and wrinkled features will be revealed for what she is—a soul more beautiful than the fairest and strongest of earth's daughters.

7. The second coming of Christ is a motive to cause us to seek the things above and set our hearts upon them.
8. The words "Christ . . . our life" bring a full glory to our emotions and hopes. Our life is not only hid in Christ. It is Christ. (Gal. 2:20).

5. Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; 6. for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:

Translation and Paraphrase

5. Put to death, therefore, the (sins done by your physical) members upon the earth. (Bring them into such complete control that it will be as if they were dead. These include such things as:) fornication, uncleanness (of mind and life), passionate desire, evil desire (for what is forbidden), and covetousness (the desire to have more and more), which is (a form of) idolatry.

6. On account of these (things) the wrath of God comes upon the sons who are disobedient.

Notes

1. Colossians 3:5-11 gives a list of some of the sins that we are to put to death. Paul declares that these sins are the work of the "old man," our old nature that we had before we became Christians. This "old man" is contrasted with the "new man."

The five vices Paul lists in 3:5 involve the sinner as he is in himself. In 3:8 he lists five more vices that involve the sinner in relation to other people.

2. "MORTIFY therefore your members which are upon the earth." (Col. 3:5, KJV). *Mortify* means to put to death, or give over to death. (The words mortify, mortuary, and mortal are all related words, referring to death in various ways.) The Greek verb (*nekrosate*) is in the aorist tense, a form indicating point action, rather than continuous action. When dealing with sins, the way to stop is to stop! Tapering off gradually does not get the job done. Putting sins to death can be done. It must be done. Now. (Gal. 5:24).
3. Put to death your *members*. These *members* are identified as being certain sins that are done by the members of our bodies, by our minds, hands, eyes, etc. John Calvin said that our vices are here called "members" because they adhere so closely to us. (Matt. 5:29-30).

Perhaps a simpler explanation for their being called members is that they are called such by a figure of speech (a metonymy, the container standing for the contained objects). We sometimes use similar expressions: e.g. "I'll have none of your *lip*."

4. Though we put our "members" to death, this death is of such nature that they may revive, if a man walks in any other power than the Lord's.

5. We might wonder: How can we put to death our members when we have already died? (Col. 3:3). Both the scriptures and experience tell us that in this life our state as children of God does not always fully coincide with our condition in the flesh. Nonetheless, our intentions must always be that our fleshly members be dead to disobeying God.

6. These are the five sins which Paul calls "members:"

(1) *Fornication*. This term refers to illegal sexual intercourse in general, both by those married and those unmarried. Acts 15:29; I Cor. 5:1; 6:15, 18; 7:2.

(2) *Uncleanness*. In its moral meaning this refers to a state of mind that delights in immoral, lustful, luxurious, lawless things. Paul uses the word to refer to impure motives in I Thess. 2:3. Compare Rom. 1:24; 6:19; II Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 5:3.

(3) *Passion* (KJV, *inordinate affection*; Gr. *pathos*). This word may refer to various feelings which the mind suffers; emotion; passion; passionate desire. Paul obviously uses it here in a bad sense, referring to depraved passions. *Passion* is a more specific term than *evil desire* (No. (4)). *Passion* is the ungovernable desire. It refers to desire for sexual perversion in Rom. 1:26-27.

(4) *Evil desire* (KJV, *evil concupiscence*; Gr. *epithumia*). The word *desire* by itself simply refers to yearning, or longing, and may be good or bad. Note the good meaning in I Thess. 2:17; Phil. 1:23. In a bad sense it is desire for what is forbidden, or lust. (Rom. 7:7; James 1:14; I Peter 1:14; Gal. 5:24). *Evil desire* seems to describe that type of life which is always desirous of things forbidden. This evil desire frequently rises to peaks of passion.

(5) *Covetousness* (Gr. *pleonexia*). *Covetousness* is greedy desire to have more. It is the constant desire for material things, and the feeling that material things make up real life. (Luke 12:15).

Covetousness is rooted in selfishness and a mistrust of God. Its fruit is discontent, stealing, debt, and other such undesirables.

7. Anything that normally occupies our minds and loyalties is a god to us. *Covetousness* is a constant desire for earthly things.

Hence the things are a god to us, and the desire for them is a form of idolatry. It takes us from God, Eph. 5:2, 5.

8. The sins which Paul mentions—fornication, covetousness, evil desire, etc.—are practically unchecked by human laws, even the finest human laws. The thief will probably be punished, but the fornicator goes on his way almost unhindered. The law of Christ is therefore superior to human law, because it blocks evil at its source, in the heart.
9. If Paul felt obliged to warn the Christians in Colossae about the sins of the flesh, how much more must the non-Christians have given themselves over to immortality and covetousness. These sins must have been rampant in Colossae.
10. The wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, those who are guilty of fornication, evil desire, covetousness, etc. "Sons of disobedience" is an expression referring to those people who disobey God. The wrath of God is coming upon all such. Too little is said today about the wrath of God. Some people are opposed to teaching about the wrath of God, as if we had developed beyond this doctrine. We never shall.

Whether we like it or not, the wrath of God is coming upon all who disobey Him. (John 3:36; Matt. 3:7; Eph. 5:6). The disobedient will drink the full cup of God's wrath, undiluted. (Rev. 14:10). God has seven fearsome bowls (or vials) of wrath to pour out upon evildoers; in these is completed the wrath of God (Rev. 15-16). God's wrath is fierce. Rev. 19:15). Evil-doers will suffer frightening vengeance for their defiance of God the Almighty, and His son.

7. wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; 8. but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

Translation and Paraphrase

7. In these (sins) ye (Colossians) also once walked when ye were living in them;

8. But now (in sharp contrast to your former walk in sins) you (must) put (them) all away (from yourself, like dirty clothes. These include things like) an angry disposition, (fits of) rage, a desire to harm people, hurtful speaking, (and) obscene speech.

Notes

1. The past life and the present life of Christians should usually present a conspicuous contrast. It may not do this in the case of those brought up in God-fearing homes, but in the case of the Colossians it surely did. The "but now" in 3:8 makes a sharp contrast with the past life.

Paul reminds them that they had once walked and lived in their sins. Now they should put them all away, once for all.

2. The word *wherein* (KJV, "in the which") at the start of 3:7 may refer back grammatically either to "sons of disobedience" or to the sinful things mentioned in 3:5-6.

We prefer to think that it refers to the sinful things. It seems too apparent to need stating, that formerly Christians walked and lived among the sons of disobedience.

3. We not only once walked in these things—fornication, covetousness, evil desires, etc.—but we *lived* in them, in the sense of interest, motive, and congenial attitude.
4. Paul by his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ commands us to put away now all such evil things. We are to put them away decisively, once for all (this is indicated by the aorist tense). Note that we are to put them ALL away.
5. To the sins listed in 3:5 Paul here adds several more of like character. (See notes on 3:5-6).

(1) *Anger* (Gr. *orge*). This is chronic anger, anger maintained as a basic part of our normal attitude. (Eph. 4:31).

(2) *Wrath* (Gr. *thumos*). This is sudden anger, anger boiling over into rage and then subsiding.

(3) *Malice* (Gr. *kakia*). This is the desire to injure and hurt people; a vicious disposition; ill will; wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws. (I Peter 2:16; Rom. 1:29; Titus 3:3).

(4) *Railing* (KJV, *blasphemy*; Gr. *blasphemia*). This is hurtful, injurious speech, directed towards either man or God, though we sometimes falsely limit it to that toward God only. Any type of slander or reviling is here forbidden. (Matt. 12:31; 15:19; Eph. 4:31; I Tim. 6:4; Jude 9).

(5) *Shameful speaking* (KJV, *filthy communication*; Gr. *aischrologia*). This is foul speaking, low and obscene speaking. Eph. 5:4). Many in our generation are demanding their "rights" to say anything, anywhere, anytime, regardless of its offensive-

ness to people. As Christians we must not take this attitude. We put away all shameful speaking out of our mouth, and out of our hearts too, although the latter may take longer.

6. The sins listed in 3:8 may seem like little sins. They are often practiced by those of professed faith. These offences may not look great to us, but they are. "Little sins" are just as sinful in God's eyes as the ones that involve damage to people or property, which we call big sins.
7. The Christian character is an un sinning character. See I John 1:8; 3:6-9. This thought will raise our ideals and accomplishments.

9. lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings,

Translation and Paraphrase

9. (And furthermore) do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his evil deeds, (that is, you have now in Christ put off your old nature, as if it were a dirty garment).

Notes

Christians have stripped off, or put off, the old man, their former nature, like undesirable clothes. Because of this they ought not to lie to one another. Lying would make it appear that their old man was still living. (Eph. 4:22, 24, 25).

10. and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11. where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.

Translation and Paraphrase

10. (You must not lie because you have put off your old nature,) and (also you) have put on the new man, (which is) being renewed unto knowledge, (learning more every day of the precise knowledge of God. Also you are being renewed) in a manner agreeable to the likeness of (God) who created him (the new man).

11. (This new man, or new nature which we have put on, is a state) wherein there is no (distinction recognized between) Greek and Jew; circumcision (Jews) and uncircumcision (Gentiles);

foreigners; (wild despised people like the) Scythians; slave (or) freeman; but Christ is all (that matters), and (Christ is) in all (of his people).

Notes

1. In 3:10 Paul gives a second reason why we should not lie to one another: we have put on the new man, or new nature. Then he describes this new man in two ways: (1) He is constantly being renewed and improving so as to become God-like; (2) In the new man there cannot be distinctions of race or social standing. Christ is all that matters, and He is in all of his people, to purify and empower them.
2. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," a new man. (II Cor. 5:17). We clothe ourselves with this new man, the new character that Christ gives unto us. (Eph. 4:24; II Cor. 4:16).
3. This new man is continually being renewed unto spiritual knowledge, so as to capture new and fresh intimacy with God and the deep satisfying truths of God.
4. It is wonderful to think that Christians are being renewed unto knowledge (Gr. *epignosis*, precise knowledge). Most of us live by our feelings and emotions. We are governed less by truth than by prejudice. We do indeed find a full range of emotions in our Christian experience. But so often our emotions are temporary and misleading. We should rejoice that we are being renewed unto knowledge, unto true facts and authoritative principles plainly stated in God's word.
5. The new man is also being renewed "after the image of him that created him." "After" (Gr. *kata*) here may either mean "in the direction towards" or "in a manner agreeable to." The process of being renewed to conform to the image, or likeness, of God is a lifelong glory road. It goes forward best without our thinking about it, as we serve our Christ and learn of Him. "We all . . . beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory." (II Cor. 3:18).
6. The reference to "him that created him" seems to refer to our spiritual re-creation at conversion, since only Adam and Eve were physically created by God. Compare Gen. 1:26-27. (Eph. 2:10; II Cor. 5:17).

7. An added marvel about the "new man" that Christians have put on, is that in this new state all distinctions based on race or social differences are eliminated. (Compare Gal. 3:28). Paul itemizes a few of these abolished distinctions.

(a) *Greek-Jew*. The Greeks (Hellenists in this case) had been in bitter warfare with the Jews during the Maccabean period, about 165 B.C. The Greeks thought the Jews were uncultured, the Jews regarded the Hellenists as pagans, idolaters, and corrupters of true faith and morals.

(b) *Circumcision-uncircumcision*. This is simply the distinction between the Jews as a circumcised race, and the Gentiles as predominantly not so. Over the centuries Gentiles have often been guilty of anti-Semitic prejudice; but the Jews have also been guilty of an anti-Goyim (anti-Gentile) prejudice.

No Christian dares hate the Jews! Some preachers have gone into horrible error about this. They write and preach hate messages, claiming that the Jews are behind world Communism, or are planning to take over the world, or to outlaw Christianity, or a hundred other dreadful crimes. We do not deny that there have been and are bad Jews and undesirable Jews. Paul did not either. See I Thess. 2:14-16. But there are just as many rotten Gentiles proportionately as there are undesirable Jews.

Even if modern Jews should be plotting all the things some accuse them of (which we do not believe), this is no cause for Christians to hate them, nor would this be anything new. Jews plotted to kill Jesus and to kill Paul. They hounded his footsteps everywhere. But Paul loved his fellow-kinsmen the Jews so much that he was willing to be accursed himself before God, if that might bring them salvation. (Rom. 9:3). He loved his nation, and denied that God had cast them off. (Rom. 11:1).

We Christians must hold Paul's attitude toward the Jews and not the attitude of the professional anti-Semites and hate-mongers.

(c) *Barbarians*. This term refers to any who speak a foreign or strange language, which is not understood by those speaking. The Greeks called any foreigners who were ignorant of their language and culture barbarians, as if they were speaking the baby-like syllables *Bar-bar*. Such contempt is excluded in Christ.

(d) *Scythians*. The Scythians were a people from the steppes of southern Russia. They invaded the Middle East and Palestine in the late seventh century before Christ (about 625 B.C.). They were regarded as the wildest of all barbarians by the more civilized nations.

(e) *Bondman-freeman*. Christ is the master of masters and the brother of slaves. In Christ slaves are brothers to their masters. This thought is developed to glorious heights in Col. 3:22—4:1, and in Philemon.

8. In the "new man" which Christians have put on CHRIST IS ALL. If a Jew is in Christ, he is a beloved brother to his Gentile Christian neighbor. (The Gentile Christian should be gracious to the Jew, even if the Jew is still an unbeliever.) In Christ there can be no negro, Japanese, Russian, Indian, etc. Christ is all that matters. (I Cor. 15:28).
9. Not only is Christ all that matters, but Christ is *in all*. He sanctifies all in whom He dwells; he empowers them to overcome sin and prejudice. He is all and in all.
10. In our unbelieving generation, conservative Christians are sometimes accused of causing racial prejudice because they insist that Christ is the world's only savior, and that we cannot come to God except through Him. We do believe these truths. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But we deny that our commitment to Christ causes us to harm others or speak evil of them.

The people who have hurt the Jews through the centuries have NOT been Christians. Hitler was NOT a Christian. The persecuting popes of the middle ages were not following Christ Jesus nor Paul, for Christ and his apostles taught us to do good to *all* men. (Matt. 5:43-48; Gal. 6:10).

In our own times we have read of many violent conflicts and prejudices that have risen between groups when neither group even pretended to be Christians—between negroes and Jews, Arabs and Jews, negroes and whites, etc. Knowing the feelings in our own hearts toward other races and cultures, and seeing the hatreds in the non-Christian world, we deny that Christ causes race hatred. More than that, we affirm that only by common faith in Him will race hatred ever be eliminated. Laws have not eliminated it; government spending has not eliminated it. Only Christ can.

11. PUT TO DEATH	PUT ON
1. Fornication; 3:5.	1. Compassion; 3:12.
2. Uncleaness.	2. Kindness.
3. Passion.	3. Lowliness.
4. Evil desire.	4. Meekness.
5. Covetousness.	5. Longsuffering.
6. Anger; 3:8.	6. Forbearance; 3:13.
7. Wrath.	7. Forgiveness.
8. Malice.	8. Love; 3:14.
9. Railing.	9. Peace of Christ; 3:15.
10. Shameful speaking.	10. Thankfulness; 3:15.
11. Lies; 3:9.	11. The word of Christ in music; 3:16.
12. Racial and social prejudice; 3:11.	12. Dedication to Christ; 3:17.

12. Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13. forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

Translation and Paraphrase

12. Therefore (since you are a new being) put on as God's chosen ones, (who are) holy and beloved, a heart (or bowels) of compassion, pleasantness, lowliness of mind, gentleness, longsuffering (with the faults of others),

13. bearing with one another, and (graciously) forgiving each other, if any (of you) has something to blame someone for. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, you also (should forgive) in the same way.

Notes

1. Col. 3:12 begins a new paragraph in our outline, a section that could be called "Things to put on for Christ." It is the positive alternative to the list of negative things to put off, given in 3:5-11.

We must deliberately put on certain qualities and acts, as well as putting off certain things. At least in our intentions and determination we must put them on. (Note the aorist tense of *put on*, indicating point action.) Determine that you are going to put them on, and do so to the utmost of your ability.

2. Paul called the Colossians God's *elect*, *holy*, and *beloved*. *Elect* means *chosen*. Christians are now God's chosen people. (Eph. 1:4). *Holy* means separated unto God in Christ. *Beloved* is a perfect passive participle, indicating a past action having continued effects. It is a term of affection, and refers to God's love for them, rather than Paul's.

Paul applies to the church these three terms, which were formerly applied to O.T. Israel. *Elect* (Psalms 105:6); *Holy* (Ex. 19:6); *Beloved* (Deut. 23:5):

3. The Colossians were to put on bowels of mercy, that is, a heart of compassion. Our modern English word *bowels* has too limited a meaning to adequately represent the Gr. *splanchna*, which referred to the bowels, and to the heart, and to the lungs, and in a broader meaning to the emotions and compassion.

Compassion is not something that grows naturally in the human bosom. In ancient times the aged, insane, weak, etc. were sometimes thrust out and mistreated. Compassion was made into a living reality by Christ.

4. Put on *kindness*, that is, sweetness, moral goodness, or integrity. Romans 2:4; II Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22.
5. *Meekness*. Meekness is a quality of gentleness and submissiveness to authority which does not imply that the one having it will not resist evil strongly. Moses was meek (Num. 12:3). Christ was meek. (Matt. 11:29).
6. *Longsuffering* (*mukrothumia*) is the quality of endurance that will not be exasperated. It is the self-restraint that will not quickly retaliate a wrong. It is the opposite of wrath and revenge. (Col. 1:11; Eph. 4:2; II Tim. 3:10).
7. Longsuffering should manifest itself in two stages: (1) *forbearing*, or bearing with others; and (2) *forgiving* one another. The word *forgive* here means to forgive graciously. (It has the same root as the word *grace*.)
8. The possibility of complaints and quarrels of Christians against one another is conceded in Paul's statement "If any man have a complaint against any." However the use of the conditional conjunction *ean* presents it, as it were, reluctantly, a case just supposable.
9. Forgiving others as the Lord forgave you. (Matt. 6:12, 14; 18:35; Luke 11:4; Mark 11:25; Eph. 4:32.)

14. and above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfectness.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. But upon (above) all things (put on) love, which is (the) bond (that holds all things in a state) of perfectness.

Notes

1. Put on love over all the qualities of compassion, kindness, etc. Love is like the girdle, or sash, that binds all our garments together into one united adornment. (Eph. 4:3).
2. Love in Col. 3:14 is *agape*, that wide-reaching affection, good will, and benevolence such as Christ has toward men. (John 15:9; II Cor. 5:14; Rom. 13:8, 10).
3. Love is the bond of perfectness. This may mean "the perfect bond." However, the meaning seems rather to be "the bond that brings perfectness or completeness."
4. The tendency of any body of people is to fly apart sooner or later. A *bond* is something which binds or ties together. Love is the bond which binds the church together into a perfect unity.

15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. And let the peace which Christ gives rule (as an umpire directs a game) in your hearts; (for) you were called (by God) unto this (peace); and be ye thankful (for it).

Notes

1. Peace has always been an outstanding characteristic of God's children, and a notable lack in sinners. "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." (Psalm 120:7). "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." (Isa. 57:20-21). Our God is a God of peace. (Rom. 16:20).
2. The peace of Christ (John 14:27) is to rule in our hearts, like an umpire or arbiter. Do not permit angry emotions to rule in our hearts. Let the peace of Christ rule your minds, will, emotions, and conscience.

3. We were called to become Christians with the intention that we should permit the peace of Christ to rule in our own lives, and in our group as a whole. (I Thess. 2:14). We are called individually to enjoy God's peace, and also called as a group in *one body* unto peace. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace and only grows well in peace. (James 3:18). No good progress can be made while fighting is going on.
4. Many Bible verses exhort us to be thankful. (I Thess. 5:18). The context of Col. 3:15 suggests that we should be thankful that we have been called in peace into one body. The peace of God is to arbitrate in our hearts, and in our group, whenever there are strains within the body that would tend to make it fly apart. For this we should be thankful.

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 unto God.

Translation and Paraphrase

16. Let the word (the message) of Christ dwell within you richly. (Learn it fully; meditate upon it; live by it.) (Then) with all (the) wisdom (you can employ, be) teaching and admonishing one another by psalms (songs and music such as David wrote in the book of Psalms; and) hymns (of praise to God, and) songs having the character of the (Holy) Spirit.

Notes

1. If we expect to have the *peace* of Christ (3:15) in our hearts, we must let the *word* of Christ dwell in us richly.
2. The *word of Christ* must refer to the Scriptures. If it refers to anything else, we are left to be pushed around about in our thinking according to the conflicting and changing ideas of men. We must fill our hearts with written words of the gospel.
3. The word of Christ is not to dwell within us, and then remain there. We are to teach and admonish (or warn) one another with this word.
4. The words "in all wisdom" may be grammatically interpreted as being connected with "dwell" (as in KJV, "dwell in you richly in all wisdom"). Or they may be connected with the word

"teaching" that follows them (as in ASV, "in all wisdom teaching and admonishing"). In the light of verses using similar expressions (Col. 1:28; Eph. 5:18-19), we feel that "in all wisdom" goes with the phrase that follows it. We are to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.

5. One of the most effective ways to teach and admonish one another is by music. (Eph. 5:19). People quickly learn songs and remember them. They hum and meditate upon the music. Ancient peoples taught and preserved the famous events in their history by ballads, before written material was easily available. The ungodly people in our world today know the power of music. They keep a tidal wave of suggestive, lawless, emotion-stirring songs coming on all the time, and see to it that the radio waves are saturated with them. Talented Christians should dedicate themselves to the composition, production, promotion, and teaching of worthwhile gospel music. Christianity has always been a singing religion.
6. Our music should be designed to teach and admonish, not just to appeal to the emotions, or to vanity. So often a hymn or anthem is just "rendered," and is not used for instruction and admonition of one another.
7. Three types of music are listed as desirable: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The distinction between these terms is given in Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, under the word *humnos* (hymn).

Ode (song) is the generic term; *psalmos* (psalm) and *humnos* (hymn) are specific, the former (*psalmos*) designating a song which took its general character from the O.T. 'Psalms' (although not restricted to them; see I Cor. 14:15, 26), the latter (*humnos*) a song of praise. [Thayer then quotes Bishop Lightfoot, on Col. 3:16.] "While the leading idea of *psalmos* is a musical accompaniment, and that of *humnos* praise to God, *ode* is the general word for a song, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, whether of praise or on any other subject. Thus it was quite possible for the same song to be at once *psalmos*, *humnos*, and *ode*."

Paul exhorts us here to use psalms. How many of the psalms have you learned or used?

8. *Psalmos* (or its cognate verb *psallo*) is used to mean instrumental music, or a song played to musical accompaniment in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) in I Sam. 16:23; Psalm 98:5; 71:22; and many other places. Also Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., used the word to refer to instrumental accompaniment in *Antiquities* VI, viii, 2; VI, xi, 3; and some other places.

For these reasons and others we believe that Paul's use of the term *psalm* shows that God approves the use of instrumental music in our teaching and admonishing. However, they do not establish that such music must be used at all times. The music referred to as *hymns* and *spiritual songs* is not necessarily accompanied by instruments.

9. Colossians 3:16, when very literally translated, closes by saying, "In the grace singing in your hearts unto God." This suggests that we sing *in grace*. It is perfectly correct to translate this as it is in most versions, "singing with grace," but it seems to us that the idea of singing *in grace* is a very likely situation. Those people who are most keenly aware of the grace of God and what it has done in their lives are the people most likely to sing about it. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!"

17. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. And (in) everything that you do, (whether) in speech or in deed, (do) all in (a manner that will show you love and honor) the name of (the) Lord Jesus, giving thanks (always) to God the father through him (through Christ).

Notes

1. Probably the peak of dedication to Christ is summarized in Col. 3:17: Do everything you do, and say everything you say in the name of Christ. (I Cor. 10:31).
2. The *name* of Christ stands for everything about Christ—his authority, his love, his deity, his grace, etc. Do everything in the name of Christ.
3. While we should do everything in Christ's name, we should do it with thankfulness, not with submissive resentfulness to His overpowering authority.

4. Paul exhorted us to use music in 3:16. The close connection of that verse with 3:17 leads us to believe that our music must express thanks, as well as all our other acts.
5. One of the best tests of any action is: Can I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, and give thanks to God about it? (Eph. 5:20).
6. The fact that we are to give thanks to God through Christ rather suggests that we are unworthy even of the right of coming to God with thanks except as we come through Christ.

18. Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. (You) women, be in subjection to (your) husbands, as is proper in (the) Lord (Jesus). (Arrange yourselves in the proper relationships with your husbands.)

19. (You) men, love (your) wives, and do not be embittered toward them. (Do not allow bitterness to build up within you, or to issue from your mouth.)

Notes

1. Colossians 3:18—4:1 is a new section in our outline. Instructions for special groups of people. It deals with interpersonal relationships between Christians. Note that all of our interpersonal relationships are to be done "in the Lord." (3:18, 20, 22). If the Lord does not guide all of your life, he probably is not Lord at all.
2. Colossians and Ephesians alone of all of Paul's writings give a detailed treatment of the home and the duties of husbands and wives. (Eph. 5:22-33; Compare I Peter 3:1-7.)

The fact that Colossians and Ephesians both contain this material that is unique in all of Paul's letters tends to confirm the close relationship between the two letters. We believe that they were written within a few days of one another, and sent out together. *

3. Let us not forget that the remarks in the preceding passages apply to Paul's discussion about the home. In our homes we must seek the things that are above, not the things on the earth. (3:1-2). In our homes we must put to death the members of

the flesh. (3:5). In our homes we must put on the new man. (3:10). In our homes we must do everything in Christ's name. (3:17).

4. In one way husbands and wives are perfectly equal. (Gal. 3:28). But in another way the wife is to be in subjection to the husband, as the church is subject unto Christ.

The wife's subjection is not a state of slavery to the husband. Nowhere in scripture is the wife commanded to *obey* her husband. He has no right to order her about. Her subjection consists in her recognition that she was created as a helper for him, and that he is the head of the home. It is her responsibility to help him, and go with him in fulfillment of his life's work. She will find her happiness and fulfillment in her joyful acceptance of this role.

If the husband is as kind a head over his house, as Christ is kind as head over the church, no woman could possibly resent her husband's headship.

5. It is fitting, or proper, in the Lord that the wife thus be in subjection. It is fitting both in the eyes of men and of God
6. The Roman world gave very little honor and few rights to women and children. Christianity gives rights to them as well as to husbands and fathers.
7. The command for husbands to love their wives is always needed. Love will wipe suspicions away, produce gratitude and kindness, and keep a multitude of small misunderstandings from eroding away the happiness of a basically blessed marriage.

The command to husbands to love their wives would be especially needed in a society where marriages were arranged by the parents on the basis of social and financial considerations, and not by the couple themselves on the basis of love.

8. Husbands must be careful not to be bitter or irritated against their wives, and careful not to speak bitterly. The husband may soon forget what he said, but such words may burn more deeply into the feelings of the wife than the husband ever knows.
9. In Titus 2:4 the wife also is instructed to love her husband. Thus love is not solely a responsibility that the husband must take care to cultivate in marriage; the wife must be loving too.

20. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.

Translation and Paraphrase

20. (You) children (and youths), be obedient to (your) parents in everything, for this is well pleasing in the Lord (and to the Lord).

21. (You) fathers, do not stir up (the emotions of) your children (so as to provoke them), lest they become disheartened.

Notes

1. Probably the most difficult place to be a true Christian is in our homes. There we do not have to impress anyone, or maintain an "image." We may be ourselves, and often the ugly feelings stirred up outside the home are released at home.
2. In the home children are to *obey* their parents in all things. The term *children* is by no means limited to those under twelve! Many teen-agers need to give heed to this verse. Probably they have more ability to give heed to it, and often more need to do so, than younger children.
3. The father in the home (and indeed the mother too) has a grave responsibility. He must avoid the twin pitfalls of child discipline: over-leniency and over-strictness may induce rebellion or lack of personal decisiveness in the child.
4. Parents should not *provoke* children. Provoke here means to excite, stimulate, or rouse the emotions, particularly in a bad sense. Parents may do this by constant criticism, by uneven discipline (sometimes strict, sometimes lenient), by refusing to let their children "grow up", and many other unwise acts.
5. The result of prolonged provoking children is that they may become discouraged (broken-spirited), or that they may rebel. Parents should encourage children, rather than discourage them. Children do not often rise higher than the confidence their parents show in them.

22. Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord:

Translation and Paraphrase

22. (You) slaves, be obedient in every manner to those who are (your) lords according to the flesh, not with eye-service (service only when the master has his eye upon you) as (if you were just)

men-pleasers, but (be obedient) with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord (Jesus, whose eye is ever upon you).

Notes

1. Paul gives a rather long exhortation to slaves in the epistle to the Colossians. (4:22-25). Probably the presence of Onesimus returning to Colossae with Tychicus made this section about bondservants pertinent. (See notes on Col. 4:9, and the book of Philemon.) Certainly in the light of this section no one could say that Paul was behind any violent slave revolutions!
2. The basic duty of slaves was to obey—to obey their masters in all things. This obedience was, however, coupled with such instructions to the masters, and such a new relationship between Christian masters and slaves, that it was not a painful servitude anymore. The teaching given by Paul to slaves and to masters led to love and real liberty for both.
3. Paul refers to the slave masters as "masters according to the flesh." This hints that according to spiritual relationships, the masters were not masters, but were equals and brothers. Still the fleshly situation could not be ignored.
4. Slaves were warned not to work and serve with eye-service (eye-bondage) as men-pleasers. Eye-service is begrudging service that is performed only when the master's eye (or the inspector's eye) is upon you, or looks over your work.

Non-Christian masters who suddenly found their once-recalcitrant slaves now serving willingly, would probably inquire as to why the change. This would give the new Christian slave an opportunity to tell of his new faith in Christ.

5. Slaves were to serve in singleness of heart. Singleness here means sincerity, mental honesty, singleness of purpose. They were to have only one objective—to please and serve their masters, and thereby to serve Christ.
6. The service of the slave was to be done "fearing the Lord." He might well fear a cruel, unreasonable master. But the slave had a greater master in heaven, who had told him to serve his earthly masters faithfully. Out of Godly and loving (but real) fear of Christ, he would willingly serve the earthly master.

23. whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; 24. knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompence of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ.

Translation and Paraphrase

23. (And) whatever you do, work from (your) soul (work heartily), as unto the Lord, and not (as just) unto men,

24. because you know that from the Lord you shall receive the recompense (repayment) of (your works, which is) the inheritance (of God; for in faithfully serving your masters) you are serving the Lord Christ.

Notes

1. Paul revealed a glorious promise to the slaves: They would receive an inheritance and a recompense (repayment) from the Lord.
2. Slaves were called upon again to work heartily (literally, "from the soul"). They were to work that way whatever they did, and some jobs were very disagreeable. They were to work as if they were working for the Lord Jesus, and not unto men. In truth they were working for the Lord.
3. Slaves were told that they could *know* they would receive from the Lord the reward of a heavenly inheritance. It was a great marvel that *slaves* should expect to receive an inheritance from the Lord. On earth children of masters might inherit, but slaves never.
4. To some modern people Paul's instructions to slaves might sound very unappealing, as if he had said, "Be good boys, and you'll get pie in the sky by and by." Many moderns would have advised the slaves to strike, to revolt, to stage demonstrations, to protest.

In the light of the good effects which Paul's commands to slaves produced (they were really God's commands), we believe that Paul gave the right advice; and the methods of modern revolutionaries would only have caused more misery to come upon everyone, the slaves included.

5. All of us should desire and work for the heavenly inheritance above all else. (Rom. 8:18; I Peter 1:4, 13).
6. In serving our masters or employers faithfully, we serve the Lord Christ. Faithful service on our part will impress our employers with the reality of our Christian faith, and will probably give us an opportunity to testify about our faith. Poor service will do just the opposite.

There is simply no place in the church of Christ for those who will not work sincerely. (I Thess. 3:11-12; II Thess. 3:10-11; Eph. 4:28).

25. For the one who does wrong shall get back that which he has wrongfully done; and there is no partiality (with God the divine judge in repaying wrongs).

Translation and Paraphrase

25. For the one who goes wrong shall get back that which he has wrongfully done; and there is no partiality (with God the divine judge in repaying wrongs).

Notes

1. Paul followed up his glorious promise to slaves about their heavenly inheritance with a warning: Those who do wrong shall receive back the very wrong that they have done. Those who cheat will be cheated. Those who lie will be lied to. Those who damage the master's goods will suffer damage to their heavenly inheritance.
2. Very often in life we see this principle work out. Those who are kind to others receive kindness. Those who are unfair to others receive unfair treatment. We admit freely that this does not always work out in this life this way. Sometimes evil-doers die apparently triumphant in evil, never being punished for it. But God will square the accounts, and repay evil doers according to their works on the day of judgment.
3. In dealing with God we must never forget that there is no partiality with Him, no respect of persons. God will punish evil-doers, whether they be educated or illiterate, strong or weak, rich or poor, influential or unknown.

God has no special pity for slaves and no partiality to them. God has no special preference for masters, nor is He afraid of them. Whoever does wrong will receive back a punishment of like kind for the wrong he has done.

QUESTIONS over Colossians Chapter Three.

Questions over Colossians chapter three are given following the notes on Col. 4:6. The outline section "CHRIST—the basis of a new life" extends from 3:1 through 4:6. Questions over this entire section are given at the close of the section.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER FOUR LIVING IN GRACE

“Let your speech be always with *grace* . . .
Grace be with you.”

Living in grace involves:

1. *Persistent prayer*; 4:2-4
 - a. Pray with watching; 4:2a
 - b. Pray with thanksgiving; 2b
 - c. Pray for opportunities for the word; 4:3
 - d. Pray for ability to speak; 4:4
2. *A winsome walk*; 4:5
3. *Salty speech*; 4:6
4. *Faithful friends*; 4:7-14
 - a. Tychicus and Onesimus inform you and comfort you; 4:7-9
 - b. Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus greet you; 4:10-11
 - c. Luke and Demas send greetings; 4:14
5. *Gracious greetings*; 4:15-16
6. *Excellent exhortations*; 4:17
“Fulfill your ministry.”

Paul's salutation and benediction; 4:18

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

Translation and Paraphrase

4:1. (You) masters, render to the slaves that which is just and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. (As you treat your slaves, the heavenly Master will treat you.)

Notes

1. Paul commanded the masters (Gr. *kurios*, lord) to give to their slaves just and equal treatment. They must treat their slaves as they themselves desired Christ, the master in heaven, to treat them.
2. If masters gave their slaves just and equal treatment, they would pay the slaves the same wages that they paid other hired workers for the same services. They would allow the slaves the same freedom of movement that they themselves enjoyed.

The practical result of this would be the end of slavery in every household where it was done. Indeed in thousands of Christian homes over the Roman empire slaves became fully or nearly free men. Many slaves desired to stay and work for their masters, but their service became a blessing for both slave and master.

3. Perhaps the most prominent example of slave-master relationships is the case of Onesimus and Philemon. Philemon was urged to receive back his runaway slave, Onesimus, as a brother in the Lord. (Philemon 15-17).
4. Old Testament law forbade masters to rule over slaves rigorously. (Lev. 25:43, 53). New Testament law is an advance even over the benign commandments of God in the Old Testament.
5. Christ is truly Master of masters, Lord of lords, and King of kings. (Rev. 19:16; I Tim. 6:15).

2. Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; 3. withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; 4. that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

Translation and Paraphrase

2. (All of you) continue constantly in prayer, being watchful in (doing) it, (that you may note the things you should pray for; and pray always) with thanksgiving.

3. Praying together for me also, that God may open for us a door (an opportunity) for the message, that we may speak the mystery (the revealed secret) of Christ, for which also I am in bonds.

4. (Do be praying for me) that I may make it (the mystery) plain (and speak) as I ought to speak.

Notes

1. Paul always urged the Christians to whom he wrote to pray. I Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18.
2. They were to persevere in prayer, to continue steadfastly in it. Acts 2:47; 1:14. Persevere even when the answer is not immediately obvious.
3. They were to be watching as they prayed. It is so easy to go to sleep. Note Eph. 6:18; Acts 20:31; I Cor. 16:13; I Thess. 5:6; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 3:2-3. The disciples of Jesus could not watch with Him one hour as he prayed in Gethsemane, but went to sleep. Matt. 26:40-41.

There are many things that we should watch as a preparation to prayer. We should be watching conditions in the world, in the church, in our own lives, in the lives of our brethren; and, most of all, let us be watching what God's word says.

Every Christian should be a Gregory! The name Gregory comes from the Greek verb *gregoreo*, meaning to watch.

4. In addition to watching, thanksgiving is necessary in prayer. Col. 4:2. This scripture seems to present thanksgiving as a part of our watching. We watch, not merely so we can be cautious and pray for corrections, but so we can observe things for which we can be thankful. Many things we see are hard to give thanks for, but we can give thanks for everything if we try. Compare I Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20.
5. Paul often requested prayers for his work. Eph. 6:18-20; Rom. 15:30; Phil. 1:19. If Paul needed the prayers of his brethren, we need them even more than he.
6. The word *withal* at the start of 4:3 means "together, at once, at the same time."

7. Paul asked prayers for two things concerning him:
 - (1) That God would open to them a door for the word.
 - (2) That he might speak as he ought; Col. 4:4.
8. Paul did not ask for release from prison, for successful outcome of his trial, for rest and peace, but only for an open door.

It is hypocrisy for us to pray for an open door if we are not fully prepared and willing to enter in through it when God provides it.
9. The New Testament frequently uses the word *door* to mean an opportunity to preach. Compare I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Rev. 3:8; Acts 14:27. Paul needed such a door just at this time. He was in prison and his work was therefore hindered.
10. Paul requested prayers for *us*, for himself and for others, doubtless the people named in 4:7-14.
11. Paul in 4:3 refers again to the gospel as the mystery (or the revealed secret) of Christ. Compare notes on Col. 1:27; 2:2; Eph. 3:3-4; 6:19. The term *mystery* was a favorite expression of Paul's.
12. Paul was bound for the sake of the gospel, not for wrongdoing. He was bound in chains. Eph. 6:20.
13. Paul wanted prayer that he might speak the message in the right way. A good message can be proclaimed in a bad way. The message should be proclaimed clearly (made *manifest*), boldly (Eph. 6:19), and graciously (Col. 4:6).
14. Paul wanted to speak as he *ought*. There is an "oughtness" lying upon every Christian. We ought to speak, and thus to make the gospel manifest.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.

Translation and Paraphrase

5. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward those outside (of the church), buying up the time (by wise use of your opportunities).

6. (Let) your speech always be gracious, seasoned with (the) salt (of wit and enthusiasm and sparkle). (Study) to know how you ought to answer each one (who asks you about your faith).

Notes

1. In the times of the early church Christians were sometimes spoken of as atheists because they would not conform to the

state religions. They were regarded as unpatriotic and sometimes immoral. Toward such hostile outsiders they needed to behave wisely, both to prevent harm to themselves, and to persuade men of the truth of the gospel.

2. Those that are *without* are those that are outside the church. Mark. 4:11.
3. When Paul spoke about redeeming the time, he was not suggesting that we can redeem the time in the sense of buying back past opportunities that we have let slip by. The word *redeem* used here (Gr. *exagoradzo*) has the meaning of buying up for one's use, but not the meaning of buying back. Thus by wise use of every opportunity to do good, we can buy up the time so that the record of its use is on the credit side of our ledger with God. (Eph. 5:15-16).
4. While our speech and conduct should be done with wisdom so that the world will be attracted to the gospel and not unnecessarily repelled by our personal manners, we must remember that the gospel itself is the supreme wisdom, and that walking in wisdom cannot be done more perfectly than by walking according to the gospel. I Cor. 2:1-7.
5. Probably the primary part of our walking in wisdom toward outsiders is the speech we utter. Therefore Paul urges us to speak "with grace." (Eph. 4:29).
6. Our speech should be "seasoned with salt," as well as being wise. In our modern usage salty speech means profanity. But Paul meant almost the exact opposite: he referred to speech that was pungent, interesting, full of charm, witty, not repelling. Note Christ's use of the word *salt*. Matt. 5:13.
7. Paul's speeches had salt. Consider his words on Mars Hill (Acts 17), in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), before King Agrippa (Acts 26), and on board the ship to Rome (Acts 27).
8. The wording of Col. 4:6 makes it sound as if we were to season our speech with salt as a means of learning how we ought to answer each one. This seems a little strange, and perhaps even backward: salty speech seems to us to be the goal we strive for in learning to speak, rather than the means of learning how we ought to answer each one. Perhaps Paul was suggesting that in our efforts to use speech seasoned with salt, we shall discover what types of answers are most effective and which are not.

9. We certainly do need to study and think and experiment until we learn the right ways to answer every one. I Peter 3:15; Prov. 26:4-5.

Study and Review

Questions on Colossians 3:1—4:6

1. What is the topic of 3:1—4:6 in the outline?
2. When are we raised with Christ? (3:1; 2:12)
3. What should we do because we are raised with Christ?
4. Where is Christ seated?
5. What are we to set our minds (KJV, *affections*) on? (3:2)
6. What are we not to set our minds on?
7. When did we die? How? (3:3)
8. Where is the Christian's life now?
9. Explain the statement that our life is *hid* with Christ in God? (3:3)
10. What is Christ to the Christian, according to Col. 3:4?
11. When shall Christ be manifested (appear)?
12. What shall happen to us when Christ is manifested? (3:4)
13. Define the word *mortify* in King James version. (3:5)
14. What are we to put to death? (3:5)
15. What sins are called "members which are upon the earth"?
16. To what does *uncleanness* refer?
17. What is covetousness?
18. Why is covetousness called idolatry?
19. What comes upon those who do the sins listed in 3:5? (3:6)
20. Explain the phrase *sons of disobedience*.
21. What does the *wherein* (KJV, *which things' sake*) at the start of 3:7 refer to?
22. Differentiate (if possible) between *anger* and *wrath*. (3:8)
23. What is *railing* (KJV, *blasphemy*)?
24. What does *shameful speaking* (KJV, *filthy communication*) deal with? (3:8)
25. What reason is given for not lying to one another? (3:9)
26. What is the *old man*?
27. What have we put on? (3:10)
28. What is the new man being renewed unto?
29. After what are we being renewed? (3:10)
30. Who created us? When? (Compare II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10)

CHAPTER FOUR

31. Where is it that there can be no Greek or Jew, or other such distinction? (3:11)
32. Whom did the Greeks call barbarians?
33. What type of people were the Scythians? (3:11)
34. How can there be no bondman or freeman if slaves are still required to be obedient to their masters? (3:11, 22)
35. How important is Christ to the new man? (3:11)
36. Define the term *elect* in 3:12.
37. What are we to put on as God's elect?
38. What is *forbearing*? (3:13)
39. How are we to forgive one another? (3:13)
40. What are we to put on above all? (3:14)
41. Explain the phrase "the *bond* of perfectness."
42. What is to rule in our hearts? (3:15)
43. To what were we called?
44. What connection could there be between letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts and being called in one body? (3:15)
45. How is the word of Christ to dwell in us? (3:16)
46. Which does "in all wisdom" refer to, to "dwell in you richly," or to "teaching and admonishing"?
47. With what are we to teach and admonish one another? (3:16)
48. What distinction can be made between psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs?
49. How do we go about singing with grace in our hearts?
50. How are we to do everything we do? (3:17)
51. What does "in the *name* of the Lord Jesus" mean? (3:17)
52. Through whom are thanks to be given?
53. What does it mean for a wife to be in subjection to her husband? (3:18)
54. Why is it fitting in the Lord for a wife to be in subjection?
55. Why should the husband be told to love his wife, when the wife is not told to love her husband? (3:19; Compare Titus 2:4)
56. Is the command against bitterness in husbands greatly needed? (3:19)
57. How far are children to go in obeying parents? (3:20)
58. Does Paul appeal for obedience of children by a threatening approach, or by some other appeal? (3:20)
59. What does *provoke* mean? (3:21)
60. What may be the result of provoking children?
61. How fully were slaves to be obedient? (3:22)

COLOSSIANS

62. In what one respect were masters really masters over slaves?
63. Were there respects wherein masters were really not masters over slaves?
64. What is *eye-service*? (3:22)
65. What is *singleness* of heart?
66. What does fearing the Lord have to do with a slave's obedience?
67. How were slaves to work? (3:23)
68. The slave was to work for his master as if he were working for whom?
69. What shall slaves (and others too) receive from the Lord as a result of their obedient labor? (3:24)
70. Whom were obedient Christian slaves really serving?
71. What shall wrongdoers receive? From whom? (3:25)
72. How does the statement that "there is no respect of persons" fit into Paul's argument?
73. Propose a title or theme or topic for Colossians chapter three.
74. What were slave-masters to give (or render) to their slaves? (4:1)
75. Give specific suggestions as to how masters might give this to their slaves.
76. Why was it essential that masters give slaves what was just? (4:1)
77. Who is the Master of masters?
78. What instructions are given about prayer? (4:2)
79. What necessity is there for watching in prayer?
80. What was to accompany prayer and watching?
81. For what did Paul request prayers? (4:3)
82. What does *door* in 4:3 mean?
83. What is the mystery of Christ? (4:3; Compare 1:27; 2:2)
84. What was Paul's situation with reference to the mystery of Christ? (4:3)
85. What did Paul want to do with the mystery of Christ? (4:4)
86. Who are the *them* that are without? What does *without* mean here? (4:5)
87. How were the Christians to behave before those without?
88. Explain the phrase "redeeming the time."
89. With what was their speech always to be uttered? (4:6)
90. Explain the phrase "speech . . . seasoned with salt."
91. What is the connection between "seasoned with salt" and "that ye may know how ye ought to answer"?

Outline of 4:7-18

- F. Conclusion (Personal notes); 4:7-18
1. Notes about Tychichus and Onesimus; 4:7-9
 - a. Tychicus will make known my affairs; 4:7
 - b. Tychicus was sent for this; 4:8
 - (1) That you may know our state.
 - (2) That your hearts may be comforted.
 - a. Onesimus is sent with Tychicus; 4:9
 - (1) Onesimus is a faithful and beloved brother.
 - (2) They will make known the things here.
 2. Greetings from Paul's companions; 4:10-14
 - a. Jewish companions; 4:10-11
 - (1) Aristarchus; 4:10a
 - (2) Mark; 10b
 - (3) Jesus called Justus; 4:11
 - b. Non-Jewish companions; 4:12-14
 - (1) Epaphras; 4:12-13
 - (a) He strives for you; 4:12
 - (b) He has much zeal for you and others; 4:13
 - (2) Luke 4:14
 - (3) Demas; 4:14
 3. Instructions to the Colossians; 4:15-17
 - a. Salute the brethren in Laodicea; 4:15a
 - b. Salute Nymphas; 15b
 - c. Read this epistle also in Laodicea; 4:16a
 - d. Read the epistle from Laodicea; 16b
 - e. Tell Archippus to fulfill his ministry; 4:7
 4. Paul's salutation and benediction; 4:18.

7. All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: 8. whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; 9. together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.

Translation and Paraphrase

7. Tychicus (the man who delivered Ephesians before he came to you) will make known to you all the things involving me. (He is) the beloved brother and faithful servant (or minister) in the Lord (Jesus).

8. (So ask your questions of Tychicus.) I have sent him to you for this very reason, that you may know the news concerning us, and that he may comfort (and exhort) your hearts.

9. Along with (Tychicus I have sent) Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is (now one) of you (though he was a slave). They (Tychicus and Onesimus) will make known to you the things (going on) here (in Rome).

Notes

1. Col. 4:7-9 tells of Tychicus and Onesimus. Tychicus delivered the letter to the Colossians from Paul in Rome, and he also delivered the epistle to the Ephesians on the same trip. Onesimus was a slave who had fled to Rome. In Rome he met Paul, and was converted to Christ. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon, who lived in Colossae. Onesimus was given the short epistle to Philemon, which we have in our New Testament. This letter requested Philemon to forgive him and receive him back as a brother in the Lord. Onesimus and Tychicus travelled together to Colossae. (Notice the drawings inside the covers of this book relating to Onesimus and Tychicus.)
2. Besides their work of delivering epistles, Tychicus and Onesimus were appointed to tell the Colossians all other personal news concerning Paul, and to comfort and exhort the hearts of the Colossians. Quite probably the news from Paul was good news. See Phil. 1:12.
3. Tychicus is referred to several places in the Scripture:
 - Acts 20:4—He helped bear the offerings to Judea. He was from Asia (Ephesus perhaps).
 - Eph. 6:21-22—He delivered Ephesians.
 - II Tim. 4:12—He was later sent to Ephesus on another trip.
 - Titus 3:12—Paul considered sending him on another mission.
 Tychicus is called a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and fellow servant with Paul. (Col. 4:7). This description is similar to that given to Epaphras in Col. 1:7.
4. Paul introduced Onesimus to the Colossian church here in this letter, along with Tychicus. Onesimus stood side by side with Tychicus.

Notice the honorable titles given to Onesimus: faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.

The words "who is one of you" are loaded with emotion and pathos. The same expression is applied to Epaphras in Col. 4:12. Both the preacher Epaphras and the ex-slave are described the same way.

Onesimus' introduction to the Colossian church would serve as a powerful incentive to Philemon to receive him back. Philemon 10.

5. Good news from Paul through Tychicus and Onesimus would be a comfort to the hearts of the Colossians. Prov. 25:25.

10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him), 11. and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only *are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.*

Translation and Paraphrase

10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you; also Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, (greets you). You have received instructions concerning him (Mark). If he comes to you, receive him (as you should).

11. Also Jesus (sends greetings), the one called Justus. These (men I have named are) the only fellow workers (now with me) for the kingdom of God from the circumcision, (they are Jews; and I assure you that they are brethren) who have been a comfort to me.

Notes

1. Col. 4:10-11 lists three Jewish companions of Paul who were with him at that time; Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus called Justus. These three men sent greetings to the Colossian church. The verb *salute* in 4:10, 12, 14, etc., means to greet.
2. Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; and Phm. 24. He was a Thessalonian. He was in Ephesus during Paul's long stay there, and was seized by Ephesian rioters looking for Paul. He was one of the bearers of the offering Paul collected for the poor Judeans. He travelled with Paul on his last ship journey to Rome. In Rome he was a fellow-prisoner with Paul. He seems to have had a bravery and valor about him that was unusual. Paul had several such companions about whom we

know little. We look forward to getting better acquainted with them in the new heaven and earth.

3. The reference to Mark here in Colossians comes as a pleasure to us. Mark (also called John, or John Mark) had once been a disappointment to Paul, because he had abandoned Paul and Barnabas midway during their first missionary trip. (Acts 13:5, 13). This so disturbed Paul that he would not take Mark on his second trip. (Acts 15:37-39). But now Paul is reconciled to Mark, and has given him a special important mission. We do not know what Paul had assigned him to do. But Paul had sent instructions to the Colossians concerning Mark, and here urges them to welcome him if he came to them.
4. The Mark referred to here in undoubtedly the same person who wrote the gospel of Mark in later years. In the gospel Mark never names himself, but seems to be the one referred to as a "certain young man." (Mark 14:51-52). In the book of Acts Mark is usually called John, or John Mark. His mother's name was Mary. We discover here in Colossians that Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. (Acts 12:12). (The Gr. word *anepsios* translated *cousin* here in Colossians is used in Num. 33:11 in LXX to refer to "father's brother's sons".) Perhaps the relationship between Barnabas and Mark explains why Barnabas was willing to take Mark on the second missionary trip when Paul was not.

For information regarding Barnabas, see Acts 4:36-37; 11:22-26; 13:1-3.

5. Paul mentions another Jewish associate (the expression "of the circumcision" refers to Jews) who was with him, one Jesus called Justus. He was a Jew with a Roman name. We know nothing more about him.
6. The statement of Paul that only three men of his Jewish associates were with him in Rome has a sadness in it. See Acts 28:25; "They departed." Others had been no comfort to Paul, but these three had truly been a comfort to him. Paul calls them workers unto (or *for*: Gr. *eis*) the kingdom of God.

12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant to Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.

Translation and Paraphrase

12. Epaphras greets you, (he being one) from your number, (and) a slave of Christ Jesus, (and) always striving for you in (his) prayers, that you may stand (as) perfect (saints), and be fully assured in all the will of God (never doubting God for an instant).

13. (Don't think that Epaphras has forgotten you.) For I will vouch for him that he has intense longing for you, and for the (brethren) in Laodicea, and in Hierapolis.

Notes

1. Col. 4:10-11 names three Jewish Christians who were companions with Paul. In Col. 4:12-14 Paul names three Gentile Christian companions: Epaphras, Luke and Demas.
2. Col. 4:12-13 tells of Epaphras, the preacher for the Colossians. See notes on Col. 1:7 for additional information about Epaphras.
3. Col. 4:12-13 tells us these facts about Epaphras:

(1) He was "one of you," that is, one of the Colossians. He was evidently a Gentile.

(2) He prayed much. He was striving in prayer for the Colossians. Compare Col. 2:1.

(3) His concern extended to other nearby churches in the Lycus valley, to those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

(4) He was with Paul in Rome when Colossians was dispatched, and he sent greetings to his friends in Colossae. Philemon 23 refers to Epaphras as Paul's fellow-prisoner.

4. Epaphras was concerned that the Colossians might stand perfect, that is, stand for Christ without wavering, and be perfect in life. *Perfect* (Gr. *teleios*) means complete, not lacking in any part.

Also he desired that they might be fully assured in all the will of God. The participle "fully assured" (KJV, complete; Gr. *peplerophoremnoi*) is a word related to the term "full assurance" in Col. 2:2. The verb means "to make full; to make certain; convince; to fill with any though, conviction, or inclination."

We should also pray for our brethren, that they may stand perfect and fully assured. Entirely too many are imperfect and partially developed, and have many doubts instead of full assurance.

14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.

Translation and Paraphrase

14. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, and (also) Demas.

Notes

1. We learn from Col. 4:14 a fact stated nowhere else in Scripture; that Luke was a physician. When we read the gospel of Luke with this knowledge, we notice occasional medicinal comments that seem particularly appropriate for a doctor to make. Luke 4:38-39; 8:43.
2. Luke was the author of the third gospel story containing a life of Christ. He also was author of the book of Acts. Note that the books of Luke and Acts were both sent to the same man. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2. It is interesting to notice that the authors of the second and third gospels were both with Paul at this time.
3. Luke was apparently a Gentile. He travelled with Paul, joining him at Troas during Paul's second missionary trip. (Acts 16:8-10). He seems to have stopped off and remained at Philippi until the returning portion of Paul's third missionary trip. (Acts 20:5-6). At that time he rejoined Paul, returning with him to Jerusalem, and apparently was with Paul during his trials and imprisonments in Judea, and during his trip to Rome, and was with Paul in Rome when Paul wrote Colossians and Philemon. (Phm. 24). He was still with Paul during Paul's later second imprisonment in Rome. (II Tim. 4:11). Paul refers to Luke as "beloved" and as a fellow-worker.
4. Some Christians have felt that they should not go to doctors, but only pray for healing. The fact that Luke was a doctor, even so long after his first travels with Paul, and that his occupation was not condemned, nor described as being past, no-longer-practiced, profession, argues rather strongly that physicians are approved by God for Christians in these times. We are indeed taught to pray for the sick, but we are not taught to avoid physicians.
5. Demas the disappointment! Here is Colossians and in Phm. 24, Demas is listed as one of Paul's companions. In Philemon he is grouped with others who are called Paul's fellow-workers. Nothing further is said of him, either in praise or blame.

However in II Tim. 4:10 a sad sentence reads: "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica." Demas could have been another Barnabas, a Timothy, a Titus, or Tychicus. It is as the poet said,

"Of all sad words in tongue or pen,
The saddest these: 'It might have been'."

15. Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. 16. And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye read also the epistle from Laodicea.

Translation and Paraphrase

15. (Now please) greet the brethren in Laodicea (for us), and (particularly greet) Nymphas, and the church in her house.

16. And when (this) letter has been read by you, make arrangements that it also be read in the church of the Laodiceans; and (see to it) that you read the (letter which is coming) from Laodicea.

Notes

1. Paul encouraged acquaintance and fellowship among the local churches, such as between Colossae and Laodicea (twelve miles apart). "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea." Churches can have wonderful free fellowship and cooperation with one another without belonging to a connectional denominational system. In fact under such a system their fellowship may easily be more legalistic than real. Churches in New Testament times were free independent congregations, united and cooperating together willingly under the authority of Christ alone.
2. "Salute Nymphas (or Nympha?), and the church which is in her (his? their?) house." Nymphas was apparently the leading Christian at Laodicea, the "Philemon of Laodicea," as Moule calls him. Compare Phm. 1-2.
3. There has been much dispute as to whether the name of this person was Nymphas or Nympha. (The Greek form *Nymphan*, an accusative sing., may stand for either spelling.) Also there is uncertainty as to whether the text should read "her" house, "his" house, or "their" house.

The 1966 Greek text of the United Bible Societies gives the reading "her" house, but gives manuscript evidence for the other readings in the footnotes. No certain decision about the reading here is possible at present.

4. The church in Laodicea assembled in the house of Nymphas. For other churches meeting in houses, see Rom. 16:5, 23; I Cor. 16:19; Phm. 2; Acts 12:2; 16:15, 40.
5. The epistle to the Colossians was to be read publicly in Colossae. Then it was to be taken to Laodicea, where it was to be read also. The Greek text reads in such a way as to suggest that they were to do whatever was necessary to see that the Letter was read at Laodicea. Public scripture reading, when done well, is powerful beyond imagination.
6. The Colossians were to read also a letter which was coming to them "from Laodicea." We know nothing definite about this letter "from Laodicea." The most common specific suggestion about it is that it was the same letter we know as Ephesians. There is some evidence that Ephesians was written to be a circulating letter, first delivered to Ephesus, and then taken about to various churches in Asia, finally to Laodicea, and thence to Colossae. This is a possibility, but it cannot be said to be proven.

17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.

Translation and Paraphrase

17. And speak to Archippus (your new minister): See that you fulfill the ministry which you received in the Lord (for His service).

Notes

1. Paul's final exhortation to the church concerned their minister, Archippus. The church was to encourage him and exhort him to fulfill his ministry. The enthusiasm and effectiveness of a minister is determined to a great degree by the amount of backing and exhortation that his church gives him.
2. It appears that Archippus was the new (newly-ordained perhaps?) minister at Colossae, replacing Epaphras who was with Paul in Rome. Archippus may well have been the son of Philemon and Apphia. Phm. 2.

3. Two exhortations are given to Archippus, that may well be given to all who undertake the ministry:
 - (1) Look to the service;
 - (2) Fill it full.
4. Ministers should not let any work pass by without full-fulfillment. "Make full proof (or fulfill) of thy ministry." (II Tim. 4:5). "Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy progress may be manifest unto all." (I Tim. 4:15).
5. Archippus' ministry had been passed on to him. He had received something transmitted, perhaps from Epaphras.
6. A ministry is received "in the Lord," and not just from men. It is a divine work. We must work as in God's sight. A minister may be held in honor with men for doing half his work, and be in displeasure with God for neglect of the other half.

18. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

Translation and Paraphrase

18. (I close with) the greeting in my own handwriting: Paul. Remember my bonds (in your prayers). Grace (favor) be with you.

Notes

1. Paul closed the epistle to the Colossians by signing it with his own hand. The chain linking him to his guard clanks in an act of authentication.
2. Several other letters of Paul were also written by one of his helpers serving as secretary (amanuensis) as Paul dictated. At the close of these, the last line or so was added by Paul in his own handwriting. Romans 16:22; I Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; II Thess. 3:17; Compare Phm. 19.
3. In closing, Paul requests, "Remember my bonds." "Remember them in your prayers; remember them when you feel discouraged and depressed; remember that I have won many victories for Christ while wearing these bonds." Phil. 1:7; Eph. 6:20; Acts 28:20.
4. Paul closed with his customary benediction (used in all his epistles): "Grace (or favor) be with you." If God's favor is with us, what more can we ask in this life or in the world to come?

5. Paul finishes his epistle. The letter is dried, folded, tied shut, perhaps sealed, and given to Tychicus. Thence it went to Colossae. And now to us.

6. May we in our Christian life and faith make CHRIST SUPREME, as Paul exhorted the Colossians.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: . . . that in all things he might have the preeminence." (1:18).

"In him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." (2:10).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." (3:1).

"And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (3:17).

Study and Review

Questions on Colossians 4:7-18

1. What is the title of Col. 4:7-18 in the outline?
2. Who was sent to the Colossians to make known Paul's affairs? (4:7)
3. What is Tychicus described as being (3 things)?
4. For what two purposes had Paul sent Tychicus? (4:8)
5. Who was sent with Tychicus? (4:9)
6. How is the one who was sent with Tychicus described?
7. Why would the statement "who is one of you" in 4:9 be especially forceful?
8. Who is called Paul's fellow-prisoner? (4:10)
9. What else do we know about the one who is called Paul's fellow-prisoner? (See Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2)
10. To whom was Mark related?
11. What previous dealings had Paul had with Mark? (Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37-40)
12. What special instructions were given to the Colossians about Mark?
13. What group of people are those "of the circumcision"?
14. What companions of Paul were "of the circumcision"? (Give names)
15. What had Paul's fellow-workers been unto him? (3:11)

CHAPTER FOUR

16. Where was Epaphras from? (4:12)
 17. What does *salute* mean? (4:12)
 18. How is Epaphras' prayer life described?
 19. For what two things did Epaphras pray?
 20. Who bore witness to Epaphras? (4:13)
 21. For what people did Epaphras have zeal (or labor)?
 22. How is Luke described? (4:14)
 23. What else do we know about Demas? (Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:10)
 24. What were the Colossians to do toward the brethren in Laodicea? (4:15)
 25. Who was Nymphas (or Nympha)? Man or woman?
 26. Where did the Laodicean church meet?
 27. Where was the epistle to the Colossians to be read? (4:16)
 28. What other epistle were the Colossians to read? Identify this other epistle if you can.
 29. Who was Archippus? (4:17; Philemon 2)
 30. What had Archippus received?
 31. What was Archippus told to do?
 32. How did Paul make the closing salutation of this epistle?
 33. What did Paul ask the Colossians to remember? How would this remembering be done?
 34. What was Paul's final wish for the Colossians?
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PHILEMON

INTRODUCTORY SECTIONS
ON
PHILEMON

- A. Facts about the Epistle to Philemon.
- B. It was somewhat like this . . .
- C. Appeals Used by Paul in the Epistle to Philemon.
- D. Facts about Philemon the man, and about Onesimus.
- E. Slavery and the Scriptures.
- F. Social justice and the Scriptures.
- G. Translation and Paraphrase of Philemon.
- H. Questions on the Introductory sections.

INTRODUCTION

A. FACTS ABOUT THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

(Pronounced Fy-LEE mun)

1. It was written by the apostle Paul. Timothy is named as co-sender.
2. It was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment, about A.D. 62.
3. It is the only strictly private letter in the New Testament. The epistles to Timothy and Titus, though addressed to one person, dealt with matters involving the whole church.
4. The letter is primarily a request to a man named Philemon to receive back a runaway slave named Onesimus (Oh-NESS-uh-muss). Onesimus had run away from Philemon his master, and had gone to Rome, where Paul met him and won him to Christ. Then Paul sent him back to Philemon with this letter.
5. The letter is a gem of literary beauty. This fact is almost universally admitted. The epistle has sometimes been compared with a letter from Pliny the younger (a Roman governor about 90 A.D.), who wrote to a friend urging him not to condemn back into slavery an ex-slave who had offended. Pliny's letter is full of grace and beauty also, but it does not have the spiritual foundations nor the brotherly earnestness of the letter to Philemon. (Pliny's letter may be read in Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, pp. 318-319).
6. Onesimus himself delivered the letter to Philemon. He travelled with Tychichus (TICKY-kuss), who delivered the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. Observe that the same men sent both Colossians and Philemon (Col. 1:1; Phm. 1). Note that Paul calls himself a prisoner in both epistles (Col. 4:10; Phm. 1). Note that the same men send greetings; in both epistles (Col. 4:12-14; Phm. 23-24). Note that in Col. 4:7-9 Onesimus is called "one of you," and that Tychicus is to give them personal news.
7. Although Philemon is a private letter, it has been regarded as inspired scripture by the church from the very beginning. Even Marcion, the heretic in the late second century, included it in his abridged list of authentic epistles. Origen early in the third century quotes vs. 9 and 14 as scripture.

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8. Many Christian leaders of the fourth century deprecated the epistle, and thought that it dealt with a matter too trifling to be a part of Scripture. They were interested only in credal controversies and ecclesiastical authority. Jerome and Chrysostom defended the letter ably.
9. The Geneva Bible (1557) has this note before the epistle: "Paul, handling a base and small matter, yet, according to his manner, mounteth aloft unto God." This is a quaint but accurate description.
10. It is hard for us to feel that the matter under discussion in Philemon is a small matter. It involved the whole future life on earth of one of God's saints. This case would become a precedent for all subsequent similar situations. The letter shows that the principles of the gospel bring good to us in every situation of life, small as well as great.
11. The letter presents the concept of DUTY very vividly. Onesimus was to do his duty in spite of his changed spiritual condition in Christ.
12. Outline of Philemon (memorize):
 - I. Paul's greeting; Phm. 1-3.
 - II. Paul's thanks for Philemon; Phm. 4-7.
 - III. Paul's intercession for Onesimus; Phm. 8-22.
 - IV. Salutations and benediction; Phm. 23-25.

B. IT WAS SOMEWHAT LIKE THIS¹

Two men stood on the rim of a mountain valley in the Cadmus range of Central Asia Minor. A narrow road led from their feet down into the Lycus river valley before them. Spread out below them lay the town of Colossae, the river dividing the city.

The men, wearing Roman togas of very ordinary style, looked at one another and smiled a bit. This was the end of the journey. The one, named Tychicus, held in his hand a rolled-up letter to be delivered to the church of God in Colossae. The other man felt of his robe to make sure a letter was still tucked in his breast.

As the city appeared before him, a swirl of memories foamed up before his mind: his last look at this scene—in the moonlight—going the other way—stolen coins bumping against his thigh as he walked—the weary week of walking at nights, to Ephesus,

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a hundred miles away—the lonely ship ride, a thousand miles to Rome, suspicious people asking leading questions as he tried to keep to himself—those dazzling buildings of Rome—street gossip about a queer prisoner there named Paul—“Paul?” He’d heard his master speak of Paul back in Colossae!—The crooked gamblers who took his last coin—His meeting with Paul—His burning heart and tear-filled eyes as he heard of God’s love for slaves and for masters—That clean feeling as Paul’s friends had baptized him—Then Paul’s words, “You must go back to Philemon!”

Now he had come back—he, Onesimus, un-helpful Onesimus! He, a slave, who had left his good master Philemon! Slaves simply did not go back voluntarily. But there he was, and there was his master’s house, the corner house, across the river, right over there!

Down the steep path their feet fell heavily; the road levelled, into the city, over the bridge, around the turn, to the house. Tychicus knocked. Footfalls inside. The door opens, and Philemon’s mouth falls open. “ONESIMUS!”

With downturned eyes the slave holds out the sweat-soiled, rolled-up letter. Philemon slowly takes it; its seal snaps open . . .

“From Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ . . . unto Philemon . . .”

1. Credit is given to Dr. Dean E. Walker of Milligan College, Tenn., who furnished the inspiration for this article by a sermon at the North American Christian Convention, 1952.

C. APPEALS USED BY PAUL IN THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

1. I am a prisoner; vs. 1, 9.
2. There is a love between us; vs. 1.
3. I am thankful for you; vs. 4,7.
4. I pray for you; vs. 4.
5. You have refreshed the hearts of saints; vs. 7.
6. I don’t command you; I rather appeal; vs. 8-9.
7. I am an old man; vs. 9.
8. I have won Onesimus to Christ; vs. 10.
9. He is now profitable to us both; vs. 11.
10. Sending him back is like sending my own heart; vs. 12.
11. You may now have him forever; vs. 15.
12. He is now your brother; vs. 16.
13. Receive him as you would receive me; vs. 17.

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14. I will pay whatever he owes you; vs. 18-19a.
15. Don't forget that you owe yourself to me; vs. 19b.
16. I have great confidence in you; vs. 21.
17. I'm coming to visit you; vs. 22.

This group of appeals used by Paul to move Philemon to receive Onesimus back could well be studied as a course in psychology for Christians.

Paul's appeals are the very essence of tact. The Scripture contains many examples of tactfulness. Christ himself was most tactful, except when dealing with reprobates, often telling stories to bring out points to people who probably deserved a bitter scolding. A harsh and legalistic approach to people—a "Do or be damned" attitude—is neither helpful nor Scriptural.

D. FACTS ABOUT PHILEMON THE MAN

1. He lived in the city of Colossae (Ko-LOSS-ee). Paul had never visited the town of Colossae personally. (Col. 2:1).
2. Philemon was a Christian. Phm. 19 plainly indicates that he had been won to Christ by Paul. Where that took place we cannot say. Perhaps it was during the time Paul preached in Ephesus, and many that were in Asia heard the word of the Lord. Acts 19:10.
3. Philemon's wife was named Apphia (AP-fia). She also was a Christian.
4. It seems probably that Archippus (Ar-KIPP-us) was the son of Philemon, and that Archippus served as the minister of the church in Colossae after the departure of Epaphras to visit Paul. See Phm. 2; Col. 1:7; 4:17.
5. The church at Colossae met in Philemon's house.
6. Philemon owned a slave named Onesimus, who had run away from him.
7. The fact that Philemon had slave(s) and a house suitable for the meeting place of the church suggests that he was a man of some wealth and social standing.
8. Paul may have heard from Epaphras concerning Philemon's love and faith. Phm. 5; Compare Col. 1:7-8.

FACTS ABOUT ONESIMUS

1. Onesimus was the slave of Philemon who ran away.
2. His name means "helpful." This was a common name given

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to slaves, as were similar names indicating utility, worth, and such.

3. Unsubstantiated legends say that many years after his conversion Onesimus became bishop of Ephesus, early in the second century. To us this seems rather unlikely.
4. Martin Luther wrote a famous statement concerning Onesimus: "We are all the Lord's Onesimi."

E. SLAVERY AND THE SCRIPTURES

1. Slavery was a widespread institution in the world of New Testament times. There were far more slaves in the Roman empire than free citizens. Slaves were obtained from many nations by the ceaseless wars fought by the Romans. Wealthy Romans sometimes owned ten to twenty thousand slaves, who did all the menial and sometimes much of the mental work in the families. While Greece is sometimes called the cradle of democracy, there were more slaves in Athens during the days of their great philosophers than freemen. This social condition tended to undermine society by making the citizens lazy, and giving them time for philosophizing, politicking, immorality, and gambling.
2. The philosophers, such as Aristotle, did not regard slaves as human beings, but as property, as extensions of the master's body.
3. Extreme cruelty to slaves was nothing uncommon, and several slave uprisings occurred (e.g. Spartacus). One Roman, Vedius Pollio, a friend of the emperor Augustus, kept a tank of conger-eels in his garden. Slaves who incurred his displeasure were thrown to these eels to be killed and eaten.

About 60 A.D. in Rome four hundred slaves belonging to one master were killed because one of them had slain the master, after terrible provocation. That is if the tales are true. In defense of this act the historian Tacitus said that killing an entire slave household after such offenses was an "old custom" to deter further disobedience.

Crucifixion was the common punishment for even petty thievery by slaves.

4. In the Old Testament slavery was accepted as an existing social institution, and regulated. Foreigners might be purchased and kept as bondmen. Lev. 25:44-46. Israelites were not to be

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sold as bondmen. Lev. 25:39-43. Hebrews sometimes got into slavery to their own brethren as a result of debt, but Hebrew slaves had to be liberated after seven years. Lev. 25:39-43; Deut. 15:12-15; Ex. 21:2-4. Hebrew slaves could bind themselves to their masters permanently. Ex. 21:5-6; Deut. 15:16-18. Cruelty to slaves was forbidden and punishable. Ex. 21:26-27; Deut. 23:15. Slaves (even foreign ones) could take part in the Hebrew feasts with their masters. Ex. 12:47-49. Stealing and selling people as slaves was a capital offense. Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7.

5. All in all the O.T. regulations for the Hebrews concerning slavery were much milder than those in other nations at the same time. A comparison of the O.T. laws about slavery with those in the Code of Hammurabi will verify this.
6. Even so the O.T. stipulations about slavery are not as perfect as those in the N.T. In the O.T. age God overlooked ("winked at") many acts—polygamy, slavery, etc.—that the N.T. principles condemn. See Acts 17:30. We are glad to live under the new covenant.
7. The N.T. sets forth no revolutionary edicts abolishing slavery as an institution. But it does set forth principles of conduct that inevitably lead to the abolition of slavery.
8. Some N.T. Scriptures regarding slavery:
 - a. Gal. 3:28—There is neither bond nor free in Christ.
 - b. Col. 3:22—4:1—Slaves, be heartily obedient. Masters, be fair.
 - c. Titus 2:9-10—Slaves, be in subjection.
 - d. I Timothy 6:1-2—Slaves, count your masters worthy of honor.
 - e. Eph. 6:5-9—Slaves, be obedient. Masters, be gracious.
 - f. I Cor. 7:20-24—Do not try to make radical changes in your social position, e.g. into or out of slavery.
 - g. Book of Philemon—Receive the slave as your brother.
9. These New Testament teachings on slavery have done their job. They have created good will. They have prevented needless civil disturbances and lawlessness. They have brought freedom.

If the New Testament preachers had advocated an immediate and total end to slavery throughout the Roman empire, they would have produced unmanageable social disorders. Vast numbers of people would have been dislocated and left without employment, when they were neither economically, socially, educationally, nor emotionally prepared to survive as free

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citizens. The principles set forth by Christ and the apostles made the slaves to be brothers and equals with their masters. This inevitably led to blessings for the slave, and total liberty in countless cases.

F. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE SCRIPTURES

The epistle to Philemon raises the question of social justice in the earth. This is a hot question in this age with its controversies about integration of races, civil rights, welfare state programs, etc. Church councils pass many resolutions on social issues. What do the Scriptures say on this subject?

1. God desires social justice in the world. The dishonesty and sinfulness of men will bring damnation upon them. Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 12:20-21; Romans 1:18.
2. Christians are to do good works unto all men. Gal. 6:10; Matt. 5:13; Romans 12:17-21; Ephesians 2:10; 4:28; Titus 2:14. In the steps of God's people the fir tree and the myrtle tree should come up instead of thorns and briars. Isaiah 55:13. Thus social blessings have risen and will arise wherever there are Christians.
3. As Christians and as citizens of the USA we have liberty to pressure our legislators and executive officers to enforce just and equal treatment of all citizens and to suppress wickedness. Civil officers are appointed by God as avengers of wrath upon evil doers. Romans 13:1-4. If we as Christians do not stand up for right, then selfish, grasping, heartless, impenitent evil doers (even religious evildoers!) will wipe their feet in our faces and make our lives unbearable.
4. However, this question arises: Are such civil and social efforts the main work of the church? Do we bring in the kingdom of God by social legislation? To this we answer a resounding NO!

Many modern churchmen have gone off on this tangent. They think that pressure for social change is the primary (if not the only) work of the church in this generation. Such people have closed their eyes to the sinfulness in men's hearts, and to the examples of Christ and his apostles.

5. Neither Christ nor his apostles nor the early Christians entered upon great political crusades to rectify existing social evils. They knew that the gospel was the power of God unto

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salvation, not man's efforts to pull himself up by his own bootstraps. Christ refused to be a judge or a divider of men's earthly possessions. He warned us to beware of coveting earthly goods. Luke 12:13-15. Paul never led any protest parades against slavery before the Roman senate. He did not organize a mob of gladiators to go through the Roman market-place, burning, looting, and killing in the name of justice. The early Christians sent no resolutions to Caesar. We regard their restraint in these matters as the right example for us to follow.

6. Economic and social advancement will not take away the sinfulness of men, and the sinfulness itself causes the misery in society. Romans 1:28-32. A man who is a liar, drunkard, thief, adulterer, or loafer in a slum will almost certainly still be a liar, drunkard, thief, adulterer, or loafer in a new apartment. There are circumstances wherein a government might well help some people with housing or relief (but shame on the church for not doing it!), but these acts will not change the sinfulness in people.
7. The Scriptures plainly predict that there will be war, sin, and trouble until the end of the world. Matt. 13:30, 40; Luke 18:8; Rev. 20:8; Matt. 24:37. Even those who do not believe the predictions of the scripture should be able to see that all human history points to more war and trouble. It is a foolish and hopeless goal to assume that we can make a paradise out of the present world and society. We hope to save some out of the world, and to do as much good as we can in the world. But we expect to find tares along with the good grain until Christ returns.
8. Christians are taught to set their prime hope upon the world to come, upon the blessings to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven. I Peter 1:13; Titus 2:13; Rom. 8:18; John 14:1-3; Col. 1:5.
9. Some so-called liberals, desiring to find justification for their political and social meddling in the name of religion, and not finding it in the New Testament, turn for endorsement to the Old Testament prophets. These men are set forth as great examples and pioneers of social reform, while at the same time emphatic denials are made that they received objective revelations from God or made predictions of distant events by divine inspiration. Such use of the prophets is to be condemned. Why?

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- (1) The prophets plainly made predictive statements, even predictions of far distant events. Only by tearing passages out of their books can such statements be dodged.
- (2) The prophets spoke to Israel, not to all the world. Israel was the people of God, and if it is to be equated with anything in this present dispensation, it must be equated with the church, not the whole world. Among the people of God (both Israel of old and the church now) social righteousness was obligatory. Heathen nations were sometimes condemned for gross wickedness (e.g. Amos chs. 1, 2, and Jonah), but no consistent attempt was made to force them into the righteous mold of Israel. Similarly the evangelists of New Testament times made almost no attempts to force non-Christians by political pressure into the righteous mold of the gospel.

G. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO PHILEMON (translation and paraphrase)¹

1. (This is a short note from) Paul, a captive of Christ Jesus (—I'm in bonds!), and (from) Timothy, the brother (you know well),—to Philemon, (our) beloved (friend) and our co-worker,
2. and to Apphia, the sister (we love greatly)², and to Archippus, our fellow-soldier (in Christ's army), and to the church (that meets) in your (sing.) house.
3. (May) all divine favor (be) upon you, and peace (also), from God our father and (from our) Lord Jesus Christ.
4. In my prayers I give thanks to my God always, making mention of you (sing.),
5. hearing (as I do) about the (sincere benevolent) love and the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and to all the saints (the holy brethren in the churches)—
6. (I pray) that the share which you have in the faith (of Christ) may become active (and working) in (ways that will rise up from) a full knowledge of every good thing that is (known) among us, for (the sake of) Christ.
7. I have had much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you (and your good deeds), (my) brother. (Indeed the aftereffects of your refreshing deeds still continue.)

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8. So though I have plenty of boldness to command you to (do) the thing that is proper,
9. (yet) for love's sake I rather (just) urge (you)—being such a one as (I am), Paul, an old man, and now also a captive of Christ Jesus—
10. I urge you regarding my child, (one) whom I have begotten (while I have been) in these bonds, (none other than) Onesimus,
11. the (very) one who was formerly of no value to you, but (who) now is of good value to you and to me—
12. I have sent him to you, (Onesimus) himself—that is (I have sent) my (own very) heart (in sending him);
13. whom I wanted to keep back with me so that he could serve me in your place in (the service due from you in) the bonds of the gospel.
14. But without your knowledge (and consent) I was not willing to do anything, so that your good (work) might not be (done) because of compulsion, but because of (your) free will.
15. For perhaps he was separated (from you) for (a short time,) an "hour," that you might (in the fullest manner) have him (with you) forever,
16. no longer as a slave but (over and) beyond a slave, a brother beloved, (beloved) most of all by me, (and yet) how much more (beloved) by you, both in the flesh and in the Lord!
17. If therefore you accept me (as) a partner, receive him as (you would receive) me.
18. If he has done some dishonest thing to you, or owes (you something), lay this to my charge.
19. I Paul, with my own hand, put it in writing: I will repay (anything that is due.) (However I do not feel you will want to do this) so that I may not (have to) say to you that you owe to me even your own self.
20. Yes, (my) brother, let me receive help from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.
21. Because I am convinced of your obedience I have written to you (in this way), knowing that you will do even beyond the things I say.
22. Also (now) at this same time (please) prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I may be granted to you all (my presence being somewhat of a gift from God to you).

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23. Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus greets you.
24. (Also) Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke—my fellow workers.
25. May the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ be with the spirit of you (all). (Amen)

1. This is first of all a precise translation from the Greek New Testament. To the translation we have added some additional words to make the meaning of the Greek as complete as possible and to improve the English. The words in parentheses are the paraphrased additions.

2. Several Greek manuscripts, also some Latin and Syriac, describe Apphia as beloved, or most beloved.

H. QUESTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON

1. Who wrote the epistle to Philemon?
2. Who was the co-sender?
3. What was the place of writing the epistle?
4. What is its date?
5. What is the epistle to Philemon primarily about?
6. What Roman governor wrote a letter on a related subject?
7. Who travelled with Onesimus when he delivered the letter?
8. What two letters did his travelling companion deliver?
9. What evidence is there that the epistle to Philemon was early accepted as Scripture?
10. Does the epistle to Philemon deal with a small topic? Give your own opinion.
11. Give the outline of Philemon.
12. On what river did the city of Colossae lay?
13. How far from Colossae to Ephesus?
14. How far from Colossae to Rome?
15. List five of the arguments Paul used to present his appeal to Philemon.
16. In what town did Philemon live?
17. Who was Philemon's wife?
18. Who was Philemon's son? What was his son's work?
19. Where did the church meet in Philemon's town?
20. From whom may Paul have heard about Philemon's love and faith?
21. What does the name *Onesimus* mean?
22. How extensive was slavery in the Roman empire?
23. Tell three things the Old Testament said about slavery.

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24. True or false: The New Testament abolishes slavery. Explain your answer.
25. Should Christians work for social justice?
26. Did Christ lead political crusades for social justice?
27. Did the apostles lead political crusades for social justice?
28. Does social legislation take away human sinfulness?
29. What are Christians to set their hopes mainly upon?
30. Is our world ever to become a social paradise?
31. Why can we, or why can we not, use the O.T. prophets as examples of religio-political social crusading?

COMMENTARY

I. *Paul's greeting*; Phm. 1-3.

I. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker,

- a. Paul opens this lovely letter with a description of himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." The word *prisoner* means one bound with a chain. Paul was constantly bound to a guarding soldier by a chain from his wrist to the guard's arm. Phil. 1:7; Eph. 6:20. Paul's situation as a prisoner would make it harder for Philemon to refuse his request.
- b. Paul was the prisoner of *Christ*, not the prisoner of Rome. Paul had not committed any civil offenses that could have convicted him, but his devotion to Christ kept him in trouble with those who hated Christ. However, Paul was a free man in reality, for captivity to Christ is the truest freedom.

When bound to Christ, my soul is free;
But sin doth make a slave of me. (John 8:31-34)
- c. Paul lists Timothy as the co-sender of the epistle. Timothy is called "our (Gr. *the*) brother." He was so well known for his associations with Paul from the second missionary journey onward that he can well be called *the* brother. For a summary of his career see notes on Phil. 1:1.
- d. Philemon's name comes from a word meaning to love. The Greek word for a *kiss* is very similar to the name Philemon. No significance is to be attached to these facts; however the character of Philemon as it is suggested by this letter makes the root meaning of his name seem very fitting for him. He was loving, and Paul calls him "the beloved."

- e. Philemon lived in the city of Colossae, on the river Lycus, in the ancient land of Phrygia, now a part of Turkey (Asia Minor.)
- f. We do not know in what ways that Philemon had been a fellow-worker with Paul. The observations that the church met in his house, and that he had refreshed the hearts of the saints (Phm. 7) suggest many ways in which he may have been a fellow-worker.

2. and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house:

- a. Apphia was probably Philemon's wife. She was a Christian. Paul addresses her as "our (Gr. *the*) sister."
- b. It is possible that Archippus was the son of Philemon and Apphia, and was serving the Colossian church as minister and evangelist. Col. 4:17 mentions Archippus, and urges him to take heed to his ministry and fulfill it. Remember, of course, that Colossians and Philemon were letters dispatched at the same time to people in the same city.
- c. Archippus is called "our fellow-soldier." The figure of soldiers and warfare is often applied to Christians and Christian service. We are in a battle. II Tim. 2:3; Phil. 2:25.
- d. The reference to the church meeting in Philemon's house reminds us that the churches in other cities also often met in people's homes. The Roman church met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. Rom. 16:5. This same couple previously had a church meeting in their house in Ephesus. I Co. 16:19. The church at Laodicea had meetings in the house of a lady named Nympha. Buildings made specially for church meetings did not exist in the first century, and probably not during most of the second century.

3. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. Like all the epistles of Paul, the epistle to Philemon begins and ends with a request that grace be given to the readers.
- b. Grace means *favor*, particularly undeserved favor, with all the good things that God's favor brings to us. As a result of God's grace we receive inward peace and happiness, our daily needs, the ability to work for the Lord, and other such benefits.
- c. We always, without any dispute, receive grace and peace from God when we receive Christ. But Paul could request that

grace would be with them, because grace is a quality that we can always receive more of with greater and greater profit.

- d. Grace and peace come not only from God the father, but from Jesus Christ the Lord. It is just as necessary to give Christ the honor as it is to give God honor. He that honors not the son honors not the father that sent him. John 5:23.

II. *Paul's thanks for Philemon; Phm. 4-7.*

4. I thank my God always, making mention of thee in my prayers,

- a. As in many of his epistles Paul starts the section right after his greeting with an expression of his thankfulness. Compare Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; and other epistles by Paul.
- b. Paul's thankfulness was sincere. He was not hypocritically "polishing the apples" to make Philemon more receptive to his request. It is almost impossible to express thanks convincingly unless you really feel thankful.

5. hearing of thy love, and of the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all the saints;

- a. Paul may have heard of Philemon's faith and love from Epaphras, whom he describes as "one of you," and who was visiting with Paul at the time he wrote the epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon. Col. 4:12.
- b. We naturally would think that the faith of Philemon would be directed toward the Lord Jesus, and his love toward all the saints (though we love Christ also). However, the order in which faith and love are named is opposite to that in which the most obvious recipients of the faith and love are listed. We do not know the reason for this order of listing (called a chiasmic construction), if any reason actually exists.
- c. Can your Christian friends say of you that they have heard of your love and faith? Or do they hear of your spitefulness and skepticism?

6. that the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ.

- a. This verse gives Paul's objective in his prayers for Philemon. He desires that the fellowship (A.V. *communication*) of his faith may become effectual.
- b. The word *effectual* means active or at work. The word *fellowship*, or communication, means participation, sharing, or

the share which one has in anything. Thus Paul was praying that the share or portion which Philemon had of faith might be put to work and become active. Faith which is not active is not worth much. Compare Gal. 5:6.

Numerous commentators understand the word *fellowship* here to refer to the act of sharing the faith, rather than to the share which one has in the faith. Both meanings come out at about the same point.

- c. Paul furthermore plays that the activity of Philemon's faith may be done in the *knowledge* (A.V. *acknowledging*) of every good thing which is in you unto Christ.

The Greek word for *knowledge* in this verse means precise, accurate, and full knowledge. Thus faith is not simply to be active in just any business, but in that which is based on the full knowledge of the truth. Compare Phil. 1:9.

- d. The last words of this verse indicate that all of this desired activity is *unto Christ* (K.J.V., *in Christ Jesus*), that is, for Christ's sake. The service of Christ must be the ultimate motivation and goal of our activities.

7. For I had much joy and comfort in thy love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother.

- a. This verse continues and enlarges upon the theme of thankfulness started in Phm. 4. In this verse Paul says that his joy and comfort came because he had heard how Philemon had refreshed the hearts of the saints.

- b. The word *heart* refers to center of emotion and feeling. In Biblical times people regarded the bowels as the center of emotion, and thus the King James Bible renders the word literally as *bowels*. Actually it makes just as much sense to speak of the bowels (the nobler bowels, the liver, lungs, etc. rather than the entrails) as the seat of feeling as to speak of the heart as the center of feeling.

- c. The word *comfort* in this verse is *paraklesis*, which means both comfort and exhortation. Thus Philemon's graciousness was both a comfort to Paul and an exhortation to him to finer Christian living.

III. Paul's intercession for Onesimus; Phm. 8-22.

8. Wherefore, though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting, 9. yet for love's sake I rather beseech, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus.

- a. Paul as a chosen apostle of Christ Jesus had authority to command Christ's followers to do what they should. See Gal. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; II Cor. 10:2, 8; II Thess. 3:6. But even as Christ usually sought to move men's hearts by love and teaching rather than by compulsion, so Paul usually appealed to people by love and devotion to Christ.

Actually we cannot say that Paul utterly excluded his authority as Christ's ambassador in this section, but it was not the motivation that he desired Philemon to act upon.

- b. The *wherefore* at the beginning of vs. 8 refers ahead to vs. 9: "Wherefore (because of your love and faith) . . . I beseech you."
- c. There are certain attitudes that are befitting (A.V. *convenient*) to Christians, i.e. proper, appropriate, due, and becoming. We should pray that in all circumstances we may be able to discern what is the befitting course of action, and then be motivated to do it.
- d. Paul leads up to his main appeal very skilfully. He expressed his prayer for Philemon, and his thanks for his deeds. Now he makes a frank appeal on the basis of his old age and imprisonment, and the love between them. It would have been hard for Philemon to refuse the request thus presented.
- e. Some old N.T. manuscripts have *ambassador* (Gr. *presbutes*) instead of *aged* (Gr. *presbutes*) in vs. 9. R.S.V. gives *ambassador*. It seems to us that the reading *aged* is much to be preferred. More of the old manuscripts give it. Also an ambassador is one invested with authority from another person or country, and Paul does not make his request to Philemon on the basis of authority. He makes it as an appeal based on love, respect, propriety, and personal relationships. Thus he speaks of himself as Paul the old man.
- f. Regarding Paul as the prisoner of Christ Jesus, see notes on Phm. 1.
- g. If Paul was a young man (maybe about 30) when Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58), which took place about A.D. 40, he would now (about A.D. 62) have indeed been an old man of approximately 60 years. In Paul's time with its limited medical services, and in consideration of all that Paul had suffered (II Cor. 11:23—12:9), sixty years would indeed have made him an old man.

10. I beseech thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus.

- a. In this verse the great central burden of the letter is revealed: Paul is begging concerning Onesimus, the runaway slave.
- In all probability Philemon sensed that the letter concerned Onesimus from the instant he saw it, even before he unrolled it. Onesimus himself had probably handed it to Philemon, or was standing nearby as Tychicus handed it over. See Col. 4:7-9. The very circumstances under which a runaway slave might return were so rare that the return of the slave would in itself arouse the expectation of an explanation.
- But even if Philemon had sensed that the letter concerned Onesimus, he could hardly have anticipated an appeal so tender, so spiritual, so moving.
- b. The name *Onesimus* is given last in the sentence, both in the Greek and in our version. Placing the name last produces an effective climax to the request.
- c. The fact that Onesimus was now Paul's child shows that Paul had won him to Christ during their contact at Rome. Onesimus had heard the story of Jesus, and was convinced. He had been begotten by the word of truth. James 1:18; I Pet. 1:23. He had been told that he must repent. He had been baptized, born of the water and the spirit. John 3:5. Probably one of Paul's helpers, Timothy or Tychicus or some other, had gone to a pool, or bath, or river to baptize him; Paul himself was confined to his house. See Acts 28:30. After his conversion Paul himself had told Onesimus that he was obligated to return to his master.
- d. The name Onesimus means "Helpful." Up to this time Onesimus had hardly lived up to his name. However, if Onesimus afterwards obeyed Paul's instructions to slaves in Col. 3:22-25, he certainly would have been helpful.
- e. A verb (*oninemi*) from the same root as the name Onesimus is used in Phm. 20. It means to be useful, to profit, or help. Thus Paul makes a play on words, based on the name *Onesimus*.
- f. The fact that Onesimus was begotten (converted) while Paul was in bonds shows that we can win souls under any circumstances. I Cor. 4:15.

11. who once was unprofitable to thee, but now is profitable to thee and to me:

- a. Paul makes no attempt to cover up or deny the wrongs that Onesimus had done. He did not assume, as may do today, that a person must not be criticized for responding violently in a bad environment. If Philemon were living in the twentieth century, some people would blame him for anything that Onesimus did that was wrong. Paul admits that Onesimus had been unprofitable, and that is probably a euphemism of major proportions!
- b. Paul, however, emphasizes the transformation in Onesimus. Too many people are unwilling to forget a man's past, and to recognize that in Christ we become new creatures. "Once a thief, always a thief" is not necessarily true. Once a thief takes Christ by belief, he's not a thief. Thus unprofitable Onesimus was now profitable both to Paul and to Philemon. The only problem now was this: Would Philemon give him the chance to prove it? Runaway slaves were frequently tortured or slain upon recapture.

12. whom I have sent back to thee in his own person, that is, my very heart:

- a. This sentence is choppy and ragged in wording. It evidently was written under strong emotion. The words blurted forth without regard to smooth poetic flow. A literal Greek rendering is: "Whom I sent to you, him, that is my own heart." Even though it is in the King James version, the command to "Receive him" is not in the best Greek manuscripts of this verse. It is, however, found in vs. 17. And the idea is plainly implied.
- b. It was obviously Paul's own idea that Onesimus should go back from Rome to Philemon. Paul declares, "I send him." It may have taken some persuading to get Onesimus to do this. Think of all the arguments that could have been advanced against Onesimus' going back.
- c. If the case of Onesimus had occurred in the twentieth century, some churchmen would probably have put Onesimus at the head of a picket parade or protest march in front of the Rome Senate.

But never once did Christ or any of his apostles organize political and civil protests and disturbances in the name of

the church. There were plenty of causes that needed rectifying in those times. Slaves outnumbered free citizens in Roman society. Gladiatorial games took hundreds of lives in cruel exhibitions. Children were occasionally exposed, that is, thrown out to perish as infants if their fathers so decreed.

The spread of the gospel guaranteed that the wicked social conditions would end. But the changes were brought about by the leavening influence of godliness in the lives of individual believers, not by the political lobbying of organized churchmen.

13. whom I would fain have kept with me, that in thy behalf he might minister unto me in the bonds of the gospel; 14. but without thy mind I would do nothing; that thy goodness should not be as of necessity, but of free will.

- a. The information in vs. 13 would certainly go far to convince Philemon that a marvelous change had come over Onesimus. Once he was an unprofitable slave; now Paul desired to keep him with him, so that he could be of assistance to him.
- b. The *I* in vs. 13 is emphatic: I, Paul, personally have been wanting to keep Onesimus with me. The verb is in a continuous past tense (imperfect). Paul's desire to keep Onesimus with him had been continuous. It had not been interrupted by lapses into loafing or wrongdoing by Onesimus.
- c. These verses do not suggest that Paul expected Philemon to send Onesimus back to Rome to help him. On the contrary Paul expected to be visiting Philemon at Colossae soon. Phm. 22. Paul mentions the service of Onesimus to him merely to prove to Philemon the sincerity of Onesimus' conversion.
- d. Phil. 2:20 suggests that Paul had a distinct shortage of helpers with him during part of his imprisonment in Rome. Therefore the assistance of Onesimus would be the more appreciated. Cf. I Tim. 4:11.
- e. Paul declares that Onesimus had been helping him "in thy behalf," or "in your place." He thus indicates that Philemon was indebted to him, since Paul had won Philemon to Christ. Philemon owed Paul a debt of service, even though Paul did not demand payment (like the merchant his pound of flesh). Thus when Philemon's slave turned to Christ and assisted Paul it was somewhat as if Philemon were paying off his debt to Paul by granting time off to Onesimus to serve Paul.
- f. The service rendered by Onesimus was "in the bonds of the gospel." This can mean that Paul himself was in the bonds

of the gospel, as in Phm. 1. Or it can mean that Philemon (and every one of us) in his bonds (i.e. obligation) to help other people by the very facts and truths of the gospel. The latter meaning is broader, and is probably to be preferred.

- g. The fact that Paul would not keep Onesimus without Philemon's consent shows the high value which Paul set on individual property rights. He recognized Philemon's right (his right in the sight of *God*) to dictate what should be done with his bond servant Onesimus. As Christians we have come so far in our revulsion to slavery that Paul's rather pedantic attention to Philemon's legal rights as master seems to us more a violation of Onesimus' greater right to be free than a necessary preservation of Philemon's rights. Perhaps we have all been brainwashed a bit in this line of thinking. Too long have the property rights of people been disregarded in futile socialistic attempts to force everyone into equality.

Thus Paul would not keep Onesimus without Philemon's mind (his consent, resolve, and judgment). Furthermore Paul's teaching in I Cor. 7:20-22, I Tim. 6:1-2, Titus 2:9-10, and Col. 3:22-25 indicate that he expected Onesimus to be obedient and subject to Philemon's wishes.

- h. Nonetheless we must not fail to notice that Paul fully desired and expected Philemon to do the good thing, to forgive, accept, and (almost inevitably it would seem to us) emancipate Onesimus, and then doubtless help him in every way possible to enter into the mainstream of free human society.

The whole issue was this: On what basis should this be done? By compulsion (as by state or ecclesiastical law), or by free will? The apostle Paul chose to effect social changes in people's lives by appealing to the sanctified free will of saints rather than by force.

- i. The idea that our good works should be done by free will and not legalistic compulsion applies not only to our treatment of one another (as in the case of Philemon and Onesimus), but to such matters as our giving (II Cor. 9:7) and our Christian labors (I Peter 5:2).

15. For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever;

- a. Paul here presents a possibility ("perhaps"—"peradventure"): Maybe Onesimus was separated from Philemon so that he

might be reunited with Philemon throughout eternity. He was parted from a slave temporarily to be reunited with a brother forever.

- b. Note the tactful "was parted." Paul might just as accurately have said, "He ran off from you." But the passive verb forms suggests that Onesimus' departure was perhaps not just gross disobedience on his part, but that he was influenced by other factors (for example, by divine providence!). And thus he "was parted," or separated, from you.

We are not insinuating that Paul was insincere in saying that Onesimus "was parted" from Philemon. Maybe God did indeed have a hand in Onesimus' departure. We cannot often tell which acts of men are the results of God's intervention. Certainly his running away indirectly produced benefits for the entire Christian world ever since. We would be much poorer, for example, if we did not have the letter to Philemon.

- c. The verb *have* (Gr. *apecho*) in "that thou shouldest *have*" means "to have wholly or in full." Thus Philemon would have Onesimus in the fullest way possible throughout eternity.

So often we really do not know our associates and have so little in common with them. In eternity we shall have one another fully, and know as we are known. And this will be altogether good, for there will be no secret sins to fear or hide.

16. no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

- a. Philemon was to consider that in having Onesimus forever, he would have him no longer as a slave, but as one much superior to a slave, a beloved brother.

It is almost unthinkable that a person could enslave his own brother. In the song "O Holy Night" there are these lovely words concerning Christ :

"Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother;

And in his name all oppression shall cease."

- b. Paul declares that Onesimus is beloved "specially" to me. This is a superlative form, meaning "most of all." However Philemon's love for Onesimus was to be even more than Paul's (more than most!).

The idealism of Paul and his high expectations concerning Philemon, show the power of the Holy Spirit to transform attitudes, feelings, and actions.

- c. Philemon's love for Onesimus was to be both in the flesh and in the Lord. He was not to feel as one party who said, "Oh, I love foreigners; I just don't want to be around them." It is often pretense to claim to love people abstractly, but not in the flesh. I John 4:20.

17. If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself.

- a. This verse is the grand climax of all that Paul has written up to this point. Receive Onesimus as you would receive me.
- b. Paul assumes that Philemon will have (accept, welcome) him as a *partner*, one with a common share in the blessings of Christ, an associate. But Philemon was to do more than that. He was to receive Onesimus as one equal to Paul himself.
- c. Paul's conditional statement is a simple form which assumes that the conditional statement is truth. "Since you accept me as a partner, then receive him to yourself as you would receive me."

18. But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account;

- a. This verse answers a possible objection that might be raised by Philemon: How can I receive Onesimus back when he has done so dishonestly (or unjustly), and owes me for what he has taken?
- b. We have no definite information as to what Onesimus had done or not done that could be called "unjust." It is altogether likely that he stole some money from Philemon's house before he ran away. He could hardly have gotten to far-off Rome from Colossae without considerable funds. But we can only guess about all this. (Titus 2:9-10 commands Christian slaves to avoid stealing and pilfering!)
- c. In three short Greek words Paul disposes of the possible objection of Onesimus' debts to Philemon: *touto emoi elloga!* "Put this to my account!"
- d. Paul almost certainly never expected to have to pay any damages caused by Onesimus. In the first place Paul probably did not have enough money to do so. Phil. 2:25 speaks of Paul being in need while he was a prisoner in Rome. Secondly Paul wrote these words—"Put this to my account"—more to impress Philemon with his eagerness about forgiving Onesimus, than to pledge himself as financial security for debts.

19. I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee that thou owest to me even thine own self besides.

- a. In vs. 19 Paul continues and clinches his promise to personally square up all debts of Onesimus, should it be that Philemon insisted on this. Paul declares that he has put it in writing with his own hand: he will repay all that Onesimus may owe.
- b. It is rather obvious that Paul really did not expect to receive from Philemon an itemized bill from Philemon of Onesimus' debts. He goes the conscience of Philemon by saying, "I am confident that you will not demand payment of Onesimus' debts, so that I may not say unto you that you owe to me your own self. (Though Paul said he did not want to say this, he did say it!)"
- c. Philemon owed his own self to Paul because Paul had preached to and won Philemon. Philemon had eternal life because Paul had gone to the trouble and effort of teaching, exhorting, and persuading him.
- d. The Bible does not say a great deal about the debts of converts to their teachers. But this is a very real obligation, and is one that cannot be paid off with money. It is best paid by doing the same things to others that those who won us to Christ did unto us. It is best paid by holding and radiating a sincere feeling of gratitude. The heartfelt recognition of the debt is in itself a payment of the debt.

20. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my heart in Christ.

- a. Paul's appeal closes on a positive note: "Yes, my brother, I wish to receive help from you in the Lord." Philemon's act of receiving Onesimus back would be a help to Paul. It would encourage him. It would show to multitudes of people the reality of the power of the gospel in human lives. It would strengthen the faith and love of Onesimus, who was in reality only a babe in Christ. It would show how the gospel relates to and solves the problems of this life.
- b. The wording of this verse ("Let me have *joy* in thee") literally reads, "Let me have *help* of (from) thee." The Gr. word for *help* is *oninemi*, which is from the same root as the name Onesimus. See notes on Phm., 10. Paul rather asked Philemon to onesimize (i.e. help) him by receiving Onesimus.

- c. The verb *help* is in the optative mood, a mood expressing wishes and possibility. Paul doubtless used this mood form to make his request gentle and suggestive, rather than imperious and demanding.
- d. Back in Phm. 7 Paul declared that Philemon had refreshed the hearts of the saints. Paul closes by asking that Philemon refresh his heart *in Christ* by receiving Onesimus back as a brother. While this would not be a refreshing for Paul *in the flesh*, it would be a refreshing to him *in Christ*. That expression implies a lot of areas wherein Paul might find refreshment.

21. Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say.

- a. Paul was persuaded by his personal knowledge of Philemon that he would be obedient to the request to receive Onesimus. He could even assert more than that: he *knew* that Philemon would do more than he requested in the letter.
- b. We can well imagine that Philemon emancipated Onesimus, and then helped him by training, and counsel, and perhaps financial assistance and intercession on his behalf with others to become a self-supporting citizen in the society of free Christians.
- c. If such actually happened it is unthinkable that Onesimus ever became overbearing and contemptuous and demanding toward his former master. It sometimes happens that those who have been helped out of slavery or poverty become overbearing and intolerably demanding toward the very people to whom they owe all they are and have.
- d. Some commentators start a new division of the outline of Philemon at vs. 21, assuming that the conclusion and salutations start there, and go on to the end of the epistle. But inasmuch as the proposed visit by Paul to Philemon served as a powerful incentive to Philemon to receive Onesimus, we have included vss. 21-22 as part of division III, Paul's intercession for Onesimus.

22. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted unto you.

- a. Paul clinches his written appeal by the announcement that he expected to be visiting Philemon sometime soon. If by

some chance Philemon had not complied with Paul's written request, he could expect to face kindly old Paul with this disobedience standing as a barrier between them. Such an meeting could not avoid being an emotional experience even if Philemon had been obedient. Should Philemon have been disobedient it would be nearly an unbearable experience.

- b. Paul asked Philemon to prepare a guest room for him at the same time (Gr. *ama*) he was giving Onesimus his brotherly reception.
- c. Paul was, of course, still in detention in Rome when he wrote that he hoped to visit Philemon. To hasten his release Paul wrote that he expected Philemon to be praying for him.

This request for prayer sharpens Paul's appeal. How could Philemon be praying for Paul's release, so that Paul could the more quickly visit him, when he was at the same time not doing that which Paul had so fervently requested him to do?

- d. Paul hoped to *be granted* (A.V. *given*) to Philemon and to the other brethren in Colossae (the *you* is plural). The word *grant* used here means to give graciously, give as a gift, give as a favor. And notice the passive voice. Paul speaks of himself as being acted upon. God was working things out so that Paul would be granted to visit Philemon, and this is regarded as a favor bestowed upon Philemon.

This manner of speaking might make us feel that Paul was a bit conceited in looking upon his presence as a gift to those who entertained him. But there was no conceit or vanity there. The Colossians were genuinely in Paul's debt. (Phm. 19). Paul's visit to them would be God's doing, not his own.

IV. *Salutations and benediction*; Phm. 23-25.

- 23. Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee;
- 24. and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers.

- a. As he does in several epistles Paul closes by naming several brethren with him who also send greetings.
- b. All of the men named here in the epistle to Philemon are called Paul's fellow-workers.
- c. All of them are also named in Colossians chapter four. This is a strong confirmation that the epistles to Colossians and to Philemon were dispatched simultaneously. Names here given include:

- (1) Epaphras, their former minister, who was at that time with Paul, and who had reported to Paul concerning their love. Col. 1:7-8; 4:12. Epaphras is called Paul's fellow-prisoner. This word is also found in Rom. 16:7 and Col. 4:10. It is not the same word as *desmios* that is used in Phm, 1. Its root meaning is "one taken away captive by the spear." We do not know the cause of Epaphras' imprisonment, nor its severity.
- (2) Mark; See notes on Col. 4:10.
- (3) Aristarchus; See notes on Col. 4:10.
- (4) Demas; See notes on Col. 4:14 and II Tim. 4:10.
- (5) Luke; See notes on Col. 4:14.

25. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

- a. This closing wish for grace is found in every epistle of Paul.
- b. This benediction is nearly word for word like Gal. 6:18, and is identical with Phil. 4:23.
- c. Grace comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is a comprehensive term for His favor and all the good effects that His favor brings to us.
- d. It is noteworthy that the grace is to be with your (plural) spirit. The invisible needs of our invisible spirits are just as real as the more obvious visible needs of our visible bodies. Furthermore if the needs of our spirits are not supplied, we shall soon be suffering in both body and spirit. See Eph. 4:12.

The question comes inevitably to our minds: Did Philemon obey Paul's request. We think the answer is YES.

There is no written postscript or definite historical information to settle the question. Traditions that Onesimus ultimately became a bishop are just traditions. But to us it is more than unthinkable that Philemon did not fulfill Paul's confidence and hopes to the utmost. Surely the letter would never have been preserved if it had not accomplished its goal.

QUESTIONS OVER THE COMMENTARY ON PHILEMON

1. How does Paul describe himself in his greeting?
2. How does Paul describe Philemon?
3. How does Paul describe Archippus?

EXAMINATION

4. When were church buildings first built?
5. What is grace?
6. From whom does grace come?
7. When did Paul thank God for Philemon?
8. What two things had Paul heard about Philemon?
9. What was Paul asking for in praying that "the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual"?
10. What is the significance of the word *knowledge* in Phm. 6?
11. To what does the *bowels* of the saints refer?
12. What did Paul not command (or enjoin) Philemon to do what he should?
13. Why should Paul refer to himself as "Paul the aged"?
14. What other word is sometimes used rather than *aged*?
15. Explain the word *befitting* in vs. 8
16. If Paul did not present his wish as a command, in what form did he present it?
17. At what point in the sentence in Phm. 10 is the name Onesimus placed? Why?
18. Explain the clause, "I have begotten (him) in my bonds."
19. How may Onesimus have once been unprofitable to Philemon?
20. To whom had Onesimus become profitable?
21. What did Paul mean by saying that he was send back his very heart in sending Onesimus?
22. Why did Paul desire to keep Onesimus with him?
23. Why did he send him back if he desired to keep him?
24. Why did Paul assume that Philemon ought to minister unto him?
25. What was to be the motivating cause of Philemon's good act? (Phm. 14)
26. What significance may there be in the passive verb form "was parted" in Phm. 15?
27. Why, perhaps, was Onesimus parted from Philemon? (Phm. 15)
28. What is the significance of the verb *have* in Phm. 15?
29. In what capacity would Philemon have Onesimus for ever?
30. According to Phm. 16 how much love did Paul have for Onesimus? How much was Philemon to have for him?
31. In what two respects was Philemon to love Onesimus?
32. Philemon was to receive Onesimus as he would receive whom?
33. What settlement was to be made for the wrongs Onesimus had done and the debts he owed?
34. How did Paul make emphatic his pledge to repay?

PHILEMON

35. What did Paul say he hoped not to say, and yet did say?
36. Why did Philemon owe Paul even his very self?
37. How does the sentence, "Let me have joy of thee" relate to the name Onesimus?
38. What deed would refresh Paul?
39. Of what did Paul have confidence?
40. What did Paul know that Philemon would do?
41. What did Paul request that Philemon prepare for him?
42. What did Paul hope would hasten his coming to visit Philemon?
43. How would Paul's promised visit to Philemon strengthen the force of his appeal for Onesimus?
44. Paul hoped that "I shall be granted unto you." Explain the implication of the passive verb form.
45. Name the five men who sent greetings along with Paul.
46. Which of these is called Paul's fellow-prisoner?
47. What descriptive title is applied to all five of the men?
48. What closing benediction is found in all of Paul's epistles?
49. What is the grace of Christ to be with? (Phm. 25)

PHILIPPIANS-COLOSSIANS
PHILEMON

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