

COLOSSIANS

The Lordship of Christ

The Bible Notebook
Series

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DEDICATION

To

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His Word is a lamp unto your feet, a light unto your path

FOREWORD

Years ago, I have been writing Bible studies on various books of the Bible. I began this work with a hand-written outline of the Book of Romans, and then I moved on to other books, Next, I added notes to those outlines, and finally when I obtained my first computer I wrote a commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians. After a period of time I expanded that study into a a commentary, which was published under the title, *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*. I then expanded earlier studies and wrote new ones.

At present, I have about 30 commentaries (THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK) and 150 sermon manuscripts (THE SERMON NOTEBOOK) that are being uploaded to SermonCity (www.sermoncity.com), a free web site and a ministry created by Dr. J. Mike Minnix for pastors, Bible teachers and others to use. The Bible Notebook targets what I perceive to be a gap between the critical commentary and the devotional commentary by providing a certain amount of critical help as well as illustrations and applications.

Since I can recall a time when I might approach a new commentary with a question as to the doctrinal position of the author. At times the author such an attempt to be “fair and balanced” that his position on various issues was not that apparent. For that reason, I like to stress that I hold a very high view of Scripture. To me the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. It is, in the words I often heard from the late R. G. Lee, the miracle book of unity in diversity, of simplicity in infinitely complexity. The Bible is the perfect Word of the perfect God. As I have often stated, if God could not have produced a perfect Book why do we call Him God; and if He could do it but would not, what kind of God is He?

I was sitting in a trustees meeting for LifeWay Christian Resources in Glorieta, NM in 2003 when then president, Dr. Jimmy Draper shared his Essential Baptist Beliefs with us. Dr. Draper stressed that there are many Baptist distinctives, but these are the essentials. He gave me permission to use his list:

1. Salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing (which demands security of believers).
2. Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
4. Autonomy of the local church
5. Religious Liberty
6. Trinitarian view of God
7. The Great Commission

There are many distinctives that may be grouped under this list of essentials. This study of the wonderful little epistle to the Colossians will reflect those essentials.

SPECIAL NOTE: In the fourth chapter (vs 16) of this epistle, Paul refers to a Laodicean epistle. It was during my work on this project that I began communicating with a most incredible Bible scholar and linguist from England, Dr. William R. Cooper, the man who “translated” both the 1388

Wycliffe New Testament and the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. He had written an amazing book, AFTER THE FLOOD, in which he translates ancient royal genealogies into modern English. These ancient genealogical lists follow two lines down from Japheth, son of Noah, to kings of various European nations through the Middle Ages. He also provides a genealogy Shem and Ham.

While working on the Wycliffe translation of the NT, Dr. Cooper came across an astounding insertion between Philippians and Colossians, for there is a personal letter, written in Latin, signed by Paul. There is a note that this is a non-canonical (personal) letter written by Paul to the church at Laodicea. Some modern scholars who are aware of this epistle dismiss it as a forgery, but Dr. Cooper, after much study, determined that the little epistle had been translated into Latin from Greek. Dr. Cooper sent me the following note:

Hi, Johnny! It occurred to me that in your studying the Laodicean letter, you did not have **the attempts of Lightfoot and Hutter at restoring the Greek text**. So I've attached them here just in case they help or you needed them.

God bless you, my brother!
Bill

Dr. Cooper sent me a photocopy of the handwritten “attempts” of Lightfoot and Hutter mentioned above. I already had, in unpublished scholarly research papers, his own translation from Latin to Greek to English. I will deal with this research in the final chapter and Appendices One, Two, and Three.

BACKGROUND

AUTHOR. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles was the human author of this powerful little epistle. He is identified in Acts as Saul of Tarsus. As he and Barnabas moved more into Roman territory on The First Missionary Journey, he began using his Roman name, Paul. The divine author is the Holy Spirit Who inspired Paul to write this epistle and illumines our hearts that we might understand it and apply it to our lives. Dr. Norman Geisler (in The Bible Knowledge Commentary - after this, BKC), provides us with some relevant information on the authorship of this epistle as well as the style and content:

“The Pauline authorship of Colossians is supported by **abundant evidence both in and out of the book**. Colossians has **three personal references to Paul in the first person** (1:1; 1:23; 4:18) and numerous references to Paul’s associates, such as Tychicus (4:7), Onesimus (4:9), Aristarchus (4:10), Mark (4:10), Justus (4:11), Epaphras (4:12), Luke (4:14), Demas (4:14), and Archippus (4:17).

“The style and content of Colossians is similar to Ephesians, written about the same time and probably alluded to as “the letter from Laodicea” (4:16). While 34 Greek

words are unique to Colossians, they are characteristic of the theme of the book and fit the thoughts of Paul. Words in this category include “visible” (1:16), “supremacy” (1:18), “fill up” (1:24), “philosophy” (2:8), and “Deity” (2:9)” [BKC].

Until recently, I might have agreed with Geisler on “the letter from Laodicea”. I have reservations for three reasons. First, This was probably one of Paul’s prison epistles, written from Rome. Second, Paul wrote, in 4:16, “see that you **also** read the letter from Laodicea,” which seems to distinguish it from the letter to Colossians. It is doubtful that Paul could have written Ephesians since he had never been to Colosse, and since the churches at Colosse and Laodicea were very close, it is probably that he had been to Laodicea it would have been a simple matter to have visited Colosse.

In the third place, there is the work by Dr. Bill Cooper, which I have already mentioned (above) in producing a modern English rendering of the Tyndale NT and the Wycliffe NT, as well as the letter in Latin, signed by someone named Paul, which is attached to some Wycliffe New Testaments. Dr. Cooper has determined (1) that the letter had been translated from Greek into Latin and he has done extensive research to try to determine whether or not the letter is a genuine Pauline non-canonical, personal epistle written to the church at Laodicea, and (2) the author of the letter stresses that it was not a part of the New Testament. I have read Cooper’s translation of the brief letter and if it is genuine it definitely is not the Epistle to the Ephesians. [See Dr. Cooper’s translation of the letter at the end of this study].

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING. Colossians was probably written during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. We may group Colossians along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon as Paul’s Prison Epistles. The date was possibly A. D. 61 or 62 (some say 60-61). Colossians and Philemon were both sent to Colosse (1:1; 4:17; Philemon 2). Colossians and Ephesians were both delivered by Tychicus (4:7; Eph. 6:21). Ephesians may well be a theological expansion of Colossians (a view which I prefer to any suggestion that Colossians is a Reader’s Digest version of Ephesians). We must remember that Paul did not decide on the contents of either epistle, the Holy Spirit did.

It should be pointed out here that there are scholars who reject both the Pauline authorship and the above date, and they make a determined, yet unconvincing case for their claims. In the first place, certain critics hold that the issues raised in Colossians demand a later date, possibly toward the end of the First Century. For one thing, they argue that Gnosticism did not become a serious issue for the church until late in the century, so Paul would not have known about it. My response to that is that, while Gnosticism may not have become a serious issue until after Paul’s death, there is no way we can prove that Paul was not aware of a budding philosophy which posed a threat to the church. Paul was no ordinary preacher/teacher. He had the gift of prophecy, which means that the Lord revealed answers to him, as we see in the Corinthian epistles. Furthermore, the divine Author would have known about the Gnostic heresy that was still in its early development as an invasive heresy.

Another objection is that the Christology, the study of Christ, in the Epistle to the Colossians is too

advanced, or too highly developed for Paul. That objection fails the tests to which I would subject it. In the first place, Paul's development of the doctrine of Christ is no more advanced here than in Philippians 2:9-11. In the second place, it is doubtful that any other single individual in the history of Christianity has ever had a deeper understanding of our Savior than the Apostle to the Gentiles - with the possible exception of John, the Beloved Disciple, who was inspired to write the Fourth Gospel, the three Epistles of John, and the Revelation.

There is another reason that I reject the late date for Colossians, as well as the arguments against Pauline authorship. As mentioned, earlier, Paul is the human author of this Scripture, but this epistle is not the product of the mind of Paul, it is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, and though Paul's awareness of a budding Gnosticism and his understanding of Christology may have been limited, there was no such limits placed upon the Holy Spirit. He understood Gnosticism and He understood the person, nature, and character of Christ.

Critics have for generations, attacked the authorship of various books of the New Testament. Some of those opposed to the Pauline authorship of certain books may well question the authorship in an attempt to reject the inerrancy of the Word of God. I see no legitimate or compelling reason for rejecting either the authorship or the date given above: Paul was the author and he wrote it during his first imprisonment in Rome, or around A. D. 61.

THE IMPORTANCE AND VALIDITY OF COLOSSIANS. The New Commentary on the Whole Bible: (New Testament Volume; QuickVerse Bible Library, Parsons Technology - identified in this volume as NCWB] points out that the genuineness of this epistle is attested by

“Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, who quotes “the firstborn of every creature” in reference to Christ, from 1:15; Theophilus of Antioch, To Autolychus, 2; Irenaeus, 3.14.1, who quotes expressly from this “Epistle to the Colossians” (4:14); Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 1, who quotes 1:9-11, 28; 2:2ff.; 2:8; 3:12, 14; 4:2, 3ff.; Tertullian, Prescription of Heretics, 7, who quotes 2:8 and in The Resurrection of the Body, 23, quotes 2:12, 20 and 3:1, 2; and Origen, Against Celsus, 5.8, who quotes 2:18, 19 [NCWB].

OCCASION. To understand the occasion, or purpose of Colossians we should be aware of certain circumstances that have a bearing on the message of this Epistle. No book in the Bible was written in a vacuum. Even from a cursory reading of the Scripture, it becomes obvious that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this epistle to the Colossians in order to correct some potentially serious theological errors that were making their way into the church. It is obvious from the Scripture that the church was being infiltrated by a heretical philosophical system (2:8), which combined certain elements of legalistic Judaism (2:11, 14, 16, 17), asceticism (2:20-23), and an incipient Gnosticism (2:3ff.). A quarter of a century later, John would be inspired to refute Gnosticism eloquently and dramatically in the prologue to the Gospel that bears his name and in the First Epistle of John. The gnostic here was the most dangerous element with which Paul deals in this epistle.

THE CITY OF COLOSSE. Colosse was a declining city in a tri-city area located in the

southwestern sector of present day Turkey. It was located on the Lycus River about 100 miles east of Ephesus. About twelve miles down the river stood Laodicea on the south bank and Hierapolis on the north. The Lycus Valley was known for its beauty and commerce, and even though chalky deposits from the Lycus River limited land use, there were many fertile valleys, and thus a lot of sheep and a good wool industry. Colosse, however, was not keeping pace with the other two cities. Lightfoot says Colosse was the most unimportant town to which Paul wrote a letter.

JEWISH POPULATION. There were probably as many as 50,000 Jews in this tri-city area at the time Paul wrote to the church. They posed a constant threat to the young church. Those who rejected Christ were constantly going to the authorities with tales about Christians. Some of the other Jews who accepted Christ tried to introduce ritualism and legalism to the church.

We have often heard the cry that Christians have persecuted Jews through the centuries, and no doubt there are incidents and periods to which one might point as proof. The late Dr. Leo Eddleman was a missionary to Israel at the beginning of the Second World War. His father had been pastor my home church and Dr. Eddleman and my pastor, Henning Andrews were close friends. There were many evenings when Dr. Eddleman and I shot baskets in the Gym at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student and he was president. Dr. Eddleman told me that when he went to Israel, he found an Arab who didn't know a word of English, and persuaded him to teach him Arabic. Within six months he was preaching to the Arabs in Arabic.

Dr. Eddleman was preaching to an Israeli audience one time when a tall young Jewish man stood up and challenged, "Why are you coming over here and telling us about Jesus when Christians have been guilty of the greatest atrocities against Jews?" When asked for an explanation, the young man said, "Hitler was a Christian. Stalin was baptized as a Christians!" About six million of the twenty-two million people killed by the Nazis were Jews. Millions were professing Christians. Brutal Communists regimes in the USSR, China, Cambodia, and Cuba slaughtered both Jews and Christians.

During the First Century, believers faced severe persecution at the hands of the Roman government, and some of it was encouraged by Jews who sought to destroy the church. Some early believers may well have harbored some animosity toward their Jewish neighbors, but the average believer today is totally ignorant of the contribution of early Jews the persecution of Christians, if they even know about the early persecution of believers by Rome.

THE CHURCH AT COLOSSE. Paul, who had never been to Colosse, may have encouraged fellow workers to establish the church there. During his three year ministry at Ephesus the whole province of Asia was a target for evangelism. Paul concentrated on the major population centers along the great Roman highways. From these great population centers the Gospel spread to the towns and villages. People came from towns, villages, and the country side to sell their produce in the major population centers, which were usually located on the major Roman highways or along the major harbors and the rivers that emptied into them. Epaphras was probably instrumental in founding the church to which Paul was writing (Acts 19:1ff).

A CHURCH WITH A PROBLEM. It was probably Epaphras who brought to Paul news of the situation in Colosse. If so, we must remember that Paul was in prison in Rome and Epaphras had a long and possibly costly trip. There may have been some risk involved in visiting Paul under the circumstances. There is little to be gained by speculations, but considering the issues raised in the epistle, Epaphras may well have gone to Rome to consult with Paul. At the same time, his purpose may simply have been to minister to him, or to take aid from the church. Why, however, should we limit him to one purpose?

SOME GOOD NEWS. There were many strong, faithful saints in Colosse. A prayer of thanksgiving is uttered for them, as it well should have been. Every church needs faithful members, but it is particularly important when there are problems. That faithful Christian who is willing to put the church ahead of his, or her, personal interests is a blessing the Lord's church, in any place and in any century.

SOME BAD NEWS. The church at Colosse was threatened with a very serious heresy. No name is given to the heresy that threatened the church but several characteristics of the heresy are revealed.

- 1) The heresy attacked both the total adequacy and the supremacy of Christ.
- 2) Paul stresses the role Jesus Christ played in creation.
- 3) Paul emphasized strongly both the HUMANITY and DEITY of Christ.
- 4) Astrological elements were associated with the heresy.
- 5) The heresy emphasized demonic spirits.
- 6) There were philosophical and ascetic elements.
- 7) Ritualism received more than a little attention.
- 8) There was a spiritual and intellectual snobbery associated with the problem.

GNOSTIC HERESY. The heresy at Colosse seems to have been the same incipient Gnosticism that posed such a threat to other churches in this area. Gnosticism denotes "knowledge" and describes a philosophy that was erected upon three assumptions: (1) that all material things are inherently evil, (2) only the spiritual is good and (3) that both the material and spiritual are eternal. These presuppositions led the Gnostics to deny that God created the universe because He is good and could not touch matter (which is evil) without becoming contaminated by it. One group spiritualized Christ and denied his humanity, while other branches developed other theories about Christ. They all prided themselves in their having discovered a highly intelligent way of life.

As mentioned above, John would deal with this heresy a quarter of a century later in the First Epistle of John. In my study of The Epistles of John, I included a note about Gnosticism:

The Gnostics got their name from the Greek word "*gnosis*" which means knowledge. To them the key to salvation was knowledge. Primary tenets of their faith are listed below:

- 1) They separated the Father from the Son.

- 2) They denied the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- 3) They held a dualistic view of the world.
- 4) They insisted that salvation came from knowledge – learning a certain set of theories about the creation and about Jesus.
- 5) They also insisted that sin was powerless over their lives, and to prove it they boasted of their indulgence in immoral acts.

(TO KNOW AND KNOW YOU KNOW, a verse by verse study of The Epistles of John study by this writer.)

THE HERESY AT WORK IN THE CHURCH. The church was predominantly Gentile which means that most of the members had a pagan background and were susceptible to certain elements in pagan religions. Some questioned the adequacy of Jesus Christ to replace all their former gods and to protect them from all the evil spirits lurking around them. Some decided on a compromise: they would take the best elements of all religions and put them together, just to be sure! Some of the Jewish converts were ready to help with the rituals and rules. A few members seemed to think if they could master all these theories it would make them a sort of “super saint”.

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION. The trouble in Colosse had not yet reached epidemic proportions, but it posed a serious threat. The Lord inspired Paul to write to the church in an effort to “nip this movement in the bud” and persuade the Christians to go back to their early lessons in the Gospel, to live by that Gospel and share it with others.

Paul combated the assault by the Gnostics on the deity of Christ’s deity by holding Him up to them as the preeminent, supreme, all-inclusive, and all-sufficient Christ. In this epistle Paul portrays Christ in various ways:

- 1) He has rescued us..and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, (1:13),
- 2) He is the one in whom we have redemption (1:14),
- 3) He is the image of the invisible God (:15),
- 4) He is the first born of all creation (1:15),
- 5) He is the predates creation (1:17),
- 6) He is the source of creation (1:17),
- 7) He is the head of the body (1:18),
- 8) He is the beginning (1:18),
- 9) He is the firstborn from the dead (1:18),
- 10) He is the preeminent One (1:18),
- 11) He is the embodiment of all fullness of God (1:19),
- 12) He reconciles us by His blood (1:20),
- 13) He is the wealth of the glorious mystery (1:27),
- 14) He indwells believers (1:27),
- 15) He is the hope of glory (1:27),
- 16) He is key to the mystery of God (2:2),
- 17) In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (2:3),
- 18) “In Him the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily, (2:9),

- 19) He is “is the head over every ruler and authority” (2:10),
- 20) He is the One in whom we are raised from the dead, (2:11-13),
- 21) “He erased the certificate of debt” (2:14)
- 22) “He triumphed over all principalities and powers (2:15),
- 23) He is the Messiah, the substance to which all shadows point (2:16, 17),
- 24) He is the Messiah, seated at the right hand of God (3:1),
- 25) He is the One in whom your life is hidden (3:3),
- 26) He is your life and you will appear with Him in glory (3:4),
- 27) He is “all in all” (3:11),
- 28) He is the One who forgives us (3:13),
- 29) He will reward believers with an inheritance from the Lord (3:24),
- 30) He fills the believer’s heart with peace (3:15).

INTRODUCTION - 1:1-14

A. GREETINGS (1:1-2).

1:1 - PAUL. “ *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Timothy our brother.* ” Paul is the human author. We have his testimony that every word of Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is the position of this writer that the Word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit, infallible and inerrant.

APOSTLE. The word means “one sent forth.” Paul introduces himself as an apostle here, possibly because he was not personally known to the church at Colosse. On the other hand he stressed his apostleship in his letter to the Galatians because he had been attacked by Judaizers who had apparently challenged his apostleship. In that epistle, he wrote, “Paul, an apostle—not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead” (Gal 1:1).

BY GOD’S WILL. He was not self-appointed, nor had he been sent by any other man. His appointment was received from Jesus on the road to Damascus. In writing to the Galatian churches, Paul had to defend his apostleship against claims by Judaizers that he was not a legitimate apostle. They had apparently argued that they knew the “true” apostles, and Paul was not one of them. Here, he simply declares that his apostleship is by God’s will. Remember that Paul is writing what the Holy Spirit inspires him to write. The Apostle to the Gentiles has been accused of being egocentric by those who unfortunately read only boasting into the defense of his apostleship, his defense of his deep Hebrew roots, and his statements about his suffering and persecution for Christ.

OF CHRIST JESUS. A. T. Robertson (Word Pictures in the New Testament, the Bible

Navigator electronic library, published by LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, identified as ATR), stressed that by this time the title Christ (The Anointed One) is being used as a personal name for Jesus, not just a verbal adjective [ATR]. Jesus was the one sending Paul forth and he never lost sight of that.

There have been claims that some media outlets have made the decision never to use both the personal name “Jesus” and the glorious title “Christ” together. To use them together would be an endorsement of Jesus as the Lord’s Anointed Savior, the Redeemer. It is refreshing to see here that Paul used the title Christ as a personal name.

In 2005, some major businesses across America made the decisions that they would minimize any reference to Christ at Christmas time. Protests prompted statements by management in some chains that they would not take that action in the future. On November 15, 2006, Fox News ran reports that in Great Britain there is a fresh commitment to remove every symbol of Christ from the public arena. Amazingly, the first to protest were Muslims. It is interesting that in America, secularists and leftists are offended by the name Jesus. In England, authorities, fearing that Muslims would be offended by Christian symbols, began an effort to force Christ out of holiday establishments to honor His name. Muslims, possibly fearing either a backlash or future restrictions, opposed the measure.

TIMOTHY. Young Timothy was arguably closer to Paul than any of the other missionaries who traveled with him. When was a child, his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois taught him the Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) in their home in Lystra. He was obviously converted on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23). Paul calls Timothy his child in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). When Paul came to Lystra on his second journey, he was highly respected by the other believers (Acts 16:1-2). Paul asked Timothy to accompany him and Silas when they departed from Lystra. “Timothy’s father was a Greek, and Timothy had not been circumcised. Because they would be ministering to many Jews and because Timothy’s mother was Jewish, Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3) [Holman Bible Dictionary - after this, HBD].

Timothy is mentioned in the introduction to this epistle, as he is mentioned as in 1 and 2 Thess. when in they were in Corinth, and in 2 Corinthians when he was with Paul in Macedonia. He was mentioned in Philippians and Philemon when they were in Rome as here [ATR].

1:2 - TO THE SAINTS. *“To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”* From time to time, one hears some misguided person say, “I’m a Christian, but I’m no saint.” He is misguided because he does not understand that in the New Testament, the word saint is applied to all believers. It simply denotes one who has been set apart for the glory of the Lord. All believers were set apart at the point of salvation for the glory of God.

Some have noted that this powerful little epistle was written to the least important of any of the churches to whom Paul wrote. The church may have been weak, but we may infer from the address that the recipient, the “saints and faithful brothers” (and sisters) there were strong in the Lord. There were some Jews and many Gentiles in the church.

In my commentary on Philippians in The Bible Notebook series, I note that Paul invented the Christian epistle:

The first century Greek letter differed from the modern personal letter in a number of ways. Since Philippians is a personal letter, it is important for us to understand the parts of a proper letter in Paul's day.

1. Paul began with the name of the writer. This was an important part of a letter (and practical since it was written on a scroll).
2. Next, there is the name of the recipient(s).
3. A greeting follows (see James 1:1).
4. Then there is a prayer.
5. Next comes the body of the letter.

There is a basic difference between Paul's letters and the normal letter of his day. He followed the conventions, but he was creative rather than imitative. He does not just say, "Paul." He makes some significant statements about himself. He does not just name the recipients, but he says something about them. When it comes to the greeting, Paul does something very interesting. When he came to the prayer part, he does not just tell them he is praying for them; he includes a fervent prayer. We should never skip the salutation to any of Paul's letters.

Paul literally invented the Christian epistle. He built upon the Hellenistic letter, but there is another factor. The Pauline epistles are not private epistles, but they were circular letters. The epistle would be read in the church and then forwarded to another church after it had been carefully copied. The copy would be preserved and read over and over before the congregation. The style took this into consideration. Other Christian letters followed this style, but Paul was the first to employ it [Sanders, Johnny L., *UNDEFEATED, Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*, Brentwood Christian Press, Columbus, GA, 1998, 13-14].

GOD OUR FATHER. Paul often refers to God as the Father. I have often stressed that after years of pondering as the why God identifies Himself as Father to believers, I have concluded that:

- 1) Man did give God the title Father.
- 2) God gave us the name Father.
- 3) As our Father, He loves us (He grants us the privilege of a relationship with our Him).
- 4) As our Father, He provides for us.
- 5) As our Father He protects us.
- 6) Our heavenly Father is the role model for earthly fathers.
- 7) He becomes our Father when we receive His Son as Savior and Lord.

While the term Trinity does not appear in Paul's epistles, he refers to Father, Son and Holy Spirit frequently. He often refers to Jesus as "Lord"; to God as "Father"; and to the Third Person of the Trinity as the Spirit, or Holy Spirit.

GRACE. In the New testament sense grace means the unmerited love or favor of God. It was the common Greek greeting. It was a positive word and when one used it in a greeting he was wishing all things kind and gracious to the person he greeted.

PEACE. Peace (*shalom*) was the common Jewish greeting and in essence, it meant, “I wish you the highest good you may experience.” Paul used both the Greek and Hebrew greeting. The extent of one’s inner peace is relative to one’s response to God’s grace. Let me quote again from my commentary on Philippians:

GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE. As we have seen, Paul begins Philippians with the typical style for a Greco-Roman letter of the day, including the author, and the recipients, and a greeting. But Paul's greeting is not the standard greeting, either for the Jewish readers or the Greek readers. It is a combination of the Greek and Jewish greeting which brings together concepts precious to the early church. The normal Greek greeting (*chairein*) carries the basic idea of joy, pleasure, beauty. Grace is from the Greek word *charis*, which in NT means God’s unmerited favor and love.

In a Greek letter, it could simply mean "greetings" (James 1:1). As used in the New Testament, it refers to the unmerited favor of God. It is easier to define than to believe. To believe in grace we have to give up our arrogance, and ideas about our own worth (self esteem). We can never accept something as ours because of our own merit. We can never claim God's blessings as our right or as our property by our own merit.

Peace (*eirene*, Gk.; *shalom* in Heb.) is the usual Hebrew greeting. The word carries the idea of joining, or weaving together. “Peace in the Jewish sense is the symphony of life made meaningful through a right relationship with God. The theological order is significant as well; it is only through the grace made available by the shed blood of the spotless Lamb of God that peace will come”.¹ Peace is positive and not negative. It connotes far more than the absence of strife and hostility - it expresses the desire for harmony with God and with other people.

Here, peace has to do with a new relationship and points to blessings we receive because of grace. There is a problem, however. Today we usually understand peace to mean an inner peace of mind, but Paul was not a post-Freudian psychologist. God seeks to save neurotics. There are sincere Christians who are deeply troubled. Believers are often put to the test. How, then, does grace bring us peace? When one accepts Christ, the warfare between himself and God is over. So, Paul prays for them to realize what they already have (it was not dependent upon his prayer). From the point of one’s new birth in Christ the Lord seeks to make the peace that passes all understanding a reality in every aspect of the life of His children.

That other Christian writers would be influenced by Paul's new letter writing style is seen in the writing of the early Church Fathers. Polycarp, who was probably an infant at the time of Paul's martyrdom, would write to this same church a half-century later. He began his letter,

"Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, be multiplied."

Paul prays for both grace and peace. They can only come in that order. Grace is the source of peace - peace is always dependent upon grace. If God withdraws his grace, there will be no peace and we would be lost. Prayer for grace recognizes a continuous need. The grace of God always comes as His free and unmerited gift; it is never our private possession - not an inalienable right. "That Gentiles have finally been made partakers in this marvelous mystery of God is the prime cause of the keynote of joy sounded throughout the epistle" [JLS].

B. PRAYER FOR A TROUBLED CHURCH (1:3-14).

1. Prayer of Thanksgiving, 1:3-8.

1:3 - WHEN WE PRAY. *"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you..."* Whether in church, on a mission trip, or in prison, Paul and his companions prayed continuously for these believers. He had never met them personally, but he knew about them and the work at Colosse. "We always thank God" underscores the point that they keep on praying for them. Thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. Whether offering thanks or a petition in behalf of the churches, prayer was not simply an exercise for the Apostle to the Gentiles. It was as much a part of his spiritual life as eating and breathing was to his physical life.

Some have stressed that this was the weakest church to whom Paul wrote, but we need to be very careful in making that designation. This may have been the smallest church and it may have been located in a relatively insignificant town, but no church that meets the purpose to which it is commissioned should be considered a weak church. There are very large congregations that have compromised the Word of God, and there are churches that are small in numbers but when they pray they move mountains. There was a time, throughout the middle of the Twentieth Century, for example, when we were told that most preachers were called out of small rural churches in America.

Paul and Timothy prayed to "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Robertson notes that In verse Col. 1:2, we have "the only instance in the opening benediction of an epistle when the name of "Jesus Christ" is not joined with "God our Father" [ATR]. Those who hold a unitary view of God, rejecting the Trinity, must deal with passages like this, where Paul is inspired by God the Holy Spirit to focus our attention on God the Father through God the Son. Where there are theological problems a church could find no better starting place than Christology, the study of

Christ.

1:4 - YOUR FAITH. *“For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints...”* This may have been a small church, and if so, God is doing some of His greatest work in one of the smallest church. Paul and Timothy had heard certain things about the church, probably from Epaphras. This is the first indication that Paul had not planted the church at Colosse, and that he had not visited the church.

Any church that would avoid being labeled a “weak church” should focus on the two things Paul mentions here: “faith in Christ Jesus” and love for all the saints. This is not natural love for mankind in general, as expressed by Will Rogers when he said, “I never met a man I didn’t like.” This is a love resulting from an experience with Christ Jesus. From the note about their faith “in Christ Jesus” we may infer that he has in mind both the sphere of their faith and the direction of their faith, since the word “in” may implies either.

1:5 - THE HOPE. *“Because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You have already heard about [this hope] in the message of truth...”* Hope, in a general sense, denotes the object or goal ahead. Here is a distinction that we must make between the hope the world knows and the hope that resides in the true believer in Christ Jesus. This world’s hope may be based on sound, intelligent plans and expectations, or it may be based on little more than wishful thinking. From the moment we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, there lives in us the hope of eternal life - not wishful thinking, but assurance of all the blessings promised the saints.

I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta, seven miles west of Sledge, a small town in the north west corner of the state. When I was a student at Mississippi College, I worked summers for the Quitman County ASCS (a department of the USDA). We had a school at the beginning of the summer each year. When the class work was over we went to the field to see how well the young men could apply what they had learned. Since I had experience plotting cotton fields on an aerial photograph, our supervisor, Orbie Wheeler, asked me to take half of the men and go one direction while he took the other half and worked a different field. We finished ahead of the other group and had to sit in a shade beside a scope of woods and wait for them. While sitting there, I talked with them about some practical things they would be dealing with when they visited a farm. After a few minutes, I brought up a conversation I had with a farmer in which I had mentioned salvation in Jesus Christ and assurance of heaven. One of the young men, John, said, “I wish I could know I was going to heaven.” John was a Catholic and his sister was in training to be a nun, but he had no assurance of going to heaven. I quoted what Paul wrote to Timothy, “I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12b).

RESERVED FOR YOU. In Christ, hope is not wishful thinking. Paul would write to Timothy, “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the age to come, so that they may take hold of life that is real” (1 Tim 6:19). No where is this hope illustrated stated more clearly than in these words from 1 Peter:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great

mercy, He has given us a new birth into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, uncorrupted, and unfading, **kept in heaven for you**, who are being **protected by God's power** through faith for a salvation that is **ready to be revealed** in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5, HCSB, emphasis added).

I have hope because of what Jesus has done for me. The TEV has, "It is kept safe for you in heaven." I have hope because of the promise of God. We can know, and I must know! I have hope because I have a reservation in heaven.

THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH. The "message of truth" is the Gospel, the good news which reveals the hope upon which faith and love are based. Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the Word. Sadly, there is evidence that the Word is not being preached in many pulpits today. In some case the Gospel has been compromised, and in other cases pastors have yielded the pulpit to praise songs and made the preaching of the Gospel secondary. That is tragic because the Bible clearly states that He speaks to our hearts in a special way when the Gospel is being preached (Romans 10:15-17).

Whether a church uses traditional hymns or contemporary music is not as important as the attitude of those on either side toward the other side. For one thing, the Bible stresses that we must respect our elders. Sadly, some of our elderly members have been disrespected - and some have been disrespectful of others. There is something that must always be considered and that is that those who publish hymnals normally give a lot attention to the doctrinal integrity of each hymn. Theologians go over the lyrics very carefully and if they are not sound they are not used. Many Gospel songs and many contemporary songs may not have been subjected to such careful examination by those who are qualified to make those decisions. For example, my sister was talking with a group of leaders from churches in their association when someone brought up the music they preferred. She made the statement that one song that was popular in her church disturbed her. She said, "When they sing, 'He is the air I breathe', that is a New Age theme. The pastor immediately said, "I don't agree. He is the air I breathe." A Bible professor from a Baptist university assured him the Jesus transcends the air he breathes - he is not the air Himself. Few pastors have a good grasp of New Age movements and their philosophies. Linda's husband taught New Age teachings in colleges, seminaries, conference centers, and state conventions for twelve years. He was said by some to be the most effective speaker Southern Baptists had on the subject, but he would not make that claim. The point is that Linda does recognize New Age Monism (and Pantheism) when she hears it. Sadly, many church leaders have opened the door to false doctrines. That is a sure sign they do not know the "message of truth."

1:6 - BEARING FRUIT. *"...The gospel that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and recognized God's grace in the truth."* Paul notes two proofs that the Gospel which had come to them was the true Gospel. First, it bears fruit; and second, it is grows. Growth and fruit bearing go on simultaneously. In Paul's day a phenomenal growth was experienced. This was first, a growth in numbers, which is always a reason for rejoicing. However, after new converts are brought into the kingdom, we must disciple them. Sadly, there are times when there is too little evidence that we have disciplined

new members. Studies prove that a shocking percentage of those who profess to be born-again Christians do not worship on a regular basis.

Studies show that, even though some denominations may continue to grow (though many are in decline), there is no evidence that many of our members are growing in the Lord. Southern Baptists numbered around ten or eleven million members when I became a Christians. Today, there are about 16.5 million Southern Baptists. Sadly, even if all evangelical denominations had grown by the same percentage, we would still be losing ground in America. New conversions have not kept pace with the population growth. Consequently, we are losing ground, and losing influence in the political arena, resulting in shameful consequences: we are approaching the fifty million mark in abortions since Roe v. Wade, spread of homosexuality, pornography, embryonic stem cell research, addiction to gambling, and steps toward euthanasia (Terri Schiavo case is a shocking example of murder with the approval of the courts, media, academia, and sadly, the church).

There is another shocking aspect of this. Even where there is numerical growth, many who have come into the church have remained spiritual infants, capable only to be fed on the milk of the word, not on solid food. What has happened? We have watered down the Word of God to the point that even those who want to grow, are going to find it difficult to do so unless they can discipline themselves to study the Word on their own. They are not going to get it at church! The home entertainment industry has given us a name that would describe some churches -play station!

One issue that will bear further study is the popularity of the contemporary worship style. I am afraid it may have been encouraged by denominational leaders who view the numerical growth as evidence that their programs are working, and by pastors who are excited about their church growth that they may neglect their high calling to feed the sheep.

Praise is good, godly, desirable, and scriptural, but true praise is our response to a blessing. It is sad when the some seem to think they can create the blessing through praise songs, motions, and movements. For some, there is no worship apart from standing with arms raised, and in some cases, dancing, while singing the same words over and over again. A baby may prefer to play with his food, but his mother must make sure she gets the food into his mouth, and that he swallows it. He may find it more amusing to play with his food, but she knows that growth, health, and the promise of a productive life depend upon proper nourishment. Believers begin as babes in Christ and they must be fed if they are to grow. Sadly, many church members are splashing like giddy children in milk, when they should be feasting on sincere meat of the Word of God.

This is not a diatribe against contemporary worship. The point I would make is that when we are singing or speaking to God, or about God, we may be blessed, but that is not the primary way the saints grow in the Lord. It is when God speaks to you that you are fed and when you are fed you will (1) grow in Him and (2) you will bear fruit for Him.

A parent or teacher will give a child or student an opportunity to respond to a lesson, but they

understands that if the child is to develop normally, he must shut up and listen. One may protest that, “When I am praising God He speaks to my heart.” I would never argue that point, but if that had been the most important way the Lord had intended to grow you, He would have spelled it out in His Word. Instead, He emphasizes the preaching of the Word, the teaching of the Word, and the study of the Word. If you really want to hear God speak to your heart, pray that your pastor will preach expository sermons, for it is when the Gospel is being preached that God specifically promises to speak to the hearts of believers. While it through the foolishness of preaching that He saves souls, it is not through foolish preaching that He provides the growth and fruit He desires from His children. We have His word of that:

“But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And **how can they hear without a preacher?** And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things! But all did not obey the gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message? So **faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ**” (Romans 10:14-17).

The subject here is **the preaching of the Word of God**. God will speak to your heart when you are praying and when you are reading His Word, but He teaches us that it is when the Word is being faithfully preached that He will speak to believers. For that reason, we should prayerfully anticipate a blessing from the Lord, pray for the one who preaches the Word, and be prepared to respond to it. Then, you must study the Word so that you might be an effective witness for God (2 Timothy 2:15).

1:7 - FELLOW SLAVE. *“You learned this from Epaphras, our much loved fellow slave. He is a faithful minister of the Messiah on your behalf.”* When Epaphras visited Paul in prison in Rome, he was able to determine that their pastor and mentor had faithfully preached the Word of God to them. He refers to him as “a faithful minister of the Messiah” on their behalf.

The word “slave” may surprise those who are not familiar with the Holman Christian Standard Bible. The NASB calls Epaphras, “our beloved fellow bond-servant”, whereas the NKJV renders it, “our dear fellow servant”. I wrote in another Bible study about an experience I had a few years ago. I was sitting at a table eating lunch with other trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville a few years ago when Dr. Jimmy Draper brought Dr. Ed. Blum to our table. Dr. Blum had met with the Broadman and Holman Committee to talk with us about the progress being made on the new translation, the Holman Christian Standard Bible. It was at that meeting that our committee voted to to commit ourselves to the new translation, the HCSB. A Hispanic man from Florida had apparently asked a question about the HCSB and Dr. Draper wanted Dr. Blum to answer his question. The man from Florida asked, “Why did you translate the word, “slave” instead of “servant” or “bond-servant.”

Dr. Blum explained that the HCSB is a word-for-word translation and that the word slave is the literal rendering. He went on to explain that when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are bought with a price. You belong to Him. You surrender your will to His will. When we think of a bond-servant we may think of one who volunteers his service for a period of time, but when

Jesus Christ becomes the Lord of your life, you are his slave forever. Your will is forever subjected to His will. You do not belong to yourself, you belong to Him forever.

1:8 - YOUR LOVE. *“And he has told us about your love in the Spirit.”* In verses 7 and 8, Paul gives thanks for the work of Epaphras:

- 1) Epaphras was the source of their knowledge of the Gospel.
- 2) He was a faithful servant of Christ.
- 3) He was the source of Paul’s information about the situation at Colosse.

2. Prayer for Spiritual Prosperity (1:9-14).

1:9 - WE ARE ASKING. *“For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...”* Wisdom denotes knowledge of general principles, whereas understanding speaks of the faculty for deciding in particular cases. This is a petitionary prayer that they might “grow in the knowledge of God” (vs. 10). The answer to Gnosticism (and the New Age movements today) is in wisdom and spiritual understanding. Knowing God is left neither to chance nor human discovery. God will fill those who are obedient to Him with “knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” We can know God because He reveals Himself to us. We can know His will because he will reveal it to those who are obedient to Him. Robertson observed that:

“Paul faces Gnosticism with full front and wishes the freest use of all one’s intellectual powers in interpreting Christianity. The preacher ought to be the greatest man in the world for he has to deal with the greatest problems of life and death” [ATR].

Paul is asking God to do for these believers that which He desires to do for them. That which He desires for them they cannot produce. God produces the wisdom and spiritual understanding through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is true Sanctification. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5), he was revealing the key to Sanctification. When you begin to think like Jesus you will begin to act as Jesus acted. As this progresses you are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, as God has predestined for every born-again believer (Rom. 8:29).

Let us stress that Sanctification is not an emotional experience, yet joy will flood your soul daily when you are filled with “the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” How does one receive that wisdom and understanding. Get alone with the Word of God and continue in prayerful study and medication. Get involved in a Sunday School class where the Word is faithfully taught. Prayerfully listen to a pastor who is anointed of God to feed the sheep. I am convinced that the Lord did not call me to entertain the sheep; He did not call me to traumatize the sheep; and He did not call me to psychologize the sheep. He called me to feed His sheep.

1:10 - WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD. *“So that you may walk worthy of the Lord,*

fully pleasing [to Him] , bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.” This is no isolated theme for Paul, but that is not surprising when we remember that this is the product of the Holy Spirit. He wrote to another church, “Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27). Robertson quotes Lightfoot: “The end of all knowledge is conduct” [ATR].

Only those who are growing in the knowledge of God can walk worthy of the Lord, and the wisdom of God is revealed only to those who walk with Him. A person who attends worship services and in a general way subscribes to the basic tenets of Christianity may claim that he walks worthy of the Lord, but Paul qualifies the statement with the words, “fully pleasing” to Him. How can one be sure his walk is fully pleasing to the Lord. When John baptized Jesus, God announced that he was well pleased with Him. It is reasonable to assume that for one to be fully pleasing to God, he must be Christ-like. That is the purpose of God in placing His Spirit in the heart of each believer when he or she is saved. It is His purpose to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). There are four stated goals involved in walking worthy of the Lord:

- 1) Bearing fruit (1:10).
- 2) Increasing in the knowledge of God (1:10).
- 3) Being strengthened (1:11).
- 4) Giving thanks (1:12).

1:11 - STRENGTHENED. “ *May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy...*” Literally, Paul prays that they might be empowered with all power. The Gnostics may have boasted of strength and endurance, but “joy” is a distinctively Christian blessing.

“Endurance” is translated long-suffering in the NASB, whereas patience refers to a willingness to bear up under trials. It is interesting that the word translated endurance (long-suffering) is more often used in reference to God rather than man. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes (from this point identified with the initials, BSB) makes the added point:

“As applied to God it means to put fury far off while suffering wrong or injustice. The Christian is to count the long-suffering of God toward evil and injustice not as slackness, but as evidence of His grace toward evildoers in granting them time for repentance and salvation (2 Pet 3:9).As His children, Christians are to allow the Holy Spirit to manifest this family characteristic in them as well” (Rom 12:19-21) [BSB].

1:12 - GIVING THANKS. “*...Giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light.*” God qualifies us, or makes us fit to share in the inheritance of the saints. Paul prays continuously, thanking God for enabling these saints to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. It is God who enables us to share in the inheritance of the saints. We are saved by grace through faith, not of the works of the flesh (Eph. 2:8-9).

1:13 - RESCUED US. “*He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred*

us into the kingdom of the Son He loves...” The Gnostics completely missed the truth. Redemption does not come through certain mysteries revealed to, or discovered by, the elite. Ryrie (Study Bible Notes - after this identified by the initials, RSB) explains that this is literally, “the kingdom of the Son of His love.’ Believers have been rescued from the authority of Satan to that of Christ” [RSB]. Our heavenly Father has delivered us, once for all time, from the realm of darkness (spiritual death) to the kingdom of the Son He loves.

1:14 - REDEMPTION. “...*In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*”
Redemption

refers to the release on payment of a ransom for a slave or debtor (see Hebrews 9:15). It carries the idea of “liberation at a great cost to the one who liberates. It suggests a philanthropist who releases a slave by payment of a ransom. Redemption is linked with the price paid, and that price is “paid in full” (“it is finished,” *tetelestai*, Gk.; cf. John 19:30) with the death of Christ” [BSB].

We are redeemed by the blood of the Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

It has been well said that salvation is free, but it is not cheap. To summarize, consider what Paul saw a foundation for massive thanksgiving:

- 1) He qualified us.
- 2) He transferred us.
- 3) He delivered us
- 4) He redeemed us.
- 5) He has forgiven us.

I. THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST (1:15-23).

A. The Person and work of Jesus Christ, 1:15-20.

1. Jesus is the agent of creation, 1:15-17.

1:15 - THE IMAGE. *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation...”* Jesus was the very stamp (image) of God the Father. He was in the world before the Incarnation (John 1:7); He predates creation; He is co-eternal and co-existent with the Father. He is the image of God now (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-4). This verse totally refutes Gnosticism, as well as any other religious or secular philosophy that denies or minimizes Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the **image** of the invisible God. There was a time in America, before the invention of printers, duplicating machines, and copiers, when one would hear the expression, “He’s a carbon copy of his father.” When I was writing research papers in seminary, I chose my paper and inserted it, along with a sheet of carbon paper and a thin white sheet of paper. When I typed the page I had an original and one carbon copy. The top sheet would be clear and the letters sharp (though not as clear as later typewriters and certainly not as clear as modern printers).

When my sons were very young, I went to my brother Mike, an attorney, and asked him to draw up a will for me and one for Becky. We were told that this was especially important in Louisiana for the protection of our sons. Mike specialized in injury litigation on the defense side and did not do wills, but he agreed to prepare ours. He consulted a partner who specialized in wills and estate work, and prepared our wills and when we went in to sign, he called in an associate and asked him to sign. He then turned to a paralegal and said, “I want two originals of this.” She asked, “You mean one original and one copy?” He said, “No, I want two originals.” She would simply print each will two times. He had just given me an illustration I needed. Jesus is not a carbon copy of the Father! God the Father is the original, and Jesus, the Son, is the original - the exact image of the Father.

Sadly, many preachers and teachers hold a unitary view of God rather than a Trinitarian view. They point out that the word Trinity does not appear in the Bible. Some use the illustration: I am the son of my father, the husband of my wife, and the father of my children - one person in three roles. Or one might use water. Below 32 degrees Fahrenheit it becomes ice, from 32 degrees to 212 degrees it is water, and at 212 degrees it becomes steam. These illustrations sound good, and they may illustrate a unitary view of God, but they do not adequately portray the Trinity.

God is one in essence, three in personality: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The word Trinity does not appear in the Scripture, but the concept is seen throughout the Bible, especially in the New Testament. At the baptism of Jesus, the Son was baptized, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke His approval of the Son. Jesus often withdrew to spend time with the Father - if there was no Father His prayer was a hoax. Furthermore, if there was no Father in heaven, who maintained and sustained creation while Jesus was on earth? Furthermore, Jesus promised to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers. When you pray, you pray

to the Father, in the name of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

FIRST BORN OVER ALL CREATION. In this verse, Paul nails the door shut on Gnosticism, and any other heresy that denies either the humanity or the deity of Christ Jesus. The point in calling Him the first born over all creation is not that He came into existence before all creation, but to show His rank, position, and authority over all creation.

“Among all the creatures of God, or over all his creation, occupying the rank and pre-eminence of the firstborn. The first-born, or the eldest son, among the Hebrews as elsewhere, had peculiar privileges. He was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. It has been, also, and especially in Oriental countries, a common thing for the eldest son to succeed to the estate and the title of his father. In early times, the firstborn son was the officiating priest in the family, in the absence or on the death of the father. There can be no doubt that the apostle here has reference to the usual distinctions and honours conferred on the firstborn, and means to say, that, among all the creatures of God, Christ occupied a pre-eminence similar to that” [Barnes' Notes on the New Testament” - after this, Barnes].

1:16 - CREATED THROUGH HIM. *“Because by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”* Accepting this completely destroys the Gnostic heresy. He is one with God (John 1:1-3). He is Creator - “all things have been **created through Him and for Him.**” We need to rediscover the significance of the creative work of Jesus Christ. We live in a humanistic, naturalistic society that has accepted Darwin’s theory of evolution as fact. When people say that evolution has been proved they reveal that they do not know the Word of God, or if they know it, they reject it.

Research by The Institute for Creation Research clearly shows that both Creation and evolution are belief systems, neither of which can be tested scientifically (in a lab). According to Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. Dewayne Gish, research shows that when the evidence is weighed on both sides, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the Genesis account of Creation.

I read Philip Johnson’s work on Intelligent Design and I have followed the ID movement for a number of years. When I read about ID, it seemed to me that these people were indebted to Henry Morris and other creation scientists, but did not give them credit. Long before we began reading about Intelligent Design (ID), Morris, Gish, Ken Ham, Steve Austin, Gary Parker, and others were emphasizing the fact that if you have a design you have to have a designer. If you have intelligent design, you must have and Intelligent Designer.

Long before I read some of the works of Philip Johnson, I was guided in my studies by the late Dr. Jan Mercer, whom I met when I became her mother’s pastor. Jan and her husband Andy became good friends to my family. During visits, Jan recommended books and authors, explained how I might choose material on creation science. Jimmy Draper was their pastor at First Baptist, Euless, Texas, when I first met them. Later, I would work with Dr. Draper when I served on the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources. He once told me that when he preached on

Creation he took his sermon to Jan and had her to check it to be sure he had his facts straight. I would like to think that every pastor had that kind of maturity, courage, and humility. Jan guided both Dr. Draper and me, pointed us in the right direction, and helped keep us from error.

1:17 - BY HIM. *“He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.”* Robertson observes that “The precedence of Christ in time and the preeminence as Creator are both stated sharply” [ATR]. The Bible reveals that Jesus was the Agent of creation: “All things were created by Him and without Him was not anything created that was created” (John 1:1ff). Jesus often stressed the timelessness of His existence. In His High Priestly prayer, He prayed: “Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with that glory I had with You before the world existed” (John 17:5).

For further study on Biblical Creation, see my commentary on Genesis One-Three on the PastorLife.com web site (Georgia Baptist Convention site managed by Mike Minnix). This is an unpublished study of the first three chapters of Genesis in what I call The Bible Notebook. While it is called a commentary on the web site, I simply refer to it as The Bible Notebook. Dr. Jimmy Brossette told me that when he taught a seminary class on Genesis, he announced to students that they were going to set aside the original textbook and use my study for the class. It is always rewarding to find others who follow the Genesis account of creation without compromise.

We need to “get it right” in Genesis if we are going to get it right throughout the rest of the Bible. If you do not have Genesis One you don’t need John One; if you don’t have Genesis Three you don’t need John Three. If you don’t have a Creator, you don’t need a Redeemer because you are accountable to no one and you will never stand before Jesus Christ as Judge. Science books go through one revision after another, but the Bible has never been revised, except by those who seem to distort it (as the Jehovah’s Witnesses).

BY HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER. This is very important. Jesus is one with God (John 1:1-3). He not only predated creation, he maintains and sustains creation. He is the sustaining Agent of creation. God the Father and God the Son are co-equal and co-eternal, and to coin a term, co-operational with the Father. He is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. Robertson concludes, “The Gnostic philosophy that matter is evil and was created by a remote aeon is thus swept away. The Son of God's love is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe which is not evil” [ATR].

2. Christ is praised as Lord of the Church, 1:18-20.

1:18 - THE HEAD. *“He is also the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything.”* In Ephesians the church is seen as the body of Christ. In Colossians Christ is the head of the body. Church as used

here denotes the general church rather than the local body or assembly.

Sadly, some church members forget that Christ is the head of the body, the church. I can hardly conceive of the arrogance of a self-appointed church boss. Nor can I comprehend the attitude that would forget that the church belongs to the Head, Christ Jesus. One might say, “This is my

church and I will be here when you are gone.” In order to protect their position as “head of the church” people have plotted, schemed, lied, gossiped, and resorted to power plays that should embarrass an unscrupulous politician. They orchestrate situations to divide the opposition and recruit members from the divisions they create. Some will even spread rumors designed to drive a wedge between family members.

A pastor moved to a new church and after several attempts to “get him under his thumb” he announced, “I know when you came here some of these people talked to you about me.” His name had been mentioned, but those he suspected were not as motivated to talk about him as he had thought. A member of the church who seldom attended services once said to the pastor, “I know times you don’t even know about when that man has tried to get you under his thumb.” The pastor never tried to find out what it was to which he referred. Years later, a situation came up which led a lady to go to the pastor’s home and announce that she had this problem with him and one of the deacons had told her she needed to talk with the pastor about it. In reality, he had asked the pastor to deal with an issue involving something the lady was doing in her work with young people. He said, “If you can do anything to stop this the deacons will stand behind you.” They didn’t, but he was probably the only deacon who knew about that discussion.

The pastor went to visit the deacon and told him about the visit. The deacon admitted that he had sent her to see him, but never mentioned supporting him. He then invited the pastor to go out and sit on the patio, and as soon as they were seated, the deacon said, “I told you when you first came here that when you had a problem with any of these people you should come to me. I know these people.” Realizing the power play in the making, the pastor said, “Mr. ‘Smith’, as you know when the people were talking with me, they were talking about you and I couldn’t violate their confidence.” He thought he might lose a deacon that afternoon - from heart failure. He later heard that this deacon had actually invited a former pastor out side to settle some issue. This is an extreme case, but it is not as rare as it should be.

The church belongs to Jesus. He is the head of the body the church and the church is the body of Christ. If you want to advance your church and be a blessing to others, humble yourself before the Lord and pray for the pastor and other leaders. Make yourself available for any position or responsibility for which you are qualified. Serve the Lord with gladness. Love the Head of the church. Love His body. Then permit the Holy Spirit to develop you into a true New Testament witness for Christ.

1:19 - GOD WAS PLEASED. *“For God was pleased [to have] all His fullness dwell in Him.”* It is by God’s decision that His Son has in Himself the full nature of God. The Gnostics distributed the divine power among various aeons. Paul declared Jesus to be one with God, not some lesser god. He is driving yet another nail in the casket lid of this doomed but dangerous heresy, which can only honor Satan, the prince of this world. John would be inspired o drive another nail in it in he prologue to the Gospel that bears his name. Today, many would assume that Gnosticism ran its course centuries ago, but in reality, it resurfaced in Eastern Mysticism, which in turn provided the foundation for New Age movements that spread across America a quarter of a century ago - and still finds expression in various postmodern movements.

The Gnostics did not deny the existence of Christ, they just diluted Scriptural claims for His humanity and perverted claims for His deity. The **Third Person of the Trinity** inspired Paul to write that the **First Person of the Trinity** has caused all his attributes, nature, and character to dwell in the **Second Person of the Trinity**. Gnosticism falls before the eternal truth of the Word of God, just as New Age (postmodern) religious movements, the occult, and the so-called Christian cults will fall before Him. The day is coming when they will become His footstool, a symbol of His complete victory.

1:20 - TO RECONCILE. *“And through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross —Whether things on earth or things in heaven.”* “Through Him” stresses that Jesus is the only instrument God has provided for our reconciliation and that His death on the cross is means by which we are reconciled. “Through the blood of his cross (*dia tou haimatos tou staurou autou*). This for the benefit of the Docetic Gnostics who denied the real humanity of Jesus and as clearly stating the *causa medians* (Ellicott) of the work of reconciliation to be the Cross of Christ, a doctrine needed today” [ATR]

Jesus is the adequate (and only) Agent in the work of reconciliation (the cross). “Christ is the remedy for alienation from God, and eventually all things will be changed and brought into a unity in Him, even though this will involve judgment” (1 Cor. 15:24-28) [RSB].

B. Christ Is Supreme in the Believer's Life, 1:21-23.

1. His supremacy demonstrated through reconciliation, 1:21-22a.

1:21 - ALIENATED. *“And you were once alienated and hostile in mind because of your evil actions.* Paul addresses this statement to the church at Colosse, but it applies to all of us, for all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Barnes captures the idea here:

“In this work of reconciling heaven and earth, you at Colosse, who were once enemies of God, have been reached. The benefit of that great plan has been extended to you, and it has accomplished in you what it is designed to effect everywhere--to reconcile enemies to God. The word sometime here...means formerly. In common with all other men, they were, by nature, in a state of enmity against God” [BARNES].

1:22a - RECONCILED YOU. *But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death...* This flies in the face of Gnostic denials that the Jesus could not have died on the cross if He really was God. It also refutes the docetic Gnostics who claimed that He only seemed to be flesh and blood. Some claimed that he was flesh and blood, He became spirit at His baptism, and then became flesh and blood again before he was nailed to the cross (reasoning that spirit, or deity could not die). This epistle is a powerful defense of the person and work of Christ.

Reconciliation is specifically the work of our Lord through His Son, and only through His Son.

We inherited a sinful nature from the first Adam and reconciliation is only made through the Second Adam, Christ. Paul wrote, “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam’s transgression. He is a prototype of the Coming One” (Rom. 5:14). He wrote to the church at Corinth, “For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22).

Reconciliation, peace with God, is made through the blood Jesus shed on the cross.

“The substitutionary nature of this reconciliation (atonement) is seen in vv. 21, 22; from being ‘alienated and enemies in ... mind’ because of works of wickedness, the Christian has moved in Christ to being “reconciled ... holy ... blameless ... above reproach in His sight.” Christ, on the other hand, went from being the spotless Lamb of God to being sin on our behalf (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). Any theology that denies the substitutionary atonement of Christ or neglects the saving power of His sacrifice and the necessity of His shed blood, no matter how impressive otherwise, is a false theology with no power to save. The cross of Christ is a constant reminder of proud mankind’s inability to generate its own salvation. The substitutionary atonement is not one theory among many, but an eternal fact reflected in many scriptural metaphors” [BSB].

2. His supremacy is manifested in restoration, 1:22b-23.

1:22b - TO PRESENT YOU, FAULTLESS. “...*To present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him...*” It is the purpose of God and without doubt the desire of Paul to see these Colossians presented holy, faultless, and blameless before the judgment bar of Christ Jesus. The word “holy” carries the idea of consecration, or separation. We are separated for the glory of God, separate from the world and all things that are unholy or worldly. “Faultless” maybe translated without spot or blemish. “Blameless” means that no one will be able to find flaws in the believer. “These three adjectives give a marvelous picture of complete purity (positive and negative, internal and external). This is Paul's ideal when he presents the Colossians “before him” (*katenôpion autou*), right down in the eye of Christ the Judge of all” [ATR].

Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi: “Do everything without grumbling and arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world” (Phil 2:14-15).

1: 23 - IF YOU REMAIN GROUNDED. “*If indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith, and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard. [This gospel] has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a minister of it.*” The word “if” here does not imply that they are in danger of losing their salvation. What will they lose if they are not faithful? We do lose blessings, including joy, peace that passes all understanding, and all the fruit of the spirit. The original language does not allow the loss of one’s salvation:

“This verse is not teaching that loss of salvation is possible. The Greek first-class

conditional sentence (ei, Gk., “if, since,” plus the indicative mood) expresses Paul’s certainty that they will in fact continue. The word “if” could well be translated “since”: “He has reconciled [you] ... since indeed you continue in the faith.” Paul’s purpose is to lead them to appreciate their reconciliation, not to doubt it. Every true believer in Christ will endure to the end (John 10:28, 29; Phil 1:6)” [BSB].

To summarize, you were once alienated from God, but Jesus died on the cross to provide for your reconciliation. He (1) Jesus restores the believer, and (2) He demands that the believer build something constructive on the foundation Christ Jesus laid for him.

II. PAUL'S MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH (1:24-2:5)

A. Paul Found Happiness and Joy Despite Suffering, 1:24

1:24 - I REJOICE. *“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for His body, that is, the church.”* Many people have suffered for the cause of Jesus Christ. *The Voice of Martyrs* organization chronicles persecution for Christ throughout the centuries, and continually highlights persecution around the world today. The world has often been reminded of the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were brutally slaughtered in the most brutal and inhuman ways imaginable. I had always heard that the Nazis killed fifteen mission people, but when I mentioned this to retired General Dutch Shoffner he said, “I have 22 million.” Since he was once the commander of our army in Europe, I will take his word for it. Six million of those killed by Hitler were Jews. Millions more were Christians. The Jews are to be commended for keeping the Holocaust before the world for decades. Sadly, many people, especially Muslims, deny that he Holocaust ever happened. Christians were very shortsighted in not keeping the slaughter of Christians before the world to try to prevent a repeat of such atrocities.

The world has witnessed an interesting phenomenon over the past half-century. Communists around the world have slaughtered several times as many people as Hitler, many of whom were Christians, but elites in the entertainment industry, news media, academia, and political arena who hate the memory of Hitler and the Nazis, have often given murderous Communist regimes a pass. It does not stop there. Many of these same people have turned against Israel and sought to drive Christianity out of the public arena. Groups like the ACLU and Americans United for Separation for Church and State are suing to remove every expression and symbol of Christ from public property (while giving Islam a pass). Apparently, they think they can label Islam a “religion of peace” and use it to oppress Christianity. These people are more horrified by the imagined responsibility of Twenty-First Century Christians for the Crusades than they are for the slaughter of Jews and Christians around the world by Muslims today. Communism may have slaughtered five or six times as many people as the Nazis, but the greatest threat against Christians today is Islam. Many would add, radical Muslims, specifically the terrorists. Islamic clerics continue to announce that Islam is a peaceful religion and that the terrorists are renegades who dishonor

Muhammad. Robert Spencer, (*The Truth About Muhammad*, Regnery Publishing Inc., 2006) has written a book that should be a wake-up call for the world. Spencer asks, “Is Islam a religion of peace? He answers that

“A tiny minority of extremists have supposedly hijacked a peaceful religion, but jihadist Muslims won elections in the Palestinian Authority and elsewhere. The new, American-backed Iraqi and Afghan constitutions have enshrined sharia, Islamic law, (which includes the death penalty for Christian converts), as the highest law of the land. And the vast majority of peaceful Muslims show no signs of resisting or condemning the global Islamic jihad that is being fought in their name” [Spencer, Robert, *The Truth About Muhammad*, pp. 1-2].

The Soviet Union had a vast propaganda network that reached far beyond their vast borders, reportedly including active participants in New York (the UN), Washington, D. C., and Hollywood.

What the Soviet Union lacked during the Cold War, Islamic leaders have today. They have satellite broadcasts and telecasts to get out their message. A cartoon about Muhammad appears in a Denmark newspaper and riots break out immediately around the world. They monitor the news from around the world with one thing in mind - fanatical demonstrations in streets around the world. In the past few years France, Germany, and other European nations have seen violent demonstrations in the streets. America has seen demonstrations, but for some reason, possibly since they have not yet been violent, they are not deemed newsworthy in the America press.

Spencer, in interviews on talk radio (Laura Ingraham and others), has stated that the **radical Muslims and the terrorists are the purists**. They have gone back to the teachings of Muhammad. In other words, **the peaceful Muslims have drifted away from the teachings of Muhammad**.

Based on the current signs, Christians in America may be much closer to persecution for their faith than they realize. We are moving deeper and deeper into the post-Christian era of our history, and we are already witnessing a war against Jesus Christ in our courts, in public schools, and in the public arena in general. Shocking Supreme Court decisions since 1962 would underscore the war against God in America. If we continue, Christians in America may one day be severely persecuted for their faith. The world should be warned, however. Persecution may be exactly what it takes to awaken a sleeping giant. **Stripped of its idolatrous relationship with fun, fame, and fortune, a persecuted church might finally get on its knees before God**, confess sins, repent, and once again move mountains for the Lord.

I don't doubt that Christians within another generation may well be paying a price for their faith, and possibly see serious persecution in America. They will not likely be burned at the stake, but they may be thrown into jail for sharing their testimony on public property. If we do face the persecution, will we say with Paul, “I rejoice in my persecution”?

COMPLETING IN MY FLESH. Paul writes, “I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, that is, the church.” This is not a new theme for Paul (Acts

16:25; 2 Cor. 11:16-33; Phil 2:18). Literally, it is “Fill up on my part,” or to fill in turn. Jesus suffered and bled and died for us, but He warned that those who proclaimed His message of salvation would also face persecution. By “what was lacking in Christ’s afflictions” does not mean that His sacrifice was insufficient any more than it is a claim that we can add to the once-for-all price Jesus paid at Calvary for our redemption. Barnes may help here: “That which I lack of coming up to the sufferings which Christ endured in the cause of the church. The apostle seems to mean,

(1.) that he suffered in the same cause as that for which Christ suffered;

(2.) that he endured the same kind of sufferings, to some extent, in reproaches, persecutions, and opposition from the world;

(3.) that he had not yet suffered as much as Christ did in this cause, and, though he had suffered greatly, yet there was much that was lacking to make him equal in this respect to the Saviour; and,

(4.) that he felt that it was an object to be earnestly desired to be made in all respects just like Christ, and that in his present circumstances he was fast filling up that which was lacking, so that he would have a more complete resemblance to him. What he says here is based on the leading desire of his soul--the great principle of his life--TO BE JUST LIKE CHRIST; alike in moral character, in suffering, and in destiny” [BARNES].

B. The Nature of His Ministry, 1:25-26.

1. To proclaim the Word of God, 1:25.

1:25 - TO MAKE GOD’S MESSAGE FULLY KNOWN. *“I have become its minister, according to God’s administration that was given to me for you, to make God’s message fully known...”* The Believer’s Study Bible Notes provide a worthy summary to the second half of verse 24 and commentary on verse 25:

“The redemptive suffering of Christ has no deficiency, but He does not exhaust all the suffering to be endured in the redemptive purpose of God. The sufferings of Paul do not add to the finished work of redemption but are incurred in making known the redeeming work of Christ to the Gentiles. The afflictions of every believer supplement those of Christ and lead to maturity (Heb 2:10; 1 Pet 1:6, 7), patience (James 1:3), and eschatological privilege (2 Tim 2:12)” [BSB, emphasis added].

2. To reveal the mystery of the ages, 1:26.

1: 26 - THE MYSTERY. *“The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to*

His saints.” In the N.T., a mystery was something once hidden, but now revealed. Paul was God’s called apostle and minister (vs. 25), through whom God is making known the mystery that was hidden throughout the Old Testament period.

He was a God-ordained servant of the precious truth of the Word of God in its fullness (cf. 1:9; 2:9). The Colossian heresy boasted of a “fullness” of knowledge possible only through their mystical experience. But Paul declared that the fullness of the mystery is found only in Christ. By “mystery” he meant something once concealed but then revealed. This contrasted with the Colossian heretics’ notion that a mystery was a secret teaching known only to an exclusive group and unknown to the masses. The church was unknown in the Old Testament because it had been kept hidden for ages and generations. In fact, said Paul, it is only now disclosed to the saints. Since the church is Christ’s body, resulting from His death on the cross, it could not possibly have been in existence in the Old Testament. Indeed, Jesus, when on earth, said it was yet future (Matt. 16:16-18)” [NCWB].

C. The Purpose of His Ministry, 1:27-29.

1. The purpose is to make known the secret of the Riches of Christ, 1:27.

1:27 - TO MAKE KNOWN. “*God wanted to make known to those among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” The secret of the mystery of Christ contrasts sharply with the mysteries of the Gnostics (which only the elite could know). **God’s purpose is to reveal, not to conceal.** The Gnostics boasted of hidden mysteries known only to the initiated (the elite). God’s purpose in calling preachers to preach the Gospel is to reveal clearly the great mystery which could never have been completely comprehended by O.T. believers. What was that mystery? Christ in you! That is it. Christ in you, a mystery only a born-again believer in Jesus Christ can comprehend. Why is that? Paul was inspired to explain it to us in the First Epistle to the Corinthians:

“But the natural man does not welcome what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to know it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone” (1 Cor 2:14-15).

The full expression of the mystery of God is Christ in you. You cannot help but know it if Christ is in your heart because He is constantly revealing His presence in love, power, conviction, and direction. Christ in you is your hope of glory. Hope is not wishful thinking but assurance of what lies ahead. We may not be able to comprehend what heaven is going to be like, but we know that Jesus is preparing a place for us. I have a reservation in heaven, and Jesus is in charge of the reservation. My future is as safe as His!

NOTE: When we come to the end of this life, what could be more important than an anticipation of our Lord saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant”? Sadly, many will not hear those words.

On February 8, 2007, the networks broke the news, and cable channels ran the story all day and late into the evening. The newspapers proclaimed it: “Anna Nicole Smith dies at 39.” Sadly, a life of drugs, immorality, and debauchery had apparently taken her life, as it had taken the life of her son five months earlier. As soon as the news was released, lawyers were filing for a hearing to demand DNA tests to prove who was the father of her five month old baby. One attorney stressed over and over, “She is at peace now. She and Daniel are together and they have finally found peace.”

I had read recently a story in one of James Herriot’s books (this one about dogs) about how he had reassured an elderly woman that she would be reunited with her dog in heaven. He added that they had studied a lot about dogs’ souls in veterinary school. How can anyone possibly make such a statement? Only human beings are created in the image of God and only human beings are capable of a personal relationship with Him.

The simple fact is that there is no eternal peace without the Prince of Peace. All who reject Him will spend their eternity in hell, where there is conscious, eternal torment. The only time to persuade people to repent of sins and trust Jesus for His salvation is right now, while they are living in this world. It is appointed unto each person, “once to die, and after that, the judgment.” There will be no second chance for anyone. It is imperative that we proclaim the message of salvation today.

2. Christ is proclaimed to bring believers to maturity in Christ, 1:28-29.

1:28 - WE PROCLAIM HIM. “*We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*” It has been wisely observed that “Paul does not preach a religion but a relationship; not a dogma but a Person, Jesus Christ” [BSB]. To “proclaim Him” means to preach Jesus Christ, and when we recall what Paul wrote to the Romans (ch. 10), we know that when the Gospel is faithfully preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, God speaks to our hearts.

“Warning” stresses that the preaching of the Word will warn sinners of the need to repent or face the consequences, one of which is spiritual immaturity, which carries serious consequences in and of itself. When God Turns a deaf ear to your prayers and you do not sense the active leadership of the Holy Spirit in your life, the first thing we need to do is to repent. This focuses on the heart. “Teaching” is “connected with faith, refers to doctrines, and is addressed primarily to the intellect” [NCWB]. “With all wisdom” denotes all wisdom revealed to believers through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and through the study of the Word of God. Faithful preaching and teaching of the Word are essential to this wisdom.

“SO THAT WE MAY PRESENT EVERYONE MATURE IN CHRIST. Some translations have “perfect” instead of maturity. Maturity is literally what the Lord is seeking to develop in each believer. He wants us to be complete or mature in Him. He wants every believer to be “perfectly instructed in doctrine, and full grown and matured in faith and practice. in Christ—in living union with Christ” [NCWB].

EVERYONE. It is was the purpose of the Gospel to present “everyone mature in Christ.” “Everyone” stands in sharp contrast to the intellectual snobbery of the Gnostics who were spreading their heresy.

1:29 - I LABOR. *“I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.”* The word “labor” denotes hard work - toiling, striving in the work to which one is committed. Paul is not laboring in his own strength, but in the strength of the Lord, the strength made available to every true believer at the point of his or her salvation. If one walks in the Spirit, His strength works powerfully in that person (Acts 1:8). If one walks in the flesh, the Holy Spirit is quenched to the point that His power will not work so powerfully in him. What does he need to do? Recall the earlier warning. Repent. Confess and repent.

D. Paul's Concern for the Colossian Believers, 2:1-5.

1. That they may have wisdom and knowledge, 2:1-3.

2:1 - HOW GREAT A STRUGGLE. *“For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person.”* Literally, Paul is saying, “I want you to know how great a contest I am having for you...” He had not been to Colosse or to Laodicea, but he was deeply burdened for them, based on reports and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in His life. He was having an inner battle of anxiety for them. In terms only the Christians can understand, he was waging a spiritual battle for them.

THOSE IN LAODICEA. It is interesting that Paul mentions the saints in Laodicea in his petition. Please see notes on Paul’s personal, non-biblical (non-canonical) epistle to the Laodiceans in Appendices One - Four at the end of this study. Laodicea and Colosse were sister churches and since they lived in a Roman society that was hostile to the church, it would be expected that there was constant communication between the two churches. Circular Christians epistles would have been passed from one to the other.

IN PERSON. They did not know Paul personally, but they faced the same enemies, the same challenges, and the same trials. Their hopes, their answers, their survival was also the same - in Jesus Christ. Paul had never been to either Laodicea or Colosse, but he had been informed by those who loved the church and he was inspired to write by the Holy Spirit.

2:2 - THEIR HEARTS. *“[I want] their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding, and have the knowledge of God’s mystery—Christ.”* Love is the motive that knits their hearts together, and Paul encourages them to be joined together as one against a common enemy. I would suggest an exercise to any serious student of the Word of God. Read the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles of Paul and the Epistles of John and mark the various times when we read about divisions. Then make notes as to the cause of the divisions, and the prescribed solution. Then, seek to apply those lessons in the local church to which the student of the Word belongs.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Paul is not talking about Bible trivia here. It was no uncommon when I began in the ministry for someone to buy a book of Bible trivia and then ask friends - and pastors - questions about obscure places, events, and personalities. You could sense that there were those who seemed to believe that if they knew Bible trivia they really “knew the Bible.” If you would really know God, you are going to have to move beyond trivia, or the trivial.

The Gnostics boasted of secret knowledge and the key to unlocking mysteries. God's secrets, however, are not found in a system of philosophies about Christ. They are not “discovered” by those who are initiated in certain mysteries. In the first place, we must know the true Christ, the Christ of the Bible in order to be saved, and then we must follow the true Christ and grow in knowledge of Him if we are to grow in our relationship with Him.

Sadly, some people never seem to get beyond what “I feel in my heart.” Adrian Rogers was a master communicator, one of the greatest the modern church has ever known. He often stressed, that “emotions are the weakest part of you, and salvation is the greatest work of God. Why would God do His greatest work in the weakest part of you?” With that in mind, I have stressed, “Don’t tell me what you feel in your heart. Tell me what you know in your mind (intellect, mind) and how you have acted upon that information (volition, will), and I will be able to draw reasonable conclusions as to what you have in your heart (emotions).

The solution to Gnosticism, Communism, Islam, and secularism, is Jesus Christ. In order to know God we must go to His Word in the power of His Spirit. We must stay in the Word, and not in some strange philosophy. In Colosse, the issue was Gnosticism; in America today the issues include, secularism or Humanism, Islam, Mormonism, and New Age religious philosophies.

2:3 - TREASURES OF WISDOM. *“In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.”* I am reading and marking Robert Spencer’s new book, THE TRUTH ABOUT MUHAMMAD (Regnery, 2006) as I work on this study of Colossians. I had read a few pages and marked my place so I could get back to it after finishing other books I was reading. Then, I turned on Fox News and discovered that Laura Ingraham was filling in for Bill O’Reilly (Nov. 20, 2006), so I watched for several minutes as she interviewed Robert Spencer and a Muslim woman who was trying to refute what Spencer was saying about Islam. At one point, Spencer made a statement about what Muhammad taught and the woman immediately began crying out, “That’s not true, that’s not true!” To which, Spencer repeatedly gave chapter and verse. It was obvious that the woman was emotionally bound to Islam, but that Robert Spencer knew the Qur’an (his spelling) better than she.

For the Christian, the answers are not found in fables and fantasies, but in the wisdom and knowledge found only in Jesus Christ. Our answers are found in revealed truth, not in concealed mysteries, as in Gnosticism.

ARE HIDDEN. In contrast to Gnosticism, the great mysteries that are found in Jesus Christ are revealed, not concealed. “Like treasures that are concealed or garnered up. It does not mean that none of those “treasures” had been developed; but that, so to speak, Christ, as Mediator, was the

great treasure-house where were to be found all the wisdom and knowledge needful for men” [Barnes].

2. They should not be deceived by even the best sounding arguments, 2:4.

2:4 - PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS. *“I am saying this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments.”* Paul is warning the saints at Colosse that they must not be deceived by the “Persuasive arguments” of the Gnostics. That was good advice for those First Century saints, and it is good for Christians of every generation. Francis Schaeffer declared that England entered the post-Christian era of their history in 1895 and America in 1935. Even though I have read some twenty-two volumes by Schaeffer, some of them three or four, I do not recall whether or not he specifically made the connection I make or not, but having accepted the possibility that he was right, I asked myself why. One of the first lessons I learned under Dr. R. R. Pearce at Mississippi College was the danger of assigning a single cause to an effect. He would ask his Sociology class what caused a certain result. Sometimes he would add, “Preachers say it was sin.” Those preachers he knew may well have been right, but the point Dr. Pearce was making is that in any given situation there are probably a number of factors that go to make up a cause.

There is no doubt in my mind that there were many factors involved in moving England from being at least a nominally Christian nation into the post-Christian realm in 1895 and America in 1935. If we back up a generation from those dates, we should be able to justify the claim that both nations were not just nominally Christian, but distinctively Christian in consensus. There were many lost people who, if told that the Bible said certain behavior was unacceptable, would have agreed that if the Bible called it sin, it was sin. If the Bible stated that certain behavior was desirable, they would have accepted it without question. That is not so any more, and the deeper we move into the post-Christian era in both countries, the less people look to the Bible as the strongest standard or authority for morality.

If I were to assign **one major factor** in the shift from a Christian consensus to a post-Christian, secular society it would be the acceptance and **teaching of evolution**. Without any effort to defend this suggestion at this point, I would simply mention that which either propelled, or accelerated the move from a theistic society to one that was greatly influenced by this decidedly anti-Christians theory, which in turn moved these once great Christian nations into the post-Christian era in their history. In England, recall the work of Charles Darwin and the Huxleys. In America, there was the famous - or infamous- Scopes trial which the ACLU used to force schools to teach evolution as an alternate theory to creation. Within a generation, they would fight any effort to have creation taught as an alternate theory to evolution.

There are many Christians, including pastors and educators, who hold some compromise position with reference to evolution (the Gap Theory or Day/Age Theory, for example), evolution opens the door for many to reject the Bible as their authority in all things. While, I will admit that the statement I am about to make is something of an overstatement, I am still convinced that it contains a valid argument. It is my conviction that if you want to move a society from a Christian consensus to a post-Christian - and in some ways, an anti-Christian society - begin with evolution. If you want to move a nation that generally looks to the Bible as an infallible guide to a society in

which abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, homosexuality, pornography, promiscuity, and infidelity in marriage are common, teach that society evolution. Yes, I know that is an over-simplification, but, I wonder, what would we think if we could find a way prove that in the moral realm evolution is more dangerous than, say, second-hand smoke in the physical realm.

Let me stress that there are many well-intentioned, and sincere Christians who have been deceived by the greatest single “carrier” the moral arena has known for spreading moral and spiritual perversion in our society. Many Christians who have high morals, have non-the-less, accepted evolution and reject any evidence that does not fit their evolutionary training. They had rather fight creation science than entertain the possibility that they might have been wrong since elementary school. After all, their pastor and Sunday school teacher are perfectly comfortable with the basic claims of evolution - as long as the evolutionists allow them to say, “Yes, but it was God who got it all started before the evolutionary process began.”

Space here will not permit a discussion of the debate between evolutionary science and creation science, but if anyone is interested in discovering what creation science has discovered, they can go to the Institute for Creation Science, Answers in Genesis, or the Creation Network on the PAX Network for a presentation. For now, however, I would suggest that if you want to sell a society on abortion, immorality, homosexuality, or euthanasia, you could lay no better foundation than the theory of evolution. Sadly, many people will argue that evolution has been proved. What has been proved is change within a species. What has not been proved is change from one species to another.

Let us stress again that many of the most moral people in our society hold a compromise position with reference to origins. At the same time, many who profess to believe the Gospel and subscribe to a high view of Scripture, have listened, and are listening to some “*persuasive arguments*.” For further reading about creation, please see this writer’s work on Genesis in The Bible Notebook Series (Vol. 1 of Genesis, PastorLife.com, Georgia Baptist Convention web site, Dr. Mike Minnix, editor). Read Genesis and the prologue to John, which was written over 30 years after the Epistle to the Colossians. The Fourth Gospel delivers a death blow to Gnosticism, but like its master, is continues to writhe in the dust like a serpent with his head crushed (under the names of Eastern Mysticism and New Age movements).

To summarize this point, **if you do not have Genesis One you do not need John One.** If you do not have a Creator at the beginning you do not have to worry about a Judge at the end. If you have neither a Creator or a Judge, why would you need a Redeemer? If you do not have Genesis 3 you do not need John 3.

A VERSE TO REMEMBER: “Not all flesh is the same flesh; there is one flesh for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish” (1 Cor 15:39, HCSB).

Some of the persuasive arguments with which the church must deal in the Twenty-first Century are Communism (which is not dead yet), Islam (which is a serious threat to Christians - but not to Christianity!), and New Age (post-modern) religious beliefs. The answer to these philosophies is found in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

3. Paul's wants the Colossian Christians remain firm in the faith 2:5.

2:5 - THE STRENGTH OF YOUR FAITH. *“For I may be absent in body, but I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the strength of your faith in Christ.”* “Your good order” denote a military line which is unbroken. “A few stragglers had gone over to the Gnostics, but there had been no panic, no breach in the line” [ATR]. The “strength of your faith in Christ” may relate to the metaphor of the military line which holds against the enemy. They have been attacked by pagan Gnostic philosophies, but the line is holding firm.

III. A NOTE OF WARNING (2:6-23).

A. Warning against false doctrines, 2:6-15.

1. Plea for spiritual depth, 2:6-7.

2:6 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him...”* “Therefore” holds before us that which has been said and looks ahead to a conclusion. Based on the previous argument, which you have received from Christ Jesus, you are to walk in the Lord. What has he just said? For one thing, he has written, “In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden” (Col 2:3). The great mystery of God is revealed in Christ Jesus, and they were being strengthened in the faith (vs. 5). In other words, they have sound doctrine as opposed to the false teachings of the Gnostics, which should motivate them to “walk in Him”.

CHRIST JESUS THE LORD. Literally, it is “The Christ, Jesus the Lord.” It is a unique title for Jesus but with it Paul meets the two forms of Gnostic heresy about the person of Christ. **He is both human and divine.** We must never compromise on either His humanity or His deity. The incarnate Christ was as much human as if He had not been divine at all, and He was much divine as if He had not been human at all: completely human and completely divine. This can be said of no other person who has ever lived on earth.

AS YOU HAVE RECEIVED. You were given the true Gospel - go back to your first lessons in Christ. I was attending the September, 2006 meeting of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources in Glorieta, NM, when Dr. Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and ex-officio member of the board, shared his vision for Southern Baptists. As he spoke, he reminded us that South Carolina, where he serves as a pastor, is one of the key early states in presidential elections, and that candidates are already focusing on South Carolina. Page announced that he had spent an hour on the phone with one of the best known political figures in America. At one point Frank Page asked the politician, “Have you ever received Jesus Christ as your Savior?” To which, the great statesman replied, “Oh yes. I received Him last Sunday when I received communion.” Page explained that this is not what we are talking about when we talk

about receiving Christ.

The expression, “receiving Christ”, may seem strange to some, but it is scriptural, and it is sound doctrine. We do not acquire Christ; we do not discover Him through some mystical experience; we do not earn a relationship with Him through our good works or our wisdom; we do not “find” Christ through ritual or ceremony; and we do not discover Him through our study of through mysterious steps. We receive Him through faith, the only thing in the world that is compatible with the grace of God, as Paul wrote succinctly but adequately in Ephesians 2:8-9.

SO WALK YE IN HIM. You have received Christ a Savior and Lord. Now, keep on walking in Him. To walk with Christ is simply to obey Him. Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9). We must continue to walk in obedience to Him.

2:7 - BUILT UP IN HIM. “...*Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*” Roots are essential to growth in the plant world.

I grew up on a cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta. We grew cotton, and soy beans, as well as a little corn, and we usually had two or three gardens. My mother was determined that no neighbor would go hungry, and she wanted to be sure that Brother and Mrs. M. C. Waldrup, the Superintendent of Missions for Riverside Baptist Association, who preached at our mission every Sunday, had fresh vegetables. We understood the importance of a good root system in the growth of a healthy, productive plant. We also knew that if we were to have a good yield, the plant had to be rooted in good soil.

Every true believer who is rooted in Christ Jesus and “built up in Him and established in the faith,” will be productive (bear fruit) and every fruitful believer will abound in joy and thankfulness. The idea here is continuous action, not just spurts of growth. As plants cannot receive the nutrition necessary to produce fruit by simply dipping them into good soil, the believer does not grow and he does not produce fruit just because he has had a momentary exposure to Christ. We are saved when we receive Jesus Christ - that is salvation. We must then be “rooted and built up in Him” and that is a process called Sanctification. In a once for all experience, we are justified; and in continuous obedience and walking daily with Christ, we are being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). That is a good definition of Sanctification - being conformed to the image of Christ. That requires continuous action.

2. We are must avoid being deceived by worldly wisdom, 2:8.

2:8 - BE CAREFUL. “*Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world, and not based on Christ.*” Paul sends them a sharp warning: “Beware.” They are warned to be alert at all times. The warning implies both an enemy and an action.

TAKE YOU CAPTIVE. Paul explains the danger with the warning, “that no one takes you captive.” The goal of Satan in inspiring the spread of false doctrines is to take individuals captive. If a person truly belongs to Jesus Christ, Satan cannot take that person from Him. That is to say, he cannot take away his salvation. He can, however, take away his joy and his fruitfulness by taking his mind captive in one of two ways. He can **keep him from sound doctrine**, or he can **give him false doctrine**.

PHILOSOPHY. This is the only use of the word in the New Testament, and it is “employed by Paul because the Gnostics were fond of it” [ATR]. The word means lover of wisdom, but Satan was using the gnostics to give them a false wisdom. There are a lot of people who have knowledge without wisdom and understanding. They have learned certain philosophical ideas, but they do not know the truth. Millions have been fanatically committed to Nazism, Communism, Islam, New Age religious beliefs, and the philosophies of the world, but do not know the wisdom of God. Their knowledge is based on the world’s philosophy “and empty deceit based on human tradition.”

BASED ON THE ELEMENTAL FORCES OF THE WORLD. The NASB has, “basic principles of the world,” referring to

“the unseen host of evil angelic beings who were thought to be in control of the universe in pagan belief. These spirits were believed by some to be associated with wind, cold, heat, and all natural phenomena. The phrase “Colossian heresy” describes a movement of false teachings within the church at Colosse which threatened the faith of the new covenant. Paul composes the Colossian letter in an effort to correct certain errors in their teachings” [BSB].

In warning of this heresy in 2:4-23, Paul identifies some of its key features:

- 1) It is very persuasive, alluring men to heretical opinions (v. 4).
- 2) It is based upon human tradition rather than divine revelation (Col 2:8).
- 3) It is legalistic, defining religion in terms of laws governing food and drink; special days (vs. 16).
- 4) It involves the worship of angels (v. 18).
- 5) It is mystical, claiming visions, revelations and, the formation of a spiritual aristocracy (v. 18).
- 6) It is ascetic, calling for self-abasement and severity to the body (v. 23).

[based on BSB Notes]

In light of these characteristics, the heresy, as noted previously, is probably an early form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism derives its name from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge.” It identifies an intellectual, elitist group which stressed wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge (cf. 1:9, note). In its mature form, Gnosticism attempts to combine Oriental theosophy (belief about God) and Greek philosophy with Christian doctrines. The essential errors of Gnosticism are found in its teachings relative to matter and the

origin of the world. It holds that spirit is good and matter in itself is evil; therefore, the world could not have been created by God. In its effort to reconcile the holiness of God with the creation of evil matter, it imposes a series of emanations (lesser spirits called aeons, spirits, and angels) between God and matter. These emanations place matter in a position so remote from God that God cannot be contaminated by creations of evil matter; yet He is close enough to have the power to create matter. The *aeon* closest to God possesses a measure of the holiness and power of God, but each descending *aeon* contains less and less until, finally, there is one (the *demiourgos*, Gk.) that possesses just enough of God to create, but too little of God to remain uncontaminated by evil [BSB].

The question might be asked, what does all of this have to do with the church or the Gospel of Jesus Christ? When some of the Gnostics were converted, they professed a faith in Christ, but they brought some of the basic elements of Gnosticism with them into the church and before long their philosophies were clashing with Christianity. They had to figure out a way to fit Christ into their elaborate, complicated system. **They identified Jesus, not as God, but as one of those aeons and placed Him somewhere between God and the evil universe.** When the church encountered Gnostics, instead of confronting them, many compromised with them. This led to serious error concerning the Person, ministry, and work of Christ.

The error takes two forms. The **first** denies the humanity of Jesus. In this case, Christ is regarded as having only a phantom body and as being wholly *aeon* or angel. They believed He took upon Himself an apparent human form, but His body was only an illusion. **The other** form denies the identity of Jesus as the Christ. This speculation holds that Jesus had a natural human life, and the *aeon* (spirit) came upon Him at His baptism and left Him on the cross.

The Gnostic philosophy gave rise to **two extremes**: asceticism and license. “In the one view, evil is to be avoided altogether and the body abused as being evil in itself. In the other view, evil is everywhere and cannot be avoided; so there is no need to struggle with it. This results in the wildest license” [BSB].

Apparently, Epaphras, upon his visit with Paul in Rome, had revealed the problem with this budding philosophy and its effects on the church at Colosse. John would be inspired to deal with this pagan philosophy which was impacting the church some twenty-five years later, but this is the earliest the heresy is dealt with in Scripture.

Gnosticism was a very real danger then, just as any false philosophy is today. The primary problem at Colosse was Gnosticism. Today we are confronted with evolution, Humanism, Communism, Holistic healing, Mormonism, the New Age Movements, Islam, and countless other “isms.” The answer both then and now is the Word of God.

CAPTIVE. Paul was concerned that no one take them - that no one carry them off as booty (captive, slave). The singular use of “one” or “someone” suggests that one strong leader was doing most of the damage in leading the people astray [ATR]. The other possibility is that this strong person was Satan himself.

3. The sovereignty and deity of Christ, 2:9-15.

2:9 - FULLNESS OF GOD. *“For in Him the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily...”* Paul has already expressed this in 1:15, when he wrote, “He is the image of the invisible God.” When Jesus was on earth, he was no apparition. Instead, He was fully God and He was fully man. Verse 9 deals with BOTH **the supremacy and adequacy of Christ** (see Rom. 11:6; Gal. 2:16; 3:3).

The “entire fullness of God’s nature” dwells in Jesus. When we receive Jesus as Savior, the fullness of God dwells in us - we are filled with the Spirit of God. “...Only in Christ can one have fullness. Apart from Him there is only emptiness. As philosopher Jean Paul Sartre put it, “Life is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness” [BKC]. That quote does not describe the believer.

DWELLS. This is the heart of the message about the Person of Christ. **There dwells (at home) in Christ ALL the aspects of God** (the essence of God), not just some of the traits of God. He is God! With these words, Paul wipes out **Cerinthian Gnosticism, which separates the man Jesus and the aeon Christ**, and the **Docetic Gnosticism, which claimed He had no real body**.

2:10 - FILLED BY HIM. *“...And you have been filled by Him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”* At the point of salvation, Jesus enters the believer’s heart and life. We are filled with the Holy Spirit, we know the presence of the living God. That does not mean that we become God. What that means is that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who then begins the process by which we take on the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Romans, “For those He foreknew He also **predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29, emphasis added). Regardless of whether we agree on certain aspects of predestination, there is one thing upon which we must surely agree: All those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. There is a word for that: it is called **Sanctification**. Someone once commented to me, “It’s not how high you jump, but how straight you walk when you come back down!”

THE HEAD. He is supreme, the head over every ruler and every authority. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Many rulers have rejected His lordship, but the Bible is very clear about the consequences. Our Lord is going to return and with the sword of His mouth (His Word) destroy all foes, bring down all satanic regimes, and make every ruler his footstool.

An ancient emperor sends his armies to war against a bitter enemy. Months later, they return victorious, parading the spoils of war, the symbols of the defeated nation, and their king and princes before the cheering throngs along the highway that leads to the palace. As they arrive, the defeated king approaches the throne of the king which has been set up so the people can see it. The defeated king crawls on his stomach, face to the ground, until he is immediately before the conquering king. At this point, the mighty king stretches out his foot and rests it upon the head of the defeated king. The message is clear. He is the king who rules over the defeated foe.

The kings and rulers who refuse to accept his Lordship today will indeed become His footstools. The victorious earthly king might permit the defeated king to live and serve him, or he might decide to put him to death. Dr. William (Bill) Cooper of London provides us with an interesting illustration:

The story begins in Britain, in AD 43, the year of the Claudian Invasion of this island and the Britons' resistance to it over nine long years under the leadership of Caradoc. We could say much at this point of how **Caradoc, time after time, defeated the Roman legions, humiliating their finest generals (including the future emperor Vespasian), in more than thirty pitched battles**, so that his fame and notoriety soon reached even Rome itself.³ But the truly important aspect of Caradoc's life as far as *this* paper is concerned, is what happened to him and his family when finally he was betrayed into the Romans' hands by the Brigantean Queen, Cartimantua. Tacitus, the Roman historian, takes up the story.

The scene is the Roman Senate, before whom are presented the members of Caradoc's household, and, of course, Caradoc himself. In fear and supplication, every member of the household kneels before Caesar, with the sole exception of Caradoc. **With summary execution awaiting him, he remains standing in chains, and addresses the so-called masters of the world with such dignified defiance that he wins their applause, their pardon, and a home with his family in the imperial palace.** And there modern historians (if they mention him at all) leave him, as if there is nothing more to say. Further enquiry, however, leads us to one of the most important episodes in the history of the early Christian Church, and ultimately it helps to answer a question that has been dogging even fundamentalist Biblical scholars for years concerning the date of the earliest writing of the Gospel.

Caradoc (known to Tacitus as Caratacus) is listed in the Welsh Triads (*Trioedd ynys Prydein*) as *Caradawc map Bran Vendigeit*, or Caradoc the son of Bran the Blessed. Prior to his leading the Britons against the invading Romans, he was one of the three *cynweissieit*, or "Chief Ministers" of Britain, finally becoming *cynwessiad*, or the Chief Minister mentioned in the *Branwen verch Llyr* [Cooper, William, *Old Light on the Roman Church*, academic paper, London, 2005, emphasis added].

2:11 - IN HIM. *"In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah."* Spiritual circumcision is the emphasis here. For further study see the Galatian controversy (Gal. 2 and Acts 15). See also, my commentary on Galatians in The Bible Notebook series, or on the PastorLife.Com web site (Georgia Baptist Convention). There is no contradiction. In Galatia the question was whether Christ (grace) was the "how" of salvation, or Christ plus circumcision (Law). In Colosse false teachers had apparently incorporated circumcision into their message in such a way as to create a ritual by which individuals who were already Christians were initiated into a higher

spiritual level. Paul saw the adequacy of Christ challenged. He stressed that in Christ all believers receive the purification symbolized by the ancient law of circumcision.

The ordinances today may be treated in a similar way as circumcision to those early Jewish believers. There are those who believe that one must believe and be baptized, even though the Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by grace through faith and that no one is saved by the works of the Law (Gal. 2:16). There are others who believe that they receive Jesus each time they take communion, even though the purpose of the Lord's Supper is clearly stated in the words, "This do in remembrance of Me."

PUTTING OF THE BODY OF SINS OF THE FLESH. This refers to the work of the Lord in spiritual circumcision. Physical circumcision can no more release one from the sins of the flesh than water baptism can. Only the baptism of the Holy Spirit can free anyone from the bondage of sin.

2:12 - BURIED WITH HIM. *"Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."* This is no new theme. Paul wrote to the church at Rome:

"Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were **buried with Him by baptism into death**, in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life**" (Rom. 6:3-4, emphasis added).

Robertson quotes Thayer's Lexicon: "For all who in the rite of baptism are plunged under the water, thereby declare that they put faith in the expiatory death of Christ for the pardon of their past sins" [ATR]. Robertson adds, "Yes, and for all future sins also. This word gives Paul's vivid picture of baptism as a symbolic burial with Christ and resurrection also to newness of life in him as Paul shows by the addition wherein ye were also raised with him" [ATR].

Believers are buried with Christ in baptism. "In the symbol of baptism the resurrection to new life in Christ is pictured with an allusion to Christ's own resurrection and to our final resurrection" [ATR]. New life in Christ is not caused by baptism; it is symbolized by it. Baptism is an outward manifestation of an inward experience. In Romans 6:4-5 we see that we are buried with Him (symbolizing the death of our old nature) and we are raised to walk in newness of life - we experience the resurrection life (we are alive in Him) - and our manner of life should reflect the presence of the indwelling Christ every day.

2:13 - DEAD IN TRESPASSES. *"And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses."* Gentiles were dead in sin and alienated from God. "Uncircumcision" was also a symbol, the symbol of the lostness of the Gentiles without Jesus. He is saying that their new life is in Christ and is the result of what He did for them on the cross and not the result of any ritual.

2:14 - THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT. *“He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.”* Often old manuscripts were “erased” (rubbed out or scraped off) and written over again. Jesus blots out or erases the record of sin. We can illustrate this in any number of ways today. Any record of this working copy can be erased, deleted or over written by striking the right keys. He cancels the debt and sets us free. The Bible Knowledge Commentary elucidates this for us:

“This new life came when God forgave us all our sins for He canceled the written code. Before God’s written Law, His “written code,” people stood condemned (cf. Rom. 3:19), so it worked against them and opposed them. But in Christ the Law is fulfilled (Rom. 8:2) and done away with (Gal. 3:25; Heb. 7:12). Legalism is wrong because believers are dead to the Law in Christ. He fulfilled its demands in His life and by His death, and Christians are in Him.

“This written code, the Law, was like a handwritten “certificate of debt” (NASB). Since people cannot keep the Law, it is like a bill of indebtedness. So people, unable to pay the debt, are criminals. But Jesus took... away this criminal charge, this certificate of indebtedness, by His death. It is as if He were nailing it to the cross with Him, showing He paid the debt. He wiped the slate clean” [BKC].

2:15 - HE TRIUMPHED OVER THEM. *“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him.”* On the cross, Jesus showed His power over all rulers and authorities, both in the physical realm and the spiritual realm. He showed them up! God won a complete victory over all alien powers. This is expressed in “The metaphor of a triumphant Roman general who strips his foes and leads them as captives behind his chariot in his victory procession is used to describe how God in Christ stripped from the powers of evil their control over the lives of men” [BSB].

There have been some crushing defeats in the annals of warfare, not the least of which was the shocking defeat of the enemy during Desert Storm. The media in America insisted that we could not win and that we would be involved in the Middle East for one hundred years. With modern weaponry, wars will often be decided in days, or even in hours, instead of decades. But, the most crushing and decisive defeat ever was the defeat of the enemies of Christ when He died on the cross. Some of the enemies of the cross realized what a defeat it was for them when He arose on the third day. When He returns to wage war on His enemies with the sword of his mouth (His Word), all enemies will know the scope of His victory. His victory over all powers and authorities has already been declared, but when He returns they will know the scope of the victory.

B. Warning Against Ritualism, 2:16-23.

1. Ritualism is of the world, 2:16-22.

2:16 - DON’T LET ANYONE JUDGE YOU. *“Therefore don’t let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a sabbath day.”* This is a

warning against ascetic regulations. We must remind ourselves here that this warning focuses specifically on the Gnostic heresy at Colosse, but it is relevant in any situation to which it is applicable, whether Gnosticism of the First Century, Eastern Mysticism from the Middle Ages to the present, New Age religious philosophies of the late Twentieth Century, or post-modern philosophies of the Twenty-first Century.

Born-again believers have Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and nothing mystics of any persuasion offer can add to that. I visited with a friend before a funeral a few years ago. He is an intelligent, successful business man who professes faith in Christ. He told me he had been reading a book about reincarnation. He smiled and added, "I was just wondering, what if..." I doubt that I covered my surprise as I replied, "You don't have to wonder 'what if...'?!!! The Bible tells us that it is appointed unto man once to die and after that, the judgment."

Jesus Christ is the source of your existence; He came to earth and died on the cross for our sins; He has provided everything we need for this life and for eternity. God has provided us with His inerrant Word and placed the Holy Spirit in the heart of every believer to help us understand His Word and apply it daily in every situation. What more can anyone possibly need? Yet, fallen man is constantly looking for something novel, something new that will boost him to the next spiritual level.

Acceptance of that which is extra-biblical is rejection of that which is distinctly biblical, yet human beings are constantly seeking short-cuts in order to try to satisfy that inner drive the Lord has placed in each person. Others will go the long-way around, adding superfluous rituals, ceremonies, and rules to satisfy their psychological, emotional, or egocentric whims. The various cults that identify themselves as "Christian" will attest to that. The Mormons offer a free King James New Testament to people who call an 800 number, yet, a true understanding of the Scripture they offer free of charge could be very costly to them. In fact, the truth revealed there would put them out of business, even if one went no further than the study of the doctrine of Christ. The Jehovah's Witnesses, like the Mormons, may show an admirable zeal for evangelism (proselytizing), yet they offer converts a Christ that is not biblical. In their New World Translation, Jesus is not God, but "a god" (John 1).

We must also beware of those who try to impose strange doctrines on others. I worked part time for the USDA for several while I was going to college and seminary, and worked a few agricultural surveys when my older son was still an infant. My wife took off three years from teaching when each son was born. I attended a school in Jackson, Mississippi and listened to a rather worldly young man teach us how to conduct interviews. A years or so later I was back for another meeting and the same man who could hardly wait to get away to go for a beer the year before, mentioned God, faith, prayer, and fellow believers. There had been a radical change in this young man.

I asked him about it and he invited me to come to his hotel room where he would tell me about it. A friend and I went to his room and listened as he told us about getting involved with a charismatic business men's association. I was at first very happy for my friend, but as he talked I realized that he was saying something that was disturbing to me. Finally, I asked, "Are you saying that you

believe you have to speak in tongues to be saved?” With the greatest sincerity and reverence, he answered, “I am not saying you have to speak in tongues to be saved. But I will say that I have never seen anyone who was saved who didn’t speak in tongues.” I looked him in the eye and with great concern for his misguided zeal, said, “You are looking at your first one right now.” I did not believe I convinced him, but it affirmed to me the importance of standing on the Word of God in all things, and not letting others sit in judgment on us because we do not endorse or participate in some questionable practice because they are “sincere in what they believe.”

2:17 - THE SUBSTANCE. *“These are a shadow of what was to come; the substance is the Messiah.”* If Jesus Christ is the ultimate reality, why search for His shadow? The Law of Moses, with its rituals, sacrifices, and ceremonies, was but a shadow pointing to Christ. I once said that If we could capture the sacrifices, rituals, and ceremonies associated with Tabernacle and the Temple on film and project it onto a screen, we would see Calvary, Jesus on the cross. Today, we could make that a DVD, but the idea is the same. “The Colossians, who possess the reality as members of Christ, would be foolish to return to the shadow” [‘BSB]. The Messiah is the body, the substance or the reality, as opposed to the shadow (rituals and ordinances). “The OT ordinances, festivals, holy days, etc., were like a shadow without a body. Christ is the body, the reality, of all the OT shadows” [NCWB].

2:18 - LET NO ONE DISQUALIFY YOU. *“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on ascetic practices and the worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm and inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.”* Those who would turn people from reality (Christ) to the shadow (Law and its ceremonies) “disqualify” them for the prize. The NAS B reads, “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen...” The kind of humility to which he refers may have been “self-absorbing and self-gratifying, and a kind of pretentious piety” [NCSB].

WORSHIP OF ANGELS. Those who “disqualified” them may have made them feel that they could not go directly to God, “so they prayed to angels, justifying this by the fact that the law was given by angels.

“This practice continued for some time in Phrygia, so that in A.D. 360 the Council of Laodicea specifically spoke against angel-worshippers in its 35th canon. Even as late as Theodoret’s time there were oratories to Michael the archangel, and the modern Greeks have a legend of Michael opening a chasm to save the Colossians from a threatening flood.

“Scripture clearly opposes the idea of “patrons” or “intercessors” (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). True Christian humility comes from realizing that our only worth is due to Christ’s intervention on our behalf” [NCWB].

CLAIMING ACCESS TO A VISIONARY REALM. Or, to “things which he has seen.” According to our records, the gnostic ascetics gloried in their visions. “The language admits that the visions must have been real, or else Paul would have qualified his statement. But these people trusted in their visions and senses rather than holding on to Christ, the Head, by faith (2:19)”

[NCWB].

2:19 - THE HEAD. *“He doesn’t hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, develops with growth from God.”* Stated negatively, “Doesn’t hold” carries the force of abandoning or deserting “the head”. Robertson observes that “The Gnostics dethroned Christ from his primacy (Col 1:18) and placed him below a long line of aeons or angels. They did it with words of praise for Christ as those do now who teach Christ as only the noblest of men. The headship of Christ is the keynote of this Epistle to the Colossians and the heart of Paul’s Christology” [ATR].

HELD TOGETHER. Barnes was right in his conclusion that “This is regarded here as essential to the maintenance of all the other doctrines of religion. He who has just views of the Redeemer will not be in much danger of erring respecting the other points of religious belief” [BARNES]. This makes about as much sense as a neurosurgeon who forgets the neurological system in treating a lower back problem. The whole body is “nourished” and “develops with growth from God.” Jesus is the Head of the church and God develops every organ of the body (church) in concert with the Head.

2:20 - IF YOU DIED WITH CHRIST. *“If you died with Christ to the elemental forces of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations:”* **This is the condition of the first class, assumed to be true** - since Paul is addressing this to members of the church at Colosse. “If you died with Christ”, which is symbolized in baptism, you died to the “elemental forces of this world.” They were dead to Christ when they lived in the realm of superstition, false gods, and demonic angels. When they received Jesus they were made alive in Him, but dead to the dark things of this world. If we have come out on the other side of the grave (symbolized by baptism), why would we live as though we were still alive in that other realm (death)?

ELEMENTAL FORCES. The underlying Greek word has a variety of meanings, “several of which could fit in this context: (1) elementary principles of teaching, (2) elemental spirits, and (3) heavenly bodies (which were associated with personal, celestial beings)” [NCWB].

2:21 - DON’T TASTE. *“Don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch”?* Believers are set free from superficial regulations and they should avoid man-made rules and doctrines. Robertson adds that

“The Pharisees, Essenes, Gnostics made piety hinge on outward observances and rules instead of inward conviction and principle. These three verbs are all in the aorist subjunctive second person singular with *mê*, a prohibition against handling or touching these forbidden things. Two of them do not differ greatly in meaning” [ATR].

Sadly, there are still people who believe Christianity consists of a bunch of negative rules. I once listened to a Christian counselor on a tape, and while I do not remember anything else he said, I recall clearly one illustration. The man said that he had been a chaplain in the army and upon arriving at a new base, he was invited to some function that evening. He arrived, met people, and

visited. Someone asked, “Chaplain, would you like a drink?” He said, “No, thanks. I don’t drink.”

Then another man walked up and as they visited, he said, “Chaplain, would you like a cigarette?” The chaplain answered, “No, thanks. I don’t smoke.” After a while someone asked if he would like to dance, to which he replied, “No thanks. I don’t dance.” Someone who had heard all three exchanges said, “Chaplain, do you spit?”

The former chaplain, turned counselor, stated that this last question caused him to go back and rethink his position on some things. He concluded that his profession was negative, not positive. I was concerned about the counselor’s conclusion because he could have given a good reason for abstaining from things that have been demonstrated to be harmful to the body (smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages), or questionable spiritually (drinking in dancing).

For those who do not believe social drinking is sinful, I would insist that I abstain for a number of reasons. First, I make a pledge to abstain for life when I was about 13 years old. Second, there are no alcoholics among life-long total abstainers. Third, I refuse to support an industry that contributes so much to trouble at home and risks on the road. Fourth, I know the legacy of addiction I have seen among relatives and friends.

A number of years ago, I sat on a bed in the hospital at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, visiting with Kenny Wagoner, without a question the most notorious criminal in the history of the state. We had stood near a door visiting until he told me he had to lie down. He motioned to the next bed and told me to be seated. After some time, I told Kenny Wagoner that I had read that alcohol was a factor in 94.6% of the cases in which people were sentenced to the state penitentiary. I asked if he thought those statistics were right. He said, “It’s higher than that!” When I asked him to explain his statement, he said, “It is involved in all of them.” I did not argue, but I did question his claim that it was involved in all cases, but he knew a lot more about criminal behavior than I. Today, drugs are often the primary factor.

When I was a young pastor, our Minister of Education told me about the dances his daughter liked to attend. He went on to say that he didn’t want her to go where they had slow dancing. “The ones she goes to,” he added, “they just jump up and down and act silly.” I mentioned this to a young man who had a lot of experience in partying before he was saved and called into a ministry. He said, “Parents thought we were not touching, but we were touching and we knew exactly where, why, and how we were touching.”

There is not enough space here to debate either of these issues, but it is sufficient to say that if we abstain from something that may be harmful or sinful, we should be able to offer a positive reason for our position, and not simply a negative one. Do I have to explain why I do not put sand in the crankcase of my automobile, or water in the gas tank? Everyone knows that I abstain from those things for positive reasons. Like Paul, I abstain from some things, not so much because I find them harmful, but because I might become a stumbling block to others. I am loyal to Jesus for positive reasons, just as I am faithful to my wife for positive reasons.

2:22 - HUMAN COMMANDS. *“All these [regulations] refer to what is destroyed by being used up; they are human commands and doctrines.”* “All these regulations” refers to the rules of verse. 21, “Don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch.” The things covered by these rules are being used up, or consumed, as they are being used. Material things perish with the using. We may look at a banquet table with a great deal of appreciation, but once the food has been “used up” the banquet is but a memory.

2. Ritualism is vain, 2:23.

2:23 - REPUTATION OF WISDOM. *“Although these have a reputation of wisdom by promoting ascetic practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value against fleshly indulgence.”* “These” denote ascetic regulations which may be highly regarded by some. Ritualism is worthless in controlling physical passions. The gnostics had a **reputation** for wisdom, but there is **no real wisdom** in these heretical teachings. “But this does not prevent an “appearance of wisdom,” i.e., a feigned wisdom” [BSB]. The self-imposed religion of the Gnostics may have referred to “the determined promulgation of those myths which had no basis in revealed truth but were concocted in the corporate heretical imagination” [BSB].

“Living by such regulations or self-made religion has a certain appearance of wisdom (sophias; cf. Col. 1:9; 2:3, 4:5), but it has absolutely no value in restraining sensual indulgence. “Sensual indulgence” is literally “the flesh” (sarkos; cf. 2:11, 18). For denying the body its desires merely arouses them, as is well known by many who have tried to lose weight by sticking to rigid diets. Neglecting the body, Paul argued, does not nourish the spirit” [BKC].

IV. MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, 3:1-4:1.

A. What it means to be raised together with Christ, 3:1-4.

- (1) It means setting your heart on the things of heaven, 3:1.
- (2) It means fixing your mind on things above and not on things of the earth, 3:2.
- (3) It means being hidden with Christ in God, 3:3.
- (4) It means that believers will appear with Him in glory, 3:4.

3:1 - RAISED WITH THE MESSIAH. *“So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.”* “If you have been raised” is the *condition of the first class, assumed to be true.* If you are a child of God, you have died with the Messiah and you have been raised with Him.

In the Gospel According to Mark, the Holy Spirit sets before us a series of fast moving stories

about Jesus, in which His authority is established over diseases, infirmities, storms and rough seas, even death. These stories are often linked with words like “immediately” and “amazed.” When Jesus spoke things happened immediately and people were amazed. After a series of miracles and parables in which Jesus is set before us miraculously and gloriously, the people asked, “What manner of man is this? (Mark 4:41).

There are many miracles recorded in the New Testament, but the crowning miracle, the miracle of miracles is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They came up with human explanations for some of the miracles of Jesus, denied others, and were enraged at the ones they could not explain or deny, but the one miracle they could not refute was His resurrection. There were simply too many eye-witnesses. What was the response of the people. Those who hated Him hated Him and His followers all the more. Others acknowledged that something mysterious had occurred. Many believed. In fact, His brothers believed after the resurrection and James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. Even Paul reported to James when he returned to Jerusalem after a mission trip.

SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. Jesus suffered, bled, and died for our sins. He died that we would not have to die; He arose that we might live. The death would have been nothing more than a sad tragedy if He had not risen from the dead. Those early saints understood that. Jesus ascended to the Father and took His place at the right hand of the Father’s throne, where He is making intercession for us and awaiting His glorious return, the rapture of His church, and the ultimate victory and glorious reign. The risen Savior is preparing a dwelling place in heaven, where all believers will live with Him forever.

3:2 - SET YOUR MIND. *“Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth.”* “If you have been raised with the Messiah” - and if you are a true believer you have (3:1) - you are directed to “set your mind on what is above, not on what is on earth.” Anything less is unacceptable - the word for that is sin. To set your mind on the things above is to be spiritually minded. To set your mind on the things on the earth is to be earthly minded or to walk in the flesh. The things of God are spiritually discerned. It is the Lord’s purpose that “no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:29, KJV). Paul teaches us the importance of this truth:

“We also speak these things, **not in words taught by human wisdom**, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. But the natural man does not welcome what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to know it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. For: who has known the Lord’s mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:13-16, emphasis added).

To set your mind “on what is above” demands a choice, a commitment. We must continually focus on the things of God, and while we are not to neglect our day to day responsibilities on earth, we are not to become so focused on them that we are distracted from the things of God.

It was said of the “Jesus freaks” of the Sixties, “They are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly

good.” Some responded that they were only reacting to their parents who “were so earthly minded they were of no heavenly good.” Those who are genuinely set their minds on the things above are those who pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

As I was talking with a pastor who was not familiar with the Holman Christian Standard Bible, I pointed out the fact that the HCSB is a word-for-word translation, not a “version” of an earlier translation. I also told him about the time when Dr. Jimmy Draper, President of LifeWay Christian Resources, brought the General Editor of the HCSB (the chief translator), Dr. Ed. Blum, came to my table where I was enjoying lunch with other members of the board of trustees in Nashville. A Hispanic trustee from Florida was concerned about the use of the word “slave” instead of the more familiar word, “servant” or “bond-servant.” Dr. Bloom patiently explained that the HCSB is a word-for-word translation, it is literal and readable. He went on to stress that when you receive Jesus Christ as Savior you become His slave - you are not your own, you are bought with a price.

I commented on the fact that pastors have traditionally explained that a bond-servant was a servant, but his service is voluntary. That, however, is not the case if you are His slave. A slave serves at the discretion of his master. Jesus paid the price to set you free from bondage to sin and death and made you His slave. My new friend said, “But we do serve voluntarily.” I answered, “You are not your own, you belong to Him. You have this choice: you either doing His will, or you sin. It is not a matter of saying I may do His will or I may not. If you are not obedient to Him you are sinning.”

3:3 - YOU HAVE DIED. *“For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.”*

The word “Hidden” expresses “a permanent condition created by God in Christ. The fact that the Christian’s old sin nature has been crucified with Christ and buried together with Him in baptism (cf. Rom 6:3-5, note) and that he is now liberated, resurrected to live a life pleasing to God, must be accepted “by grace ... through faith” (Eph 2:8, 9), just as was the initial salvation (cf. 2:6)” [BSB].

Paul underscores the importance of the resurrection of Jesus in his letter to Rome:

“Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life” (Rom. 6:4).

That Paul’s life was “hidden with the Messiah in God” is seen in his great declaration, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21, KJV). In the epistle to the Galatians, he wrote that believers, “Having begun in the Spirit,” (by allowing God’s power to work in them by faith) are not made mature “by the flesh” (Gal 3:3), by striving to live the Christian life in their own power without total dependence on God (cf. John 15:5; Phil 4:13).

3:4 - WHEN THE MESSIAH IS REVEALED. *“When the Messiah, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”* If you have been “raised with the Messiah” (Vs. 1) - and if you are a child of God you have (condition of the first class) - then your life is “hidden with the Messiah in God” (vs. 3). That being the case,

“Christ himself is our new, implanted, divine life. But this life is now hidden. One day, when Christ is manifested in glory, we will also be manifested in glory, for this divine life will have saturated our entire being and thereby glorified us (see Rom. 8:11, 18, 19, 30)” [NCWB].

This is the blessed and glorious hope of every born-again believer - and that is the only kind of believer there is. The word “hope” in this case is not mere wishful thinking.

B. The Old Life and the New, 3:5-17.

1. Putting off the old way of life, 3:5-11.

3:5 - PUT TO DEATH. *“Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.”* The verb is the first aorist active imperative of the Greek word meaning to put to death, meaning that Christians are commanded to put to death, once for all time, a worldly lifestyle and world-view, as well as sexual immorality, impurity in every form, and greed. Paul uses the metaphor of death here a number of times (Col 2:20; Col 3:3). It is portrayed in baptism (Col 2:12) to the life of the born-again believer.

Paul is laying the foundation for the church in dealing with Gnostic extremes, one of which is that of license on their claim that the soul is not affected by what the body does. Paul condemns such philosophy with the command to

“Put to death that which is carnal within you, “your members which are on the earth.” With the words ‘put to death,’ Paul does not suggest suicide (a supposed euthanasia to benefit and liberate the soul), but the mortification of the deeds of the flesh, a list of which follows immediately. The form of the verb in the Greek implies that Paul’s readers have not been putting to death the deeds of the flesh by faith but that they are to begin doing so (cf. 3:3, note). ‘Evil desire’ is a translation of the same Greek word which is usually rendered ‘lust’ [BSB].

Paul sees the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Co 6:19), and as such it should not be given over to worldliness, which includes sexual sins of all kinds, greed, and covetousness (not included here, but it is in Ephesians 4:19 and 5:5). The lists of things the believer must put to death is similar to the catalog of sins Paul lists in the first chapter of Romans, where he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to list sins of which pagan Gentiles were guilty. We must expect the unsaved person who is a slave to Satan, the world, and the flesh to be guilty of these things, especially in a culture that has little or no Christian influence. Today, studies reveal that the culture in America is becoming more and more worldly. Incredibly, the moral line between the church and the world is becoming increasingly blurred. This is not a matter of speculation, or sermonizing by pastors and evangelists.

In his book, *THE BRIDGERS* (B & H, Nashville, 2006), Tom Rainer reveals a disturbing picture of the culture of the generation he calls “the bridgers”, the generation with a population second in numbers only to the Boomers. America has grown progressively more secular and less Christian, as The Builders, the Boomers, the Busters, and now the children of the Busters, the Bridgers (bridging the gap between the centuries) reject the moral position the church once held in America. The speech, dress, entertainment (movies, TV, music, and literature) is becoming more secular, and a secular society is a pagan society.

Sexual immorality spreads where the influence of the Gospel wanes, and today the attitude of the church toward worldly entertainment, profanity, obscenity, “R” rated movies and television programs, pre-marital and extra-marital sex is becoming increasingly, incrementally, more worldly. There is a war going on in America and Europe against Jesus Christ - not religion, but Jesus Christ. Billy O’Reilly, on his television show, *The O’Reilly Factor*, November 28, 2006, announced that Mayor Daily of Chicago had announced that the city would not allow advertizement of the movie, *The Nativity*, at a mall set up to celebrate Christmas, for fear that non-Christians might be offended. In 2005, well known retail chains, according to some reports, prohibited Nativity scenes, prohibited employees from saying “Merry Christmas,” and denied the Salvation Army the privilege of collecting money for their ministries. Cities across America denied citizens the right to set up a nativity scene on public property, even though Jewish and Muslim symbols were permitted.

WHICH IS IDOLATRY. Several years ago, my younger brother Mike called with a question before going to teach a Bible class. Mike is so highly respected for his competence and integrity that he could give lawyers a good name! He is highly disciplined in his law practice and when he teaches a Bible class, he prepares not only to teach the material in the teacher’s commentary, but he anticipates questions, plans answers - to the fourth generation: “If I say this someone may ask... and I will answer. I anticipate this response....and I will give this answer. But what if someone asks....”

He prepares as carefully as if he is getting ready to cross examine an expert witness on the stand.

This Sunday morning he ask, “What exactly is idolatry? I have always understood that idolatry is the worship of idols, but I hear people calling various things idolatry.” I pointed to this verse, in which Paul tells us that anything that gets between you and the Lord is idolatry. We do not have to get on our knees before an idol, all we have to do is adopt a carnal word-view, or a worldly life-style.

Several years ago, a man I had known for several years surprised me when he called me over and pointed to a young man who was working out on another machine at our health club. My friend, said, “That young man has AIDS.” Several things ran through my mind, most of them concerning my friend’s radical claim and suspicious nature. I nodded but had not replied when he added, “I asked him. I called him over and said, ‘Son, do you have AIDS? Now, I am not judging you, my son died of AIDS and I know he symptoms. I assured him that I was concerned for him.” I never saw the young man there again but I could not help think of he pain my friend had known. I asked him if his son had gotten AIDS from and injection (which happened at times back then). He told me that his son lived a homosexual life-style. I later learned that a daughter was also homosexual.

I could not help but factor in the information my friend's former pastor had shared with me. He said that the man had been a womanizer in his younger days. I wondered if his immoral life-style, the infidelity and the effect on their mother might have contributed to their ungodly life-style. Then one day the man told me his wife had cancer and that she was terminal. Some time later, while grieving for his terminally ill wife, he told me he had lain awake the previous night and counted thirty-nine women with whom he had committed adultery. It's a wonder someone had not killed him!

Pornography had become a booming business. Tim Vineyard, Vice President the Technology Division for LifeWay Christian Resources, talked with a friend and me at a trustees meeting at Glorieta Conference Center a few years ago about all the steps his department had taken to filter out pornography at LifeWay. I asked him why people would send pornography to a Christian ministry like LifeWay Christian Resources, possibly the most visible and influential entity of its kind in the entire history of the church. Tim looked at me as though I were as naive as I discovered I was, and said, "Pornography is highly addictive." I knew that, but what I wanted to know is how people could profit by sending unsolicited pornography to a Christian institution. I now know that they are trying to hook people on pornography so they can sell them more pornography.

Pornography is a form of idolatry. Not only is it idolatry, it infects the soul of the one who become addicted to it, some of whom will act on their lusts. My older son John is a prosecutor with the local District Attorney's office and one day as we drove through an older, quiet neighborhood, he said, "You wouldn't believe the cases of sexual abuse I have worked in this neighborhood." Sadly, most of those living in that neighborhood believe it is a safe community. They are not aware of the evil lurking just around the corner. As older neighbors move away or die, new people have moved into the community. Lust, Paul tells us, is idolatry. Greed and covetousness are called idolatry.

3:6 - GODS WRATH COMES. *"Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient..."*

Those who commit these sins mentioned in verse 5 are not only engaged in idolatry, they are also inviting the wrath of God on themselves. The wrath of God is "in the process of coming upon the sons characterized by disobedience, as distinguished from sons characterized by obedience—those who have trusted Christ as Lord and Savior (cf. Rom 1:18-21; 2:5; Eph 2:1-10; 2 Pet 3:9)" [BSB].

The wrath of God is directed against the devil and his angels who would destroy those for whom Christ died. It is also coming upon those

"Who pridefully refuse the only remedy for overcoming the power of sin: Christ's atoning sacrifice (John 3:36; 1 John 5:12). The love of God is not a later stage in an evolutionary process away from the more primitive concept of the wrath of God. Rather, the wrath of God is a necessary result of the holiness and love of God, who hates that which is destroying His creatures. Rather than evolving away from the wrath of God, the unbelieving world is rapidly devolving toward it (Rev 6:15-17)

[BSB].

3:7 - YOU ONCE WALKED. “...*And you once walked in these things when you were living in them.*” The phrase, “walked in these things” means that they followed after all the sins listed in 3:5. This does not imply an occasional slip-up - it was their lifestyle. They continually walked in these sins so as to make it a deep seated part of their character and nature.

3:8 - PUT AWAY. “*But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.*” They must break away from their sinful past, meaning their previous pagan state, complete with the sins listed in verse 5. Repentance in biblical terms means a change of mind that is reflected in a change in one’s direction. One who is converted, in the biblical sense, is one who has been persuaded to commit himself or herself to Jesus Christ, including a conversion from sin to righteousness, from death to life, and the new direction implied by the term “walk”.

1) They were guilty of sins of attitude:

- a) **ANGER** - denotes a smoldering and chronic attitude of ill will toward another person. The Bible cautions us, “Be angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26).
- b) **WRATH** - implies a fit of rage.
- c) **MALICE** - refers to hostility toward others and eagerness to do harm to another person.

2) They were guilty of sins of speech.

- a) **SLANDER** - denotes blasphemous speech toward others, using the tongue to destroy others.
- b) **FILTHY LANGUAGE** - points to vile, repulsive language.

Filthy language often including obscene references to body parts or body functions, sexual innuendos, and the use of crude offensive language in referring to women or behavior. When Isaiah saw the vision of the Lord (Is. 6), his first response was, “Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts” (Is. 6:5).

3:9 - DO NOT LIE. “*Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his practices ...*” In Christ, it is off with the old and on with the new. We must first put off the old man, the practice of sin. A good beginning point is the commitment not to lie to one another. Lying identifies one with the father of liars, Satan. It is to sin after the pattern of the old life which was dominated by Satan: it honors Satan and dishonors God. Jesus charged the religious leaders of His day with two sins that identified their behavior with Satan:

“You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father’s

desires. He was a **murderer** from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because **there is no truth in him.** When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars (John 8:44-45, emphasis added).

3:10 - PUT ON THE NEW MAN. “...And have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator.” Only those who have put off the old man can put on the new man. The picture of the believer putting on “the new man” is one Paul repeats in other epistles: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). In his letter to the Ephesians, he explains this picture more clearly:

“You took off your former way of life, **the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires;** you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; **you put on the new man, the one created according to God’s [likeness] in righteousness and purity of the truth**” (Eph 4:22-24).

BEING RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE. A process of renewal in knowledge is clearly implied, but to what does this refer? It cannot mean simply an ingathering of knowledge about the peoples, events, miracles, or parables of the Bible, because there are cynics and scoffers who read the Bible to argue with Christians about everything from creation to miracles, from ethics to Eschatology. It is not uncommon for one who professes to be a Christian to attack other Christians who do not accept some compromise position of evolution, never stopping to consider how inefficient godless evolution would have been for the God whose name should always be spelled with a capital “G”. If He had the power to say, “Let there be”, and if His purpose was to create something which He could assess as “good”, or even “very good”, why would He have begun a good work and then pulled out and left the end product to random chance?

What then is the knowledge to which Paul refers? Some believe this refers to the knowledge man had of God before the Fall. The reasoning is that if you view this passage with Ephesians 4:24, (see above), we have evidence that before the Fall, man was endowed with “righteousness and purity of the truth (Or, “righteousness, true holiness, and knowledge). Barnes sees this as a reference to the knowledge man had of God before the Fall:

“Man was acquainted with his Creator. He resembled him in his capacity for knowledge. He was an intelligent being, and he had an acquaintance with the Divine existence and perfections. Comp. But especially had he that knowledge which is the fear of the Lord; that knowledge of God which is the result of love. Piety, in the Scriptures, is often represented as the "knowledge" of God” [BARNES].

NOTE: This is not the first time Paul has used the word knowledge in this brief epistle. The Gnostics boasted of secret knowledge, available only to those initiated in their philosophy, and blessed with mystical knowledge not available to the uninitiated. Paul stresses the importance of true knowledge of God. The answer to Eastern Mysticism and New Age movements, Mormonism, Islam, or any other “ism” is knowledge of God and His Word. In other words, we must grow in the “purity of truth”.

ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE OF HIS CREATOR. Those who are putting on the “new man”, or new woman for that matter, are “being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator.” This is another picture of Sanctification, without using the term. In Romans 8:29, we learn that God has predestined every believer to be “conformed to the image of His Son.” While we may debate the whole subject of predestination endlessly, there can be no question about God’s purpose for every true believer. He wants every believer to be conformed to the image of His Son - who, according to the first chapter of John was the Agent of Creation.

3:11 - NOT GREEK AND JEW. *“Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.”* The ground really is level at the foot of the cross. There are two class of people in the world, the lost and the saved. From the perspective of this epistle, there are but two races, the redeemed and the condemned. Politicians “play the race card” whenever it serves their purpose. In November, 2006, all the talk shows and television news programs were playing the ranting and ravings of a so-called comedian who had used the “n” word several times while shouting back had hecklers. Jesse Jackson had him on a radio program few Americans had ever heard of, and gave the man an opportunity to apologize. Afterward, Jesse Jackson was asked by some news person if he thought the comedian’s apology was genuine. Jackson offered a brief comment and then immediately declared that we should not be concerned about a comedian: what we need to be concerned about, he insisted, was the fact that Trent Lott was back in power as the Senate Minority Leader.

The disturbing thing to me is how anyone who really knows Senator Trent Lott would not recognize him as a committed Christian. You would especially think the “reverend” Jackson would have enough of the gift of discernment to know that Senator Lott’s faith is genuine. I met Trent Lott when he was a congressman from Mississippi. His aunt was married to my wife’s uncle and we were attending the funeral service for her uncle. I had a very rewarding visit with Trent Lott and we have heard from him regularly from family. Black people in Mississippi support him overwhelmingly, yet Jackson attacks him very pointedly.

Those who really know the Lord, those who are being conformed to the image of His Son, appreciate the song many children learn in Sunday School, “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.” Jerry Vale began a song with those words years ago, but I was disappointed when he didn’t complete the line, “Jesus loves the little children of the world.” We will know we are being conformed to the image of Christ when we love others as He loves them.

2. Ladder to Christian maturity, 3:12-17.

3:12 - GOD’S CHOSEN ONES. *“Therefore, God’s chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...”* When we see the word “therefore” in the Scripture we should make it a point to look at that which precedes it and then look at that which is about to be said. Here, that which has been said is, “And have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator” (vs. 10). “Therefore” bridges the gap between putting on the new man and instruction to put on the character of the new man in Christ, including:

- 1) Heartfelt Compassion - seated in love for one another.
- 2) Kindness - the product of love for others.
- 3) Humility - the fruit of a life surrendered to God and genuine love for Him.
- 4) Gentleness and meekness - the fruit of the Spirit, seated in love for God and others.
- 5) Patience - a deep seated commitment to remain faithful to Christ the end.
- 6) Be helpful to others - in honor of the Second Great Commandment.
- 7) Forgive one another - as the Lord forgives you (Model Prayer).

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, compassion means “To feel passion with someone, to enter sympathetically into their sorrow and pain. Compassion in English translations represents at least five Hebrew and eight Greek terms. *Chamal* means ‘to regret,’ ‘be sorry for,’ ‘grieve over,’ or ‘spare someone’ [HBD]. We often read of God’s compassion for Israel or for various individuals. For an example of human compassion we might point out the compassion David showed Mephibosheth for Jonathan’s sake (2 Sam. 21:7).

Kindness may be defined as “The steadfast love that maintains relationships through gracious aid in times of need” [HBD]. According to this passage, kindness is a characteristic of one should “put on” when he comes to know Jesus Christ. It is not a native trait to fallen man. Francis Schaeffer often reminded his readers that nothing has been “normal” since the Fall. He also stressed that we must never be surprised at how low fallen man can stoop. Christian kindness is not natural to fallen man, but it should become the nature of one who has received Christ and made a commitment to put on “kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

Dr. Leon Hyatt led in the conservative resurgence in the Louisiana Baptist Convention for many years, and some who resisted the conservative resurgence in the convention and opposed him in letters, in the press, in public and private meetings were kind and gracious in doing so. Others straddled the fence and one could never predict which side of the issue they would take. Still others were hostile, arrogant, dishonest, and vindictive in their attacks on Dr. Hyatt. I heard the charges against him and against the Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship, which he led. There were times when I thought he would have been justified in reacting in kind - rather than in kindness. Instead, in every situation in which I was privileged to be a witness, he responded in humility, kindness and grace. Even when he was hurt by those who were supposed to be his friends or assaulted by one who saw him as the enemy, I never saw my friend as anything but gracious. He not only set an example for others, he encouraged friends to meet criticism with grace, humility, meekness, and kindness. On one occasion, a well known pastor made the statement, “I love Leon Hyatt, but....” and then, in a spirit that bordered on anger and arrogance, he expressed his opposition to endorsing the Scripture as the inerrant Word of God. When the man took his seat, I observed Dr. Hyatt as he got up from his seat and move over behind the man who had fought us for years. He leaned over and spoke to him. During a break, some of us asked Leon what he had said to this man we had all heard speak in opposition to our position. He said, “I simply went over and spoke to him. He started to speak (it seemed that he would continue to argue), but I said, “I don’t want to argue with you. I just want to thank you for saying you love me. I want you to know that I love you, too.” He then returned to his seat. My thoughts had not been so gracious, but I was learning from a man who has put on “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility,

gentleness, and patience.”

3:13 - FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER. “...*Accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive.*” Continuing the appeal of verse 12, “put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...,” Paul now adds, “Accepting one another and forgiving one another.” The first step in forgiving one another is accepting one another.” If you accept all people as objects of God’s love, you are a step closer to forgiving them. When you accept other believers as your brothers and sisters in the Lord, you have the mind and heart for forgiving others.

Sometimes one may say, “I can forgive but I cannot forget.” That really is a dumb statement if left to stand alone. Here, we are commanded to forgive one another. There is absolutely nothing said about forgetting. The Bible assures us that when God forgives our sins he remembers them no more, but that does not mean that God has suddenly become less than omniscient. Mentally, He remembers, but judicially, He does not remember sins He has forgiven so that they will be brought up as charges against us in judgment.

When someone offends us and we forgive them, we may not forget what that person did, but we will not continue to bring it up so that we can use that offense against them. We will not continue to try to make them pay for it. Nor, will we use it against them in an effort to hurt them or to turn others against them. Politicians and many in the news media hear that someone has made a statement that is not well-founded, or deleterious or injurious to another person or group and they immediately begin making demands that he or she apologize. Some of those political apologies have a hollow ring to them. The real issue is, has he repented? An apology where there is no evidence of repentance is in fact, very hollow.

3:14 - PUT ON LOVE. “*Above all, put on love—the perfect bond of unity.*” When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus knew His critics had in mind Deuteronomy 6:4-6, so He answered: “...Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important commandment” (Matt. 22:37-38), but He did not stop there. He continued, “The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:39). This is the highest expectation of any believer and one cannot assume that because he or she has a warm fuzzy feeling toward others when they are first saved, that they really understand or manifest the love of which the Lord was speaking. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, both our understanding of love and our capacity for love grows, both toward God and others.

THE PERFECT BOND OF UNITY. The basis for unity is love for God and love for others, but we must never assume that this hinges on our emotions. The love God commands (*agape*) is a mental attitude love, and for that reason it can be commanded. The late W. O. Vaught, used to insist that unity in a church does not depend upon love, as important as it is, but upon sound doctrine. There is an element of truth in that, but teaching what Jesus has in mind when He commands us to love one another comes under the heading of sound doctrine. The church at Ephesus had maintained sound doctrine but the came under condemnation from Jesus because they had left their first love (Rev. 2:1ff).

Rather than making sound doctrine the issue, however, it would seem more beneficial here to focus on all the other qualities Paul is inspired to commend. The thought may well be that

“love will bind all the other graces fast together, and render the whole system complete. Without love, though there might be other graces and virtues, there would be a want of harmony and compactness in our Christian graces--and this was necessary to unite and complete the whole. There is great beauty in the expression, and it contains most important truth. If it were possible to conceive that the other graces could exist among a Christian people, yet there would be a sad incompleteness, a painful want of harmony and union, if love were not the reigning principle. Nor faith, nor zeal, nor prophecy, nor the power of speaking with the tongue of angels, would answer the purpose” [BARNES].

3:15 - THE PEACE OF THE MESSIAH. *“And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful.”* In this context one sees why the Peace of Christ is the peace that surpasses all understanding. The closer we are to the Messiah, the closer we are to each other. “In interpersonal relationships ‘peace’ (transcendent, God-given tranquillity) should rule (*brabeuetoô*, “arbitrate, decide every debate”; a word used only here in the NT; cf. *katabrabeuetoô*, “decide against,” 2:18). Christ’s followers who have put on the virtues Paul listed (3:12-14), are concerned about being arbitrated in every trying circumstance by His peace, not by their wrangling” [BKC].

BE THANKFUL. This is not a general “Let us thank Him for our food” call to thanksgiving. Within this context, we are to thank Him for the peace that He provides and all the benefits derived from it. Specifically here, we should thank our Savior for the principle of peace that reigns in the hearts of those who love Him and love each other to the point that they will allow the Holy Spirit to arbitrate every debate. Needless to say, that is not always the case, but it is what the Lord expects of His followers.

3:16 - THE MESSAGE. *“Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.”* We are encouraged to put on Christ, to put on the new man in Christ. This new life believers “put on” is one in which the “message about the Messiah dwells richly.” Paul understood that when he wrote the he professed to know nothing among the saints except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The message about the Messiah is not complete if we leave Him short of the cross. Jesus in the manger is essential to the salvation story, but the message is incomplete if do not preach the cross in all its purpose and power.

TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER. Born again believers in Jesus Christ who hear and respond to the message about the Messiah are directed to teach and admonish each other “in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.” The message about the Messiah must be continually declared (and heard), in hymns and spiritual songs “with gratitude” to God.

“Christ’s words were recorded by Spirit-guided apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; 20:31). The words of the Bible, God’s written Word, are to dwell in believers. That is, by study, meditation, and application of the Word, it becomes a permanent abiding part of one’s life. When the words of Christ become part of a believer’s nature, they spring forth naturally and daily in psalms (songs from the Book of Psalms), hymns (other songs of praise), and spiritual songs (as opposed to secular odes) with gratitude (en teô chariti; lit., “in grace”) [BKC].

WITH GRATITUDE IN YOUR HEARTS TO GOD. Though some have suggested that this may mean graciousness in singing Christian hymn, the natural idea of the Christian’s expressing thanks is seems best. The joyful singing of hymns, and spiritual songs will not only please the ones singing and the ones hearing them, but it will please the Lord. “Through this Spirit-filled kind of life (cf. Eph. 5:18-19), Christians can teach (instruct) and admonish (“counsel”) one another (Col. 3:16; cf. “admonishing and teaching” in 1:28) if it is done with all wisdom (sophia; cf. 1:9; 2:3; 4:5) and not tactlessly (cf. Gal. 6:1)” [BKC].

3:17 - IN WORD OF IN DEED. “*And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*” This verse, often quoted by sincere Christians, should be the philosophy and the desire of every child of God. With a verse like this in mind, there is little wonder that the Lord would call us His slaves, or that Paul would identify himself as the slave of Jesus Christ. The Holman Christian Standard Bible has been a surprise to some when they first read the word “slave” where they were used to finding the word “servant” or “bond-servant”. As I have stated in other places, I had the privilege of sitting at a table with Dr. Ed Blum, the General Editor of the HCSB, while he explained to a friend why the HCSB translators used slave rather than servant. It is because this is a word-for-word rendering of the language of the New Testament. When you come to know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you cease to be your own - you become His. You are bought with a price.

The slave of Jesus Christ should say with Paul, “...Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,” or “in the conscious realization of his presence and person or, in the authority of being his representative” [NCWB]. We must worship Him and serve Him, always “giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Every child of God who is walking in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit will give thanks to God through Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C. Personal relations in the New Life, 3:18-4:1.

3:18 - WIVES. “*Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*”

A. T. Robertson translates it, “Be in subjection to your husbands.” He adds, The word has a military air and connotes obedience. However, this is qualified with the words, “as is fitting in the Lord.” Feminists may not like his translation, but as New Testament students all know, A. T. Robertson was a Greek scholar of the first magnitude. Wives have privileges and rights, but this calls for recognition of the husband’s role of leadership in the home. The assumption is that the

man is the man he should be in the sight of the Lord.

3:19 - HUSBANDS. *“Husbands, love your wives and don’t become bitter against them.”* Husbands who love their wives will want to avoid being bitter or harsh. The husband must recognize the wife’s dignity and rights. Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Eph 5:25). The husband is to love his wife more than his job, more than houses and cars, more than recreation, more than success, more than self. Faithfulness to the marriage vow seems old fashioned to many people. Lust is confused with love. An application of this passage will prevent infidelity. Love for God and love for one’s spouse will prevent fornication and it will help avoid strife in the home.

3:20 - CHILDREN. *“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord.”*

In writing to the Ephesian church, Paul wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land” (Eph 6:1-3). I have spent a number of years listening to horror stories about children shared by teachers. My wife has taught sixth graders for many years and my older son has been a juvenile prosecutor for some ten years. It is sad to listen to stories of rebellion and disrespect for parents, teachers, and for authority figures in general. My wife is another of those teachers who have had suffer through the changes forced upon teachers and administrators by No Child Left Behind legislation. Often time, what the new programs have done has been to get between the teacher and the child, or force children to stay home while teachers meet to deal with mandated changes.

What is seldom addressed is the effects of divorce on children. One little girl said that as far back as she could remembered, her parents had fought over her. A friend said, “Yeah, I know. My parents fight over me, too.” Often times, a child is forced to live with mother and her boy friend. There is no discipline in the home and where there is no discipline, the child often responds with rebellion. Sometimes the rebellion shows disrespect for parents, but at times the conduct may be an effort to get a parent’s approval. Whatever the motivation, what ever the challenges, God expects children to respect their parents “in everything”.

3:21 - PARENTS. *“Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they won’t become discouraged.”* Parents must not habitually nag and irritate children so as to discourage them. However, permissiveness is not of the Lord. It often seems that parents have abdicated their position in the home. They seem to have lost the courage to discipline their children.

It is amazing how many parents let television producers and movie stars determine their children’s values, or turn them over to their peers. They may push them academically and socially but neglect spiritual needs. That includes many who have them in services on Sunday morning. Then, when they get into trouble, they wring their hands and wonder what happened - after thousands of hours of sex, violence, profanity and rebellion against parental authority on TV.

Parents who take their children and young people to Sunday School and then take them home without staying for worship service are missing a very important fact. It is by the foolishness of

the

preaching of the Gospel that people come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and make decisions for the Lord (not that they do not make decisions in Sunday School or at home). What these parents are teaching their children is that the Sunday School class is important, but the preaching of the Gospel is optional. In reality, it is in the worship service that one experiences New Testament worship and where the Holy Spirit works in a special way.

Many young people sit through worship services every Sunday and never experience worship. They are much more conscious of other people than they are of the Lord. If their friends are absent they are very much aware of it. But if the Lord withdrew Himself from the service they would never know it. Some talk, or are irreverent in other ways. Others are simple day dreaming or thinking of something else.

Sometimes these young people rebel against their parents or get into trouble. And their parents say, "we don't understand. We had him in church all his life." You could answer, "No, you never had him in worship. You just had a warm body on a hard pew." A pastor can often observe young people and predict most of those who are going to drop out as soon as they move away from home, go off to college, or get married.

Children need godly parents, but too often they are saddled with self-centered, immature, worldly parents who put themselves and their interests above their children. There are many children in America who are never able to say, I will be at home: They have to say, I'll be at my Mom's home, or I'll be at my Dad's home. To take a hypothetical child (really a composite involving real children), consider a 10 or 11 years old girl we will call Sarah. I have used a similar illustration before. She her friend are talking in the presence of their teacher and Sarah says, "I am supposed to spend the week-end with my dad, he has a date. His girlfriend has slept with every man in town - he has slept with every man my mother has slept with!" Her friend assures her she understands.

3:22 - SLAVES. *"Slaves, obey your human masters in everything; don't work only while being watched, in order to please men, but [work] wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord."* When these slaves were saved, Jesus became their true Master, but as long as they were slaves they were owned by, and accountable to, human masters. They had a choice: They could work only to please their master, shirk their responsibility, run away, or serve more faithfully than ever.

There were an estimated 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire at the time, so it is only natural that Paul would be inspired to address some instructions to slaves. When they became believers in Jesus Christ they were set free spiritually from the eternal consequences of sin, but they were not set free from their masters. Paul says that even slaves have Christian responsibilities. They have responsibilities to God and to their earthly masters. Any effort on the part of Communists to claim that the Bible supports slavery and oppression is unfounded. Slavery was a reality in that day and for the safety and security of the slave, he is advised to obey his human master. There is a more important reason that the slave should obey his master. Slaves were often in a position to bear a witness to their masters by their conduct and attitude. Some were well educated and given grave responsibilities in business or in the home. They were in a strategic position to bear a witness to their master and to his household.

The instructions here will find application for employees here. I was talking with two brothers who were building a gun cabinet for me many years ago. They mentioned a carpenter I knew in the community and told me that this man used to work for their father, who was a building contractor. Their father was very conscientious in his work but he noticed that his friend was cutting off doors and they were splintering as he ran the saw over them. The contractor said, "If you score them before you cut them they won't splinter." The older man said, "I know, but I don't care." To which the contractor said, "If you don't care about your work you can't work for me." I often admired the work done by the contractor's sons. They were careful and skillful. He had taught them well and they knew he would not tolerate shoddy work.

3:23 - FOR THE LORD. *"Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men..."* Service must come from the heart, and it must be rendered for the glory of the Lord. "All Christian endeavor ought to be characterized by an enthusiasm, confidence, and diligence not found in the attitude of others" [BSB].

The fact that Paul writes this suggests that this Scripture might well have been read in services attended by both masters and slaves. In fact, slaves might have been, in some case, teachers and leaders in the church services, but when they returned to their home they were still slaves. They are encouraged here to serve, not grudgingly, but enthusiastically, not as one trying only to impress the earthly master, but as one who seeks to please the Lord.

Once during the days when civil rights workers were swarming all over the Mississippi Delta, looking for white landlords who were abusing black farm hands, a man was riding in the truck with a northerner who knew very little about farm work. As they drove by one of his fields, they observed a tractor driver plowing cotton. The visitor asked, "Isn't that skilled labor?" To which the farmer said, "Just as long as I'm looking at him." There were some who really worked hard, and others who did just enough "to get by". By my mid-teens, I was a regular tractor driver and I loved it, but there were tractor drivers who made frequent stops when the boss was not around.

There were people who came to the south looking for farmers who abused their hands, and no doubt there were some. There were some farmers who were very color conscious, but for many of them the color was green. They wanted to get all the work they could for the least amount of money they could pay, whether the hand was white or black. It was a privilege to grow up in the home of a farmer who was, in the Mississippi Delta vernacular, "as honest as the day was long." I have never known a more honest man than my father, and he made no distinction when it came to the work he assigned or the money he paid for the work. When he found a man who worked hard and with a good attitude, he sent for him when he needed help.

3:24 - AN INHERITANCE. *"...Knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord—you serve the Lord Christ."* This is the only time in the New Testament we find the title, Lord Christ, which makes it noteworthy. In that day, a slave did not receive an inheritance - he was the inheritance! He would be passed on from father to son, along with the home and business. In Christ, the slave could expect an inheritance from the Lord. Whether master or slave here on earth, the true believer serves "the Lord Christ" and looks to him for his

inheritance.

3:25 - THE WRONGDOER. “*For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.*” When we were picking cotton on the farm, some hands wanted to be paid at the end of each day, but others preferred to be paid at the end of the week. Regardless, of when payday comes, the worker looks forward to it. There is coming a payday when we will be rewarded according to our works. The lazy sluggard, who just marks time and cheats his employer will be rewarded according to his deeds. The “wrongdoer” will have his payday. R. G. Lee preached his famous sermon, Pay Day Some Day, over 1200 times. I was blessed with the opportunity to hear it twice, and now have a video tape and an audio tape of that powerful sermon. I was also reminded that there is coming a pay day like no earthly pay day.

NO FAVORITISM. From the playground to the gymnasium, from the classroom to the stockroom, from the media desk to the halls of congress, the cry goes up: “That’s not fair!” A child works hard to complete a \$-H project, only to discover that he is competing, not against another child, but against the child’s parents. A little boy builds a little toy car to race against friends at church, only to find that someone else’s father helps his son, and then protests if his son doesn’t win. It’s not fair! A high school principal once called to tell me about a motivational speaker who had made the statement, “This is not a just world, it is just a world.” That sounded good for a moment, and then I realized that the statement was not true. This is an unjust world and Christians have often found themselves on the short end of things.

“The early Christians wore simple robes (an idea retained in the present-day use of choir robes) to show that cultural, social, and racial distinctions were no longer of importance in the body of Christ (cf. v. 11). But just as there was no preference given to one Christian above another, neither was there given a privilege to commit sin” [BSB].

4:1 - MASTERS. “*Masters, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since you know that you too have a Master in heaven.*” Masters were commanded to be fair with slaves. With a large population of slaves in the Roman Empire it is not surprising that this issues would be addressed.

No matter how high the earthly master ranked in his society, he would stand before the “Master in heaven” to give an account and to receive his rewards. Thomas Sowell is a brilliant economist and author who has written many books on race and culture. He has stressed that every race, culture, and ethnic group has supplied it share of slaves and slave owners. All of those slaves and masters will stand before the “Master in heaven”.

Employers must also be fair with their employees. If the instructions set forth here were applied to both employers and employees today, a lot of labor problems could be avoided. Many problems in the home would be avoided, or solved without homes being broken by divorce or rebellion.

Elgy had been a very large, slow, powerful man, and as he aged he became even slower. My father taught him to drive a tractor later in his life. One day, I called my father’s attention to Elgy,

who had a tractor stuck in a muddy ditch about one hundred yards from where my father was getting another tractor ready to go to the field. Elgy was discing and the other tractor was being serviced before sending someone to plow cotton. My father stopped, a wrench in one hand and some part to a an implement he was mounting on a tractor in the other hand, and watched Elgy for several seconds. He would pull forward until the wheels began spinning. Then he would back up until they started spinning. He never stopped, waved for help, or any of the things we normally did when a tractor was stuck in slick gumbo mud. I asked Daddy, “Do you want to take this tractor and pull him out?” Daddy turned back to the tractor he was getting ready to go to the fields, and as he turned he said, “He’s not hurtin’ a thing.” Several minutes later he had the tractor ready to go to the field and then he sent me to pull Elgy out of the mud. He never said anything to Elgy about it because he never expected more from him. Tractors were something new to Elgy and he was doing the best he could.

V. FINAL INSTRUCTIONS, 4:2-6.

A. Be persistent in prayer, 4:2-4.

4:2 - PRAYER. *“Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.”* Paul prayed

and he also prescribed prayer for others. Here, he is writing that they should devote” themselves to prayer. From the word “devote”, one may reasonable infer that the believer must pray persistently and with an alert mind. There must be a commitment to continue in prayer (see Rom. 12:12). For Paul, prayer was not a spiritual luxury:

“it is essential for growth. Prayer—as vital to one’s spiritual health as breathing is to one’s physical health—should be continual (1 Thes. 5:17), not casual. In his praying, a Christian should be watchful (“alert, aware”) against spiritual drowsiness caused by attention to the world (Matt. 24:42; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Thes. 5:6) and/or by the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:16; 1 Peter 5:8)” [BKC].

That thanksgiving is an integral part of prayer is seen throughout Paul’s epistles (Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12; 3:16-17; 1 Thes. 5:18). Why would the Scripture place such emphasis on offering thanks to God? For one thing, it puts the child of God in the right attitude as he or she enters the presence of God (see Rom. 1:21). Just as the Lord refused to hear the prayers of the proud and arrogant, He rejects ingratitude as the proper attitude for prayer.

The disciples did not ask Jesus to teach them “how” to pray, they asked Him to teach them to pray. Christian prayer is not a religious exercise, it communication within a relationship. The child of God is not praying to gain the favor of God’ he is not praying to avoid some curse; he is praying because there is a relationship and he had a desire to spend time with the One who loves him enough to have given His only begotten Son to die for him on the cross. The Christian must confess sin daily, (1 John 1:9), and he will pray for mercy because he does not want to pay the penalty for his sin. But, after receiving forgiveness and restoration, the lines of communication are open for fellowship with God the Father, in the name of God the Son, in the power of God the

Holy Spirit. In other words, after we pray, “Father, forgive me and bless me,” we are now ready to enter a deeper relationship with the Lord and we must “stay alert” so that we will not miss that blessing. We must stay alert so that we can communicate with the Lord about our personal needs, the needs of our family, our church, and our nation.

In a recent article in a Southern Baptist publication, there was a picture of Morris Chapman, President of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page, with his wife, and President George W. Bush in the Oval Office. These leaders of the 16.4 million member Southern Baptist Convention were scheduled to spend forty-five minutes with the president and they had issued they wanted to bring up with president. Frank Page said later that most of the time President Bush talked with them about what prayer meant to him.

On December 4, 2006, Brit Hume of Fox News spent most of his one hour program playing back a lengthy interview with the president. Brit Hume stated that many people who love and pray for the president are deeply burdened for him because so many people hate him - and the liberal news media has sought to destroy his presidency for one reason or another. His supporters assume he is defeated and depressed. The president knows that one reason so many people hate him is because of his faith in Jesus Christ and because he is so open about it. The criticism is that he goes to God and gets his orders and then goes out and acts on those orders. That is exactly what a Christian America desired of a president, but not post-Christian America. President Bush assured Hume that instead of being down, his heart is filled with joy because of what prayer means to him. To the liberal media, this is beyond comprehension.

President Bush is staying alert in prayer, trusting his legacy to the Lord. Sean Hannity reported a few weeks earlier that he was a part of a group of people invited to spend an hour with the president and he stated that one thing really stood out when the president talked with them. This president is not concerned with polls, ratings, and popularity. He is concerned about doing what is right. Some have wondered if President George W. Bush may be the most “spiritual” president since Abraham Lincoln. He is perfectly happy doing what he thinks is right and letting history judge him. My wife and I listened with a sense of awe and gratitude as the president of the United States talk about prayer and his joy in the Lord. What we were hearing is a message that should have made the front page of the papers across the nation the next day. It should have been covered on the news networks. There was no mention of it in the papers or on the same news shows that report every slip of the tongue they hear. Brit Hume asked a panel to discuss what the president said about being filled with joy in the midst of all the negative news about Iraq. The first person to respond showed that she does not understand what prayer means to a true believer.

Every since I heard the president of the United States talk about his joy in prayer, I have been offering up a prayer of thanksgiving. When we see the hand of the Lord on our life, or on others, we should give thanks. I sensed that President Bush was doing just that.

4:3 - PRAY ALSO FOR US. *“At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah—for which I am in prison...”* “Us” refers to Paul and Timothy (1:1). Paul’s prayer request is specific, and as we have come to

expect, related to his call as the Apostle to the Gentiles. He seeks their prayer “that God would open a door” for them to preach the Gospel of the Messiah. “For which I am in prison” would explain to a church that had never seen him, but had no doubt heard of his imprisonment, the truth as to why he is in prison.

“Paul was not only God’s slave but was also in chains at Rome (Eph. 6:20) [NCWB]. In Eph. 6:19, Paul asks for wisdom and ability in preaching. Here, “he is asking for the opportunity to preach, preferably by his release from prison” [NCWB] “For which” denotes the preaching of the mystery of the Messiah.

“It is comforting to other preachers to see the greatest of all preachers here asking prayer that he may be set free again to preach. He uses this figure elsewhere, once of a great and open door with many adversaries in Ephesus (1Co 16:9), once of an open door that he could not enter in Troas (2Co 2:12)” [ATR].

Paul requested special prayer for himself, but he does not pray selfishly. He prays, not for his prison doors to be open (though he has seen God open prison doors, Acts 16), but for the doors to open for the preaching of the word of God. Such is the passion for preaching when one has been called to preach the Word and anointed for that calling.

Paul is the kind of the person you want praying for you, but he requested prayer for himself and for his companions. How desperately ministers and missionaries need prayer today. Often when missionaries are asked what they need most, they answer, “What we need more than anything else is your prayer.” They are serious and we should be serious about it, too. Pastors and evangelist need the prayers of Christian just as much as the missionaries.

4:4 - THAT I MAY REVEAL. “...*So that I may reveal it as I am required to speak.*” There is no doubt that Paul would have wanted do get out of prison, and that if he had been released he would have gone on another mission trip to preach the message of the Messiah. However, that may not be the primary focus of his prayer request here.

“Some interpreters think Paul was asking for his freedom as though it were the only way that he could spread the gospel. Though the Colossians and others prayed to this end, there are indications that Paul had many opportunities to proclaim Christ even in prison (Phil. 1:12, 13; cf. 2 Tim. 2:9)” [NCWB].

During the Cold War, there were some ministries that specifically sought to smuggle persecuted saints out of the Soviet Union. In many cases, this might well have been the right thing to do. In many cases, however, God wanted believers witnessing for Him in Soviet prison camps, in cities, towns and villages, and in local unauthorized churches throughout that vast land. It was not His purpose to have all Christians flee the oppression. What we learned when Communism failed the Soviet Union was that God had a mighty Christian army the Communists had never been able to shut down. There were reports about the prolific growth of Baptists and Pentecostal groups throughout the most intense persecution. After the Soviet Union opened began allowing foreigners to visit the Soviet Union, Dr. Leo Eddleman, who was at the time president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary went on a world-wide trip one summer. He reported to

students and faculty his experiences behind the Iron Curtain, and later shared some of his experiences with this writer. Dr. Eddleman had shared with me his experiences after he had been hand-picked by “a high level secret organization within our government” to go with Golda Maier to Moscow to help with interpretation and translation from Hebrew to English. He had been hand-picked because J. Edgar Hoover had said that Dr. Eddleman had the best working knowledge of any non-Jew in the United States. He told me that when he went to his room in the hotel every night, every time he heard footsteps in the hall he assumed that the KGB was coming for him to exchange him for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Later, he sent me a book written by Maurice Hindus, a Jewish writer who had visited the Soviet Union. This Jewish writer said that he liked to stay in the home of Baptists because they were clean and they did not have bed bugs. What we also learned is that commissars were given a quota, whether they worked in agriculture or a manufacturing plant, and they tolerated Baptists (and no doubt others) because they showed up for work on Monday. And they showed up sober, with no hang-over. They helped the commissar reach his quota so he would not report their church activities.

Dr. Jimmy Draper, former president of LifeWay Christian Resources, often sent newsletters to members of the board of trustees. The late Adrian Rogers had gift for communicating, especially from the pulpit, but in person he was warm and personable. In fact, I once heard Ron Dunn make the statement that Adrian Rogers was the finest Christian gentleman he had ever met. He was very deserving of such high praise from a humble servant of the Lord. I would argue, however, that during his fifteen years at the helm of the most influential entity in the history of the evangelical church, Jimmy Draper was absolutely amazing when it came to communicating the Gospel. Because his position at LifeWay, he was able to communicate to many more people than when he had served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas. I am one of hundreds, if not thousands of people who have received personal notes from Dr. Draper. In fact, I have a letter from him to my little granddaughter, Abigail, in 2005 when she was five years old, which she will read when she is 21 years old.

In one news letter to trustees, Dr. Draper told us about leader in a “house church” in Communist China. Someone asked what Christians in America could do to help him and the Christian movement in China. One of the first things the Chinese pastor said was, “Please stop asking for the persecution to end. That is what keeps us growing.” Today, there are more Christians (7%) in China than Communists (5%). They are not praying for an open door through which they would flee China; they are praying for an open door for the spread of the Gospel.

B. Be wise in outreach (witnessing to the lost), 4:5.

4:5 - WALK IN WISDOM. *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time.”* This is practical advice for the church of any age. As one commentary points out, “a double meaning is implied here. The Christian must be wise in his dealings with unbelievers, and in the way in which he shares Christ with them [NCWB]. “Outsiders” are non-believers, those outside the fellowship of the church (1 Cor. 5:12; 1 Thess. 4:12). “The Christian fellowship will make

allowances for the mistakes of their brothers, but the world will not. The Christian's behavior toward unbelievers should be above reproach. redeeming the time—buying up the opportunity”[NCWB].

Jesus commissioned His followers to reach out to the unsaved (Matt. 28:19-20). Christians, however, have special responsibilities toward other believers, those who are in the church. For example, Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. **Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality**” (Rom. 12:12-13). Again, he wrote to those within the church, “**Be in agreement with one another.** Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation” (Rom. 12:16). We will never be in agreement with all non-believers all the time, nor will Christians always agree on every issue, but a conscious effort should be made in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit live in harmony with fellow believers. We should not get caught up in petty arguments: we should not be “wise in our own estimation.” The wisdom of the humble believer is to be preferred to the egotistical wisdom of the world.

At the same time, there are things about the Christian life that the lost person cannot comprehend. Therefore, we must “walk in wisdom” in dealing with outsiders, even to the point of not demanding our rights under some circumstances in order to win the lost to the Lord. An illustration of our responsibilities to all people follows in the same epistle to the Romans: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:17-18). Paul was willing to waive his rights in order to protect weaker church members:

“Food will not make us acceptable to God. We are not inferior if we don't eat, and we are not better if we do eat. But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak....Now when you sin like this against the brothers and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to fall, I will never again eat meat, **so that I won't cause my brother to fall**” (1 Cor 8:8-13, emphasis added).

If Paul was willing to forgo certain rights to keep from offending weaker saints, he would surely expect us to avoid offending lost people. When I began my first pastorate I was a student at Mississippi College. I was very young and inexperienced, but not totally naive. I was often asked questions like, “Do you believe it is a sin to play cards?” Or, “Do you believe it is sin to go to a movie?” Others might ask, “Do you believe it is a sin to dance?” I decided that it made more sense for me to abstain from playing cards than to try to explain the difference between poker and Old Maid! If people associated some place with sin it was usually a simple matter to avoid that place.

Sadly, some people are offended by people with whom they try to worship. Someone asked a lost person, “Why don't you go to church?” To which, he replied, “Because I have been to church!” Some church members are more concerned with their power within the local church than they are the lost in the community. They laugh and talk with long time friends but do not make visitors feel welcome.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE TIME. The Authorized Version has “redeeming the time.” The idea seems to be that of one going to the market place. Two people may go to the market place with the same amount of time, but one may waste a lot of time visiting or browsing while the other makes the most of the time he has and purchases what is needed. The admonition to make the most of the time today may be interpreted against a number of backdrops. Most believers waste entirely too much time to call themselves good stewards of their time. Many people waste a lot of time on the job, and in doing so, either cheat their employer or cheat themselves.

Dr. Jimmy Draper observed when he became president of LifeWay Christian Resources (then, the Sunday School Board) that many employees took long breaks and lunch hours. There was no sense of urgency about their work. He sought to correct that attitude. I would recommend his book, *LIFEWAY LEGACY*, B & H Publishing, Nashville, 2007, to see how he dealt with employees when he moved into his office.

My brother observed that many attorneys have to stay late to get their work done, whereas he is often ready to go home at an earlier hour. Why? He is disciplined to focus on his work while some people visit for long periods over coffee in the break room. We can waste the Lord’s time as well as our own time. Paul stresses the importance of being good stewards of our time.

A minister’s wife recently confided, “We are singing choruses all the time at our church and I realized the other day that I am forgetting the hymns we used to sing.” There is a lot of theology to be learned from those old hymns, as well as some practical applications. Many contemporary hymns may have been written by very talented men and women and performed by musicians with far more training than some of those old hymn writers, but in many cases those older hymn writers had one major advantage: time. Make that, *TIME*. They had no cell phones, no Blackberries, no computers, no e-mail, no automobiles, and no shopping malls. What did they do with all their time? They sat and read God’s Word and meditated upon it, and as moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote those great hymns. In the old Soviet Union, when churches were permitted to sing hymns, but the preaching was carefully monitored by some Communist official, the people might sing a hymn with sixty or eighty verses. They were using the hymns to teach sound doctrine. A hymn that illustrates the importance of our making the most of our time was written by the amazing Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915), that blind saint who never saw the light of day, but knew intimately the Light of the World. The hymn, *To The Work*, was written by one who might have been excused by others if she had not worked so faithfully.

To the work! To the work! We are servants of God,
Let us follow the path that our Master trod;
With the balm of His counsel our strength to renew,
Let us do with our might what our hands find to do.

To the work! To the work! Let the hungry be fed;
To the fountain of life let the weary be led;
In the cross and its banner our glory shall be,

While we herald the tidings, “Salvation is free!”

To the work! To the work! There is labor for all;
For the kingdom of darkness and error shall fall;
And the love of our Father exalted shall be,
In the loud swelling chorus, “Salvation is free!”

To the work! To the work! In the strength of the Lord,
And a robe and a crown shall our labor reward,
When the home of the faithful our dwelling shall be,
We shall shout with the ransomed, “Salvation is free!”

C. Let your speech be “seasoned with salt,” (4:6).

4:6 - YOUR SPEECH. *“Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.”* The believer’s speech must be gracious toward other believers and toward lost persons. “In the previous verse the apostle had given a general direction that our conduct towards those who are not professing Christians should be wise and prudent; he here gives a particular direction in regard to our conversation” [BARNES].

“Seasoned with salt” implies not too much salt, and not too little. Robertson writes, “Our word salacious is this same word degenerated into vulgarity. Grace and salt (wit, sense) make an ideal combination. Every teacher will sympathize with Paul’s desire ‘that ye know how ye must answer each one’ [ATR].

The NASB has, “Let your speech always be with grace...” “Grace” denotes undeserved favor, and “salt” suggests “that one should allow the Holy Spirit to convict others of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come (cf. John 16:8). The salt that stings and pricks the conscience of the nonbeliever should be accompanied by undeserved favor and unconditional love” [BSB].

CONCLUSION, 4:7-18

1. Tychicus and Onesimus commended, 4:7-9.

4:7 - A BELOVED BROTHER. *“Tychicus, a loved brother, a faithful servant, and a fellow slave in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me.”* Tychicus was a native of Asia Minor (Acts 20:4), he traveled with the apostle on the third missionary journey. “Tychicus and Onesimus carried the Colossian letter from Paul (Col. 4:7-9), and were to relate to the church Paul’s condition. Paul also sent Tychicus to Ephesus on one occasion (2 Tim. 4:12) and possibly to Crete on another (Titus 3:12). Tradition holds that he died a martyr” [HBD].

Tychicus was a leader in his church and the bearer of this letter to the Colossians. Paul calls him “a faithful servant” and no greater reward could a true servant desire than for his Master to call him faithful. When one is faithful to the Lord, he or she is serving in the nature and character of his Master. In one of the most awe inspiring encounters any human being has ever experienced with the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, Moses was privileged to hear Yahweh express something of His nature and character:

“The Lord came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed [His] name **Yahweh.** Then the Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed:

Yahweh—Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and **rich in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love** to a thousand [generations], forgiving wrongdoing, rebellion, and sin. But He will not leave [the guilty] unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers’ wrongdoing on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation” (Ex 34:5-7).

God is absolutely faithful in all things. Peter calls God “a faithful Creator” (1 Pet. 4:19). John writes, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Moses (Hebrews 3:5) was called a faithful servant.” God demands faithfulness and he empowers His servants to be faithful. The Lord has moved His kingdom forward on the shoulders of faithful servants, filled with His Spirit.

A FELLOW SLAVE IN THE LORD. Paul calls Tychicus was both a servant and a fellow slave in the Lord.” The NASB has, “faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord.” As mentioned earlier, one of the first things that grabs one’s attention when reading these words in the HCSB is the rendering, “slave”, rather than the traditional, “servant”. However, the born again believer belongs to Jesus Christ. We are bought with the most precious price ever paid for anything in time of eternity, the blood of our Savior. We belong to Him. A friend said, “But our service is voluntary!” Is the service of a slave voluntary? We either serve at His command or we sin. We cannot decide either to serve or not to serve without sin. To refuse to serve is rebellion.

4:8 - THIS VERY PURPOSE. *“I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are, and so that he may encourage your hearts.”* Each book in the New Testament was written with a purpose and to understand that purpose is one of the keys in unlocking the mystery of the book. John was inspired to state the purpose in the Gospel According to John: “But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). Likewise we are told that the First Epistle of John was written that we might know that we know Him, to provide assurance of salvation to all true believers (1 John 2:3).

This epistle to the church at Colosse was written with a specific purpose: “this very purpose.” Paul then states a two-sided purpose. **First**, he is writing that the might know how Paul and his companions were at that time, which implies that the church had followed the trials of the Apostle to the Gentiles. The **second** aspect of this purpose was “so that he (Tychicus) may encourage

your hearts.” If we consider only this statement we might assume that he sent Tychicus to pat them on the back and say, “Well done. Keep up the good work.” However, against the backdrop of the entire epistle we may well infer that the whole message would encourage them to remain faithful to the Lord and to grow in His grace and knowledge. The revealed truth in this epistle, if read and applied would bless them and encourage them.

4:9 - FAITHFUL AND LOVED BROTHER. *“He is with Onesimus, a faithful and loved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.”* The personal name Onesimus probably means “profitable”. He is also the slave for whom Paul wrote his letter to Philemon. “In the epistle, Paul pled with Philemon to free the servant because Onesimus had been so helpful to the apostle. Onesimus had robbed his master, escaped, met Paul, and accepted Christ. In sending him back to Philemon, Paul urged the owner to treat the slave as a Christian brother (v. 16)” [HBD].

Paul has high praise for his friend and the companion of Tychicus, with whom he would take this epistle to Colosse. What was the most important thing Paul could say about a fellow servant? Simply that he was a faithful and loved brother. The word faithful is a powerful word, but unfortunately one that we may pass over without evaluating its significance. I had gone through the receiving line at the inauguration for Thom Rainer as President of LifeWay Christian Resources and was speaking to a number of other guests. I spoke to a seminary president who in turn introduced me to the man with whom he had been talking. I recognized the name (“Bill”) as well as the face from pictures I had seen. I immediately mentioned a mutual friend. This man immediately stated their relationship in terms of rank: “George (not his real name) used to work for me.” We visited briefly before I started to moved on toward the entrance where a fan waited to return me to the hotel. Suddenly, this well know denominational leader interrupted, “Oh, how is George doing?”

Later, when I mentioned the meeting to George he asked for my impression of “Bill”. I repeated our brief exchange, and noted that “Bill” had added the question about his welfare. He asked my impression of “Bill” and I had to admit that I recognized the arrogance “George” had mentioned to me a number of times in the past.

Several months later, I visited with George and he told me a friend and collogue of many years had spoken in his area and stayed in his home. He told him about my conversation with “Bill” and his friend and collogue (who had worked more closely with “Bill”) said, “Let me explain what happened there. First, when Johnny mentioned your name he made it a point to stress his rank to Johnny and the seminary president. Then, it occurred to him that Johnny might be someone important and he added, “How is George doing?”

His explanation may or may not have been valid, but it did fit many of the things I had heard about this man who seemed to keep his name in the news. The friend’s opinion is irrelevant for our purpose. The point is that our evaluation of fellow servants are often based on their position, name recognition, and numerical success (How big is your church, what has he published, where has he served?). I am originally from Mississippi and graduated from Mississippi College before going to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Following my graduation, I served for a

while in Mississippi before moving to Louisiana, so I would go back to Mississippi for an evangelism conference or to a session of their state convention, in part to keep in touch with friend, but also because I wanted to hear some of the speakers. One day I was walking through the display set up by the local Baptist Book Store (now LifeWay Christian Stores) when I saw a friend from college who had transferred to another school before we graduated. Immediately after shaking my hand he began asking, “Where are you now? How big is your church? How many do you run in Sunday School? I have seven staff members.” I heard years later that he was out of the ministry, but I still remember the disappointment in discovering that my friend did not value me because of friendship, nor was he concerned that I was where the Lord had called me, nor was he the least bit concerned with whether or not I was faithful.

Paul might have said many different things about Tychicus, his fellow slave of Jesus Christ, but that which was important was that he was faithful. Whether a pastor, missionary, Bible teacher, or lay person, God expects us to be faithful. One of the primary attributes of God is that He is faithful. God is love, God is holy, God is omnipotent, God is omnipresent, God is omniscient, but if He is not faithful to forgive and redeem we are in trouble. The Lord expects His slaves (servants) to be faithful.

2. Greetings from Paul's fellow workers, 4:10-14.

4:10 - ARISTARCHUS. “*Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, as does Mark, Barnabas’ cousin (concerning whom you have received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)...*” Some of Paul’s companions would desert him when he needed them most. Others, like Luke, Timothy, Mark, Aristarchus (and Tychicus and Onesimus) were loyal, devoted companions. “Being Paul’s fellow prisoner meant either that Aristarchus attended Paul, or more likely, that he was incarcerated with Paul (probably also for preaching the gospel). Paul also called him a fellow worker (Phil. 24)” [BKC]. The Holman Bible Dictionary provides a thumbnail sketch of Aristarchus, who was persecuted by the followers of Artemis in Ephesus (Acts 19:29).

“Apparently the same person was the Thessalonian who accompanied Paul from Greece to Jerusalem as he returned from his third missionary journey (Acts 20:4). Aristarchus also accompanied Paul when he sailed for Rome (Acts 27:2). Paul sent greetings from Aristarchus, a fellow prisoner and worker, in his letters to the Colossians (4:10) and Philemon (24). Later church tradition said Nero put Aristarchus to death in Rome” [HBD].

Aristarchus was a martyr in every sense of the word. When Jesus declared that His followers would be witnesses for him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and throughout the world, the word he used (in the Greek) was *martus*, a word that may be translated either witness or martyr. A witness for Jesus Christ is one who is willing to take his life in his own hands to live and offer a testimony for the Lord - or more accurately, he is taking up his cross and following Jesus. In this day, that may seem far fetched in America, but it was very real in the First Century, as it is in many places in the world today. When one witnesses in an Islamic country today he is risking his life for the Lord.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are many people who are mentioned only one time, or very few times in the Bible, who were totally committed to the Lord. Dr. William R. Cooper of England has made an incredible contribution to modern scholarship, as well as to our understanding of the high cost paid by many early saints for their commitment to the Great Commission. Dr. Cooper, with whom I often communicate, is a true scholar whose work amazes me, as does his permission to add excerpts from his carefully researched and meticulously documented research paper, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH. If one goes to the Barnes and Nobles web site and types in TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT, he will find to of his major contributions to our Lord's kingdom. First, he is the man who "translated" the 1388 Wycliff New Testament into modern English. He then converted ("translated") the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. This New Testament out sold the first *Harry Potter* book in 2000 in England. It was my privilege to hold in my hand the first copy of that New Testament to reach America, thanks to our mutual friend, Dr. Gene Jeffries, president of Cambridge Graduate School, on whose faculty both Dr. Cooper and I serve. The following excerpt will give us a feel for what it was like to be a witness for the Lord in the middle of the First Century.

Aristobulus

Aristobulus is a prime example of how the Bible can help us make better sense of otherwise mystifying secular records. The one appearance of his name in the Bible occurs in Romans 16:10 where Paul asks his readers to, "salute them which are of Aristobulus' household." Having directed his greetings to many others directly by name, it is intriguing that here Paul seems to be aware of the fact that Aristobulus himself is not at Rome, and would not be at Rome when his letter arrived (in AD 59/60) to be personally saluted. As we shall see in the next section concerning the Lady Pomponia, Paul was surprisingly well informed about what was happening in Rome, for he sends similar greetings in the same epistle to the household of Narcissus who was also seemingly absent from his house. So, if Aristobulus was not at Rome when Paul wrote his letter in AD 59/60, then where was he? For the answer, we must look to the secular records.

Writing in AD 190, Hippolytus harks back to Aristobulus as the bishop of the Britons, and according to the Greek martyrologies, "[Aristobulus], one of the seventy disciples and a follower of St Paul the Apostle...was chosen by St Paul to be the missionary bishop to the land of Britain, inhabited by a very war-like and fierce race. By them he was often scourged and repeatedly dragged as a criminal through their towns, yet he converted many of them to Christianity. He was martyred after he had built [churches?] and ordained deacons and priests for the island."⁷⁰ This much from later Roman and Greek sources, who would not, we may assume, have had access to local British records. So what do the British records tell us?

The early Britons knew Aristobulus as *Arwystli Hen* - Old Aristobulus. A better translation, however, might be Aristobulus the Elder, this suffix denoting his

office in the Church rather than his age. According to the records, he accompanied Bran, the father of Caradoc, to Britain where they preached the Gospel. But they did not travel alone: "These came with Bran the Blessed from Rome to Britain - Arwystli Hen, Ilid, Cyndaw, men of Israel, [and] Maw the son of Arwystli."71

Of interest is the fact that, according to the Greek Martyrology, Aristobolus was one of the original seventy disciples who were sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:1&17), and in the British records we see him accompanied on his later mission to Britain by other Jews (*Israeliait*- men of Israel) and well as his own son. Of those who accompanied him, Ilid (whose name may be the early Welsh form of Elias) seems to have left his mark by giving his name to the small Welsh town of Llanilid - lit. the Church or 'sacred enclosure' of Ilid - which lies between Cardiff and Bridgend, evidently commemorating his work in that part of the country. He is further remembered in an ancient British proverb, "Hast thou heard the saying of Ilid, one come of the race of Israel - 'There is no mania like passion'?"72

As for Aristobolus himself, we read in other sources that he was slain in Britain during a mission to the Ordovician Welsh on the 15th March AD 59.73 This would have been about the time that Paul was writing his letter to the Romans. **Supporting this information is the fact that a place in Montgomeryshire on the River Severn still bears the name of Arwystli as the place of his martyrdom,** and it lies in an area once occupied by the Ordovices. Of great importance, however, is the consideration that without Paul's remark in Romans 16:10, we could never have fully accounted for the appearance of this *Arwystli* in the British records [Dr. William R (Bill) Cooper, London, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH, unpublished research paper, emphasis added].

It is obvious from Dr. Cooper's extensive research that Paul may well have been informed about what was happening in the Kingdom of God throughout a far greater part of the known world than we once might have believed. Persecution of Christians increased sharply from the time Paul wrote to the church at Rome until he was writing this epistle from prison in Rome to the church at Colosse.

AS DOES MARK, BARNABAS' COUSIN. This is especially interesting, because this is the same Mark over whom Paul and Barnabas had argued so vehemently that it led to a split between the two missionaries who had been led so powerfully on The First Missionary Journey. Barnabas, who was apparently known to the Colossians, and Paul had chosen Mark their companion on their first great missionary endeavor. The book of Acts provides certain information about Mark, including the fact that his mother's home was a meeting place for Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

"The family was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36), accounting for Barnabas's, choice of Cyprus as the first stop on their journey (Acts 13:4) and for Mark's eagerness to make the journey. Mark went as far as Perga, in Pamphylia, and from there returned to his mother in Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Because Mark did not go farther, Paul

did not take him on his second journey (Acts 15:37-39)” [NCWB].

The truth is, Paul saw John Mark’s turning back as a betrayal and so vehemently refused to have him with them on the Second Missionary Journey that he and Barnabas chose to dissolve their partnership. Barnabas and Mark returned to Cyprus and Paul chose Silas to accompany him when they returned to the churches planted on the First Missionary Journey. I stress in my study on the Gospel According to Mark and elsewhere (PastorLife.Com, Georgia Baptist Convention web site) that young Mark had quit when the going got rough and Paul resented it so strongly that he would not even consider taking him with him again. I have often stressed that there comes a time in each believer’s life when he needs a Barnabas more than he needs a Paul. Barnabas showed more maturity, love, and compassion by far than the Apostle to the Gentiles. At that point in his life, Paul was unyielding and unforgiving. In Mark’s life there was a need for forgiveness and understanding. He would receive none from Paul. Barnabas, on the other hand, was forgiving and understanding. Though one cannot count on a person who repeatedly quits when the going gets rough, many of the Lord’s servants have stumbled at some point in their early life. Abraham fled to Egypt when he found a famine when he arrived in the Land of Promise. Mark may well have panicked when they arrived in the coastal region of Pamphylia and discovered that there were risks he had not anticipated.

There are some especially brilliant people who are so focused on their work that they do not consider the feelings of those who serve under them. There are pastors who show little concern for some staff members. They are too focused to notice personal needs. Barnabas was right and Paul was wrong in his judgment of John Mark, as Paul would later agree. It is a rare pastor or missionary who has never needed a second chance. Many learn more from their mistakes than their successes.

Here, Paul adds the note, “concerning whom you have received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him.” Those instructions may well have been from Tychicus, the one who delivered the epistle to them. The note does prove that Mark had proved himself to Paul and that Paul valued his friendship, and considered him a co-worker (vs. 11).

4:11 - MY CO-WORKERS. *“And so does Jesus who is called Justus. These alone of the circumcision are my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.”* Both Jesus (Yeshua, meaning the salvation of Yahweh) and Justus (righteous) were common names. The modern reader might be surprised to find the name Jesus included in this list, but Robertson points out that this is “another illustration of the frequency of the name Jesus (Joshua). The surname Justus is the Latin Justus for the Greek Dikaioi and the Hebrew Zadok and very common as a surname among the Jews. The name appears for two others in the N.T. (Acts 1:23; Acts 18:7)” [ATR].

OF THE CIRCUMCISION. These are the only Jewish believers who are with Paul at this time.

Only a few of the Jews (the circumcision) worked with Paul in his effort to take the Gospel to Gentiles (the “uncircumcision”). Some believe this may have been the reason Mark had turned back on the first mission trip, and they may have a point, but there is no way to prove that. Before

condemning Mark for being prejudiced, let us remember that his mentor, Simon Peter had a serious problem in associating with Gentiles, which led Paul to rebuke him to his face in Antioch of Syria (see Galatians).

4:12 - CONTENDING FOR YOU. *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always contending for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills.”* In 1:17, Paul calls Epaphras his “beloved fellow slave.” Epaphras is identified as “one of you”, meaning that he was from Colosse, and he was a Gentile.

CONTENDING FOR YOU. “The word denotes the intense desire which he had for their salvation; his fervent, earnest pleading for their welfare” [BARNES]. He prayed for their growth and maturity in the faith.

4:13 - I TESTIFY ABOUT HIM. *“For I testify about him that he works hard for you, for those in Laodicea, and for those in Hierapolis.”* Paul is quick to testify about Epaphras, though his testimony may not have been needed at Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. “These are probably other local churches founded by Epaphras. These two cities, with Colosse, were destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 62. Laodicea was named for Laodice, queen of Antiochus II. Located on the river Lycus, it was “the chiefest city to Phrygia Pacatiana.” Hierapolis was six Roman miles north of Laodicea” [NCWB].

4:14 - LUKE. *“Luke, the loved physician, and Demas greet you.”* Luke is one of the most amazing believer we encounter in the New Testament, as the following note in the Believer’s Study Bible will attest:

“Luke, Paul’s dear friend and doctor, stood firm not only in this earlier imprisonment but also in Paul’s latter imprisonment, by which time Demas (here with Paul) had forsaken him (2 Tim. 4:10). Luke is the author of the Third Gospel and of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1). By tradition he was one of the 72 (Luke 10:1). Some also suggest he was the anonymous disciple on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13). Since the only men with Paul who were “of the circumcision” were Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus), Luke may have been a Gentile” [BKC].

That Luke was a Gentile is usually accepted by students of the New Testament. Paul mentions a serious health problem in the Epistle to the Galatians (see this writer’s study on Galatians on the PastorLife.Com web site). He tells us that his condition was so grave that he would not have blamed them if they had turned their backs on him, but they did not.

Luke was not only a faithful physician, friend, and companion to Paul, he was inspired to write the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts, both of which he tells us he carefully researched. One can mark the “we” sections of Acts to see the times when Luke was with Paul and the “they” sections to see when he was not with Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

DEMAS. Once again, we see a name in one of Paul’s letters which receives little or no attention other than in a greeting or conclusion to one of his epistles. However, in this case the Believer’s

Study Bible Notes offer a sad, but pertinent note on Demas:

“The name of Demas, here used in conjunction with that of Luke, the beloved physician, adds a tragic note of solemnity and confirmation to Paul’s exhortations in this chapter. In Paul’s final letter, 2 Timothy, one reads that Demas had forsaken Paul and fled to Thessalonica, having loved the things of this present world more than the things of Christ (cf. 3:1, 2; 2 Tim 4:10)” [BSB].

3. Final message from Paul, 4:15-17.

4:15 - THE BROTHERS IN LAODICEA. *“Give my greetings to the brothers in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.”* This was a circular letter, which would be read and copied in Colosse before being sent on to other churches, and because of the proximity to Laodicea the saints there would possibly be the first to read it after the Colossians. The church met in the home of Nympha, as the church at Philippi had probably met in the home of Lydia. This is interesting because of the prominence of women in the early church. Because pagan religions were oppressive toward women, many Gentile women were attracted to Judaism, as we see in Paul’s missionary journeys. When Paul preached in the synagogues, many of those women were converted to Christianity, in part because they were seeking something they had not know in paganism, but primarily because of the power of the Gospel to save men, women, Jews, and Gentiles.

4:16 - THIS LETTER. *“And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.”* When this epistle to the Colossians had been read (and copied), they were asked to send it on to Laodicea where it would be read (and probably copied before sending it on to another church.

THE LETTER FROM LAODICEA. This is really interesting to me at this point. I had read the epistle for years without giving serious attention to this reference to the Laodicean letter. I checked with a number of sources and they all agree that “the letter from Laodicea” was probably Paul’s letter we know as Ephesians. We can follow the logic: “This “Laodicean letter” may be the letter to the Ephesians, which was written about that time, and sent to the same general vicinity” [BKC]. Several other commentaries consulted agree with this conclusion, and I would never have questioned it, except from some recent scholarship made known to me within the past few years.

Dr. Gene Jeffries, president of Cambridge Graduate School, told me about the research faculty member, Dr. William R. Gordon of London, was doing on a Latin copy of a letter he found attached to a 1388 Wycliff New Testament which he had converted from Old English to modern English (a monumental task). The letter claims to have been written by Paul, but many “modernists” (according to Dr. Cooper) reject it outright as a fake or forgery. Conservatives, he says, have made no effort to discover whether it is authentic or not. His research is fascinating. Dr. Cooper and I serve on the faculty of Cambridge Graduate School and Emmanuel College for Christian studies and he and I have corresponded often about his research (mentioned earlier in this study).

Dr. Cooper also “translated” the 1526 Tyndale New Testament into modern English. I have spent a lot of time with the four research papers that make up his book, OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH, and I find his research and argument compelling, even if I understand why many modern scholars are not going to change their opinion on the issue. I have Dr. Cooper’s permission to include any part of his work on the Laodicean Letter in this, or any Bible study I write, so I will include here a modern translation of the letter, his introduction, conclusion, and a few other points of interest. Whether or not you agree with his conclusion, you should find the research, documentation, and Bibliography impressive. It may be time for modern students of the Word to consider anew whether this is a canonical (New Testament collection) epistle (Ephesians) or a non-canonical (not inspired, non-New Testament) Pauline epistle. Remember that Paul mentions two non-canonical epistle he wrote to the Corinthian church (one mentioned in each of the epistles to the saints at Corinth). No doubt many will consider to call this a forgery.

INTRODUCTION

(To the paper on the Laodicean Letter by William R. Cooper)
(Bold printed added by this writer for emphasis)

Whilst producing a modern-spelling edition of the Wycliffe New Testament,¹ I came across a document which purports to be a letter written by the apostle Paul to the church of Laodicea. I was aware that Paul had written such a letter, for he himself makes mention of it in his letter to the Colossian church.² But I was entirely unaware of the fact that it might have survived, albeit that it was not included in the canon. Though appearing in by no means every manuscript of the Wycliffe New Testament (it is generally admitted in its own prologue, when it does appear, that the letter is not part of the canon of Scripture), it is nevertheless included in the majority of the surviving manuscripts, whilst in those that omit it, it is yet referred to and recommended to the reader’s attention.³

Consulting modernist scholars on the subject has been (as ever) a fruitless exercise. With one voice, the few that do deal with it condemn the letter as a “late and utterly worthless” forgery, whilst omitting any detailed evidence that might compel - or overthrow - such a view. At the same time, conservative scholars seem never to have questioned the modernist view, and have thus never investigated the truth of the matter. But it soon became apparent on closer inspection that the document deserves better treatment than it has been afforded so far by either school.

Amongst the modernists are those who argue that the letter was forged by Marcion, a 2nd-century heresiarch who was given to forging ‘Biblical’ writings in order to lend his heresies what he hoped would seem a Scriptural authority. But again, **further consideration shows this view to be erroneous.** Whilst Marcion certainly took away from Scripture in a big way, it is not known that he ever added to it to the extent of composing fake documents. Whoever did write the letter, and

though in its present state it shows signs of possible tampering or loss, it was not Marcion, and we shall consider why later and in somewhat greater depth.

The investigation is taken back to the letter's Latin text which survives in manuscripts from the 6th to the 14th centuries, and of which the Middle English is a translation. This survival enables the question of a Greek original to be also examined in the light of the clues which might lie within the Latin text, and which may, or may not, betray borrowing from the Greek. **We shall see that the Latin text's brevity and awkwardness are the result of its Latin sitting awkwardly with the Greek idiom in translation**, and how the Latin text is so closely tied to its Greek original that it has been possible to give (after Hutter -see below) a very plausible **reconstruction of the original Greek text from it**.

If little or no Greek influence had been discernible within the Latin text, then it would have seemed most unlikely that the letter is a surviving relic from the apostolic era. Paul, as far as we know, did not write in Latin. Neither did any other apostle. But if, as we shall see, such Greek influence is indeed discernible, then that will take the hypothesis that the letter is a genuine Pauline (**though extra-canonical**) epistle one step closer toward proof.

Another such step will be taken if the question of possible forgery reveals no hidden agenda on points of doctrine, for doctrine, or rather *perversion* or *innovation* of doctrine, is always the motivating force behind all the works that have come down to us within what is known as the New Testament Apocrypha and other post-apostolic writings, certain of the so-called church fathers and so on. **Doctrine, indeed, is the litmus test of any document from New Testament times, canonical or no**, and comparison will be made between the Laodicean epistle, the New Testament itself - with particular reference to the known letters of Paul - and to known but spurious 'gospels' and letters that together make up that corpus of ancient writings known as the New Testament Apocrypha.

Close investigation will be made into the views and teachings of Marcion, and how these came to be disseminated both by himself and his followers. A detailed understanding of this is important, because the modernist contentions against the Laodicean letter rely strongly on the Marcionite hypothesis for their plausibility. The letter will thus be thoroughly examined for any trace of Marcionite influence or contamination.

The Muratorian Canon will also be discussed, as it is from this source that modernists claim authority for their view that Marcion is the author of the Laodicean letter under question. We shall see that if Marcion ever did write such a letter, it was not the one that has survived and come down to us through the Wycliffe New Testament. The letter's brevity and discontinuity are said to be evidence that display the hallmarks of typically Marcionite editing, but we will see that there is another, much better, explanation for the letter's peculiarities.

If the letter is a Latin forgery, and if it is not Marcionite, then it can only be a post-apostolic composition of the Latin church, and may thus be expected to betray influences of early Roman Catholic teachings and points of doctrine. We shall see that the church of Rome underwent several fundamental shifts of doctrine at a very early stage, and its people witnessed the innovation and introduction of many strange teachings, most of them directly borrowed from the pagan world. One or more of these innovations will be evident, if only in embryo, if the letter is a post-apostolic Latin forgery.

If ultimately it can be shown that the letter is no Latin forgery, but is based upon a Greek original, and if it can be further shown that **its doctrinal content is entirely ‘primitive’, bearing all the hallmarks of apostolic composition and doctrinal purity,** then considerable justification will be given to the view that what has come down to us through the Wycliffe New Testament in the body of this letter, is a most fortuitous, not to say Providential, **survival of an apostolic (though non-canonical) document of the early Christian church.** But we must now let the evidence speak for itself, and consider exactly what it tells us.

The Two Middle English Versions

The letter that purports to be from Paul to the Laodiceans, has come down to us in Latin and in two Middle English versions. The first English version was incorporated into the earlier of the two versions of the Wycliffe Bible known as ‘Wycliffe A’,⁴ first published in 1382, although today it is found in only one surviving manuscript of that version. The later version was published in the improved ‘Wycliffe B’ text of 1388, and is included in many of the surviving 15th-century manuscripts of the Wycliffe New Testament.⁵ Both versions, however, are clearly translations of the same Latin text of the epistle. The first, Wycliffe A, reads thus in modern spelling (for old-spelling version and glossary, see Appendix One):

Paul, apostle not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren that be of Laodicea, grace to you and peace, of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Graces I do to Christ by all mine orison, that ye be dwelling in Him and lasting, by the behest abiding in the day of doom. Ne He unordained us of some vain speech feigning, that us overturn fro the soothfastness of the gospel that of me is preached. Also now shall God do them leaving and doing of blessedness of works, which health of life is. And now openly be my bonds which I suffer in Christ Jesus, in which I glad and joy, and that is to me health everlasting, that that I did with our prayers and ministering the Holy Spirit by life or by death. It is forsooth to me life into Christ, and to die joy without end. In us He shall do His mercy that ye have the same loving, and that ye be of one will. Therefore, darlings, as ye have heard in presence of me, hold ye and do ye in the dread of God, and it shall be to you life without end. It is, forsooth, God that worketh in us. And do ye without any withdrawing whatsoever ye do. And that it is, darlings, joy ye in Christ and flee ye [those] made foul with

clay. All your askings be open anents God, and be ye fastened in the wit of Christ. And [that] which be holy and sooth, and chaste and rightwise and loveable, do ye. And which heard and taken in heart, hold ye, and it shall be to you peace. Holy men greet you well in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost. And do ye that pistle of Colossians to be read to you. Amen.

*

The second version, ‘Wycliffe B’, first published in 1388 and encountered in most 15th-century copies of the Wycliffe New Testament, reads thus in modern spelling, and includes a short prologue (for old-spelling version and glossary, see Appendix Two):

Here beginneth the Prologue on the Pistle to Laodiceans

Laodiceans be also Colossians, as two towns and one people in manners. These be of Asia, and among them had been false apostles and deceived many. Therefore the postle bringeth them to mind of his conversation and true preaching of the gospel, and exciteth them to be steadfast in the true wit and love of Christ, and to be of one will. But this pistle is not in common Latin books, and therefore it was but late translated into English tongue.

Thus endeth the Prologue, and beginneth the pistle to Laodiceans

Here beginneth the epistle to the Laodiceans, which is not in the canon

“Paul, apostle, not of men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren that be at Laodicea, grace to you and peace, of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do thankings to my God by all my prayer that ye be dwelling and lasting in Him, abiding the behest in the day of doom. For neither the vain speaking of some unwise men hath letted you, the which would turn you fro the truth of the gospel that is preached of me. And now them that be of me to the profit of truth of the gospel, God shall make deserving and doing benignity of works and health of everlasting life. And now my bonds be open which I suffer in Christ Jesus, in which I glad and joy. And that is to me to everlasting health that this same thing be done by your prayers and ministering of the Holy Ghost, either by life, either by death. Forsooth, to me it is life to live in Christ, and to die joy. And His mercy shall do in you the same thing, that ye moun have the same love and that ye be of one will. Therefore, ye well beloved brethren, hold ye and do ye in the dread of God, as ye have heard [in] the presence of me, and life shall be to you without end. Soothly, it is God that worketh in you. And, my well beloved brethren, do ye without any withdrawing whatever things ye do. Joy ye in Christ, and eschew ye men defouled in lucre, either foul winning. Be all your askings open anents God, and be ye steadfast in the wit of Christ. And do ye tho things that be holy and true, and chaste and just, and able to be loved. And keep ye in heart tho things that ye have heard and taken, and peace shall be to you. All holy men greet you well. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, and do ye that pistle of Colossians to be read to you.”

Here endeth the pistle to Laodiceans

*

Whenever the epistle to the Laodiceans is included in copies of the Wycliffe

English New Testament, **it always falls between Paul's letter to the Colossians and I Thessalonians** - though in the Latin manuscripts its place varies. Even in those English manuscripts that omit the epistle, the exhortation to read it elsewhere appears in the same place, suggesting that its given place in the 14th to 15th-century Wycliffite New Testament was already an established one and that that was where readers would expect to encounter it. **The position, of course, is entirely natural and expected, as it is in the closing verses of Colossians (4:16) that Paul exhorts his readers to now read the text of his letter to the Laodiceans**, even as, at the end of Laodiceans, he exhorts those readers to read his letter to the Colossians. But we must now look carefully at the background against which the letter to the Laodiceans was written (if it is by Paul), and at how closely or otherwise the general tone of the letter matches or reflects that background.

NOTE: There follows a lengthy, scholarly, and well documented discussion of the evidence for and against the authenticity of the Laodicean Letter, including doctrinal issues, language issues, reconstruction of the epistle from Latin back to Greek, and a discussion of both modern and ancient theories. Following those discussions, which are far to long to add here, Dr. Cooper offers his conclusion:

Conclusion

Assuming that the original Greek text of the Laodicean letter will remain undiscovered, **we have reached the end of the road as far as direct evidence is concerned regarding the letter's historical authenticity**. We have considered many objections and suppositions that have been put forward since the mid-2nd century that seek to discredit the letter as a blatant forgery, yet we have also seen that each objection is in turn discredited under the light of hard evidence.

Marcion, we have seen, could not have composed the letter, as it bears nothing of his stamp or philosophy. Neither can any post-apostolic Latin or Roman author have written it, as it contains not one of the sentiments or ideas which so quickly infected the Roman church once the apostles were dead. It stands apart from what we call the New Testament Apocryphal writings, lacking (unlike them) the slightest deviation in doctrine or innovation. It is certainly not what many nowadays claim it to be, namely a mish-mash of New Testament verses. The Latin text alone differs so much from the Latin New Testament verses with which it shares some similarity of sentiment, that it is plain that the Greek verses of the original differed from the Greek verses of the New Testament just as much. Difference is not similarity, and even similarity is not sameness or identity. Yet certain modernist scholars would have the unwary believe that, in this case at least, there is no real distinction between one or the other.

What we do have in the Laodicean letter is an admittedly damaged text, caused perhaps by the material (papyrus) upon which it was written. For that reason it might be more accurate to refer to the letter as **the Laodicean**

fragment. But what little does remain of its contents is entirely “primitive” in doctrine and sentiment, with not one phrase, sentence or verse being in conflict with any part of the Bible, Old Testament or New. **The vocabulary and syntax of the Latin text are entirely in keeping with a document that has been translated from the Greek**, as even Lightfoot so candidly admits, and it allows a most plausible reconstruction to be made of the probable Greek text - as Hutter has so ably demonstrated.

In short, when we consider the claims made by the opposing camps concerning the genuineness or otherwise of this letter, **we are forced to the conclusion that those who would claim that it is a forgery, enjoy not the smallest item of credible evidence to support their view.** Opinions and suppositions they have a-plenty, but no evidence.

On the other hand, when we consider the arguments for the letter’s historical authenticity, **we must confess ourselves mightily impressed with the array of both internal and external items of evidence that together compel the view that this fragment is what it claims to be, namely a portion of a letter once written by Paul to the Laodicean church.** As such it is a unique and precious item of immense archaeological, literary and theological importance concerning our Christian heritage, and it is the view of the present writer that nothing should be allowed to rob us of that.

[NOTE: complete credit for these excerpts and for the entire study is given to Dr. William R. Cooper of London, England.]

4:17 - TELL ARCHIPPUS. *“And tell Archippus, ‘Pay attention to the ministry you have received in the Lord, so that you can accomplish it.’”* Archippus is mentioned in Philemon 1:2 and no where else in the New Testament, so no more is know of him other that what we may glean from these two references. He was obviously a person in a position of leadership, the kind of person who can make a difference. Paul challenges him to pay attention to the ministry to which he has been called.

I had the privilege of serving on both the executive board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources at the same time. Twenty years earlier we were talking about goals and the principles and methods by which we sought to meet our goals. When I began serving on these two boards, I began hearing new terminology, including “Mission Statement”. I even voted on a new mission statement for LifeWay. We not only talked about mission statements, but also the plans by which we would accomplish our mission. The terminology may have been different, but Paul is calling on Archippus to faithfully commit himself to the mission to which he had been called in such a way that he would accomplish the goals given him by the Lord.

4. Closing salutation. 4:18.

4:18 - THIS GREETING. *“This greeting is in my own hand—Paul. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.”* When Paul wrote the epistles to the Thessalonians, it seems that someone had written to the church, telling them that the Lord had already returned (and in the language of the popular Jenkins & LaHaye series, they had been LEFT BEHIND!). The people were disturbed and misled because the writer had evidently signed Paul’s name to the letter. Paul wrote to the church to remind them what he had taught them when he was with them, and assured them that he would sign the letter with his own hand. They, we assume, would recognize his signature. He closed the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians in this way:

“This greeting is in my own hand—Paul. **This is a sign in every letter;** this is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you” (2 Thess 3:17-18).

A. T. Robertson says, “The chains clanked as Paul took the pen to sign the letter personally.” I like that. May God add His blessing to the study of His Word.

PARTING THOUGHTS

In the introduction, I made the statement, “It is obvious from the Scripture that the church was being infiltrated by a heretical philosophical system (2:8), which combined certain elements of legalistic Judaism (2:11, 14, 16, 17), asceticism (2:20-23), and an incipient Gnosticism (2:3ff.). Satan has constantly sought to corrupt the church, and he did not wait long to begin his evil campaign, using both immorality, greed, envy, jealousy, various emotions and drives, as well as theological corruption that still divide churches today. Dr. William R. Cooper made the statement near the beginning of his book, *OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH*, that if you would destroy the church, don’t persecute it, accommodate it, praise it, and promote it [COOPER, WILLIAM R., quoted loosely].

Bible students often quote Paul, often telling us why Paul might have said one thing or another, or what he might have been thinking as he wrote. Someone might write that if Paul had known certain conditions which existed in a particular city or church, the Scripture should be interpreted one way - but if he had not known that, we would be forced to follow a different line. The simple fact is that the divine Author, the Holy Spirit did know, and He did inspire Paul to write exactly what He wanted that church or individual to read. Every word of Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit - it is God-breathed. I have always reasoned that the Bible is the perfect Word of the perfect God. If He could not have produced a perfect Book why do we call Him God? And if He could have done it and wouldn’t do it, what kind of God is He? What we read in this epistle may reflect the great literary, philosophical, and theological genius of Paul, but this Scripture is God-breathed and as such it is authoritative and relevant for us today.

Paul addresses critical issues in this epistle to a church he had never visited. John would be inspired to write the Fourth Gospel a quarter of a century later to drive the final nail into the coffin of Gnosticism, Eastern Mysticism, and New Age Religious philosophies. John's introduction (prologue) is a fitting conclusion to the Epistle to the Colossians:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it.

(John 1:1-5, HCSB)

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2. Quick-Verse Electronic Library (numerous references, including The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Commentary on the Whole Bible, Believer's Study Bible Notes, and the Ryrie Study Bible Notes.
3. The Bible Navigator (LifeWay Christian Resources), including the HCSB, A. T. Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vines Word Studies in the New Testament, Barnes Commentary, the Holman Bible Dictionary, and other references.

APPENDIX ONE

NOTE: William (Bill) Cooper is the author of *After the Flood* (1995); *Paley's Watchmaker*

(1996); *William Tyndale's 1526 New Testament* (British Library 2000); & *The Wycliffe New Testament of 1388* (British Library 2002). He graduated with honors at Kingston University, England, and has since obtained his MA, PhD, and ThD at Emmanuel College of Christian Studies, Springdale, Arkansas.

(Dr. Cooper's Appendix One)
(Dr. Cooper's Research on the Laodicean Letter)

Wycliffe A version in original spelling:

“Poul, apostle, not of men ne bi man, but bi Jhesu Crist, to the britheren that ben of Laodice, grace to you and pees, of God the fadir and of the Lord Jhesu Crist. Gracis I do to Crist bi al myn orisoun that ye be dwellinge in him and lastinge, bi the beheest abidinge in the dai of doom. Ne he vnordeynede vs of sum veyn speche feynynge, that vs ouerturne fro the sothfastnesse of the gospel that of me is prechid. Also now schal God do hem leuyng and doynge of blessidnesse of werkis, which heelthe of lyf is. And now openli ben my boondis whiche I suffre in Crist Jhesu, in whiche I glad and ioie, and that is to me heelthe euerlastynge, that that I dide with oure preieris and mynystringe the Holy Spirit bi lijf or bi deeth. It is forsothe to me lijf into Crist, and to die ioie withouten eende. In vs he schal do his merci, that ye haue the same louynge, and that ye be of o wil. Therefore, derlyngis, as ye han herd in presence of me, hold ye and do ye in drede of God, and it schal be to you lijf withouten eende. It is forsothe God that worchith in vs. and do ye withouten ony withdrawinge what soeuere ye doon. And that it is, derlyngis, ioie ye in Crist and flee ye maad foul in clay. Alle youre axingis ben open anentis God, and be ye fastned in the witt of Crist. And whiche been hool and sooth, and chast and rightwijs and louable, do ye, and whiche herden and take in herte, hold ye, and it schal be to you pees. Holi men greeten you weel in the grace of oure Lord Jhesu Crist, with the Holi Goost. And do ye that pistil of Colosensis to be red to you. Amen.”

Glossary

gracis = thanks; *orisoun* = prayer; *beheest* = promise; *doom* = judgment
vnordeynede = unordained; *sothfastnesse* = truth; *hem* = them;
leuyng = leaving; *heelthe* = salvation; *boondis* = bonds; *ioie* = joy;
preieris = prayers; *axinigis* = askings; *anentis* = with; *rightwijs* = righteous

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APPENDIX TWO

Chronology

(From Dr. Cooper's book)

- AD 29.....Aulus Plautius Consul of Rome, afterwards Governor of Pannonia.
- AD 30.....(?) The year of Pudens' birth. His father, Pudentinus dies in this decade.
- AD 33.....Our Lord's death and resurrection.
- AD 36.....Birth of Claudia, daughter of Caradoc. Matthew's(?) Gospel is finished.
- AD 37.....(?) Gospel arrives in Britain according to Gildas. Death of Tiberius Caesar.
- AD 40.....(?) Aulus Plautius marries Pomponia. Pomponia converted by Gospel.
- AD 41.....Death of Tiberius Caesar. Claudius becomes Emperor.
- AD 43.....Claudian Invasion of Britain. Arrival here of Aulus Plautius and Pomponia.
- Judicial murder in Rome of Julia by Messalina, the wife of Claudius.
- AD 49.....Capture of Caradoc's family by Ostorius Scapula. They are placed in the care of Pomponia who converts them to Christ.
- AD 51.....Caradoc is betrayed by Queen Cartimantua (Aregwedd Foeddawg).
- AD 52.....Caradoc appears with his family before the Senate. Pudens returns to Rome, leaving his land in Chichester to the pagan temple there.
- AD 54.....Death of Claudius Caesar. Nero becomes Emperor.
- AD 57.....Trial of Pomponia. Retirement of Aulus Plautius from public life.
- AD 58.....Return to Britain of Bran, accompanied by Aristobulus.
- AD 59.....March 15th, Aristobulus martyred. Paul writes letter to Romans.
- AD 60.....(?) Murder by Nero of Aulus Plautius the Younger.
- AD 67.....Paul is martyred at Rome.
- AD 68.....Nero commits suicide.
- AD 81.....September 23rd, martyrdom of Linus under Domitian.

AD 83.....Death of Pomponia (said to be forty years after Julia's death in AD 43).

AD 107.....May 19th, Pudentiana is martyred.

AD 124.....Beginning of Lucius' reign.

AD 140.....(?) Timotheus is martyred with one Marcus.

AD 142.....Pius becomes bishop of the Roman Christians.

AD 151.....June 20th, Novatus is martyred.

AD 201.....December 3rd, death of Lucius.

APPENDIX THREE

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