

PAUL'S INTRODUCTION TO HIS COLOSSIAN LETTER
Col. 1:1-8

Intro: Colosse--about 100 miles east of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia, and within a day's walk of two other cities: Hierapolis and Laodicea.

At this time Colosse seems to have been in a state of decline.

Paul had never been there, nor had Timothy. Thus he begins by laying a foundation that will make the people receive his message of warning.

Although there is a similarity between Ephesians and Colossians, there is a characteristic difference. Ephesians is an epistle in which Paul is teaching; Colossians finds him teaching and defending. They have the same relationship with each other that Romans and Galatians do.

It was probably written in the early 60's, A.D.

The introduction actually goes down through v. 14, but we want to look at the first part of it tonight to learn what we can for our own blessing and edification.

A sub-title to this message might be, A Study In Words. Look at the great number of great words we have here: apostle, the will of God, saints, faithful, brethren, grace, peace, thanks, praying, faith, love, hope, heaven, the truth of the gospel, fruit, servant, minister--besides, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit, and then Paul, Timothy, Colosse, Epaphras! IT WOULD TAKE A LIFETIME TO LEARN ALL THAT WE CAN ABOUT THESE WORDS. HOWEVER, TO GET A GOOD START IS TO TAKE THE KEY WHICH WILL UNLOCK MUCH OF THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT.

Notice first . . .

I. Paul's Salutation (Col. 1:1, 2).

Notice how he speaks of himself . . . of Timothy . . . of the people of God in Colosse . . . of Jesus Christ . . . of God . . . and of the blessings that he desires for them.

We have authority coupled with tenderness. He is an apostle but he is also a brother. The people of God in Colosse are saints, believers (as Lenski translates, "faithful"), and brethren.

Note: "And the Lord Jesus Christ" at the end of v. 2 is not found in the best MSS.

II. Paul's Thanksgiving (Col. 1:3-8).

Paul as a child of God became a person who was characteristically thankful. Notice how much of it you have in his epistles!

But it is just as important to note what he was thankful for.

Trouble had evidently not broken out in Colosse as it had in the Galatian churches, but the danger was there. BUT HE HAD NOT WAITED FOR TROUBLE BEFORE HE BEGAN TO PRAY FOR THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS. He had been praying ever since he had heard about them--and his praying was preeminently thanksgiving.

Notice the times Paul uses the words "heard" and "also."

- A. He was thankful for the effect of the Gospel in Colosse (Col. 1:3-5).

His thanksgiving is built around three words:

- 1) "Faith"--the foundation. Without this there can be nothing else.
- 2) "Love"--the evidence of faith, "love . . . to all the saints." Cf. John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:14. And the importance of it is brought out again in v. 8.
- 3) "Hope"--the future prospect for all who have trusted the Lord. It is "laid up," i.e., "reserved for one, awaiting him" (Thayer, p. 63). So it is absolutely certain.

A different word is used in 1 Pet. 1:4, 5. Actually the words for keep in these two verses are different from each other and from Col. 1:5. BUT THE IDEA IS THE SAME.

- B. He was thankful that what had taken place in other lives had taken place also there--confirming the truth of the Gospel (Col. 1:6).

There is not one Gospel for one place, and another for another, but the one Gospel is for all places and produces the same results wherever it goes!

- C. He was thankful to have Epaphras come to Rome to confirm all that he had heard before--especially with respect to their "love in the Spirit." Cf. vv. 7, 8.

Concl: Who does Paul thank for all this? Cf. v. 3. Why? Because He is the One who is responsible for all of the good things that had taken place in the lives of the Colossian believers, and it was He who had made Paul an Apostle, commissioning him to write to the Colossians from Rome.

THE PRAYER EVERY CHURCH NEEDS

Col. 1:9-14

Intro: The prayers of the Apostle Paul form one of the richest of all studies in the Word of God. They not only give us a commentary on the spiritual life of the Apostle Paul, but they become a pattern for our own praying.

This first chapter in Colossians tells us of two kinds of praying which the Apostle did: thanksgiving and intercession. We want to look at the second of these this evening.

If we do no more than just read over Paul's prayer here we can be immediately impressed with the generally shallow nature of our own praying. Paul came to grips with the great issues of spiritual life when he prayed. And he surely teaches us that a church you can be thankful for is a church you should be praying for!

What can we learn here?

- I. THE CAUSE FOR HIS PRAYING (Col. 1:9a): "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it . . ."

This takes us back to vv. 3-8. The evidence that there was life was the only excuse Paul needed to pray that that life might grow! Regardless of how well a church may be getting along, it can always be better. The same applies to every child of God!

- II. THE CONTINUATION OF HIS PRAYING (Col. 1:9m): "Do not cease to pray for you."

Cf. Eph. 6:18, "Praying always . . ." Also, Col. 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving!" And, 1 Thess. 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

Only the Spirit of God can make such prayer possible, and, oh, how it is needed today! We may make a good start, but how well do we keep it up?

- III. THE CONFIDENCE IN HIS PRAYING (Col. 1:9m): "And to desire."

Lenski (p. 33) points out that this verb in the middle means to ask for the things which you are entitled to ask for.

In Mark 6:23 this morning we had a commitment which Herod made to Salome (if that were really her name). He said that she could ask for anything up to half of his kingdom. This is what she was entitled to do because of a commitment which the king had made to her.

How do we find out what we are entitled to ask for? We find it in the Word. That is the reason that the Word and prayer must always go together! Cf. John 15:7. The promises of the Word that have application to us can be turned into prayers.

IV. THE CONTENTS OF HIS PRAYER (Col. 1:9b-14).

Generally speaking the prayer itself has to do with two things: the will of God and the walk of the Colossian believers.

A. The will of God (Col. 1:9b).

For us, we need to remember that this takes us and keeps us right in the Word of God. There is no other way to know the will of God.

And it is good to think of the Word as the will of God!

"Filled" means dominated, controlled, to the utmost of one's capacity.

It is possible to know (fully) the will of God, and to have your life directed by it. This is foundational to everything else in a believer's life. If things are not right here, they cannot possibly be right any place else.

But it requires two things:

- 1) "In all wisdom"--the knowledge of the principles of Scripture, knowing the ways of the Lord.
- 2) "Spiritual understanding"--the application of those principles in one's life each day.

So, it is both doctrinal and practical. The one is incomplete without the other.

B. The walk of the believer (Col. 1:10-14).

The whole life of the believer is to be determined by what is worthy of the Lord and what is pleasing to Him. That is why we need to know the Word. If it is contrary to the Word, it cannot be pleasing to Him.

"Unto all pleasing" = satisfying Him in everything.

But now, instead of leaving us to ourselves to determine what this means, Paul tells us in detail as he has been praying for the Colossians. (And incidentally, it is not out of harmony with Scripture to tell people how you are praying for them, if you are!)

1. "Being fruitful in every good work." Cf. Col. 1:10m.

Fruitfulness in every good work does not necessarily mean what we want it to mean, but it is possible for us to do just this if the preceding is in order.

God does not waste the time of His servants. Cf. John 15:16. It is not necessarily soul winning, but it is the production of that which is according to the will of God in any ministry that we have.

2. "Increasing in the knowledge (the full knowledge) of God." Cf. Col. 1:10b.

A fruitful Christian has to be a growing Christian, and a child of God is not growing unless he is "increasing in the knowledge of God"!

Cf. 2 Pet. 3:18.

3. "Strengthened . . ." (Col. 1:11).

The more you look at these the more they seem to be mentioned in reverse order, i.e., the things mentioned in connection with our walk.

It is inevitable that there will be testing in this life of ours. For this we need divine strengthening. Our strength is completely inadequate, and nothing will prove this more than a little testing.

Note the details of the verse carefully.

4. "Giving thanks . . ." (Col. 1:12-14).

In vv. 3-8 Paul tells them about his thanksgiving; now he is praying that they will be thankful.

And, will you notice that this is the largest section of his prayer for them?

But, more than that, note what it is that he wants them to be thankful for. It details the future, the past, and the present.

- a. Thanksgiving for the future: "Who hath made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (v. 12).
- b. Thanksgiving regarding the past: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" (v. 13a).

- c. Thanksgiving concerning the present (vv. 13b, 14).

There are two things here:

- (1) He "hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son," or, the Son of His love.
- (2) "We have redemption . . . , even the forgiveness of sins."

All of the thanksgiving has to do with what the Father has done for us, not for anything that we have done for Him.

Concl: What a prayer!

Do you pray this way for any church? For Central Bible Church?
For any mission church in some other country?

If we would all learn to pray like this, the situation in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ would undergo a quickening that would be felt everywhere.

But the secret of being able to pray this way is that we have come, individually, to the place where these are the things that are of the utmost importance to the one doing the praying. That is when the blessing will come!

THE ONE WITH NO LIKE NOR EQUAL
Col. 1:15-20

Intro: With this passage we come to the beginning of the doctrinal section of the book. Actually, Paul has already done a great deal of teaching, but at this point there is no question but that he is getting down to the main business of his epistle! NOTHING TO DO, BUT WHAT WE ARE TO KNOW AND TO BELIEVE.

Quite obviously the Colossians were being troubled by those who were teaching error concerning the Lord. If a person is wrong about Him, it is impossible to be right any place else. Also, if a person is wrong about Him it will lead to practical difficulties. The very foundation of all that is dear to a Christian is found in the truth concerning Christ.

There are four relationships in which Paul presents our Lord here:

- 1) In His relationship with the Father (v. 15a).
- 2) In His relationship with creation (vv. 15b-17).
- 3) In His relationship with the Church (vv. 18, 19).
- 4) In His relationship with the truth of reconciliation (v. 20).

Paul's words are very carefully selected. He speaks briefly, but to the point. He presents no options. He states very positively what the situation is in each case and leaves no room for compromise on any of these points.

I. THE SON--IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FATHER (v. 15a).

It seems clear that Paul is thinking about Jesus Christ in the flesh! EMPHASIS ON INCARNATION - UNTIL THEN, "INVISIBLE GOD." Here we must make a distinction between man and Christ: Man was created in the image and likeness of God; Jesus Christ is the image. This involves God's original purpose in creation, and His present purpose in redemption. Cf. Rom. 8:28, 29; 1 John 3:2.

But with our Lord we have One Who, as a man, continued to be in His Deity all that the Father is. Cf. John 1:18; Heb. 1:1-3; John 14:9.

This is why John wrote His Gospel. This is basic to Paul's letter to the Church at Rome (see the introduction). This does not just apply to the evidences which men could see, but to that which is discerned by the eye of faith. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:4-6. All that can be said about the Deity of God the Father can also be said about the Deity of God the Son.

We must never leave any room for doubt on this point.

II. THE SON--IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION (vv. 15b-17).

Paul calls him, "the firstborn of all creation."

Some say that this means that our Lord was the first created being. Is this what Paul is saying? Read v. 16.

It means just the opposite; it means that He was the Creator!

This applies to powers which can be seen, as well as to those which cannot be seen.

In the last of v. 16 and all of v. 17 we have four very important statements regarding Christ and creation.

- A. He is the Creator of all things.
- B. He is the One for whom all things were created.
- C. He existed before any created thing. He did not begin with His birth; He has always been. Cf. John 17:5,
 "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine
 own self with the glory which I had with thee
 before the world was."
- D. All of creation owes its continuation to Him: "By Him all things consist." As one has said, "He makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos."

Thus, our Lord can never be placed in the position of a creature. He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe--of things on the earth and in heaven.

III. THE SON--IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH (vv. 18, 19).

He is "the head"--the One in the sole place of authority over His body. This is the new creation.

To the Church He is "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." The Church owes its very existence to the Lord, and specifically to His resurrection. His resurrection not only is our source of life, but sets the pattern for our resurrection.

The rest of v. 18 and all of v. 19 go with all that has preceded. The Father intended that the fulness of power and authority over original creation and the new creation should rest in Him. NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN GIVEN THAT PLACE, AND IT WOULD BE THE HEIGHT OF BLASPHEMY FOR ANYONE TO CLAIM IT.

IV. THE SON--IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH RECONCILIATION (Col. 1: 20).

Now the emphasis is placed specifically on the work of
Christ--but only in one of its aspects: reconciliation.

All of creation has felt the effect of sin. It started among angels, and invaded the human realm.

This called for a reconciliation--first to God, and then a reconciliation among all creatures. Cf. Isa. 11; John 16:11; Eph. 2:15, 16.

The climax of it all is right here.

Concl: With our Lord pre-eminent in all of these areas, there is no ground for man to glory.

Christ is pre-eminent, 1) as to His Person,
2) as to Creation,
3) as to the Church, and
4) in the work of salvation itself.

THE COMING GREAT PRESENTATION
Col. 1:21-23

Intro: In vv. 15-20 of ch. 1 we have a section that is purely doctrinal--telling of the pre-eminence of our Lord in three areas:

- 1) In creation.
- 2) In the Church.
- 3) In reconciliation.

In the verses just before vv. 15-20 Paul spoke of what the Father has done for us in the Son.

As we view the purposes of God in creation, in the Church, in salvation, IT IS ALL LOOKED UPON AS A DIVINE WORK--NOT SOMETHING THAT IS PARTLY OF GOD, AND PARTLY OF MAN. AND IN IT ALL, CHRIST IS THE CHIEF ONE.

His emphasis with regard to salvation is upon reconciliation--evidently to show how far we were from God, and how much the Lord will have done for us by the time the work is completed.

Therefore, it seems that we have a repetition of the emphasis upon the past, the present, and the future--with an emphasis upon what the future purpose is.

We come to that same emphasis in our passage this evening. Here Paul is relating this whole truth of reconciliation to the experience of the Colossians. So he is moving from the doctrinal into the practical--especially when we come to v. 23.

Let us notice how he develops it.

I. THE PAST: "And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." This is Col. 1:21a.

These statements are very instructive:

- 1) We "were alienated"--a perfect passive, speaking of something that was done to us, and of a condition that continued right up to the time of our reconciliation. There is no question but that the alienation was brought about by Satan.

- 2) As a result, we became "enemies," enemies of God. Our attitude toward Him was one of hostility. He was not our enemy, but we were His! And this centered "in your mind." It was an inward condition which no man has the power to change.

Since such enmity is always active, it was manifested in

- 3) "Wicked works." So now it has become personal. We are not only sinners by nature, but we are sinners by choice.

A WAY OF
THINKING

TRENCH SAYS
THAT THIS EX-
PRESSION POINTS
TO THE DEPRAV-
ING EFFECT
THAT WE HAVE
ON OTHERS.

Since God is holy, it is nothing short of a miracle that He

would intervene on behalf of those who had so turned against Him.

But let us see what had happened in the hearts of many Colossians.

- II. THE PRESENT: "Yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death" (Col. 1:21b, 22a).

What a mouthful this is!

In order to remove the enmity that was in our hearts it was necessary for the Son of God to become incarnate and to die upon the cross for our sins.

That was the only way our "wicked works" could be forgiven.

And will you note very carefully that Paul says that this reconciliation is NOW. It is not that the enmity in man's heart will be remove; it has been removed. We are reconciled NOW.

The very fact that many Colossians loved the Lord was proof of this, just as we have proof in the fact that we love the Lord.

- However, I am still capable of displeasing God through my sin, even though it grieves me and grieves Him, so it is necessary for us to think about . . .

- III. THE FUTURE: "To present you holy and unblamable and un-reprovable in His sight" (Col. 1:22b).

This is at least the fourth time that Paul refers to our hope in Christ:

- 1) Col. 1:5.
- 2) Col. 1:12.
- 3) Col. 1:20.
- 4) Col. 1:22b.

Look at what it will mean:

- A. "Holy." Basically this means to be set apart from something, and set apart unto something else.

— In the context it cannot mean anything else than being separated forever from sin and all that would displease God, and separated forever for God and all that pleases Him. We will be exclusively His in actual experience and will never again be able to do a single thing that is sin in God's sight.

But, again, so we will know how complete this is, Paul adds two other expressions.

B. "Unblamable." This actually has a positive emphasis. Everything will be present in us to make us acceptable to God. Nothing will be lacking which God would require.

C. "Unreprovable." Neither will anything be in us which should not be there. The Lord will have taken away all that could possibly displease Him at any time or in any way in the future.

Can you believe that you and I will ever be like that? This is what Paul has in mind when we read his words in Rom. 8:29. And John says it in 1 John 3:1, 2.

But then Paul brings us back to the present and sounds a warning.

IV. BACK TO THE PRESENT--A WARNING (Col. 1:23).

The Gospel that Paul preached was more than a doctrinal dissertation. It was a message that was transforming upon the life of those who put their faith in the Savior it proclaimed.

Furthermore, Paul would have us know that the man who professed to be reconciled but still lived like an enemy was one who was only kidding himself.

Putting the two present emphases of this passage together we have this: "Yet now hath he reconciled . . . if ye continue in the faith . . ."

Does this mean that we are saved by continuing?

Absolutely not!

What does it mean, then? IT MEANS THAT OUR CONTINUING IS PROOF THAT WE ARE RECONCILED, AND THAT, IF WE DO NOT CONTINUE, WE HAVE NO PROOF THAT WE HAVE BEEN RECONCILED.

Continue in what?

First of all, let it be said that continuing means something that is going on continuously and growing.

"In the faith" is a doctrinal term which point in the NT to the faith of the Gospel. A man is not continuing in the Gospel who changes it in any way! "Grounded" means that he is established in the Gospel. He knows what the Gospel is,

grows in his understanding of it, but never alters it in the least. He is "settled" because he stays right there. He is not going first to one thing and then another, occasionally coming back to the Gospel, but he is "grounded" and "settled" upon it as upon a rock!

Nor is he "moved away from the hope of the Gospel." See 1: 5, 27. See also v. 22b. Our "hope" is not just heaven, but it is to be like Christ! And that process begins the moment we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

So that the person who says that he is a child of God, but continues on in sin is a person who deserves to be watched as one who professes, but does not possess!

Concl: You can see how Paul is striking at those within the Church who would not limit salvation to Christ, and who would throw some question, any question, upon Who Christ is, or upon what He has done.

And, as is always the case, the Gospel and its effect in the world so far outstrips any other doctrine that Paul cannot but refer to this fact as he brings this passage to a close.

It is to be feared that many carry the name Christian who do not qualify under the strong terms which Paul has set down in this epistle. But this is not a place for conciliation. This is the place for the plain speaking of the truth. It is a simple thing to become a child of God because the Lord has done all that is necessary for our reconciliation, BUT PAUL WOULD HAVE US KNOW THAT ONE WHO IS TRULY RECONCILED WILL BE TRANSFORMED IN HIS LIFE, MORE AND MORE TRANSFORMED IN ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING GREAT PRESENTATION WHEN WE SHALL BE WITH THE LORD AND LIKE HIM.

How could we better conclude than with the words of Jude:

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

THE APOSTLE PAUL, HIS MESSAGE AND MISSION
Col. 1:24-29

Intro: In these closing verses of chapter 1, the Apostle Paul talks, or writes, about himself--to make known the place that he has as an apostle in the realization of "the hope of the Gospel," the subject which has run right through the first chapter.

The place of the Lord Jesus Christ was being minimized by the false teachers in Colosse. We refer to the Gnostics.

Paul has been showing the unique place that the Lord has, and now he wants to show, through the nature of his own ministry, the part that he has in presenting "every man," i.e., every believer, "perfect in Christ Jesus" (v. 28b).

Heaven has sometimes been referred to as a prepared place for a prepared people. There could hardly be a better definition. Our Lord has gone to prepare the place. That is His work in heaven--or a part of it! Saints on earth are being prepared for heaven. That is what Paul's ministry was, not by himself, but "striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" --as he says in v. 29b.

In other words, it is not enough to bring people to the Lord, any more than it is enough when a child is born into this world. These are only beginnings! That which has been born must be brought to maturity. There probably has not been any phases of the church's ministry that has been more neglected than this.

If you take Christ out of it, the task is impossible!

How does Paul speak of his work?

I. HIS AFFLICTIONS (Col. 1:24).

Paul would never say that he is adding to the work of Christ on the cross for our salvation. He is talking about the perfection of the church. One big factor in that perfection is suffering. This was the first message that was given to Paul on the road to Damascus. Read Acts 9:5, 15, 16.

Remember that we are in a body, the body of Christ. If one member of that body suffers, the whole body suffers. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:26. See also Phil. 1:29, 30,

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

This is also from a prison epistle.

Thus, the body of Christ, which included the Colossian church, would benefit spiritually from the sufferings of the Apostle Paul through his ministry to them.

II. HIS ASSIGNMENT--with regard to the Word of God (Col. 1: 25-27).

You can never separate the perfection of the saints from the ministry of the Word. BUT PAUL HAS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL TO SAY IN THESE VERSES, A MESSAGE WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, OF TOO OFTEN PASSED OVER.

Note the word, "mystery" (in vv. 26, 27--defined in v. 26).

Then notice the expression, "to fulfill the word of God." This is not like fulfilled prophecy; the word, "mystery," would forbid such an interpretation. No, THE WORD "FULFILL" HERE MEANS TO COMPLETE.

This is one of the passages we should go to when people ask us how we know that we have all of the Bible. Cf. also Heb. 1:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4; Eph. 1:3. What else needs to be added?

Paul's dispensation, or assignment, was to complete the Word of God. What did he complete it with? Read v. 27.

Do you see why he was so concerned with the false teachers who were minimizing and explaining away the very vital truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. HE ALONE IS OUR HOPE OF GLORY! Take Him away from us, and there is no "hope of glory."

But this is not all that he has to say.

III. HIS ACTIVITY--in the work of the ministry of the Word (Col. 1:28, 29).

Note, first of all,

- A. His goal: "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Paul eliminated no one. Every believer is to be like Christ. Paul can work with the assurance of God's blessing upon his work!

- B. His method: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man."

People do not know this unless it is told them. This is where the preaching comes in.

And its truth is so foreign to anything that we have ever known before that it calls for constant warning. This is what Paul is doing, especially in the first part of Colossinas.

Then, there is so much more to be learned about this wonderful truth that each believer needs to be taught-- "teaching every man in all wisdom."

Any ministry which is not centered upon these cannot expect to have the blessing of God.

And, finally, there is

- C. His manner: "For this I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

Paul's very work was an illustration of the truth which he preached! The Lord was doing the work, even though the Apostle Paul was the one through whom the work was being done!

Concl: Has the glory of this wonderful truth really gripped your heart? "Christ in you"--and you, and you, and you!!!! Not part of Him, but all of Him in each one of you! It is too good to be true--unbelievably amazing!

This is our only certainty of glory--which is the meaning of the word, "hope." What joy and assurance it ought to give us for ourselves, and what tremendous confidence as we have the privilege (which Paul felt that it was) of ministering to others.

A MATTER OF THE GREATEST CONCERN
Col. 2:1-7

Intro: Paul is leading up to the main warning of the epistle--which begins in v. 8.

He has already expressed his delight in the Colossian believers, and has indicated that he has been praying for them even though he had never been to Colosse.

But now he intensifies his expression of concern as once again it seems that he turns to the subject of . . .

I. PRAYER (Col. 2:1-4).

The "great conflict" which he mentions in v. 1 is the word which gives us our word, agony. Paul's concern always intensified his praying. He uses this same expression in 1:29 for his own work, and in 4:12 for the way Epaphras was praying for his flock in Colosse.

What was he praying about?

For their encouragement--a better translation here than "comforted."

How would this encouragement come? Where do we find our encouragement, and why was encouragement needed at this time?

The word speaks of a complete encouragement--that to which nothing need be added.

It would come about through . . .

- A. The recognition of something that had already taken place: in the past, at the time of salvation, they had been "knit together in love" (v. 2a).

Anything that would mar this relationship would be wrong and must be looked upon with suspicion.

- B. The need for something more (vv. 2b, 3).

Now this is where we need to be very clear. Paul is not saying that they are to seek for something that they do not have. This is always the emphasis of the false teachers. No, they are to gain greater assurance through a fuller understanding of the mystery of God, even Christ. This is where our encouragement come from.

Note the words here which express a superabundance: "Riches . . . full assurance." In v. 3 we read of "all the treasures."

These things are "hidden." As Bunyan says, We need to pray and pry into the word. The treasures are not found by the casual observer, but for the one who is looking for hidden treasure.

Does this picture your search of the Word of God? And does your search begin and end with Christ?

It is all in Christ--"wisdom and knowledge"--but why in this order since wisdom is the proper application and use of knowledge?

Because the Colossians needed to use the knowledge that they had and then to acquire more knowledge in order to use that.

C. The reason (v. 4).

False teachers were standing around who would adversely affect their love for each other . . . who would destroy their assurance . . . who would turn them away from Christ . . . and ultimately turn them from their own searching for the "hidden . . . treasures."

Paul did not want them to be, lit., cheated out of the enjoyment of what they have in Christ.

II. PRAISE (Col. 2:5).

This is also encouragement. Note: "I am with you," i.e., I am on your side.

What does Paul see in the Colossian Church at this point? He sees their "order," like an army standing ready for battle. There is no disorder. The enemy has not been able to do his work. There is a steadfastness about their faith in Christ.

This is different from what Paul saw in the Corinthian Church.

And it is certainly different from what he had heard about in the Galatian churches. They were in disarray! BUT NOT SO AT COLOSSE. But Paul does not want it to come to that, and so he has been praying and now he is writing. Paul did not wait for trouble to start; he

sought to prepare the Church so that there would be no trouble. WHEN A CHURCH IS WELL-GROUNDED IN THEWORD AND IN THE LORD, FALSE TEACHERS FIND THAT THERE IS LITTLE THAT THEY CAN DO!

III. PROGRESS (Col. 2:6, 7).

These two verses indicate, basically, that what has been going on must continue.

Paul is saying, Don't look for something new; just continue on, strengthening what you are doing. How wonderful to be able to write like this to a church!

Note: Paul does not talk just about the Gospel, even though we had that in ch. 1. But he speaks of the Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, His full name, to remind them, not of what they received when they were saved, but who they received!

Then, "walk in Him." Not just with, or like, or before, but "in." They had been walking in dependence upon Him, and they were to continue.

V. 7 explains how--with four participles.

"Rooted" - This reaches back into the past, comes up to the present, and extends into the future. And it is a passive, and so it was not something which they did for themselves, but which was done for them. The picture here is of a plant.

"Built up"--like a building. This is a present passive. As Lenski says (p. 94), the roots need to go down more and more, and the building needs to go up more and more. Our foundations should get stronger, and our building should get bigger!

The third participle will result from the first two. And this also is for our encouragement.

"Established in the faith"--receiving confirmation, proofs, that the faith is true, is complete, "that it lacking in no point, and that any claim which offers you additions and the like is spurious" (Lenski, 95).

"As you have been taught" goes with "established . . ." and is a confirmation of the ministry of Tychicus!

But then the fourth participle: "abounding with thanksgiving."

This also is a result--overflowing with thanksgiving!

And encouragement comes through this. For a person who is seeking the treasures of the Word, learning of the Lord Jesus, sending down roots, and sending up growth, receiving added confirmations of the truth of the Word, it is impossible to keep them from praising the Lord!

Concl: This was a church which was without problems--YET!

But, as is always the case where there is growth and blessing, someone is liable to come along any time to get our eyes off of the Lord.

The best preventive for trouble is a growing healthy relationship, not just with the doctrines of the Word (although doctrine is involved), BUT WITH THE CHRIST OF THE THE WORD!

IF NOT CHRIST, WHAT THEN?
Col. 2:8-15

Intro: All of Paul's epistles are full of Christ, but none is quite as full as this one! Just read it some time noticing how many times His name is used, and how many times He is referred to in different ways.

Read our passage tonight with that in mind. In the 8 verses there are at least 12 specific references to Christ.

This emphasis tells us volumes about the trouble that was threatening the Colossian church. They were in danger of being turned away from Christ.

And so now we have come to Paul's warning in v. 8, and the reasons for that warning in vv. 9-15. It is as though he is saying, IF NOT CHRIST, WHAT THEN?

This means that we need continually to be asking ourselves two things:

- 1) What is it that I have in Christ? It is a question that many people are not prepared to answer, many of the Lord's people, and so they are completely unprepared to evaluate the teaching they hear.
- 2) What will this new doctrine give me that I do not already have in Christ? And closely related to this is another question: What will this new doctrine take away from me (if it can) which I already have in Christ?

Paul never stopped just with doctrine, but he always began with doctrine. This is where we must start, and this is why the truths concerning Christ, His Person and His Work, are referred to so constantly and so thoroughly in the beginning of Colossians.

Let us now examine the passage.

I. THE WARNING (Col. 2:8).

"Beware" is a word of warning. Lit., See to it. It points to a very present danger. He is alerting the Colossians to be on their guard.

There are those who would lead them astray. This is the meaning of "spoil." If the truth sets us free (cf. John 8:32), it must be equally true that error enslaves men.

How were they in danger of being led astray?

"Through philosophy" which was nothing more than "vain deceit--the latter describing the former.

Paul calls it "vain deceit" because it is empty and hollow, and will only deceive man in connection with what he hopes to gain from it.

This is the only time that the word, "philosophy," is used in the Bible, but we have "philosophers" in Acts 17:18, and, of course, there are many passages which deal with human wisdom, i.e., wisdom which originates with men. The most prominent is probably 1 Cor. 1-3.

Truth such as a religious teacher claims to have can only be known by revelation. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10. Therefore, that which is "after the tradition of men" is a term which points to truth which is basically human in origin. It deals with just the elementary forms, the abc's, of knowledge as it relates to this life. BUT, WHAT IS MOST DESTROYING OF ALL, IT IS NOT "ACCORDING TO CHRIST"--It is not centered in Him as to its content, and it is not dependent upon Him for its fulfillment!

This is why Paul is so greatly concerned about the Colossians.

But, now, let us look at . . .

II. THE REASONS FOR THE WARNINGS (Col. 2:9-15).

This takes up the remainder of the passage, and it is indicated by the fact that v. 9 begins with the word, "For."

Paul believed in explaining things when he was teaching. Peter did too. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15.

There are four reasons.

A. Because all fulness is in Christ (Col. 2:9, 10).

The word, "fulness," speaks of a condition in which there is not room for any more, nor the need for any more.

He uses this term in one way in v. 9; another, in v. 10.

1. Christ, the fulness of the Godhead.

In Christ "bodily," i.e., in the incarnate Christ, there is all Deity. Nothing is lacking. To know Him is to know God, because there is nothing in God which is not also in Christ--even after His birth here on earth. His birth did have the slightest effect upon His Deity. He is still the same Son of God that He has always been.

2. Christ, the believer's fulness (Col. 2:10).

All that man needs to be able to find acceptance before God is in Christ!

And He, at the same time, is "the head of all principality and power," i.e., He is the source of life for all created authorities, heavenly and earthly. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that our sufficiency should be found in Him.

But there is another reason.

B. Because all freedom is in Christ (Col. 2:11, 12).

You say, how do you get freedom out of these verses?

Let me ask another question: What is the greatest freedom that man needs?

Men would answer today, The freedom to do what we please.

But, is it? Do you find that you are happy just because you can do what you want to do? Do you not regret times when you have done what you could do, and did do?

Paul is talking here about the greatest freedom that there is--THE FREEDOM OF BEING ABLE NOT TO SIN!

Our Lord Jesus Christ gives us this, and He is the only One who can give it to us! And remember that this is something that He must do for us because we cannot do it for ourselves.

Note the three terms which Paul uses to describe this:

- 1) "In whom also ye are circumcised," lit., ye were circumcised.
- 2) "Buried with Him."
- 3) "Also ye are risen with Him."

Where does this point us, but to the Cross? WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS, HE DIED, NOT ONLY TO DELIVER US FROM SIN'S PENALTY, BUT TO DELIVER US FROM SIN'S POWER. This is what Paul is concerned with here.

The expression, "the body of the sins of the flesh," should read, the body of the flesh, i.e., the sum-total of all that is involved in the term, the flesh, as it is used in the NT to describe our old nature.

WE HAVE BEEN JOINED WITH OUR LORD IN HIS DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION. The result is this: We are delivered

from sin as a master. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

DO NOT TRY TO UNDERSTAND IT ALL. JUST BELIEVE IT! AND ACT UPON IT, KNOWING BEYOND ANY DOUBT THAT IT IS TRUE!

We cannot understand how a person becomes a new creature in Christ simply by receiving Christ as his Savior; how can we hope to understand this? BUT, DEPEND UPON IT: IT IS TRUE!

Do not turn away from Christ unless you can get the same thing in someone else.

The third reason:

C. Because all forgiveness is in Christ (Col. 2:13).

There has already been a resurrection in your case, and in mine. And this is not to be confused with the resurrection of our bodies which is yet to come.

We have been raised (as v. 12 has already taught us), but the only reason we have been raised is because God has through the work of His Son FORGIVEN "you all trespasses."

You could not be raised from spiritual death into spiritual life without forgiveness.

The Bible has many wonderful words. We were thinking of one of them this morning: the word, grace. But here is another: forgiveness. Can you find this any place but in Christ. There are a lot of systems that will tell you how you can work toward this, how much YOU have to do. BUT IT IS ONLY IN CHRIST THAT THIS IS PRESENTED TO US AS A GIFT OF THE GOD OF GRACE--A PRICELESS GIFT WHICH IS OURS FREE BECAUSE IT WAS PURCHASED AT THE COST OF THE BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

Before you turn from Christ to someone else, will you see if they can give you this?

The final reason:

D. Because all finality is in Christ (Col. 2:14, 15).

One of the great blessings of the Gospel is that it offers us, not only salvation, but the assurance that we are saved.

What are our two problems in this area that could possi-

bly open up each of our cases for review, and result in a decision against us? They are:

- 1) The Law.
- 2) Satan, and demonic forces.

In v. 14 Paul shows how the Law has been satisfied completely and finally; in v. 15 he shows how the forces of Satan have been defeated once and for all time!

1. The Law.

This is "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." The Law never professed to save; the Law can only condemn, and it demands our death.

But the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted it out.

It does not mean that it no longer exists, but it does mean that as a written charge against the child of God it has been erased in the sense that it can never be used to demand the death of the child of God. THE LORD JESUS SATISFIED ITS EVERY DEMAND WHEN HE DIED ON THE CROSS, AND NOTHING REMAINS TO BE DONE.

Cf. John 5:24.

2. Satan, and demonic forces.

In Rev. 12:10 Satan is referred to as the accuser of the brethren and that he accuses them before God day and night.

What does he accuse us of? Of sin.

Are his accusations just? Yes.

Why are we not cast out from God? Because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us--not only settling the question of guilt, and of sinning, but also of Satan. He is a defeated foe. By the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Satan was stripped of his armor and weapons, openly, publicly disgraced, to be cast into the lake of fire at a future day, but thoroughly defeated and disgraced NOW!

Concl: Can you think of anything that you would possibly need in your relationship to God that you do not have in Christ? And, if you have all of these things in Him, WHY, OH, WHY, WOULD YOU EVER, EVER THINK OF LETTING ANYONE TURN YOU AWAY FROM HIM?

THE SEARCH FOR AN ANSWER
Col. 2:16-23

Intro: If there is any question as to the problems which were threatening the Colossian Church, and the reason for those problems, that question is answered as we come to chapter 2, verse 16.

We had a hint of it in 2:8--but just enough to know that it had to do with human wisdom, or "philosophy," which was especially dangerous because it had no place for Christ.

But now Paul is going into the details.

We are going to see that there were three problems. They may have been separate, but it seems that it is more likely that they were three distinctive parts of one kind of teaching.

The three parts are:

- 1) Ritualism (vv. 16, 17).
- 2) **Mysticism** (vv. 18, 19).
- 3) Legalism (vv. 20-23).

The reason for these problems is the desire that many Colossian believers had to be delivered from the sins of the flesh.

And this is where a warning is in order: THE CHILD OF GOD WHO GETS CONCERNED ABOUT SIN IN HIS LIFE HAS TO BE JUST AS CAREFUL THAT HE DOES NOT TAKE THE WRONG ANSWER AS HE DOES THAT HE TAKE THE RIGHT ONE.

This is especially appropriate today.

One can certainly sense in the Church today a desire for reality.

This has been brought on by many things:

- 1) The emptiness of materialism.
- 2) The forsaking of our moral standards.
- 3) The drug problem, with its aftermath of tragedy and death.
- 4) Crime.
- 5) War.
- 6) Racial troubles.
- 7) Boredom.

Other things like this could be mentioned.

But people are looking for answers.

AND--the superficiality and hypocrisy of many Christians is being uncovered so that Christians seem to be taking the lead in the search for an answer. AND WITH THIS RENEWED INTEREST IN FINDING AN ANSWER TO OUR PERSONAL PROBLEMS THERE HAS COME A FLOOD OF HERESY WHICH IS CERTAINLY WITHOUT PARALLEL IN RECENT TIMES. Therefore, while we are looking for the answer, we need to be

warned against the false answers which some teachers are suggesting. If there has ever been a time when we needed to stay close to the Word of God, that time is now.

We have been saved from our sins, but how can we be delivered from sinning?

Before Paul gives the right answer in chapter 3, he mentions three wrong answers in the remainder of chapter 2.

I. RITUALISM (Col. 2:16, 17).

The first thing to note in v. 16 is that Paul is pointing to a situation where some person is looked to as our authority. If you please him, it is good; if you do not, it is bad. He is your judge.

The NASB renders it,

"Therefore let no one act as your judge . . ."

What does this particular judge make his decision on? Five things:

- 1) Eating.
- 2) Drinking. Which would also include NOT doing either, i.e., fasting.
- 3) The annual feasts.
- 4) The monthly observances.
- 5) The weekly sabbaths.

Anyone can recognize that this is a perverted form of Judaism which had invaded the church. It taught, in effect, that if you want to be the right kind of a person and do the right things, then you need to be religious. RITUAL IS YOUR ANSWER.

How subtle error can be if it makes use of the Scriptures. After all, does not the Old Testament deal with these very things?

Yes, it does. BUT THOSE THINGS ARE THE SHADOW OF A PERSON. THEY ARE TYPES THAT ARE LOOKING FOR AN ANTITYPE, A FULFILLMENT. That fulfillment has come. He is Christ! And Paul wants the Colossians to know that you can be the most religious person in the world, but not have anything to do with Christ! He is the One you need. Why still be occupied with the shadow when you can have the reality?

II. MYSTICISM (Col. 2:18, 19).

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to get some Christians away from the Word of God? Of course, some have never been very close to it anyway, and so they do not know what they

they are leaving behind.

Paul now refers to those who will defraud or rob you of the prize of victory.

And notice the contradiction in this verse as it applies to the mystic. He devotes himself to humility and yet he is blown up with pride as a result of doctrine that come right from his own corrupted, human flesh--his old nature.

What does he teach?

He, lit., takes his stand ("intruding") on things which he claims that he has seen, i.e., visions. This stands for any revelation that a man claims to have received apart from the Word of God!

His visions seem to outdate everything else. No wonder that he is "puffed up"!

But, what, basically, is wrong with this? It exalts a man's experience; it (v. 19) forsakes, it denies "the Head" of "the body," CHRIST. Oh, it may give Him a place, but it does not exclude everything else but Him.

V. 19 is very similar to Eph. 4:16. Paul is talking about the havoc which this brings into the Body of Christ, the Church. When anything interrupts the authority of the head over the body, the whole body is in trouble.

So Paul is talking about the effect of mysticism upon the fellowship of the people of God in the Body--the corporate growth.

Then, the third problem.

III. LEGALISM (Col. 2:20-22). "If" in v. 20 = since.

The legalist says that you can keep your flesh under control if you are negative: "Touch not; taste not; handle not." This is Phariseeism. It reminds us of what we have recently seen in Mark 7.

"Dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world" points to the tremendous change which took place for believers as a result of Christ's death, and our part in it. It is similar to what Paul teaches in Galatians about the difference between a child and a son. HERE IT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMMATURITY AND MATURITY.

Again, this has its roots in the Old Testament.

The Law was given in the Old Testament as a schoolmaster until Christ came. Then we are no longer under the Law. To place ourselves under the Law is to admit that we are still spiritual infants . . .

. . . and (note the way things will degenerate) to continue to stay under the Law will eventually lead to "the commandments and doctrines of men"--doctrines which have no relationship at all even to the Old Testament.

You cannot corrupt the Word of God without eventually leaving it.

Concl: Col. 2:23.

How does Paul summarize it all?

One writer has paraphrased it this way:

"All such teaching is worthless. It may bear the semblance of wisdom; but it wants (lacks) the reality. It may make an officious parade of religious service; it may vaunt its humility; it may treat the body with merciless rigour; but it entirely fails in its chief aim. It is powerless to check indulgence of the flesh" (Lightfoot, 271).

And do you know, why, basically, they are wrong? BECAUSE THEY DENY JESUS CHRIST HIS PLACE AND SUBSTITUTE IN HIS PLACE THE WORKS OF MAN.

Starting with chapter 3 Paul gives us the answer. We will take it up next week. But let us read it in closing. His answer has to do entirely, from start to finish, with Christ!

THE ONLY WAY TO BE HOLY
Col. 3:1-4

Intro: The whole reason for the problem in the Colossian church was the fact that believers there wanted to be holy!

— Just go back and read what Paul has written in his introduction to the epistle if you need to be reminded as to what this Church was like.

But, whenever this happens in the life of a Christian, or in a Church, i.e., when people get concerned about personal holiness, then we have to be on the lookout for the false as well as the true.

It seems that more heresy will show at such a time than at any other time.

And, we must remember that heresy is always discouraging because it does not produce what it promises. The only way to be holy is the way that is consistent with all of the teaching of Scripture.

— In these first four verses of Colossians 3 we have Paul telling us how we can be holy. If we can get these truths pinned down in our hearts, we will have the truth. We have a mingling together of the doctrinal and the practical. Let us notice them in detail.

First of all, we have . . .

I. A FACT TO BE RECOGNIZED (Col. 1:1a).

This is the very place where many people get started on the wrong foot. They do not understand their position spiritually.

Unfortunately our English translation gives just the opposite idea which Paul meant to convey. This is a first class condition which means he is talking about something which he recognizes as being true. And so the word, "If," should be translated, Since!

He is not saying that you have to seek this as an experience; he is saying that this is already true of every believer in Colosse--and of every believer in Christ!

Cf. Eph. 2:4-7.

— Right here is where many believers get off on the wrong track. Many are seeking self-crucifixion, not realizing that they already have been raised!

If you look at heretical teaching which has to do with the Bible, you will find that it always stops short of the Cross. But, if you look at many Christians as to their experience, you will find that they stop at the Cross. PAUL WANTS US TO MOVE US ON PAST THE CROSS TO THE RESURRECTION AND TO A LORD WHO IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD!

Do not seek crucifixion because you already have resurrection.

II. AN EFFORT TO BE MADE (Col. 3:1b).

You and I are not going to be holy automatically. There are things to be done if we are to be holy:

- 1) It calls for a search.
- 2) It calls for a continuous search.

This would bear the translation, Keep on seeking.

What does this tell you?

It tells you two things:

- 1) That there is a human side to holiness
- 2) That this holiness will never be complete in this life. Regardless of how long we have known the Lord, we still must keep up the search, the seeking.

What are we looking for?

WE ARE LOOKING FOR CHRIST--"Christ . . . seated at the right hand of God."

But, do we not have Him now?

Yes, we do. But we will never exhaust what there is to know about Him--not just in His pre-existence, nor in His earthly ministry, nor in His death, nor even in just His resurrection. WE NEED TO BE SEEKING MORE AND MORE INTO WHAT IT MEANS THAT HE IS NOW SEATED AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND.

Where do you find this? Do you tarry and pray and pray? Do you seek for some kind of a vision of the Lord in glory? ABSOLUTELY NOT! You take the Word of God, the New Testament, and you find there what it has to say about Christ NOW--at the Father's right hand!

This means that you have to read passages like Romans 8 and Ephesians 1 and 2 and the whole epistle to the Hebrews--especially chapter 1, 8, 10, 12. Read them and re-read them and seek and search and meditate and pray--AND THE MORE YOU SEARCH, THE MORE YOU WILL LEARN THAT THE SEARCH WILL NEVER END.

But let us understand that you do not become holy just by sitting around hoping that you will be. Nor do you become holy by fighting your sin, or by trying to crucify yourself. YOU BECOME HOLY WHEN YOU REALIZE WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED TO YOU IN CHRIST, AND THEN BEGIN TO LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT HIM IN HEAVEN.

But there is more.

III. A NEW DIRECTION FOR OUR THOUGHTS (Col. 3:2).

"Set your affection" is not quite what the original says, but it is certainly involved. Paul is saying here, Keep on thinking about . . .

There is to be a deliberate turning in our thoughts TO "things above" (note the order) and away FROM "the things on the earth."

"THINGS ON
THE EARTH"--
ITS SINS,
ITS ANSWERS,
ITS RELIGION,
ITS WAYS,
ETC.

Our thoughts reflect our affections, do they not? If you want something very badly, it is hard to keep from thinking about it. IN FACT, YOUR THOUGHTS WILL INDICATE TO YOU WHAT YOU REALLY FEEL IS IMPORTANT! What do you think about?

Prov. 23:7 says about man, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Someone (the most-quoted authority) has paraphrased it this way: You aren't what you think you are, but, what you think, you are!

An idle mind is the devil's workshop--and it is true. We become holy by deliberately and continuously turning our thoughts to Christ above, and not to let our minds be filled with "things on the earth."

This same verb, think, is used of the ungodly in Phil. 3:19.

Bishop Lightfoot says, "You must not only seek heaven; you must think heaven."

May I change that slightly: You must not only seek Christ; you must think about Him--and all the things that you have in Him where He is now.

IV. TWO GREAT TRUTHS TO REST IN (Col. 3:3, 4).

Actually each of these truths has two parts. BOTH OF THEM GIVE ASSURANCE TO THE BELIEVER IN HIS QUEST FOR HOLINESS.

A. The first truth (Col. 3:3).

In this truth Paul looks into the past, and brings us up to the present.

1. The past: Lit., you died.

This is consistent with v. 1. If we are now raised, it must be true that at some time in the past, in God's sight, we died!

Every believer can say the first part of Gal. 2:20; every believer ought to be able to say the last part of Gal. 2:20.

We enter into this when we are saved, but how tragic that so many are spending their lives seeking to crucify themselves when they have already died, and are now raised!

What does this mean?

It means that you died to all that you were before you came to the Lord, and that now you have been raised together with Him, never to be separated from Him, and that all that He is is yours!

2. The present: Lit., Has been hidden with Christ in God.

It took place in the past, but it continues right up to the present--and goes right on continuing!

This is for our assurance--double assurance!

PEOPLE CANNOT
EVEN TELL THAT WE
HAVE IT.

"Hidden"--where the source of our life and victory cannot be seen nor understood, and where the forces of evil can never tamper with or destroy it!

B. The second truth--having to do with the future (Col. 3:4)

Have you ever had any doubts about whether or not Christ has been glorified?

Have you had any doubts that you will see Him in His glorified body?

We know that these two truths are as certain as the birth or death or resurrection of Christ.

But what about you? Do you have any doubts about your own glorification? Do you know what that will mean?

Right now you can sin, but you do not have to sin. When

you are glorified it will impossible for you ever to sin again. BUT MORE THAN THAT--WHEN YOU ARE GLORIFIED YOU WILL BE JUST LIKE THE LORD!

Did the Colossians want to be holy? Then they needed to seek Christ, think Christ, knowing that the answer is not to be found in fighting sin, or in crucifying ourselves, but but in a life and a mind and a heart occupied with Christ.

Concl: How different this is from the ritualism, the mysticism, and the legalism of the passage we had last week. All of them depend upon what we can do for ourselves. Paul wants us to know that the answer is in Christ. He is the Savior from start to finish, and HE IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE HOLY.

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE
Col. 3:5-11

Intro: There are two sides to a Christian's life: the negative and the positive.

In our day (and probably in every generation of believers) there has been a tendency to emphasis either one or the other.

Sometimes you will run across the idea that, since the 10 commandments are primarily negative, in the OT life was primarily made up of things that the people of God were not to do, but that now the emphasis is positive--and negatives are a thing of the past.

There is only one way to settle problems like these. We must go to the Word of God!

When we do, what do we find?

We find that, whether we are looking at the Old Testament or the New, there was a positive side in the Old Testament and there was a negative side as well, and there is a positive side in the New Testament and there is also a negative side.

So we have both in both Testaments. We need to recognize both, and maintain the balance between the two that we find in all of the Word of God.

An OT example: Psalm 1:1, 2.

In the passage we come to now in Colossians we find Paul dealing with the negative side of a Christian's life, and then dealing with the positive side. To take one but not the other will only lead to confusion and disappointment in our experience. So we need to see both sides.

He takes up the negative side first, and this will be our concern tonight. Next Sunday night, the Lord willing, we will look at the positive side.

Let us think, first of all, of . . .

I. THE MEANING OF THE NEGATIVE SIDE.

Why is there such an emphasis any place in the Word for those who have come to know the Lord as Savior?

It seems that there are two answers to this question:

A. Because we need to understand that it is still possible for a child of God to sin.

If this is not the case then the passage before us has no meaning at all. If a person cannot do these things there is no reason at all to bring them up.

And what child of God is there who has not come in shame and humiliation before the Lord to confess to the heavenly Father things which have been done that are sin?

- B. Because we need to understand that it is not necessary for a child of God to sin.

Before we were saved we could not help ourselves. Cf. John 8:34,

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

But, thank God, things are different now. Cf. John 8:36,

"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

We not longer are the servants of sin, the bondservants. Our Lord has provided for our deliverance--and Paul is making sure that the Colossians know about this.

If a Christian does not know this, then, when he does sin, he can only come to the conclusion that he has not been saved.

But now, as we look at these verses, it seems that we have the same thing twice. In vv. 5-7 we have three verses introduced with a list of sins, and in vv. 8-11 we have four more verses introduced with another list of sins.

However, a closer look will indicate that Paul is showing us in these two groups of verses . . .

II. THE TWO REASONS FOR THE NEGATIVE SIDE (Col. 3:5-11).

The first is this:

- A. In our lives we need to manifest that there is a change FROM what we used to do (Col. 3:5-7).

At our first glance it might seem that "mortify" is in direct conflict with Col. 3:3. But v. 3 gives us the doctrinal side, i.e., that which has already happened, while v. 5 introduces the practical side, i.e., that which needs to be done.

The relationship between the two is simply that I am to act upon what the Word teaches me about myself now that

I have been saved. Lit., I am to treat as dead these things which Paul mentions as only a samplly of the many sins which I am capable of committing.

- 1) "Fornication" - illicit sexual sins, which the heathen were inclined to minimize and accept as a way of life.
- 2) "Uncleanness" - a general term which includes sins like the one mentioned above. It would point to such sins as greediness, idolatry, dishonesty, etc.
- 3) "Inordinate affection" - any ungovernable desire. Cf. 1 Th. 4:5; Gal. 5:24.
- 4) "Evil concupiscence," or lust. These are those desires which are dictated by our old nature.
- 5) "Covetousness" - to have more. It points primarily to that which a person does not have. This is idolatry because it becomes a form of worship.

These are all possibilities for any person, even for a person who knows the Lord as his Savior! We must never forget it!

But the point is that we do not need to continue to live as we have in the past. This is what Paul is pointing out in vv. 6, 7. THIS IS WHY GOD'S JUDGMENT IS COMING, AND THIS IS HOW WE USED TO LIVE. BUT THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE WORD IS GOD IS NEEDED TO TEACH US THAT COMING TO KNOW THE LORD HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A CHANGE FROM ALL THAT WE USED TO DO.

The Word of God knows nothing about the teaching that a person can accept Jesus Christ as his Savior and still remain the same.

So this is the first reason for the negative teaching.

- B. In our lives we need to manifest that there is a change toward new things (Col. 3:8-11).

Now Paul uses another verb, different from "mortify" in v. 3. It is this: "Put off" - as we would put off an article of clothing, the thing which people can see.

Here he mentions 6 sins which we used to wear as a garment:

- 1) "Anger" - a settled and continuing habit of mind which is set on revenge.
- 2) "Wrath" - the sudden outburst which soon subsides and disappears as soon as it came up. This causes a lot of grief to a lot of people.
- 3) "Malice" - "The vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others" (Lightfoot, p. 280).
- 4) "Blasphemy" - speech (a sin of the tongue) which is

- designed to injure another's good name.
- 5) "Filthy communication" - obscene, lewd speech which fosters wantonness.
 - 6) "Lie not" - singled out for special attention.

The first group of sins had to do with desires; the second with the tongue.

Here Paul is leading up to the positive side in v. 12, but he wants to show how the negative prepares the way for the positive. If we take away, but do not put something else in its place, eventually we go back to that which has been taken away.

AT THIS POINT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US TO KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO US ALREADY SO THAT WE CAN BECOME DIFFERENT. WE CAN "PUT OFF" WHAT THE OLD NATURE DOES BECAUSE WE HAVE ALREADY PUT OFF WHAT THE OLD NATURE IS, i.e., WE WERE DELIVERED FROM OUR BONDAGE TO THE OLD NATURE SINCE WE HAVE PUT ON THE NEW.

The word, "new," not only means something which we did not have before, but something which is young and needs to grow. "Renewed" speaks of development, growth.

From this we learn another important lesson: OUR PROBLEM WITH SIN IS NOT SETTLED INSTANTANEOUSLY; INSTEAD, IT KEEPS PACE WITH OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH!

"In knowledge" = unto the full knowledge. "The image" speaks of Him who represents what we one day will be-- a statement which goes right along with Rom. 8:29 and 1 John 3:2. Christ is the One who is the pattern.

And, in conclusion, there are no impossible cases in this, whether you divide men:

- 1) Nationally: "Greek or Jew."
- 2) Religiously: "circumcision or uncircumcision."
- 3) Culturally: "Barbarian, Scythian."
- 4) Socially: "bond or free."

The Barbarian was any non-Jew, but the Scythian was the lowest of the low. They were a race of savages who had caused the Jews much difficulty. They neither plowed nor sowed. They moved about as nomads, and plundered people everywhere. They had the most filthy habits. They never bathed. They drank the blood of the first man they killed in battle. They made napkins of scalps and drinking bowls out of human skulls. They sacrificed every 100th man taken as a prisoner--sacrificed them to their heathen deities. It would be revolting to a Jew and to other Gentiles to be mentioned in a list with them.

Why does Paul mention them here?

- 1) To show that as far as nature is concerned, there is no difference among men.
- 2) To show that the Lord can deliver the lowest as well as the rest because there are no impossible cases with the Lord.

"CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL."

Concl: Perhaps you and I can see more clearly now the reason for Paul's negatives, or better, the negatives of the Lord. It takes a very superficial look at man to say that these are not needed.

And has the Apostle not compressed into just a few verses an amazing amount of spiritual teaching?

Where will I find my troubles coming from?

From the old man, ruined by sin, with its desires and speech.

Thank God we can treat them as dead, can put them off, because our position before God is that we died with Christ, and the glorious effect of that death and resurrection are gradually being more and more apparent until that day when He come and the work will be complete!

THE POSITIVE SIDE OF A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE
Col. 3:12-17

Intro: In vv. 5-11 we have the negative side of a Christian's life. Tonight we come to the positive side.

In our Scripture tonight there is only one word which is negative; it is the word, "admonishing," in v. 16. EVERYTHING ELSE IS POSITIVE!

Now--one thing will impress the careful reader, and it is this: Paul has only one set of instructions for all believers. In v. 11 he had mentioned various groups. The same instructions apply to all. We can add men and women, young and old, rich and poor, or any other contrast--BUT THE SAME INSTRUCTIONS APPLY TO ALL IN THE SAME WAY.

In other words, there is a sense in which we are all to be alike.

Note the unique way in which Paul presents this. I want to reflect it in my outline tonight:

- I. Ways in which we are alike (v. 12a).
- II. Ways in which we are to dress alike, or look alike (vv. 12b-14).
- III. Ways in which we are to live alike, or act alike (vv. 15-17). Especially in vv. 15 and 16 we have our relationship to each other in the words, "one body," and "teaching and admonishing one another."

If Paul were talking about spiritual gifts, he would show how we are different, but he is not talking about spiritual gifts here. He is talking about the positive side of our lives, and here there must be no difference.

We like to pride ourselves in our differences, but even looking at us from a natural point of view there are ways in which we refuse to be different--and two of the main areas of our lives in which this is true are 1) the way we dress and 2) the way we live. Paul takes up both of these.

But before he gets to his practical emphasis, let us note what he has to say about . . .

I. WAYS IN WHICH WE ARE ALIKE (Col. 3:12a).

He uses three words to describe every child of God, every believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. "Elect of God." This indicates where our salvation had its origin. We were chosen by God. We are His because He wanted us to be His. Cf. Eph. 1:4.

- B. "Holy." We are set apart by God for Himself. Bishop Moule says that this means, dedicated to God by Himself.
- C. "Beloved," or simply, loved. God has no favorites in His family. He loves us all the same, and He loves us more than we can possibly understand.

These are the ways in which we are alike.

II. WAYS IN WHICH WE ARE TO DRESS ALIKE, OR TO LOOK ALIKE (Col. 3:12b-14).

We get this emphasis from the verb, "put on" (as you would put on garments).

Probably in high school we want to dress alike more than at any other time in our lives, but we never really get away from it. We do not want to have exactly what other people have, but we do not want to get too far away from the current styles either.

But one thing that does irritate us is the way styles change.

This is one of the wonderful things about the styles of the Christian life. They were set by the Lord long ago, and they are the latest thing now.

What kind of garments are you and I to wear? Paul mentions eight.

- A. "Bowels of mercies," or tender mercies. We might translate this, compassion. It speaks of how we feel toward others when we see them in distress or need. Cf. Rom. 12:1. This is a Christ-like trait.
- B. "Kindness." This also has to do with our attitude toward others. This word describes a gentle-woman or a gentle-man. He is not harsh or austere. Our heavenly Father will be like this through all eternity. Cf. Eph. 2:7.
- C. "Humbleness of mind." Now Paul would turn our thoughts to the way we feel about ourselves. It is the person who sees himself as he really is, and so is humble. You can tell by being with him that he has not forgotten that he is only a sinner saved by grace.
- D. "Meekness." Perhaps the main thought in this word has to do with our relationship to God. Archbishop Trench (p. 152) says that meekness is "that inwrought grace of the soul . . . that temper of spirit in which we accept

his (i.e., the Lord's) dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting." Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. Cf. Num. 12:3.

- E. "Longsuffering"--which has to do with our circumstances, closely related to "meekness." It also can include the people who are responsible, or involved, in our circumstances. We patiently endure without feeling resentment.
- F. "Forbearing one another"--according to Fausset, this word has to do with things which are going on now . . .
- G. "Forgiving one another" has to do with past offenses.

The pattern is the forgiveness of Christ. Cf. Luke 23:34; Heb. 10:17.

- H. "Love." This is the outer garment that goes over everything else, and without which the rest of the garments are impossible and meaningless. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-8.

It is spoken of here as "the bond of perfectness," i.e., that which holds all things together and shows that we are moving along toward that goal of our salvation--spiritual growth which will culminate in our entire conformity to Christ.

Are these the garments you are wearing? These are what you should have on all of the time. This is the style that never goes out!

But now, and finally, Paul goes on to say, to point out . . .

III. WAYS IN WHICH WE ARE TO ACT ALIKE (Col. 3:15-17).

Here he points to five things--one of which is repeated because it is so important!

- A. "Peace . . . in one body" (Col. 3:15a).

The better versions render it, the peace of Christ. Paul is exalting Christ.

Our actions are to be judged, not by the false teacher, nor by the world, i.e., that which pleases or makes peace with them, but that which brings the peace of Christ Himself to our hearts.

Lenski says (p. 175) that "Paul . . . personifies peace." This should be true of every believer. We were "called"

- to this, and something is wrong in what we are doing if it is not acclaiming us as the victor in our own hearts.
- B. Thanksgiving. Fausset: Paul mentions this 41x.
- C. "The word of Christ." Obviously this is the Scriptures. What are you doing with the Word, and especially with the word about Christ?

Does it dwell in you, have its home in you--"richly," abundantly, until it overflows?

And is it there "in all wisdom"? I.e., do you show "skill and discretion" in your understanding and use of the Word?

This leads to the fourth point . . .

- D. "Teaching and admonishing one another"--the positive and the negative sides of instructing each other.

But here it is done with music:

- 1) "In psalms"--the Psalms of the OT.
- 2) "And hymns"--later than the Psalms, but with the same characteristics. And they always had this one trait: they were addressed primarily to God, not to men.
- 3) "Spiritual songs," or spiritual odes (since all odes are not spiritual). They were not as restricted as psalms and hymns, but could give a testimony, or teach, or exhort, etc.

But to be effective it had to be:

- 1) "With grace," enabling grace.
- 2) "In your hearts."
- 3) "To the Lord."

Paul must have loved music. Cf. Acts 16:25,
"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them."

- E. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"(Col. 3:17a).

Alexander McClaren, a great teacher of the Word of the past generation, said that this meant two things:

- 1) To do all that you do because it is what He wants you to do ~~do~~, i.e., in obedience to His authority.
- 2) To do all things in dependence upon Him for His help. HE IS OUR LORD, AND HE IS OUR LIFE.

And then, to cap it all, Paul mentions again . . .

- F. "Giving thanks." And here he wants to emphasize that it is only "in him," i.e., in Christ, that our thanksgiving

can ever get to God!

Concl: Paul, of course, has not touched on everything, but he has given us the basic essentials.

And why is there such a sameness about it all--a glorious sameness? Because we all have the same destiny--to be like Christ!

And, when Paul goes on to speak of the home, this is the kind of a foundation that he intends should be carried into those relationships.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:31 that "the fashion of this world passeth away." He is speaking of its form, the superficial outward appearance. Cf. Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17. It is only in being like, and looking like, and doing like the Lord wants us to be and look and do, that we will find the blessing now and the glory to come that will satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts--and bring glory to our dear Lord!

Intro: For our day, and certainly for Paul's day, we come tonight to some very, very important practical suggestions. They have to do with our homes, and with our work.

But it is important to see that these instructions have a special place in this epistle. They are built on a foundation that is twofold:

- 1) Doctrinal instruction.
- 2) Practical instruction.

The practical instructions have likewise taken on a twofold character. They have to do with:

- 1) Our personal relationship with the Lord.
- 2) Our personal relationship to each other in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Then these instructions having to do with the home and with our work are followed by what the Apostle Paul has to say about our ministry to the world. See 4:2 and following.

To ignore the place that our passage has in the epistle is to rob it of its power and its importance. We are not expected to take these by themselves, but to come up to them through the epistle in our understanding and in our practical experience.

As we begin to consider them, let us make, first of all, . . .

I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

A. Three sets of pairs.

B. Their personal character. Paul tells the wives what they are to do; he does not tell the husbands to make them do it, etc.

This is always the key to any problem, i.e., that I am willing to do what the Lord wants me to do even before the other one does what he is supposed to do, and whether or not he even wants to.

C. The simplicity. There is just one thing for each person mentioned, and that one thing is to be the determining factor for everything else.

D. The starting-point with each pair. Paul always starts with the one who has the least responsibility--the wife, the child, the servant.

E. The glory of each. The Lord has so made us that our

greatest joy is to be found in fulfilling what Paul, speaking by the Spirit of God, tells us what we should do.

F. Related to the Lord (in most of the cases).

G. The starting-point in the series: the home. From the home Paul moves out to the work.

II. THE DETAILS. Cf Eph. 5:22-6:9.

Preached:
10/15/72
2 p.m.

A. Wives (Col. 3:18).

For greater detail on all of these, read Eph. 5:22-6:9. Here Paul is being very brief, but to the point, giving the one thing necessary for each person involved.

What an important place a wife has! From Paul's order here it would seem that the wives form the foundation for all that is being said. If the wife is wrong, then it is hard for anything else to be right.

The very purpose for a wife's existence goes back to the beginning of the Bible, and is one of the oldest truths in the Word of God. There is no excuse for anyone who is ignorant of it!

Her word is, "submit." The NASB has it, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." J. B. Phillips says, "Wives, adapt yourselves to your husbands."

"As it is fitting" - ἀνάκειν. It speaks of that which is consistent with us in our relationship to the Lord.

Perhaps there is some significance to the fact that Paul does not use the word, obey, here, as he does for the children, and for the servants. The wives are not to be the slaves, neither are they to be the leaders.

And this is where a wife is the happiest. Women's Lib will produce nothing but miserable women because it violates God's will and purpose for women.

B. Husbands (Col. 3:19).

"Love" - ἀγαπάτε.
Cf. 1:4, 8, 2:2.
Cf. Eph. 5:25-29.

This present tense could be translated, "Husbands, keep on loving your wives." Under all circumstances, this is the will of God for the husband. And he is not to allow himself to be bitter, resentful, irritated, exasperated.

It does not mean that everything must be accepted, and that problems cannot be solved, BUT LOVE MUST BE DOMINANT ALWAYS IN EVERYTHING!

C. Children (Col. 3:20).

Have you noticed the similar way in which Paul begins his word to the servants in v. 22?

children are considered after the parents. Their obedience is to teach obedience to their children.

This is a child's first step in learning obedience to God.

Regardless of what category we may fall into now (and we can be in more than one), all of us are or have been children. And Paul's word to the children is basic to the will of God for children, but it is also the foundation upon which a happy adult life can be, and must be, founded.

Much adult unhappiness today, even among Christians, is due to the fact that many adults never learned obedience as children. IF YOU AND I ARE NOT TEACHING OUR CHILDREN OBEDIENCE, WE ARE ROBBING THEM OF THE VERY TRAINING THAT WILL BRING THEM HAPPINESS IN YEARS TO COME. This is what makes you tremble for the children of our generation.

But here Paul is writing to the children themselves. Let every child who is interested in pleasing the Lord know that he cannot please the Lord if he disobeys his parents.

There may be problems which need to be worked out, but this is God's will for children.

D. Fathers (Col. 3:21).

A father is to be a disciplinarian, but he is also to be an encourager. Children need encouragement. They not only need to be rebuked when they do wrong, but they need to be complimented when they do right.

This is the place that the father has, and what he can so easily neglect.

E. Servants (Col. 3:22-25).

This is where Paul places his emphasis. Perhaps it is because of Onesimus. Perhaps also because most of the Colossian believers were servants.

They need to remember that obedience is always the order of the day for three reasons:

1. That in serving men they are serving the Lord.
2. That reward will be given even for a servant's faithful labor. A faithful servant receives double pay - from his Master, and from the Lord. Cf. Joseph.

3. That there are penalties for doing the wrong thing.

What dignity, and what unlimited opportunities there are for a servant who will be faithful! Cf. Joseph and Daniel.

F. Masters (Col. 4:1). The word for the Master is, "Give." PHILEMON -

The best thing for a master on earth is for him to be a good servant of his Master who is in heaven.

"Just" = right-
eous, that which
is acceptable
to God. Not just
what is legal.
"Equal" - the
rights. Let
the pay corres-
pond with the
responsibility of
the position.

Some weeks ago there came into my hand a delightful little commentary on Colossians by Herbert W. Cragg. It contains a series of message he gave at Keswick in England. He is a vicar in the Church of England, and obviously a dear man of God. But one thing that he has to say about the masters is this:

"Being a good servant of the Lord, you will make a good master; for no man is fit to lead who has not first learned to follow" (p. 96).

Concl: This concludes all that Paul has to say. He could say more, but he has given us the basics. If all we had about the home and work were Colossians, we would have enough for us to know what the will of God is in each of these positions.

But why is this so important?

Let me close by giving three reasons:

- 1) This is the only way we as the people of God can be happy, and satisfied.
- 2) It is only through these things that we can please the Lord, that we can do His will, glorifying Him.
- 3) Not until we realize the importance of these things and do them will our witness to the world amount to much. We will come to this next Sunday evening.

Mr. Cragg says again,

"Every Christian home is an outpost of the Gospel--planted by God in a pagan society. Every Christian church is a mission station, a focal point of spiritual life from which the outposts are to be nourished. It is time we gave more thought to the home, and to the local church to which we belong" (pp. 89, 90).

Very few blessings are accidental. They are the result of knowing the will of God, and doing it. And there is no place where this is tested, or more important, than in our homes. May God incline our hearts toward these things which, if followed, can only result in great blessing.

PRAYING, WALKING, AND TALKING
Col. 4:2-6

Intro: We are coming to the end of this wonderful letter from Paul to the believers at Colosse.

The Colossians were very dear to the Apostle Paul. Although it is an epistle of warning and argument, yet it comes from the heart of Paul and it is directed toward their hearts. Paul is so jealous for their blessing that he does not want anything to turn them away from the Lord.

He wants them to know the dangers that lurk in their own hearts--and that no law, no ritual, no spiritualization of worship could ever handle sin. Only the Lord can do that!

He has spoken to them about the truth which they need to know and believe.

He has told them how they need to live.

He has even given them help for family problems that some of them were evidently facing.

And he has spoken specifically to servants and masters.

Now, as he comes to the end we see him bring together:

- 1) Their needs.
- 2) His needs, and the needs of those with him.
- 3) The needs of people in the world who are without Christ.

There is no need to write more; he simply wants to draw together in a final way the fact that all of this has been written with the world in mind. How can the people of the world be reached?

Note the three things which he mentions:

I. PRAYING (Col. 4:2-4).

Paul mentions here three kinds of prayer:

- 1) General praying--all-inclusive.
- 2) Thanksgiving.
- 3) Intercession--not for the world, but for the children of God who are concerned about reaching the people of the world.

We note also that he says three things about our praying:

A. Prayer as a priority: "Continue in prayer."

Basically this means that we are to be so devoted to praying that there is nothing that is more important to

us.

Can we actually say this about ourselves? Do we plan our lives around this? Does it occupy our thoughts? Do we look for spare moments during the day that we can give to prayer? OR . . . must we confess tonight that having a good time, or making a living, or other things mean more to us than praying?

If anything is more important to us than prayer, then some changes need to be made in our lives!

- B. Prayer as on watch for thanksgiving: "And watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Paul evidently meant that we should watch our lives so closely, and what the Lord is doing in answer to prayer, that no opportunity for thanksgiving will escape us.

Does it? From all of the time you and I give to prayer, how much of it is thankful prayer?

- C. Prayer as intercession: "Praying also for us . . ."
(vv. 3, 4).

Paul was probably facing his own trial, and he was concerned about it, not that he would be released, but that it might provide him with an opportunity to speak to others about Christ.

Two things make up his request in this connection:

1. He wanted the Lord to open the door. We may force ourselves upon people, but only God can open the hearts of people to the Gospel, only the Lord can make people receptive to what we have to tell them.

"The mystery of Christ" by its parallel in Ephesians (6:19) is "the mystery of the gospel."

Phil. 1:12, 13 may record the answer to this prayer. Lenski (p. 192) says that this meant reaching 9,000 Roman soldiers of the imperial Roman guard plus many others!

2. He wanted the Lord to guide him in knowing what to say.

Here is an experienced servant of the Lord. He did not have a preconceived idea as to what he was going to say each time he faced an open door. Each door

was different, and demanded fresh dependence upon the Lord for guidance.

"Ought" means bound, and is related to bonds in v. 3. He, as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, was under divine orders to witness--even when he was in Roman bonds! But he wanted to do it so that people would learn and hear what they might otherwise never know. This is the meaning of "manifest."

What a difference there would be if we learned to pray from what we can learn in the Bible!

The second thing that Paul brings up as he thinks of our witness to the world is . . .

II. WALKING (Col. 4:5).

If you are concerned about people in the world and their need of Christ, the first thing you should do about it is to pray.

The second thing is to look at the way you live when you are with them.

Paul literally says, "In wisdom, walk."

"In wisdom" cannot be separated from this epistle. Cf. 1:9, 28; 2:1-3. IF YOU ARE GOING TO WALK IN WISDOM IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE GOING TO WALK IN HARMONY WITH WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE LORD AND ABOUT HIS WORD. Any other kind of a walk will ultimately make people think less of the Gospel.

"Redeeming the time." This means buying up the time. It speaks of a person has an opportunity to purchase something, and he buys out the stock! REMEMBER: This is still about the walk that Paul is writing. Do not pass by a minute, but take every opportunity to live for the Lord according to His Word. It is when we waste time, and forget these words, that we do things which cause people to turn from the Gospel and from the Lord.

Read what Paul has had to say about our walk in preceding sections of the book: Col. 1:10; 2:6. Contrast Col. 3:7. If we are pleasing the Lord in our walk, then we will be walking in wisdom toward them that are without Christ!

Finally . . .

III. TALKING (Col. 4:6).

This is where we have a lot of trouble, don't we? Cf. Jas.

3:2,

"For in many things we all stumble. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

When we think of witnessing, we think of talking first. Paul puts praying first, then walking, and finally talking. The way we talk to God, and the way we walk before men, will affect our talk with men!

"Let your speech be always with grace" means graciously.
"Seasoned with salt" means attractively.

But is it possible that Paul has even more in mind?

Cf. "grace" in Col. 1:2; 3:16; 4:18. Could this mean with God's enabling grace? Then the Lord Himself will show us each time how we ought to answer every man!

Note: "answer." Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Paul seems to be saying this:

If you and I are devoting ourselves to prayer,
and if we are walking according to the Word,
and if we are trusting the Lord to guide us in our talk,
THAT PEOPLE WILL BE ASKING US TO TELL THEM WHY WE ARE
THE WAY WE ARE!

Concl: How greatly we need to understand these words of the Apostle Paul. No one, with the one exception of our Lord Jesus Christ, seems to have had a greater burden to see men brought to Christ. The way to bring them meant more to him than we can possibly know. Here is his answer. Let us take it to heart, and trust the Lord to use us to bring others to experience the joy and peace that we have found in our Savior.

CB - 11/5/72 p.m.

11/2/72 p.m.

PEOPLE AND CHURCHES

Col. 4:7-18

Intro: We come tonight to the conclusion to Paul's letter to the church at Colosse.

Perhaps there is no place where we see the heart of the Apostle Paul any more than we do in the introductions and the conclusions to his letters. This is no exception.

In it we see Paul's concern for and his recognition of people and churches. He mentions:

- 1) Eight men who are, or who have been, with him.
- 2) Two churches in addition to the Colossian church:
 - a) The one at Laodicea.
 - b) The one at Hierapolis.
- 3) He sends greetings to Nymphas in whose home the church of Laodicea was meeting.
- 4) Archippus, to whom he sends a word of exhortation.

The divisions in the conclusion are clearly:

- 1) Vv. 7-9.
- 2) Vv. 10-14.
- 3) Vv. 15-17.
- 4) V. 18.

— As we look at these divisions, we see, first of all . . .

I. THE TEAM PAUL WAS SENDING TO COLOSSE (Col. 4:7-9).

Here is an amazing thing: Paul had written a whole epistle without actually telling the Colossians how he was! His concern for them was so great that he had forgotten about himself.

So he is sending Tychicus with Onesimus.

We know from the epistle to Philemon the details about Onesimus. But what about Tychicus? He is mentioned in 5 books of the NT: Colossians, Ephesians, Acts, Titus, and 2 Timothy.

He was with Paul at the end of his third missionary journey, and may have gone with him to Jerusalem. He was with Paul in Rome during his first and second imprisonments. He was sent by Paul on missions to Colosse, to Crete, and to Ephesus. Thus, his calling was that of being "a minister" (diakonos) to the Apostle Paul—one who is serving the interests of another.

Note how Paul loved him (and Onesimus). See also how he commends them for their faithfulness. And Paul knew that he

could trust them to relieve the minds of the Colossians so that they might be comforted, or encouraged.

Paul believed in encouraging the saints.

Many are the lessons in verses like these for us:

- 1) Our need to love each other.
- 2) The need to be faithful to each other.
- 3) The need to be thoughtful about others who are concerned about us.

II. THE GREETINGS SENT FROM THOSE WHO WERE WITH PAUL (Col. 4: 10-14). THESE GREETINGS MEANT THE FULL SUPPORT OF THESE MEN.

Aristarchus went with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 19:29; 20:4), and started to Rome with Paul, arriving and becoming his "fellow prisoner." Luke calls him a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

John Mark, the writer of the second Gospel, a nephew of Barnabas, also was with Paul, and sent his greetings.
THE COLOSSIANS EVIDENTLY KNEW BARNABAS.

"Jesus . . . Justus" is only mentioned here.

All of these men were Jewish believers, and they were all Paul had in Rome of Jews who knew the Lord, who were standing with him. They had been a great encouragement to him.

So even Paul needed encouragement.

BONDservant. "ONE WHOSE WILL IS WHOLLY GOVERNED BY CHRIST" (LENSKI, P. 202)
Epaphras, mentioned in 1:7, is called in Ph. 23 Paul's fellow-prisoner--which tells its own story. It was he who had brought Paul word about the trouble the Colossians were facing.

What was he doing about it? PRAYING! - RECOGNIZING, CF. PAUL IN 2:1.

What did he want the Lord to do for the Colossians? "That ye may stand perfect (fully instructed) and complete (fully assured) in all the will of God."

FROM COLOSSIANS THIS MEANS THAT THEY WOULD KNOW WHAT THEY HAD IN CHRIST, AND THAT THEY DID NOT NEED TO BE SAVED FROM HIM.

V. 13 makes it clear that Epaphras labored to the point of weariness for Colosse, and Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

The greetings are concluded with one from Luke, whom Paul loved very dearly, and Demas (who finally breaks Paul's heart). See 2 Tim. 4:10.

III. THE GREETINGS SENT TO (Note the difference from II.) THOSE IN LAODICEA AND COLOSSE (Col. 4:15-17).

NOT MENTIONED SINCE HE LEFT PAUL AND BARNABAS IN ACTS 13:13. NOW HE HAS BEEN RE-STORED TO PAUL AND IS IN ROME.

"STAND" - ONE WHO HOLDS HIS GROUND.

TWO GOSPEL WRITERS WERE WITH PAUL. LUKE ALSO WROTE ACTS.

Paul is obviously concerned about the church at Laodicea, and so he wants this epistle to be read to them. Why? Because false teaching spreads rapidly, and, if there were danger from the false teachers in Colosse, it would be certain that both Laodicea and Hierapolis were threatened with it too.

BUT THE KEY MAN ON THE SCENE IN COLOSSE IS UNDOUBTEDLY ARCHIPPUS.

Who was he?

From Ph. 2 there is reason to believe that he was the son of Philemon, and most assuredly was the pastor of the church in Colosse. Some think that he may have been a Laodicean. We do not know for sure. Lenski (p. 206) thinks that Archippus was in charge of the Lord's work in all three places.

"MINISTRY" IS RELATED TO "MINISTER" IN V. 7 - ONE WHO IS DE- VOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS.

THE PEOPLE TO TELL

Paul tells Archippus to do two things:

- 1) To keep his eye on and carefully guard the saints.
- 2) To fulfill the ministry which he had received, not from men, but from the Lord. This means to carry something through to the end, to finish it.

Cf. Paul in 2 Tim. 4:5. And see the nature of his ministry in Col. 1:27-29.

What a solemn thing it is to have the spiritual oversight of the Lord's people!

IV. THE CONCLUSION (Col. 4:18).

Paul signed the letter.

Perhaps his bonds, his chains, hindered him in writing.

Why should they, AND WE, remember them?

"BONDS" = IMPRISONMENT.

- 1) Paul wanted their prayers.
- 2) He wanted them to remember how important the truth of the Word of God is.
- 3) He wanted them to be inspired by his example
- 4) Paul's final word, "grace be with you," indicated that they would need the Lord's help and strength in their lives, too.

Concl: As one thinks back over this epistle it seems that there were three things that made Paul the great apostle that he was--an example to us today:

- 1) His knowledge of the truth, and his love for it.
- 2) His understanding of the pre-eminence of Christ--forever making the Christian faith distinctive from all religions.
- 3) His love for the people of God, and for his co-workers.