**Christ in You, The Hope of Glory**

**Philippians and Colossians**

John Oakes and Pedro Figueroa

Both probably written during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome about AD 61-62

Both have an incredibly positive and hopeful outlook.

How could that be? Because Christ was in Paul (which was his hope—his confident expectation of ultimate glory) and because Paul was in Christ, and we truly have everything in Christ.

Two parallel themes in both Colossians and Philippians:

Christ in You

Living in Christ

In Christ, In Him, In the Lord 164 times in Paul alone.

What do we have in Christ?

Coll 1:14, Eph 1:7 Redemption

Coll 2:11-12 Put off the flesh

Colossians 2:10 fullness

Philippians 4:19 all your needs met Ephesians 1:3 every spiritual blessing

Phil 4:7 peace of God

Philippians 1:1 Saints in Christ Jesus

Philippians 3:1 Called of God in Christ Jesus

Philippians2:1 Encouragement in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4, 11 chosen

1 Corinthians 15:22 we will be made alive/resurrected

2 Corinthians 5:21 we become the righteousness of God

Romans 6:23 have eternal life

Romans 8:38-39 secure love of God

2 Timothy 1:9 grace

2 Corinthians 5:17 a new creation

2 Corinthians 1:20 all God’s promises fulfilled

So, how do we get into Christ? Gal 3:27, Rom 6:3 Baptized into Christ.

**Philippians: To Live is Christ**

Theme: Life in Christ.

Theme verse: Philippians 1:21 For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Outline:

Phil 1:1-30 To Live is Christ

Phil 2:1-18 Living Like Christ

Phil 3:1-21 Put Your Confidence in Christ

Phil 4:1-23 Practical Living in Christ

Ironside:

Ch 1 Christ as our life

Ch 2 Christ as our example

Ch 3 Christ as our object

Ch 4 Christ as our strength and supply

Background:

Philippi is the city Paul was called to from Asia Minor on his 2nd missionary journey. This church was very dear to his heart.

Acts 16:6-15

v. 6-8 Paul prevented from traveling west to Asia, Mysia in the north

and Bithynia along the Black Sea. Paul was blocked by the Holy Spirit in every direction.

v. 12 Philippi was a Roman (not Greek) city, although it was named after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great.

v. 13 There was no synagogue there. A new kind of ministry for Paul.

The first church in what we now call Europe.

Q: How might he have felt about this new situation? (insecure, needed to rely on God more?)

Q: Why did God send Paul to Philippi?

There was no synagogue for Paul to preach in, so he and Silas went down by the river, to a place of prayer. The church was, literally, born in a place of prayer. Mostly women. Why? Because, generally, women are more spiritual. Lydia was the first convert in Europe. v. 14 “God opened her heart.”

Paul has many fond memories of Philippi, but perhaps his favorite is of being jailed, along with Silas, for casting a demon out of a woman. They were given many blows in a public beating, and were put in chains in the innermost part of the prison, where it was cold and dark. What did Paul and Silas do? They prayed and sang.

Q: What do you do in your darkest and coldest moments?

At midnight, Paul and Silas were miraculously freed. The jailer said, “What must I do to be saved.” Imagine Paul sharing that story while he was stuck in a jail in Rome.

Afterward, the city officials publicly apologized to Paul and Silas. God is great.

Q: Would you be willing to be publicly flogged and thrown into the darkest prison in order to help people to be saved?

A little more background. Paul had sent Epaphroditus to Philippi to encourage the church, he had returned to Paul and given him an update.

Points of emphasis in Philippians:

1. Living in Christ, of course, but also

2. Unity 1:27 (with one spirit and one mind) 2:2 (be like-minded) 4:2 (urge Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord)

3. The immanent return of Jesus. Phil 1:6 (the day of Christ Jesus),10 (the day of Christ), 2:16 (the day of Christ) , 3:20-21 (we eagerly await the Savior) , 4:5 (the Lord is near)

**Philippians 1 To Live is Christ**

Phil 1:1 to all the Saints in Christ. It didn’t take him long….

What is a saint (Gr. *hagios*)? He or she is a called-out, separate, different, holy person.

If we are saints, then we are like God. Isaiah 6:3 “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts.”

I appreciate that God calls us what he envisions as being, rather than what we are in our human selves. God sees us as what we can become and as what we will be in Christ.

Who are you and I? We are holy in Christ Jesus!!!!!

Philippians 1:2 Grace was the traditional Greek salutation. Peace was the traditional Jewish salutation.

All who are in Christ, receive grace and peace.

What is peace in Christ like? An author named H. A. Kent said it is “the inner assurance and tranquility that God ministers to the hearts of believers and that keeps them spiritually confident and content even in the midst of turmoil.”

1:3-8 Assurance in Christ. What God has already done in us, what he is now doing in us, and what he will continue to do in us.

 Q: How did Paul feel about the Philippian disciples?

Q: Do you, like Paul, truly have people on your heart? What is that like?

1:6 God began a good work in us. God began a good work in Philippi through Paul and Silas, specifically in the conversions of Lydia and the jailer.

1:5 …from the first day until now. He is still working in us…

1:6 God will carry his work in us on to completion. Do you believe that?

1:6 God sees in us that which will be fully realized in heaven. He is working now toward that end.

In Christ the outcome is guaranteed. Trouble, victory, sadness, joy all has purpose and God will carry it to completion.

1:5 What are we partners in? In [sharing] the gospel. 1:7 In defending and confirming the gospel. “Those who possess the gospel share it.” That is what we have together.

1:7 Can you with Paul, say that you have the saints in San Diego and around the world on your heart? Could you say in public (v.8) “God can testify” How much was he on their heart?

Paul 1:8 I yearn for you. (*epipotheo* which can be translated as homesickness) 1 Thess 2:6b-12 Paul felt similarly about the Thessalonians.

1:9-11 Q: What was Paul’s deepest desire for the Philippian believers?

--that they would have knowledge of and discernment about what is best.

Paul’s prayer is that our love for God will produce both knowledge of God’s will and discernment about how to best help to bring it about.

 Q: How can we come to know what is best? (Romans 12:1-2)

How is our love manifested? In knowledge and discernment (depth of insight).

We need to grow in our knowledge of what is right (largely from Bible knowledge)

We also need to grow in discernment (wisdom) about how to carry it out.

Discernment: The ability which makes us able to make a wise, moral decision.

To decide between **good, better and best**. (BTW, this is an even bigger theme in Colossians, so perhaps I should move on…)

Q: Do you settle for what is good or even better, or do you earnestly seek what is best?

Don’t forget, however, that with knowledge and discernment comes the need to do those things you discern need to be done.

v. 10 pure = sincere = without wax—a reference to delicate porcelain which often had small cracks repaired by filling them with wax.

v. 10 “blameless” refers to our motivation, not our actions.

1. love for God the seed

2. knowledge and discernment the plant

3. pure and blameless the flower

4. fruit from God the fruit

The result: We give give glory and praise to God.

Read Phil 1:12-20 Q: What is on Paul’s heart? (bear in mind where he is!)

 The spread of the gospel.

Paul is sharing his testimony.

1. v. 12-13 What has happened has served to advance the gospel. (his unjustly being accused by the Jews in Jerusalem, being imprisoned for two years and finally being sent to Rome, after many dangers to face trial)

2. v. 14-18 What is happening now is serving to spread the gospel. (being in chains in Rome, sharing his faith with many in Caesar’s household [Phil 4:22] to believe and thereby encouraging and emboldening disciples, even in Philippi).

3. v. 19-26 What will happen will also help to spread the gospel. (whether I am cleared of charges and remain to encourage the church or whether I am convicted and executed).

What it comes down to is that Paul believes Phil 1:6 applies to himself.

1:12-13 What has already happened is advancing the gospel.

Paul has shared his faith and many in Caesar’s household have come to believe (Phil 4:22)

1:14-18 What is now happening is advancing the gospel.

v. 14 Q: What will people be encouraged to do “because of your chains.” Sometimes we help people to do right more by our actions than by our “discipling.” Through your tireless effort, your pushing through sickness and suffering, your faithfulness despite loss and grief will advance the gospel.

Paul is an “ambassador in chains.” Eph 6:20

Paul is talking about “fruitful suffering.” Do or will you embrace this?

v. 15-18 Paul refuses to let people with insincere motives rob his joy at the advancement of the gospel.

Some of us are disturbed by the unwise actions of the zealous young. We want to correct their unwisdom, but “He who is wise wins souls.” Or is it “He who wins souls is wise.” (Prov 11:30)?

Paul did not dwell on what they did to him—so much so that we do not even know what these insincere self-serving believers actually did to Paul.

v. 18 “What does it matter?” Q: Could you say that?

1:19-26 What will happen will serve to advance the gospel.

Read Phil 1:19-26

Paul is certain of the outcome, but uncertain about the path by which he will reach that outcome. This is faith (Heb 11:1)!!!

v. 19 Paul: I KNOW that through your prayers and by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit that I will be delivered/saved.

v. 20 I EXPECT that I will have sufficient courage

Christ will be lifted up by my life/body, whether by my life or by my death. Q: Is this your attitude about your life?

1:21 For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The theme verse in Philippians.

Q: Do you believe this? Really?

Paul had labored so hard, had sacrificed so much, could anticipate future hardship and suffering so great, that his heart longed for release from this life.

Do you feel this way?

Q: How would you fill in this blank?

For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Let us look at Paul’s life. Look what he could say in

Acts 20:18 You know how I have lived…

 20:19 I served the Lord with great humility Wow!

 20:24 I consider my life worth nothing to me… (except that I finish the race)

 20:26-27 I am innocent of the blood of all men.

Phil 1:22-26 Q: How does Paul view his life? How did this affect his view of job, money, pleasure, etc….?

v. 22 For Paul, continued fruitful labor was sweetly anticipated,

v. 23 but dying in Christ and departing was even sweeter.

v. 23 I desire to depart. Depart is like pulling up stakes.

It is ironic that Paul is a tentmaker. He is a temporary resident—like Abraham—a temporary resident.

To die is to leave a tent behind and to go to a permanent home in heaven with God.

What is heaven like, according to Paul. It is being “with Christ.” (not merely in Christ).

Paul would be happy to die and to go and be with God, not that he does not recognize that it would hurt them. Look at Phil 2:27 He understands that, as humans, death brings to those behind sorrow on sorrow

v. 24-26 But I believe that I will remain behind. Why?

v. 22 fruitful labor. v. 24 for your sake…. v. 25 for your progress…

notice: **Again, Paul is not sure about the path**

**v. 25 convinced that I will be delivered and remain.**

**v. 27 but whatever happens….**

Phil 1:27-30

Phil 1:27 Q: How would you describe Paul’s vision for the church in Philippi? Living a life worthy of the gospel.

Contending as one man for the gospel.

v. 27 What does it mean to live a life worthy of the gospel?

1. By our defense of the gospel (v. 7)

2. By our proclamation of the gospel (v. 13-18)

3. By our living worthily.

It means to live a life that would make your Father in heaven proud.

In 1:27-28 and in 2:1f we will see that a major aspect of this worthiness is living in complete unity with one another. This is the worthiness that the world will see

“whether I come and see you or am absent.” Again, although Paul is certain of the outcome, he is unsure of the path by which God will reach that outcome.

v. 27-28 Paul’s call for unity.

1. In one spirit. Fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

2. With one mind (NIV contending as one man). *Psyche* connotes one heart and mind.

3. Working side by side. (contending as one man,striving together) Unity of action. Each disciple is in the battle

The result:

Our unity will be an omen to the lost.

Q: What does “contending as one man for the faith” mean to you?

Q: What would a church like this look like in a modern setting?

Phil 1:28-30 The world may not exactly be fired up about your unity and may even feel threatened by it to the point of persecuting you. We need to stand firm together.

**Philippians 2 Living Like Christ.**

As already said, the unity of mind in 2:2 goes back to the worthiness of 1:27 This is why 2:1 begins with “Therefore.”

2:1-4 The worthy life is one of unity with one another.

In fact, to outsiders, unity is the, or one of the hallmarks of true faith John 17:23 ….complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Clearly, unity was hugely important to Paul and, clearly, he saw it is sina qua non (inescapable essential, without which none) of spreading the gospel. It was a discussion of unity which led him into the most famous part of Philippians, 2:5-11. This is the background to his discussion of Christ.

2:1 If you have any encouragement comfort or sympathy in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Paul is pulling out all the stops here. It almost like he is emotionally manipulating them. If you love me, then…

Paul says, “make my joy complete by being like-minded.” Paul, in chains for his faith, will have complete joy—will be totally happy—if only they will be united.

v. 2 Literally, thinking the same thing.

Q: What do you think it means for us, as believers in a local church, to be like-minded?

a. Phil 2:3-4 It is to consider others’ needs above your own—to abandon

selfishness. This is a high calling!

b. Phil 2:5 It is to have the mind of Christ, as described in 2:6-8.

Philippians 2:5 Have the same mind-set as Christ.

2:6-8 Is an accounting of the cross from Jesus’ point of view.

I. Did not cling on to what he had with God. *harpagmos*  Grasped. To hold onto tenaciously. (note: some have used this passage to teach that Jesus is NOT God—teaching here that Jesus did not consider equality with God attainable. This would deny the entire sense of this passage.)

He emptied himself (made himself nothing) meaning to deprive something of its proper place and use. This is the mind of Christ.

Q: What did Jesus empty himself of? His God-ness, his omniscience, his omnipresence, his power, even his immortality. His place in heaven.

Instead, he became a slave. We, as sinners, are slaves John 8:34-35. We were, symbolically, slaves in Egypt.

Q: In what way/sense should we empty ourselves?

Notice that this is something he did to himself. It was an act of his own will. (as well as v. 8 where he humbled himself.

What is the mindset of Christ? It is to take what is best and most desirable to ourselves and to abandon it for the sake of the salvation of others.

II. Phil 2:7b He took the form of a human being.

But that was not humble enough.

III. Not only did Jesus not cling onto his God-nature, he even did not cling on to his humanness. He did not have to die but he did.

Became the lowest of the low…. To the point of being crucified alongside common criminals. The most humiliating conceivable death.

God → man → humiliating death.

Notice v. 8 He humbled himself in this way. He took death upon himself. It was his will to do this.

Isaiah 53:12 He poured out his soul unto death and was counted with the transgressors.

Like it says in Deut 21:23 (as quoted in Gal 3:13) “cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.”

This is the mind we should have (v. 5)!

v. 8 He humbled himself. We have two choices. We can humble ourselves, or we can be humbled by God (Daniel 4 Those who walk in pride he is able to humble)

Isaiah 53:7 A willing sacrifice. This is part of what made Jesus a perfect sacrifice, not only his sinlessness but the willingness of his sacrifice—something a sheep or bull was not capable of.

2:5-11 Jesus went from exaltation to slavery and back to exaltation. This was foreshadowed in Joseph and in Moses.

2:9-11 Therefore. A big word here. Because of this. Because of what?

Therefore God exalted him. Literally in the Ascension, but also in a spiritual sense. As he will any of us who willingly humble ourselves. Humble yourselves…. And he will lift you up. (James 4:10)

v. 10 All will confess… Those who see Jesus in his glory cannot help but confess as Peter did in that boat. This is as natural as breathing, if we were to see Jesus in his glory. But, sadly, many do not see him that way. But many of those will confess, perhaps grudgingly, as the last act before being sent to eternal punishment.

But for us, it will be a declaration of the greatest imaginable joy!!!!

How do we prepare ourselves for that day? By having the mind of Christ today. Jn 14 What is the way? I am the Way!

All…. All in heaven (angels, heavenly beings) on earth (those alive until the coming of Jesus) and “under the earth” (those who are waiting in Hades).

Phil 2:12 Therefore….. (God’s therefore is v. 9. Our therefore is v. 12. As the Father responded to Jesus’ humbling himself, so we, too, ought to respond to his humbling of himself.) Q: What does it mean to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.”? Works salvation? I thought perfect love casts out fear. I thought God wanted us to be confident in our salvation.

Exactly. That is why he tells us to behave this way, so that we can continue in just such confidence.

Work out = Let it go through its natural development in you. Let your salvation work itself out in your life. How? Well, by having the mind of Christ, but also see v. 14-15 and v. 17.

What may at first seem to be a threat is intended as an assurance. Let God continue to work (v. 13) in your life in this way. (the word here, *energeo* means to work effectively. God is effectively working in you.) God is effectively working in us in that he is creating both the will and the action on your part. Why? v. 13 Because it is his pleasure to do so. (Deut 7:7)

Motyer: The Christian life is a blend of resting and striving. Resting in our salvation and striving in it as well to become what God already sees us as being. Remember Phil 1:5-7. Paul is confident that what God began in us he will carry on to completion.

“Work out your own salvation.” Means take personal responsibility for your own growth. Make it happen. Remember that, biblically, salvation is in a sense a thing of the past, in another sense of the present (already, but not yet), and in another sense a thing of the future. He has the second sense in mind here.

Motyer’s analogy: It is like a marriage. You are already married, but you need to work on your marriage.

“with fear and trembling” Not that this will normally be the chief emotion, but we should bear in mind that he who thinks he stands, should take heed, lest he fall (1 Cor 10:12)

1. Phil 2:14-15. No complaining or arguing!!! Why? Go back to Phil 2:3-4 Remember the point of the entire section, which is unity and having the same mind.

If we have the mind of Christ, what will we be like? a. We will not grumble or complain. b. We will, as a result be blameless and pure. This reminds me of James 3:2. If we can control our tongue, we will be blameless in everything.

Q: Why might complaining and arguing (questioning) defeat any efforts on our part to remaining “blameless and pure”? (Motyer: selfish complaining, unbalanced criticism of small matters, grudging unwillingness to be helpful) (complaining is outward, questioning is inward)

Q: Do you struggle with complaining and arguing? How can you put this behind you?

v. 15 showing yourselves to be children of God. Again, become what God already says you are.

15b Shining like stars… Daniel 12:3 You will stick out and be a beacon to the lost.

2. 2:17 the drink offering. What a great metaphor!

2 Tim 4:6-8 Paul describes his life as a drink offering. Paul lived like Christ.

Jesus also made a drink offering Luke 22:20 “Which is poured out for you.”

What does pouring out your life mean to you?

The Drink Offering (nesek) = pouring out our life in devotion to God.

Exodus 29:41, Leviticus 23:13 and Numbers 28:31 for example

Usually given with the grain offering. The connection is significant. We give our 10%, but we also pour out our lives.

Are you pouring out your life or are you holding things back in the cup?

My wife Jan is a great example of this.

What are you saving for? Where are you putting your treasures?

Are you “All in?” (1 Tim 6:6-8) contentment.

2:16-17 Q: What did Paul “run or labor” for? To see that the Philippians are in Christ.

2:19-30 Examples of what Paul is talking about: Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul hesitates to use his own example too directly. Timothy and Epaphroditus lived like Christ.

19-24 Timothy. His interest is truly in the welfare of the Philippians, not his own interest.

v. 20 Timothy shows genuine concern for the Philippians.

v. 22 He slaved with me, as Jesus took the form of a slave.

Also, in sending him, Paul is also sacrificing, in that he is sending his favorite (“as a son” v. 22) for the sake of the Philippians.

(aside: v. 20 “No one else like him”. This is by degree, not literal. Eg. Epaphroditus!

2:25-30

Why does he mention Epaphroditus here? Because he illustrated what Paul is talking about. He demonstrates the mind of Christ.

The Philippians knew Epaphroditus, as he had already visited them (Phil 4:18).

Epaphroditus (as he hopes the Philippians will be, and us as well) is a “co-worker and fellow soldier,…. Who longs for you. (Paul had yearned for them 1:8)

He is distressed, not that he is sick, but that his illness might cause them distress.

Epaphroditus nearly died for the work of Christ.

Paul is lifting up Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples here of the mind of Christ, but he is also, subtly, using his own life as an example as well, as we see how deeply he cared about Timothy and Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus’ death would have caused him sorrow upon sorrow (v. 27). Yet, Paul is happily sacrificing his own desire and sending his best to Philippi.

**Philippians 3 Put Your Confidence in Christ**

Read Philippians 3:1-4

(humorous note: Paul says “finally” when he is almost exactly half way done with the letter)

Phil 3:1 Rejoice in the Lord (as opposed to rejoicing in your accomplishments). This is a bridge to the next section.

Paul is about to head into a discussion of something which will surely steal our joy. He is launching on an uncomfortable topic, but he does it to safeguard them.

(aside: the “mutilators of the flesh” are those who were trying to force male circumcision on the church. Here we see some parallels with Galatians and Colossians, implying at least some influence of Judaizing Christians in Philippi)

Paul shows some real anger here. “Watch out for those dogs.”

Q: What did Paul get angry about? (Those who would replace grace with law-keeping Gal 1:8-9)

Q: What did Jesus get angry about? (those who do not forgive others Matt 18:32-35, those whose religion leads people away from God Matt 23;15)

Q: What do YOU get righteously angry about?

v. 3 Q: What does Paul mean when he says “we are the circumcision”? (see Colossians 2:11-15) Romans 2:28-29 True circumcision is circumcision of the heart.

(And, of course, the Old Testament often pointed toward a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34, Ezekiel 37:26-28.)

We are the the circumcision—the promised ones of Genesis 17:11-12 and 17:19. Gal 4:21-31 Especially 4:28

v. 3b Paul says “we put no confidence in the flesh (in the things the world values).

Q: Can you say that about yourself? What do you put your confidence in?

We are the opposite of these “dogs”—these circumcisers/Judaizers. (A lot more on this in Colossians)

The opposite of putting confidence in the flesh is to “boast in Christ Jesus.”

v. 4-6 Q: Why is Paul giving his resume here?

These guys think they are something special—that they have something to boast about—that they have a great spiritual resume. If anyone is something special, it is me.

Paul: I have more reason to put confidence in the flesh.

Paul:

I was circumcised in the right way at the right time.

I was a Jew among Jews.

Righteousness? A Pharisee of Pharisees. If legalistic righteousness could bring joy and a relationship with God then Paul would know.

A student of Gamaliel!!!

I was very zealous! I was very committed.

Parallel: Solomon and Ecclesiastes. Solomon: If happiness could be gained through having the things of this life, then Solomon would know. He can save us the trouble of trying it out.

Paul: If happiness and/or righteousness could be gained through being religious, then Paul would know. He can save us the trouble.

He had the right background.

He had the right training.

Phil 3:7-8 All this stuff of the flesh is garbage (v. 8), compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

Paul: It is not only man at his worst, but man at his best that is “flesh” (v. 5)

Analogy: It is kind of like switching accounting software. People always look back to the time when we changed over to the new system of accounting.

Our whole system of spiritual accounting changed when we came into Christ.

v. 7 Whatever I had considered gains, I now consider loss.

Paul added up all his accomplishments and they added up to exactly zero!

Actually, less than zero!

Q: Is that how you feel?

When Paul met Christ on the road to Damascus, all his accomplishments became filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)

Q: Would you like to spend your life living on a garbage heap? Paul had no regrets about what he left behind.

Q: What do you value????

Phil 3:8 all a loss compared to knowing Christ

3:9 to be found **in Him.**

3:10 I want to know Christ. How powerful!!!!!!

Our goal: TO KNOW HIM

*Ginosko*. OT yada Adam knew Eve. 947 times in OT *yada* = to know, to experience, experiential knowledge, to know intimately, as in a marriage relationship. (note: A Paper by Glenn Giles on the use, meaning and importance of yada is at the end of the notes on Philippians and Colossians)

Outside of Christ, your degree, your accomplishments, your experiences, etc. are garbage!!! In Christ, they have meaning, but that meaning comes only from being in Christ.

Q: How badly do you want to know Christ?

3:8 How much is knowing Christ worth? “Surpassing worth.” Incalculable value. Infinite value.

Anything divided by infinity is equal to zero.

3:8 How much is knowing Christ worth? Paul: “I have lost all things.” (his status as Hebrew of Hebrews, as a Pharisee, his right to a family, a stable life, a home, comfort, safety) Some of these things Paul gave up willingly—he walked away from them—and others were taken from him. For Paul, it is all more or less the same.

v.9 Q: How do we come to know Christ/ to be righteous? Not by obeying the Law! No, it is through faith. Romans 4:1-3.

Motyer: We reach the goal, not by stairs but by an elevator.

Q: Where do we find righteousness? Answer: in Christ (in Him v. 9) 2 Cor 5:21 no eye has seen….

Let’s recite Phil 3:10 together.

Phil 3:10b Becoming like him in his death.

The result of knowing Christ is to possess power—resurrection power.

The result of knowing Christ is to suffer like him. (1 Peter 4:12)

The result of knowing Christ, is becoming like him!!!!

Christlikeness leads us to the cross.

We will die like him, but we will be raised in glory like him.

v. 11 and so somehow… This sounds like Paul is uncertain about attaining to the resurrection. This is not the case. As before, he is uncertain about the path to this end, but not about the end.

To paraphrase, I want to know Christ and so, by whatever route he so chooses, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

(rem: Phil 1:6 I am confident that he will bring to completion. Phil 1:19-27 I am confident, but even if I am wrong, I am confident)

Philippians 3:12-14 Paul: I know where I am going, but in the meantime… Not that I have already obtained this. He knows where he is going, but he is not there yet.

I press on (literally pursue). Paul is not sitting back idly. He is pursuing righteousness—he is pursuing what God perceives him to already have.

v. 13 Forgetting what is behind… Q: What is he forgetting? Not dwelling on the past in ways that will hinder the progress of the gospel—that will cause us to doubt what God can do in our lives.

v. 14 I press on to the goal. What goal? To hear “Well done, good and faithful servant (Luke 19:17). The crown of righteousness 2 Tim 4:8 1 Cor 2:9

Q: Are you pressing on to the goal? Do you keep the goal in mind?

3:15-16 This reminds me of Phil 2:1 If you have any encouragement…, any comfort…, any sharing in the Spirit… Then surely all of you will agree with me on this!

Again, unity is in mind. We may not agree on everything, but surely we can agree on this—that all of us what to have the mind of Christ and that all of us want to know Christ.

If we have this in common, then our petty differences of doctrine, practice and even theology will work itself out in time.

Paul does not want us to major in the minors. He wants us to bear with one another—including one another’s differences.

Paul’s solution: Let us live up to what we have already attained. Let us all seek to know Christ. This we have in common.

Q: What are some of the things we may disagree on which can take away this unity?

Do not worry about small disagreements, and be busy about doing what you already know to do.

3:17 In this, follow my example. What example? His putting off of the flesh, counting it garbage and seeking with all his energy, pressing on to know Christ.

3:18-19 There are some among us and out in the world who are not of this mindset. (v. 18 “even with tears” implies Paul has examples in the church in mind)

Q: Who are the enemies of the cross? Those who value the things of the flesh/of this world over knowing Christ.

v. 19 their god is their stomach. Focused on self. Self-indulgent.

v. 19 their glory is their shame. They call good evil and evil good. (Isaiah 5:20)

v. 19 Their mind is on earthly things.

Q: How to be an enemy of God? Set your mind on earthly things.

v. 19 Their destiny is destruction. Paul: I have lost all things, but will gain all things. These people have refused to let go of worldly things, so they will lose everything.

Titus 1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.

Practical application: Find someone who exemplifies this and imitate them. We need the scriptures, but we also need worked-out examples as models. I think of Ron and Linda Brumley. I think of Luis and Silvia Mendez. Joe and Mindy Plum.

Phil 3:20-21 The solution: Put your mind on heavenly things.

3:20 Our citizenship is in heaven. Really!

Hebrews 11:13-16

My passport says USA, but that is not true.

Here, we live as in tents.

We do not put down roots. We are on a bridge, so we do not plant trees.

Our constitution is Matthew 5-7

Our king is Jesus

3:20b-21 We eagerly await/expect the return of Christ.

They are waiting for the things of this life. We are waiting for Christ.

They are devoted to the physical body. We are devoted to the heavenly body.

The early church had a much stronger sense of the immanence of the return of Christ.

Motyer: “Did the apostles expect Christ to return in their lifetimes? Of course they did, for no other attitude is permitted to a New Testament Christian.

Q: How might this have affected the church in good ways?

He will transform our bodies. Q: How? By the power that enables. By the power that powers.

3:21 We will have glorious Christ-like bodies. We will be like him.

Again, we see the recurring theme of becoming now what God sees us as already being and which we are confident we will become.

Paul: While we wait here, we should live as if we were already there.

**Philippians 4 Practical Living in Christ**

Phil 4:1-3 Paul returns to his theme of unity, but this time with a practical aspect.

4:1 “whom I love and long for, my joy and crown…. dear friends.

Paul reminds them (as he did in 1:4 partnership 1:7 I have you in my heart.

1:8 I yearn for you.) of his great affection for them.

Paul: Stand firm. Why does he say this? Because if we are not completely united in mind and heart, then we cannot stand firm against Satan, contending as one person for the gospel.

Euodia and Syntyche. We have no idea what the issue was, and it is none of our business.

The details are unimportant, but the fact that Paul mentioned it tells us something. We MUST deal with divisions. We MUST work together. Division creates a serious flaw in our spiritual armour.

Phil 4:4-7 Rejoice always. When? Always.

In case you did not hear me the first time, REJOICE!!!!!

v. 5 Let your gentle forebearance of one another be evident to all. Accept one another as you are, even while helping one another to change.

Coll 3:13 Bear with one another. If we do not learn gentle forebearance, we will not be able to rejoice.

v. 6 Do not be anxious about anything! Wow! Matthew 6:25 Lit. Do not give a thought to your life—what you will eat or what you will wear.

Q: OK, well what should I do instead? Pray. Faithful prayer is the antidote to being anxious. (not prayer—faithful prayer)

Prayer Free-will offering (Lev 22:23) fired up about God and giving an offering

Petition Vow-offering (Lev 11:16, 22:23) given in anticipation of future blessing

Thanksgiving Thank-offering (Lev 7:11-15) given in response to specific blessing

1 Thess 5:16 Rejoice always (free-will) Pray constantly (vow-offering) give thanks in all circumstances (thank-offering)

v. 7 If we will put our trust in God, we will have peace which passes all understanding. How much peace? Peace beyond your ability to even remotely understand. Biblically peace (*shalom* ) includes the idea of wholeness.

That is a lot of peace!!!

Phil 4:7b This peace is a guard (lit. garrison) for our hearts.

Ex: Ezek 38:7-23 Gog will come against God’s people living in safety in unwalled cities with a vast army. God will send Gog packing. (if time, read v. 11, 12, 21-23)

Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your hearts.

Phil 4:8-9 Think about such things. *logizomai* Ponder, consider, reflect on….

Application: We need to think about the best in one another. Do NOT get caught in the trap of considering all the faults, problems, failings, shortcomings of your brothers and sisters. Do not ignore them, but do not *logizomai* them.

Paul: We become what we contemplate, so contemplate noble things. Be careful what you read, watch on TV, how you think about people….

4:10-20 Paul’s example of contentment. Paul is beginning to wrap up and is giving us some closing thoughts, including some things specific to the Philippians.

4:12 Content. 1 Tim 6:6-8.

Q: How can we be content with only food and clothing? v. 13 Through Christ who gives us strength.

(BTW, it is literally I can do all things IN Christ who gives me strength)

v. 14-18 Paul is content, but he is also thankful.

v. 18 Their gifts are a fragrant offering (an OT reference). Their gift to him is a gift to God.

4:21-23 Closing. Grace be with you.

Introduction to Colossians

Expectations

I. Read book of Colossians

II. Memorize some key Scriptures (Col 1:19-20, Col 1:27)

Goals

I. Get excited about your walk with God

II. Lift Jesus up in your heart

III. Learn history/background of Bible

IV. Learn new ways to deepen your Bible study

a. I like to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

b. Metacognition (Thinking about the whys)

BACKGROUND: Colossae was a city in the Lycus valley of Western Anatolia (Asia Minor). Present day Turkey.

PURPOSE: To deter the church in Colossae from falling into the “Colossian heresy.” The nature of this heresy had to do with Paul’s warning not to fall prey to the human tradition of “do not handle, do not taste, do not touch,” and following new moon festivals and special days. (Col2:16-23) The Colossian heresy was basically Jewish, but not as straightforward as the Judaizing legalism of Galatians, but a form of mysticism claiming spiritual elitism. (Bruce, p. 22)

TIME FRAME: AD 60 Paul did not directly start the church in Colassae. (Col2:1) He did evangelize in the area (Acts 19:10) but Epaphras (Philemon 23) appears to have been the first to evangelize Colossae directly. Paul did, however, appear to have converted at least one Colossian named Philemon (Philemon 19).

THEME: The all sufficiency of Christ (the fullness of God) on the cross to redeem completely.

INTERESTING FACTS: The Holy Spirit is mentioned only once in Colossians (compared to Paul’s other letters).

● Romans about 25 times

● 1 Corinthians about 20 times

● 2 Corinthians about 10 times

● Galatians about 15 times

● Ephesians about 10 times

● Philippians about 3 times

● 1 Thessalonian about 4 times

● 2 Timothy about 2 times

● Titus 1 time

Paul does this possibly to focus the Colossians on, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” He is trying to emphasize Christ to combat the Colossian heresy. For Paul, the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit are distinguishable, but practically they cannot be separated- the exalted Christ imparted his life and power through the Spirit.

OUTLINE:

I. 1:1 – 1:23 The Person and Work of Christ

II. 1:24 – 2:7 Paul’s Ministry

III. 2:8 – 3:4 False Teaching and the Cure

V. 3:5 – 4:6 The Christian Way

VI. 4:7 – 4:17 Personal Notes

Colossians 1

1:1-2 Paul says, “brothers in Christ,” and “grace and peace be yours through God our Father.” Paul always emphasized the grace of God the Father through Christ. For Paul knew that there was no other way to have grace and peace with God and man except by being in Christ. You will see Paul emphasize “in Christ” throughout Colossians.

1:3-8 v7 Epaphras was the missionary who brought the Colossians to faith. Imagine the faith of Paul. A persecutor of the church trying to snuff out the gospel. What happened? He saw it spread from Jerusalem to Rome (where he was imprisoned), Asia Minor, other parts of Europe, and the East (past Damascus) and into Arabia. This is a short 30 years!

The Lycus Valley had flourishing churches in Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. All probably connected to the work of Epaphras.

v8 Paul here mentions how the Spirit did cause the Colossians to love. Paul usually writes extensively about the Spirit. But this is the only direct mention of the Spirit in Colossians. Recall that Paul is going to talk in Colossians about the indwelling Christ to combat the Colossian heresy.

Do you feel like the Spirit is causing you to grow every year in your love for the brotherhood? Sometimes we look at the church and God’s people from a worldly point of view. Especially if we have been hurt by someone in the fellowship. The church is never going to be perfect but we are called to grow in our love for God’s people. Are you holding any grudges against someone? Are you letting bitterness grow in your heart? What are you doing to resolve those issues?

V9-14 Paul speaks here about unceasing prayer for the Colossians. What is unceasing prayer?

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing (ESV),

 Never stop praying (NLT)

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (NIV)

“Devote” - προσκαρτερέω - proskartereó - to give constant attention to a thing

(http://biblehub.com/thayers/4342.htm)

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

In the previous lessons in the school of prayer we analyzed the various elements in prayer, reviewed the prayer life of the Master Teacher, showed the place the promises of God play in prayer, and considered two of the conditions of answered prayer. We now come to the extremely important lesson of the part played by the Holy Spirit in the prayer life of the disciple of Christ. “True prayer,” wrote Samuel M. Zwemer, “is God the Holy Spirit talking to God the Father in the name of God the Son, and the believer’s heart is the prayerroom.” There is scriptural warrant for asserting that our chronic disinclination and reluctance to pray, as well as our ignorance of how to pray aright, find their complete answer in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Hence Paul’s injunction, “Pray at all times in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18). The Holy Spirit is the Source and Sustainer of our spiritual life. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Since prayer is represented in Scripture as an essential factor in progress in the Christian life, it is not surprising to find that the Spirit of God is deeply involved in this sphere. The Spirit and the Word It hardly need be said that to pray in the Spirit means to pray in harmony with the Word of God, which He has inspired. He does not speak with two voices. He will never move us to pray for something that is not sanctioned by Scripture. “There is an inseparable union between the Spirit, the Word and prayer,” writes H. W. Frost, “which indicates that the Spirit will always lead the saint to make much of the Word, and especially God’s promises in the Word. ...This explains the fact that the great pray-ers have always been great students of the Word. “ (Sanders)

No one truly completely understands how God works through prayer. But the Spirit gives us what we need through prayer. He gives us power, wisdom, understanding of His will and His fruits.

How are we going to have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives? We have to ask the source. We have to pray in the Spirit.

V11 Paul speaks of patient endurance, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22-23). The Stoic philosophers of the time highly esteemed this quality but Paul combined it with joy. Something the Stoics did not associate patient endurance. A Stoic may have endured prison with patience and endurance and probably would have done so calmly. But Paul is talking about having joy in patient endurance. Paul was talking about contentment in all circumstances (1 Tim 6:6, Philippians 4:12) This can only come about by the power of the Holy Spirit because patient endurance is His fruit not ours.

V12-14 Why can Christians endure suffering with joy?

 Because we know the reward that is set before us.

Inheritance – You are guaranteed an inheritance in Christ. Why? Because you have been transferred. Not you will be transferred. You have been transferred.

Ephesians 1:18 says “8I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”

● Power - Ephesian 1:19-20

● Heaven – Matthew 25:34, Revelations 21:1-7 verse 7

● Authority – Ephesians 2:6 Co-reign with Christ

● Glorious new body – Philippians 3:21, 1 Cor 15:35-57

Christ’s inheritance is the whole universe, all that is in existence: Hebrews 1:2 says that the Son has been “appointed heir of all things.” Being a co-heir with Christ means that we, as God’s adopted children, will share in the inheritance of Jesus. What belongs to Jesus will also belong to us. Christ gives us His glory (John 17:22), His riches (2 Corinthians 8:9), and all things (Hebrews 1:2). We are as welcomed in God’s family as Jesus is; we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6, NKJV). All that belongs to Jesus Christ will belong to us, the co-heirs, as well. (https://www.gotquestions.org/co-heirs-with-Christ.html)

You cannot work hard enough, be good enough, have enough prayer time or Bible knowledge, share your faith enough, fast enough, serve enough to earn this inheritance.

The Scripture does not say you will be transferred into the Kingdom of the Son. You have been transferred into the Kingdom of His Son.

And hath translated (or transferred) us . . .—The word “translated” is a word properly applied to the transplanting of races, and the settlement of them in a new home. Salvation, begun by rescue, is completed by the settlement of the rescued captives in the new kingdom of Christ. The two acts, indeed, are distinct, but inseparable. Thus baptism is at once “for the remission of sins” and an “entrance into the kingdom of God.” (Ellicott)

And hath translated us - The word rendered here "translated" is often used in the sense of removing a people from one country to another. It means, here, that they who are Christians have been transferred from one kingdom to another, as if a people were thus removed. They become subjects of a new kingdom, are under different laws, and belong to a different community. (Barnes)

How do we know we have been transferred to the Kingdom of the Son? Colossians 1:27 Christ in us. The hope of glory.

V14 Redemption –

1. the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.

2. the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in

 exchange for payment, or clearing a debt. (Merriam-Webster)

v15-20 Christology and Combating the Colossian Heresy:

Many theologians believe that these verses are cast in a form of rhythmical prose found in much early Christian hymnody. (Bruce, p.55) It is structured in such a way that makes it easy to sing and covers some of the basic teachings in the early church about Jesus. Remember that many early Christians could not read and even if they could, did not have access to the written word. So hymns and creeds were developed to provide a solid foundation of faith and doctrine and also to combat false teachings.

I. Christ the Agent of Creation (v15-16)

He is the image of the invisible God,

Firstborn before all creation,

because in him all things were created-

things in heaven and things on earth,

things visible and invisible,

whether thrones or dominions,

whether principalities or powers-

they have all been created through him and for him.

II. Christ the Lord of the Universe and Head of the Church (17-18a)

He indeed is before all things,

and they all cohere in him;

He is also the head of the body, the church.

III. Christ the Agent in Reconciliation (18b-20)

He is the beginning,

firstborn from the dead.

 that he might be preeminent in all things,

because in him it was decreed that al the fullness should take up

 residence.

and that through him [God] should reconcile all things to himself,

 having made peace through the blood on his cross-

 [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.

This most assuredly was written to combat the Colossian heresy. Christ is here presented, not as an afterthought of God the Father but as the very image of God. He is the agent of creation, for whom all things exist, and from which they have their existence. He started the creation, redeemed the creation and will consummate the purposes of God by returning the creation to the Father.

Paul saw Jesus as the “image of God” in 2 Cor 4:4-6. Like an Ezekiel experience where Ezekiel saw God as a man. (Ezek 1:26)

The invisible qualities of God became visible in Christ Jesus.

John says something similar in John 1:14-18, John 14:9. The Hebrews writer say Hebrews 1:3.

Christ is also the “firstborn of all creation”  that is, “firstborn before all creation.” (Bruce, p.59) This means that the Son of God preexisted before all things (v.17). (John 1:1-2, John 8:58, Heb. 1:2, 10:5-9)

Whatever powers the heretics ascribe to, are all subject to Christ because He is the creator of all powers visible and invisible. (thrones, powers, principalities, authorities, demons, angels, dominions (Rom 8:38, 1 Cor 15:24, Is 6:1-7, Eph 1:21-23).

Ephesians 1:9-10 God’s eternal plan was to put everything under Christ.

For Paul, Christ was the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life. (Bruce, p. 66)

v18 All these points are not unique to Paul. They are in step with what other apostolic writers like John and Peter affirm. But Paul, through the Holy Spirit, adds his own unique concept to the nature of Christ Jesus: He is the head of the body, the church. (Eph 5:23)

Remember when Paul was on the Damascus road? (Acts 9:4-6) What did Jesus say to Paul? He said, “Saul, Saul. Why do you persecute me?” This was Jesus’ question because Paul was persecuting the church. What did Paul learn from this unique revelation? That Jesus and the church are one. Maybe because of the uniqueness this experience to Paul, Jesus revealed that Christ is the head of the church. Maybe this is why Paul is the apostle who wrote about this over and over.

How must we take this in practical terms? The members of Christ should be connected to the church, not just too Jesus. I have had friends who wanted to be baptized but did not want to commit to the church, the body of Christ. I told them that in good conscience I could not do it because I would be misleading them. The Bible is clear that we must be in unity with the body of Christ. Are there exceptions. I think so, but on the whole, when we make an exception for ourselves where none need exist, we are setting ourselves up to dishonor the bride and body of Christ.

We do not have any direct reference to the heresy that Paul is combating known as the Colossian heresy. But we can infer from Paul’s constant lifting up of Christ as supreme over all, that some gnostic teachings claimed that there were other intermediaries that existed between God and man. Paul is emphasizing that there are none because the total divine essence and power reside in Christ. (Philippians 2:10-11 Rom 14:11)

V20 Romans 8:19-23 Also show that Christ’s redemption is not only for man but all of creation. Jesus has redeemed man from decay but also all of nature.

V21-23 v22 Christ made us holy, blameless and irreproachable

Irreproachable - ἀνέγκλητος – anegklétos: That which cannot be called to account, unreprovable, unaccused (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon)

God justified and then reconciled. What is the difference? In order to be reconciled to God, he first had to justify you. That is, he had to make you free from guilt in order to restore your relationship with Him, since God cannot be reconciled to sinful man.

John1:14 Jesus is full of grace and truth. Truth is God’s righteousness. If God is going to be righteous, He has to punish sin. But because of God’s love He wants to be in relationship with His creation. If God does not punish, He would be an unrighteous, unjust God. How is God going to solve this dilemma? He Himself is going to come down and take our place. He is going to take on a body so that He can suffer in our place and be sacrificed in our place. He is going to reconcile us by first making us justified (irreproachable, unaccused, blameless. Then and only then can we be reconciled to Him.

Romans 5:1-11 Justified  Reconciled  Sanctified (Colossian 1:23)

V22 Why does Paul emphasize “in his physical body?” If the Colossian heresy had anything to do with Gnosticism, then we should know something about it.

Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis γνῶσις - knowledge

Gnosticism (http://www.theopedia.com/gnosticism)

Gnosticism is a heresy which is made up of a diverse set of beliefs. It is the teaching based on the idea of gnosis (a Koine Greek word meaning "secret knowledge"), or knowledge of transcendence arrived at by way of internal, intuitive means. While Gnosticism thus relies on personal religious experience as its primary authority, early "Christian" Gnostics did adopt their own versions of authoritative Scriptures, such as those found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt.

What we know about Gnosticism comes from Irenaeus who studied twenty of the most influential Gnostic writers and defined and criticized their beliefs. Other early church fathers, such as Tertullian and Origen also provide information regarding Gnostic beliefs. Lastly, many Gnostic writings were discovered at the Nag Hammadi Library. Nag Hammadi is a town in Upper Egypt near ancient Chenoboskion and 13 codices were discovered about 1945.

General beliefs

The following information is taken from Olson, The Story of Christian Theology, p. 37.

Matter or materiality

Gnostics believed that matter, whether it be the physical universe or the humanly body, is evil. It is obvious that there is a great tension between spirit and matter. This effects many of their beliefs and especially the way they perceive(d) the world and God's interactions with it.

God

God is wholly transcendent, that is, he is far removed from his creation. He did not create the material universe because it was instead created by an evil or lesser God, sometimes called a "demiurge". God is thus too perfect and pure to have much to do with the evilness of the material universe.

Humanity

Gnostics believed that human beings were "sparks" or "droplets" of the very same spiritual substance (or essence) that God is. Somehow we became trapped in our physical bodies from which we are to escape.

The Fall

All Gnostics agreed that The Fall was identical to the fall into matter. In other words, creation and The Fall coincide. "As long as spirits are trapped in physical bodies and materiality, they will be subject to sin, which is caused by ignorance of their true nature and home."

Salvation

Gnosticism commonly held that "salvation is to escape from the bondage of the material existence and travel back to the home from which souls/spirits have fallen."

What implications does this have for Jesus becoming a man? What implications does this have for the Torah saying that God created the world and everything in it?

V23 Paul says that perseverance in the true gospel is key to remaining in Christ. This is a warning for the Colossians to not fall for the fake teaching that was probably attacking the church.

Think about how amazing it is for Paul, a Pharisee by training and an ex-persecutor of the church, to hold to the doctrine of Jesus as the Messiah. He tried to kill the movement and now he is one of its main proponents in all of creation! What an amazing miracle.

V24-29 Paul’s ministry was not a mystery to Paul. Jesus made it very clear to Paul what Paul must do, even from the very beginning.

Acts 9:16 Jesus told Ananias, “he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake”

Paul tells us of more sufferings he endured:

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

Paul was also given a thorn to keep him reliant on God’s grace:

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

How about you? Have you fallen prey to the prosperity gospel? If you follow Jesus then you will be healthy, wealthy and wise?

Have you fallen into this line of thinking that is of the world? If I follow Jesus then my marriage will be great, my kids will love God, my finances will be in order and all my neighbors and family members will like me? (Luke 6:22-23, Math 10:21, Luke 12:53, Mk 13:12, John15:18)

Jesus never promised any of this. He does say that we will have peace with Him and with God’s people.

Paul says he rejoices in his suffering! Why? Paul knew the reward. Paul knew that his suffering would benefit the brotherhood. Paul knew his suffering would benefit the lost. Paul even said that he rejoiced in his suffering. (Rom 5:3, Phil 3:10)

How do you deal with suffering? Do you ask God to take it away? Maybe it is the very instrument that God will use to bring peace to others.

Why does God use suffering? Is 53:3-4, 1 Peter 2:24, Hebrews 5:7

Suffering is the divine method of God for sanctification, impact and growth.

 Paul calls suffering “light and momentary troubles.” (2 Corinthians 4;17)

God does everything the opposite of what humans think:

We want praise of men  Jesus was despised of men

We want comfort  Jesus left comfort

We want freedom from authority  True freedom is submission to Christ

We want wealth  Jesus became poor for our sake

We want worldly wisdom  God chose those not wise in this world

Wow!

V26-28 Paul says God’s eternal plan was a mystery.

 What is this mystery?

Christ in you. The hope of glory!

 Ephesians 3:8-11

Do you feel the incredible privilege that it is to know the answer to God’s eternal plan? You know something that the prophets of old would long to know. You are God’s mystery revealed!

V28-29 Once again Paul emphasizes the centrality of Christ. It is he whom we preach, not some mysterious knowledge accessed by a few like the Gnostics claimed. Paul is also making clear that this mystery is not a mystery anymore because it has been proclaimed openly and to all the world. (Col 1:23) The important thing is to be in Christ.

1 Peter 1:10-12, Luke 10:24, Matt 13:17 The prophets and even angels longed to know about when God would reveal this mystery to His people.

There is no “secret” wisdom. Everyone can know the wisdom of God in Christ. There are no elite and common disciples, as was believed in Gnosticism. We are all in Christ.

God made known many important things to the prophets but kept one important piece missing. We know the missing piece! Jesus is the fulfilment of the promise and we get to be part of this fulfillment! (Acts 3:11-15, Gal 3:8, Ephesians 1:3-14, Rom15:9-12, Is 49:6, Acts 13:47-48)

Col 1:27 You are the hope of glory

Matt 5:14-16 You are the light of the world

 You are a city on a hill

2 Cor 5:21 You are the righteousness of God

Galatians 3:26 You are the son of God

You are the daughter of God

1 Peter 2:9-10 You are the royal priesthood

You are the holy nation

2 Cor 5:20 You are the ambassador of Crist

John 15:5 You are the branch of Jesus

1 Cor 3:16 You are the temple of God

John 1:12 You are the child of God

Matt 5:9 You are the peacemaker of God

Romans 8:17 You are the co-heir with Christ

Eph 2:10 You are the workmanship (masterpiece) of God

Eph 5:25-27 You are bride of Christ

The list goes on, but I will stop here.

Colossians 2

V1-3 Paul says that the mystery is Christ. There is no other mysterious revelation that the Christians of Colossae and the Lycus Valley (Laodicea and Hierapolis, etc) have to know about.

V4-15 Here is where we begin to see elements of this false teaching that Paul is concerned about that the Colossians have been exposed to. It appears to have a Jewish basis with elements of mysticism, thus Jewish mysticism. This mysticism seems to have an ascetic aspect to it. It also appears to have ideas about a hierarchy of powers, authorities or deities associated with it. “There were tendencies within rabbinical Judaism with features which were not dissimilar to aspects of mystery initiation among the pagans. Notable among these was “merkabah mysticism” – the practice of techniques for experiencing the vision of God, enthroned on his heavenly chariot (merkabah), which was granted to Ezekiel when he was called to the prophetic ministry (Ezekiel 1:26-28). (Bruce, p. 96) It included meticulous observance of the law, self-discipline, angel mediation, and spiritual elitism.

V4-6 v5. how firm your faith in Christ is

 V6. live your lives in him

 V7. rooted and built up in him

♦ How many times does Paul have to say in Christ or in him until we get the picture? In teaching we call this the broken record technique.

What happens when you understand the grace of being in Christ?

Grace leads to gratitude!

Why would angels need to be intermediaries? We see that angels are messengers of God in the O.T. They are servants of God. However, in the ancient mystery cults, there was this sense that God could not have contact with the material world because the material world was evil and the spiritual world was holy. It would be impossible then for God (the Supreme Spirit) to speak directly (or have any contact) with man (a product of the material world). You can see clearly then, that this has direct ramifications for the idea of God becoming a man- the incarnation.

V8-10 Paul says that all the fullness of deity resides in Christ in bodily form. Paul does not want the Colossians to be convinced otherwise. (John 1:14)

V8 taken captive – συλαγωγέω - sulagógeó

To carry off booty, to carry one of as a captive and enslaved (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon), kidnapped

Elemental forces - στοιχεῖα - stoicheia –

stoixeíon– properly, fundamentals, like with the basic components of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) "first principles," like the basic fundamentals of Christianity.

(stoixeíon) refers to "the rudiments with which mankind . . . were indoctrinated (before the time of Christ), i.e. the elements of religious training or the ceremonial precepts common alike to the worship of Jews and of Gentiles" (J. Thayer).

The RSV however renders stoixeia as "elemental spirits," i.e. spiritual powers or "cosmic spirits" (DNTT, 2, 828). This views /stoixeíon ("elements") as ancient astral beings associated with the very beginning (make-up) of the earth.]

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It means the elemental spirits of the world, and especially the spirits of the stars and planets. There are still people today who take astrology seriously. They wear signs of the zodiac charms and read newspaper columns which tell what is forecast for them in the stars. But it is almost impossible for us to realize how dominated the ancient world was by the idea of the influence of the elemental spirits and the stars. Astrology was then, as someone has said, the queen of the sciences. Even men so great as Julius Caesar and Augustus, so cynical as Tiberius, so level-headed as Vespasian would take no step without consulting the stars. Alexander the Great believed implicitly in the influence of the stars. Men and women believed that their whole lives were fixed by them. If a man was born under a fortunate star all was well; if he was born under an unlucky star, he could not look for happiness; if any undertaking was to have a chance of success, the stars must be observed. Men were the slaves of the stars. (Barclay)

stoicheia was also used to describe learning the ABCs because it was the rudiments of learning a language.

What would make this philosophy that Paul was concerned about so deceptive? It combined elements of different ideas that were prevalent and accepted in the ancient culture: asceticism, mysticism, mystery religion, Jewish tradition, Gnosticism.

What would be our stoicheia today?

1. Prosperity gospel

2. American dream

3. Comfort/materialism

4. Security

5. Being a good person/ a nice guy

6. Universal salvation

7. Moral relativism

8. Entertainment/leisure

9. Post modernism

10. Scientism

What might be some others philosophies that are deceptive and can

kidnap our faith and drag us away?

The Colossians were being warned against the smooth talking spiritual tricksters. They used many fine sounding arguments, combining moral teaching, philosophy, self-discipline and religious practices. These theories about God were being discussed and taught constantly at the pagan and Jewish school in the Greek cities of the time. (Bruce, p. 98) They are not unlike the universities of today where all manner of teaching is discussed. We see a lot of that today. This is why we have to be students of God’s Word and be watchful or we too will fall prey to the deceitful philosophies that pervade our culture. This philosophy sounded good but it would destroy the faith of the Colossian Christians and it can destroy ours too. Our faith must be focused on Christ. He is the fullness of God in bodily form.

All these alternate teaching are hollow and useless. Would you go back to learning and reciting your ABCs after you already a fluent reader?

V10 You do not need anything else but Christ. Since you are in Christ, you have the fullness of God in you! (John 1:16, Gal 3:27)

V11-12 How do you come to be in Christ? Baptism (Rom 6:1-4, Gal 3:26-27, Acts 2:36-18, 1 Pet 3:21)

Baptism = circumcision of the heart by God

Circumcision = cutting away of the physical flesh

Baptism = cutting away of the sinful nature (Rom 6:6)

What was the intent of circumcision under the law?

Purpose of Circumcision

Gen 17:10-13

 V11 To serve as a sign of the covenant between God and His people

 V13-14 It would be a permanent sign in the flesh of the covenant with God, to last forever. You cannot put the foreskin back on. No going back. Commitment forever. If not circumcised, you are cut off from God.

 What was God’s intention with circumcision? Jer 4:1-4

V4 For people to have a relationship with Him that was etched into the heart.

 Why? Did it work?

 How does God circumcise the heart then? Dt 10:12-16

V16.

ū-mal-tem ’êṯ ‘ā-rə-laṯ lə-ḇaḇ-ḵem

וּמַלְתֶּ֕ם אֵ֖ת עָרְלַ֣ת ְבַבְכֶ֑ם ל

And circumcise - therefore foreskin - of your heart

Romans 2:28-29 Who does the circumcising now? The Holy Spirit, the indwelling of Christ

 How does the Holy Spirit circumcise the heart now?

 What is the result? Gal 5:22

 What does God promise He will do? Ez 36:25-27

 Why?

V13-15 “having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness”

canceled - ἐξαλείψας - exaleiphas

to besmear: equivalent to cover with lime (to whitewash or plaster), to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon).

The sins which have now been forgiven represented a mountain of bankruptcy that could have never, ever been paid off. He took that signed acknowledgement of indebtedness and cancelled it by his death. (Bruce, p. 109)

“charge of legal indebtedness” – NIV

“the record of the charges” – NLT

“the certificate of debt, with its obligations” Holman Christian

“the handwriting in the decrees against us” - Berean Literal

“handwriting” – a term that is found very common in ancient papyri, a handwritten legal certificate of debt.

-papyrus debt records illustrate that debts were cancelled by blotting them out and then cancelling them. They were doubly cancelled. Thus Jesus blotted out our sins and then cancelled what we owed.

What is the payment for sin? Rom 6:23 death

Jesus covered, blotted out our sin, and then cancelled the debt by nailing it to the cross. (Bruce, p. 109)

Mt 18:23-27 Jesus said the king cancelled 10,000 talents of debt. 1 talent = 6,000 denarii (a day’s wages for an ordinary laborer). 10,000 talents = 60,000, 000 million days of wages or 164,383 years. If the average day laborer today makes $80/day that means $4,800,000,000 of debt cancelled!

V15 Jesus publicly nailed that blotted out debt certificate to the cross to show all the hostile powers (whether human or spiritual beings) that they were vanquished and no longer had power over God’s ransomed people. As a matter of fact, Jesus is publicly humiliating them by marching them out in procession. They thought Jesus would be humiliated and shamed on the cross, but instead He turned the tables and made it the very object of power and glory. Oh the glory and wonder of the Almighty’s wisdom!

As Jesus was suspended there with his hands and feet nailed to the cross, thinking Him weak and defeated, the enemies of God attacked, not realizing that Jesus would grapple with them and destroy them - showing their true helplessness before the Almighty! Such is the picture that Paul paints. (Bruce, p. 111)

V16-17 Paul elsewhere addresses the issue of not falling prey to the demands “of do not taste, do not touch” and celebrating special days. (Rom 14:3, 13-21, 1 Cor 8:1-13, 1 Cor 10:19-30) As did Jesus (Mk 7:9, Mt 12:8)

The legal prescriptions of yesterday are all but shadows of what is now reality, that is, you in Christ.

What is this shadow? 1 Cor 5:7-8 Christ is our Passover lamb.

Heb 10:1-22 Christ Jesus has done away with the law. He has fulfilled the law of the O.T. Do not go backwards to the Law! The Law is part of the stoicheia, the ABC fundamentals. Gal 4:8-11 For Paul, to turn to the law for justification is like giving up your faith in Christ!

V18-19 Paul says for the Colossians not to let anyone disqualify them from the prize.

Disqualify – καταβραβευέτω - katabrabeuetō

Originally used to describe a judge or umpire who gives an unfavorable ruling on a competitor in some athletic contest. It conveys the idea of depriving someone of something which he or she would otherwise have possessed, getting robbed.

Do not be deceived by false piety like angel worship or in “humility.” Paul may be referring to ascetic practices like excessive fasting or abstaining from foods or drink (like wine).

Do not be deceived by someone who has seen or been involved in some sort of vision, rite or experience that was possibly connected to mystery religion or Gnosticism. Paul say that would be the equivalent of being disconnected from Christ.

V20-23 Paul is saying all of these things are useless. They are but a shadow. Christ is the real thing.

V20. The Colossians died to these things when they became united with Christ.

Remember that Paul had been caught up in visions and revelations and concluded that they were worth nothing because God’s power was made perfect in weakness and reliance on Him, not in any special visions, rites or practices. Paul was even given a thorn in the flesh to remind him of this truth. 2 Cor 12:1-10

Christendom eventually fell for this false teaching - things like self –flagellation, unusually long fasting, dunking in frigid water, living in abject poverty, etc..

Self-flagellation remains common in Colombia, the Phillippines, Mexico, Spain and one convent in Peru. Some members of strict monastic orders, and some religious groups practice mild self-flagellation using an instrument called a "discipline", a cattail whip usually made of knotted cords, which is flung over the shoulders repeatedly during private prayer.

Do not do this or that. In Christ, the Spirit says “yes” to righteous living. Christianity is more about saying “yes” than saying “no.” If I am occupied by “yes” in Christ, I do not concern myself with the constant demands of the “no.” Are we actively living in the Spirit of yes, or in the fleshly fight of “no.” We say “no” to sin by saying “yes” to grace and righteousness.

There were ascetic schools like Pythagoreans that practiced an ascetic life style. Many Pythagorean beliefs (such as secrecy, vegetarianism, periods of food abstinence and silence, refusal to eat beans, refusal to wear animal skins, celibacy, self-examination, immortality, and reincarnation) were directed as "rules of life." (encyclopedia.com)

Do not think about pink elephants! The law made you aware that you cannot live by no.

 The Old Testament was about “no.” (Col2:20-21) The N.T. is about yes. (Gal5:19-24)

 The Ten Commandments

 1. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.

 2. You shall have no other gods but me.

 3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

 4. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.

 5. Honor your father and mother.

 6. You shall not murder.

 7. You shall not commit adultery.

 8. You shall not steal.

 9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

 10. You shall not covet.

 11. Men are not to wear women’s clothing.

 12. Do not sow 2 different kinds of seeds together.

 13. Do not work on the Sabbath.

 14. Do not touch dead bodies.

 15. Do not wear clothes with 2 kinds of fabric.

 16. Do not eat fish without scales, animals that do not chew the cud, etc.

 17. Do not eat food with blood.

There are 613 laws in the O.T. There are 365 Negative Mitzvot/Commandments: "The Don'ts," some 248

Positive Mitzvot/Commandments: "The Do's"

Need I go on?

There is no “no” in the fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Colossians 3

V1-4 Where do the Colossians get their true connection with God? How does on live and grow in Christ? By being in Christ: by being crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20), by dying with Christ (Rom 6:3), by being buried with Christ (Rom 6) and by being raised with Christ (Rom 6:4) to a new life (2 Cor 5:17)

V1 Christ is sitting at the right hand is one of the earliest Christian testimonia based on Ps 110:1 (Mk 12:35-37, Mk 14:61-62, 1 Cor 15:24-28, Acts 7:55-56, Phil 2:10-11, Eph 4:10)

What are the practical implications of being raised with Christ?

1. Their life is the life of Christ. (Gal 2:20)

2. They live with and for God’s purposes. (Mt 6:33)

3. Their outlook is vertical, eternal (2 Cor 4:18)

4. With practical implications for how to live now (Gal 5:23-25, Eph 2:10)

What good work is God calling you to? What talents and gifts has He blessed you with? What opportunities has he placed in your life and what passions has he put in your heart? That is part of the joy, adventure and glories of being a Christian. It is like unwrapping a gift every morning. God, what have you got in store for me?

You do not have to wait for heaven to be in glory. The glory in Christ starts now.

V2 -4 Your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Christ has your divine appointment in heaven protected with Him, and the Father is also protecting it. Bruce quoting Moule calls this – “a double rampart, all divine.” (Bruce, p. 135) Your eternal life is bound up and doubly protected by God the son and God the Father. There is no insecurity in Christ. This has been God’s eternal purpose in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:4, 9-10).

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

O what a foretaste of glory divine

Heir of salvation, purchase of God

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

Perfect submission, all is at rest

I in my Savior am happy and blessed

Watching and waiting, looking above

Filled with His goodness, lost in His love”

The whole creation looks with eager expectation to God’s unveiling of the sons of God and the new Jerusalem. (Rom 8:18-23, Rev 21:1-7)

“The day of revelation and glory will but bring to complete and public fruition something that is already true –that Christians have died with Christ and been raised with him, and in him are partakers of the age to come.” (Bruce, p. 137)

Paul says in Romans 8:29-32: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things.

The day of revelation and glorification is unknown but the advent is certain. There is no doubt for those who are in Christ. The day of glory may be future but the word “glorified” is in the past tense, implying its arrival is as sure as if it were already here. (Bruce, p. 137)

Given all this glorious grace and reward, what should we do?

V5-11 Rise up, O men and women of God!

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and soul and mind and strength

To serve the King of Kings.

Rise up, O men and women of God!

Tread where his feet have trod.

As brothers and sisters of the Son of Man,

Rise up, O men and women of God!

All these sins and attitudes that Paul mentions are lesser things that we need to rid ourselves of.

V5 fornication

Fornication or sexual immorality -porneia- πορνεία

porneía (the root of the English terms "pornography, pornographic"; cf. 4205 /pórnos) which is derived from pernaō, "to sell off") – properly, a selling off (surrendering) of sexual purity; promiscuity of any (every) type.

Sexual immorality was so common in Graeco-Roman antiquity that, except when carried to excess, it was not regarded as especially reprehensible.

Impurity

Impurity includes misuse of sex but includes also various forms of moral evil such as perjury.

Lust, evil desires - Paul moves from sinful acts to sinful thoughts. Just as Jesus taught. (Matt 5:27-28)

Greed = idolatry Greed comes to dominate our lives and leads to so many sins. (Eph 5:5) It sets ones heart on earthly things not on things above.

We can hide greed in so many ways. This is why it is so dangerous to our spiritual health. Greed is incredibly deceptive. It sneaks up and steals your faith, hope and trust in God. How many marriages have been destroyed by greed? Families? Relationships? Countries? Cultures? We have entire majors in college, professions and magazines dedicated to promoting greed! The Bible puts greed in the lists with immorality and impurity. (1 Cor 5:10-11, 6:9-10, Eph 4:19, 5:3) Greed will definitely corrupt your heart.

How might greed erode our spiritual strength? 1 Timothy 6:6-10

V6 These sins have both eternal and earthly consequences!

V7-10 You are a new creation. Take off those old clothes and put on the new since you have put on Christ (Gal 3:27) and thus come into Christ. You are to become more and more the image of Christ. Be transformed (Rom 12:1-2) by the Spirit of Christ in you (2 Cor 3:18).

V10 The Colossians needed the true and highest knowledge (gnosis) of Christ – the highest knowledge humans can aspire to - not the secret knowledge (gnosis) that the Gnostic appealed to.

V11 When we come to understand who we are in Christ, we begin to understand what are relationship should be with others. The Christ through the Holy Spirit bring people together, unifies. All of us are sons and daughters of God in Christ. On account of our baptism (Gal 3:26-27) there are barriers removed.

Scythians were considered backwards and uncouth in ancient Roman and Greek culture. In Roman and Greek culture slaves were considered a piece of property, not people.

In the early church, a slave might be a leader because of their spiritual stature and ability, and freeborn members of the church would humbly and gratefully accept his direction. Slaves and masters were known to die together in martyrdom. An example is in the arena of Carthage in AD 202. A deep impression was made on the spectators when the Roman matron Perpetua stood hand-in-hand with her slave Felicitas and died together for their faith.

1 Cor 12:13 We were all baptized into on body by one Spirit.

V12-17

v12 Paul tells us to put on kindness, humility, gentleness, patience (all qualities of God) as seen in Eph 5:22-23, Ps 34:8, LK 6: 35).

God kindness leads to repentance (Rom 2:4).

True humility was not esteemed as a virtue in pagan antiquity.

Gentleness is central to the ministry of Jesus (Lk 11:29) and should be to ours.

Patience –God shows it to help people repent. (Rom 2:4, 9:22). Patience is an attribute of love (1 Cor 13:4).

V13 Forgiveness (Mt 18:22) Jesus modeled this too. (Lk 23:34) Lack of forgiveness is self-destructive.

V14 Love binds them all together

V15 We need to be at peace with men because we are at peace with God. Phil 4:7 Let the peace of Christ garrison - φρουρέω (phroureó) -your heart. Do not let anxiety, lack of faith and fear into your heart. Pray until you feel that peace. Strife results when men and women are out of touch with the peace of Christ.

V16 -17 Whatever you do, do it to glorify God in the name of Christ.

V18- Colossian 4:1

V18-19. In the church women had equal status with men, slaves with the free and Gentiles with Jews. But early Christianity had no desire to destabilize the family structure, social order or government. (Bruce, p. 163) But how men were to treat there wives in the church was considered radical.

Following the end of the Punic Wars in 146 BC, the breakdown of marriage and the family had begun in earnest. By the time of Christ, Rome was a pornographic culture. Marriage was a "loose and voluntary compact" (Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire [reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1994] 2:813). Sexual licentiousness, adultery, marital dissolution, and pornography were widespread. It was into this depraved cultural context that Christians would introduce a radically new and different view of life, sexuality, marriage, and parenting. In contrast to the Roman concept of Patria Potestas, according to which fathers had the right to kill their wives and children, Christians taught husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Eros gave way to agape. (Hunter, p. 55).

Husbands were called to sacrifice themselves for their wives and put their wives before themselves. (Eph 5:25-19)

V20-21 Children are instructed to obey their parents in everything. But are we as parents training them without embittering them?

I have been a parent who has embittered my children by being too hard or demanding at times. I have been doing a lot of apologizing the last 2 years. It has been good to go back and admit my sin and mistakes. My children have forgiven me and it has drawn us closer together. They know in the end, that most of the time when I was too hard on them, it was out of concern and love. I wanted the best for them but my judgement was lacking. My oldest daughter has pointed out that I would not ask enough questions. My youngest has pointed out that I tended to jump to conclusions. I have reasoned and learned 2 very important lessons. One is that many times I did these things because I was too busy and wanted to deal with things quickly, so that I could get on to other things. That is a bad approach to parenting. The other is that I was parenting by sight and not by faith. Faith works from a perspective of love and not fear. If you parent with fear in your heart then you become harsh. You worry about your kids and do not give them the grace, patience and hope that they need to confront their weaknesses and to bring them to God. You begin to parent the actions instead of the heart and this is how you embitter your children. They feel stressed and hopeless that they cannot not change. They begin to internalize your fear. You also become their law instead of their advocate. Parents should be stressing how much they believe that their kids can change and not how disappointed they are that they are not changing. My wife would tell me that I was too hard on the kids and that I needed to encourage them more. I realize now that I should have spent more time with them just teaching and having fun together. Unfortunately, I repeated some of the mistakes that I learned from my father - things like not spending enough heart to heart time with them, not talking about their dreams, hopes and fears, not spending time with them talking about their concerns and pressures at school and home. This only came really clear to me when I took the Good Enough Parenting class. I highly recommend the book. We all as parents need to become more like Christ in our parenting. Showing our kids love, respect and boundaries. This is something that my Mom was good at but my Dad not so much. I could go on but let us suffice to say that parenting is a life long task. You never can stop learning how to be a better parent. I still go to parenting classes and read parenting books because the parenting goes on even after they leave home. I have probably done more parenting in the last year with my oldest who is 29, then I had in the previous last 5 years combined. For me this means that I have done a lot more listening and encouraging, then advice giving. The good news for me is that my oldest says that I have changed a lot and become a more loving father. I certainly hope so!

Children are called to obey their parents. We may think as adults that this command ends when we leave the home. But let us not forget that we are children of our parents until they pass. This is why I have gone back at times and asked my mother for advice (my father passed when I was 11 years old). I ask her about how she grew up. What was her thinking when she did certain things with us. What she sees I can do differently. I ask my Mom her opinion about things. She is not a disciple, but she loves me and has a vast wealth of experiences that can help guide me. Even though I do not always agree with my Mom’s thinking, I know that I am honoring her as my parent by asking for it.

Anyone have something they would like to share?

V22-24 One must remember that there were both slaves and slave owners in the church. (Col 4:1) The slave master relationship might persist in the home and the work place but it was swallowed up in the church. No command is given in the Bible to free the slave. Paul encourages those who can become free to take that opportunity, but if not, never mind. In the end, being free or being a slave has no eternal consequence. (1 Cor 7:21-22) According to Bartchy as cited by Bruce (p. 168), if a Christian slave became a leader in the church, he would be entitled to receive due deference from his Christian master. But the Christian slave should not work with less effort for his master because of this new relationship as brothers. (Eph 6:5-9) Paul does give Philemon a broad hint of what is expected of him with regard to Onesimus, but at the same time he makes it clear that the virtue of such an act lies in its being done voluntarily (Philem 12-14)

Christian employees should work hard for their employers because Christ’s reputation is on the line. Are you a hard working example at work or do you bring dishonor to Christ?

The principals Paul lays out did not set out to abolish or reshape existing social structures, but to Christianize them. (Bruce, p. 171) It took a long time for the essential incompatibility of the institutions with the ethic of the gospel or biblical doctrine to be properly assimilated into the general Christian consciousness.

V25-Col 4:1 Although we are saved by grace and have the reward of heaven, there is still judgement on earth for those who disobey.

Colossian 4

V2-6 Paul urges the Colossians to be watchful in prayer. This is the practice throughout the Bible (Mk 13:33, Lk 18:1, Acts 1:14, Eph 6:18, 1 Thes 5:17)

V3 It is interesting to note that Paul does not ask for prayers to be released from prison. He asks for prayers for an open door for the gospel. Why might this be? Paul was not interested in being set free from prison. He was only interested in the spread of the gospel. (Philip. 1:12-18)

♦Paul demonstrates this attitude in many other parts of Scriptures.

Can you think of any?

-When he does not run away to escape the Philippian jail. Acts 16:25-28)

-When he appeals to Caesar instead of being released from custody. (Acts 25:10-12, Acts 28:19)

-When he chooses to go to Jerusalem despite the prophecy of Agabus. (Acts 21:10-14)

-When he allows himself to be beaten when he could have declared his Roman citizenship. (Acts 16:22-23)

Can you think of any others? Why did he do this?

V4 Paul wants to make sure that his testimony about Christ is the most effective possible, not the easiest.

V5-6 Paul stresses the importance of our example, our life and knowledge, life and doctrine will affect our hearers for eternity. (1 Tim 4:16, Eph 5:16) Sometimes the only Bible people will ever read is our life. Be prepared to answer.

1 Pet 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

Reason - To give the reason (defense ἀπολογίαν -apologian)

apología (from 575 /apó, "from" and 3056 /lógos, "intelligent reasoning") – properly, a well-reasoned reply; a thought-out response to adequately address the issue(s) that is raised.

627 /apología ("reasoned defense") is the term for making a legal defense in an ancient court. Today 627 /apología ("biblical apologetics") is used for supplying evidences for the Christian faith.

[An "apology" in classical times had nothing to do with saying, "I'm sorry," but rather was a reasoned argument (defense) that presented evidence (supplied compelling proof).]

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Seasoned with salt:

probably “gracious,” “pleasant” is the meaning; by the sweetness and courtesy of their conversation they are to impress favourably the heathen, In classical writers “salt” expressed the wit with which conversation was flavoured. Here wisdom is probably meant on account of εἰδέναι. There may be the secondary meaning of wholesome, derived from the function of salt to preserve from corruption.—εἰδέναι: “so as to know”.—πῶς κ.τ.λ.: they must strive to cultivate the gift of pleasant and wise conversation, so that they may be able to speak appropriately to each individual (with his peculiar needs) with whom they come in contact. (Nicoll)

V7-17

V7-9 The reference to Tychicus is almost identical to Eph 6:21-22. Tychicus was probably the bearer of the Ephesians, Colossians and possibly another letter to Laodicea (Col 4:16). Tychicus was a native of Asia and traveled with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) Tychicus was one of the Gentile brothers commissioned to take the gifts to the Jerusalem church from the Gentile churches. He was also a messenger for Paul (2 Tim 4:12; Tit 3:12). Tychicus was a close friend and coworker of Paul’s. Tychicus paid Paul and Timothy a visit in Rome and was now on his way back to Colossae. Imagine the cost and difficulty of such a visit, just to support Paul.

V9 Onesimus was going to Colossae for reasons stated in Philemon. Onesimus had somehow come in contact with Paul, become a believer and was being sent back by Paul to Philemon, a brother and Onesimus’ master in Colossae. Paul’s desire was to send Onesimus back to Philemon so that they could be reconciled as brothers! Imagine the expense, difficulty and time it would take to get back to Colossae from Rome. And yet, Paul thought it important enough to send Onesimus back to Philemon. Paul put a high price on unity, reconciliation and love amongst the brothers.

How important is to it to you to have resolution, unity and peace with your brothers and sisters? Paul sent Onesimus half way around the known world to reconcile with Philemon!

Rome to Colossae is a distance of 1136 miles at its shortest distance! It would have taken weeks if not months to travel that far.

Do you have unresolved issues with your brother or sister? You can resolve it with a phone call.

V10-12 Three Jewish brothers (Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus) and three Gentile brothers (Epaphras, Luke and Demas) are with Paul. Aristarchus, a native of Thessalonica, was with Paul in Ephesus in the theatre riot (Acts 19:29), on the last voyage to Judaea (Acts 20:4), Caesarea to Italy (Acts 27:2) and probably all the way to Rome where he is now as a fellow prisoner-of-war (synaichmalōtos συναιχμάλωτός -

 Philemon 23) with Paul.

V13-14 Epaphras was the disciple who began the church in Colossae. He always had them on his heart. He could have also been the brother who helped start the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis. The Lycus valley where Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea are located is in the extreme southwestern Phrygia, Asia Minor. Hierapolis, Colossae, and Laodicea form a triangle in the valley. From Hierapolis to Laodicea is about 6 miles south. The sites can be seen across the valley. From Laodicea to Colossae is about 10 miles to the southwest. From Colossae it is about 12 miles to Hierapolis.

Hierapolis is mentioned only once in the New Testament. Paul commends Epaphras, for his burdensome labor for the churches of the Lycus River Valley. The name Hierapolis means “holy city.” The modern Turkish name is Pamukkale, meaning “cotton castle” or “cotton fortress.” The city is famous for the hot springs and the limestone formations that cascade down the hillside below the city. (https://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com/2009/02/17/hierapolis-and-the-lycus-river-valley)

Visiting the imprisoned was an important Christian duty (Mt25:35- 45). However, it was carried out at great personal risk of also being imprisoned as Christian co-conspirators. It was very important to visit the prisoners because those who were imprisoned were confronted with the very real possibility of starving to death. It seems here that Paul had Aristarchus and Epaphras as fellow prisoners on suspicion for accompanying him or as voluntary servants.

Mark, the first cousin of Barnabas was with Paul. Fourteen years earlier Mark had disgraced himself by abandoning Paul and Barnabas at

Perga (Acts 13:13, Acts 15:36-40) Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, did not give up on people. It resulted in John Mark getting stronger spiritually and healing his relationship with Paul (2 Tim 4:11).

V14 Luke, here called the beloved physician and elsewhere the fellow laborer (Philemon 24) we know as Paul’s companion who wrote the Gospel of Luke, Acts and probably was Paul’s amanuensis on many occasions. Luke traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40). He rejoins Paul at Philippi (Acts 20:1-7) on the return from the third missionary journey, remaining with him at Caesarea and on the way to Rome (Acts Chs. 20-28). Luke may be on the travels to take care of Paul’s health issues, his possible “thorn in the flesh.”

Little is known of Demas. He could be the Demas who is spoken ill of by Paul in 2 Tim 4:10

V15-18 Nympha had a house church in Laodicea. As did Priscilla and Aquila (1 Cor 16:19) in Corinth, Lidia in Philippi (Acts 16:40), Mary the mother of Mark (Acts 12:12) and possibly Phoebe in Cenchreae (Rom 16:1).

Do we see a pattern here? Women played a huge role in the early church. In many places they were the backbone of the faith. They often devoted themselves to serving the poor. (Acts 9:36) They would travel to other cities for the work of the church. (Rom 16:1) Churches would meet in their homes. (Acts 16:40) They traveled with Jesus in large numbers and took care of his physical needs in Jesus’ ministry. (Luke 8:1-3) They were in the initial group that was baptized by the Holy Spirit on the first day of the movement. (Acts 1:12-15) They were the first to witness the resurrection. (John20:1, 20:11-16) Christian history tells us that they were devoted to the point of martyrdom.

Today, no one knows anything about the letter to Laodicea. It has been lost to history. It was common however, to pass letters around the churches for the sake of news and direction. This is why we have so many copies of the early New Testament documents. Churches would copy the letters and pass them on. The originals were obviously passed on because Paul would authenticate them with his own hand writing. (1Cor16:21; Col4:18; 2Thes3:17f). Kind of like the way kings used seals to authenticate their messages or we sign our names to a typed document to make it official. The emphasis on writing in his own hand would serve the purpose of ensuring that false brethren would not twist Paul’s letter to suit their needs and that its instructions would be carried out carefully. (Bruce, 1981)

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ONE OF THE UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

By Glenn Giles

November 18, 2004

 For many years I have been contemplating the special-ness of our movement in the area of the heart. When I came to our movement I found very special relational aspect of true Christianity. I have called it the “heart” ever since I was studied with in Milwaukee. What I experienced was different than I had experienced in any religious group before. It was, in fact, the difference between being a person who knew about God and had some association with him, and being a person who truly knows God through a true personal relationship with him. The things our movement has gone through the last 2 years has caused me to search the Scriptures to better understand that which I have been calling “heart”. In the last few months I have come to understand that the “heart” is what is involved in the OT concept of yada, the Hebrew word for “know”. In this article I will attempt to explain that concept, a concept that I think distinguishes us from nearly all other movements of today that I am aware of , a concept that I would urge everyone to hold on to and never surrender, a concept when experienced is basically the watershed of spiritual life and death.

 Matthew 7:21-23 states”

"Not everyone who says to me, `Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, `Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, `I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers’” (emphasis mine).

For a long time I have felt this was talking about a personal relationship with God but did not understand the depth of what it meant until I studied out the Hebrew word yada. The big question is “What does it mean to be known by God and to know God”?

 The Greek word here in Matthew 7:23 is ginosko. Of the 946 times yada is found in the Hebrew OT over 490 times it is translated by ginosko in the LXX (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) . Hence ginosko is the major Greek word used for yada. The Greeks however did not have a word that translates yada with is full meaning. The closest term the Greeks had was ginosko. The Greek term ginosko designates predominately an intellectual concept which is not the predominate concept involved in yada. The major emphasis of yada includes subjective dimensions of knowing not just the objective. Groome states,

. . . in Greek philosophy ginoskein has a predominant meaning of ‘intellectual looking at’ an object of scrutiny and strongly connotes objectivity . . . For the Hebrews yada is more by the heart than by the mind, and the knowing arises not by standing back from in order to look at, but by active and intentional engagement in lived experience . . . the Hebrews had no word that corresponds exactly to our words mind or intellect.

 “Yada” has the basic meaning of “to perceive, know” . Its semantic range is broad and also embraces definitions such as “find out”, “know by experience”, “recognize”, “acknowledge”, “know a person, be acquainted with”, “be skillful”, “teach”, “make known” , as well as “to notice”, “learn”, “to know sexually, have intercourse with, copulate”, “to have experience”, and “to take care of someone” . This word for the most part involves knowledge gained through experience . It thus basically indicates experiential knowledge . This is contrary to much of our modern day understanding of “knowledge” and its acquisition which largely involves pure thought by one’s own contemplation or mere verbal transmission of information from teacher to student in a classroom setting. That is not to say that yada does not include these types of knowledge and teaching but that it has as its major dimension experientially gained or relationally gained knowledge.

 With respect to “knowing” God, the Old Testament use of this term is enlightening. Consider the following verses:

1. Jer. 16:21 states,

"Therefore I will teach (yada) them--this time I will teach (yada) them my power and might. Then they will know (yada) that my name is the LORD”.

Here knowing God comes from him causing them to experience his power and might.

2. Ezek. 30:8 states

“Then they will know (yada) that I am the LORD, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed”.

Here knowledge of God comes through experiencing his character of justice and wrath. This concept of “knowing that I am the LORD” occurs over 65 times in Ezekiel alone indicating relational knowledge coming through experiencing his judgments.

 3. Hosea 2:19-20 states:

"And I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in loving kindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know (yada:) the Lord” (NASB).

 Here one sees that knowing the Lord is a result of experiencing his righteousness, justice, loving kindness, compassion, and faithfulness.

4. Hosea 6:2-3 states,

 “He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. So let us know (yada), let us press on to know (yada) the Lord. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth” (NASB).

 Here knowledge of God is obtained through experiencing Him reviving them and giving them rain. They would not know God however if they did not press on in faithfulness to experience his character. Knowing God comes from experiencing God’s faithfulness, mercy, and provision.

 5. One of the most important passages in the OT is Jer. 31:34. It reads,

 “No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know (yada) the LORD,’ because they will all know (yada) me, from the least of them to the greatest”, declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (emphases mine).

 The word “For” here indicates that knowing the LORD comes about as a result of a person experiencing the LORD’s forgiveness and his forgetting their sins. Knowing God thus comes by experiencing his grace.

 All of these passages indicate knowing God involves interpersonal experience with his character. God is allowing people to know him through experiencing his character. Knowing God however also involves our response to him. It is associated with one’s obedience to him (I Sam. 2:12; Job. 18:21), fear of him (I Ki. 8:43; II Chron. 6:33), serving him (I Chron.28: 9), belief in him (Is. 43:10), trust in him (Ps. 9:10; Prov. 3:5-6) confession of one’s sin (Ps. 32:5), and knowledge of the Torah or his Word (Ps. 119:79) . It thus “involves not just theoretical knowledge but acceptance of the divine will for one’s own life” .

 Knowing God can be summarized as coming from one’s personal life experience of the relational blessings or discipline of God as a result of one’s trusting in and following him. Knowing God involves experiencing his character and willingly submitting to him as LORD.

 So we see that when used in the New Testament, in a Hebrew context (Matthew was written to a Jewish audience), the word “know” (ginosko in Greek) takes on more than an intellectual concept. It takes on an experiential interpersonal relational meaning.

So when we see the statement in Matt. 7:23, “I never knew you”, it is not talking about intellectual knowledge but character or relational knowledge. This fits perfectly into the context of Matt. 7:15-23 which states:

 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize (epiginosko, an intensive form of ginosko) them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize (epiginosko) them. "Not everyone who says to me, `Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, `Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, `I never knew (ginosko) you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Our knowledge, our yada of people, occurs when we experience their character (verses 15-20). You can be sure that people are false prophets if they do not produce good fruit. God’s knowing of us also occurs by his experiencing our character (verses 21-23). Even though one might do things, things which are good, there can be an interpersonal relationship, a heart knowing, which is lacking. As is typical of Matthew, relationship with God was more than outward show or actions, it must involve the heart (e.g., Matt. 15:8-9).

 God tests us to see what is in our heart to “know” us. Consider Deut. 8:1-2:

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know (yada) what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his command (emphases mine).

Note the use of the word “know” here. Surely an all-knowing God “knew” what was in their hearts from an intellectual perspective! So what does this mean? Our study of yada would indicate that God wanted to experience what was in their hearts through experiencing their obedience. This is how God knows them and can know us! It is not just about raw works but about relationship experienced through actions toward God and he toward us. He wants to know us personally and wants us to know him personally. He wants to experience our character. He wants to live out life with us it seems. Just as his love for us would not be real unless his heart and actions work together to allow us to experience his character, so our love for him is not real unless our heart and actions, work together to allow him to experience us. No wonder James 2 states that faith without works is dead and that works complete our faith! Works complete our personal relationship with God! They do not make us merit that relationship (that is a totally erroneous perspective). Obedience is our allowing God to experience us. This is how God knows us.

 When I reflect on what I experienced in our movement it brings me great joy to see how those who studied with me prepared me to meet my God, prepared me to experience (yada) Him, and prepared me to allow him to know (yada) me! I am so glad they helped me dig deeply into what sin I had so I could really experience His character of forgiveness, grace, and love. No wonder Jesus said, “. . . he who has been forgiven little loves little." (Luke 7:47). The more we admit our sin, the more we will be able to love God, and know him, and God know us! I am so glad people helped me to come to a place of brokenness over my sin. God’s love became so real when that happened as I experienced his offer of grace in an incredible way. I am so glad that people helped me to understand that experiencing God involves listening to him through the reading of his word and that God experiencing me involves me praying and crying out to Him. No wonder David was a man after God’s own heart. I can see it in the Psalms where he opens up his heart to God and God experiences what is in his heart. I am so grateful that my leaders were hard on sin. They were protecting my yada with God. I am so thankful that many of my disciplers in the past insisted on my obedience to God! They were (whether or not they knew it) helping me with my yada with God an others. I am so grateful that people who discipled me helped me to learn what total openness is and urged me to express it! Relationships do not exist without it whether they are relationships with others or with God. No wonder John 3:20-21states:

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

Living by the truth means you are open with your life. Your deeds are seen plainly, you are an open book to allow God (and others) to test your character and actions and work through you. Yada helps make sense of this! Loving the light, loving Jesus, means being open and allowing others and God to experience your character.

 It is no wonder Jesus could say in John 8:31-32, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know (ginosko) the truth, and the truth will set you free”. It is experiential knowledge that is spoken of here. Truth is to be experienced. Jesus is the truth and Jesus is to be experienced. Experiencing this truth will set one free. Holding to Jesus’ teachings is the first step. It is a way of loving him! It is a way of having an interpersonal experiential relationship with God. Holding to his teachings makes you his disciple and this actively engages you in yada!

 Yada helps me understand that loving God means obeying him. He indeed knows (yada) us relationally when he is loved. He experiences our character when we love him. I Jn. 5:3 states, “This is love for God: to obey his commands”. Love is connected with actions and heart and one’s being. Mark 12:28-31 states,

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: `Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: `Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

The love God wants is not intellectual ascent but love that comes from all your heart, all your soul (person), all your mind, and all your strength. In other words, the love God wants to experience from us involves our whole being (including our body and its actions). To love someone else will also mean that your heart, mind, soul, and body is involved just as when a person loves himself. Loving someone is the act of allowing them to know you. Receiving love from them is an act of you experiencing or knowing them.

 Are you engaged in yada? Is God knowing you? Are you knowing God? What will God say to you on that judgment day? Will he say “I never new you” or “I don’t know you” or will he say “Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master's happiness!”? Are you letting God experience the real you? Are you allowing yourself to experience the real God?

 Brothers and Sisters, this is, I believe, the greatest blessing I experienced as a result of those in our movement who discipled me and studied with me. It helped me to know God and God me. It helped me to become a true disciple, a true son of God. It helped God to become my true father. I owe them my life. I owe God my life. I hope you have also experienced this blessing, this salvation. Let us never give up yada!