

## THE NEW LIFE IN THE CHURCH

## Colossians 3:15-17

Intro: It seems to me that as Paul discussed the new life, after giving its general character in verses 10 through 15, that he then applied the new life to various relationships that the child of God has from day to day. He began by speaking of the new life in the church. This we have in our text for today: 3:15-17. Next he spoke of the new life in the home. We will consider this next Sunday morning, the Lord willing, as we consider 3:18-21. After this he spoke of the new life at work. You can see that this is the theme from 3:22-4:1. And then, to conclude the practical section of his epistle, we have the new life in the world. This is the subject in 4:2-6.

I saw all of this after I gave my subject to Mrs. Hayes this week, and so I am going to take the liberty of changing my subject today from what you have in the Tableau to a subject which means the same, but will be more in line with the emphasis I will be making in the next three weeks.

Looking at verse 15 you will see that Paul mentioned the body of Christ.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts,  
to the which also ye are called in one body;  
and be ye thankful.

He previously in the epistle had mentioned the body of Christ three times:

Col. 1:18: And he is the head of the body, the church:  
who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;  
that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Col. 1:24: Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,  
and fill up that which is behind  
of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh  
for his body's sake, which is the church.

Col. 2:19: And not holding the Head,  
from which all the body by joints and bands  
having nourishment ministered, and knit together,  
increaseth with the increase of God.

There are two remaining verses where the church is mentioned, but they are different from these four verses which I have already read to you. They have to do with the local church; the others have to do with the body of Christ. But notice these other two verses:

Col. 4:15: Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea,

and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Col. 4:16: And when this epistle is read among you,  
cause that it be read also  
in the church of the Laodiceans;  
and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

As we come to this subject of the church, the body of Christ, let me remind you of a couple of things:

- 1) The contrast between Ephesians and Colossians on this particular doctrine. Colossians emphasizes the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church; Ephesians stresses the fact that the Church is the Body of Christ.
- 2) The word church is used in two different ways in Colossians (as well as in other places in the NT):
  - a) The word church is used of a local group of believers. We see that in 4:15, 16.
  - b) The church is called the body of Christ. We have this in 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15 (our text for today).

It is important that we distinguish between these two usages. There were many local churches in Paul's day (not as many as there are today, but they were increasing in number almost daily). There is only ONE Body of Christ! All true believers today are members of the ONE Body of Christ. And Christ is the Head of the Body.

But let me add another word of explanation to this distinction which I have made. Paul, in speaking of the body of Christ, would be indicating that which was to be true of the local church at Colossae as well. It would apply to all churches. It applies to Trinity Bible Church and to all others churches which stand for the fundamental truths of Scripture.

Today we are going to be thinking about five specific things which are to characterize the Body of Christ. This means that they are to characterize also every local church wherever it might be--local churches that are true to Scripture. These five things are:

- 1) Peace (v. 15a).
- 2) Thanksgiving (mentioned twice: vv. 15b and 17b).
- 3) The word of Christ (v. 16a).
- 4) Music (v. 16b).
- 5) Whatever is done in word or deed (v. 17a).

And then you have the mention of thanksgiving for the second time which surely indicates its importance.

Let us consider these to get an idea of the way people ought to be able to describe Trinity Bible Church, and all churches that are faithful to the Word of God.

## I. THE PEACE OF GOD (Col. 3:15b).

Some MSS read, "the peace of Christ," but whichever may have been the original wording, the meaning remains the same.

How ironic it is that people who claim to have peace with God have so much trouble being at peace with each other! We are a "called" people. God has "called" us "into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9b). We all have the same Savior, and we are members of the same Body, but from the beginning Christians have had trouble getting along with each other. And that is probably the #1 problem in churches today. We have "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), but we often lack "the peace of God." Cf. Phil. 4:6, 7.

The peace of God is a peace, an inner peace. It is "in our hearts" or we do not have it all. And if it is in our hearts, it will "rule." This is Paul's first exhortation as he turned his attention from THE NEW LIFE IN US PERSONALLY to THE NEW LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

What is "peace," and what does the word "rule" mean?

"Peace" is tranquillity. It is the absence of hostility, of quarrels, of disagreements. Where peace is there are harmonious relationships. Where peace is there is inner contentment. Peace survives best in an atmosphere of love. When there is peace among believers there is good order in the churches. Perhaps Paul was referring to this when he said what he did in Col. 2:5. (Read.) Peace is a condition that may not be easy to describe, but we all know when we have it, and we all know when we don't have it. We know when there is peace in a church, and we know when there is turmoil and warfare in a church. But we must have "peace," peace that rules in our hearts.

What does "rule" mean?

This is the only time this word appears in the NT. It is an athletic term. It means to act as an umpire. The umpire in a game is there to see that everyone plays by the rules. He is in charge. If there are disputes, he is the one who settles them. His word is final.

What Paul was saying here was that we are to "let the peace of God" determine what and how we do things. The Rule Book is the Bible. We are to go by the Word of God. That is the way to have peace.

But what if there is a difference between believers as to what the Word of God says? Then no decision should be made at all for the present. Or, if one insists, or if a group insists, on having their own way, the others will for the sake of peace leave the matter in the Lord's hands and defer to their opponents. The price of peace is often humility, but this always brings the blessing of God. Remember how Abraham refused to argue with Lot about the pastureland. Cf. Gen. 13:8, 9.

This is the first characteristic of a NT church. And it is not at all easy to keep the peace.

## II. THANKSGIVING (Col. 3:15b).

Have you noticed how often Paul mentioned thanksgiving in Colossians? There are no less than six specific references to thanksgiving, plus many of the things that Paul wrote were written in the spirit of thanksgiving, for example, Col. 2:5.

NO ONE HAS MORE REASONS TO BE THANKFUL THAN A CHILD OF GOD. AND NO PLACE SHOULD BE CHARACTERIZED MORE BY THANKSGIVING THAN THE CHURCH. We thank the Lord with our hymns which we sing. We thank the Lord in prayer. We come to church thankful that we are able to be here, thankful for this time with each other, and especially thankful for the Lord and all that He has done for us. But it is impossible to be thankful if you are not peaceful in your heart. But if you are peaceful, you will be thankful, thankful for everything, thankful for things which most people never give thanks for.

We give thanks to God because all of our blessings come from Him. Even when we are going through trials we give thanks because the Lord has a purpose for them, and we will be better because of them.

## III. THE WORD OF CHRIST (Col. 3:16).

Please note, as I mentioned before about the characteristics of the new life mentioned earlier in this chapter: They all blend together! What Paul wrote about the new life in the body of Christ all blends together, too.

What did Paul mean by "the word of Christ"?

Obviously he meant the Scriptures. But he meant the Scriptures as coming from Christ, and as being about Christ. Paul was concerned in this Epistle about the pre-eminence of Christ. And so he was saying to the

Church, "Get this Word, this Word which came from Christ, this Word which tells us about Christ--get this Word into your hearts, and let it find its home there "richly." That is, we are not just to have a little of the truth in our hearts, but our hearts are to be overflowing with the Word. Give the Word of God a home in your heart, all of the Word. And let it tell you of Christ so that you will become more like He is. Read it. Listen to others read it. Hear it taught and preached. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Do all of these things. But remember that it will become apparent to others that the Word has a home in your heart WHEN YOU ARE OBEYING IT, LIVING IT!

But then Paul added to that some words about:

#### IV. MUSIC (Col. 3:16b).

I wish that more pastors and leaders of our churches would follow what the Word has to say about music in our churches.

When the Word of Christ is dwelling in your richly, it is going to change your idea about music in the church.

Let me briefly mention what this verse says. It is packed with meaning.

- 1) Singing is threefold in its purpose:
  - a) It gives us an opportunity to express our joy in the Lord.
  - b) It helps us all to teach and admonish each other.
  - c) We are to sing in our hearts to the Lord.
- 2) We are to sing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Paul did not say "psalms or hymns or spiritual songs," as though he was talking about three kinds of music. He did not even say what the AV says: "psalms **and** hymns **and** spiritual songs." Translated literally it would read like this: with psalms hymns spiritual songs.

What does this mean?

It means that our hymns are to be filled with Scripture, our singing is to be directed to God (that is what hymns are), and they are to be "spiritual" in tone, not carnal--imitating the current type of music that is popular in the world, or any previous kind that has come out of the world. MUSIC IN THE CHURCH IS TO BE DISTINCTIVELY DIFFERENT, TRUE TO THE WORD OF GOD, ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, AND BLESSED BY THE

SPIRIT OF GOD. There is no place in the church for music that is entertaining, nor for music that copies what we can hear every day from musicians in the world. AND YET I DO NOT KNOW OF A SINGLE LARGE CHURCH TODAY WHICH HAS NOT BROKEN DOWN ITS STANDARDS IN MUSIC, USUALLY FOR THE SAKE OF ATTRACTING A CROWD, JUSTIFYING IT ON THE BASIS THAT WHEN THE PEOPLE COME TO HEAR THE MUSIC, THEN WE CAN GIVE THEM THE WORD.

Are we saying that we know more about what God wants in His Church than God does? And are we saying that we need the music of the world to accomplish the work of the Lord?

Let me say it again: When the Word of Christ is dwelling richly in your heart, you are not going to be satisfied with music which does not fit into the pattern described here by the Apostle Paul. Once you begin to sing psalms that are hymns that are spiritual songs, you will never be content to go back to lesser fare.

But I have one more point:

V. WHATEVER IS DONE IN WORD OR DEED (Col. 3:17b).

This certainly would include all of the teaching that is done in the church, plus all of the service that we render to the Lord.

There is one main characteristic for it all: It must be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus." What does this mean?

To do things, to say things, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, is to do things as He would do them, to do them with His authority and seeking primarily His approval. Christ is the Head of His Church. He is the Lord of the Church. The leaders of the Church are to do His will. The people of the Church are to desire nothing but His will. And you and I will never know what it is to do what the Lord wants us to do, nor how to say what He wants us to say, unless we know what He has told us to do in His Word.

THE GREATEST PRIORITY THAT WE HAVE IN THE CHURCH IS TO DO ALL THAT WE DO "IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS," WITH HIS AUTHORITY, AND FOR HIS GLORY, "GIVING THANKS TO GOD AND THE FATHER BY HIM."

Concl: In verses 15 through 17 of Colossians 3 we have laid out for us in very clear terms what people should be able to find when they come to Trinity Bible Church, or any other church where the people love Christ, honor His Word, and seek to glorify God.

Will you notice as I close that three times Paul spoke of what is going on within us. The peace of God has to be in our hearts. The word of Christ has to be dwelling in us. And our singing has to be with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Each of those has some outward manifestation, but verse 17 indicates that the more inner reality we have in our relationship with the Lord, the greater the possibility that we will be able to please Him in word and deed, with hearts that are overflowing with thanks to the One Who is both God and our Father. And we must remember that even our praise is not acceptable to God except it be offered "by him," i.e., by Christ.

Those who are in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has a new life in Christ. Our fellowship and ministry together in the church are to manifest the blessing that can result when people really walk together in fellowship with the Lord, seeking above all else to be pleasing to Him. May the Lord make us the kind of a church that Paul described in the three verses we have been considering today. It will only become a reality as it becomes the goal of each one of us individually.

## THE NEW LIFE AT HOME

## Colossians 3:18-21

Intro: In this Epistle to the Colossians the Apostle Paul has described salvation as putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. This is what God does for us when we are saved. In other places salvation is described differently, but it means the same thing. For example, Paul told the Corinthians believers this in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore if any man be in Christ,  
he is a new creature: old things are passed away;  
behold, all things are become new.

When our Lord was speaking to Nicodemus who was one of the religious leaders of the Jews, He told him, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7b).

Other expressions that are used for this work of God in the soul are, being saved, being redeemed, becoming a child of God. And there are other expressions. The different expressions are used to bring out different aspects of the glorious truth of salvation. No one term is big enough to tell all that is included in our salvation. And so many different expressions are used, yet they all point to what we are talking about when we speak of being saved.

Going back to the idea of "the old man" and "the new man," or "a new creature," there are two ideas which are brought out in Col. 3:10 and 2 Cor. 5:17--and to these we can from our text mention a third idea.

- 1) The first is that, when you speak of "the old man" and "the new man," you are saying that the new is the most recent. You and I were born as "the old man." We were sinners by nature and by choice. We lived for ourselves; God did not figure into our thinking at all. But God, by His grace, has made each of us "a new man." (I am speaking now of those of us who are trusting in Christ as our Savior.)

So we did not start out life as the children of God. We have become the children of God since we were born. Our life in Christ is the new life; our life as sinners without God was the old life.

So when we speak of "the old life" as compared with "the new life," we are thinking in terms to time. The old came before; the new came after. And for the Colossians, it was very recent in time.

- 2) Paul also conveyed by one of the words that he used that "the new man" is completely different from "the old man." God did not overhaul us, and remake us from what we were before. We are completely new. "The new man" possesses qualities and powers that "the old man" never did have,



and never could have had! That is the reason Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:17, "...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "The new man" is of a different character, and he lives an entirely different kind of life. You may not see everything changed at first, but there will be changes! And the longer "the new man" lives, the greater will be the changes that you will see.

But there is a third idea that is present in the two words that Paul used for new. It is this:

- 3) "The new man" is better, far better, than "the old man." I did not say that it is necessarily easier, but it is better. It is better to be a Christian than not to be a Christian. It is better for this present life that we live in this world, and it is surely better in eternity, as much better as heaven is than hell! It is better to know the Lord than not to know Him. It is better to live for God than to live for yourself. It is better to have yours sins forgiven than not to have them forgiven. It is better not to sin than it is to sin. However you look at "the old man with his deeds," and compare him with "the new man" and the life he lives, "the new man" is always better, infinitely better.

Did you ever know a Christian who wishes he could go back and not be a Christian anymore? You might hear a Christian suggest that in some moment of great discouragement, but true Christians, even though they might have great trials, would never go back to what they were when they were under sin, without God, without Christ, and without hope.

So these are some of the ideas that Paul was seeking to get across to the Colossian church. As the Lord's people, they were different. They could not help but be different. They were different in their hearts, different in their habits, different in their speech, different in their goals and objectives in life. The person who is a "new man" lives a new life.

And he does not just live this life now and then, nor here and there, but always and everywhere! This, too, is what Paul has been saying. Let me review this for you again.

- 1) He shows it in his personal life (Col. 3:5-14).
- 2) He shows it in the church (Col. 3:15-17).

**Today we are going to see that:**

- 3) **He shows it at home (Col. 3:18-21).** I know that I am not going to be able to finish these four verses today, so we will take two Sundays on the home, and consider next Sunday morning what Paul wrote for fathers and children.
- 4) The week after next we will see in Col. 3:22-4:1 that he

will show the new life at work.

- 5) And after that, the Lord willing, in Col. 4:2-6, we will see how the new life is to be manifested in the world.

— If you look at these five areas of life that I have mentioned, and for which Paul gave specific instructions here in this Epistle, you will see that they are five areas in which the Church, the body of Christ, has great needs today.

- 1) In the personal lives of believers.
- 2) In the church itself. Church splits have become very common.
- 3) Divorce has become a major problem among professing Christians, and even among men in the ministry.
- 4) Christians often have trouble with their behavior in the work place, often doing what men and women do who are not Christians.
- 5) Finally, the testimony of the church in the world. Its effect upon the world has probably never been more negative than it is today.

So these are teachings that we all need very much.

Now let us see what Paul had to say about the home.

— Right at the outset of our consideration of these four verses (Col. 3:18-21) I want to make it clear that Paul was speaking to people who had put on "the new man." He was speaking to people who were trusting in Christ for salvation, people who had been born again. Even they can have trouble in these areas, and they need to be taught how to behave in the various relationships of their lives. But it needs to be made clear that when a husband and wife are having trouble, or parents are having trouble with their children, and children with their parents, their first concern needs to be their relationship with God! Don't try to live like a Christian unless you are a Christian! The troubles you are having may be God's way of showing you that you need a new heart. You need to be changed.

Illus: Dr. Chafer eating dinner in the diner on a train with a young wife who was in the process of getting a divorce.

Paul was not giving advice to people in the world; he was teaching believers how a home is to function.

— What you read here are definitely not the prevailing ideas today, even among many Christians, about how we are to live in our homes. But I would remind you that the Lord made us. And the Lord established marriage. And He is the One Who made us so that we could have children. **THEREFORE, HE IS THE**

ONE WHO CAN TELL US, AND THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TELL US, WHAT THE HUSBAND AND WIFE RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE, AND WHAT THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE. These instructions are almost 2,000 years old, but they are just as right for us today as they were when Paul first wrote them to the church at Colossae. I can assure you that this was not the way the average Colossian family lived. When they were saved, they had to learn God's way for their homes as well as in every other area of their lives. Let me say that whenever you get counsel about your family that runs contrary to this, get away from that councilor as fast as you can--EVEN IF HE PROFESSES TO BE A "CHRISTIAN" COUNCILOR! Any advice for a home and family which is not founded upon these four verses is the wrong advice!

I doubt if what we are now considering is new to anyone who is here, but I am equally sure that, even though we know what these four verses say, we all need to hear them again.

#### I. THE HUSBAND AND WIFE (Col. 3:18, 19).

What Paul wrote here is very simple, isn't it? It is not at all hard to understand. The wife has one thing that she has to be concerned about; the husband has one thing that he has to be concerned about. But the one thing for each of them encompasses the whole of their life together. So Paul was not speaking of isolated times when a wife is submissive and her husband is loving and thoughtful, but Paul was speaking about a way of life.

Neither the husband nor the wife was to look for possible exceptions (as we are all inclined to do), but each was to see that for the wife, this is the one thing that would please the Lord, and, for the husband, this was the one thing that would please the Lord: SUBMISSION and LOVE.

##### A. The wife (Col. 3:18).

Why does Paul mention the wife first, and the children first, and the servants first, before the husbands, fathers, and masters?

I really haven't gotten any help on this question from the commentaries. No one seems to pay attention to the order. But the order has to be important, especially when it is the opposite of what you would expect: husbands, then wives; fathers, then children; masters, then servants--since it is the husbands, fathers, and masters who have the responsibility of leadership in each case.

This is what I feel is the answer to the order: It seems to me that Paul was saying that although the husbands, fathers, and masters are the leaders, they are powerless to lead unless those under them are willing to follow, and to be submissive. A husband with a rebellious wife is really powerless to lead. A father with a rebellious child may punish the child, and should, but there comes the time when he, too, has to realize that unless his son does what he is supposed to do, he is powerless to act as a father. The same is true of masters and servants (which we will be considering next week): until the servant is willing to work, the master's hands are tied.

So Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, addressed the one with the least responsibility first. As far as the wives were concerned, Paul was saying, in effect, "Wives, if you are not submissive to you husbands, you have the power to destroy your homes."

What does it mean to submit?

It means to put yourself under the authority, and under the protection, of your husband. "As it is fit in the Lord" means that this is what the Word teaches about the place of the wife (from Eve on down), and that you cannot be submissive to the Lord, or to his Word, unless you are submissive to your husband.

So a wife's submission to the authority of her husband is a test, and an evidence, of her submission to the Lord. Wives, God is asking that your submission to your husband be made in submission to the Lord. What if you disagree with your husband? You have to leave that with the Lord. The Lord is in control, and He is sovereign. Therefore, if your husband is wrong, remember that he is in the Lord's hands.

So the degree of a wife's submission to her husband is a test of her believe in the sovereignty of God.

#### B. The husband (Col. 3:19).

If a wife's problem is with rebellion, the husband's problem is with bitterness, harshness, anger, and a desire for revenge. His responsibility is to love his wife, and, according to Eph. 5:25, the pattern of his love for his wife is to be the love of Christ for the Church.

How does the Lord love us? Does His love fluctuate from day to day, depending upon what we do? Does He love us when we are obedient, and hate us when we are disobedient? If we displease Him, does He divorce us--even though we displease Him over and over again?

I think we all know the answers to these questions. So what characteristics is the Lord manifesting when we displease Him? He is showing grace, patience, meekness, faithfulness--all of those qualities which we have in this new life, but which always need greater development in practice.

So a husband will demonstrate when he has troubles with his wife, the extent to which he is like his Lord.

So the husband is not to think of excuses he might feel that he has in order to sidestep his responsibility toward his wife before God. He is to see that this overrules all other considerations.

And so we have submission and love. The two together make a perfect pair. As I have said before on other occasions, it is not difficult for a wife to submit herself to a husband who really loves her, nor is it difficult for a husband to be loving toward a wife who wants to be submissive to him. Both have to come from the heart, and only the Lord can enable us to be what He wants us to be.

What a difference there would be in our homes if every husband and every wife did what Paul has told us to do in these two important verses. Perfect obedience to these commands on the part of each wife and each husband would guarantee the blessing of the Lord through all of the trials and testings that might come along.

While there is much more that could be said, notice this final thing: The Lord did not tell the wife what her husband was to do, but what she was supposed to do. Neither did he tell the husband what the wife was supposed to do, but what he was supposed to do. There is no reason they cannot discuss their responsibilities, but in the final analysis the wife is responsible to the Lord for herself, and the same is true of the husband. Under no condition are we justified before God for our disobedience. How important it is for us to remember this.

Concl: But I can almost hear someone saying, "That sounds

good when you talk about it, but it doesn't work that way in our home." Or maybe you wouldn't say that, but that is what you are thinking?

If you even feel that way, do you realize what you are doing? You are not only saying that it doesn't work, but you are also saying that it is not right. You are claiming that the solution for your home has to be found some place outside of the Word of God. Is that what you really mean? Can we ever go wrong by submitting to the Word of God, doing what the Lord has told us to do? Is your case so exceptional that it requires something beyond Scripture?

A young lady was talking to me several years ago about the need for victory over sin in her life. And so I talked to her about Romans 6. I hadn't been talking very long before she said to me (and she was a Bible School student), "Oh, I've tried all of that, and it doesn't work!" And so I asked her: "Do you hear what you are saying? You are saying either that this is not the word of God, or that God is wrong!" She denied that she was saying either, but I showed her that it was impossible to come to any other conclusion. People who do not know the Lord try first one thing and then another. We are not trying to find out if God is right. We know He is right. We are acting upon what He says to do; the results are given by Him when our obedience is what it should be.

And so if we have "tried" the Word ( I have a strong dislike for that term), and things have not changed, the fault is not with the Apostle Paul, it is not with the Lord, nor with His Word. The fault is with us. It is because we have been "trying" to do what we need to trust the Lord to enable us to do. After all, He is the One Who strengthens us to do His will. That is what Paul has been speaking about throughout this Epistle. Seek the things above, the things of Christ. When you place your life in the Lord's hands, then you will find that He will do for you and in you and through you what you, nor any other person, has been able to do for you.

## THE NEW LIFE AT HOME

## Part 2

## Colossians 3:20

Intro: In Colossians chapter 3 Paul discussed what happens to a person when he (or she) receives eternal life:

- 1) What happens to him personally.
- 2) What happens to him in the church.
- 3) What happens to him at home.
- 4) What happens to him at work.
- 5) What happens to him in his relationship with the world.

Paul has described it as putting off the old man, and putting on the new man. The person who has eternal life is changed, permanently changed. He becomes a part of the body of Christ, and will then seek out and enjoy the fellowship of other believers. He will be different at home, on the job, and even in his dealings with people who are not believers in Christ.

Last Sunday we considered the first two verses in which Paul discussed the home. These are verses 18 and 19. Today I want to consider with you the next verse: verse 20. I thought that I would be able to get through these four verses, starting with verse 18, in one Sunday. Then I saw that I was going to need two Sundays. Now I realize that it will have to be three. These are the verses where Paul was thinking about the home: verses 18 through 21.

In preparing these messages I made an interesting discovery.

I do not have many books of sermons, but I have some. I have the full set of Spurgeon's sermons. I have a set Alexander Maclaren's sermons, and I have Charles Simeon's set of sermons on the whole Bible.

This was my discovery. Spurgeon apparently never preached on this passage, nor on the parallel passage in Ephesians. Maclaren has nothing on either of these passages. Charles Simeon has one paragraph each on wives, husbands, children, and fathers. And they are included in the same sermon where he had one paragraph on servants, and one on masters--ALL IN THE SAME SERMON!

What does this tell us?

This tells us that, while I am sure they had some marriage problems and home problems in the nineteenth century, and very early in this century (Maclaren died in 1910), it was not anything like it is today! The problems of divorce and of children who are disobedient to their parents is of such

magnitude today that it threatens the very existence of our nation. I am not saying that there have not been troubles in these areas before. Men and women have always been immoral, often grossly immoral. But the problem is out of control today, and no relief is in sight. We have more councilors than I have ever known of before, and yet counsel without God and His Word is worthless. It is better to have no counsel than to have God-less counsel. And so this is the reason I have felt constrained to extend the time I am giving to these verses--because the need is so great. And it is a need which is affecting many Christian homes.

So I trust you will bear with me in this, and that all of us will profit greatly from what we are seeing in the Word of God. Those of you who are not yet married can profit from seeing what to expect when you establish your own home.

Now let us look at verse 20.

In the home we have basically two relationships to be concerned about:

- 1) The husband and wife.
- 2) The parent and the child.

So, today we will be looking at verses 20 and 21 where Paul was thinking about the father and his children.

As we look at these various themes which Paul wrote about in this part of the epistle (and also in Ephesians), let us always remember that these are not verses that we are to lift out of either epistle to consider by themselves; they are verses that must be looked at in the light of Paul's purpose in writing both of these epistles. Ultimately his purpose was the same in both epistles: to produce godly character, and to encourage godly living. This was the object of Paul's teaching; this was the reason for Paul's prayers. And he has even stated this purpose in each epistle.

- 1) In Ephesians, cf. 1:4-6, "According as he hath chosen us...." This emphasis is clear also in other passages.
- 2) In Colossians, cf. 1:21, 22, 27, 28.

So, when we think of what a Christian home should be, it is clearly God's purpose that He wants us to be godly fathers and godly mothers, godly parents and godly children. And it is important that husbands and wives, parents and children, understand this. A wife is to be submissive to her husband because it is her husband's responsibility to help her become a godly woman, and to grow in godliness. And the husband needs to keep this in mind as he leads his wife. He must be godly, and behave in a godly manner, if he wants his wife to follow in his steps.



In the same way, this is the object of guidance and discipline in the home. Godly parents should want their children to be godly, and this is God's plan for reaching that objective. You will never find a married couple who are having trouble but what verses 18 and 19 are being violated in some way—perhaps many ways. And you will never find a home where parents and children are having trouble with each other but what verses 20 and 21 are being either ignored or violated. These four verses give us God's pattern for a godly home, and we need to realize that it is only a godly home that is a truly happy home.

Since Paul takes up the "children" first, we will do the same. Look at verse 20:

## II. CHILDREN AND FATHERS (Col. 3:20, 21).

(I am continuing the outline from the preceding message.)

### A. The children.

The question is usually raised: How long? At what age is a child no longer under the authority of his (or her) parents?

#### 1. How long?

Let me say, first of all, Paul was speaking here to both boys and girls, and he had in mind from birth on up.

But let me also say that that is a bad question. It is a bad question because it usually indicates a bad attitude. When it comes to obeying the Word of God, we should not try to stay as close as we can to the boundary between obedience and disobedience. We should get as far away from disobedience as we can possibly get.

Illus: I know a family who have a fox terrier who is trained to stay in the kitchen; she is not allowed to be on the living room rug. Does she stay in the middle of the kitchen so as to avoid a transgression? No, she stands right on the border between the kitchen and the living room, and will step over the line if she possibly can.

That is the way we often are as Christians. We say, "Can I do this or that, and still be considered a Christian?" So when a child says,

"How long do I have to obey my parents?" you know two things:

- 1) He (or she) does not understand the purpose of discipline.
- 2) His (or her) heart is not right.

But let me give you the answer to that question. How long do you have to obey your parents? You are responsible to honor your parents as long as you live; you are responsible to obey them as long as their home is your home. That means that you are to be submissive to their authority even when you go off to college--as long as your parents' home is your home. You cannot have two heads to a household, and God has made your father the head of your home, and you are under his authority.

The law may say that you are "on your own" at 18. I think men and women in our government are going to have a lot to answer for for making such a law. And young people, remember this: There are many things that may be legal that are not godly. Our society has gotten more and more permissive, and we are paying a terrible price for it. But most people are too blind to be able to see what is going on in our world today. The breakdown of the home leads to the breakdown of society, and the breakdown of society is what ruins nations.

But speaking of obeying our parents, let me add this: If you are like most of us, I think that you will find as you go through life that you will always want to please your parents, and there will be many times when you will go to them for advice. And later in life you may even wish that your parents had been a little tougher on you than they were--in some instances, possibly a whole lot tougher!

But let me ask another important question:

## 2. In what?

The Word is very clear; it says, "in all things."

Now remember: I did not write this. Your father did not write this. Neither did your mother. This is what the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write. And so this can't be wrong because it is the Word of God.

It means that your whole life is to be pleasing to your parents. This includes the way you dress, the way you talk, the friends you make, the activities you engage in, the places you go, the time you give to your studies. Don't look upon your parents as tyrants who stand over you all day every day. Realize that no one loves you like your parents do, and they are watching for your souls, perhaps seeking to keep you from some mistakes that they have made, but above everything else seeking to guarantee your future happiness by living for the Lord today!

Don't hide things from your parents. Seek their help in every part of your life, and you will never be sorry that you did.

Now for my third question.

3. Why? Why would the Lord make this the responsibility of every child--boy and girl, every young man and young woman.

Let me give you three reasons. All three of these reasons can be seen in this epistle to the Colossians (and also in the epistle to the Ephesians).

- a. Because all of us were born sinners, and we have a natural inclination to do things that are wrong in God's sight.

And right along with that let me remind you that we are born under "the power of darkness." See Col. 1:13. So we not only were born sinners, with sinful desires and inclinations, but we live in an evil world which is under the authority of the Devil. He is going to do everything to ruin you eternally, and, without the help of God, you are going to cooperate fully with him.

That is why you need parents who love you enough to say "no" when you are inclined to step over the line.

Let me give you another reason why you need godly parents.

- b. Because you need someone to teach you what is right.

Nobody ever had to teach any of us how to sin. That came naturally with all of us. BUT WE DO NEED TO BE TAUGHT HOW TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT!

That is why your parents read the Bible to you, and encourage you to read the Bible. That is why your parents pray for you. That is why they want you to be in Sunday School and Church. That is why they want you to have Christian friends. That is one reason why Paul wrote Colossians: so the Colossian parents would know what to teach their children. Your parents are responsible to teach you what to believe, and to show you how to live. And the wisest thing that you as a child can do is to listen to them, believe what they teach you, and do what they say. Some day you are going to be parents, and then you will understand why your parents were so concerned about you.

All through your life you will be thankful that your parents taught you from the Word of God what you needed to know, and showed you even by their own lives from the Word of God how you should live.

But let me give you a third reason. It is found in the last part of Col. 3:20.

- c. Because for you to obey your parents is "well pleasing to the Lord." Not just pleasing, but "well pleasing."

The apostle Paul, as an older, mature Christian, wrote this to the Corinthian church about his main objective in life (and I am reading this from the NKJV):  
Therefore we make it our aim...  
to be well pleasing to him (2 Cor. 5:9).

If you remember the story of Paul's life, you will remember that he was not raised as a Christian. He was raised in a Jewish home and taught by the rabbis. And they instilled in his heart that purpose: to please God. The trouble was that they did not know that Jesus was their Messiah, and so they taught him some wrong things. But when he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he began to

learn what it really meant to please God, and then he was on the right track.

So, when he wrote these words which we are considering today, he was urging parents to do in the right way what had been done for him in the wrong way when he was a child. How thankful you should be, young people, boys and girls, if you have a Daddy and a Mother who love the Lord Jesus and want you to love Him and to please Him, too.

It is never easy to do what your parents want you to do when you want to do something else. But remember: what I have been telling you is what God wants you to do. When your will conflicts with the will of your parents, the probability is very strong that they are right and you are wrong. God has given you that safeguard to keep you from sin, to keep you from having a lot of bad memories, and to help you learn to live in such a way so that when you are grown and have a family of your own, you will be able to teach them to follow you in living a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

Concl: Paul's version of this verse which he gave in Ephesians 6:1 is this:  
Children, obey your parents in the Lord:  
for this is right.

He did not say that it was easy; he said that it was right. It is right because this is what please God. Nothing that the Lord tells us to do is really easy. It can't be easy because it is a godly life, a divine life, a new life. It is not a natural life, but a supernatural life. And if it were not for the help that the Lord gives us, it would be impossible for wives or husbands or fathers or servants or masters to do what Paul told them to do here. You can tell that the people of the world do not like these verses because this is not even the way that they want to live. Marriage has become a headless partnership in these days. Children are not to be suppressed because it will hamper their development. That is true. It hampers their development into major sinners. People today are trained in doing their own thing, doing what they want to do. And as long as it doesn't bother too many people, it is tolerated.

When Paul was showing man's need for salvation in Romans 1, one of the sins he mentioned to show the depravity of man's heart was that which you and I see in children. We experienced in our own childhood. It is mentioned in Romans

1:30: "disobedient to parents."

And then when we turn over to 2 Timothy 3 and read what Paul wrote as he described "the last days," and what he said would be "perilous times," this is what we read:

This know also,  
that in the last time perilous times shall come.  
For men shall be lovers of their own selves,  
covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,  
**disobedient to parents**, unthankful, unholy  
(2 Tim. 3:1, 2).

It was so in the beginning; it will continue on to the end, getting worse, not better. Oh, dear children and young people, God has given you the privilege of knowing what most children and young people do not know, and what their parents do not know. Your main purpose in life should be to please the Lord, **and He will help you to do what He wants you to do.** We learned in Col. 1:28 that the only way we can hope to be what God wants us to be, and to do what He wants us to do, is to know that Christ is in us, and that He is our only hope of becoming like He is. Resolve in your heart that by God's grace you are going to please Him. As you get older, you will be thankful for all that your parents did to put you in the right way, and to keep you from the wrong way.

I want all of you children and young people to know that I pray regularly for every one of you by name, and I know that there are others in our church family who are praying for you, too. I pray for your parents, too. There is nothing that I want more than to see that you are happy. But I know that you can't be really happy unless you are doing what the Lord wants you to do, and doing it to please Him.

It is my prayer that you have heard what I have been saying today, and that, if your heart is pulling you away from the Lord, you will ask Him to work in your heart each day to make you willing to obey your parents. It may not seem like it at the time, but that is the way to please the Lord, that is the way to be truly happy.

## THE NEW LIFE AT HOME

## Part 3

## Colossians 3:21

Intro: Chapter 3 marks the beginning of the practical section of Colossians. It opens with those four majestic verses at the beginning of the chapter. (Read.)

A Christian is one who has been raised with Christ, raised out of spiritual death into spiritual life. Some day we will be raised physically, and glorified. But, for the present, we have been raised spiritually. While walking on the earth we are to dwell in the heavenlies. We are to seek the things above, where Christ is. Our affections are to be heavenly, not earthly. A child of God cannot continue on in the same life he lived before he was saved. He was dead then; he is alive now.

However, there are practical guidelines for us to follow in this new life. That is why we have all of the commandments of God in the NT.

We have seen that Paul addressed each individual believer. The "therefore" in verse 5 ties in the practical exhortations which follow with the truth which Paul had just stated in verses 1 through 4. In verses 1 and 2 we have some general exhortations; in verses 5 and following we have particular exhortations to the believers in the various positions which they hold in this life:

- 1) Personally (vv. 5-14).
- 2) In the church (vv. 15-17).
- 3) In the home (vv. 18-21).
- 4) At work (3:22-4:1).
- 5) In the world (4:2-6).

Today, the Lord willing, I want to conclude what Paul was saying about how we are to live this new life at home.

Two Sundays ago I spoke to you about wives and husbands. Last week, about children. Today we are going to be thinking about fathers.

Our verse is 21. (Read.)

Let us take, first of all, this title which is given to the one who is the head of the family:

I. "FATHERS."

When a man gets married, he becomes a husband, and a home is established. When the first child is born into that

home, he becomes a father. He does not need two or three or four children to be a father; he only needs one! If two or more are born into this home, he is the father of all of them.

We are so familiar with this title that probably many of us have never noticed the great dignity which is bestowed upon any man for him to be called, father. What do I mean?

Well, if you have been reading through this epistle, and come to our text for today, you should remember that this is not the first time you have seen this word in this letter to the Colossian church. It is found six times before this (none at all after this). The references are 1:2, 3, 12, 19; 2:2; 3:17. All of the preceding appearances of this title have to do with none other than God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father--the Father of all of the people of God.

A. God is our Father.

SO HERE IS THE DIGNITY, THE HONOR, OF THIS TITLE:  
EVERY FATHER THROUGHOUT HISTORY, IN EVERY GENERATION,  
IN EVERY NATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, IS CALLED BY  
THIS TITLE WHICH BELONGS PRIMARILY TO GOD!

What an honor for any man!

It shows immediately that God has conferred upon every father a tremendous responsibility, a responsibility which can be likened to God's responsibility. And it should immediately be recognized by every father who knows anything at all about the Bible, that, in a limited way, and yet in a very similar way, what God is to His family, every human father should be to his family.

Let me draw another very significant comparison.

When Paul wrote to the husbands in his letter to the Ephesian church, he said this:

Husbands, love your wives,  
even as Christ also loved the church,  
and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

What Paul wrote to husbands and what he wrote to fathers need to be brought together if we are to get the whole picture. In the plan of God no man should be a father who is not, first of all, a husband. As a husband, Christ is his example of what a husband



should be. He is this in His relationship to and treatment of the Church, His bride. As a Father, God is his example of what a father should be in His relationship to and treatment of the Church, which is His family. You and I as believers are in the Church; we are also in the family of God. In the Church, Christ is our Bridegroom; in the family of God, God is our Father.

So it follows (and I hope you are staying with me) that if a husband is to be the best husband that he can be, he must follow the example of Christ. If a father is to be a good father, the best that he can be, he must follow the example of God in what he is, what He does, and how He deals with us as His children.

So a husband needs to know Christ; as a father, he needs to know God. And, I might add, as an individual he needs to know the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in his life. Such learning, such fellowship, and such a life are only within the reach of a father who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. It needs also to be said that the only source of truth about Christ as our Bridegroom, or of God as our Father, is the Bible, the Word of God.

Therefore, fathers, if you are to succeed in your position as a father, you must make it one of your chief goals in life to learn all that you can about God, your heavenly Father. Knowing God not only will make you a better and a stronger Christian, but it will make you a better and more effective father. I recommend to you the greatest Book ever written on how to be a good father. You have it in your hand: THE BIBLE! Read it continually and thoroughly. Seek to know all that it tells you about God as a Father. Pray daily that the Lord will give you more and more light for the task that you have.

God's example is perfect. There is none better. You will never go wrong in following Him.

But let me point you in another direction also.

B. The fathers who are mentioned in the Bible.

You have to be very discerning as you study the fathers of the Bible because, while many of them were wonderful fathers, none of them was perfect. You can learn from what they did that was right, and from

what they did that was wrong.

Think of some of these fathers: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Eli, David, Solomon, Zacharias, Joseph the husband of Mary, the mother of our Lord; the father of the prodigal son.

Many times in Scripture we can see that certain fathers should have been better than they were. But we can even learn from them. We need to know what we should not be, as well as what we should be.

How much better it would be today if we had some good books on THE FATHERS OF THE BIBLE rather than many of the books we do have which have more human wisdom in them than they do Bible!

I am sure that in pointing you to God our Father, and to the fathers of Scripture, I have turned you all in the right direction.

So much for the title. Let us go on now to look at:

## II. PAUL'S FIRST WARNING: "Provoke not your children to anger."

This kind of teaching would be looked down upon by many of our councilors and teachers today. It is negative, and we have been told for a long time not to be negative in our attitudes, and not to be negative with our children.

Well, I would rather take Paul's advice than the advice of most of the professional councilors I know, and many that I have heard of. There are lots of times in Paul's writings when he was negative. God is often negative—that is where Paul learned it. We in our society today are reaping the results of a generation of parents (perhaps two or three generations of parents) who refused to say "no" to their children. In trying to keep from warping their personalities, they made little demons out of them.

Here God was saying "no" to fathers, but the implication of what He said through Paul was positive also.

This warning suggests what the responsibility of the father is, but it indicates that we as fathers can be trying to do the right thing, but doing it in such a way that the results are bad.

How does a father provoke his child to anger?

He does it by being unreasonable, by setting up impossible standards. He does it when he fails to show genuine love for his children. He does it when he is partial to some of his children, but hard on others. He does it by carrying his penalties too far (which is one meaning of this word). He does it when his own anger gets out of control. Sometimes fathers give their children the impression that they can never really please them, or they will make fun of them when they are trying to do something. Not all provoking comes at times when there is punishment.

In the parallel passage in Ephesians Paul wrote:

And, ye fathers,  
provoke not your children to wrath:  
but bring them up in the nurture  
and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

In this verse Paul was indicating that one way to keep your children from getting angry as you seek to discipline them is to show them that what your goal with them is: to show them that what you are trying to do is to help them to be and to do that which is pleasing to the Lord. You want to see your children come to the Lord for salvation, and so show them why they have such a tendency to do the wrong things. After your children come to the Lord you want them to become godly in their characters and godly in their lives.

Fathers need a lot of patience. And this is where God's dealings with us will help us with our children. When we think of how patient the Lord has been with us, it will make us more patient with our children.

Now let us go to:

### III. PAUL'S SECOND WARNING: "Lest they be discouraged."

Here let me call your attention to 2 Cor. 1:3, 4. Listen to what it says. It is one of those precious doxologies of Scripture, written by the Apostle Paul. Notice that it speaks of God as a Father. It goes like this:

Blessed be God,  
even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Father of mercies,  
and the God of all comfort;  
Who comforteth us in all our tribulation,  
that we may be able to comfort them  
which are in any trouble,  
by the comfort wherewith we ourselves

are comforted of God.

What is "comfort" in Scripture? It is encouragement!

God, our Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our great "Encourager"!

Let me tell you something else about the word that is translated "comfort" in 2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

It is from the same root as the word Paraclete. That is the word that is translated "Comforter" in John 14, 15, and 16 where it is used of the Holy Spirit. And it is the same word that is translated "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1 where it is used of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we put all of this together, what does it mean? It means that God our Father is our Paraclete, our Comforter, our "Encourager." Jesus Christ is our Paraclete, our Comforter, our "Encourager." And the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, our Comforter, our "Encourager."

And, fathers, according to our text, what does the Lord want us to be to our children? He wants us to be their Paraclete, their Comforter, their "Encourager."

But how easy it is for us to be "DIScouragers" to our children!

This is where your knowledge of God and His ways with you can help you to be a blessing to your children.

Lucille and I are both reading the same book just now. It is called, A Lifting Up of the Downcast, by a Puritan, William Bridge. We each have our own copy. I heartily recommend it to all of you, but, since I am speaking to fathers today, I especially recommend it to you. Mr. Bridge speaks to your heart. And he goes from one of our problems to another, and he proves this: YOU AND I NEVER HAVE ANY REASON TO BE DISCOURAGED! We have reasons to be humbled, but never any reason to be discouraged. And he proves his case Biblically.

Now, fathers, if you and I are a discouragement to our children, there is something wrong in the way we are dealing with them. I know that there are times when we have done all that we can do, and we have to commit our children to the Lord, but through all of that our ways and our words should be designed to lift up our children, never to cast them down!

The father of the prodigal son was his son's "Encourager." And when the older son was unhappy because of the royal treatment given to his renegade brother, the father sought to encourage him, too.

Fathers, we need to be "Encouragers" to our children, just as our heavenly Father has so often encouraged us. Let us never give up on them; God never gives up on us. Let our actions and attitudes toward them help them to understand how they can expect their heavenly Father to deal with them throughout their lives in all the days ahead. Whenever punishment may be necessary, do not let it stop there. As soon as you can, take them in your arms and assure them of how much you love them, and want them to be like the Lord. If we are seeking to be like the Lord, we won't have to spend a lot of time telling our children what we mean.

Concl: The Spirit of God can really pack a lot of truth into one short verse, can't He? In the Greek there are only ten words, but what Paul said here is the key to being a good father. Take the Word, and take it by itself, and you will never be sorry because with the Word you can never go wrong.

One wonderful thing about acting on the Word of God is that the Lord will not leave you to do it all by yourself. He will help you. He loves your children more than you do. He wants you to be a godly father. And mothers, He wants you to be godly mothers. And this is the key to having godly children. The battle may be fierce at times, especially in these days in which we live. But never get away from the Book. Let us trust the Lord with our children, and guide them according to His Word, and His blessing will be upon us.

THE NEW LIFE IN THE WORK PLACE  
Colossians 3:22-25; 4:1

Intro: It is apparent from Paul's epistle to the Colossians that, when a person was saved,

- 1) he was changed;
- 2) his friendships were changed. He began to seek the fellowship of the Lord's people in the church.
- 3) His life at home was changed,
- 4) his behavior in his work changed,
- 5) and he had a new outlook as far as the world was concerned.

This is what we have been learning. Today we are ready to consider what Paul said about their work. In verse 22 of chapter 3 he addressed himself to "servants." In the first verse of chapter 4 (just one verse) he told the "masters" what was expected of them.

But when we think of the kind of society they had, we must not think that it was like our own. Theirs was very different from ours. While I am going to apply what Paul wrote to "servants" to employees today, yet Paul was speaking to bondservants. They belonged to their "masters." Their "masters" owned them! A bondservant served without pay. He was given food, clothing, a place to live with his family, but how much he was to be paid and the benefits he was to receive, were not a matter of negotiation for him at all. He took what he got, and that was it!

Obviously there was much unhappiness in such a system. Often slaves would run away to get out of an situation where they were not happy. There were many injustices. Interestingly the Apostle Paul, nor any of the other apostles, ever encouraged revolt against the system. Neither did the Lord Jesus Christ seek to change the system. Changing the system clearly was not the work of the Church. The Gospel changes people, and then their lives are changed. And it is when people undergo a spiritual transformation, then the effect can always be seen on society.

Today the Church is getting involved more and more in politics. And as she does, she is getting further and further away from her mission in this world. Trying to change the evils of society without changing the hearts of people is getting the cart ahead of the horse. This is something that professing Christians need to recognize.

The problems between employers and employees is one of the major difficulties in our society today. There is probably no time when a strike is not being carried out some place in

our country. Greyhound bus drivers are on strike just now. And so are major league baseball players. Employees strike, and employers lock out their employees. It is apparent that the way we are dealing with such problems is not satisfactory. Companies lose money. Employees lose money. Often there is destruction of property, and sometimes even death resulting from the confrontations that develop. Workers have their demands, and employers refuse to go beyond certain limits. Greed and selfishness are easy to see. No one ever gets as much as he would like to have. The richest people in the world always want to be richer, and everybody is continually seeking to better himself financially.

I do not mean to suggest that we are ever going to have a perfect society--at least, not until our Lord is reigning upon the earth. But Christians get caught on both sides of these troubles that I have been talking about, and they are often asking about what they should do.

As I have stressing throughout this section in which we have been discussing THE NEW LIFE, Paul was teaching believers in these verses. He was not setting a pattern for the world to follow because people cannot live according to the will of God in these matters until until they are saved. But when Christians seek to please God in every area of their lives, it is amazing to see how far-reaching the effect can be in the lives of others. Many people with personal problems, with home problems, with problems at work, have come to know the Lord when somebody has come to them with the Gospel at the very time when the problems they are facing have gotten so bad that they had no other one to turn to. We need to be telling people that we have the problems that we have today because people are the way they are. They are sinners--self-centered, self-seeking, self-destroying sinners--whose hearts need to be changed. Only God can do that. And He does it as people are brought to know His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as their Savior from sin and from judgment.

The "servants" of Paul's day had one advantage that employees do not have today. They had to stay in unpleasant situations. They could not quit. They had no rights which they could claim. I say that that was an "advantage" because they had to learn to cope with their circumstances. And that is where the Word of God is so helpful for the people of God. Today an employee can quit. And he should quit if he cannot cope. There is not one bit of evidence in Scripture that an employee has any right to cause trouble. Neither is there any evidence that any person in a family has any right to cause trouble. And the same can be said about the church: no one has the right to cause trouble. WE ARE TAUGHT IN SCRIPTURE HOW TO COPE WITH OUR TROUBLES, AND HOW WE CAN

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD. Unless I have misunderstood this passage, this is what Paul was saying. And as we have seen in what he told wives and husbands and children and parents in the preceding verses, the emphasis is the same here. You and I are not to be concerned about what someone else needs to do; we need to be primarily concerned about ourselves and what we need to do!

Let us not look at what Paul said specifically to "servants" and their "masters."

#### I. SERVANTS (Col. 3:22-25).

If you are a careful observer, you will see that Paul had about four times as much to say to the servants as he did to the masters. In fact, he had more to say to servants than he did to the members of the family combined! Why?

I do not know that I have all of the answers. It may have been that servants were a special problem in Colossae, or that they faced many problems in their work. Undoubtedly there were more servants in the church than there were masters. But it might also have been because servants spent most of their time when they were awake, on their jobs. And then we could add to these possibilities that fact wives of servants were servants, and children growing up in the homes of servants became servants. So these instructions would include many people.

Whatever the reasons might have been, the very space given to servants suggests that these instructions were very important.

Paul told them that there was just one thing that they needed to do.

But then he went on to tell them in several ways, how they were to do it.

Finally, he told them that there were certain things that they needed to keep in mind, things to remember.

##### A. What were they to do?

The answer is in verse 22. They were to "obey in all things" their "masters according to the flesh." Whether or not they liked what they were told to do, was not the question. Whatever their masters wanted them to do, they were to do it.



The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

Servants, be subject to your masters  
with all fear;  
not only to the good and gentle,  
but also to the froward (1 Pet. 2:18).

Servants were not only to obey a good, gentle master,  
but also one who was wicked, perverse, hard to get  
along with.

And Paul warned servants against taking advantage  
of a good master who was a child of God. After  
saying that masters were worthy of "all honour," he  
said this:

And they that have believing masters,  
let them not despise them,  
because they are brethren;  
but rather do them service,  
because they are faithful and beloved,  
partakers of the benefit (1 Tim.6:2a).

Therefore, whether a master was a believer or an  
unbeliever, a good master or a bad one, the servant  
was under obligation to obey him in all things.

That was tough enough, but when we see what else Paul  
said, we realize that servants, too, had to trust the  
Lord to help them do what He wanted them to do.

And so we ask,

B. How were they to obey their masters?

The first answer is:

1. Immediately--not just when you want to, or when  
you think that you have time, but right NOW!  
This is the meaning of "obey."

Secondly,

2. "Not with eyeservice" (v. 22).

That is, you are not to be working just when your  
master or someone representing him is watching  
you, but you should work just as faithfully when  
no one is watching you as when someone is.

3. "In singleness of heart" (v. 22).

This means with sincerity. Work with the kind of  
enthusiasm that you would in doing the thing that

you like to do the most. It means that you do not just act like you are interested in what you are doing, but you really are interested in it!

4. "Heartily" (v. 23).

This means that a servant is to do what he does with his whole being! He does not hold back anything! Lit. this expression means from your soul. What you are doing outwardly comes from within you.

All of this is a big order, especially if you are in a difficult circumstance.

But this is where the third point for servants is so important:

C. Things to remember.

In dealing with the verses we have been over, you may have noticed that there have been some expressions which I have passed by. I want to speak of them now.

1. Remember Who it is that you serve.

As Paul began his message to servants, you can see in verse 22 that he said that servants were to "obey... not with eyeservice, as **menpleasers.**" This suggests that, while a servant is to obey his boss, THAT IS NOT THE PRIMARY OBJECT THAT HE HAS IN HIS WORK. IF HE IS NOT MERELY A PLEASER OF MEN, THEN WHO IS HE TRYING TO PLEASE?

That question is answered in verses 22, 23, 24. He is above and beyond everyone else, to seek to be pleasing to God and the Lord Jesus Christ! That is his goal! He pleases his master because he wants to please the Lord.

Somewhere where it can be seen regularly, especially when things get tough, every Christian employee needs to be able to see those words at the end of verse 24: "FOR YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST."

You may be working for a good boss, or a bad one. He may be a Christian, or not a Christian. Whatever the situation may be in the work place for you as a child of God, REMEMBER THAT YOU

SERVE THE LORD CHRIST.

Let me give you a verse to help you along that line. It is from King David in the OT, found in Psa. 16:8, 9a. This is what David said:

I have set the Lord always before me:  
because he is at my right hand,  
I shall not be moved.  
Therefore my heart is glad,  
and my glory rejoiceth....

David, with all of his responsibilities and problems, got into trouble when he lost sight of the Lord. Therefore, he made it a habit to set the Lord before himself, that is, he recognized that the Lord was there with him all the time, watching him, ready to help him. And that he as the King of Israel was really the servant of the Lord.

Don't forget this.

A second thing to remember:

2. The Lord will grant future rewards for service you render to your master here on earth.

See verse 24.

You are not only being paid for your work here, but bonuses are awaiting you in heaven.

One more thing for servant--a warning:

3. Remember that if you do wrong, you may get away with it here with your earthly master, but you don't get away with it with the Lord.

You probably won't get away with it even here. This could mean the loss of pay, a demotion, or the loss of your job. But it is important to remember that in all of these things you are not just dealing with people here on earth; YOU ARE DEALING WITH THE LORD!

Now just a word for masters.

II. MASTERS (Col. 4:1).

This is very brief, but very important.

Masters, too, need to remember the Lord. Paul was speaking to Christian masters, Christian employers, but it is a good thing for the non-Christian employer to know this and keep it in mind.

— Regardless of how high man may be in the social order, there is always One Who is higher than he is--much higher! That is the Lord. So the master must "give" voluntarily and joyfully to his servant "that which is just and equal." He is to treat his servant the way he would like for the Lord to treat him.

"Just" means that which is right in the sight of the Lord. "Equal" is probably best explained by 2 Cor. 8:14 where Paul was actually discussing giving. But the principle applies here. This is the verse:

But by an equality,  
that now at this time your abundance may be  
a supply for their want,  
that their abundance also may be  
a supply for your want:  
that there may be equality.

— This is the idea. The master has the work which he wants done, and he has the money to pay. He could not do the work by himself. So he is to provide for the needs of his servant just as his servant provides what is needed to get the master's work done. No amounts are set. It is up to the master to give as he believes the Lord would have him give, making sure that his servant is not in need.

Is this not what the Apostle Paul said the Lord would do for all of us? Cf. Phil. 4:19. For the servants the main source of the Lord's supply is through the master.

— Concl: This is the Lord's plan for His people who are servants and masters. How different things would be today if even those of us who are believers would do as the Lord would have us do in THE WORK PLACE! We cannot expect this from unregenerate hearts. But each one of us, as these words apply to us, can seek by God's grace to please Him first and most of all. You may be a Christian working for a non-Christian, or you may be a Christian employer with people working for you who are not Christians. The directions are given to us, for us to do the Lord's will. When we are pleasing Him, we can trust Him to take care of all of the people involved and all of the circumstances because the Lord Jesus Christ is the One Who is really our Master.

THE NEW LIFE IN THE WORLD  
Colossians 4:2-6

Intro: The Bible makes it very clear that everyone who knows Christ as his Savior, is a new person, a changed person. He looks the same. He has the same abilities, and the same weaknesses. We have no trouble recognizing who he is, but he has been changed. He is different within. His interests in life are different. His attitude toward God, and toward Jesus Christ, are different. He has an interest in the Word of God that he did not have before. And he enjoys being with the people of God. You will probably notice that his language has undergone a change.

The Bible expresses this newness of life in different ways. Paul wrote these words to the church at Rome about those who believe in Christ:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death:  
that like as Christ was raised up from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
**even so we also should walk in newness of life**  
(Rom. 6:4).

To the Corinthian church he wrote,

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:  
old things are passed away;  
behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Paul expressed this change to the Ephesian church by saying that whereas "we were dead in sins," yet God "hath quickened us together with Christ...." (Eph. 2:5). And then he went on to say a few verses later,

For we are his workmanship,  
created in Christ Jesus unto good works,  
which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them  
(Eph. 2:10).

As I have said many times before, the Bible knows nothing of a salvation which leaves people the same as they were before. To know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior means that there is an inner, spiritual transformation that is eternal. Once a person is truly saved, he or she can never go back and be what they were before. I am not talking about a person who has only made a profession of faith; I am talking about a person in whose heart the Lord has made a change.

We have seen in the epistle of Paul to the Colossians that the gift of this new life in Christ makes a person different, makes his life different, makes a difference in the people he wants to be with (he will want to go to church), makes his marriage different, makes his family life different, and makes him different on the job. Today we will see that it makes a difference in his relationship with the world.

My text is Colossians 4:2-6. You will notice, if you let your eyes run quickly through these five verses, that the world is not mentioned as such in these verses. We do see Paul's concern in verses 3 and 4 for those who have either have not heard the Gospel, or who have heard it, but have not received it. These would have to be the people in the world.

But then in verse 5 Paul mentioned "them that are without." This speaks of people who are outside of the true church, those who are outside of Christ, those who are without Christ. Two of the first proofs that a person has really been saved are:

- 1) He gets concerned about those who do not know the Lord.
- 2) He becomes careful about the way he lives in the world. He wants his life to be a testimony to those who do not know the Savior.

This is the reason that we can say that these verses in chapter 4 have to do with living THE NEW LIFE IN THE WORLD.

The world is where we live. The people of the world are those we want to reach with the Gospel. We want to see the members of our families come to Christ. We want to see our friends saved. We hope to be able to witness even to those people we meet from day to day, although we may not have a close relationship with them, some we may meet only once and never see again.

However, the temptations that we face in the world pose a real threat to the people of God. We have come out from them, but there is always the tendency to be like them. That is why we have such commandments in Scripture as we find in Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:15-17.

When we understand these Scriptures, then we can see that, in our desire to reach people with the Gospel, we must be very careful not to become like them. We do not win people by doing what they do, but by living in such a way that they will see what it means to be a Christian.

In the light of this, how tragic it is that you go into many churches today and you can hear the same kind of music that you hear in the world. You can often see the same kind of showmanship in the pulpit that you can see in our theaters. You are confronted with the same kind of money-raising efforts in the church that you see in the world. For many years the emphasis has been very strong among Christians that if we are to win people to Christ we must be as much like them as we can be, and we must create in our churches the kind of an atmosphere that will make them feel at home with us. They hear their kind of music. They see their kind of

entertainment. I have known of Christians who actually felt that if you are with people who drink, you should drink with them so as not to offend them. But I also know of instances where the result of doing that has been disaster!

I ask you to join me today in looking at present-day trends in the church in the light of what we find here in the Word of God.

Paul basically emphasized four things:

- 1) Prayer.
- 2) Witnessing.
- 3) Lifestyle.
- 4) Speech.

The first is in verse 2. The second is in verses 3 and 4. The third is in verse 5. The last in verse 6. Let us examine what Paul wrote to the Colossian church almost 2,000 years ago.

#### I. PRAYER (Col. 4:2).

One of the distinguishing marks of a Christian is that he (or she) prays. He prays because he needs God. He prays because he has needs which only God can meet. He may have been a very independent person before he was saved, but there is something about salvation that makes us realize how dependent we are upon God.

And so we pray. We may not pray the way we should, especially in the beginning, and we may not pray as much as we should, but a Christian prays. And the more a Christian grows in his faith, the more he is going to pray.

Here in this verse Paul did not tell them to pray (they knew to do that); he told them to "continue in prayer..." Our problem so often is that we start praying, but then give up. Or our praying is spasmodic. We pray now and then instead of praying regularly. Cf. 1 Thess. 5:17. No Christian is going to be able to overcome the temptations that he will face in the world unless he prays, and continues to pray.

But Paul also added that statement, "and watch in the same with thanksgiving." What does this mean?

It means that you and I are to pray expecting God to answer us, and we are waiting for the answer with our thanksgiving ready to offer to God. We do not pray just to pray. Prayer was never meant to be a ritual. Prayer is the very life-line of the Christian life. We pray

because God wants us to pray, and we pray because we believe that God answers prayer.

Sometimes it seems that our prayers are not going to be answered. This verse ought to encourage us. This is not just Paul telling us to keep on praying; it is God speaking through Paul. God was saying this. And He would not say it if He did not intend to answer us.

The world does not know anything about real prayer. But we, living in this world, must not only learn to pray, we must pray, and we must keep on praying with our thanksgivings ready when God gives the answer.

## II. WITNESSING (Col. 4:3, 4).

Paul was here presenting a personal request. And, if you give it a moment's thought, you will see that he was teaching the Colossian church an important lesson as he gave them this request. He was teaching them that it is by prayer that God opens doors for our witnessing. If Paul needed such prayer, they did, too!

He was concerned about two things:

- A. The opportunity to witness.
- B. The ability to make the message clear.

Paul gave a similar request to the Ephesian church. This is the way he worded it to them:

Praying always...for me,  
that utterance may be given unto me,  
that I may open my mouth boldly,  
to make known the mystery of the gospel  
(Eph. 6:18a, 19).

That which he called "the mystery of Christ" in Colossians, he called "the mystery of the gospel" in Ephesians.

Paul was asking his fellow-believers to pray that God would open up opportunities to speak of Christ in the Gospel, and that God would enable him to give the message accurately and clearly. That is our responsibility. How the message is used is in God's hands. Cf. Isa. 55:10, 11, "For as the rain cometh down...."

Before we can witness effectively we have to know what the Gospel is. But then it is God Who opens doors for us, and He is the One Who enables us to be clear in our presentation of the Gospel. If people are going to be



brought to faith in Christ, it will be through the Word. Cf. Rom. 10:17. Pray for this. Pray continually. And pray expecting that the Lord is going to answer. Get ready with your thanksgivings.

Let me go on to my third point:

### III. LIFESTYLE (Col. 4:5).

We need to live godly lives before each other, but we need to be just as godly before the people of the world. Walking in the Bible means living. Cf. Col. 3:7.

Walking in wisdom means to live like Paul had instructed the Colossian Christians in this epistle to live. We are not to live like the people of the world live; we are to live as the people of God should always live. IF OUR LIVES ARE NOT A TESTIMONY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US, OUR WORDS WILL BE OF NO EFFECT. Walking always precedes talking. Perhaps one reason that we do not have more Christians who "talk" the Gospel is because we have so few who really "walk" the Gospel. On the other hand, a godly life is a powerful influence for the Gospel in the world. That is the reason that Paul put what he said in verse 5 ahead of what he said in verse 6. Walking goes before and prepares the way for talking.

Paul expressed it this way in Eph. 5:15-17:

See then that ye walk circumspectly,  
not as fools, but as wise,  
Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.  
Wherefore be ye not unwise,  
but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

If, then, we are to "walk in wisdom," we must walk according to the will of God, and the only place to find the will of God is in the Word of God. So to "walk in wisdom" is to be obedient to God's Word.

Finally,

### IV. SPEECH (Col. 4:6).

Paul has already had much to say in this epistle about the speech of believers. Cf. 3:8, 9, 17. Here he was thinking about our witness to the world.

In Ephesians 4:29 Paul wrote,  
Let no corrupt communication  
proceed out of your mouth,  
but that which is good to the use of edifying,

that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

That probably had to do with believers. Here in Colossians Paul was concerned about the non-Christian.

What does it mean to have our speech always "with grace, seasoned with salt"?

I have said that our mission in the world is not to be worldly, but spiritual. Our walk and our talk are to reflect who we are: the people of God. But this is not to be in a harsh, or sanctimonious way, as though we were better than the people we are trying to reach. Our speech is to be "with grace," i.e., the grace of God, not only in what we say, but how we say it. Our love for God, and our sincere desire to see people come to know God in salvation, should be very apparent in all that we say.

"Seasoned with salt" -- One of the uses of salt is to make our food tasty and attractive. Our speech is "seasoned with salt" when people realize that we are saying, in so many words,

O taste and see that the Lord is good:  
blessed is the man that trusteth in him  
(Psa. 34:8).

We do not witness just out of duty, but we witness because of the love that we have for the Lord, and because we truly want others to know and love Him, too.

With such a life, and with such an approach, it is not surprising that Paul concluded this verse with those words, "that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." This, like 1 Pet. 3:15, suggests that, if we are living as the people of God ought to live, people will be asking us "a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear." I am afraid that our occupation with methods as to how to approach people with the Gospel is an acknowledgment of the low level spiritually on which most of us are living.

Concl: Paul has shown us in this practical section of his epistle to the Colossians that we as believers live the same way wherever we are: by ourselves, in the church, at home, on the job, or in the world. We do not change because of the environment we are in. We are to live with the Lord and walk with the Lord wherever we might be. And it is through our lives that the Lord will use us to awaken in the hearts of others a realization of the peace, the joy, the love, that is to be found in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. Pray that God's grace may always be seen in us.

PAUL'S BELOVED BROTHERS  
Colossians 4:7-9

Intro: It is clear to anyone reading this epistle that Paul's main message is finished in verse 6 of chapter 4. And yet is that really true? Can we say that the last 12 verses are not especially important, that they were meaningful then, but not so to us now?

In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 (which we had in our SS lesson today, we learned that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God...." Since that is true, then we have to say, with regard to this epistle, that it is not finished until we get to verse 18 of chapter 4. If God had not intended for these verses to be in this epistle, they would not be there. The fact that they are, is evidence that they, too, are the Word of God, are important, and we need to seek to learn from them. As 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 teach us, we need to be on the lookout for additional teaching, perhaps some reproof. If there is reproof, there will be correction. In addition, we may find more instruction in righteousness--all of which will make us better equipped to live for the Lord, and to serve Him.

Perhaps all Scripture is not equally important, but all is important! We need to make that distinction. And so we cannot pass over verses like we have here without personal and spiritual loss to ourselves.

Before we concentrate on verses 7 through 9, let me make one observation about this whole concluding section from verse 7 down to the end of chapter 4. These verses show us that:

I. THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE IMPORTANT TO PAUL.

A. The three churches.

He was not only concerned about the church in Colossae, but also the churches in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. And this is all the more amazing since he mentioned in this epistle that he had not been in Colossae, nor in Laodicea, nor, we can assume, in Hierapolis. See 2:1.

He was keenly interested in the people of God in all of these places, and he was concerned about their growth in the things of the Lord.

But this is not the only way he showed an interest in people. I am sure that you have noticed by this time:

## B. The individuals he mentioned.

There are 10 names, twelve if you count Barnabas, and Paul's own name which he himself wrote in 4:18.

The 10 are:

- 1) Tychicus (v. 7).
- 2) Onesimus (v. 9).
- 3) Aristarchus (v. 10).
- 4) Marcus (v. 10).
- 5) Jesus, which is called Justus (v. 11).
- 6) Epaphras (v.12).
- 7) Luke (v. 14).
- 8) Demas (v. 14).
- 9) Nymphas (v. 15).
- 10) Archippus (v. 17).

These were all real people, important people. They were not only important to Paul, but they were important to the people in Colossae, as well as to the people in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Today, and for two more Sundays, I want to introduce you to these people, insofar as I can, so that we can learn what we are able to learn about each one of them, and, I trust, profit spiritually from our acquaintance with them. So get ready to get better informed about those you have known before, as well as making some new friends.

Today we will turn our attention to two of them, mentioned in the first three verses of Paul's conclusion. They are Tychicus and Onesimus.

The one thing that these two men have in common is that Paul called both of them beloved brothers. This does not mean that the others were not his beloved brothers, but, for some reason, he singled out these two for that distinction. Paul called Luke in verse 14 "the beloved physician," and so we can see that he was very dear to Paul also. But we can say that, as far as this epistle is concerned, Tychicus and Onesimus were PAUL'S BELOVED BROTHERS.

## II. TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS CONTRASTED.

Tychicus was older in the Lord than Onesimus was. It is apparent from what we read here that Tychicus was a mature believer, a man who had proved himself not only as "a faithful minister," but also as Paul's "fellowservant in the Lord." Onesimus was, on the other hand, a recent convert--as we shall learn when we consider the epistle

to Philemon. I can't tell you how they compared in age, but there was a real contrast between them spiritually.

There was also a difference between them socially.

We know that Onesimus was a slave. He belonged to Philemon in Colossae. He had run away from Philemon, had gone to Rome, and there his path crossed providentially with the Apostle Paul, and Paul had won him to Christ.

We have no reason to think that Tychicus was a slave. In fact, I am sure that he was not a slave.

So, with the two you have a free man and a slave--socially poles apart, and yet united in Christ. This is especially important to note in view of what Paul had written in 3:11. Human differences remain when we receive Christ, but these are no barrier to our fellowship. Christ is all to each one of us, and He is in all of us regardless of the distinctions which can be made between us. Tychicus and Onesimus illustrate that great truth.

And I would remind you that, if each was a brother to Paul, then they were brothers to each other--brothers in the family of God!

But now let us look at the two men individually. We will take Tychicus first because he is mentioned first.

### III. TYCHICUS (Col. 4:7).

He called here:

- 1) "A beloved brother."
- 2) "A faithful minister."
- 3) "A fellowservant in the Lord."

Paul used the first two terms to describe Tychicus in Eph. 6:21.

#### A. "A beloved brother."

Paul loved Tychicus, and although Paul was an apostle, and Tychicus was not an apostle, yet Paul considered him a dear brother in the Lord. They were both members of the family of God. This was the reason for the great bond which existed between them. They had the same Savior and the same heavenly Father.

But he was even more than "a beloved brother." He was:

B. "A faithful minister."

Bishop Moule said in his commentary that the word "minister" suggests both activity and subordination (p. 261).

We see in Eph. 6:21, in Titus 3:12, and in 2 Tim. 4:12, that Tychicus was very busy in the work of the Lord. In all three of those passages, in here in Colossians, we see that Tychicus had placed himself under the authority of Paul, and that he was actually an apostle of Paul. He spent his life serving the Lord, doing what Paul had for him to do. This involved a lot of traveling for Tychicus, but he did it, did it faithfully. He was a man Paul could trust to do what he had for him to do. When Paul sent Tychicus on a mission, he knew that the job would be done as it should be done. Tychicus was an example of 1 Cor. 4:2, that "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Solomon once wrote,  
Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness,  
but a faithful man who can find? (Prov. 20:6).

But Tychicus had a third characteristic:

C. "Fellowservant in the Lord."

Paul was over Tychicus in the work of the Lord, and yet at the same time he was a fellow-bondservant in the Lord.

Think of Paul and Tychicus, on the one hand, and of Onesimus, on the other hand, when you read 1 Cor. 7:22,

For he that is called in the Lord,  
being a servant, is the Lord's freeman:  
likewise also he that called, being free,  
is Christ's servant.

Paul and Tychicus both worked together so well because both were bondservant, fellow-bondservants, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is an important lesson for all of us. The key to unity in our fellowship, and in our service, is to see that we are what we are because of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let us look at:

## IV. ONESIMUS (Col. 4:9).

I can't tell you how long Onesimus had been saved before this epistle was written, but I do know that it was long enough for the Apostle Paul to be assured that Onesimus was truly saved! He had shown himself to be "faithful," and Paul loved him like he loved Tychicus. And so he called him "beloved."

Before Onesimus had been saved, he was not faithful. He was a runaway slave. But that had been changed. Paul now trusted him, could depend upon him. He knew that Onesimus would be loyal to the Lord, and loyal to him, to Paul.

He was one of them now in the church at Colossae. He had not been when he left, but he was coming back a new creature in Christ. And this was one of the reasons for Paul's imprisonment: the Lord used those circumstances for Paul to reach Onesimus. How wonderful are the ways of God, and what a blessing it must have been to Paul to see God's hand in his circumstances there in Rome.

There is one more point:

## V. THEIR MISSION (Col. 4:7a, 8, 9b).

Tychicus was coming with Onesimus, and together they were on a mission for the Apostle Paul. The wording of these three verses makes it clear that Onesimus was just as much a part of the mission as Tychicus was.

What were they to do?

Their mission was twofold:

1) They were to carry this epistle to the Colossian church.

It would be impossible to emphasize the importance of this part of their mission. They were entrusted with the very Word of God. If they had failed in this part of their mission, this portion of God's Word would have been lost for all succeeding generations.

2) They were to tell the church at Colossae how Paul was getting along.

Paul did not take the time to tell them about himself in the letter, but he wanted them to have the full particulars about how things were going with him in Rome.

This shows one of the main purposes for letter-writing, and for personal contacts, especially to those whom we

love, and who love us. We need to keep them informed so they will not be needlessly concerned about us.

Probably the better reading of verse 8 is, "...that ye might know our estate...." And that is in accord with verses 7 and 9. Paul was sending them to be "encouragers." Whatever they had to say about Paul's health, his living conditions, his ministry, the prospect of his release and of a visit to Colossae, Tychicus and Onesimus were to tell the truth, but to tell it so the church at Colossae would be encouraged. When we recognize the hand of the Lord in all things, we can be encouraged even when things are not going too well.

Joseph was an "encourager" to his brothers. Caleb and Joshua, as spies, were "encouragers" to the nation. Daniel was able to encourage King Darius. And remember what we have learned about the work of fathers with their children: they are to be "encouragers."

There are always things to discourage us. We all probably have a tendency to look at the hole in the doughnut instead of the doughnut. But we need to keep our eyes on the Lord, to see what He is doing, and to encourage each other to keep praying, and to keep trusting the Lord Who has never been known to fail.

This should be one of the main reasons we have for writing to our loved ones: to encourage them. Paul did not want the people of Colossae to be wondering about him, and thinking the worst. He loved them, and they loved him. And so he wanted to keep them informed. And he sent two men, two very different men, to do these two things:

- 1) To tell them how things were going.
- 2) To encourage them in their faith.

Even the presence of Onesimus would have been an encouragement.

Concl: Do you see why these are important verses for us, too?

We can learn much from Tychicus and Onesimus concerning what is important in a servant of the Lord--their humility, their diligence, their faithfulness, their oneness.

We can see how God has purposes, good purposes, even in our trials.

And we can see that, even when things may be hard and



difficult, there is always much for which we can be thankful, and this causes us to do what we need to do all of the time, give God the glory which He fully deserves, which is always due to Him alone.

Paul and Tychicus and Onesimus were in different stages of spiritual growth. And yet all are good examples for us to follow. Paul not only preached the truth, and wrote the truth, but he lived the truth. These three verses are a good illustration of what Paul wrote in Col. 3:14,

And above all these things put on charity (love),  
which is the bond of perfectness.

May God enable us to follow their examples.

## PAUL'S FELLOW WORKERS

Colossians 4:10-14

Intro: Paul was a man who loved people. He knew them by name. He recognized the work that they were doing. He was conscious of their problems, and grateful for their help and encouragement in the work of the Lord.

When Tychicus and Onesimus left Paul to take the Colossian epistle to the church in Colossae, as I have mentioned, they took also the letter to Philemon--which I want to consider after we finish Colossians. It is interesting to compare what Paul said about his co-workers in his letter to Philemon with what he said here in his letter to the Colossian church.

In Philemon 23 Paul called Epaphras, "my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus." Here in Col. 4:10 he called Aristarchus, "my fellowprisoner."

In Philemon 24 Paul called "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas," and "Lucas" his "fellowlabourers." Here in Col. 4:11, after speaking of Aristarchus, Marcus, "Jesus, which is called Justus," he said that they "only were his fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God."

So, it seems that they were all his fellow workers in one way or another, while Epaphras and Aristarchus seem to have taken turns at voluntarily staying with Paul in his quarters as his fellow prisoners. But, as far as we know there were no charges against them. They were neither ashamed nor afraid to identify themselves with the Apostle Paul.

It would be interesting if we knew more about these men than we do, but we can be sure that Paul, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, has given us much that we can profit from in the closing verses of this epistle.

I mentioned last week that there are 10 men whose names appear here, beginning with verse 7: Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Marcus, Jesus, "which is called Justus," Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nymphas, and Archippus. Some were Jews; some were Gentiles. Most of them were with Paul, but at least two were in Colossae; and Tychicus and Onesimus would soon be in Colossae.

Today I want us to consider six of these men, those who are mentioned in verses 10-14: Aristarchus,

Marcus,  
Jesus, called Justus,  
Epaphras,  
Luke, and Demas.

## I. ARISTARCHUS (Col. 4:10a).

He was a Gentile, a Macedonian whose home was Thessalonica. He is first mentioned in Acts 19:29 as being present with Paul at the time of the riot in Ephesus. He was referred to with Gaius, and they are called, "Paul's companions in travel." So he was with Paul on Paul's second missionary journey, and had been with Paul, as far as we can tell, from that time until Paul arrived in Rome. And Aristarchus stayed there with him, alternating, very likely, with Epaphras.

So he had been a friend and companion in travel and work with the Apostle Paul for at least 7 years when this epistle was written, and perhaps a little longer than that.

What can we say about him?

We can say that he illustrates the fact that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. These men who probably would not have known each other if it had not been for Christ, and we can almost certainly assume that they would not have liked each other, one being a Jew, the other a Gentile. Yet in Christ there was a very strong attachment between these men.

Since they were fellow workers, we can assume that Aristarchus believed what Paul believed, and felt with Paul that it was very important to get the message of the Gospel out to the people of the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, we can say that Aristarchus was not afraid of any consequences that might come his way because of his close attachment with Paul. Aristarchus was a good example for Timothy to follow when Paul wrote to him saying,

Be not thou therefore ashamed  
of the testimony of our Lord,  
nor of me his prisoner,  
but be thou partaker of the afflictions  
of the gospel according to the power of God  
(2 Tim. 1:8).

Since Paul's life was endangered, the same would have been true for his close friends

So we can assume that Aristarchus must have been a mature, spiritually strong believer in Christ. And he was a very close personal friend of Paul the apostle.

## II. MARCUS (Col. 4:10b).

This is John Mark, the writer of the second Gospel. He was either a nephew or a cousin of Barnabas. He had gone with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Cf. Acts 13:5. But when they got as far as Perga, John Mark left them--why, we do not know! Cf. Acts 13:13.

When Paul and Barnabas started out on their second journey, Barnabas was "determined" (Acts 15:37) to take John Mark with them. But Paul was just as determined that John Mark would not go with them. So Paul and Barnabas came to the parting of the ways; Barnabas left with John Mark; Paul took Silas with him.

But quite evidently, when Paul wrote this epistle, the trouble between all of them was a thing of the past. John Mark was with Paul in Rome, and Paul seems to have mentioned Barnabas as an indication that his relationship with John Mark was a real recommendation for John Mark.

Whatever the problem had been, it had been resolved, and John Mark is one whom the Apostle Paul included when he said what he did in the latter half of Col. 4:11.

In Paul's last letter, written during his second imprisonment in Rome, he told Timothy,  
     Take Mark, and bring him with thee:  
     for he is profitable to me for the ministry  
     (2 Tim. 4:11).

John Mark is a good illustration of Phil.1:6. He may have been unprofitable at one time, but he was profitable just a short time afterwards. God never gives up on those who are truly His. Our spiritual chart might look like a roller coaster, but the longer we live, the higher we go, and the dips become less and less.

John Mark was something like Onesimus. Listen to what Paul said about him in Philemon 10, 11:  
     I beseech thee for my son Onesimus,  
     whom I have begotten in my bonds:  
     Which in time past was to thee unprofitable,  
     but now profitable to thee and to me.

God is continually working miracles in the lives of those who know Him.

### III. "JESUS, WHICH IS CALLED JUSTUS" (Col. 4:11a).

As I have been going over and over this epistle for the past seven months plus, I don't think that I have on any day gone over the name of this man without wondering, Why

did Paul speak of him in this way? Why not simply "Jesus"? Why "Jesus, which is called Justus"?

Gradually I began to feel that there might be one special reason.

Before I tell you what that reason is, or might be, let me tell you that I looked at eleven different commentaries on Colossians, and they all mainly had these points to make:

- 1) This is one of three times that we have "Justus" mentioned in the NT:
  - a) Acts 1:23,  
And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
  - b) Acts 18:7, where we read of a man whose name was Justus, who lived next to the synagogue.
 But all of the commentators agreed that neither of these was "Jesus, which is called Justus." The first was Barsabas; the second must have been a Gentile.
- 2) Perhaps I should not actually make this a point because it has to do with an omission by all of the commentaries, except for one. None of them ventured to say why he should not have been called merely "Jesus."

The only exception was Matthew Henry.

Now when you are choosing the claim of one over against no explanation by ten of them, it might be claimed that you are not on good ground. However, I have learned in interpreting Scripture that it is not always to be expected that the majority is right. You be the judge if you think that Mr. Henry and I might be right.

This is what he said: "It is probable that he changed his name for that of Justus, in honour to the name of the Redeemer" (Matthew Henry, Vol. VI, p. 769).

That makes sense to me; does it to you? Here was a man who at birth had been given the name of Jesus, probably in honor of the great Jewish leader of the OT: Joshua. There were many Jewish boys with that name in those days. But when he became a Christian, he must have felt unworthy to carry such a name, and so he chose to be called by that which would describe what Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, had made him. By faith he had become a righteous one. This was the Hebrew equivalent of \_\_\_\_\_.

If this is true (and you must remember that this is an

explanation that is likely, but not certain), then what does it tell us about "Jesus, who is called Justus"? May I suggest two things:

- 1) It tells us that he had the highest regard, the greatest affection, for his Lord.
- 2) It tells us that he was a humble man.

I feel satisfied in my own mind that this is the meaning of "Jesus, which is called Justus."

Those who were "of the circumcision," i.e., were Jews, were Marcus and Justus (and possibly Barnabas).

Note: In the light of what Paul said about them, it should be no wonder that he concluded verse 11 as he did.  
(Read.)

Do you remember what a comforter is? A comforter a person who is an encouragement. Paul was speaking here as a minister and as a servant of the Lord. There are many people who are a discouragement in the work of the Lord. Sometimes they are people you have high expectations of, and then they fall away. Or they might be people who start out as your friends, but become you enemies. God is so good to send along people who lift us up, and help to get us back into the battle once again. Paul needed that, and so do we today.  
Thank the Lord for everyone who is an encouragement to you.  
And pray that the Lord will make you an encouragement to others.

But let us go on to the last three men--quickly.

#### IV. EPAPHRAS (Col. 4:12, 13).

Epaphras was mentioned in Col. 1:7, 8. He may have been the pastor. If not, possibly an evangelist from the Colossian church.

He had come to Rome to see Paul, but there was a part of his ministry that had not stopped, nor had it changed:  
HE CONTINUED TO PRAY FOR THEM ACCORDING TO BURDEN WHICH HE HAD FOR THEM AS IT IS STATED IN VERSE 12.

But not only did he pray for them; he also was praying for the Lord's people in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

"Labouring fervently" is the translation of one word in the Greek. It speaks of agonizing, struggling to overcome all obstacles and difficulties in order to obtain what he was after. Cf. Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but...." Prayer is work,

hard work. Prayer is spiritual conflict. The burden on Epaphras' heart was no little thing: "that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." If there is one or a hundred things that the Devil does not want, that is all of it!

Epaphras was like Jacob in that he refused to let the Lord go. Cf. Gen. 32:26. He had to have the Lord's blessing for the Lord's people. Oh, how we need men (and women) today who will spend time in prayer, seeking the blessing of God upon His church. Are you one of them, or will you be?

The last two men:

V. "LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN" (Col. 4:14a).

Have you noticed that we have three men in this passage who have given us a large part of the Scriptures? They are Paul, who has given us 13, possibly 14, of the NT epistles; John Mark, who has given us the Gospel according to Mark; and Dr. Luke, who has given us the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

How Paul has honored the medical profession here! "Luke, the beloved physician." Paul who once had been a healer now had his own personal physician with him in most of his ministry. Luke was not only a doctor for the body, but he was like our doctors, a doctor for the soul. Not only did Paul love Luke, but it seems that everyone else did, too.

Paul said that Luke was sending his greetings to them. That would encourage the churches.

Finally,

VI. DEMAS (Col. 4:14b).

As I have gone through Colossians it has bothered me that Paul just said, "Demas." He did not give him any kind of a title, nor commend him in any way like he did the others who are mentioned in this chapter. Do you suppose that he had an idea that things were not right there?

I mentioned a moment ago that Paul had had many trials in the ministry, trials from different kinds of people. One of his greatest trials was yet to come, a trial that came just prior to the martyrdom of the Apostle Paul. Paul mentioned it in his last epistle: 2 Tim. 4:10a. This is what he said: "DEMAS HATH FORSAKEN ME, HAVING LOVED THIS

PRESENT WORLD" (or age). What did this mean?

Let me answer that question by taking you to two passages in 1 John 2, the chapter we will be considering for the next two Sundays in our Sunday School. The verses are 15 through 17, and then verse 19.

Concl: We have met some very wonderful people today:

Aristarchus, Marcus, Justus, Epaphras, and Luke.

There are things about each one of them that you and I should seek to imitate--by the grace of God. They are excellent examples for us to follow.

I am sorry that I cannot add the name of Demas. Demas worked with Paul's fellow workers. He acted like he belonged. But somewhere down the line something happened, and Demas departed because he loved the world instead of loving God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit. He loved the world instead of the people of God. The love of the Father was not in him. He was not saved. He was not a child of God.

Do you suppose that we have any Demases with us today? Could it be possible that your real name is Demas? Demas belonged to the same group as Judas Iscariot. They mixed and mingled with the people of God, pretended to be servants of the Lord, but their hearts had never been changed.

This is no light matter that I am talking about. Make sure that you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. You will never get to heaven just because you come to church, nor because you have a lot of friends, nor because you are living, or have lived, a successful life. Christ is the way to heaven. Either you go to heaven through faith in Christ, through the merit of His work on the Cross, or you will not get there. Make sure today that Christ is your Savior and your Lord.



THE MINISTRY AND THE RESURRECTION  
Colossians 4:15-18

Intro: We come today to our last Sunday in this present series on the book of Colossians. This is our twenty-seventh Sunday in this short epistle. For me these have been weeks of tremendous blessing. Not only have I had the joy of spending hours in preparation for the messages, but, like many of you, I have spent these weeks memorizing the entire epistle. One thing I look forward to each morning is repeating this epistle as I begin my time with the Lord. It is with a certain feeling of regret that I come to the end of these messages. I hope that the weeks we have spent considering the truth of this book have been even half the blessing to you that they have been to me. I hope, too, that not only our understanding of the Word of God has increased, but also that our obedience to the Word has greatly improved as a result of the hours we have spent going through this letter verse by verse. I am sure that there is much that I have missed, but perhaps the Lord will continue to open up this book to us individually in the days ahead.

But this is another important day.

This is Easter Sunday throughout the world. It is the day that Christians everywhere have set aside to remember the resurrection of Christ. Actually every Sunday is a commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. That is the reason we meet on Sunday and not on Saturday. Throughout the world today the resurrection will be spoken of, but, unfortunately, in different ways. Many will speak of it who do not really believe that Jesus Christ was raised physically from the dead--that He was raised only in the sense that He continued to live on in the hearts of those who loved Him. But when you hear about the resurrection of Christ at Trinity Bible Church we want everyone to know that we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ came out of the tomb in His physical body, glorified, forever beyond the possibility that He could die again. As Paul said so clearly in Romans 6:9b,  
Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead,  
dieth no more,  
death hath no more dominion over him.

We do not serve a dead Christ, but a risen, glorified, exalted Savior, Who some day is coming to take us to be with Him for ever!

This morning I want, then, to do two things:

- 1) I want to complete our studies in the epistle to the Colossians.

2) I want make this a resurrection message.

After reading the last four verses of this book, the verses which are my text for today, you probably are asking, How can he get an Easter message out of those verses when there is no reference at all to the death and/or the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, if you say there is no reference to the death and resurrection of Christ in these verses, I was to differ with you. And so you will say, "Where is it?" And my answer is, "in the word 'ministry' which you find in verse 17." Paul told the people to tell Archippus,

Take heed to the ministry  
which thou hast received in the Lord,  
that thou fulfil it.

Let me explain. Please turn to Acts 20:24.

In Acts 20 we have the account of Paul meeting with the elders of the church at Ephesus when they met at Miletus. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem. It was the last time that he expected to meet with those elders. The Holy Spirit had told Paul that trouble was ahead for him in Jerusalem. Many had tried to keep him from going, but he was determined to go. And this is what he told the Ephesian elders:

But none of these things move me,  
neither count I my life dear unto myself,  
that I might finish my course with joy,  
**and the ministry which I have received**  
**of the Lord Jesus,**  
**to testify the gospel of the grace of God.**

The one things that I want you to notice about that verse is the way Paul described the ministry which he had received from the Lord. It was this: **"To testify the gospel of the grace of God."**

But what is "the gospel of the grace of God"?

Paul defined it in 1 Cor. 15:1-4. This is what Paul wrote in that passage:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel  
which I preached unto you, which also ye received,  
and wherein ye stand:

By which also ye are saved...  
For I delivered unto you first of all  
that which I also received,  
how that Christ died for our sins  
according to the scriptures;  
And that he was buried,

and that he rose again the third day  
according to the scriptures.

The ministry which Paul had received from the Lord was to preach the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is the gospel! And we have no reason to believe that Archippus had any other ministry!

Why Archippus needed this exhortation, we do not know. Perhaps he felt inadequate. Or it might be that he was discouraged because of the difficulties. He is only mentioned here and in Paul's letter to Philemon, verse 2, where Paul called him, "our fellowsoldier." Much of the responsibility of the ministry may have rested upon him. But, whatever the reason, this is what Paul told him.

Let me remind all of us today that the ministry is not what men nor churches nor denominations might want to make it; it is what God has declared to be. And no man can fulfill the ministry if he is failing to proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ! Paul's ministry was to preach this message in order that people might be saved, and then he took those who were saved, established them in churches where they could learn how saved people were to live.

Therefore, the ministry of the Gospel is far-reaching. As Paul has shown us in this epistle, it includes both the justification of sinners, and then their sanctification.

I hope that I have convinced you concerning what Paul meant by this special message to Archippus. Furthermore, I trust that you can see that in the word ministry we do have the message which is before the world again this year on this Easter Sunday.

This past week I had the delightful experience of going through this epistle again just to find how many times Paul referred to either the death of Christ, or His resurrection, or both. I found that there were 13 specific references in which these were the subject, and that there are many other verses which have the Gospel implied in them. However, I want to confine myself to the 13 reference, and I will not be able to speak of all of them. I merely want to emphasize four truths in Colossians which arise out of the death and resurrection of Christ as Paul believed it and taught it.

So let my first point be:

I. THE GOSPEL. WE MUST NEVER FORGET WHO HE IS WHO DIED:  
(COL. 1:15; 2:9, 10). CHRIST!

The first thing that I want you to notice is that:

- A. Paul believed in the actual physical death of Christ, and in His physical resurrection.

He spoke of "his blood" in 1:14, and of "the blood of his cross" in 1:20. He spoke of our being "reconciled" to God "in the body of his flesh through death" in 1:22.

Paul would never have spoken of our Lord's body, nor of His blood, nor of the Cross, if he had not believed in a real death.

But then look at 2:20 where he wrote of "God, who hath raised him [Christ] from the dead." And in 1:18 Paul said that our Lord was "the firstborn of the dead," that is, He was the first to be raised from the dead, never to die again. And, as "the firstborn," He was the first of many others who would also be raised from the dead--speaking of the resurrection of His people.

But look at a second point:

- B. When Christ died, all believers died with Him; when He was raised, all believers were raised with Him.

Look at 2:11-13a. Also 2:20a, and 3:1a.

We cannot understand as fully as we would like to, but these verses mean that Christ died in our place, as our Substitute, that we were united with Him in His death, so that all that He accomplished by His death and resurrection was placed to our account in heaven.

This leads me to the third thing that I want you to see as we think of Christ's death and resurrection:

- C. The benefits which He purchased for us by His death and resurrection.

Paul did not mention all of them, but let me point out some that he did mention.

1. Redemption (1:14).
2. Forgiveness of sins (1:14). In 2:13 Paul said that this included them "all."
3. Reconciliation (1:20-22). This means that we have peace with God.

Let me mention just one more:

4. We are made new (3:9, 10). Christ has become our very life. We are different. We are not the same. We can never go back and be the same kind of people that we were before.

Much more could be said about the benefits we have under the Gospel, even from what Paul mentioned in this epistle, but this will have to be enough for now.

This leads me to the fourth point I want to make under the Gospel:

- D. The Gospel produces changes in character and changes in conduct.

Paul mentioned the goal of our salvation in 1:22. He mentioned it again in 1:28. Then we have the whole story in 3:1-4.

This was Paul's ministry; this was Archippus' ministry. It is awesome in its dimensions. No one would ever enter into the ministry, realizing what it is, if he had to go in his own strength. It is no wonder that Archippus needed Paul's encouragement, as well as the encouragement of the whole Colossian church.

The Gospel is a message and a ministry which takes us out of Satanic bondage and sin, and sets us on the path to heaven and to glorification when we will be like Christ.

I mentioned to begin with today that I had two objectives:

- 1) To make this a resurrection message.
- 2) To finish the study of Colossians.

I hope you can see that I have done the first; now let me do the second.

Those of us who have been considering the last 12 verses of this epistle have seen that Paul mentioned 10 people, probably all men (although there are some who feel that Nymphas might better be Nympha--if so, it would be a woman). Paul had some very interesting things to say about most of them. But now in concluding this epistle I want to point out from these 12 verses in general, and the last 4 verses in particular:

## II. THE MINISTRY.

How can we ever expect to accomplish such a work? What is involved in this ministry?

Let me again mention four things.

From verse 17 upon which we have been focusing our attention, let me say, first of all, that it will mean:

A. Work (Col. 4:7-18).

It will mean work, hard work, lots of work, by lots of people. Thank God we are not in this work alone. There are many who are fellow workers. And it is important for us to see that the very heart of our work is preaching and teaching the Word of God. God works through His Word, and in no other way. The preaching must be true to the Word, and the preachers must be men who walk with God, and who trust in God.

B. Prayer (Col. 4:12, 13).

How thankful we can be for people like Epaphras. It has well been said that the church moves ahead on its knees. By prayer we recognize our dependence upon God. By prayer we seek the glory of God. By prayer we worship God for all that He is, and for all that He is continually doing in our lives.

C. Reading the Word (Col. 4:16).

When Paul wrote this epistle, the Word of God had not yet been completed. Neither did everyone have his own copy of that which had been written. And so, much emphasis was placed upon the public reading of the Word of God. It is probably too bad that we have gotten away from this.

However, there needs to be family reading, and each one needs his own private reading of the Word of God. When people are reading the Word, they are going to be changed, and they are not going to want anything else when they come to church but to have the Word of God explained to them. The people who look for churches where they can be entertained, are people who are either not reading the Word, or they are not paying much attention to what they are reading.

This ministry includes one more thing which Paul mentioned:

D. Suffering (Col. 4:18).

Why would Paul say, "Remember my bonds"? He probably had several reasons.

He wanted them to pray for him.

But he also wanted them to know that the ministry is not going to be easy. It is always going to mean suffering. It does not mean the same kind of suffering for everyone, but there is always suffering. Sometimes it means the loss of friends. Sometimes, false accusations which leave a blight on a person's character. Sometimes, as in the case of the Apostle Paul, it means imprisonment. Sometimes, as also in his case, it means death.

The suffering can be of other kinds, too. It can mean the heartache of seeing people turn away from the Lord. It can mean the burden of unanswered prayer. It can mean the trial of learning that God's ways are not like our ways. Sometimes it means physical trials, limitations, sickness.

Concl: But we can also be thankful that Paul said along with "remember my bonds"---"Grace be with you. Amen." God's grace is sufficient for all that we will need to minister faithfully, and to minister effectively.

The Lord does not leave us alone. He really is a living, glorified, triumphant Savior. And we can rejoice that He is the same today. As He was faithful to Paul, to his fellow workers, and to the Colossian church, He will be the same today. Let us be faithful in proclaiming the true Gospel, and pressing on toward the goal of our salvation when we will be made like our dear Savior and Lord.