

20 Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

21 ¶ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.

22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

23 ¶ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

hold: There were different brethren with Paul at different times during his Roman imprisonment. These brethren are mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. However, only here does he mention the result of his evangelistic work among the royal family of

Nero. The godly influence, reputation and boldness of Paul reached even unto Caesar's household through the preaching of the gospel. We must never underestimate the power of the gospel to change the lives of men (Rm 1:16).

Paul's Letter To The Colossians

Author

The Spirit-inspired letter of Colossians was written to the churches in the cities of Colosse and Laodicea (4:16) by the apostle Paul (See "Author" in the introduction to Rm).

Date

This was one of the four letters that Paul wrote during his first Roman imprisonment. He was imprisoned in Rome for about two years somewhere between A.D. 61-63. During this first Roman imprisonment, he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. He may have written this letter before the letter to the Ephesians because the letter to the Ephesians seems to expand on the thoughts that he presents in this letter.

Theme

The theme of this letter is taken from 1:16-18. The key verse would be 1:18. *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He might have the preeminence."* Paul focuses on the present exaltation of Christ. It is in Christ that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells. Therefore, He is over all things since all things were created by Him (1:16).

Purpose

The Colossian church, as well as all other churches in western Asia Minor, were located in a religious culture that was greatly influenced by Far East mysticism. A mixture of eastern mysticism with Judaism produced a Judaeo-gnosticism that had permeated the synagogues when the church was first established in the region. Jewish converts seemed to have brought some of their world views into the church, and thus, were attacking the nature of who Jesus is in reference to His being and authority as one with the Godhead.

The heresy of Gnosticism is not dealt with directly in the letter. From what Paul says in this letter, there was the prevalent belief that Jesus was at least above the level of man. It was believed that He was superior to man, but not great enough to qualify Him to be the sacrificial offering of the incarnate God on behalf of humanity. He was superhuman. However, He was not deity as God.

In conjunction with the preceding false concepts that seemed to permeate the world view of some of the Colossians, a system of legalistic religiosity came into the church as a substitute for salvation by God's grace (See comments Gl 1:6-9). This system of religion was common in the religious institutions of the culture among both the Jews and the Gentiles. Those of this system of religion taught that through legal actions of religious obedience one could place demands on God in order to merit salvation (See comments in the introduction to Gl).

Epaphras, who was one of the evangelists of the region, was experiencing the invasion of Judaeo-gnosticism among the Colossian disciples. The influence of this teaching was possibly affecting the church in the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13,16). Epaphras thus traveled to Rome where he explained the situation to Paul. Realizing that the very foundation of the church was under attack by a teaching that corrupted the nature of who Jesus Christ was, the Holy Spirit moves Paul to write this letter to the churches in the region of Colosse. The letter was directed primarily to

the Colossian church, though it was to be read in the churches of Laodicea (4:16) and Hierapolis (4:13), which were not far away.

Paul's purpose for writing, therefore, was to (1) exalt the preeminence of Jesus over all things (1:15-23), (2) to explain his apostolic work of preaching the truth of the gospel in a world of false religion (2:6 - 3:4), and (3) to exhort the Colossian disciples to maintain Christian principles in their conduct of living (3:5 - 4:6).

Historical Background

Colosse was a city of Phrygia in the western part of Asia Minor. The cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea were nearby (2:1; 4:13,16). The city of Colosse was located on the Lycus River and was about 160 kilometers (100 miles) east of the city of Ephesus. Colosse was a commercial city which traded in textiles, wool and a precious dye that was unique with the area. It was also a religious center, being the location of the throne of the goddess Cybele. Stoic and Epicurean philosophies with Egyptian religions abounded in the area. Because it was on a trade route between Rome and the Far East, the teaching of oriental religions, with their mysticism, infiltrated the area and flourished at the time the letter was written.

In the second century before Christ, Antiochus III resettled about two thousand Jewish families in the area of Colosse. These Jews were brought from the Mesopotamian area where Judaism had been influenced by religious beliefs of the Far East. When these Jews were resettled in Asia Minor, they brought with them a Judaism that was influenced by the mystic beliefs of the religions of the region of Mesopotamia and religions further east. The combination of these religious beliefs later led to the development of systematic Gnosticism in Asia Minor in the second century. At the time Paul writes the prison epistles (Ep, Cl, Ph, Pl), the beginnings of this philosophy had already been initiated in the minds of the religious people throughout the region. The principal beliefs of the heresy were already infiltrating the church. Therefore, in this letter to the Colossian brethren, as well as, the other prison letters and the letters to Timothy and the Corinthians, Paul mentions those religious philosophies that denied the eternal being of the Son of God and His present existence as God over all.

The churches in Colosse, Hierapolis and Laodicea were probably started by Epaphras (1:7; 4:12,13), though Paul possibly visited Hierapolis and Laodicea during the almost three years he worked with the Ephesian church (At 19:10). The church met in at least two houses in Colosse (Compare Pl 2 with Cl 4:9 and 4:15). The homes of members were the customary meeting place of all the disciples at this time in the growth of the early church. We must assume that the church that is addressed in all the cities of the New Testament, therefore, was meeting in several different homes of the members because there were no church buildings.

The church in Colosse probably consisted mainly of Gentile converts, though there were many Jews in the region, and consequently, in the church. Because there is little direct reference to the Old Testament by direct quotation, it is believed that the church was composed primarily of Gentiles. However, in the letter there is a strong reference to Judaism which was a system of religion of the Jews that they had constructed after their own traditions (Mk 7:1-9; see comments Gl 1:13,14). It was this system of religion, in conjunction with the religious influences that the Gentiles brought into the church, that Paul attacks in this letter. He begins first by reaffirming the nature of the being, existence and authority of Jesus. Since Jesus is who He said He was, such should motivate Christian behavior. After affirming the nature of the present existence of Jesus, Paul thus moves into the Christlike behavior of those who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus over all things.

Chapter 1

1 ¶ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the

will of God, and Timothy *our* brother,

2 to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ

Chapter 1

GREETINGS

1 This was a common manner of addressing the churches. Paul addresses this church from the authority of his Christ-sent apostleship. He was a Christ-sent apostle because he was personally called and commissioned by God (See Ep 1:1; Gl 1:11,12). Therefore, it is by the authority of his apostleship that he writes this letter. If we would call ourselves after Christ, therefore,

we must accept what Paul is teaching by the Holy Spirit in this letter. One cannot claim to be a Christian, and at the same time, affirm that the man Paul is here giving only his personal opinions or theology concerning these matters. Paul does not write from opinion or personal thought. He writes by the direct revelation from God and inscribes by the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit those things God wants the disciples to know (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21). **Timothy:** Timothy is with Paul in Rome at the time Paul writes this letter. He is the

who are at Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 ¶ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, **4** since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love *that you have* for all the saints; **5** for the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the

truth of the gospel,

6 that has come to you. Even in all the world *this gospel* is bringing forth fruit, just as *it does* also in you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.

7 You learned *it* from Epaphras our dear fellow bondservant, who is for you a faithful servant of Christ,

young evangelist who is now seasoned with experience and is with his father in the faith who is in a trying hour (See "Author" in the introduction to 1 Tm). **2 Faithful brethren:** Paul is not using this terminology in reference to those who had some type of perfect attendance to church assemblies or accredited amounts of contributions and good works. His emphasis is on those who are faithful in their beliefs to the very foundation upon which Christians remain true to their calling. They were faithful in believing that Jesus was the incarnate Deity who offered Himself as a ransom for humanity (Mk 10:45). These were those who had responded to their belief in the revealed grace of God by obedience to the gospel, and thus, were washed of their sins (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6). They were thus saints of God because they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb (See comments At 22:16; 1 Co 1:1; Ep 1:1). **Grace ... peace:** This is Paul's common greeting to the churches (See Gl 1:3). Grace is the foundation upon which our salvation rests. Peace with God is the result of grace, and thus, peace within results from knowing that God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16).

THANKSGIVING FOR THE COLOSSIANS

3 We give thanks: Both Paul and Timothy were sincerely thankful for the faithfulness of the Colossian church (1 Co 1:4; Ep 1:16; Ph 1:3). Their thankfulness was manifested in their continual prayers for the Colossians. **4,5 We heard of your faith:** Epaphras had come to Rome and reported to Paul and Timothy the loving nature of the Colossian brethren who maintained their faith (vss 7,8; see 2 Th 1:3). **Love ... for all the saints:** No man can claim to have faith in Jesus without loving also the body of Christ (Mt 5:43-48; compare 1 Jn 3:14-24). All Christians must love the brotherhood of Christians (1 Th 4:9,10; 1 Pt 2:17; see comments Jn 13:34,35). It is by such love that brethren are identified as members of the body of Christ. **Hope ... in heaven:** The reason they had faith in God and brotherly love was because of their hope of eternal dwelling in the presence of God (See Hb 6:18,19; 1 Pt 1:4). Their common hope brought them together into a brotherhood of all those who had the same hope of eternal life (See comments Ep 4:4-6). **The truth of the gospel:** The Colossian disciples had not personally witnessed the death and resurrection of Jesus (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). The truth of the event of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope was reported to them by the word of evangelists who had gone into all the world to preach the good news (See Mk 16:15). The Colossians believed the report of the gospel event and accepted it as true (See comments Gl 2:5). **6 That has come to you:** The truth about which Paul refers is the

good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that was reported throughout the Roman Empire (1 Co 15:1-4). He is not talking about a body of religious regulations concerning which they must legally be obedient. He is talking about the report of the death of Jesus on the cross for the salvation of all those who would respond to God's grace through faith (See comments Ep 2:4-10). **In all the world:** This phrase refers to the Roman world (See comments Lk 2:1). By the time Paul wrote this letter in A.D. 62, the report of the death and resurrection of Jesus had gone forth into all the Roman Empire (See vs 23; Rm 1:8). This accomplishment of evangelism could not have been carried out exclusively by the apostles. Jesus had instructed them to teach those they baptized all things that He had commanded them (Mt 28:20). Jesus had instructed them to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mk 16:15). Those who were subsequently baptized were instructed to do the same. Therefore, the early Christians went forth under the command of Jesus to preach the gospel to every creature in all the world (At 8:4). The apostles remained in Jerusalem for several years after the initial establishment of the church on the day of Pentecost. They waited in Jerusalem in order to preach to those Jews who continued to come to Jerusalem for the annual Passover/Pentecost feasts. When Jews were converted as they were during the Pentecost of A.D. 30, they returned to their homes proclaiming the gospel of Jesus. This great commission continues today through the efforts of faithful men and women who have also assumed their Christian responsibility to preach the gospel to the world. **Bringing forth fruit:** In this context concerning fruit, reference is to the conversion of many throughout the known world and in the area of the Colossians. Many were obeying the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion in water for the remission of their sins (Rm 6:3-6; see comments 2 Th 1:7-9). **Since the day you heard:** When the Colossians were obedient to the gospel, they immediately began preaching the same gospel throughout their region (See comments 1 Th 1:6-8). They accepted the responsibility of evangelizing their area while the evangelists went on to other regions. Therefore, the grace of God not only motivates one to obey the gospel, but also to preach and teach the gospel to others. One's knowledge of the grace of God will not allow him to be idle in a society where people are lost in sin (See comments 1 Co 15:10). Those Christians who fail to reach out to their neighbors do not fully understand the motivating nature of the gospel of God's grace that was revealed on the cross (Ti 2:11). **7,8 You learned it from Epaphras:** It could have been that Paul originally established the church in Colosse by teaching faithful men who went forth from Ephesus. Epaphras followed in nurturing the new con-

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

9 ¶ For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,

10 so that you might walk worthy of the Lord to fully please *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge

of God,

11 strengthened with all power according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy,

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

13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has transferred *us* unto the kingdom of His dear Son,

verts by reaffirming the same good news that Paul had preached to them (See 2 Co 11:23; 1 Tm 4:6; Pl 23). Whatever the case, Paul either started the church directly or indirectly as a result of his ministry while in the city of Ephesus for two years teaching in the school of Tyrannas (At 19:9,10). **Faithful servant:** No greater commendation could be given to those who have dedicated their lives to the ministry of the flock of God (See 1 Co 4:1,2; 16:15,16; 2 Co 11:23). Those who have dedicated themselves to care for the flock of God must be commended for their love and concern for those the Lord purchased with His own blood (At 20:28). **Love in the Spirit:** Love is the fruit of the Spirit upon which all relational actions are based in the church (See comments Gl 5:22,23). Love is the bond that holds the community of God together as one body (3:12-17).

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

9 That you might be filled: Paul is not here praying that they be inspired in order to receive direct revelation from God through the Holy Spirit. Only the Christ-sent apostles were given this function in reference to the revelation of all truth to the church (See comments Jn 14:26; 16:13). The word of God was revealed to the church through holy men who were moved along by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21). All truth has since been delivered to the church (2 Pt 1:3; Jd 3; see comments Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). In this context, Paul is praying that they be filled with the word of God by allowing God's word to permeate their lives (3:16). They must have a disposition of spirit in order to allow the Spirit to mold their lives through their voluntary obedience to God. If they do such, then God will produce wisdom and understanding in their lives in spiritual matters (1 Co 1:5). In their religious society, the Gnostic teachers were claiming special insights and self-awareness in reference to their salvation (Compare 2:8,23; 1 Co 1:1-23). Their supposed greater spiritual experiences or insights made them arrogant, and their arrogance had evidently intimidated the Colossian disciples to the point of questioning their sense of salvation. Paul is here exhorting the Colossian brethren to trust in the message of those who had the gifts of wisdom and knowledge among them, for to some of them was "given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit ..." (1 Co 12:8). In contrast to those who exalted themselves according to human wisdom and knowledge, they must trust in the wisdom and knowledge that came through the miraculous gifts of wisdom and knowledge. They must listen, therefore, to their inspired prophets (See comments 1 Th 5:19,20). **10** The self-acclaimed

wisdom and knowledge of the false teachers led to pride, conceit and arrogance. In contrast to such humanly devised wisdom and knowledge, the true wisdom and knowledge that originates from God produces humility and meekness (See comments Ph 2:5-11). The truth of the wisdom and knowledge that comes from God is evidenced in the fact that it leads one closer to God (Ep 4:1; Ph 1:27; 2 Th 1:5; see comments Js 3:13-18). The error of the wisdom and knowledge that originates from man is evidenced in the fact that it leads one to be arrogant. **Being fruitful:** When one's focus is on Jesus for the source of wisdom and knowledge, then he will produce fruit from his labors to the glory of God (Hb 13:21; see Rm 2:6-11; 2 Co 5:10). He will not only produce spiritual fruit within himself, but his spiritual fruit of holiness will influence those with whom he has contact.

11,12 Strengthened with all power: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rm 10:17). Christians must be of a disposition that allows God to permeate their lives with His will (Compare Rm 1:16; Ep 3:16; Hb 4:12). "God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pt 5:5,6). God is the source of that power which is able to produce patience and longsuffering with joy (At 5:41; 2 Co 3:2; Ep 4:2; Hb 10:34). But He can produce such only in the life of one who has humbled himself under His control (1 Pt 5:6).

The Father who has made us to be partakers: "For grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ep 2:8; see Rm 5:1,2). Christians have been qualified for salvation on the basis of God's grace. They have been delivered from sin which they could not deliver themselves on the merit of either performance of law or good works (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). We give thanks to God, therefore, by living in obedience to His will (1 Co 15:10). Christian behavior is the result of gratitude to God for one's salvation (2 Co 4:15). **13 Who has delivered us:** "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age ..." (Ti 2:11,12). God has not subjectively delivered us from the power of darkness against our will. We have responded to the death of Jesus on the cross and to His redemption which we could not accomplish by the merit of our own religious performance of law and good works (See Rm 3:9,10,23). We have thus been resurrected with Jesus to walk in newness of life (Rm 6:3-6). Our response to God's grace has brought us into contact with the sacrificial blood of Jesus (Ep 1:7). We have thus been delivered out of the

14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

15 ¶ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible

and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

17 And He is before all things and by Him all things hold together.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church,

power of Satan's kingdom of darkness (Ep 6:12) and transferred unto the kingdom reign of Jesus. **Transferred us unto the kingdom:** During His ministry, Jesus said that when the will of the Father is done on earth in the hearts of the humble minded as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10), then the kingdom reign of the Father comes into one's life (Lk 17:20,21). Jesus is now King of kings and Lord of lords with all authority in heaven (Mt 28:18; 1 Tm 6:15; 1 Pt 3:22). When His will is done on earth in the hearts of men, then those who have submitted have been delivered unto His kingdom reign. The Father spiritually transfers the obedient from the domination of Satan to the kingship of Jesus. One is transferred from being a disobedient insurrectionist unto being an obedient servant wherein Jesus reigns in his heart. **14 In whom:** It is only when one comes into Christ that there is redemption by His sacrificial blood (Ep 1:7). Only in Christ is there forgiveness by the blood. Therefore, one must come into a relationship with Jesus in order to have both redemption and forgiveness (2:12; Rm 6:3). This does not make baptism a meritorious work that puts God in debt to forgive our sins. Baptism is a point of reference at which time God has poured forth His grace in the life of the repentant believer. His grace has been poured out by the application of the blood of Jesus on those who respond to the death of Jesus for our sins and resurrection for our hope. Baptism is the response action on the part of those who accept the free gift of grace. Without the conditional response, therefore, the gift cannot be accepted. Without the response there is no remission.

THE PREMINENCE OF CHRIST

Paul now leads the Colossians through one of the most profound portions of inspired Scripture concerning who Jesus was and is. Herein is his explanation of what he reminded the Corinthians. *"Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no more"* (2 Co 5:16). **15 The image of the invisible God:** Jesus is the true reflection or representation of the character and attributes of God (2 Co 4:4; Hb 1:3). Though the creation communicates the existence of God and the great power He must have for creating the universe (Rm 1:20), we can know the character of God only through a personal revelation of God. God's revelation of His behavior with Israel identified the loving mercy and justice of God with a rebellious nation that did not deserve His grace. However, His work as revealed in the Old Testament was still insufficient in fully identifying His character and nature. Therefore, through Jesus, God personally revealed Himself to all men. Those who can never get past the physical environment of this world in their search for God, will never come to a true knowledge of God unless they come to Jesus. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me"* (Jn 14:6). Jesus places Himself between God and

man. If anyone seeks to find God, he must find Him through Jesus (At 4:12; 1 Tm 2:5). Only through Jesus can one find the true and living God. Any religion that does not have Jesus as the center of reference, cannot and never will discover the one true God. **The first-born:** Paul is not here talking about existence, that is, that Jesus was created by God. The belief that Jesus was the creation of God is totally contrary to the entire context of what Paul is here revealing. Paul is magnifying the supremacy of Jesus over all things. Jesus is *"the Beginning of the creation of God"* (Rv 3:14). He is the beginning of all that has been created because of what is stated in the following verse. **16 For by Him all things were created:** All that exists finds its beginning in the Son of God (See comments Jn 1:1-3; Hb 1:2; 2:10). God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created all things through the specific work of the Son. Paul's conclusion is obvious. Since Jesus is Creator, then He is above creation. He is the firstborn with all rights above all that is created. He is not the first one that was created from which God created all things. He is the manifestation of the one God who is the Creator of all things.

In heaven ... on earth: Both the physical world and those of the spirit world were created by Jesus. *"All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"* (Jn 1:3). We find the origin of Satan in Jesus. It is not that Satan was created as he is in his present evil character. He was created as Gabriel, Michael and all angelic beings. However, he used his freedom of choice to rebel against God (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). He thus led himself into all wickedness in opposition to God. **For Him:** The purpose of all things is summed up in this one prepositional phrase. The answer as to why we exist and the world around us is discovered here. We have been created for Jesus. All that exists is in existence for the purpose for which Jesus created all things. Therefore, any religious belief that does not have Jesus as its central figure simply cannot be true. Theologies without Christ are the inventions of religiously oriented men who have been misguided in order to establish religions on the authority of their imaginations or their traditions. They cannot come to a knowledge of God unless they come to God through Jesus (Jn 14:6). **17 He is:** The Greek phrase here is emphatic. It stresses an undeniable truth that must be believed. Paul is stating a fundamental belief that must be accepted by all who would call themselves after Christ. **Before all things:** This same Greek word *pro* is translated "above" in James 5:12. It should be so translated here. Jesus is above all that is created because He is the originator of all that is. There is no such thing as dualism. God and matter have not coexisted throughout eternity. Good and evil have not always been. Satan is not an eternal equal and opposing power to God. Paul says the Gnostics are wrong. Jesus as God is above all things because all things have originated from Him (Jn 1:1-3; Hb 1:3). **Hold together:** Since Jesus is the creator of

who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He might have the preeminence.

19 ¶ For it pleased *the Father* that in Him should all the fullness dwell,

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

21 ¶ And you who were formerly alienated

and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and beyond reproach in His sight;

23 if you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was preached to every creature that is under heaven, of which I, Paul, was made a servant.

all things, then all things maintain their existence because of His power. He is "*upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Hb 1:3). Jesus is the foundation upon which all that exists continues to exist. **18 He is the head of the body:** No greater head could be found for the church than what Jesus is. This is why it is so presumptuous for any man on earth to claim to be the head of the church. Such presumptuous proclamations deny the sufficiency of the headship of the One who has control over all things. Jesus is not so impotent in His headship of all things as to need a head of the church on earth (See Ep 1:20-23). Jesus' headship of the church proclaims that He only is the One from whom authority must come. He is the only center of reference from whom the church is to receive direction and control (See Jn 12:48; Rm 12:5; 1 Co 10:16,17; 12:12,27; Ep 5:23).

The beginning: Jesus is not only the beginning of all things that have been created (Rv 3:14), He is the beginning of the church of those who have believed and accepted His lordship in their lives. **Firstborn from the dead:** Jesus was the first to be resurrected from the dead never to die again (Compare At 26:23; Rm 14:9; Rv 1:5). His resurrection as the firstborn from the dead is evidence that those who are in Him will also be resurrected never to die again. Therefore, Jesus is the firstborn of all His disciples. He is not the first born of the unbelieving world. The wicked shall be resurrected (Jn 5:28,29). However, they shall be resurrected to die again (Mt 10:28; 2 Th 1:7-9). **He might have the preeminence:** And so Paul gives the purpose for the preceding statements. Any theology that displaces Jesus from His present supreme position in reference to the church and creation is an erroneous theology. Any theology that is established that would endanger the preeminence of Jesus must be rejected as an attack against Jesus. What we believe concerning the present authority and position of Jesus is important. Our beliefs affect our values. And values affect behavior. Therefore, our beliefs concerning who Jesus is and the authority He now has will affect our behavior. Those who accept Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords will bring their lives into conformity with the King's will. They will allow Jesus to be the Lord of their lives (2 Co 5:16; Gl 2:20).

THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION

19 All the fullness dwell: The Gnostic affirmed that the *pleroma* ("fullness") was the realm wherein God existed completely separate from the material world. Gnostics of the latter part of the first century who began to infiltrate the church affirmed that since Jesus was incarnate into the physical world, He could not have been from the realm of God's existence. He could not have

been from such since Jesus partook of the material world by His incarnation. But Paul counters this erroneous theology. "*For in Him [Christ] all the fullness [pleroma] of Deity dwells in bodily form*" (2:9; Jn 1:14-16). Though Jesus emptied Himself in His incarnation (Ph 2:5-7), He did not give up deity. He was the manifestation of God on earth, though confined to the body of a man. Though we do not understand all that God was in incarnation, this does not mean that Jesus was not God in the flesh. Knowing this, however, does not help us to fully comprehend all that took place in the incarnation. It is difficult to use the words of our dictionary in order to define something that took place in the transition of God from heaven to earth. **20 To reconcile all things to Himself:** For this purpose "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (Jn 1:14). One can approach God only through Jesus who is the incarnate Word (Jn 14:6). Through the sacrificial blood of Jesus (Rm 3:25; 5:9; 1 Co 10:16; 11:27), we have been restored or reconciled again to God as we were before the fall of man through Adam (Rm 5:1,10,11; 11:15; Ep 2:14,17; 2 Co 5:18,19). **Peace through the blood:** Sin wrecked the world and all that is in it. However, through the sacrificial blood of Jesus, peace was produced between God and those who deserved destruction because of their sin (Ep 1:10). The sacrificial blood was the result of grace. Peace was the result of the sacrificial blood.

21 Alienated and enemies: Sin separated the Colossians from God (Is 59:1,2). It was sin that made them and us enemies of God (Rm 6:23; Ep 2:1). They were mentally warring against God by fulfilling the lusts of the flesh in worldly living (See comments Ep 2:1-3). Nevertheless, God poured out His grace (Rm 5:8). Through the grace of God, those who were once enemies of God by rebellion in sin are now reconciled through the cross of Christ. **22 In the body of His flesh:** It was the incarnate body of Jesus that suffered and died on the cross. He was not a phantom spirit or fable of religiously excited men. He was flesh and bones (Jn 1:1,14; Ph 2:6-8; 1 Jn 1:1,2). **To present you:** When we realize how far God had to come through incarnation in order to reconcile us again unto Himself, then we begin to understand what Paul is trying to tell us in this statement. We must not take lightly the incarnation of God in the flesh in order to go to the cross. He did such in order that sinful men be presented sanctified before God for eternal dwelling (1:28; Ep 5:27). **23 If you continue:** There is a condition stated here. There is no such thing as universal salvation for all men without any condition on the part of man. Those who have first obeyed the gospel must continue to respond in their lives to the grace of God by which they were saved at

24 ¶ Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is *still* lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

25 of which I was made a servant according to the stewardship of God that is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God,

26 the mystery that has been hidden from *past* ages and from generations, but now has been manifested to His saints.

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

28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ Jesus.

29 For this purpose I also labor, striving according to His working that powerfully works in me.

Chapter 2

1 ¶ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and *for* those at Laodicea and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,

2 that their hearts may be comforted, being

the time of their immersion into Christ (See 1 Co 15:1,2). If one is moved away from the hope of the gospel, then he will not be presented without blemish before God (See 2 Pt 2:20-22; 1 Jn 1:6-9). **Preached to every creature:** By the time this epistle was written, the gospel had been preached throughout the Roman Empire (See comments vs 6; Rm 8:22). These words were written about thirty years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. Therefore, the early Christians had carried out their responsibility of taking the gospel to their world in their generation (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; At 8:4). Such is a testimony to the fact that they believed the necessity that men obey the gospel in order to be saved (At 4:12).

THE MINISTRY OF PAUL

24 Paul was willing to continue in the sufferings of Christ in order to continue the building and edification of the church (Rm 8:17; 2 Co 1:5; 7:4; 12:15; Ph 2:17). In the same manner, and as members of the body, all disciples continue the sufferings of Jesus because the body of Christ continues to be persecuted by the world (See At 14:22; 2 Tm 2:11,12; see Ep 3:1,13). **25** Paul was chosen by God to minister to the churches, especially to the Gentile churches (Gl 1:1; Ep 3:2). The accomplishment of his ministry was in fulfillment of the purpose for which God called him (See At 20:22-24). **26 The mystery:** The mystery that God would reconcile all men into one body through the cross had been hidden from the minds of men since the creation of the world (See comments Ep 2:11-18; see 1 Co 2:7; 2 Pt 1:10-12). **27** God made known through the apostles the mystery of His salvation. It was preached by the inspired New Testament prophets. By Christ living in the hearts of the obedient, His salvation is manifested to the unbelieving world (Jn 13:34,35). The redeemed have Christ living in them because they have submitted to His kingship (Lk 17:20,21). By His living in us we have hope of the glory that will be revealed when Jesus comes again (Rm 8:18; 1 Jn 3:2). **28 Him we preach:** Christ and the cross were preached throughout the known world by the time Paul wrote this letter (Mk 16:15; At 20:20). The gospel had gone into the world in order that all men be warned of their condemnation outside Christ. The good news of Jesus' sacrificial death was preached to give hope to a world lost in sin. Thousands

responded to the preaching of the gospel (At 2:41; 6:7; 8:4). Those who responded to the call of the gospel were taught all things that were commanded by Jesus (Mt 28:19,20; 2 Tm 2:2). **Complete in Christ:** From the viewpoint of God, every Christian is cleansed of every sin by the continual cleansing of the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:9; compare Mt 5:48). Christians cannot live sinless lives. However, their sin is cleansed on the basis of their repentant heart (vss 22; compare Ep 5:27; Jd 24). It is for this reason that all who are in Christ will be presented without blemish before God. **29 Power fully works in me:** God works in the life of the one who is driven by the purposes of God. Paul gives God credit for what he does because it is for God that he works (1 Co 15:10; Gl 2:20; Ep 3:7; see Ph 2:12,13). Though Paul was in prison at the time he wrote these words, God was still working in him to carry out His work. Paul was one who never allowed his environment to determine his mental state of being. If he were in trying times, he continued to rejoice in the Lord (Ph 4:4). His mental and spiritual disposition was directed by his focus on God and not the things of this world (3:1-3).

Chapter 2

1 In the first few verses of this chapter Paul continues the thoughts of the end of chapter 1. **Have not seen my face:** It is possible that Paul had not visited Colosse. However, what he states here could refer to many in the church in Colosse who had been converted since the initial establishment of the church. Whatever the case, the church in Colosse was evidently established as a result of Paul's work in Asia Minor. The Colossian church was only an extension of many small efforts Paul had made in many places of the region several years before. Therefore, the work of the evangelist, as illustrated by Paul's work in Asia Minor, extends far beyond his personal presence. Evangelists should have a vision beyond their personal presence in order to instill within others visions of preaching the gospel beyond their local regions (2 Tm 2:2). Evangelists should concentrate on doing their work in order to extend themselves beyond their personal contact (See comments At 16:6,7; 19:8-10). **2 Knit together in love:** It is love that binds the Christian community together (3:14; Jn 13:34,35; Ep 3:17; 4:16; 5:2; 1 Th 4:9-12). Any other

knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God, *that is*, Christ,

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

4 ¶ And this I say so that no one should deceive you with persuasive words.

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

6 ¶ As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him,

7 rooted and built up in Him and established

in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

8 ¶ Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily *form*.

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

11 ¶ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

means to maintain unity in the church will only result in division. **All riches of the full assurance:** Paul's ministry to the churches was for the purpose of building them up to the point of understanding all things from the viewpoint of God (At 20:20,27). Their growth in the word of God would transform their thinking from viewing things from a worldly standpoint to understanding things according to the eternal purposes of God. By understanding the mystery of God in this way, they would gain full assurance in the fact that God was working all things together for good (Rm 8:28). **3** The Gnostics thought that they knew all the secret knowledge of things because of their inner awareness. However, the finality of all knowledge of what God desires we know that is beyond the physical world has been revealed in Christ (1:9,10,28; 3:16; 1 Co 1:24; 12:8).

4 Deceive you with persuasive words: Christians can be influenced by the smooth and fair speech of those who deny the nature of who Jesus is and His present headship over all things (2:8). Those who resort to such practices in the church have corrupted motives (Rm 16:18). Paul here pronounces a warning in order that the saints be cautious not to accept teachings that attack the nature of Christ (See comments Mt 24:23-25). **5 With you in the spirit:** Though Paul could not physically be with them in body, he was with them in mind (1 Th 2:17). He desired to be with them in order to personally witness their faithfulness (1 Pt 5:9). **6,7 Walk in Him:** They must let their manner of life be conducted after the nature of the gospel they received and obeyed (Ph 1:27; 1 Th 4:1). They should live the Christian life with the same zeal and eagerness with which they obeyed the gospel. They must not allow their love and enthusiasm to grow cold (See Rv 2:5). They must not become lukewarm (Rv 3:15,16). **Rooted and built up in Him:** The source of the disciples' existence is in Christ (See 1 Co 3:10; Ep 2:20,21; 1 Pt 2:5; compare At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). If one separates himself from Christ, he will spiritually die. If one separates himself from the body of Christ, he will spiritually die. No disciple can live as an island unto himself, and yet claim to be a part of the body of Christ (See comments Hb 10:24,25). The nature of the body of Christ is that it must nurture itself in order to remain healthy (Hb 3:13; 10:24,25; see comments Ep 4:11-16). **Abounding in it**

with thanksgiving: The Christian is zealous in the Lord because of his salvation that has come from the Lord (Rm 12:11). He works in thanksgiving for what God has done through His grace (See comments 1 Co 15:10). Therefore, the Christian works in thanksgiving of his salvation (See comments 2 Co 4:15).

8 Beware: The false teachings to which Paul is probably referring in this context were the Judaeo-gnostic concepts that were infiltrating the thinking of some in the church. If such concepts were mixed with the truth of the gospel, the Colossians would be cheated out of their salvation. Any addition to the gospel of God's grace would equal no gospel at all (See comments Gl 1:6-9). **Take you captive:** The Greek word here refers to being plundered. Any philosophy or tradition of man that contradicts the truth of God's word will lead to the spiritual destruction of those who would believe and practice such doctrines. It is important what one believes because our beliefs are the foundation upon which our behavior stands. In this case, the Christian world view is under attack by philosophies that bring into question the deity of Christ. **The elementary principles of the world:** The traditions about which Paul speaks are possibly motivated by the spiritualistic or mystical beliefs of those in the culture of Colosse whose religious beliefs have been affected by human reasoning. Such beliefs work contrary to Christ for they do not lead one to Christ. Any philosophy or tradition that does not lead one closer to God is a philosophy or tradition that works contrary to the work of God through Christ (See Gl 1:14; 4:3,9,10). **9** The character, essence, attributes and deity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were representatively manifested through Jesus (1:19; Jn 1:1,2,14; see Jn 10:30; 17:11,21-24). **10** Those who are in Christ are spiritually complete for God's eternal purpose to create beings with characters that are fit for eternal dwelling. They are complete because of the grace of God. Therefore, the saints of God are the completion of the work of God in the creation of all things. **Head of all:** Jesus is the center of reference from which all things are controlled in heaven and on earth (Ep 1:20-23; 1 Pt 3:22).

11 Circumcision not made with hands: Under the Old Testament law, the physical circumcision of the flesh was a sign of the covenant relationship Israel had with God (Dt 10:16). Paul metaphorically uses this cir-

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

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

14 wiping out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to

us. And *He* took it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 *And* having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public display of them, triumphing over them in it.

16 ¶ Therefore, let no one judge you in food or in drink, or in respect to a festival, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths,

17 which are a shadow of things to come. But the body *is* of Christ.

cumcision to portray the cutting off of the old man of sin by the sacrificial blood of Jesus. When one is immersed into Christ for the remission of sins, he comes into covenant relationship with Christ, and thus, contact with the sacrificial blood of the cross (See Rm 6:3-6; compare Ep 1:22; Rm 7:4; Ep 1:3; 1 Pt 2:24; 4:1). However, we must not be confused by Paul's metaphorical use of circumcision. Baptism is not a parallel to circumcision in the sense of being a New Testament type of Old Testament circumcision. In Israel's covenant with God, only males were circumcised. They were circumcised on the eighth day after birth because they were already in a covenant relationship with God as a nation. In baptism, one is immersed when he believes on the Lord (Mk 16:16). He is immersed in order to come into a covenant relationship with God. **12 *Buried with Him in immersion:*** In response to the grace of God that was manifested on the cross, repentant believers are immersed in water after crucifying the old man of sin (See comments Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:26,27). They are resurrected with Christ in order to walk in a new life. ***Faith in the working of God:*** Though baptism is an obedient response to the grace of God, salvation takes place in the spiritual realm wherein God washes one clean of sin by the sacrificial blood of Jesus (At 22:16). There is no magic in the waters of baptism. There is no meritorious atonement by one's performance of the action of immersion. However, it is at the point of baptism that God pronounces one cleansed of sin, and thus, is brought into a covenant relationship with God. Immersion into Christ is essential, therefore, because of what God promises He does at the point of immersion, not because one has indebted God through a meritorious work. **13 *Dead in your trespasses:*** Before one is baptized, he is dead because of his inability to keep law in order to save himself. He is thus dead in sin (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; see Rm 6:23; Ep 2:1-3). What man could not do in order to be justified before God, God has done at the point of one's immersion into Christ. ***Made alive together with Him:*** In immersion one must understand that it is God working, not man. One is immersed in order to allow God to work in his life because we cannot so work as to save ourselves. As God raised Jesus from physical death, the repentant believer is spiritually resurrected from the waters of baptism to be made alive in Christ (See comments Rm 3:4,5). **14 *Handwriting of ordinances:*** Paul takes his metaphor here from the certificate of debt. In the business of the day, one's debts were recorded in a ledger (certificate) of debt for the purpose of repayment. Paul's metaphorical use of this certificate brings to light the tremendous debt each one of us has in reference to God. Because of our sin,

we owe more than we can repay. Because of His grace, we will receive more than we can earn. ***Ordinances ... nailed to the cross:*** Law required that the debtor repay everything he owed. In reference to our sin, we could not repay the debt. We could never with good deeds meritoriously cancel the debt of one sin. Therefore, we were condemned under sin, having no escape through either meritorious obedience of law or meritorious deeds that would atone for sin. The problem is that we cannot keep law perfectly (Rm 3:9,10,23). We can never perform enough good deeds to atone for the sin that keeps accumulating to our account. It was by God's grace through the cross that God stepped in with the blood of Jesus. The cross cancelled our debt (See comments Mt 18:21-35). **15 *Having disarmed principalities and powers:*** The word "disarmed" is from a military word that had reference to the stripping off of one's armor after defeat in battle. Through the cross Jesus stripped Satan of his power to reign through sin and death over those who come to God's grace by their faith. What men could not do on their own through performance of law that brought sin and death, God reached forth with the gospel of grace to save those who responded to Him through obedient faith. Satan has thus been stripped of his power over the souls of men by the work of Jesus on the cross. What the world saw as the public humiliation of a Jew on a cross outside Jerusalem was actually the humiliation of Satan in the spiritual realm. Satan has no power over those who determine to walk in the light (See comments 1 Jn 1:6-9; Rv 20:1-6)

FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST

16 *Let no one judge you:* Since the Christian has been set free in Christ (Gl 5:1), he cannot be judged in reference to the observance or nonobservance of any feast day. It is within the individual liberty of each Christian to honor those days he so chooses (See comments Rm 14). There is no religious significance to any food (See Rm 14:2; 1 Tm 4:1-3). There is no religious significance to Jewish feast days or the sabbaths of the Old Testament law (Lk 23:4-44). There is no religious significance to a new moon (Compare Nm 10:10ff; Rm 14:5). This does not mean that one cannot honor a specific holiday with religious significance. What it does mean is that he cannot bind such on himself or others as legal requirements of law. **17 *Shadow of things to come:*** In reference to the ordinances that were a part of the Old Testament, all such things pointed to the substance that made the shadow. The substance was Christ. Therefore, since the Jews have come to Christ, it is not reasonable that they return to the observance of

18 Let no man disqualify you of your reward by delighting in *false* humility and the worship of angels, intruding into those things that he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom all the body, being nourished and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with the increase of God.

20 ¶ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the elementary principles of the world, why,

as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourselves to ordinances?

21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.”

22 All these concern things that perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men.

23 These things have indeed a show of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and neglect of the body, *but* not in any value in restraining the indulgence of the flesh.

the shadow as a means of salvation (See Hb 8:5; 10:1).

18 False humility and the worship of angels: There were evidently in the midst of the Colossians those who professed and practiced certain beliefs of their religiosity by the worship of angels. Instead of identifying with the person of Jesus and His mediatorship with God (1 Tm 2:5), these possibly substituted angels for Christ, and thus, worshiped angels. The Gnostics worshiped what they referred to as intermediary angels. By physical, self-torture called asceticism, they attempted to reach God through these intermediary beings. **Intruding into those things that he has not seen:** This one statement of Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit should forever warn those prognosticators who affirm that they have experienced the unseen world of spirits. These about whom Paul speaks in this context have claimed to have experiential knowledge about the spirit world beyond the physical world. What Paul affirms in this context is that such wishful thinkers have not so journeyed, and thus, have deceived themselves and those they have influenced. They are only promoting their presumptions as true experiences with the spirit world (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). Paul's argument is that the only way one can know of those things that are beyond the physical world is through the revelation of God. It is not within the mental ability of man to experientially confirm that which is beyond the physical world without the direct intervention of God who would reveal such. One's knowledge of the spiritual working of Satan is not through direct manifestations of Satan, but through the indirect effects of his work to deceive those who have given themselves over to him. **Vainly puffed up:** They were uselessly arrogant in their religious beliefs. Gnostics professed salvation by a self-awareness of knowledge that originated from within themselves. Such beliefs led to arrogance in reference to those who had not graduated to their supposed state of spiritual awareness. Their counterpart today would be those who have experienced so-called emotional and spiritual blessing from what they claim is the direct work of the Holy Spirit. Their supposed spiritual enlightenment is believed to be a higher level of spirituality over those who have not experienced such. But as the Gnostics, all such humanly devised religiosity puffs one up in his fleshly mind. His religious beliefs are based on his own emotional inventions or inward self-acknowledgment. Such is human originated religion, and thus, false in the eyes of God. God will allow one to believe in such, but in the end will condemn him for not loving the truth (See comments 2 Th 2:11,12). **19 Not holding fast to the head:** When one does not remain steadfast to the con-

trol of Jesus over his life, he will be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that fascinates the emotional and intellectual wanderings of the ignorant (See comments Ep 4:13-15). The false teachers about whom Paul speaks in this context were cutting themselves off from the Head of the body, that is, they were seeking religious knowledge from sources other than Jesus. Once this is done within a congregation, only division and destruction follow. **Grows:** When all members of the body maintain Jesus as the center of reference for their lives, the growth of the church will result. For this reason, it is essential that every member of the body seek God through Jesus for knowledge and spiritual growth (2 Pt 3:18; see Ep 4:18).

20 Died with Christ: The Colossians had crucified themselves with Christ, and subsequently, were buried with Him in the waters of baptism (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Since they had done such, they must separate themselves from the religious regulations of those teachers who would bind on them doctrines and practices that God had not bound (See At 15:10). They must not be brought into the bondage of Old Testament ceremonies, Jewish traditions or Judaeo-gnostic religiosity. They were not under law as the only means of justification, but under grace. Therefore, they were not subject to religious laws as a means of salvation. They were subject to Jesus and His will as a manifestation of salvation (See Jn 12:48; 2 Jn 9; Rv 22:18,19). They were to obey the law of Christ because of the grace of God. However, they were not to obey the law of Christ as a meritorious system whereby they would put God in debt (See “Purpose” in introduction to Gl). **21** In their former religious life, the Colossians had established all sorts of religious codes of behavior. However, Christians are to stay away from constructing a system of religion that would be after the nature of man-made religions (See comments Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). **22** The commandments of men will not profit in reference to one's justification before God. Such religious systems of justification will perish with those who follow them. Paul's point is clear. Religions that are developed after the religious thinking and traditions of men will perish. If such systems will perish, then the adherents to such will also perish. On the other hand, the eternity of the word of God assumes the eternity of those who submit to the word of God (See Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). **23 A show of wisdom in self-made religion:** As the scribes and Pharisees during the days of Jesus, these religious performers in Colosse manifested great religiosity in their ceremonies and pompous wisdom. They looked religious, but the foundation upon which their religious be-

Chapter 3

1 ¶ If you then were raised with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.
2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
3 For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
4 When Christ *who is* our life is revealed, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
5 ¶ Therefore, put to death your members that are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which

is idolatry.

6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.
7 In these you also once walked when you lived in them.
8 ¶ But now you also, put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth.
9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,
10 and have put on the new *man*, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him,

havior was constructed originated from within themselves (See comments Mt 23). **Neglect of the body:** Their ascetic practices gave the pretense of commitment and spirituality. But such religiosity was based on the desires of the worshiper to accredit himself religious before God on the basis of his own devised system of religion. Such was not according to the word of God, and thus, it was not worship in spirit and truth (See comments Jn 4:23,24). They imposed on themselves their own religious inventions, and by keeping such inventions, gave a pretense of worshipping God. In their ignorance of the word of God, they worshiped without knowing the true and living God (See comments At 17:23-35; 2 Th 2:10-12). They were as those of Judaism who constructed a useless worship (Mk 7:7,8). Paul's point is that one cannot worship God correctly when he is in ignorance of the will of God. Worship must be based on the will of the One who is worshiped. It is thus presumptuous of anyone to lead himself to believe that he can worship God according to his own religious inventions. If one creates a god in his mind that is totally contrary to the one true and living God, and then worships that god according to his own will, then he cannot assume that his worship will be well-pleasing to any god who is out there. Ignorant worship cannot be passed off as true worship of God. It is for this reason that the word of God must be preached to the world.

Chapter 3

HEAVENLY THINKING

1 Raised with Christ: When the repentant believer comes forth from the waters of baptism, the focus of his thinking is changed (See comments Rm 6). His mind is turned to concentrate on those things that are above and beyond this world. His ambition is not to live in order to use and consume the things of the world, but to use the world to sustain a life that is focused beyond the world. He not only thinks on things above this world, but he seeks them (See comments Mt 6:19-21,33). **At the right hand of God:** Jesus is now where He exercises authority and control over all things (Ps 68:18; Ep 1:20; Hb 1:3; 8:1). As sons of God, we are to seek His control in our lives in order that we be directed to a spiritually abundant life (Jn 10:10). **2,3** Since the world view of the repentant believer has changed, so has the focus of his attention. When he died with Christ, his will was replaced by the will of Jesus (Rm 6:17; 2 Co 5:7; 1

Jn 5:12). Of his own conversion, Paul wrote, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me ...*" (Gl 2:20). Since Christ lives in the Christian, then the Christian's mind is not on things of this world. **4** Jesus is now in glory, but will come again (Jn 14:6; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Th 1:8; 2 Tm 4:1,8). When He does come, Christians will partake of the glory that He now has (1 Co 15:43). It is the hope of all Christians to be where Jesus is (See comments Jn 14:6; see Jn 12:26; 1 Th 4:17). Christians seek to be delivered from this world by the One who has gone on before them into eternal glory.

5 Since Jesus is coming again, Paul exhorts that Christians should refrain from behaving after the manner of an unregenerate life (See comments Rm 6; 8:13; 12:2). As opposed to a life after the lust of the flesh, the Colossians must present their bodies as living sacrifices to God (Rm 12:1). Paul lists the following sins that manifest the nature of those who have given themselves over to the lust of the flesh: **Fornication** (Rm 1:29; 1 Co 5:1; 6:13; 2 Co 12:21), **uncleanness** (impurity), **passion** (lusts), **evil desire** (1 Tm 6:9; 2 Tm 2:22; 4:3; 1 Pt 1:14; 2 Pt 2:10), and **covetousness** (1 Tm 6:10; see comments Gl 5:19-21; Ep 5:3-5). **6 The wrath of God:** Those whose lives are identified by the nature and behavior of the preceding sins will reap the wrath of God (Rm 1:18; Ep 2:2; 5:6; 2 Th 1:7-9; Rv 22:15). **7 You also once walked:** The Colossians knew exactly what Paul was discussing because they once lived in a manner that was controlled by the lust of the flesh (Ep 2:1-3). The behavior of their lives was based on the things of this world. But they had since become slaves of righteousness (See comments Rm 6:17,18).

8 In this verse Paul turns to the abuses of the mouth that come forth from an evil heart. Anger leads to wrath, wrath to malice, malice to blasphemy and blasphemy to filthy language (See comments Ep 2:1-4; see 1 Co 6:11). Christians must put such abusive speech out of their lives (Ep 4:22; 1 Pt 2:1; see comments (Mt 12:34,35). **9 Do not lie:** In the Christian community, individuals are to deal with one another in a manner of great integrity. In the past before they became Christians, they may have rationalized dishonesty and lies to be right in human relationships. But such has no place among brethren in the church (Ep 4:25). **10 Put on:** Those behavioral practices of life that they put off must be replaced by positive actions of righteousness. Now that they are walking in newness of life, their behavior

11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircum-cision, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free. But Christ *is* all and in all.

12 ¶ Therefore, put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against

any, even as Christ forgave you, so also *should* you.

14 And above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfect unity.

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

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one

must characterize the One after whom they now call themselves (Ph 1:27). **The new man:** One is new because of the washing of sin by the blood of Jesus (See comments At 22:16; Rm 6:3-6; 2 Co 5:17). One is new because he has made a decision to maintain direction in his life that is guided by his knowledge of Christ. He is continually renewed by the knowledge of Christ in walking the Christian life. The renewing process is a continual growth in the knowledge of Jesus (See comments 2 Co 3:18; see 2 Co 4:16; 2 Pt 3:18). Our growth is pointed in the direction of the image of Jesus, and thus, we are continually becoming more like Jesus (2 Pt 1:3-8). **11 Christ is all and in all:** One identifying characteristic of those who are being conformed to the image of Christ is the fact that they begin to see humanity as God sees all men. God sees no race, social or economic classifications. In Christ one's racism is broken down. Racism is dissolved in the minds of those who grow to understand that we are one in Christ. Though sociological behavior between groups of people divide men in societies by cultural characteristics, such cannot divide disciples in the church (See At 10:34,35; Rm 10:12; 1 Co 12:13; Gl 3:26-29). Being in Christ does not mean that men lose their culture. All men are related with one another in society through their common cultural characteristics. However, when one comes into Christ, his culture is molded by God. He is transformed into the image of Christ, and thus, dwells as one man with all who are in Christ. In the Christian community, therefore, every member is molded to be able to dwell in eternity with those of other cultures. Fellowship in the church becomes the test as to whether one can dwell in heaven with those who have come from different cultural backgrounds.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

12 Elect of God: God has foreseen that in final judgment He will elect out of the world His children (1 Pt 1:21; 2:5,9). From our standpoint that is confined to time, we cannot see the action of His future election of the church out of the world. However, since God does know the future and what He will do, then Christians can be referred to in time as the elect of God. Therefore, since we are the ones who will be called into eternal glory, we must put on the nature of Christ with whom we will dwell in heaven. The nature that must characterize the elect is developed by loving God and one's neighbor (See comments Mt 22:37-40; Jn 13:34,35). Interpersonal relationships are based on loving one's neighbor. Love in action will thus produce the fruit of the Spirit in one's life (See comments Gl 5:14,22,23). **13 Forbearing one another:** "Let your forbearance be known to all men" (Ph 4:5; see Mk 11:25; Ep 4:2). In

order to forbear one another, one must have a forgiving spirit. All of us are individually different because of the different environments in which we grew up from childhood. We are different because of our religious backgrounds. When we come into the community of God, therefore, there will be individual personality characteristics that will often conflict with one another (See Ph 4:2,3). However, in a spirit of love such differences in personality are groomed to function in harmony with one another as every individual in the community of God is directed by love to be forbearing, gentle and forgiving of one another. In these verses Paul is explaining how the harmony of the community of God is to be carried out. If these things are practiced, every group of disciples will maintain unity though there will be diversity of personalities and abilities within the church. **Forgiving one another:** In conjunction with bearing with one another, Christians in the community of God must go one step further. They must have a forgiving spirit (See comments Mt 18:15-35; Js 2:13). God's forgiveness of our sins through His grace must motivate us to extend the same mercy and forgiveness to others. It is the nature of the Christian community to be forgiving. This is true because within this community are all those who have come to God's grace, pleading for His forgiveness. Therefore, as Christ has forgiven all within the church, those within the church must forgive one another (See Mt 5:23-26). **14 Put on love:** Love is the foundation upon which all interpersonal relationships are established (See comments 1 Co 13; Gl 5:14,22,23). This is the motivation from which all actions of reconciliation originate. This is the adhesive that keeps the community of God together at all times (1 Pt 4:8; see Pv 10:12; Js 5:20). **15 Let the peace of God rule:** God has called Christians into the peace of one community. Love must generate peace within the hearts of all members of the church (See Jn 14:27; 1 Co 7:15; Ph 4:7). The lack of peace within a church is the first sign that there is a lack of love among the members (See comments Gl 5:14,15; Js 4:1,2). **And be thankful:** The Colossians knew the turmoil that they had experienced in the world. Satan controls society in order to divide humanity through attitudes of hate, jealousy, envy and dishonesty. However, when one comes into the community of God, all these things are to be put away. Christians, therefore, should be sincerely thankful to God for providing a global community into which all men can come in order to escape the ravaging work of Satan in society. The church should strive to maintain a spiritual atmosphere of love and peace that will draw men unto Christ (See comments Jn 13:35). **16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you:** It is the word of Christ that must permeate one's life in the sense that it will direct the behavior of the individual.

another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving

thanks to God the Father through Him.

18 ¶ Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fitting in the Lord.

19 ¶ Husbands, love *your* wives and do not be harsh toward them.

Through the word of Christ, knowledge is revealed. By wisdom the word of Christ is used in a way that will apply such to the behavior of one's relationships with others (See comments Ep 5:18,19). Compare comments At 20:32; see Hb 4:12; 13:9. Spiritual growth comes as a result of members studying and applying the word of Christ to their lives. The church must "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). **Teaching and admonishing one another:** The result of the indwelling word of Christ is a sense of one's responsibility toward his brother. In this case, Paul states that teaching and admonishing through the method of singing is to be carried out in the Christian community. By use of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs each Christian must teach and admonish other members. Paul does not say how this is to be done, nor when it is to be done. Christians have freedom in these areas of what Paul has said must be done. Therefore, we must not limit our teaching and admonition of one another through song only to the assemblies of the church. The very nature of the loving and thankful heart of the Christian is portrayed through a spirit of singing with his voice throughout his daily living. Through the medium of words in song, teaching and admonition are expressed to one another as individuals or as groups of Christians. **Grace in your hearts:** As God extended grace to Christians for their salvation, the same is to be stimulated in the hearts of Christians toward one another. Therefore, through the medium of words in song Paul is in this context emphasizing the responsibility of Christians toward one another, as well as, their expressions of love and grace to the Lord. **17 All in the name of the Lord:** The totality of the Christian life is given as a living sacrifice (Rm 12:1,2). The Christian is a priest of God, and as a priest, he is on duty at all times throughout his life (1 Pt 2:5,9). Christ lives in the one who has given himself to Christ (Gl 2:20). It follows, therefore, that all that the Christian does in life is in his function as a representative of Christ on earth. There is no such thing as "church time" and "secular time" in the life of the Christian. The totality of the Christian's being as a son of God is to characterize the nature of Christ. In this sense, therefore, all that he does is within the direction and authority of Jesus.

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HOME

18 At this point in the Colossian letter Paul turns from relationships between disciples to relationships that are God-ordained in the home (See comments Ep 5:22 - 6:4). He does this in order to emphasize the fact that both church and society are based on good homes. If a church is composed of families that walk according to the directions of God's will, it will be a strong and vibrant church. Good leaders, therefore, will build churches by building good families. Good families build good societies. In building good churches, Paul begins in this context with the wives. **Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands:** The wife has the opportunity in

the family to manifest the spirit of Christianity by her example of submission (Ep 5:22; see comments 1 Pt 3:1). A wife who maintains a demeanor of submissive conduct in reference to her husband in the home has great influential power not only in the home, but also outside the home. Therefore, in order that the husband maintain the headship of the home, the wife must allow such to exist by her submissive behavior to her husband. Wives who are not submitting to their husbands bring chaos into the home, and thus, into the church and society. In order to maintain unity in the home, there must be a final authority to which all members of the family expect a final decision to be made in matters of disagreement. If there is no final authority, then the family digresses to a fractured relationship between a man and a woman in which children grow up without a sense of authority. Respect for authority in the church and in society must be taught in the home. Mothers train their children to respect authority when they present a model of the same in their relationship with their husbands in the home. Societies that are plagued with crime and anarchy can trace the spirit of such straight to dysfunctional homes where there were no father figures in the family or where young minds were not trained to respect authority by the example of submissive wives. Therefore, wives should not view their role and work of submission in the home simply from their own point of view. They must understand that they are molding the minds of their children for the rest of their lives. The doctrine of submissive wives, therefore, is not here written simply for the purpose of establishing a correct husband-wife relationship. It is written also for the greater purpose of building societies on the foundation of citizens who have been trained to honor authority and law. It is written in order to build churches on the foundation of members who honor the authority of Jesus who is the head of the church. The wife's submission to the husband, therefore, builds strong families, strong churches and strong nations. **19** Paul now turns in this context to the responsibility of husbands in their role in the family, the church and society. **Husbands, love your wives:** In order to guard against the abuse of authority in the home, Paul reminds the husbands that they are to love their wives. A husband who does not love his wife is a tyrant and an abusive dictator. He behaves without concern for the wife (Ep 5:25). This should explain the extent to which husbands are to love their wives. It is not an expression of love that is arbitrarily defined by the husband. The behavior of the love is defined by God. It is to be a love "just as Christ also loved the church." When this quality of love is expressed by the husband, then husbands will not abuse the wife's submission. He will take into great consideration her opinions and desires in all things. He will allow her to maintain her God-ordained duty to be the keeper of the home (Ti 2:5), and thus, assist her in those areas where she must carry out her responsibilities of keeping the home (See Ep 5:21). He will not treat his wife as property. He will not

20 ¶ Children, obey *your* parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

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

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

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

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he who does wrong will receive for the wrong what he has done. And there is no respect of persons.

demean her spirit or discourage her work. When a husband loves his wife he will seek to build her up by his loving consideration and encouragement. In doing this, the husband is setting an example for the building of families in the future through his own children. His children will deal with their wives as they have witnessed their father deal with his wife. If the husband is dysfunctional in his relationship with his wife, he will set a model for dysfunctional families in the homes with his children and grandchildren. He will be setting ungodly models for the leaders in society. Children who grow up in families wherein the husband manifests no love for the wife become leaders in society who have no compassion for the people. Tyrannical dictators learned their behavior in homes where there was neither a model of authority or a father figure who manifested love both toward wife and children. For this reason, in this context Paul urges husbands and wives to maintain their God-ordained function as godly examples to their children. **20 Children, obey your parents:** Respect for authority outside the home begins in the home. Paul has already explained the influence the mother has in the family by honoring the God-ordained authority in the home. He has defined the influence the father is to have by manifesting a spirit of love toward his wife and mother of his children. He has also explained that the authority of headship is not to be abused by husbands. Now here, children are admonished to be submissive to the authority of both the mother and the father. This assumes that the parents must exercise discipline in the lives of the children. Undisciplined children will become undisciplined adults who manifest no respect for authority in society. In the home, mothers cannot maintain their leadership and discipline of the children if the children are allowed to be insubmissive to the head of the family. Fathers cannot maintain their headship of the family if wives do not give the children an example of submission and allow the fathers to discipline the children. Fathers and mothers must always keep in mind that they are the teachers of society, for they produce the characters of those who make up society and lead in society. When any society is in chaos with crime and anarchy, it is the fault of the parents. Therefore, every encouragement must be given to empower the parents of society to train up good citizens for society. Wise are those leaders of any society who look beyond police and jails in their efforts to see and encourage families to produce better citizens. Every effort must be made to encourage families because it is upon the foundation of the family that every society is constructed. In reference to the responsibility of children in family relationships, it is God's order that they be in submission to parents. If no discipline is exercised in order to maintain this order, the family will be in chaos. The church will suffer, and society as a whole, will pay the price in crime and anarchy. **21** In order to

train children how to be obedient to their parents, Paul places the responsibility primarily on the shoulders of the fathers as the head of the family. **Do not provoke your children:** An unloving father will abuse his authority over the children. He will not generate a respectful response in the hearts of those in whom he has generated fear and terror. Fathers who behave as tyrants toward their children cause resentment in the minds of the children (Ep 6:4). Solomon wrote, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Pv 22:6). It is a wise father who motivates his children to respond with willing obedience by exercising loving authority. Such produces an environment where the child will willingly follow the example of the father who functions with a loving model with both his wife and his children. God wants parents to train their children by the example of their lives. By providing an environment where there is submission to authority, love and respect for all members of the family, children can grow up in order to manifest the same character in the church and in society. Husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, therefore, must see their Christian work in reference to their responsibility to build the church and society in general, by their God-directed conduct in the home.

CHRISTIAN BONDSERVANTS

22 See comments Ep 6:5-9. Though in this context Paul deals specifically with slave-master relationships that were the common work relationships of the Roman Empire, the principles that he discusses here should also be applied to employee-employer relationships in the free-market capitalistic societies of the modern world. In such societies, an employee is not under bondage as a slave. He can quit the job whenever he so desires. However, he is to treat his employer with no less respect and servitude as Paul here enjoins on bondservants to respect their masters. In fact, one would conclude that an employee in today's economic structure should treat his employer with even greater servitude in view of the fact that he has freedom to quit the job. **Bondservants:** Slaves should obey their masters with a sincere heart. If they give grudging service, such will bring harshness upon them by their masters. Their service should be motivated out of a heart that fears God. **23 Do it heartily:** Such should be the attitude of all those who serve either masters or employers (Ec 9:10). It is the goal of the employee to make his employer successful. If he does not, then he will be out of a job. Christians should serve with diligence in everything they do (Rm 12:11). Paul's point is that Christianity changes the nature of our service to others. Those employees who are in the world may give grudging service to their employers. But not so with Christians. Their attitude toward their masters and employers should be

Chapter 4

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

2 ¶ Continue in prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.

3 Also *continue* praying for us so that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,

4 and that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

5 ¶ Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, making the most of every opportu-

nity.

6 Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

7 ¶ All my affairs, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will declare to you.

8 I have sent him to you for the same purpose, that you may know our circumstances and comfort your hearts,

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

based on their fear of God (See comments 1 Pt 2:18-25). **As to the Lord:** The service of the Christian is given to others as if he would be working for the Lord, and not a master or employer. When the Christian is working for his living, therefore, he is working on behalf of the Lord. **24 You serve the Lord Christ:** When one becomes a Christian, his attitude changes concerning his work in making a living. As a Christian he goes to work for the Lord. By working to earn a living to support his own necessities (At 20:34), he earns in order to help the poor (At 20:35) and to send forth the gospel (Rm 10:15; Ph 4:17). **25** Those bondservants and employees that do wrong to their masters and employers will reap that which they sow. Both bondservants and masters, employees and employers should work in view of the fact that all men will stand in judgment before God (2 Co 5:10). As Christians, we must remember that all our service in this world to others is in view of the fact that God served our sin problem through Jesus.

Chapter 4

1 Masters: In this concluding admonition in reference to the preceding thoughts, Paul exhorts masters (employers) to deal fairly with their bondservants (employees) (See comments Ep 6:9). Christian masters must understand that they will also give account before their Master in heaven. Therefore, they should deal with their bondservants (employees) in view of the fact that they will stand in judgment for their own behavior (2 Co 5:10).

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

2-4 Prayer: Christians should be of an attitude at all times that is conducive to prayer (Lk 18:1; Rm 12:12; 1 Th 5:17). They are not only to continually pray, they must be fervent in prayer with thanksgiving (2:7). **That God would open to us a door:** Paul affirms that if we ask of God for open doors, He will open the doors of opportunity for us to preach and teach the gospel (See At 16:7; 1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12). Even while in prison, Paul is asking the Colossian brethren to pray for him that he preach the gospel. Paul did this very thing, for it seems that he even taught and baptized some of Caesar's household (Ph 4:22). **Mystery of Christ:** This is God's scheme of grace that was revealed on the cross

for the salvation of all men (Ep 3:3,4; 6:19). **As I ought to speak:** Every Christian ought to open their mouths for Jesus. It is the obligation of those who have been washed with the blood of the Lamb to proclaim to all an answer for their problem of sin and death. The fact that one has been saved out of his spiritual death in sin by the grace of God obligates him to proclaim the mystery of Christ to others. With the knowledge of the grace of God comes the responsibility of sharing God's grace.

5 Walk in wisdom: Christians should conduct themselves wisely before those who are still in the world (Ep 5:15,16). They should so conduct themselves in a Christlike manner because their life-style communicates the effect the gospel has had on their behavior (Compare Rm 12:1,2; Gl 2:20; Ph 1:27). Therefore, the Christian should behave in order to stimulate questions concerning his hope (1 Pt 3:15). **Making the best of the time:** Christians should take every opportunity to preach and teach the gospel (2 Tm 4:2). It should be the desire of every disciple to be able to stand before God and say that he or she did their best in manifesting their appreciation for His grace (2 Co 4:15). **6 Seasoned with salt:** That which is seasoned with salt is appealing to the taste. The speech that comes forth from the Christian's mouth should be of such a nature that it is appealing to those who hear. Gentle speech that comes forth from a meek heart draws people to one's demeanor. Harsh speech repels people. Christians should develop a manner of speech that is pleasant and inoffensive to all with whom they come into contact (See Mk 9:50; see comments Js 3:1-12).

FINAL GREETINGS

7-9 Tychicus: Tychicus is being sent to the Colossian disciples as a special messenger from Paul to inform them of his state of being (At 20:4ff; 2 Tm 4:12; Ti 3:12). He is carrying with him this letter to the Colossians and Laodiceans. **Onesimus:** Onesimus was a runaway slave from the household of Philemon (See introduction to Pl). Paul is sending him back to Philemon in the company of Tychicus. By the time this letter was written, Onesimus had been converted, and now, he is a brother of Philemon in Christ. Under Roman law, however, he must return to his master. Since Onesimus is returning with Tychicus to Colosse, it is probable that Philemon lived in the city of Colosse (Pl

10 ¶ Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him. If he comes to you, receive him.)

11 And Jesus who is called Justus, *also greets you*. These are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision. They have been a comfort to me.

12 ¶ Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, salutes you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers so that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and *for those who are* in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis.

14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas, greet you.

15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nympha and the church that *is* in her house.

16 ¶ And when this letter is read among you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *letter* from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the

1,2). **10 Aristarchus:** Aristarchus was a faithful companion of Paul and accompanied him on the ship to Rome when Paul was under arrest at the end of his ministry (At 19:29; 20:4; 27:2). Paul refers to him as a fellow prisoner. We do not know if he was also imprisoned with Paul in Palestine, and thus, went with Luke and Paul as a prisoner to Rome. At least at the time Paul writes this letter, Paul says he is also in prison with him. **Mark:** This is John Mark who had turned back on the first missionary journey into southern Galatia. He is now in Rome (At 12:12,25; 15:37-39; see introduction to Mk). At this time in Paul's life, Mark was useful to him for ministry (2 Tm 4:11). **11 Jesus:** This is a common Hebrew name and comes from the same root word for the names Joshua and Jeshua (At 7:45; Hb 4:8). The Latin form of the name is “Justus.” **Of the circumcision:** Aristarchus, Mark and Justus are fellow Jews of Paul. However, during this first imprisonment, Luke, who is a Gentile, is also with Paul (Compare 2 Tm 4:11). **12 Epaphras:** Epaphras was also from Colosse (1:7; 4:12; Pl 23). He may have traveled to Rome with Tychicus. **Laboring fervently:** This is the Greek word that is used to describe a woman in labor pains or a runner earnestly striving to finish a race under great determination. Our English word “agony” comes from this word. With such striving we should also offer our prayers to God (See Lk 22:44; Ph 4:9). **That you may stand perfect and complete:** Here is at least one thing that must be mentioned in our prayers for the brethren. We must pray that brethren base their faith and life on the word of God. We must pray that churches mature in the faith and maintain their assurance in the grace of God (See 2 Pt 3:18). **13 A great zeal for you:** This should be the behavior of faithful evangelists in their relationship with the sheep of God. They should zealously labor on behalf of the church in order to do the desires of brethren who support and send them forth. In this statement Paul reassures these three churches that Epaphras has been a zealous worker on behalf of the disciples in Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, who possibly joined together in sending him to Rome. **14 Luke:** This is not just Luke, but Luke the beloved physician who had accompanied Paul on many of his journeys. He went to Rome with Paul. He had written Paul's defense documents (See comments in introduction to Lk and At). And here, he is still faithfully by Paul's side. **Demas:** At this time Demas is with Paul in prison. How-

ever, it seems that things changed by the time Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy. “*Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed to Thessalonica*” (2 Tm 4:10; see Pl 24). **15 The church that is in his house:** There were no church buildings in Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colosse. Christians assembled in the homes of the members as they did throughout the world at the time this letter was written (See At 12:12; Rm 16:5; 1 Co 1:11; 16:19; Pl 2). It was a natural environment for the assembly of the disciples, and environment in which close relationships could be built. We must assume that the church in every city was larger than any single group of disciples who could meet in one home. And since there is no evidence of church buildings until the early part of the fourth century, we could assume that the church of Colosse was composed of several groups of disciples meeting in houses throughout the city. Thus a “local” church was not defined by the ability of all local members to meet together at the same place on Sunday. **16 See that it is read also:** The New Testament letters (epistles) were written at different times and for different situations that had arisen to motivate their writing. When the letters were written, they were circulated among the assemblies of the disciples. As years passed, these letters were gathered together into what is referred to as the canon of the New Testament. There are twenty-seven letters of the New Testament. The letters were not brought together by a council of men many years after the first century. When the letters were written, they were considered inspired documents, and thus, preserved and copied in order to be circulated among the assemblies as is indicated here. The writers were considered inspired, and thus, when the letters were written they were also considered inspired (See comments 2 Pt 3:15,16; see “History of the Bible” in *Encyclopedic Study Guide*). **The letter from Laodicea:** It is difficult to determine what letter is here referred to by Paul. Some students believe that this letter is a specific letter that was written to the disciples in Laodicea and was eventually lost. There are other Bible students who believe that Paul refers to the Ephesian letter which was a general letter in the sense that it was written to disciples in the area of western Asia Minor. This cannot be definitely confirmed though this was probably the case. **17 Take heed to the ministry:** Paul here exhorts this evangelist to complete the work of an evangelist to which he

ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.”

18 ¶ I, Paul, write this greeting by my own

hand. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

had committed himself to do (1 Tm 4:6). He was to do the work of evangelism (2 Tm 4:5). Archippus may have become discouraged, and thus, needed this Spirit-inspired admonition to get on with the work that he set out

to do. **18** Paul concludes by authenticating his personal writing of this letter. He also concludes by asking for their prayers since he is in prison on behalf of the gospel and is facing possible death.

Paul's Letter Of 1 Thessalonians

Author

The author of this epistle to the church in Thessalonica is the apostle Paul (Compare 2 Th 3:17). This letter, as well as 2 Thessalonians, was also from Silas and Timothy who had been with Paul when the church was first established (See "Author" in introduction to Rm and 1 Tm).

Date

Paul, Silas and Timothy established the church in Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (At 17:1-9). After the establishment of the church, he left Thessalonica, went to Berea (At 17:10,11), and then on to Athens and Corinth (At 18:1). He left Silas and Timothy in Berea. They stayed briefly, and then came on to Paul in Athens (At 17:14). After leaving the Thessalonians as new converts in a hostile environment, Paul was anxious concerning their faith. He made the decision to be left in Athens alone. He sent Timothy back to Thessalonica and to other churches (1 Th 3:1,2). Paul eventually left Athens and went on to Corinth. It was while he was in Corinth when Timothy returned from Thessalonica with good news concerning the faithfulness of the Thessalonians (At 18:5). Therefore, sometime during the first part of his eighteen month stay in Corinth, he wrote this letter to the young church in Thessalonica between A.D. 50 to 52 (1 Th 3:6,7).

Theme

The Thessalonians had a truly committed conversion to the gospel. Their example of discipleship was noticed throughout the region. The theme of the letter was the Thessalonians' new Christian life. They were an example of "discipleship in action" (See 1:6-8; 2:13,14; 3:6; 4:9,10). Paul was first concerned with their continued establishment in the midst of great afflictions (3:1-5). However, after Timothy returned with the report of their faithfulness, Paul stated, "*For now we live, if you stand firm in the Lord*" (3:8). Paul thus writes because they stood firm in their call to discipleship in Christ.

Purpose

Paul did not stay long in Thessalonica on his initial visit. He went on to Berea, and then to Athens and Corinth. The Thessalonians were converted out of a religious culture of idolatry which promoted fornication (1:9). Though the contrast between their culture and previous religious practices was great, they were truly converted, and thus, they manifested a great zeal for the Lord (1:6-8). Therefore, Paul wrote to commend them for their evangelistic zeal (1:2-10). He wrote to remind them of how he disciplined them to Christ while he was in Thessalonica and to express his prayerful concern for them (2:1 - 3:13). Since they were new converts, he also wrote to deal with some doctrinal problems concerning Christian conduct, and specifically teachings concerning saints who had died and the coming of Jesus at the end of time (4:1 - 5:11).

Historical Background

The city of Thessalonica was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian King Cassander. After rebuilding the city of Thessalonica in honor of his wife who was the half sister of Alexander the Great. The city later became a Roman political capital. In 42 B.C. it became a "free city", and thus, gained the right to have its own magistrates, who were called "politarchs" (The Greek word for "politarchs" is translated "rulers of the city" in At 17:6). The city was strategically located on the Egnatian highway that linked the eastern Roman Empire with the west. In Paul's day Thessalonica