



In writing to the Christians in Colossae, Paul stressed his core purpose with them when, speaking of Christ and their part with Him wrote, “...Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” (1:28) This purpose is central to the letter, especially when realizing the competitors of this age (for our purpose), many of which these Christians were up against. Some of these competitors were Jewish legalism, Greek Gnostic philosophy and the possibility of Oriental mysticism. It is possible that these were mixed together into a form of “Judaistic Gnosticism”. Gnosticism basically believed the world (matter) was evil and had an evil origin, and so concluded that God did not directly create it and was mostly a hands-off God (as deists).

As a result of this, there were groups that formed which believed that “spiritual knowledge was available only to those with superior intellects, this creating a spiritual caste system. Faith was treated with contempt; advanced Gnosticism even taught that salvation was received by knowledge. Adherents believed that they could understand divine mysteries totally unknown and unavailable to the typical Christian.” (Robert Gromacki). This influence led many to believe or be taught that Jesus did not actually come in the flesh, and so did not actually die and even led to the worship of angels. Since the physical was the evil itself, it led to variants of legalism (spirituality was to be found in physical disciplines).

In this letter, Paul will stress the preeminence of Jesus Christ as creator and sustainer of all things (1:15-20), directing their focus/faith to Him as being the source of “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). He’ll warn of the enslaving purposes of the philosophies, core life concepts and traditions of this world/age (2:6-8). We will see that since Christ dealt with the real enemy of sin, in full (2:10-15), one need not be “judged” (judicially condemned, or answerable) in regards to their religious practices (2:16-23).

Finally, Paul will deal with how to look upon the sinful influences of the body/physical with a focus upon “things above” as to where we “set” our minds (3:1-11). Priorities will then include our treatment and behavior toward each other, maintained by true peace (3:12-17). All of this will control how we are in all our earthly relationship of family and work (3:18-4:1).

I. God’s Tool of Leadership, Guidance and Training - 1:1

A. Paul an Apostle - his authority is found in the one he serves

1. Paul did not always reference himself as an Apostle, yet does so here possibly for the following reasons:

Authority in the Church was established by the Lord through His Apostles, Apostles first and then Elders and Pastor/Teachers - these need to be scrutinized for legitimacy, but are given to the Church for its edification and protection

Clearly there can be abuses of this type of authority, but this reality should not be used to avoid or deny it altogether- see Titus 2:15, Heb. 13:7,17, I Thes. 5:12-13, I Tim. 5:17, Eph. 4:11-13

- a. He was often up against many who came after him calling themselves apostles also, though they were not truly of Christ nor did they have Apostolic authority in the church
- b. Paul wrote this letter and others while a prisoner in Rome, though he had some freedoms, he was restricted and had to deal with issues from afar, by letter - his imprisonment could easily have been used by false teachers to try to disqualify him and legitimize themselves
- c. This was an official title of those with authority in and over the Church and, on the positive side, should solidify their confidence in what he was teaching them - this is still needed, not only in being sure the Scripture is the “sole authority” of faith, but that those leading us are called to such and guided by it - in our day, there are still many false teachers but there is also a reactive trend where spiritual authority is disregarded or in a constant state of challenge and mistrust (causing many to be an authority to themselves within the Church)
- d. It’s been noted also that when Paul referenced this position, it was one of accountability for himself - any who are so called of God should be reverent of the responsibility

2. His apostleship is “of Jesus Christ” and no other person, order, or authority

Others needed to be told this up front so they would realize they were not to try to control or manipulate him

- a. He was sent out to do the bidding of his master (Christ), to teach what He taught, carrying on the ministry begun by Jesus Christ - it was not about self-expression or personal ambition
- b. As such, he was not to see it as his to do with as he wished - others needed to know this

B. “... by the will of God...” - this then points to his own will being secondary, submissive

1. As their authority (in the Church), he points to his authority and purpose
2. This defines the source of his calling - Paul had a clear calling, and any of us who believes we are called, strive to be sure of the ministerial calling - not one wants to assume! - note James 3:1
3. Living/walking/working by the will of God requires a constant state of surrender

- a. It involves a surrender of our will (the power of choosing for ourselves)- Mt. 6:10, Lu. 22:42

see also Heb. 13:20-21

This involves the renewing of the mind - Rom. 12:2

b. It includes the surrender of our body - it belongs to Him - Rom. 6:12-16, I Cor. 6:15-20, II Cor. 4:16

—c. The mind is then also surrendered (intellect, understanding, opinion)- I Pet. 4:1-2, Rom. 8:5-8

• This is essential considering life (living) “springs” out of it - Prov. 4:23

d. Surrender of time (moments (each poised for His use), schedules) - Eph. 5:15-17, I Peter. 4:1-2

These are subject to change at any time, by His will

—e. The surrender of our goals (our aspirations, objectives) - Rom. 8:26-30, Php. 3:7-14

f. It necessitates the surrender of our rights (perceived) - Mt. 18:21-22, Php. 2:5-11

We are just stewards

g. It even includes the surrender of our possessions - I Tim. 6:6-10, I Jn. 2:15

C. “... Timothy our brother” - a united letter in faith, teaching and challenging

1. Here, Timothy is referenced as “brother” which is understood by those openly acknowledging their being adopted into the same family, united as family (more than just friends/colleagues)

Paul often referenced others in his letters and support, but each was a proven, faithful brother and would be trusted resources to carry on this all-important work after Paul was done (not as Paul’s legacy continued, but the most important one of Christ’s)

a. Timothy was also described by Paul elsewhere as one of genuine (sincere) faith (II Tim. 1:5), he was Paul’s fellow-worker (Rom. 16:21) and treated as an equal in this setting, and also called Paul’s “beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (I Cor. 4:17); he was one well-taught from an early age in the Scripture (II Tim. 3:14-15), so Timothy was not a novice

—b. Adding Timothy to the opening demonstrated their unanimity in its content (added authority, being from two well known leaders in the Church), being unified in doctrine and obedience which has been an ongoing, strengthening influence on the Church (as growing disunity (in the essentials) has been a hindrance, distraction and weakening impact)

II. The Ongoing Impact of the Gospel (in faith and love, motivated in hope) - 1:2-8

A. The address line is unique in describing these believers - vs. 2

1. Paul would reference believers in other letters as “saints” and call out the “faithful”, but here he uses both to describe the Colossian Christians

This title, this name/description takes us far beyond the “only a sinner saved by grace” onto a made-new, redefined, born again new creation of the age to come

a. “Saints” (here “Τοῖς ἐν Κολοσσαῖς ἁγίοις” (to those in Colossae, holy/set-apart ones)) are separated from sin, this age/world and self rule/purpose to God - it is a word emphasizing distinction and uniqueness where, once referenced as such, expect to be different and are alert to the lures of assimilation to this world

To be “faithful” in this manner one must be a person of faith (belief causing consistency)

b. But to this he adds “faithful” brothers, not just holy, but holy and faithful brothers - it may be that this was to help clarify that true saints are faithful (trustworthy because they are trustful, and consistent in who and what they are, and so faithful to what they are called to)

c. “Saints” is our identity in/because of Christ and unfaithfulness is its contradiction

The truth of being in Christ has been cheapened by so many treating it as just positional and not practical

d. These (and we) are so because we are literally “in Christ”, thus unfaithfulness is unchristian and is not to be seen as a legitimate quality of one in Christ (by His grace) - too many have allowed for “saints” made so by grace, to be unfaithful (allowable) by grace - this is contradictory!

Because grace is distorted many expect release from these and not their expected implementation

e. Note the five characteristics of grace applied in Titus 2:11-14 (sensibility (fully aware of reality), righteousness (obedient), Godly (reverent of God) and looking for the Lord’s return, zealous (excited/driven) to do “good deeds” (productive efforts/works of obedience of service)

2. More than just a greeting, Paul points to two essentials

a. Having described those he was writing to as “saints” and “faithful,” he identifies their source, how they are what they are and can do what needs to be done - **grace** and **peace** (with God)

This is a key essential to remember, since there will be times when we will be aware of our undeservedness, but because of this, will focus on His faithfulness as the source of ours

—b. “Grace” being the favor God bestowed and always upon us (those in Christ), and so we have the same “favor” the Father has for Him - it, of course, was undeserved by us, unearned and is not dependent on us to receive it - we can and will rely upon it, always

Paul uses these two words in his greeting, expressing not necessarily the wish of them, for these believers, but acknowledging them as what they have

c. This grace “to you” (from God our Father) also ensures us of ability, opportunity and resources to do what He has given us to do (His work by His means) - the only negativity that could be considered would be our acting/thinking as though we do not have it at some moment, because of us... (failing to remember that if it was **undeserved** to begin with, it will never depend upon our **deserving** it in the future)

Compare this to Php. 4:5-8- peace is practically maintained in our thinking with focus on the real reality (truth)

d. The second word being “peace” (a calmness, steady evenness) - this comes as we realize we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:11-22), and since He is above all (all-powerful and all-knowing), we can be at peace throughout life because of Him, and not dependent on circumstances

e. The opposite of these would be a mistrust of God’s goodness to us, even to the pursuit of the favor of people over that of God (as though it is of more value or more to be desired) - the opposite of peace being a life of anxiety/worry/frustration

B. Genuine thankfulness because of the genuine qualities of genuine Christians - vs. 3-5

1. Paul and Timothy give thanks (from εὐχαριστέω, commonly translated as thanks or thankful, though the core idea is “good grace” with, for believers, a focus on understanding the source of the good, God’s grace) - it is a gratefulness directed to the source, the Father - vs. 3-4

This is a good example/standard to follow - when expressing thanks, direct the focus/credit of it to God and His work in the person(s) we are grateful for - compare to Eph. 1:15-16

This ought to be a demonstration of what should thrill and encourage us with each other... what we long to see

In an age where God, the Gospel, Scripture, and true Christianity is opposed, denied or even not tolerated, such individuals are of the greatest value to us!

Faith and love go together and even hope is mentioned in the next verse - because of their faith, they love and their loving care supports their common practice of faith - those professing faith yet do not love are horribly inconsistent

Someone defined faithfulness as long obedience in the same direction

Spiritual leaders find solace in knowing those they care for will also care for each other

Faith, hope and love are all interconnected, interdependent, for hope stems from faith, faith producing love and hope, while love growing out of hope, and hope confident because of love and trust/faith - this triad is inseparable in the believer

Their faith and love were strong because it was founded in an expectation (assurance) of the future - they stood/lived on solid ground (footing)

This is the danger of false teaching, though it may seem sincere and not greatly significant, it can directly affect hope

Note Abraham’s example in Heb. 11:8-10

- a. This thankfulness is “for you” for specific reasons (not as we often hear expressed... general “thankfulness” without details) - this thankfulness is not directed at them (it is to God, for they are the results of His grace at work) - God is described further as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (for none of us could pray to the Father had it not been for the Second Adam, the God-man (in our stead, winning for us access to the Father of all))
- b. Note that from verse three to verse eight is one sentence - lots to say, all directly connected in one thought
- c. Paul is thankful to God for believers such as these, who have been shown to be people of faith in Christ, and who have genuine love “for all the saints” - this is also at the core of how we ought to thank God for each other; for the evidences (outworkings) of His work in them, in particular their belief/trust (how they live demonstrates they believe) and the active love (which true love is... active (versus expressed in word/sentiment only))
- d. This thanksgiving was a constant part of his praying for them - to know someone of true faith is praying for you and that it is always accompanied with gratefulness to God for His work in you, is of the highest possible encouragement to have!
- e. But this was not flattery - Paul uses the word (or variants) of “heard” - so much of the Lord’s work uses communications, all of which have a direct impact on His work (in this case, assessing the spiritual status of the Colossian Christians) - Paul had been told of their faith and love, but not faith and love in general, but specifically their faith in “Christ Jesus” (who He was/is, His work and so now their identity found in Him)... and not just any “love” but a love (ἀγάπην, reasoned, selfless care) for “all the saints” (not some, but all, because of who/what they are)
- f. Their faith bringing particular encouragement to Paul and Timothy, because it was evidence of their salvation (resting/relying in His work), it being true faith, founded on an unbending cause (for life) - so they would not be those who would later turn on Christ
- g. Their love for all the saints bringing encouragement, because they would not be given to “snobbery” (hypocritical preferential treatment) with believers (which is caused by a values system that is worldly), humbly meeting needs (true care in all aspects)

2. The hope that they now have is given as the practical cause of their faith and love - vs. 5

- a. This hope (ὡς ἐλπίδα “the hope” two words describing an expectation, anticipation) - this hope is not anticipating on a “chance” (as is often used as “I hope so”, nor is it wishing for the best while expecting the worst, and it is not a foolish, uncertain desire as in “a hopeless cause” - this is the case because it was created in them when they heard “in the word of truth” which was the “gospel” (truth (the reality) of the good (best) news)
- b. The “hope” referenced here is specifically speaking of “heaven” which is literally what is reserved for them/us (just as in I Peter 1:3-5) - the hope of this reserved inheritance in Heaven (eternal) which was the focus of their faith and motivator of their love for the saints (fellow inheritors) - this is in stark contrast to the “hope” the world has, which is temporal (no time guarantees), fleeting/dwindling (perishing), which helps explain why the world’s faith in itself and its “gospel” is ever changing, and why true love is rare (for who can afford to practice it!?)
- c. Much of this letter was written to serve as a warning, mainly directed at the influences that had come, and would continue to come, to try to redirect their faith (the object and content) and their love, by questioning their eternal hope by either focusing on the temporal/competing “hopes” of this age, or altering the truth to question the assurance/means to the hope
- d. This hope (of/in the true Gospel) could be described as a calm confidence (see Psalm 16 as an example of such a focus), it is then also a patient waiting (Rom. 8:18-25), for it is more focused in the outcome than in the timing

C. The ever-growing impact/fruit of the true Gospel - vs. 6-8

1. Note how the Gospel is referenced - it is “the word of truth” the very point Pilate balked at when Jesus referenced the truth, but the truth is directly associated to the Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον good tidings/news) - vs. 6
 - a. This, in contrast to what others were trying to sell the Colossians on, was not founded in experiential mysticism or the intellectual, exclusivity of the Gnostics

For if there really is a truth, then it must be sought and known, and good intentions or even ignorance do not excuse us from seeking its discovery - plus, it also does not allow for its definition in/of subjectivity

The hope that comes with the Gospel is not so much hope in the here /now (as far as fulfillment, rest and peace) as much as it is a hope here rooted in what is coming and the value/purpose of what is to be faced here

It produces growth and its own reproduction - false professions of faith become evident when there is not growth

The Colossian Christians needed to know that what was occurring in them, because of the Gospel, was happening all over the world... and still is

"The implication is that this universality of the gospel truth shall not be converted into a narrow sectarian heresy." Lenski

It was not a variant "gospel", one subject to cultural, societal, generational changes, but the real one... in truth

Careful attention was given to the faithful transfer of not only teaching/doctrine, but of authority - it was common for "upstarts" to be formed, creating their own authority and variants of the Gospel

It seems possible from this verse, that Epaphras started the church after having heard the Gospel himself and then being taught by Paul

- b. Also, it is the TRUE Gospel in contrast to the counterfeit "gospels" that were being purported in their day - if one has a "variant truth" it is not true (reliable) - the objection so many had (and still do) to the word "truth" is its exclusivity (to reality)
- c. The Gospel as truth itself lays out and authoritatively defines reality (its starting point as well as where it ends in our understanding)
- d. It is "good news" because it addresses the bad news of our natural condition before our Creator... rightful judgment to come - it counters the hopelessness of mankind without God, the despair stemming from a life without purpose (and future), a life naturally inclined to live for self, which lived as such leads to emptiness and disillusionment (and so on to denial)
- e. Paul describes the Gospel as "which has come to you" - it was by no means an answer self-concocted but was delivered via human means (see Rom. 10:14-17)
- f. The Gospel is universal ("in all the world") and is not exclusive at all to one people, class or any other human status (thus the usage of "the mystery of the Gentiles" in Ephesians)
- g. The Gospel is productive (fruitful) - "The middle voice of the verb, of which this is the sole instance, marks the fruitfulness of the Gospel by its own inherent power." (Vincent) - it will always be productive, so any notion of an ineffective Gospel (in its life-altering impact on the recipient) is inconceivable - so-called "fruits" apart from it are not true fruit
- h. It is constantly "increasing" (spreading) - this is not because of the clever "growth strategies" of the sowers, but by the very nature of the Gospel - it will without doubt spread - those that adulterate it, believing it is needed to promulgate it, often end up planting the seed of a pseudo-gospel, a growth of the appeal to the natural over the spiritual, to the now over the future
- i. It is important for us to realize the automatic, integrated design of the Gospel to keep spreading/growing (the real Gospel), and in faith we trust God in His work, not judging it based on what we see/hear in popular circles, where the true Gospel is often compromised to produce the appearance of growth - it has never been the numbers... always the diverse areas the Gospel would spread and grow within the newly produced "saints"
- j. Setting up some of what is to come in this letter, Paul adds that when they heard the Gospel, and then (by God's grace) they understood it (ἐπιγινώσκω, more than just head knowledge, but an experiential understanding that follows... it was implemented into them) and that, as he stresses, as "the grace of God in truth" - alterations of the Gospel and grace were on the rise and the influence of it about to be felt in Colossae also

2. The faithful, fellow slave of Jesus Christ, Epaphras - vs. 7-8

- a. Still looking to narrow their focus of teachers/influencers, Paul uses "καθώς" (just as, in accordance with) how it (the Gospel) was learned from Epaphras - his reliable credentials (as listed here) were his being a "fellow slave" (σύνδουλος), one that Paul loved, and second, Epaphras was also "faithful" in the work of Christ (in his representing Christ on behalf of Paul)
- b. With these credentials, he was trustworthy (and endorsed here as such by Paul), and since Epaphras was also a slave, he was subject to his master, Christ - he could not alter the truth to his liking or to that of those he was sent to minister to (teach) - practically speaking, false teachers have an advantage in being able to adjust their teaching to move/flex with popular trends and demands
- c. Epaphras brought back with him the reality of their love for Paul and Timothy - this love is described as "in the Spirit", to their core, of and from what they truly are - these loved those whom they had never met (see 2:1) - it was a love based in the Faith, produced by the Spirit

III. Filled With the Knowledge of God's Will, to Walk in a Manner Worthy of Him - 1:9-12

A. The prayer for the Colossians - vs. 9

1. "Since the day we heard..." begins the reason for the specific prayer for them

This prayer is in keeping with the oncoming onslaught of "errorists" flooding in to redirect, reinterpret, and religiously apply their wares

- a. It has been stated that prayer consists of (or ought to consist of) two general categories: first, to know/discern the will of God, and, second, to do it
- b. "In prayer, we are not so much trying to make God listen to us, as much as we are trying to make ourselves listen to God; in prayer we are not trying to persuade God to do what we want Him to do, we are trying to find out what He wants us to do." Barclay
- c. This prayer is motivated by hearing of their genuine faith, evidenced in their genuine love, both of which will be particularly targeted and or affected by these errorists

So much prayer is focused on protection, defensive, yet if their is steady growth, threats become less the issue/focus

A similar prayer in Eph. 1:15-21 - Paul constantly stressed the importance of knowing God better (see also Php. 3:7-11)

J. B. Lightfoot phrased it this way "...that ye may grow more and more in knowledge, till ye attain to the perfect understanding of God's will, being endowed with all wisdom to apprehend His verities and all intelligence to follow His processes, living in the mind of the Spirit - to the end that knowledge may manifest itself in practice..."

This "understanding" is knowing what to do with wisdom, how to apply/use it (so much more than just know or knowing about)

This was Paul's prayer for the Colossian Christians, and so it should be ours for ourselves and each other, our goal, our constant desire, so that we are working toward it

d. Note that this praying for them is stirred on (here), not so much in light of their need, but in the reality of their growth (in faith and love, because of hope (vs. 5)) - the prayer is for its continued increase - we need more of this praying, seeking improvement, growth

2. The request (ask) that they be "filled with knowledge" of a specific type

- The wording is very precise here... it is "πληρωθήτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν" (that you may be completely full/filled with precise/particular knowledge) - this is not a general "getting smarter" but a narrow, more thorough perspective (knowing more than just the facts)
- This "filling" providing the picture of being saturated with, consumed with, all things of God versus the natural inclination to grow to be filled with the knowledge of this age (for it (this age) does seek to compete and dominate the thinking, as if most important)
- But here it is the fullness of the "knowledge of His will" (from "θέλημα" a word generally used of someone's desire/wish, their pleasure, and here, since it is God's will, it is His determination)
- Still building on the detail, it is a fullness of knowing/focus of His will, more than intellectual, it is of wisdom and understanding that is spiritual (over and above the physical, but not the absence of the physical (as in mystical)) - it is aware of what makes life, life
- Dealing with the "wisdom" of the false teachers, Lightfoot also points out that it usually came under the guise of philosophy which he defined as "... the offspring of vanity nurtured by the mind of the flesh." (Paul will warn of this in 2:8)
- The wisdom of God (which is spiritual) is more than just knowledge, it is a knowledge given also instruction of how to think about what is learned/known, and understanding (from God, which also has its source in the spiritual (so above the physical)) is the word "σύνεσις" basically meaning "to put things together" (as we might say, "connect the dots")
- "Human Faith is, indeed the weakest, and most uncertain kind of knowledge; because man's testimony, on which it relies, is so fallible; but Divine Faith the most certain, because the testimony of God, on which its weight bears, is infallible: One, who cannot deceive, because he is truth itself; nor be deceived, because he is wisdom itself: so that, though Faith be not Reason, yet to believe what God saith is true, there is the highest reason." William Gurnall

B. The purpose/outcome of being filled with this wisdom and understanding - vs. 10-12

- These verses provide seven active results - 1. Walk in a worthy manner 2. Please the Lord 3. Bear fruit (be productive) 4. Increasing of the knowledge of God 5. Strengthened with His might 6. Attaining stability 7. Joyously giving thanks

It is natural to try to please, but we naturally set our sites on people (too low)

Overconfidence in personal insight or in the level of learning is at the root of intellectual pride, and such pride stifles learning

"Dead orthodoxy" being a knowing without the doing

Those living a life casually honoring the Lord and neglectful of growing in it demonstrate they do not truly know the honor/glory of God

See I Thes. 4:1 where Paul indicates it is being done, but stresses that it continue, non-stop (never believing we've arrived as in our daily living)

The English translation "walk" first seeing it indicates life/living as step-by-step

- The results being a worthwhile life (full of unending purpose) with the fulfillment of knowing we can please and are pleasing to God - we are wired to need to be pleasing
 - It results in a life of productivity (usefulness, purpose)
 - It results in a life of the greatest of insight, building strength to face all of the challenges of life with a might that is infinite (inexhaustible), so a consistent, steady life
 - All of this resulting in excited gratefulness (steady contentment not grounded in life circumstances, but grounded in knowing He is above all, unstoppably at work in all things)
- ## 2. Filled with knowing God's will in order to live out life fitting/worthy of who He is - vs. 10
- Genuine wisdom and understanding of the knowledge of His will, will assuredly translate into how one, once for all, lives out their life - some might look to counter this with the claim of "dead orthodoxy," but that would simply be knowledge that is not "ἐπίγνωσις"
 - A person can demonstrate that they are not "filled" with such insight/knowledge if they are not unstoppably driven to pursue a life lived in a way honoring to the Lord
 - It is a life characterized by giving of our best to the Master - see Eph. 4:1-2, Php. 1:27-30
- ## 3. Walking (conducting life) worthy of the Lord in order to please Him - vs. 10
- This pleasing here is preceded by the word "πάσαν" indicating more than just an aim at partial pleasing (as in appeasing), for the word indicates "all/every," fully pursuing to fully be pleasing
 - The word for "please" here (ἀρέσκεια) was normally used in a bad sense of someone obsessed with pleasing people, yet here it is a reasonable "obsession" seeing He is worthy
- ## 4. Living to please Him so as to be fruitful/productive in doing truly "good works" - vs. 10
- Seeking to please others or self will result in works not actually "good" - many have a life that appears to be productive, but the output does not measure up to the standard of "good"
 - This fruit bearing is in the form (by means of) "every good work" (tasks, endeavors)

An overly pragmatic view typically leads to focusing on results not the steps/tasks, and so we see many shortcut approaches to service

See Eph. 2:10 - we are His work, not our own, designed to walk in good works

We ought to be driven to learn, but no as much the wisdom of this age that is focused on this age, but that of the age to come

This understanding of God and how He works is critical for us to realize, so we know (expect) where to look to for empowerment (even for our faithfulness/consistency)

This phrase could also be stated as "the power of His glory" - the more we come to know God, the weaker and duller are all other strengths and glories

"... ὑπομονήν may be called the opposite of cowardice... allied to hope, while μακροθυμίαν may be contrasted with wrath and revenge and coupled with mercy." C.F.D Moule referencing Lightfoot

Trusting fatigue/weariness leads to inconsistent lives/ focus, distracted with knowing ourselves too well, over against knowing God (and His glorious might!)

It is very important for us to know where our inheritance lies so as not to be caught up into living for the meager, temporal inheritances of this life - the philosophies of this world are FOR this world/age and are designed to ensnare our focus and priorities for the "here"

- c. The "fruit" is in these works - too often this is misrepresented, and many are under the impression that the fruit is the goal, when in reality, fruit is the natural result of "good works" - thus our goal to be faithful in the doing, and the Lord the fruit producer
- d. The Lord is not seeking His work "just be done," but that it be done His way and by His definition of "good" (a significant part of this "knowledge of God") - God is to be known, not just known about, and so understood (which is what ἐπίγνωσις communicates)
- e. As the Gospel is constantly bearing fruit (vs. 6), so it continues in us, fruit not just in good works, but in EVERY good work (all are productive whether we see it or not) - our goal is informed obedience, not the appearance of fruit (for some fruit will not be readily seen)

5. All of this circling back to "increasing/growing in the knowledge of God" - vs. 10

- a. Seeing/trusting that fruit produced (in our obedience), we would not be inclined to then retire and study the bounty of our work, but would be driven to keep growing - Paul using more an example of a fruit tree than of a type of grain (each year is marked by fruit produced, growth (roots, branches, leaves) to take in more resources (in our case, understanding of God))
- b. This is one of the points in the Lord's prayer in John 17:3 - to know God is core to eternal life itself (not in the getting of it, but true "eternal living" - see also II Pet. 1:2-4)

6. For longevity and continuity, Paul and Timothy pray they be "strengthened with all power" - vs. 11

- a. Fervor is often lost once we lean on our own understanding and strength (natural motivation)
- b. "The gift of continuance is not from us, but it proceeds from the power of God." GBN
- c. The wording is interesting in this first phrase, "ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι" (in all power, empowered), that with "all power" (all, in every way and means, since it comes from the all-powerful One) - God can and will empower (by His grace) in all sorts of ways/circumstances, even when we are naturally weak, dispirited or when outmatched by the powers of this world
- d. Note Paul's personal application of this in vs. 29
- e. Note also that this is still related to "spiritual wisdom and understanding" in/of the knowledge of God - there are competing knowledges that in their application, rob us of strength, guiding us away from its true source ("His glorious might") - it needs to be seen for the glory it is so we are not attracted/lured to other artificial "glories"
- f. With such empowerment, faithful steadfastness (consistency) is the result - the key then to faithful service (lifelong) lies within truly coming to know God, growing in it and being obedient - the concept of faithfulness can be complicated unnecessarily by those coming to "take captive" through philosophy and deception using the teachings and popular, historical practices of men (built upon by the basic principles of men) as seen in 2:8
- g. What is profoundly unique with this type of endurance is its inclusion and resulting joy - steadiness, faithfulness and longsuffering lead to a contented, happy life - compare this to II Cor. 12:9-10, Heb. 10:34-38, James 1:2-4

7. Growing in understanding of/knowing God then leads to joyful thanksgiving - vs. 11-12

- a. This joy is in keeping with walking/living in a manner fitting the Lord, for it leads to (naturally) a grateful focus - a lack of thankfulness stems from a spirit of expectation (privilege), a focus not tuned/trained to see God's gracious work at work
- b. The thankfulness is brought on with the clear awareness of what the Father has done (as is core to the Gospel, in its result) - He was "qualified" us (ικανόω- rendered fit, adequate) to share in the inheritance of the saints - this goes beyond just mercy, and demonstrates the profound result of grace, not just eking us into Heaven, but fully qualifying us (so by His grace, in/by Christ, fully (now) deserving the eternal kingdom)
- c. The wording, precisely, is "receiving a share/lot in/of the share/portion of the saints" - it often seems wrong to believe and then say that we now deserve this inheritance, but it is not only appropriate but is also essential in our walk (living fitting for the Lord as His heirs, with His name)
- d. We now rightfully are associated with the Saints, because of Christ are characterized as "in light" (versus what is coming next in the "domain of darkness") - light being more than referencing the brightness of the inheritance, but the light that comes with the wisdom/ understanding of God, being "in the know" of the truth, what life is about and where everything is heading - compare with II Cor. 4:1-10 and the resulting behavior, Rom. 13:11-14

IV. Transference From Darkness to Christ's Kingdom, by Means of Redemption, Forgiveness and Reconciliation - 1:13-14

A. It helps in this upcoming section for us to remember some of the tenets of Gnosticism Paul was countering

1. This philosophy was posing a threat to the new church in Colossae, and this next section authoritatively proclaims the details of what Christ did, all in opposition to Gnostic doctrine

In their ideology, God being a spirit could not directly deal with anything physical (so then, Jesus could not have been a real man, but more a phantom)

Christianity certainly contains scholarship and intellectual content, but it is primarily faith based in solid content that would form a philosophy (but never a philosophy shaping Christianity)

- a. For instance, Gnostics believed that all matter was evil (and eternal), and that a supreme being had to use "emanations" (forces or actions that originated from another source), several times removed, to create the universe - these were in disagreement of God creating the world
- b. As indicated in their name, these were intellectuals believing that (ultimately) salvation would come by means of knowledge - they were essentially opposed to faith, and their conclusions landed on a belief that "common" people could not obtain salvation
- c. All of this helps demonstrate part of the purpose of 1:10 (the knowledge of God), 1:19 (the fullness of God) and 1:22 (referencing Jesus doing all this in His "body of flesh")
- d. Describing the Gnostics, Barclay summarized them as, "... dissatisfied with what they considered the rude simplicity of Christianity, and they wished to turn Christianity into a philosophy and to align it with other philosophies..."

2. So, in contrast to Gnostics, Jesus was not one of many (a choice/option, an "emanation"), He was the only way, the Creator Himself, indwelt with the entirety of the Godhead (see 2:9)

We will often need to be reminded of the genius of the simplicity of Scripture and the danger of our pride wanting to showcase what we can do with it (complicating it)

- a. Though the Bible (and so, Christianity) contains concepts/ideas that could be plumbed deeply, its simplicity, its obvious/clear answers should be primary
- b. Pulling in external ideas/philosophies into our Theology risks corrupting it (and much of this adulteration originates in our natural thinking, venturing beyond the clarity of Scripture)

B. The Father's deliverance and transference of us by means of His Beloved Son - vs. 13-14

1. How did the Father (practically) "qualify" us for the inheritance "of the saints in lights"? - vs. 13

As to be indicated in the next verse, this deliverance/rescue was by means of "redemption" (actually, "ransom" would fit better here)

Compare this to Paul's testimony of what Christ told him at his conversion in Acts 26:15-18

- a. First, He "rescued us from the power/authority of darkness" (rescued being "ρύομαι" a word picturing a drawing to one's self, into safety and here into light, to God Himself)
- b. The "domain of darkness" is the realm, controlling power/influence of sin - darkness indicating not only evil, but blindness/ignorance of truth/light
- c. He, the Father, demonstrating His superior power in rescuing us from one power to transfer us into a Kingdom, that of His Beloved Son, the inheritance of the saints light (and this inheritance ours now, what we are partakers of now as "holy ones," no longer under the regime of darkness (as to its overriding control and dictatorship) - it is not our master)
- d. All of this, done for us, by, as can also be translated, "the Son of His love", Jesus the Beloved Son acting out the love of the Father on/for us

2. "In whom" (Christ) we have been ransomed (purchased out of slavery), sins being forgiven - vs. 14

In Christ we are freed from the condemnation/wrath of God as well as the controlling power of sin, an enemy threatening and stopping any life by bondage (opposing purpose, fulfillment)

We have been redeemed from the tyranny of sin's rule, purchased at a great cost into the newness of life described in Romans 6:15-18

Here, in contrast to Eph. 1:7, Paul uses the word for missing the mark (not being perfect) versus the other word for sin describing side-slips, crossing the line

- a. The use of the words for "the redemption" (τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν) describing a ransom paid to release, not necessarily to "freedom" but to "liberty" - we were slaves to sin, bound not only to its mastery, but incapable of escape/rescue, and so unable to escape the imminent judgment
- b. In Christ, we have been liberated, not to a "freedom" (without constraints) but freed (in liberty) from obstructions to live life as we should
- c. Many misunderstand "freedom" in Christ as though it is a form of "freedom from the Law" which is then translated (practically) in being free from constraints/rules - yet the liberty we have in Christ frees us from the chains of sin, which would stop/hinder true living (in righteousness/rightness) - we are liberated to live life as we were originally created to live
- d. We know this is the exact meaning because this ransoming/redemption is equated with the forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσις- forgiveness as in letting it go, pardoning, removing, doing away with) - see Psalm 103:12, Isa. 43:25
- e. The proud (here, the Gnostics) would cringe at the idea of salvation being by means of forgiveness of sins (they, equating salvation more with knowledge (theirs, not God's))

V. Who Really Was Jesus (and His Qualifications) to Qualify Us In The Inheritance of Saints? - 1:15-20

A. Jesus was/is the image of God Himself - vs. 15

1. It is here we venture into some of the most significant of texts which directly and profoundly lay out for us (simply) our "Christology"
- a. He was so much more than the Gnostics could have ever imagined (and the cults today!)

He was/is God in flesh, exactly God while in the form of flesh, and no other has ever been or ever will be like Him in such a combination of natures- He was truly “only begotten” in who/what He was... one of a kind

John Eadie

We deduce from this that all “sightings” of God throughout Scripture were Christ (preincarnate and incarnate)

Based on all of this, we cannot look upon Jesus as being a lesser version (in any way) of God (at any time) - He was and is “exact” in as much as we could comprehend - see John 14:8-9

As we see in John 1 and Philippians 2:7, He took on flesh, He already existing in some form before

Note also the use of “firstborn” with Christ in Rom. 8:28-29 (Jesus being the image of God, and we now being conformed to His image)

At the heart of so many theological or philosophical fallacies is the pursuit to shift the blame off of ourselves (mankind) and onto God, nature or the “Devil”

This reemphasizes the eternity of the Son - He has always been, thus, “In the beginning WAS the Word...”

This then, obviously, includes countless things we have never seen!

It would be arrogantly presumptive of us to think we have reached (or could reach a point) where we truly have “seen it all”

- b. Simply put, Jesus was/is the “εἰκὼν” (the image/form) of “the invisible God,” and as described in Heb. 1:3, He as this image of God is “the exact imprint of his nature” or, also translated as “the very image of his substance” - mankind was made in the image of God (our personhood), while Jesus was the image itself of God - note also II Cor. 4:1-6
- c. “One trembles to subject such a declaration to the scrutiny of human reason, and feels as if he were rudely profaning it by the appliances of earthly erudition [education]. The invisible God-how dark and dreadful the impenetrable veil [a lowering, here as in condescension]. Christ His image - how perfect in its resemblance, and overpowering in its brilliance! We must worship whilst we construe [interpret]; and our exegesis must be penetrated by profound devotion.”
- d. Jesus is the image of the **invisible** God (He who cannot be seen), and yet is perfectly seen in Christ (see John 1:18 (seeing God in Jesus declarations/teachings), Romans 1:18-21 (the invisible known, though not seen, by the creation) and seen in the mercy and grace shown to Paul in I Timothy 1:12-17 - and, to top it off, we are in Him and He in us! - John 17:20-23
- e. This statement alone is mind-blowing, beyond our comprehension, that the infinite God could somehow “fit” into a man, still being truly God and truly man - the theological term for this is “hypostatic” and comes from Hebrews 1:3 and the Greek word “ὑπόστασις” in the phrase “χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ” the impress (three dimensional representation) of the essence/substance of Him [God]

2. He is “the firstborn of all creation” - He was/is preeminent/above and before all creation

- a. This is a very complex idea to fit into our understanding - plainly put, Christ existed before all creation, seeing all creation came by Him, for Him; but most common was the use of “firstborn” in the sense of position ... He is the top of all creation, though not created Himself
- b. As will be seen in verse 18, He is also the “firstborn from the dead” in that He is preeminent (above) all those that rise from the dead, for His resurrection was to a life to never die again
- c. In being the “firstborn,” He is the “first cause” of all things, so not “first created” - as “firstborn” He would be the go-ahead before us (in life, death, resurrection, righteousness (so salvation)) leading us in all things as being before and above us all
- d. In another sense also, Christ is the means by which God works through to get to man, and that man goes through to get to God (the Father)
- e. Revelation 5 demonstrates His superiority over all things, and so His “worthiness”

B. Being “firstborn”, everything was created by Him and for Him - vs. 16

1. This fact would be key for the Colossians to understand in realizing that everything, even as it stands now, was created by Christ, so the Gnostic idea of all matter (the physical realm) being innately evil was wrong

- a. We see clearly, in the creation account in Genesis 1, that when things were created, everything was “good” and when finished, it was “very good”
- b. It was the entrance of sin into the creation that introduced evil, and the blame for this could not be on the creation, the creator or even the serpent - it was on our human head, Adam and so the blame for evils in the world hangs on us - Rom. 5:12

2. In and by means (through) Him everything that was created, was created

- a. This does not discount the Father or the Spirit (as both were a part), but Christ was essentially the means and even the purpose - see also John 1:1-3
- b. So, if it had a beginning, it was created by/in Christ - there was no eternal existence of matter for everything had a beginning (except God... the Godhead)
- c. To avoid any ambiguity, Paul lists categories and locations to demonstrate the Lord’s creation work as being comprehensive - so, “all things” included in “the heavens” (the outer universe, throughout all space) and all things on the earth (including everything biological)
- d. Speaking of things we have not seen, this is what is stressed in the next two inclusions into the “all things” - all things visible (viewable) and invisible (what we cannot see or have not seen) - might this include the entirety of the spirit realm of the creation... yes!
- e. Yet, just considering the physical realm, the farther we are able to see into space, the more we see is there, countless galaxies in one small spot in the sky, and the more we are able to see using microscopes, the more we can see that was previously invisible to us
- f. Not only this, but He created the order, structure and even the concepts of such

This then leads to the full reason of Rom. 13:1-7

A significant part of this purpose is that He be glorified - literally everything is for this and will ultimately do this - His will is never effectively thwarted!

Note that in this one phrase we learn of His eternity and His immutability... and in all this, He is the answer then to the great question of ontology; where did everything that exists come from?

Peter, in II Peter 3:2-7 that as sustainer, He also preserves the creation for final judgment (in case any of these scoffers wonders why God hasn't destroyed it yet)

Creation and preservation/sustaining go hand-in-hand

He knows every possible detail of us (literally), physically, mentally/emotionally, spiritually and even, then, our detailed purpose

It's result described in Eph. 2:13

This is not to say that any before Christ are not saved or are not, now, in Christ - just that now, Christ has come, and considering the use of this word now in time, it is unique from all other uses

Christ, being the head of such an organization, should be the ultimate "draw" to it

Compare Eph. 4:11-16 and Eph. 5:22-24

g. Not just objects and energies, but authorities as conveyed in "... thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.." - these authoritative powers are from Him and for Him - there is no clarification of good or evil authorities, so all are included under Him - some have noted that these terms can refer to angelic (spirit) powers/authorities, and that these also have influence over earthly jurisdictions

h. Then, profoundly wrapping this overview up, Paul states plainly that everything has been created through Him (by means of Him) and for Him (everything in the universe, physical and spiritual, living and inanimate, authoritative and subordinate was created for His purpose)

i. It makes perfect sense then to realize that everything has purpose, and that purpose centers on Him - to exclude Christ from our purposes should be seen as senseless

C. His timelessness (above time) and sustaining power - vs. 17

1. To be Creator, He had to be before the world/universe, and to be "before" everything, He could not be made up of anything originally that is of this creation - see also John 8:58

a. Paul states as clearly and plainly as possible, Jesus "is" before everything (in time, and, as creator, in priority) - the "is" just another small indicator of the profound truth of His having always existed - He always was "is" and will always be "is" (as in "I AM")

—b. "He who made all necessarily existed before all. Prior to His creative work, He had filled the unmeasured periods of an unbeginning eternity... He is unchanging being. At every point of His existence it may be said of Him, He is." Eadie

2. And so now, ever since the universe was created, everything is held together by Him

a. The word for "hold together" (consist, cohere) is "συνέστηκεν" which describes a keeping things together, lined-up (orderly, cooperating) versus what would fall under the category of chaos/disorder (physically, spiritually) - He is the source of order

b. The word Paul uses here is very interesting to consider - he is clearly indicating an awareness of things somehow being held together, to work in harmony (physical processes and even thought processes of the brain/mind) - yet, as Creator, were He to, as it were, withdraw this holding things together, not only would everything fall apart, but would, as expected, cease to exist altogether (existence itself fully/constantly dependent on Him, at all times!)

—c. The beliefs of the "Deists" are also countered with this phrase, as they believed in a God/Creator that left the world to itself (no longer involved) - yet He is involved to the molecular/atomic level! - it is humanistic to formulate an idea of God as not being intimately involved

d. Even the enemies of Christ are held together by Him - all that they use in their attacks against Him, in their disregard of Him, even their ability to think/reason is His

e. It does us well to realize that we are never independent of Him... never! Truly delusional thinking/living is that which acts as though He is not there or is disengaged - Psalm 14:1

f. '... is the principle of cohesion in the Universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos. J.B. Lightfoot

D. The "Head of the Church" is "preeminent" over everything - vs. 18

1. Paul, starting this sentence with "He is also..." ties this directly with all that has been revealed of Christ - this same one (Eternal Creator) is also directly over the Church, in all capacities

a. The "church" (ἐκκλησία - commonly in reference to the "assembly" but particularly to those assembled/congregated as being "called out" (separated) from the world (the rest of people who are not in Christ)) - this "church" made so at this point in time, by His work

—b. There have been many that tie this word back to Eden and throughout the Old testament, but there is no doubt there is a special (particular) usage of the term after Christ, and as such is called His "body" - considering this usage comprehensively, it is now to be seen as directly carrying out His work/will as He did in His body while on the earth

c. Playing off of this wording (analogy), we would then clearly see that there could be no local church without Christ as the head, though history has demonstrated many headless churches (where Christ is not the head) - a church without Christ as its head is a monstrosity!

d. No "church" is to be seen as ours (as in ownership, subject to our authority) - Jesus is its head, and as our physical heads control all parts of the body, so He is over all parts of His body, the Church - the concept then clarifies all the more the Apostles (then on to us) carrying on Jesus' work (His physical (as it were) interface with this aspect of creation)

2. In everything that is (all creation), He is preeminent (chief)

Though some of these places may still have enough in them to constitute a church as seen in places like Rev. 7:14 (Laodicea, still called a church but needing significant change (as directed from its Head))

One point showing this as truth, He is the only one who had the power over death and life to be resurrected - He will then be the one who raises us - see John 5:19-29

Life is about God, not us - we are a part of what it is all "about" but we must never confuse or reorder it!

- a. In another profoundly broad, encompassing statement Paul writes that Jesus is "the beginning" everything coming by Him and for Him (nothing in the creation (seen/unseen) preceded Him
- b. So He is the beginning then also of the Church (the true Church), for any so-called "church" that He is not its head (or founder) should not be seen as a church
- c. As "Beginning" (some strong textual evidence indicates the absence of the article, so it could almost be used as a name), He is also, in order to be seen/recognized over everything in significance, rank and power, and then also "firstborn from the dead" - and as used in verse 15, so it is here, not the first to be resurrected (to rise) from the dead, but to be the most significant (the chief) of all that have or ever will rise from the dead
- d. All of this culminating in the preordained result that He would "come to have first place in everything" - see also I Cor. 15:21-28 (the purpose for everything is to glorify God, and it will, and this done by having everything subjected (under the open/known authority of Christ who will then subject Himself to the Father, that "God may be all, in all")) - **it's all about God!**

E. All the "fullness" of the Godhead in Christ, reconciling all things to Himself - vs. 19-20

1. The words "the Father" are not in the Greek, but are properly supplied recognizing Him as subject here, referring back to 1:12 - as part of His reconciliation work (His work to "qualify" us), it would include the fullness (completeness, sum total (here, the Godhead as in 2:9)) - vs. 19

The explanation of how this union worked within the physical body of Christ is beyond our ability to comprehend, though we take it as stated/presented - we do, though, realize that when we talk with each other, we do not see the entire person (soul and spirit), though we know there is much more to a person than what we see

- a. The ESV translates it, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" and YLT, "because in him it did please all the fullness to tabernacle"
- b. It was pleasing, was good in the mind of the Godhead to dwell completely in Him - as indicated by Jesus in John 14:8-9, when one (Philip) saw Jesus they saw the Father - it was as in "if you see Me, talk with Me, you see and talk with the Father"
- c. Christ was no partial God, or a watered-down version, but was the result of the entire Godhead's (fullness) knowing it to be "good" (and so were "well pleased") to do so
- d. This fact/reality is very important when we realize, not just its case for the deity of Christ, but its purpose in the reconciliation work (our salvation) - how could we imagine any aspect of this reconciliation work failing (or having a "weak spot") considering whose work it is!?
- e. Note also the impact this has on our read of texts like John 1:15-16

2. This "fullness" well-pleased to reconcile - vs. 20 (omniscient, eternal, perfection perfectly pleased!)

Generally it works out to:

1. The Father sends
2. The Son is sent, obeys, and is sacrificed to reconcile
3. The Spirit is sent (by the Son) the instigator of salvation and the ongoing Comforter/sustainer in the outworking of the reconciled relationship

Some would object to this explanation, but it makes sense that in reconciling everything to Himself, even the heavenly things, it is only possible when they are reconciled with the earthly things (as a parent restoring/reconciling the whole family, needing an actual means to peace between the "good" and once "bad" children)

Without Christ, there is no peace/fulfillment, for their is no reconciliation with our Creator and our fundamental life purpose cannot be achieved

- a. By means of Jesus Christ "all things" were restored/reconciled to "Himself" (pointing again back to verse 12), the Father - see II Cor. 5:18-19
- b. "Reconcile" (ἀποκαταλλάσσω, to bring together that which had been separated, and this completely (as in nothing left to finish)) - what was once in harmony with God, man and the entire creation, now separated by sin (because of man's sin, even the physical creation (the universe)) was negatively affected - see Rom. 8:18-25)
- c. The resource of this was "the blood of His cross" which was the means (the reconciling tool) to the result of reconciliation, that being "peace" (and peace here being an "at ease", calmness and no threat of any possible loss of harmony, because of how it was won/purchased)
- d. This blood (shed resulting in the end of His physical life) reconciles all things, heavenly and earthly (all that was impacted by sin) - note two things: first it is "things" to include not just people but the creation itself, and, second, in the Greek "things" is preceded by a proper article so it's not just "all things" in general but specifically "the all things" upon and for whom/which His blood was shed - note Rom. 3:21-26
- e. Some are troubled at the inclusion of things in Heaven listed here, but we can see that reconciliation is needed so that Heavenly things can be in harmony with the earthly things once again by means of this work of the Father
- f. We could also (possibly) look on the "heavenly" things including those now dead, in Heaven, having ultimately found their reconciliation in this work of Christ - note also the exclusion in this list of "all things" of Hell and the Lake of Fire (they exist because of no reconciliation)
- g. This peace is expounded upon even further not only in its eternal results but in its impact in this life also in Rom. 5:1-5 - compare also Eph. 2:13-18
- h. This reconciliation, restoring what was lost in Eden (Gen. 3) and because of this, true (actual) peace with God considering the agents (the Godhead) and the means (the blood of Christ)

VI. Alienated Enemies, Reconciled to a State of Holiness and Blamelessness - 1:21-23

A. Their original state - hostile enemies of God and righteousness - vs. 21

1. Before Paul deals with the personal reconciliation of individuals (having just described the reconciliation of all “things”), he uses a few words to lay out their natural condition

This alien state is described as “dead” in Eph. 2:1-3, for “dead” is, in the truest sense, separation and only an infusion of life will restore (reconcile) this unsurpassable chasm

Seeing this original condition is so deep, the nature of who/what we are, we cannot imagine using this same mind/heart to “reason” ourselves in any way to Christ (and so reconciliation) - this will need to happen to us, not by us!

see Titus 1:15-16

The reality of all of this is always evident - no one needs to be taught to sin... left to themselves, everyone will live-out some form of “evil” (either in depravity/perversity or in self-righteousness)

- a. They were “alienated” (the underlying word describing being shut out of fellowship with and so estranged) - the use of this term makes it clear that there once had been a close relationship that now is lost (again, lost in Eden)
- b. This otherness, of a whole different kind, was what they were, this was their entire nature, and resulted in their being “hostile in mind” (an enemy, at heart) of God - God is odd to them
- c. Such is the original state of us all - see Rom. 1:18-23, 3:10-18, 8:5-8
- d. This “hostility” (purposed aggression) is in/of the “mind” (διάνοια - thinking, critical thought, one’s way of thinking and so their understanding of things) - they are (as were we) the enemies of God completely (note Rom. 1:28 and Php. 3:17-19) - “It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change.” Lightfoot
- e. This hostility of thinking may seem extreme until we realize (and often see) the bitter hatred against the actual God, the actual Christ and the unadulterated Word of God, by the seeming decent/religious people - see Eph. 4:17-19
- f. The bright spot in this first part of verse 21 is the word “formerly” (the little word “ποτέ”)

2. Since this was the natural condition, it is expected then there would be “deeds of evil”

- a. Sin is our nature at the start, it is all we know/understand at first, even in our morality and standards of decency, for it is all based (naturally) off our various perspectives (all of which are hostile toward the real God, and why so many of man’s religions that claim to be “Christian” or “Biblical” are more focused on appeasement and not true adoration/gratefulness)
- b. The underlying word for “evil” (πονηρός) is very picturesque, painting evil for what is practically is, in that it is ultimately “toilsome” (agonizing) because it is wicked - in its wickedness it is destructive (malignant), killing its possessors and propagators/sponsors

B. Yet... and what a contrasting “yet”! He reconciled (restored) “you” - vs. 22

1. “Reconcile” here is incredible in its meaning and thoroughness

See also Heb. 10:5-14 where the sacrifice of His body is referenced and the results

This was evidenced in Jesus crying out on the cross in the pain of being “forsaken” (left) by the Father - Mt. 27:46, Mk. 15:34 - we cannot explain this separation, yet it was done for us, fully “tasting death” (Heb. 2:9)

We will never again stand alone, now being in Christ (He always with us, standing for us before all would-be accusers)

So when we later see commands to “be holy” we know it is not to obtain holiness, it is more in keeping with who/what we really are - be who we really are in thought, conduct

The judge of all this is the Father, the one before Whom we will be presented - others will still see as us “blemished”

Note that in all possible accusers, we also no longer have any right to accuse ourselves!

- a. It’s the word “ἀποκαταλλάσσω” which is a restoring completely to another state, so much so, there is nothing left to be done - the recipient is restored (once for all!)
 - b. Rom. 5:6-11 also describes this reconciliation process on God’s enemies (us) - this was accomplished by means of His death (in our stead, our death deserved (and that, eternal death... the “second death”)) - Paul adds “fleshly” body (or “body of flesh”), again countering the Gnostics notion of all that is physical is evil
 - c. It was through His “death” - He had to face death in the fullest sense, including the resulting separation (the core idea of “death”) from the Father for us - but Jesus being the perfect sacrifice accomplished this restoration/reconciliation being one with the Father again
 - d. This is His work alone, not ours - in this is our faith, not in any of our “part”
2. All of this done with the purpose/result to “present” us before the Father
- a. The word for “present” is “παρίστημι” (plainly indicating “to stand with/along side of”) - what a concept... what a reality! - being as it were before the ultimate court of the accounting of our lives and our eternal destiny, Jesus will be standing with us (or, has already, judicially, done so)
 - b. Then, marvel at the descriptors used of us as a result of this reconciliation work - it is more than just forgiveness of sins, it includes the proactively perfecting of us (sanctification)
 - c. He (Jesus) has/will present us (standing along side us, having been “in our stead” with His shed blood and death) as truly “holy,” indicating us now separated completely to God (the opposite of “alienated” from God) - we now being with Him, we being His
 - d. No only perfectly holy, but “blameless” (ἄμωμος, unblemished, flawless) as in Eph. 5:25-27 - the usage of this word in Php. 2:14-15 is an encouragement to live out the reality of this, to “prove” it in not grumbling/complaining/murmuring or in fighting/arguing with each other (as if this reality, before God, is not true)
 - e. Then, the ultimate security before such a court, Jesus stands beside us, presenting us (because of His work for us) as “beyond reproach” (ἀνέγκλητος - unconvictable) as in Rom. 8:31-34, that since this is the case (where we now stand), who can possibly (rightfully) accuse us?

C. Continuity in the faith (to the end) being the ultimate “proof” - vs. 23

1. Two extremes will not take hold; the first being a life given to sin (contradicting our state of holiness, blamelessness and above reproach) and the other, a life focused on earning these qualities on our own, self-righteously crediting some/all to ourselves (even “because” of ourselves)

Kenneth Wuest worked to stress the underlying Greek when he translated the first phrase as, “Assuming indeed, that you are adhering to your faith.” - the assumption is the remaining, the moving away is not assumed

“If the gospel teaches the final perseverance of the saints, it teaches at the same time that the saints are those who finally persevere - in Christ. Continuance is the test of reality.” FF Bruce

The idea of apostates should be one considered a rarity (not likely to happen) - when it becomes almost normal, it indicates a severe abnormality see also Heb. 12:25-29

False professors to the Gospel will inevitably be exposed as such when they “fall away” from this hope (not grounded and so are swept away with life circumstances or humanistic philosophies/religions)

It is the truth, so true (real) it cannot change with the times- it truly is an anchor for the soul though all of life’s ebb and flow with the changing of popular tides/trends

With the use of this term, Paul makes it clear who the authority truly is... Christ- this point is essential in handling and warding off errorists

- a. This is what is practically (the end result) meant by continuing in the faith - not given over to a life of sin, not to a life focused on personal (personally developed/achieved) holiness
- b. This verse gives us a very important reality - not all that associate with “the faith” remain with it - not that it proves the loss of actual salvation (for salvation is rebirth, God’s doing), but that one can even closely associate with the Gospel, advocate it, and yet still “move away” from it
- c. Paul is dealing with the inconsistency of practice and not of the results of true faith - the inconsistency demonstrates the faith as being false (dependent on circumstances) - it deals with both “the faith” and personal faith (my faith in the faith, though with true faith, my faith is “firmly established and steadfast” by THE FAITH)

2. Continuance is assumed realizing, because of true faith, we are founded/grounded and settled

- a. The idea of fluctuation was not assumed by Paul, especially considering the words used here- in the faith one is “founded” (founded upon, their life structure is built on it, no forethought to moving or being moved), as well as “steadfast” (a word describing one seated, so not up and ready to move on) - this is no “trial test” of the Gospel
- b. These two descriptors concluding then on never “moved away” (never/not set in motion away), and here, away from the “hope of the Gospel”
- c. The Gospel (the good message) brings with it true hope (expectation/anticipation) - a life now radically altered by the Faith of the Gospel has an entirely different source for what is expected/anticipated - this hope founds/establishes our lives on an eternal purpose - life and competing life philosophies cannot truly compete with the insight into true life gained by the Gospel
- d. Note also Heb. 6:13-20 (anchor of the soul) and I John 3:1-3 (resulting purity)

3. This same Gospel, heard by them and proclaimed “in all creation”

- a. Paul includes one more grouping of reasons they should not expect/desire to move away
- b. This Gospel message/truth is the same one they had already heard (likely through Epaphras) and had not changed - it was not evolving (it had/has no version numbers)
- c. It was not a regional/national exclusive - it was to and for all those in the creation (not just to the Jews or particular Gentiles, nor to just elites (versus commoners)) - note Col. 1:6

4. It is this Gospel that Paul “was made a minister”

- a. It was not his creation nor was he self-called (self-ordained), and considering his call (by the Lord Himself), he (Paul) was to be considered an authority on the Gospel and not these new, intellectually focused/motivated upstarts
- b. The word for “minister” is “διάκονος” a servant (one who expects to do the bidding of another, serving others (it is their purpose) - see also Eph. 3:1-7
- c. Paul provided one of many accounts of his conversion/call - Acts 26:1-18 - and with this ministry, as he is about to describe, he would also suffer, preaching the Word of God

VII. Joyfully Suffering for the Cause (Revealing the Mystery of the Gentiles), Presenting Complete in Christ - 1:24-29

A. Joy in suffering for the cause of Christ and the residual (ongoing results) of His suffering - vs. 24

1. Paul is genuinely joyful while suffering because of its purpose (suffering with, for, and like Christ)

There was a resentment that the message (though they disagreed with it) that centered on the Messiah would somehow be a hope of salvation for all the nations - they were angered that their exclusivity would be questioned

It is not uncommon to find those longing for a cause worth suffering for

- a. More than just physical pain, it is “πάθημα,” a passionate pain/hurt - this could almost seem contradictory or possibly schizophrenic, in that his pain is also emotional (hurts), yet it brings joy (a deep seated contentment, “joy down in my heart”)
- b. The genuine joy brought on when focus is placed upon the purposes - the first being “for your sake” and in particular, their being Gentile (as he will mention in verse 27) - this was core to the reason he was now in prison, gaining the heated hatred of the Jewish opposers, furious that the message was being brought to the Gentiles (all other ethnicities)
- c. Much like the Gnostics, this hatred was stirred on by resentment, that these elites were not looked to for their input - both the Jewish leaders and now the Gnostics would try persuasion and intimidation, and then persecution if these did not work
- d. Paul could be joyful that he was suffering at the hands of the enemies of God (for His cause)

2. Paul's rejoicing in his part in "filling-up" what remains "in Christ's afflictions"

compare to II Cor. 1:3-10

- a. This text, in no way, indicates a deficiency in Christ's atoning, propitiatory, salvific work - the wording indicates the afflictions left-behind (in His wake, as it were) - this wording normalizes the idea of suffering in the work of the Lord and its individualized parts within each of our lives
- b. Paul dealt with this concept also while writing in prison in Php. 3:10 - the residual affect of Christ will be the same affect He had while here - it will involve suffering, for the world in its hatred of Christ is not done with Him yet - note John 15:18-21

B. Joy in being made a servant/minister to reveal a mystery, focused on "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - vs. 25-27

1. Paul's joy in "suffering" was caused by association with the cause/ministry of Christ and for the "sake" of these Gentile believers in Colossae - joy is also had by Paul, knowing that it also includes the carrying out (fully) the "preaching of the Word of God" - vs. 25-26

"Minister" here is the word δῆκονος in Greek, used to describe a waiter, and errand runner, also one who "kicks up the dust" in getting to what they are tasked to do

"...develop, unfold, His message to the full." CBN - this is an ongoing responsibility for us all now (as to what we are most driven to "make fully revealed (told/understood)")

True insight into life is found in God's revelation of Truth (what is truly real) and so it is true wisdom above all other scholarship of mankind

- a. The object of Paul's joy is here, once again, unusual to the common person - suffering for/with Christ and His church/body is naturally unappealing, and so is the idea of having an official call (lifelong) to the Church, bearing God's message to it (a message contradictory to the age and popular thought) - and yet this is "for your benefit" ("for you" ESV)
- b. Paul's assignment was unique from those who had come before, in that it was in accordance with God's "stewardship" (administration) to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles - normally, this would have been unappealing to a strict Jew (which Paul had been), but it all changed when Paul came to understand its place in God's design
- c. Once again Paul uses wording that indicates something else that is to be fully worked out - here it is "the word of God" - as the sufferings of Christ were yet to be finished (not in the salvific sense), so also the Word of God (which Christ proclaimed/taught and passed on the His Apostles to continue) was yet to be made fully known (in content and by quantity)
- d. This also includes "fully carry out" (live it out, proclaim out" the Word of God - this is often not seen as a fundamental purpose, but it is for us who are in Christ - it is our mission!
- e. In particular (to Paul) revealing the "mystery" (what was not previously known but now is)- the mystery here being God's bringing the Gospel to all nations/people - the word "mystery" was apparently a favorite of the Gnostics, appealing to their idea of intellect being the source of true insight, yet the simple revelation of the Gospel to all peoples was the previously unknown insight, and it not requiring a high IQ - see also Eph. 3:1-13
- f. This former mystery now revealed (manifested) to His saints - this is not only one of the benefits of being a "saint" but is an expected trait - those not seeing/discerning the true Gospel demonstrate (at least) the possibility of not being a true saint (in Christ)

2. The revelation/insight includes the inestimable value of the mystery/message - vs. 27

And the placement of where this value is seen... "among the Gentiles"

Paul plainly demonstrates that there is no competing wisdom, glory or value that the world could produce- there is no legitimate reason for shame (of God's Word/ Gospel) within our ranks

Now, not the "God of Israel" in them, but the God of all, the universe, Creator, Lord of all, in them as an incredible display of grace - truly the "riches of the glory"!

compare to II Cor. 4:7-12

- a. Note that Paul stresses it is the will of God making this known, but in particular, making know the "riches of the glory of this mystery" - it's not just the content (the Gospel and it to all nations), but its value/worth (over against all other values) - it is actual/true hope!
- b. Paul describes it in this setting as "glorious" in its riches (an idea that most could imagine, riches having a glory/glow about them (outstanding)) - that not only would God be so gracious to bring salvation to the Gentiles (the world), but that even amongst the "glories" and "riches" of the world, this would outshine and out-do the riches/glories of the world
- c. These glorious riches consisting of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - the first part, "Christ in you", the "you" in particular here in this text, the Gentiles - those who did not appear as though they would have access to this (they not naturally being "God's people") would be shown such mercy and grace! - compare this to Rom. 11:11-21
- d. And, it is no small consideration the use of the little preposition "in" - He is not just among them, peripheral to them, but in them (note John 17:20-23)
- e. The "hope of glory" (the expectation of it) is based also on God's merciful grace - this is the content of the "riches," for there is no greater possession to be had than this hope! - this hope is amplified in a hopeless world (it (the world) with only a semblance of hope in this life alone)

C. The objective/mission: proclaim, admonish, teach and present "every man" complete in Christ - vs. 28-29

1. The ministry of the Word, of "Christ in you" is summed up in four words - vs. 28

It is not handled as if to an exclusive group - it is openly, freely, generously, continuously heralded

Colossians

- a. The first, primary/overriding word is "proclaim" (from καταγγέλλω word used to describe an open declaration, a purposed/prepared speech) - this is in contrast to a hidden, unvoiced belief

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed, and not the "social gospel" so popular today (focused on the betterment of man's present conditions over their eternal state)

Though society often frowns on the idea of "indoctrination" (though it is always seeking to do so), this is our objective - the goal is to "inculcate" (in-still (an attitude, idea, or habit) by persistent instruction)

It's not open to all ideas and does not seek to present competing ideas - it is driven to put forward absolute truth, not possible truths!

Much of modern "training" involves some form of indoctrination ahead of time (or as a part of its education approach) - We are to do this with the proper focus, rather than pretending, as many do these days, that we will "leave it up to the hearers to determine where they stand"

The means to this was covered in Col. 1:22 - by Christ's sacrifice they can be/will be presented holy and blameless, beyond before the ultimate Judge - there is another idea included here of standing with each other before the Lord, having been united on earth and thrilled to stand together before the Lord

These descriptive words lay out what true ministry is like - not popularity and ease, but hard work with non-stop opposition (of the enemy)

His inner working is so powerful, it is what gets us past our laziness and discouraged, unmotivated times

- b. There is no other step that can be done without this, first - Christ must be openly shared, a goal/objective of all believers seeking any/all open "doors" - see Col. 4:3-4
- c. It must be "Him" that is proclaimed - much is shared/preached related to Christ/Christianity/Bible that is not actually "Him" - false versions of Christ are commonly proclaimed
- d. The second word that describes this ministry is "admonishing" (from νουθετέω typically used of exhorting, warning, and counseling, and at its most basic idea means "to place/set the mind" - working to set within someone a mindset (way of thinking, looking at life, or possibly even a "worldview")) - this is to/for "every man" (again, not an exclusive group, but as there is any opportunity, and not so much to groups as much as it is to every individual)
- e. This is more than just teaching (imparting information) - it is the deliberate pursuit to persuade/convince someone directing them to how/what they think (look at life)
- f. The third word, "teaching" (from διδάσκω, simply indicating the impartation of knowledge/information) which, here, is secondary in the proclamation behind "admonishing," since it lays the objective for all teaching to be given (teaching with a purpose to change a person) - it is unapologetically biased and open in its purposed intent
- g. This order is similar to how Peter lays it out in II Peter 1:5 where, what is to be "added" (blended with / harmonized) with faith is first "virtue," then knowledge (virtue essentially describing a love for what is right) - as with children, there is to be a moral basis (purpose) upon which all of life is founded, before they start learning knowledge (reading, facts, history, science, etc.) - this was core to their "proclaim Him" here in verse 28
- h. The proclaiming, admonishing and teaching are all with "all wisdom" - as distinguished from knowledge, wisdom includes the use of knowledge and the presentation/delivery/approach - since it is to "every man" it must be accommodated to each (without compromise) - one of the many signs of elites and cults is their exclusivity (to groups) or, in their attempts to universality, it must come with force (enforcing outward subjugation) - part of wisdom includes the pre-training/pre-teaching development of a values system
- i. The fourth word, "present" (from παρίστημι, describing one standing with/by another as they are brought before another) - here it carries at least two ideas - one, that Paul and the others were responsible for this goal, doing the bidding of the Lord, and so it was an acknowledgment of accountability (reminder, openly, who they "report" to) - second, it focuses all on the end goal (where it's all headed), standing before the Lord (at the end of life)
- j. This is a key objective for us all - in some way we are all working to prepare those with whom we work and serve to be presented before the Lord - we will be there (those in Christ)... will this have been an ongoing focus to prepare ourselves and others for this event?

2. The source of Paul's stamina in the ministry - vs. 29

- a. The wording here describes a strenuous event - he is working to fatigue, contending for them against oppositions (wearying self in the fight) - the wording has been compared to the ancient Greek's wrestling competitions as all energies are exhausted in the struggle to win
- b. But he is not doing this in/of his own strength - he identifies its source as being with (by means of) "His power" - compare with I Cor. 15:10, II Cor. 12:9-10
- c. This is no causal, barely discernible empowerment; instead it is "mightily" working in him - it is literally, "the energies of Him at work in me powerfully" - this is understood in faith, for even when we do not sense such energies, we must understand that apart from it, we could (and would) not be able to do anything - in faith, also, we trust His working in/through us is a powerful work (whether we see "results" to not, or see them as powerful or not)

VIII. The Core, Motivating Concerns in the Ministry - 2:1-5

- A. The change in direction/focus in this letter is introduced now, in revealing Paul's concern that they not be "deluded" and then (possibly) become distracted, discouraged and disillusioned - vs. 1-3
 1. "I want you to know" the agonizing struggle being had for their sake - vs. 1
 - a. This is not for pity, but for comfort and added motivation in the value of what they are facing and the value in remaining focused (living in caution/alertness)
 - b. Too casual an attitude in how our work here is viewed, is a danger in itself, exposing one to dangerous influences (and considerations) that can practically ruin them

His genuine concern for their spiritual/mental well-being is remarkable, considering he was writing this in prison, his life threatened

A close bond can be had with those we've never met, finding its affection in the same belief or values

Rev. 3:14-22

A phrase that has become popular these days would fit well here... "authentic self"

It is a love for the Lord first/primary that then unites our hearts to Him - the "love" to/of each other is to be the response of our love of our Lord, else the "love" drifts into an ever-changing standard/pursuit of compliance to personal definitions

Groups have been united throughout history around countless subjects of which they are unified in their confidence (expertise)

Some balk openly or maybe even, to some degree, unconsciously at the supposed simplicity of Christ being the objective of reaching a full assurance/confidence of understanding

This doesn't mean that we never learn other things, just that all we learn is far secondary to knowing Christ... for all of life, not just "religion"

These verses ought to be at the core of all philosophies of education - what is the ultimate aim of learning anything? Christ is creator of everything, so in one way or another, it is from Him and for Him

Again, it doesn't mean all other knowledge/learning have no value... just that their value is temporary (this life only) and so cannot bring lasting hope

- c. His great "struggle" (ἀγῶνα, contest, fight (because of the opposition)) was for them - his affection/care for them was protective but also desirous that they discover firsthand the truest of riches/wealth to be had in this life
- d. There is, to a significant degree, a great impact on the recipients of such a message/challenge/warning when the one leading and guiding them is known to truly care for them - see Gal. 4:16-19
- e. He made clear that his struggle was for all those that would read this letter (and that he had ministered to) and, all those who had never seen him (and he them) - it is for us as well
- f. His concerns for them were genuine and we can see not long after what became of Laodicia losing sight of the truest values because of their earthly riches ("rich and increased with good and lack nothing"... a no-needs posture when it came to the Truth/instruction) - lukewarmness

2. Paul's "struggle" (agonizing) was that they be "encouraged" - vs. 2-3

- a. The key to this verse is in the word "encouraged" (παρακαλέω, literally describing a calling alongside, to, in this case, infuse with courage/determination), and this encouragement in their core (hearts) - it could not be superficial, it had to be "genuinely them"
- b. As mentioned and will be covered again, Paul was working to prepare them for the incoming "deluding influences", countering it with the wisdom/understanding of "God's mystery" (Christ)
- c. To face this (be prepared for it), Paul, striving/struggling with all he had against the onslaughts of obvious and subtle errorists, has as his objective that their comforted/encouraged "hearts" would be "knit together" (joined, intertwined and so unified) in love (ἀγάπη) - not as so many have today in their "unity for unity's sake" in a "love" that is indiscriminate in its application... by defining it as more affection (and that, even without a solid, Biblical reason)
- d. We know the love here (uniting us, acting as a "glue" to hold us together (Col. 3:14)) is directed by and towards "all the wealth" - at first glance this may seem shallow and even carnal (a uniting love of wealth) until we see what this wealth is; the "full assurance of understanding" (as in the conviction/confidence that comes from seeing how it all "fits" by understanding/seeing/realizing) - confidence is lacking when we are unsure, or the details are blurry
- e. Yet what exactly is the wealth of confidence (what does it consist of)? It is the "true knowledge" (the facts, true information) of "God's mystery" (the previously unrevealed truth) which is "Christ" - this is the plain result of what the underlying wording works out to be - there are and have always been other "competing smarts" (intelligences in other fields of thought and philosophy) that often lead/lure others from Christ
- f. For, as Paul now directly states, it is in Christ that are found "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" - this is not a way of describing a narrow field of knowledge (as some would consider this in reference just to "religion" or "faith") - it is all-encompassing, for Christ is the ultimate, the objective of all learning (all knowledge and wisdom/philosophy) - compare this to I Cor. 2:1-10 (a wisdom not "doomed to pass away") - learning Christ also directs us to the Father
- g. These "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (upon which confidence/assurance is formed, leading to the encouraged hearts) are described as "hidden" (in Christ) - so to leave out Christ in life is to miss out on the truest treasures of all possible learning - these treasures are not open to the world in general, and are exclusively in Christ
- h. This is in answer to (the conclusion of, in harmony with) verse 2 - why aren't these obvious to all? Because they are deliberately "hidden" (ἀπόκρυφος- concealed, secret) and can only be searched out (mined) by those in Christ (the "saints" in 1:26) - all other "wisdoms" and collections of knowledge cannot lead to the "hope" already identified as coming from the "riches of the glory of this mystery" in 1:27
- i. There then is no reason we who are in Christ and have such treasures of true wisdom and understanding should ever be lured away to any other wisdom/philosophy

B. Prepared to ward off deluding influences - vs. 4-5

1. Paul's agonizing struggle for them and the reason he wrote what he wrote was for the purpose that these not be deluded/deceived with what seem to be plausible arguments - vs. 4

- a. This concern of Paul was well founded, for many in that day (as we have seen throughout Church history) had been lead away from the plain/clear teaching of Scripture to some other conclusion, though seeming to closely resemble the Gospel/Truth... and yet erroneous
- b. The word for "delude" is "παραλογίζομαι" which plainly means "to reason beside" and was used to describe coming at a truth/concept from a different angle/perspective

Compare this to I Cor. 2:4 where Paul stresses that his preaching did not use this type of approach



Often, though, these are seen after the influence has spread and has converted many to the wrong conclusions, who then also seek to use the same reasonings - again, the underlying Greek indicates they use what would be considered "plausible arguments" (they will seem right on their own)

Note Gal. 1:6-10 where Paul, in his astonishment, chides the Galatians and makes it clear that he is not, in any way, seeking to "please men" for approval - he was bound to state the truth whether or not it seemed to persuade people

"Defection" of this type is not necessarily seen by the "convert" as desertion to the enemy... just to a better ideology, faith or way of life

It describes an organized, united front, each with responsibilities and faithful in them - it's all taken seriously!

The opposite being plagued with doubts (and not always doubt as to accuracy, but doubts as to whether or not what they have is the "best")

Unless, of course, their values were temporal (founded in this life only) - this will be built on in the first part of chapter 3

- c. Note that one such competing ideology/religion was that of the Judaizers, which caused at least five different responses/results: 1. Division, one without the highest standards was to be shunned 2. Competition, who ultimately could maintain "salvation" the best 3. Condemnation, standards elevate one above another 4. Man-centered authorities versus God-centered authority (and His word... unadulterated) 5. Fear, always wondering if one can measure-up (causing fear of openness, leading to hypocrisy)
 - d. The logic/reason in an argument or philosophical stance can be "sound" in as much as they make sense and can be seen in a positive light (even if that lighting is artificial and meant to sell the "product") - the Gospel Truth is the standard over and above natural reasoning - "smarts" don't prove rightness on their own
 - e. These (as all other errorists) will use "πιθανολογία" describing speech or an argument/case/ideology presented in a way as to make it appealing/alluring - much of the content of errorists depends on good presenters to get their audience to buy it
 - f. Too many fall from the Truth, having reached a conclusion that the error "makes sense to me"
2. The focus of joy (of Paul) in their present stance/position as these challenges were coming - vs. 5
- a. The use of the wording "absent in body... with you in spirit" is more along the lines of how we would use it (not "seeing" them by means of the Holy Spirit but that he was with them in mind/heart)
 - b. Having the report provided, he had much to celebrate (be encouraged with) -- his "labor" (agony) on their behalf was not that they were faltering, but was stirred on by seeing what was coming as far as these multiple front attacks would seek to lure them to defect
 - c. With his "mind's eye" he was rejoicing (thrilled) to for two qualities - the first was their "good discipline" (τάξις- orderly structure, as in their overall organization, which could reference their ecclesiastical order (church authority/organization)) - it's believed to be in reference to a military array (well disciplined, no breaks in the line and no division in the ranks)
 - d. The second quality that encouraged Paul was their "stability" (στερέωμα - firmness, strength, as including a solid foundation and set footing) - there is a sense in this context in which it could include a type of inflexibility (not that they could not learn or grow, but that in the foundations of the faith, they would not/could not budge)
 - e. Their order and their stability were based in their faith in Christ - it makes clear sense then (Biblically) that they would be as ordered/disciplined and solid/unshakable as the object of their faith... Christ - to know just what had been provided regarding Christ in the first chapter, who/what could compare/compete?

IX. Walk Confidently in Faith in Christ, the Head of All Rule and Authority - 2:6-15

A. Continue in the same way you started - vs. 6-7

1. They received Christ in faith, so their ongoing (rest of life) walk is expected to be the same - vs. 6

True faith (trust/believing) in what had been taught to them and they had believed/received is how they are to continue throughout life - faith is not just how one is "birthed" into life, it is their life!

These embellishers/forgery creators will work to make faith unnecessary (as much as possible)

When seen this simply, it should be apparent that no other faith/philosophy could compare/compete with the Lord of all Who did it all for us

- a. This verse may look to be transitional or just introductory to what is to follow, but it is more profound and important than may be assumed - The first word of this sentence in Greek is "Ὡς" and translated "As" or "Just as" and in reference to their receiving the Lord
- b. How was He received? The most basic answer must not be missed since it sets the core idea of the instruction to follow - He was received in faith
- c. There were (in Colosse and Laodicia) and continue to be those who will take the Faith (true Christianity) and reform it to their ideas/ideology - they will use persuasive/plausible arguments to strategically work followers off of true faith (in the Faith) to a reasoned way of thinking, so much so that true faith will look too simplistic
- d. Note also Paul's reference to Jesus as "Christ Jesus the Lord," the actual human/historical Jesus who was the Promised One, the Lord Himself - they received Him this way (as He truly is), so continue in that faith, "walk" in it (a word describing day to day living - faith is then built upon with further learning (of the Faith) proving its reliability/sufficiency

2. Four qualities/characteristics stemming from ongoing faith in the Faith - vs. 7

- a. This faith walk in Him is doable and sustainable since each is already "firmly rooted" (a passive verb, this being done to/for them) - they were established in Christ Jesus the Lord, so nothing is left for them to make it happen nor to keep it
- b. It flows with the "walking" as our walking is by faith which is firmly planted (unmovable)

Dealing with “rooted”, Homer A. Kent clarified, “The Christian life is not merely a lifestyle to be assumed or discarded as interests rise or wane. Rather, it is a life that depends upon a new birth.”

Again, this rooting and being built up are “in Him”

This “established” is in the present tense also, it being ongoing, as in continuously being secured/anchored in the faith. It is clung to because of the never ending tides of philosophical and religious trends

Solid footing is to be set first, before the opposition comes

It is almost impossible to tempt a satisfied person - to attempt to do so, one must seek to introduce dissatisfaction, doubt to then introduce their fake solution - note 2:10

B. Be on high alert to those trying to take away from the sufficiency in Christ (alone) - vs. 8-15

1. Beware (on the lookout), vigilant so as to not be taken captive - vs. 8

It's not that all these have a conscious, evil motive, for many are more convincing because they are evidently sincere and very loving/caring, yet their well-intended ideas/practices are ensnaring (practically debilitating)

It is important to understand what this “captive” idea is describing

To truly bind one of these believers would be to rob them of the truth of their situation (or of an unbeliever of the true freedom to be had in Christ) - this is why Paul worked/labored/agonized for them to be encouraged with “... all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.”

What makes a philosophy “empty” and/or “deceit” is its leaving out Christ or contradicting the real Christ

They are deceitful because they are empty and they are empty because they are deceitful - its actual emptiness must be concealed

It looks as though many in our theological camps are more focused on learning/exploring with the end result never the implementation... just the knowing, arguing and comparing

- c. This first characteristic (reality for the true believer) of being “rooted” is so because it is “in Him” - the dependence (for salvation and for all that follows) is essential in having protective understanding - roots not only play a role in being solid/grounded, but also include nourishment, lending (being the source) to the second result
- d. This second result/quality being “built up” (ἐποικοδομέω - “... to finish the structure of which the foundation has already been laid,” i. e. in plain language, to give constant increase in Christian knowledge and in a life conformed thereto...” Thayer) - the present tense also helps us to see that this growth is steady and over time, not instantaneous - God will grow us, but as with our bodies, it will involve/include eating (as steady diet, and in this case, His Word)
- e. The third characteristic/result being “established in the faith” (the underlying idea including being “secured”) - it is not, as its source, personal faith (though it produces it); it is “the faith” and even that, it is “as you were instructed” - compare to Eph. 3:14-21
- f. This is our assurance (what the authority is of what we are to be sure of) - errorists play off of core uncertainties and, truly, there are so many unaware of their uncertainties until what ought to be their “footing” for life (Heb. 11:1), ends up being their questionable opinions
- g. Having been given a foundation for life and an assured construction plan in/for/with us, both of which are more assured to us as we are established in the faith (which is why we are always learning/living/discovering it), leads to an expected, excessive (abounding) gratefulness/thanksgiving - those ungrateful either don't have this or don't know they have it (access to it)
- a. It is grossly naive and practically dangerous to trivialize the notion that there are those “out there” in religious (even “Christian”) circles “out to get you” - they have been around since the first century and have demonstrated varied purposes and methods in their motives
- b. One such example of a possible result of the “philosophies” used by these, the end result being “...who, therefore, take from the biblical records their sole, infallible, and supreme authority, leaving us an Old Testament without prophecies, and a New Testament without miracles and redemption...” Eadie
- c. Paul does not indicate in these verses a loss (or potential loss) of salvation (though such an end result may end up proving one taken captive was never truly in Christ) - this verse and context does indicate the possibility of believers being taken captive (taken advantage of)
- d. The word for “take captive” here is συλαγωγέω, only used once in the NT and describes the carrying-off the spoils of a victory, though the spoils here are the people themselves - it would include the idea of using them to, in a sense, validate their “victory” and then to use their captives for their personal bidding/agendas - this is done, at its core, by robbing them of the wealth of the treasures (of wisdom and knowledge) Paul had described at the start of this chapter, and so to hold them as a captive/slave in their error
- e. Paul reveals their means/tools/methodologies with the following three concepts (all misused) and all lacking the core component of being in harmony (agreed) with Christ
- f. The first is “philosophy,” though it can be translated “his philosophy” which is actually made up of “empty deceit/lies” - many, dealing with this phrase, have gone to great lengths to make it clear that Paul is not denouncing philosophy in general (which he is not), though an overwhelming amount of “philosophy” has been anti-biblical/anti-Christ
- g. Such philosophies often strive to explore the depths of thought/thinking, ideas, speculations, yet all without regard to not just the existence of a Creator, but what He has revealed of Himself and life purpose - it is therefore empty (containing no lasting substance of eternal value) and deceit (lies/delusions) - even, as here, the religious philosophies and even the “Christian” philosophies that get Christ and His Gospel wrong (leaving out or adulterating)
- h. There is a sense (not directly dealt with in this context) that simply “the love of wisdom/learning” can be bad, in itself, if the “learning/wisdom” is not in line with what Paul described at the start of this chapter - there have been and still are those more focused on learning, learning more, learning new and the exploration of knowledge just to know more
- i. The second means they use to take captives is their use of “the traditions of men” - they appeal to common, historical practices and even popular belief (how things are currently done)

The core issue with these being that they were “of men”, elevated up to, as it were, the Word/commands of God

Religious items and buildings have become too important even in practicing Christianity - in the Old Testament, the religious furniture of the Tabernacle was not “the point” as much as what they represented - if, for instance, someone touched the Ark of the Covenant, and died, it wasn’t because it possessed power as much as it was because of disobedience

These “basics” are what most worldly-minded pursue, seeking rituals, services that other religions of the world would also similarly seek

Church history demonstrates the lure of symbolism over substance; association is more desired than practice/obedience

The actual idea being that these practices/elements were in opposition to Him (as in replacing Him, dethroning Him)

- j. “It was, to a great extent, that tangled mass of oral teaching, which, age after age, the Jews had unwarrantably engrafted on the written law.” Eadie (read excerpts of Vol. 4, pg. 132)
- k. Paul made it very clear in his opening words to the Galatians (1:1) that what he gave them and was going to give them was “... not from men nor through man...” - many have been drawn away by seemingly “good ideas” and more “effective” ways of thinking/doing things”
- l. The third means Paul identifies that is used to take captive/enslave is thinking/philosophy “according to the elemental principles of the world” - the word for “elemental principles” is the Greek word “στοιχείον” and generally refers to basic building blocks/components of nature or of learning - the issue here (that Paul is getting at) isn’t this word (for there is nothing wrong with basic parts), but is in the phrase “of the world” - these competing ideas/practices are based mainly in the physical world... its physical elements becoming somehow sacred and the “point” or the goal of religious practices (as in a “your best life now/here” approach to life)
- m. The other use of this term pointed to religious practices, which may have had some genuine history, but that had become rituals (the acts themselves being the goal and not what the acts/practices were intended to represent and point to) - many are still attracted more to ceremonialism and sacramentalism than to actual Truth - these are “worldly” for they are more adored and sought because they are tangible, “doable”, and carry a religious atmosphere
- n. We are confident of this handling of this term, realizing Paul will build on the detail in verses 16-18 - verse 17 is particularly significant in using the picture of the “shadow” in contrast to “substance” (also dealt with in Hebrews 10:1; 8:1-5, 9:8-10)
- o. Circumcision will also be addressed in the upcoming verses, yet many failed to see what should have been obvious... even many who were circumcised were condemned... because of disbelief
- p. Again, the core issue with these was their not being “according to Christ” - what the Colossians were facing had an association with the name of Christ, but were not truly of/from Him
- q. Such things/practices are alluring because they put, in a sense, the practitioner in control (and then “faith” need not be “just on Christ”) - many want something tangible to hold to for security and even, for some, a measurement used to define religious/spiritual pride

C. The incomparable reality of being “in Christ” (and that alone) as the primary focus of life/faith - 9-15

- 1. When the focus/priority (and so objective) drifts from the simplicity, singularity of being “in Him” (as stressed in verses 9-11), other world-like ideas and practices are considered and embraced - vs. 9-10

Incredibly, though, many would say “Amen” to what Mr. Clarke wrote and then would go on to celebrate and promote their “system” or denomination, sect, traditions and their systems of theological studies as being the most important pursuit (not trusting that a faithful study and following of Scripture will be/could be enough)

And all of God lived (κατοικέω - inhabited) in His body - note the care in maintaining the distinction of Christ the Man and yet the true joining of the natures into one - in Christ, God and man can be/are joined

The pursuit of some type of “fullness” (fulfillment) is often at the center of the reasons many follow after worldly philosophies (as if lasting contentment can be found in the temporal/physical)

Contentment is essentially a life working from what we know we have versus a life working for something else

- a. In addressing the contrast of the “fullness of the Godhead” being in Christ (and so the lackluster of all else), Adam Clarke wrote, “This is opposed to the vain or empty doctrine of the Gentile and Jewish philosophers: there is a fullness in Christ suited to the empty, destitute state of the human soul, but in the philosophy of the Jews and Gentiles nothing like this was found; nor indeed in the more refined and correct philosophy of the present day. No substitute has ever been found for the grace of the Lord Jesus, and those who have sought for one have disquieted [worried] themselves in vain.”
- b. The statement that in Christ “all the fullness of Deity dwells” is understandable and yet incomprehensible in its magnitude - that Christ was/is truly God is a truth most Biblicists would hold to, but it’s the idea that the fullness of the Godhead was in Him even bodily that troubles some, yet it is clearly stated here - Jesus Christ was/is the perfect God-Man, not containing some of the divine attributes, but all of them (πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Θεότητος σωματικῶς - all the completeness (every part) of the deity (entirety of the Godhead) bodily) - note Php. 2:6-8 that He was in the “form”, “likeness” and “appearance” - He did not become less than He was, but His deity was “veiled in flesh” and that “in the form of a slave” (the lowest among us)
- c. So, now with this one short statement, why/how could any other ideology compete!? - to have true fulfillment (here in verse 10 it is “complete” (from πληρῶν) and so fully satisfied, truly completed and abounding) one would seek after the genuine, the guarantee - these competing philosophies cannot even begin to approach this level - compare to Eph. 3:14-21
- d. The sense of discontent in the life of a believer is a sign of something wrong (not that God has let us down or that we have a reason for discontent) - it evidences a life focus set on the wrong thing, for such discontent is the result of a dangerous definition of life (in the present and overall) - Paul, in Php. 4:10-13, learned to be content - this education was based on truths such as this verse, for many dissatisfied people are so because of their ignorance to life values and purpose

This, of course, includes spiritual powers/authorities (as in the angelic/spiritual realm)

And countless other practices, rituals, traditions have been added and enforced as if there was not to be had a true completeness in Christ

Circumcision, as other practices of the Law, was a precursor//shadow of what would come fully complete (all included) in Christ

There had been many before this time and during this time that believed the obedient act was enough to settle things with God (even though an internal change had not happened) - as many look upon baptism to this day

The sacramentalism of these influencers (false teachers) were emphasizing the physical/tangible - the symbol does not replace the heart (e.g. obedience)

"The aorist tense puts the burial as contemporaneous with the circumcision. Ye were circumcised when ye were buried..." Vincent

Because of this work and because it is done (we are complete in Him), the body now has a renewed purpose/value (one with eternal affects)

There really is no other acceptable answer of where saving faith comes from

The more that we see salvation (total/complete) being the work of God, the less tempted we will be to be swayed to sacramentalistic means to salvation or as means to keep it

These truths are important to understand - we're not so much working to grow as much as we are being grown

Compare to Eph. 2:1-10

Circumcision like water baptism serves another purpose (not a saving one)... symbol and memorial - note Gal. 6:15



- e. "There is no necessity, therefore, that we should look to the aid of philosophy, as if there was a defect in the teachings of the Saviour; or to human strength, as if he were unable to save us..."
- f. And being "in Him," it must be understood that He is "the Head" (the controller, the top) over ALL rule (ἀρχὴς a word indicating origin, the source of all governing authorities (as seen in Rom. 13) and ALL authority (ἐξουσία describing jurisdictions, governors (leaders)) - **He is all authorities' head...** all answer to Him and all are under His jurisdiction - why would any then look elsewhere, to other authorities, when already "in the top"?

2. The "removal of the body" in Christ - vs. 11-12

- a. As was the issue in places like the churches in Galatia, so it was here, that circumcision had become a focal point as if a needed practice/rite (for salvation, for "completion") - things like this were and still are added to have as requirements with its proponents to police its compliance
- b. Yet, once again, the "in Him" is used to cast down erroneous ideas - for "in Him" one is circumcised "made without hands" - the Old Testament use was that of a commanded sign, an identity as being part of the chosen people (the chosen nation), yet now, "in Christ" is the fullest sense of complete separation from the rest of the world and complete identify in Him (not just bodily, but in new life, character and spiritual status/standing) - yet even in the Old Testament, the spiritual circumcision was the key factor - see Deut. 10:12-17, 30:1-7; Jer. 9:23-26
- c. This "removal of the body" was meant to contrast the scope of this true "setting apart" of a person in Christ, versus the much smaller and limited physical sign - this the "removal of the body" - the practical affect of the reality of this will be dealt with in chapter 3
- d. The "circumcision of Christ" is in reference to the actual, spiritual distinction that is a result of being in Christ - this is why Paul could speak of it in the past tense (it was done at salvation/regeneration) and nothing more was to be added - the results of this are expected, being the reasonable result of this saving/sanctifying work of God in Christ - compare to Rom. 6:1-7, 8:3
- e. Paul then builds on it by joining it with baptism (only here, the spiritual baptism) - physical baptism takes place after the true, spiritual baptism into Christ - this is where/with (it seems safe to assume) that the "circumcision of Christ" takes place
- f. There is in this baptism a death (to self/sin) as seen also in 2:20 - the ordinance of baptism shows the burial with him as one is immersed (but again, it represents what has happened in Christ and is now outwardly demonstrated)
- g. The result being raised with Him - this is His work in us, we now in Him - all the rituals, "good deeds" and even "sacraments" would not nor could they place someone in Christ - at best, they are to be outward demonstrations and reminders (memorials) but must not be made into actual "saving" practices - the key word in making this case is "faith" (we believe in His complete saving work (leaving nothing left to be done in the saving process)) - this is the true essence and content of true faith!
- h. This faith is focused on (trusts) "the working of God" - this new life (being raised with Him), interestingly, is done by means of faith, a faith resulting from regeneration, and this same faith is what trusts God's working (as He did in raising Jesus Christ, so also we)
- i. "They were quickened, changed, and saved, by means of faith in Christ Jesus; which faith was produced by the operation or energy of God. Believing is the act of the soul; but the grace or power to believe comes from God himself." Adam Clarke (not a Calvinist)
- j. No one can be "more saved" or "less saved" - it is a once for all, completed work (Heb. 10:10-12)
- k. Note also that now being truly dead ("removal of the body of the flesh") produces the ongoing fight throughout life between the spirit and the flesh as described in Romans 7 - the body / flesh will still struggle for dominance, but the flesh is doomed to fail (it will die) - this also explains why true believers who sin find such discouragement and frustration in it

3. The dead brought to life, complete and true/actual forgiveness, and the disgraced opponents - vs. 13-15

- a. When did this saving work occur? What had the recipients done (or could do)? Paul takes out any human ability or work in his use of the phrase "ὁμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας" (you dead being)
- b. The majority of errors that have come into Christianity find their roots in overestimating the ability of man (sinful mankind) - once some ability is accepted, the seeming small hole is used to flood through endless amounts of works, leading to and securing some idea of "salvation"
- c. These were even "uncircumcised in your flesh" (Gentiles) - this is another key point in warding off the influences of the Judaizers teachings - see Romans 4:1-12

Assurance/confidence is created and sustained, not in our feelings or opinions, but in the reality of what God accomplished in Christ for us - legalists can only get a foothold when the means of salvation are redefined or adulterated with error and misuse of Old Testament practices

This is a once for all time forgiveness - it is official and yet personal to each of us - some, still live under its condemnation, all "debts" still listed and ever growing, while those in Christ have only a blank document when faced with the idea/possibility of condemnation

All of this still explaining how these are made "...in Him you have been made complete..." - 2:10

It is this natural, rightful guilt that the moralists will attempt to use to lure back those, no longer under condemnation, back to ceremonial, ritualistic law

see Romans 7:7-12 and Gal. 3:9-14 and , as prophesied, Isaiah 53:3-7

It has been noted that the broken law actually becomes an active enemy against the one who broke the law - their acts of defiance defy them - it is inescapable without Christ

We must remember, our actual sins were actually on Him

It's astounding to consider the countless numbers of sinners who have exploited the sin and guilt of other sinners... all in a seemingly religious/spiritual way

see II Cor. 2:14-17 for a similar usage of this idea - the conquered enemy is paraded through the cheering crowds of the victors

The way to best be prepared for the attacks of error and aggressive competitions to the truth is to know the clear, unadulterated truth (more than studying all the errors that are "out there")

- d. "The work of Christ is a work of power, because it put life into dead men; it is a work of grace, because it reached out to those who had no reason to expect the benefits of God." Barclay
- e. How exactly did God "forgive us all our transgressions:?" - vs. 14 - this is important to know/understand in dealing with personal guilt, assurance of salvation, and in warding off the legalists - not only do these next points demonstrate a complete victory, but they showcase the glorious wonder of God's work and how He accomplished it
- f. First of all, overall, God "canceled" (blotted out, erased) the "certificate of debt" against us - the word for "canceled" is "ἐξαλείφω" a word not only meaning to wash (off), but with the prefix "ἐξ" means it is done completely - whatever this document of debt was, it no longer has any content written on it remaining - it's been expunged
- g. It's interesting to think on the first part of this picture - the papyri/vellum this was written on is still there, but now with no words left (it's blank) - not trying to carry this beyond the original intent., it might be comparable to the reality that we still have before us (after salvation), the Law and its condemnation of sin, yet when applied to those in Christ, the resulting document of condemnation/sentencing has been erased - no accusers left!
- h. This document contained the "decrees against us" (literally the handwriting (record)) made up of "δόγματα" (from "δόγμα), and here, more than just general ordinances/rules, but the formal decrees listing our guilt of crimes and their rightful punishments - this is what was "blotted out" and so canceled completely! - but how was this judicially/formally done?
- i. Paul added one more significant point of emphasis - this document was "hostile to us," it being as an adversary to us (each of us, personally) - it was as if a finger pointing at us, in our guilt, rightfully accusing us and declaring our imminent doom - it is this guilt that is the terror of mankind and why so many work so hard to disregard it, deny it, and to shout it down, as it were, in ever-growing numbers (as if a majority opinion would usurp truth/reality)
- j. He, God, has "taken it out of the way" (literally removed it from "the middle" (from in between us and reconciliation with God)) - so if it was taken out from between us and God, where was it moved to? It was "nailed to His cross"... **what a concept!** - this has been associated with the sign of accusation that was above a crucified criminal, which has some merit, though here it is more appropriate to see it more as being applied to Christ (His body)... which was nailed to the cross - our rightful debt of all the judicial decrees against us applied to/on Him
- j. "Those nails which killed Christ pierced the sentence of doom - gave egress to the blood which cancelled it, and inflicted at the same time a mortal wound on the hosts of darkness... The conflict was a furious one, mighty and mysterious in its struggle. The combatant died; but in dying He conquered." Eadie
- k. The result of this, as far as the accusers and opponents are concerned... God's work in Christ "disarmed" them - the underlying Greek term meant to "put off" (typically of one's self, but here, in reference to putting off from these opponents all they would have had (or thought they had) in holding claim (and so control) over Him) - compare to Rom. 8:31-39
- l. These "rulers and authorities" would be all the evil, spiritual rulers/influencers (Satan in particular and all his ilk (John 12:31 and Eph. 2:2)) - these would then include the errorists also, their arguments, their posturing as ones with "spiritual authority" to condemn
- k. And through the work of Jesus, God also "made a public display of them" - it wasn't only the ones in Jerusalem that saw the crucifixion and then the resurrection, but the spiritual realm also (good and evil) - those who would have thought they had the victory (not just at the crucifixion of Christ, but because of sin's apparent "death grip" on mankind), were now proven (openly) as having lost... completely lost with no hope of mounting a legitimate fight
- l. This "public" shaming is from δειγματίζω, to show as an example, and here, of the overwhelming victory) - this does not describe a little victory, or even a big one; it is a complete victory, completely devastating the enemy (sin, its power and all its proponents... all that are against God)
- m. And this victory "through Him" (God, through Jesus Christ) - this "triumphing" has the underlying word "θριαμβεύω," describing the open procession after the battle/war has been completed - there is now all celebration and no longer a need for more battles/victories to be won for the cause (victory over sin, our sin and its rightful condemnation under the Law)
- n. Rather than seeing our position as weak, we look to the reality so succinctly put in Rom. 16:20

X. Do Not Be Defraudingly Disqualified of *The Prize* by Self-Promoted Judges - 2:16-23

A. The previous section began with a type of command in making sure no one would “spoil you” (take captive), and it ends with these conquered being publicly paraded in their loser-ness - vs. 16

1. The concept Paul is heading toward (using as a type of illustration) in verse 18 is based off his use of the word “καταβραβεύω” (defraud/beguile) which is what we would call an “umpire”

- a. A judge/referee (as in games) is one dictating and enforcing the rules - they approve and they disapprove (disqualify) - here, Paul will warn to not seek out either from such
- b. This is not making a case for having no “boss” or leader, just that no person should ever be looked to as the ultimate standard in and of themselves (that is then used to approve or disapprove us based on their judgment (as regards the ultimate “prize” won for us already, completely, in Christ) - they are pretenders and usurpers of the worst sort
- c. So the translation of “defraud/beguile” is pointing to the unnecessary (and wrong) yielding of such position/power to these people (peddlers of religion)

There will always be people looking to fulfill an inappropriate role in what would be considered “spiritual leadership” - they will be their own authorities and definers of “true spirituality/salvation”

2. How does this start (where does such a practice and structure get its foothold)? - acting judges - vs. 16

- a. Since the victory is complete, since this is the unchangeable reality of those in Christ, then Paul’s command (present active imperative... “let no one”) makes sense and could only be diverted from with some sort of pretext (diversion)
- b. Paul uses five examples of what not to be “judged” by (again, this “judging” being the approval/disapproval of what is deemed right/wrong by these judges, as to these externals) - eating, drinking, special holiday observances, monthly observances (sacrifices were a part of this in the O.T.) and how/if the “Sabbath” was observed
- c. These were common and a misuse of their original purposes - one could have kept all of these laws and practices under the Mosaic Covenant and still been unbelievers - the key was the heart (the inner-man) - dealing with actual sin (the old nature) will be dealt with in chapter 3
- d. Diet, under the Mosaic Covenant had a significant purpose, but was no longer to be practiced as it had been (see Heb. 9:8-15, Rom. 14:1-12, Gal. 4:8-11)
- e. The Essenes were a group in that time (like the Judaizers) who seemed to have found what they considered to be the true definitions to holiness in the requirements that were placed on the ministering Jewish Priests in the time of Moses (an example of misapplying truths)
- f. It is likely, also, that in reference to “eating and drinking” it included enforced (expected) times of fasting - there are no specific drinking laws for the Jews other than those who took the Nazarite vow and other special priestly holy observances
- g. Paul does not denounce their legitimate uses previously, but does denounce their being used again for the purpose of not only a type of practical assessments of holiness/spirituality, but even (likely) a type of mysticism and Gnosticism (a measurable religion)
- h. It is important for us to realize that the “Sabbath” is not Sunday and is not (as it was with the Jews) a law still to be kept - Sunday is a day that was practiced in the early church to meet, exhort, and encourage but was not/is not a day to be enforced as if a law - we do not come together for securing salvation or “earning more points”

All of these had a legitimate source in the Old Testament, but had served their purpose in pointing to the solution/answer in Christ - their legalistic observances now contradict and stand in the way of the Gospel itself

Many then and to this day still cling to such observable practices as though they were the goal (in themselves) - they are standardized as so many other religious systems rely on, but are unregenerate

The guides for us now would be the avoidance of intoxication (which is the core issue with alcoholic beverages to be addressed more so than drinking them at all)

Ultimately we ought to go because we desire it and because we know we should for our own growth and opportunity for mutual encouragement - examples as in Heb. 10:24-25, Paul’s stressing the reasons we come together in I Cor. 14:23-25

B. The body which cast the shadow has already arrived - vs. 17

1. With one sentence, Paul dismantles the errorists fundamental argument (and so their approach)

- a. Paul calls the legitimate uses of all the items in verse 16 a “shadow” (the sign that someone is coming, just as our shadows would indicate even to the causal observer)
- b. These were not the complete shadow (which involved much more of the Law and its ceremonies/practices as indicated in Heb. 8:1-9 and Heb. 10:1-10)

And if the legitimate uses of these was a mere shadow of the substance coming, how could these illegitimate uses have any redeeming substance in them at all!?

2. The “substance” (literally in the Greek, “the body”) belongs to (is of) Christ

- a. All of the proper uses of these and other practices in the Law pointed to a holiness (as set-apartness, set aside for God), righteousness and purity, all of which would indicate the practitioner’s inability to measure-up
- b. The unreachable holiness/perfections and the need for a champion to win these on our behalf were a part of these practices - now that the champion has come and won them, and we are placed in Him, these cannot have any part in saving us (justifying us, making us truly righteous)
- c. Jesus Christ was the One casting the Shadow - to embrace the shadow now that He is present is obviously (or at least should be) disgraceful/embarrassing

The shadow was to serve as an intimidating awareness of one’s inadequacy

The insistence on these being followed again as a means to true holiness is sinful and unholy in itself!

Humanistic religion does not seek a completed work

C. Hang-on firmly to “the Head” so as not to be dominated by controlling personalities - vs. 18-19

1. There are varied translations of the first phrase in verse 18, but at its most basic idea deals with Paul’s warning (and even command) to not allow anyone to act as if, by their own will and experience, they can rule you as disqualified before God - vs. 18

There are, of course, standards and commands we are to follow, though we are to always be aware of who the Judge actually is... not each other

Plainly put, don’t allow someone this perceived authority/influence over you - leaders lead to Christ, and His work, not to themselves and their work!

The Bible in Basic English translated it this way, “Let no man take your reward from you by consciously making little of himself.” - false humility can be used to lay a trap

It was apparently a new idea and took off in popularity (as many new ideas do.. because they are new)

Worship involves acknowledging the superior value and authority of another - God only deserves this... certainly no created being!

They, like many now, will base much of their “take” on what we should believe (and be doing) based on their experience (which will be presented as though no one can dispute it)

“... being puffed and swelled with an high opinion of himself, of his great parts and abilities, of his knowledge of things above others, and of his capacity to penetrate into, and find out things which were not seen and known by others” Gill

This can lead to an overconfidence in our personal value in the Lord’s work

Note 1:18 - He is the “Head” not just figuratively but in truth - any disconnect from Him is like a part of the body not in contact with the brain

Uzza was an example of this in I Chron. 13:5-14

As with our physical head, the pituitary gland exists to control/stimulate growth

- a. The use of the word “καταβραβεύω” describes one acting as the judge over an event (e.g. athletic competition) and watching over it as an umpire calling balls, strikes and outs (as well as disqualifications that lead to “ejections”)
- b. Another idea associated with this is one (ceremonially) taking (as it were) the reward from one person (who truly won) and giving it to another who did not win - note that even legitimate spiritual leadership cannot disqualify someone from their “prize” in Christ (though many can come to believe it is possible, and end up controlled by the individual wills of such “leadership”) - the flow of thought is all headed to the solution... “holding fast to the Head”
- c. These errorists’ particular method involved the use of the appearance of humility - the NET Bible, in trying to present the full thought in plain English, translated the first phrase this way; “Let no one who delights in false humility and the worship of angels pass judgment on you.”
- d. Another way this has been translated is “voluntary humility” (“self-abasement” in the NASB) as if humility is something one can work out/in to themselves - these would be those who see themselves as humble, and seek to use it as a means to convince others of their ways (and into their influence) - a humble presentation does not make the content accurate - note 2:23
- e. The next phrase is revealing, and shows how quickly how extreme ideas can gain a foothold - these influencers were apparently pushing a worship of angels also - another common handling of this is the belief that they were pushing a pursuit to worship like the angels worship (more in a spiritual sense, more of what we might see in a mystical approach to worship)
- f. The idea/practice worshiping of angels may seem like a stretch as to its potential danger today, but we still see similar practices in groups that identify as churches praying to dead “saints” (as though they somehow are more approachable than the Father) - some also put forward that many believed they were so lowly, they must not approach the Father (belittling the significance of the work of Christ for and in us, robbing of reverent boldness before the Throne of Grace)
- g. Another characteristic of these was their incessant focus (literally going into detail, we might put it like “camping out on”) “what he has seen” - his experiences and even the visions and other type experiences being part of their repertoire - these, as we still see today, can be an endless variety, seemingly more dynamic and interesting than just the exposition of Scripture
- h. Much like the philosophies and “traditions of men” these are just another list of more detailed ways the error can be introduced and promoted
- i. The last descriptor Paul uses of these self-promoted authorities is their useless (without cause), vainly (without actual content) “puffed-up” (inflated, arrogant) “minds of flesh” - though they make themselves out to be humble and spiritual, they are actually crippling proud people, driven by a sensual (of the flesh) mind (grounded firmly in this world and its values) - this is in reference to the unregenerate mind which is driven to do what suits/pleases itself (note Rom. 8:5)
- j. The “things seen” are not just experience and visions, but can include the stance that they see what others cannot (one of the approaches of Gnosticism, making other dependent on them)
- k. We all are dependent on God’s Holy Spirit, but no one is dependent (for spiritual wisdom/understanding) on any of us - God will use us but we must never see ourselves as indispensable

2. The core, fatal fault in these not holding tightly (in utter dependence) to “the Head” - vs. 19

- a. The only way these other “glories” could become a serious distraction is if Christ is allowed to be (in limited/flawed considerations) outshined - in this context, it’s a religious distraction, but it could also (for us) include the “love of this world” distractions also (that seem to outshine)
- b. Clearly, the Scripture demonstrates here and in other places that God is not open to worship or service defined by His servants but, in true reverence (genuine respect and love for Him), service, sacrifice, and worship that is carefully done to His specifications
- c. This “one” from verse 18 is the one who has let go, as it were, of Christ to venture out on their own - but, as Paul analogizes, that’s like a part of the body letting go of the head (disconnecting) - the Head of the Body (the Church) is where the entire body not only gets its direction and purpose for every move, but also from where it finds its growth

These are they that are not a part of the body... they could not possibly be a reliable point of counsel/direction

d. This is at the core as to why these defrauders defraud - they do not “hold fast” to the Head, having faith in themselves and their experiences more than in Christ and His Headship - again, the core focus for us in the Church is immediate, unrestricted obedience

D. Stand against self-defined, self-willed “worship” designed as a religion, characterized by asceticism - vs. 20-23

1. The basis of their errors in emphasis (and so practice) stemmed from the idea that they were working for holiness (to be holy) rather than working from the holiness they already had in Christ

This is distinctive of the true faith and must not be missed or deemphasized - we are complete in Christ, not striving to be complete - we work from fulfillment, not for it!

- a. “Virtues” emanate from the virtuous but do not make them virtuous - true holiness and virtue are to be who/what we are - this differentiates true Christianity from all other variants of Christianity or other religions/faiths - holiness is within and works its way out
- b. This same concept is dealt with in Romans 7:1-6 where the “freedom from the Law” is explained and its resulting in serving in the “newness of spirit” - in Christ there is an altogether new approach to faith and religion (versus all other faiths/religions)

2. We were dead in sins (vs. 13) and so “alive” to the world, but now are dead with Christ, raised with Him (having been buried with Him), so alive to Christ (and dead to the world-order of “life”) - vs. 20-21

These are also “elemental” principles because they are not Heavenly/eternal - they are the basics of the universe so even the most learned in these, knows just the basic basics

- a. The “elemental principles of the world”, as dealt with in verse 8, are at odds, not in being “basic principles” as much as they are “of the world” - we live by a higher, eternal set of standards
- b. Our status, Paul stresses, is having “died with Christ” with the result of being dead to the “basic principles” of the world (which we are not to live and measure our lives)
- c. In the truest (most real) way we are to see ourselves as not just alive in Christ (to/for Christ) but then dead to this world (separated from it, its driving/controlling values) - this view of life then dominates our thinking/perspective, disarming all variants of worldly religions
- d. If your true life/living is of/in Christ (having died with Christ to worldly precepts (world order)), then how could you (Colossians) live as if living to/for the dictates of the world? These decrees are, in this context, religious (as if redemptive in varying degrees) - How could your faith and hope be dependent on what is “τοῦ κόσμου” (of the world/order, subject to the material)
- e. “Men seek to be acted on from without, and to be sanctified as if by the secret and unconscious charm of an amulet; misunderstanding, forgetting, or shunning the mighty work or change which should be going on within... And thus it has been often found, that men attach a higher sanctity to abstinence from certain kinds of food and physical refreshment, than to abstinence from sin; and would rather violate a Divine statute, than break a self-inflicted fast.” Eadie
- f. This natural (of this world) motivation is very effective on “natural” people... but we are no longer “natural” (normal) people if we are in Christ - so we would never see ourselves subject to decrees such as “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” as if this is a means to true holiness - compare this to I Tim. 4:1-5 - there are, of course, things we don’t touch for practical reasons

Though these errorists were presenting a form of Christianity and Judaism, it was tied to and dependent on the physical/tangible

We are to be holy because He is holy (and we’re in Him)

The attempt was to redirect the focus to a faith in holy actions and objects, other people and practices/disciplines in order to be or remain holy (as though it depended on any of this)

Read Mat. 15:1-20 - Jesus demonstrating the precepts of religious practices contradicting real holiness

3. The ineffective, superficial religion with all the “looks” but cannot deliver a solution - vs. 22-23

Again, as seen in Mat. 15:17-18, it’s not what goes into a man that defiles him - defilement is in the heart and can only be removed by Christ

This explains why so many religions that claim to be Christian need extra Biblical resources and authorities to be sustained - the idea of authority being Scripture alone is offensive and absurd to them

Many people have been swayed to false sects of “Christianity” by those who severely abuse their bodies in beatings or denials or just in harsh living conditions (as though this somehow makes one holier in this suffering)- many “monks” and other highly disciplined spiritual figures

- a. Continuing with the question, Paul makes it clear that these acts/practices of morality or aestheticism (severe self-discipline) are, in this example, in connection with things that were designed by God to “perish with the using” - they were material and had no “holiness” in/of them
- b. These practices have their fatal flaw in being “according to human precepts and teachings” out of which cannot ever come true righteousness - only Christ was able to keep the detailed, strict Law of God in perfection (and that, on our behalf, applied to our account) - people came up with their own versions of the Law, attainable (by their accounting), and such were transferred through traditions and religious associations (denominations)
- c. Paul concedes that these have “indeed the appearance/matter of wisdom” - it will seem wise, make sense to some, and to others impress them as if very scholarly/intellectual- and certainly, they then conclude “smarter” or more impressive than a righteousness obtained vicariously
- d. It is also appealing (luring) because it looks wise because it is (can be) “self-made religion” (also translated as “will-worship”, being a “worship” dictated as one wills it to be) - it also seems right because it involves self-abasement (an outward show of humility and lowliness) along with severe treatment of their bodies - their physical discipline is confused with inner holiness
- e. Practices like self-flagellation (flogging self) were practiced (and still are) by many in Roman Catholicism and other false religions to somehow earn types of righteousness or credit with God (to make-up for their sin, or to even to “encourage more” the hand of God to act)
- f. Yet, as Paul reveals, they are all ineffective in dealing with the root cause/issue - the flesh

The design of such practices is to convince the practitioner or observer that it is true piety - but its true spirit is pride - note Eph. 5:29

Externals will be dictated by the internal versus the approach of these self-righteous influencers who believe the internal is dictated/formed by the externals

- g. Ironically, such severe treatment of the body still has a way of indulging the flesh (the NET translation wording it "... they in reality result in fleshly indulgence.") - it may, though, be a way of simply stating that such ill-treatment does not give the body what it actually (legitimately) needs - either way, it demonstrates the error of such an approach to life
- h. The answer Paul is about to give is not the mastery or pursuit of the externals of discipline or the appearance of conquering sin, but instead living in the reality of victory already in Christ, a citizenship in Heaven, and overcoming the inclinations of sin and its presence in light of being risen with Christ (to newness of life)

XI. A Life Focused Above, Not on the Earth (of this world) - 3:1-11

A. Now that the case for Christ's complete work has been made, Paul goes on to lay out the expected results and the guide/motive for how each is to live and think... since this is all true - vs. 1-2

1. The theological had to be worked out and established to counter the error, but the Christian life is more than just doctrines and creeds - it is also a normal (habitual), harmonious practice - vs. 1

Compare to Col. 2:11-14 and Eph. 2:4-6 - having been raised we look up.. having left we look forward

We are to be about the work/purpose, freed from distractions rather than focusing time/energy on being born - this would be absurd for one who is not only already born, but grown

This "seeking" is in keeping with the idea of focus, not distracted or steering the wrong direction (because the focus is not straight ahead) - compare to Heb. 11:13-16

This is where all true power is! All other powers are subject to Him and should not cause us to be awe of them (for good or bad)

"You must not only seek heaven, you must think heaven" Lightfoot

"And set your minds and keep them set on what is above..." Amplified Bible

- a. Early Christians were called people of "the way" because of how they acted/thought - it makes perfect sense to consider that one raised from the dead (truly died to death), why would he live for the grave he left? - the resurrected don't long for the tombs they left
- b. The two verbs that provide us the expected result of this newness of life purchased/won for us (completely) in Christ are "seek" (pursue) and "set" (the mind/focus) - both of these directed "above" (versus the focus of the spiritually dead... on things below, all of which is not what controls/dictates "life" and is not what life is about) - it is not that we live totally separated from the world, just that we see it for what it is, temporary/fleeting and in need of the Gospel truth
- c. The idea behind "If you have been raised up with Christ..." is more along the lines of saying "since" you are so (building off of the content just covered, their being raised with Christ)
- d. Again, if this is the case with us (for some reading this it might not be so), then the expected result is that they would be "seeking the things above" - the word for "seek" (from ζητέω) has far more in it than just looking - it includes "plotting" (planning ahead with determination), desire (longing for the things above to dictate life below (as in "Thy kingdom Come, Thy will be done...")), it includes the idea of "endeavor" (striving after with a singular focus), and it includes "enquiring" after something (what we are researching the most) and, finally, it includes "requiring" (as in a demanding customer... "it's what I'm looking for")
- e. The reason for such a steady/prioritized life focus is because it is "where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" - this is not limiting His presence as much as it is identifying Him in the seat of power (He being over all) - see Heb. 1:1-4

2. This all being true, set heart/mind on "things above, not on things on the earth" - vs. 2

- a. "φρονέω" (the word for "set mind") includes the thinking, the feeling (as a result, not the means), understanding and even opinion - "Keep on thinking about." It does matter what we think and we are responsible for our thoughts." RWP
- b. We are what we think - the tense (present imperative) stresses the non optional continuance (versus periodic thinking) - it's not a matter of thinking versus not thinking (since we are always thinking on something) as much as it is what we're thinking - this is core to the entire process of "mortifying sin" (as will be dealt with in verse 5)
- c. "Things on the earth" are just tools and possible instruments, but they are not the cause - the danger of these "things" is they often come to possess the possessor

B. For you died (you are dead to this age) - our life is now "Christ" - vs. 3-4

1. "ἀποθνήσκω" (you died) pictures to "die away from" - this is not the absence of life, just the actual death to/from this world (its purposes (without Christ/God)) and so its values - vs. 3

"...we live not in the flesh, but we dwell in the flesh." Luther

True life having such a location (because of its source) has a clear purpose all others do not nor could they have - thus the draw to religions

- a. What an interesting way of phrasing two ideas, in the same sentence, that would normally not seem to harmonize... you died... [and now] your life (true life from death)
- b. This life (made alive from the dead) is "hidden with Christ in God" - there is as very clear sense of security in its location, for physical life, seen as "in/of the body" is in constant danger of being taken away - true, spiritual life, is in Christ because we are in Him, and He in the Godhead - what a description! It is in the most glorious and secured/safe location!
- c. And, in it being "hidden" it is not naturally observable to onlookers - it is highly personal

d. Even though the death and new life are hidden with Christ in God, the actuality of it ought to be practically evidenced in how we live and what we live for - reality cannot be hidden long

2. Christ is our life - vs. 4 (note also John 14:6, Gal. 2:20, II Cor. 5:14-15)

Christ is not just the life-giver, He is the life itself - to exist is not truly to live - existence needs purpose (and direction) to be fully "life" (and this purpose and direction is determined by the Life Giver)

This is an example of how variations of Christianity can be formed when the concept of our lives are now "hidden" is disregarded or wrongly handled

The core thought is that we live in the world, for the Lord's work in/for it, but we do not live for the world (its temporal values)

All the "glories" of this age are cheap in comparison and not worthy of our lives

Note also II Thes. 1:5-12

- a. Paul does clarify that this hidden life will be seen for all that it is (revealed) when He (Christ) is revealed, then we also will be revealed with Him - this is at His second coming (an actual day)
- b. Paul makes a fundamental (life-defining) statement when he refers to Christ as "our life" - as we would reference someone given over to something in life (e.g. work, sports, hobbies) as being their "life", so it should be with us... that it is apparent that He is our life (what we live for)
- c. "The true Church shall be visible as a perfect and reigning Church, when Christ shall be visibly manifested as her reigning Head. Rome having ceased to look for Him in patient faith, has set up a visible mockhead, a false anticipation of the millennial kingdom. The Papacy took to itself by robbery that glory which is an object of hope, and can only be reached by bearing the cross now." JFB
- d. These verses are meant to sever the ties of our heart and mindset from this age - we live in it but truly are not "of it" (John 17:14-20) - it, of course, does not mean we do not interact and do not serve the Lord - doing the Lord's work in the world - we must!
- e. In keeping with the flow of thought from the previous chapter, we are not living for "glory" now, of this age (for this age), for when He appears we will also - this is our undying, daily hope in this life now - when this event happens, then His glory and our share in it (because of Him)
- f. "Do we look for such a happiness, and should we not set our affections upon that world, and live above this? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not there to draw our hearts to it? Our head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there for ever." MH

C. The reason not to sin and why to "put to death" what is earthly/carnal - live out who you are - vs. 5-11

1. The first two words in verse 5 (Νεκρώσατε οὖν... "Put to death (kill) therefore") transition to the decisive ongoing violent action (against sin) that is to be the focus all throughout life - vs. 5

Take careful note of Rom. 8:12-13 - if one is living "by the flesh" then, as literally stated, "you are [already] dying", but if you are putting to death the "deeds of the flesh" then you will live

The world will offer various remedies for the pains of dying to this age, all of which will act like pain inhibitors, looking to block the spiritual sensitivity to the convictions of the Spirit (concealing the ongoing death/decay)

We, in Christ, being the opposite, with a sensitivity of the need to guard, maintain and fight for moral purity in all areas of life

Proper responsibility and restraining controls become the enemy to these

Covetousness is the desire for more, driven by self-pleasing discontent

Mt. 6:19-24, a key verse with this

- a. Since we have died (in connection with a life directed/defined by this age), and we know where it is all heading (Christ's glorious return)... therefore, "... put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth..." (NET) - see also Gal. 5:16-25 (what it looks like)
- b. Part of this initial wording has the idea of giving to/over to death the "parts" of us that are of this world (these "members" being the outworking of the "old self," struggling as it were for life)
- c. There is no doubt that this struggle will be, at times, like these members are crying for mercy, begging to be spared, seeking to make a case for how we will miss them and cannot live very long (or very well) without them
- d. Even though this does not describe actual physical parts of our bodies (as indicated in the identifying of these parts), there is a very real sense in which our bodies will be denied
- e. The samples Paul gives start with "immorality" (πορνείαν), sexual immorality (generally of sexual practice outside of marriage) - this was considered by the society at that time as socially acceptable (common) and was rather unique to Christianity in it being forbidden - this would include pornography which is where we ultimately get this word in English
- f. The second, "impurity" (uncleanness) from "ἀκαθαρσία" a word describing general immoral/indecent character - these are deliberately sinful, and are so because they have no sense of a need for morality (a need to restrain their sexual passions/thinking)
- g. "Passion" (from πάθος) describing unrestrained, excessive desires, being led (and ultimately driven/controlled) by emotions and feelings (senses/sensuality) - it is often in reference to sexual passion but could, generally, refer to the lack of restrained passions in general
- h. "Evil desire" (ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν desire/longing that is evil), used in this context, it is an obsession for what is sinful (immoral/unrighteous) - this can include covetousness, again, often of a sexual nature, and living/thinking to live to please self - see Eph. 4:17-19
- i. And, his final sample being "greed" (covetousness), and as Paul clarifies, this is akin to idolatry (the worship and love of things over God) - this is the epitome of living for this world
- j. "Idolatry" is identified in that something else dictates our lives - at the most basic level, our affections ought to be directed toward God (they should be seen as belonging to Him) - it is also idolatrous in that it looks to other things (e.g. money) for provision/fulfillment

And idolatry being a living for things (nouns... person, place, thing idea)), seeking purpose, goals and love in them - see Eph. 5:3-5

Some would have (like the Colossian influencers were seeking) the incorporation of these worldly, elemental, religious replacements rather than deal with the actual sinful influences in their lives

Knowing the mercy/grace of God we can be open before Him

Regardless, these are characteristic of sons of disobedience versus sons of God

"He argues from the withdrawal of the cause to the withdrawal of the effect" Calvin

Since we have died with Christ, and so to sin, these sins are like dead, decaying pieces of "the old man" that should be urgently and decisively removed from our lives (as if parasites that feed off of what is living)

There is a form of righteous anger, but these here are driven by (stemming from) self and self-righteousness

Paul may have chosen this grouping because this was happening in their church (or was escalating to it)

These sins aren't who/what we are - as with old, foul clothes, our new self should smell the stench and no longer want any association with them (also knowing the smell of them when around others)

All of this because of the inward change (born again)

k. A practical summation of this list could be as follows: Immorality/fornication being habitual, sexual thinking | Impurity including a growing tolerance of sin (possibly even a sentimentalism of sin(s)) | Passion, including a growing curiosity with sin(s) leading to sinful experimentation | Evil desire, partly stemming from a boredom with righteousness and a growing envy of the sinful/wicked | Greed/covetousness catering to and growing from discontentment

l. Detailing greed and idolatry, Eadie described it as, "What it craves it worships, what it worships it makes its portion. To such a god there is given the first thought of the morning, the last wish of the evening, and the action of every waking hour."

2. These sins are recipients of God's "wrath" - vs. 6-7

a. Because (on the account of) these sins, God's wrath "is coming" - no sin goes unpunished, though; the punishment may come later in time/life or after - all sins are accounted for

—b. This is the heart of the reason/motivation why these "members of our earthly body" are to be seen as killed (and part of our practice of ongoing killing) as an expected part of our sanctification (the result of our positional sanctification)

c. Paul will deal with "putting off" other, more common (often considered acceptable) sins (in verse 8), all for the correct reason... they are not who/what we are!

—d. Nonetheless, they are to receive God's wrath (furious anger, judgment/condemnation) - we do not deny these as struggles/battles, we openly admit them because of who/what we are

e. The phrase "... sons of disobedience" is not in many of the oldest manuscripts and is believed (by many) to have been borrowed from Eph. 5:6 - either way does not change the meaning

f. This misuse and wrongly handled idea of God's mercy/grace led to "sons of disobedience" being looked on as common church members and then used to dictate expectations

g. But "you also once walked" - this is what they were and no longer are - the remnants of what they were are to be swiped off, pried off, and even, sometimes, surgically removed as old, cancerous growths that would have consumed had not the cure been applied - note also I Cor. 6:9-11 and Titus 3:3-7

h. They were what you once "lived in" (they, as is consistent with living, believed these lusts to be essential to living/life - they were their idea of joy, fulfillment and even purpose)

3. What they were to have put off (and so putting off), since they have been raised with Christ - vs. 8-9

a. "But now..." - things are not the same (in actuality not figuratively), and this being true, then, of course, put all the things aside (away from) just mentioned and the ones about to be named - it's from "ἀποτίθημι," to cast something off, lay it down (for good) - note Rom. 6:6-7

b. "The operation is by no means painless; it is violent, it is called a crucifixion (Rom.6:6). The old man is not converted, he cannot be; he is not renewed, he cannot be. He can only be replaced by the new man, by a creative act of God and by no less". Lenski

c. It is to be an exhaustive approach... all of them! Paul lists several examples, of which, first, are directed at the harm of others (the first listing (verse 5) are self-destructive)

d. They are, first, anger (ὀργή the inward (pent up) disdain/hatred of another/others, followed by "wrath" (θυμός a reactive, explosive fierceness (rage) openly directed at others)

e. These sins (sinful dispositions, normal to the unregenerate), progress/lead to "malice" (κακία evil toward others, mean/cruel actions to injure), leading (naturally) to "slander" (βλασφημίαν literally to harm the reputation), escalating to "abusive speech" (αἰσχρολογία filthy/foul/shameful speech/words, intended to communicate hate (degrading))

f. The last phrase of verse 5, "out of your mouth" helps emphasize the idea that, of all mouths, out of yours nothing like this at all should ever proceed

g. And finally, "Do not lie to each other" (the Lord being "the Truth" should be a controlling focuser in our interactions with each other) - the reason Paul stresses is their having "laid aside the old self" - as with clothing, we remove what no longer identifies us, protects us

h. The logical reason for not lying to each other as well as exhibiting (walking in) the previous sins is the fact that the laying aside has happened (in Christ)

i. In Eph. 4:17-25 we have a similar text, stressing that Christ was not "learned" (learned from and of) - the normal (to be expected) result of one now in Christ is the putting off of the "old self" (which happens as one is "renewed in the spirit of your minds" - a change in how you think - the old way of thinking/seeing things (values) are changing)

4. Having put off “the old self” and having put on “the new self” - vs. 10-11

Many will struggle with this truth, but we first take the truth and then live in light of it, rather than defining the Truth by our experience or sense of “good sense”

It is the reality of the altogether new creation that we are by/ because of Christ (which is consistently under-stressed and why pseudo “Christianity” has become an accepted norm)

This cannot be stressed enough- there is a persistent issue of identity crisis in the Church that can only be resolved in the Truth and not in societal or popular thought

The flesh (with the clinging “old self”) will lose its vigor as time passes, weakening as the final stages of its assured death overwhelm, but the “inner man is renewed day by day” - II Cor. 4:16-18

Growing into the understanding of what we truly are in Christ... what we were always intended to be in regards to the “image of God” - this was lost in Eden (its correct likeness) and regained at the cross

Again, as seen above, in II Cor. 5:16, no one is, any longer, seen in light of “the flesh” (their natural distinctions) as if any of these could stop one from being in Christ or if any of these, in Christ, should be prioritized

There have been clearly seen demonstrations of elitism in the churches... even an expectation and endorsement at times

We, in the Church, cannot be racists (or, more accurately, ethnically biased) nor can we practice class discrimination... we being who we are in Christ!

“Christ occupies the whole sphere of human life and permeates all its developments.” Lightfoot

These still play a part in our responsibilities this side of eternity, but they are, at best, organizational (as in some may have authority (structurally), but is never looked upon as “better than”

- a. The old self died with Christ (in Christ, 2:20), so using an analogy like clothing, why would one continue to wear the old, dead self’s clothing? Having died with Christ, we are raised (born again)... the old self is gone! (the identity)
- b. As is discussed in verse 10, this “new self” will continue “being renewed” not in nature, but in in coming to know their true self in Christ (“to a true knowledge”) - this is the expected, actual growth that will come and be an ongoing part of the life of one in Christ - if the believing thief on the cross had not died, he would have inevitably grown/transformed
- c. This “new” is fully true at salvation (it is now a new creation, not just a reworking of the old)- “The new man is not the ethical symbol of a mere reformation which a strong will may achieve; nor is it any change of creed, party or opinions, which is the result of personal examination and conviction.” Eadie
- d. Read II Corinthians 5:14-21 - the “... behold, the new has come” could also be translated, “Look! *The* new has come into being!” - the old has gone away, and though some of the fragments of the old cling to us, they are not truly us - we do not argue the point with the disobedient that they must change “or else”, but that such behavior is not in keeping with who/what they are in Christ
- e. This “being renewed” is ongoing, ever growing (progressive) not in becoming who/what we are, but in the discovery and growing into who/what we are - it is more than just being made new but includes an ongoing renewal, making “fresh” again - there ought to be an expected growing in strength and vigor (spiritually/mentally... and even emotionally), knowing we will be renewed throughout life - see Isaiah 40:28-31
- f. It will be continually important to keep the “old” distinguished from the “new” so we don’t identify in our thinking (and so feeling) with the old - it’s not us! The pains we so often feel are just the pains of death to self (old self), all of which are truly growing pains.
- g. Paul specifies one key aspect of this renewal/renewing - it is “in the knowledge” (underlying word communicating an understanding of true knowledge, a confident knowledge), and this, in particular, the insight of (and into) the image of the One who created us (knowing God)
- h. The “new self” is no longer characterized by the common, natural categorizations that were in our natural state (in Adam) - these here listed as Greek (Gentile) and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman - in the sphere of this renewal, there is no (the Greek uses “οὐκ ἔστι” stressing not only of the absence of it, but not even the possibility of it) distinctions like these
- i. We no longer focus on ethnicities (nationalities), nor religious symbols or associations (again, as if prerequisites to come to Christ and as the ultimate distinguishers) - the additions of “barbarian and Scythian” seem to have been added to counter the Gnostic “proud of intellect above others posturing,” and to stress that foreigners are not exempt - all of these are a part of our lives as they are now, but none of these are priorities in Christ and they should never be used as discriminatory valuations
- j. Paul then adds class distinctions and we would frame it something like “rich and poor” (socially important/significant or socially unimportant and/insignificant) - compare this to I Corinthians 7:21-22 where, in Christ, even the slave is truly “free” in Christ and the “free” (in societal terms) is the slave of Christ... these being the greater distinctions
- k. The last phrase of verse 11 could also be “but the all and in all, Christ” - this is the standard we live by now, so these earthly distinctions and priorities and classes are no longer what life is about - we are now, primarily, known as being “in Christ” which usurps all others - it is then to be this that permanently unites us
- l. Again, earthly distinctions remain while in this world/age, but these distinctions must never be prioritized to the degree the world does - we would never, for instance, put our ethnicity over others and a divisive ranking, or our educational or class standings as organizational dividers as those in Christ
- m. Regardless our standings in society and organizationally in the world or the Church itself, we see ourselves equal in Christ, brothers/sisters, all owing our lives and salvation to the Lord, all saved from the same hopelessness and owing all to Him

XII. Let the Peace of Christ Rule and the Word of Christ Dwell (a yielded life) - 3:12-17 ————— Be a gracious host!

A. These verses are the other half in the fulfilling the exhortation in the first four verses

1. The first part of these verses focuses mainly on the interpersonal relationships (with those in the Church) and the reasons for gracious postures and actions - the Colossians (and so we) were to act as the citizens of Heaven, the children of God they truly were/are

It is again interesting to note how the genuineness of one in Christ is seen in behavior, and here, treatment of others in Christ- stoic theological purity is not the goal... genuine Christlikeness associated with pure theology is.

- a. This was not something they were to be working to obtain, but the actual position from which they work - much of the conflicts we have with each other find some of their causes in unnecessary stresses, influencing us to be "on edge" and "short-fused"

- b. Paul will also include the "put on" qualities in contrast to what was to be put off - these qualities are related to who/what we are "...chosen of God, holy and beloved..."

2. One core cause of these... including the "lets" (not as if allowing the Lord to work, but as not resisting, expecting full cooperation/submission in/with His expected working)

- a. The first "let" to be enforced is the "peace of Christ" being "in charge" (giving us an odd command, but not so odd when realizing it is more like a surrender to the reality of His control)

- b. The second "let" being "the word of Christ" alive/at work in us "richly" - this being a general description of how we are to think (the cause/content of thoughts)

There is a calming control that is to be what dictates living - so much of our conflict/stress comes from our attempts at control of our lives and wrong thinking

B. Who we really are and the appropriate attire - vs. 12-14

1. It must be noted at the start of this point that the comparison to clothing is only as good in as much as we realize that whatever is put on is never put off

- a. It is the "putting on" a new identify (not a mask or persona), and coming to grips with who we are in Christ (and how this is so) and fully accepting this as our true self

- b. "... to become so possessed of the mind of Christ as in thought, feeling, and action to resemble Him and, as it were, reproduce the life He lived." Thayer

2. The reason with this being we "... as those that have been chosen of God" as the "elect" (ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ) - and this "electing/choosing" not being at conversion, but before the world was created (see Eph. 1:3-10) - we have an overriding/ controlling purpose since before our birth - vs. 12

The reason for His choice of some (us) is not given directly (person by person detail) but as in Eph. 1:5, "according to the kindness of His will"

- a. This choosing is of God (chosen for His purposes) - this includes our salvation, but also our being set apart for His purposes for all of life... into eternity

- b. It should be obvious, having been specially chosen, we must be "holy" (set apart from all else) - this is a special motivation for us (versus a common misuse of this word when those of the creation see themselves able to question the rightness of the Creator (attempting to question His love in choosing some (and not all) as though He, being true love (I Jn. 4:16) is inconsistent and subject to the scrutiny of His creation)

- c. As "holy" we are not, nor ever expect to be "normal" (average/common) - we expect, being who we are, specially chosen of God, to be supernatural, exceptional (because of His choosing of us to such a life/purpose) and we can rightfully presuppose His endless grace to live as such

- d. As "beloved" we are expected then to be secure and fulfilled because of the great love shown to us - the rest of the world strives for some type of "love" to rest in, feel secure and valued in and something that then gives them purpose - this word (beloved) indicated "dearly loved"

We are "holy and beloved" in that we are chosen, died for, saved and sanctified - this is love in action! It's not the watered-down idea of love where one expects to be approved/endorsed in whatever they set out to do or be

3. And with such an origin and preordained purpose, we, of course, "put on"... - vs. 12

"Those who owe so much to mercy ought to be merciful to all who are proper objects of mercy." MH

- a. Notice it's not just "put on" (clothe) self with "compassion," but a "heart of compassion" (literally "bowels" (innards) of pity (compassion out of seeing one in their need... not in what they deserve) - this is in contrast to the proud, condemning "heart" many often clothe themselves in, rooted more in the ego than the heart... more in human comparisons, ideologies and standards than it is in the eternal purposes of God

"...for the design of the gospel is not only to soften the minds of men, but to sweeten them, and to promote friendship among men as well as reconciliation with God." MH

- b. Put on "kindness" - also could be "gentleness" with others (working at keeping others at ease with us) and has an underlying idea of being usable (useful) to others (as in I Cor. 13:4, "Love is kind" (sees itself at the disposal of others)) - the opposite being harshness, impatience

- c. Put on "humility" (here, the underlying word means "lowliness of mind/thinking) - one chosen of God, set apart and beloved, does not look on themselves in a proud/arrogant way, as though they possess some merit of their own (over against others) - this is the same idea as Paul used in Php. 2:3, where the "lowliness of mind" works out to "esteeming others higher than yourself" - having been given everything that we have that is truly good, there could be no legitimate thought of self-superiority over others

These are the "poor in spirit" of Mt. 5:3 (knowing they only have what they have been given)

True meekness has often been identified, practically, with the practice of yielding personal rights (perceived)

We all need to be shown patience when facing our spiritual growing pains

A more modern idea of this word would be “bother” - this is not directing all to work focus on not being a bother, but to bear with them, for them - for to not do so makes a tense/stressful atmosphere (unease)

Note the scenario of Paul in I Cor. 6:7 where we should suffer wrong than be retaliatory

This is an anti-grudge verse - with the Lord's forgiveness of us in view, it is a must - compare this to Mt. 18:21-35

Considering it being above (on top of) all the others, it will serve as our uniform (our identify, our cause, our team)

see also Jn. 13:35

True, Godly love pulls together (rightly) while the others separate to compete and compare - yet none of us will ever be the standard!

It should strike us as odd when realizing the struggle we have to accept and live in this peace with God - there is, sadly, a natural side that refuses to believe the work of Christ on our behalf was completely, eternally successful - see Rom. 5:1

Read also Eph. 2:12-18

But the peace “of the world” will always come with a demanded compromise as well as a placement of faith in it

Worry/anxiety are just evidences of losing sight of reality (our safe/set/secure state in Christ)

d. Meekness (from πραΰτης, describing more than just gentleness, but more the idea of gentle strength, and so a mild demeanor) - this also stems from considering the value of others, considering the value given to us by the Lord (graciously, undeserved from one with the power/authority to condemn us) - see also Rom. 12:9-10

e. And finally, “put on” patience (from μακροθυμία, longsuffering, forbearance) as in bearing with others in their actual or perceived offenses against us, actual hurts against ourselves (or even bearing with them in their spiritual growth) - this was part of Paul's prayer for them in 1:11 (tied to their spiritual understanding/wisdom, all to walk worthy of their calling)

4. These qualities “put on” (our expected Christian garb), and so “bear with” and forgive - vs. 13

a. Paul applies the situation in which they are to bear with and forgive... whenever one “has a complaint against anyone” - a “complaint” (μομφή, a found/seen fault and so a blame and quarrel against them) - when someone has done us wrong, failed or offended us somehow

—b. In these situations (which are common), these (and we) are to tolerate/forebear (from ἀνέχω which simply means to endure) and the sense being that it is reoccurring

c. These bothersome brothers/sisters are also to be forgiven (the word being “χαρίζομαι” (coming from χάρις) picturing “gracing” someone (showing favor/grace to the undeserving)) - it has also been described (grace in action) as “grace to pardon”

d. “This does not mean: Complain a while until pardon is asked and amends are made to satisfy you and then at last condescend to forgive. This is what too many think. Hence we have so many complaints and complainers.” Lenski

e. Supreme example (of which we are obliged to mimic... always) being “as the Lord forgave” - this is why to entertain the thought of us not forgiving each other is so absurd - we, who have been forgiven all would not dare to think we could be unforgiving! - see also Eph. 4:32

5. And there's more! And “on top of these” already mentioned, then put on... love - vs. 14

a. As if the most outward clothing, on top of what you've already put on (never to take off), put on also “love” - Christlike love (true love, a determined care/affection) is what should always be seen (it being the practical cause of all the others, and the crowning glory of them all)

—b. Love, practically speaking, is the “perfect bond of unity” - it ties/holds all else together - this love is the ultimate binding agent keeping us united/together, and properly motivating the previous qualities and their use with each other - see I Cor. 13:1-8 for what true love is like

—c. The goal (end) or crowning achievement of the errorists (e.g., Judaizers) was knowledge, legalistic standards of comparisons (such as the focus on what is abstained from) - as we are held (connected) to the Head by His love, so we hold together with the rest of the body by love

C. “Let” (submit to, live by means of) the “peace of Christ” rule and His Word abundantly alive within - vs. 15-17

1. The “peace of Christ” as “ruler” (as the presiding judge) - vs. 15

a. The word for “rule” (βραβεύω) is from the same as in 2:18 where Paul warned the Colossians not to allow any to “disqualify” them by means of the popular religious practices and associations - this “disqualification” was of their “prize” (reward in Christ, by means of Christ)

—b. This peace (calmness of spirit founded in the trust of Christ's work and its eternal, irrevocable results) is to be ruler (overseeing judge) - this seems almost contrary to peace until we realize, Christ/the Father as our Judge, has won the prize for us, bringing a peace the world can never give - we have peace with God, because of God (Christ) - peace with God is the ultimate peace!

c. This peace is then the source of our ability to be at peace with each other - so many struggle with anxiety and bitterness, stemming from their lack of focus and trust in this most important of relationships having been completely reconciled - compare to Php. 4:4-7

d. It is this peace that also helps us see past the natural intimidators and fear-mongering aspects/individuals of this age (mainly those that would purpose to demote us by its standards or to influence us to seek its offer of “peace”)

e. Note that this peace is to be in our “hearts” (the real, inner us) - we don't strive to look “at peace”, we strive to be actually at peace... it is what we think, trust, do - this “letting” is an active work on our part - yielding the worry/anxiety to the rule of Christ's actual work

f. And, it is to this peace we all were “called into one body” - we were summoned (by grace that would not be resisted... or successfully resisted) and is core to what unites us as one body (the Body of Christ) - it will be what keeps us focused/calm/resolved as a unit

A lack in gratefulness is evidence of our misdirected focus and values - we will never truly have a reason to be ungrateful - even with seeming "spiritual" or "religious" disappointments, we must always remember His unthwartable control in it all

None of this carries the idea of a casual relationship - it is the predominant influence, so other competing ideologies/philosophies (and popular trends of thought) never have room to dominate/control

The expected (normal) response with such an indwelling truth is an overflowing expression and urge to share and express it openly - half-hearted or passionless singing (or even teaching) should be the oddity- though common, we ought not expect it as the norm

See Eph. 1:16-19 in an expanded handling of wisdom, what it is and what it involves

The songs are to be in response to (in obedience to) the Word of Christ and are to lend to its enriching in each other

There was much worship in the Psalms, but Paul is drawing out much more of their overall use (much like how we see Psalms in sermons, drawing out teaching/admonishing content)

This is often translated "with thankfulness" which is certainly included, but the way it is worded seems to demand more

- g. And, with such a peace ruling your lives, "Keep on becoming thankful" (RWP) - this is also a uniting factor/cause in our relationships to each other in the Church - we have everything to be grateful for in the restoration and security in the most significant relationship - though we seem to lose much from the world's perspective, we cannot lose what is most valuable
- h. Such a spirit/attitude of thankfulness will lead to a spirit of thankfulness with each other - we will look on each other as vessels of grace/graciousness to each other, seeing one another as tools God uses regularly in our lives - we should long to be vessels of honor, lending to true peace

2. The "Word of Christ" the predominant, indwelling resident - vs. 16

- a. The core idea with the "let" here is that of "let dwell" (not hindering or neglecting the open and welcoming residing influence of the Word of Christ) - it's present, imperative active
- b. This "word" being the teaching of Christ and the Word He also used (and provided... so all of Scripture) - it is, in the most basic idea, the Gospel of Christ (and its resounding affects)
- c. This Word is to live IN not just among/around us (ἐνοικεῖτω, indwell, be at home within), and so not treated as an occasional guest, but as one of the family, we at home with it and it with us
- d. And all this to be "richly" (πλουσίως, abundantly, overflowing, so the majority) in us - this is in keeping with other, fundamental texts such as Deut. 6:6-9, 11:16-21
- e. An in so doing, so richly (overflowing), it then spills over in other ways... such as in singing - singing is not just an expression of thought/feeling, but is first to be formulated and governed "with all wisdom" (it must be right, grounded in the Truth and as "wisdom" also carries with it, it must be the directing of heart/soul/mind not just in thought and feeling, but in practice)
- f. "When the gospel so possessed the heart as to fill it with a sense of blessing, then the lips might be tuned to song. Experimental acquaintance with Christianity could only warrant the chanting of the sacred ode." Eadie
- g. Regarding the "wisdom" aspect here, Matthew Henry clarified, "The proper office of wisdom is to apply what we know to ourselves, for our own direction. The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all notion and speculation, to make us doctors, but in all wisdom, to make us good Christians, and enable us to conduct ourselves in every thing as becomes Wisdom's children."
- h. It is with this "all wisdom" (not abridged) that we are to teach and admonish each other - this is not a surprise, though the method/instrument Paul includes here is not typically expected - music/songs are not for entertainment in the Church, but have a weightier purpose in teaching and challenging/exhorting each other
- i. The music/psalms/hymns/spiritual songs are all to be soundly under the jurisdiction of "all wisdom" to best fit the purpose of teaching (instructing) and admonishing
- j. The emphasis is not on the types of songs, though Paul looks to be laying out the scope (though types such as "spiritual songs" can be broad) - when the purpose presented in our text is overlooked, or overruled (for some temporal values reason) or just forgotten, they are not fulfilling their purpose and may become a distraction from purpose or just tradition
- k. Notice also, these references to music/songs are more for the purpose of communicating spiritual concepts and instruction to each rather than a "religious experience of worship"
- l. The spirit of the singing is under the qualifier of "ἐν τῇ χάριτι" (with the grace), the proper article narrowing it to THE grace of God (His favor of us, undeserved by us), and this dictating our singing (always)- half-hearted, unfocused, ungrateful singing is more than just hypocritical... it is disobedient and ungrateful (and irreverent)
- k. It is also to be in "your hearts" - it is to be from within, genuine (again, not hypocritical) since it is always to be "to God" (for God, though with conscious and purposed hearing of those around us, teaching/admonishing)

3. All that you do is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus" while giving thanks - vs. 17

- a. With the peace of God ruling and the Word of Christ indwelling, we would/should expect it to dictate/control everything we do (this "do" including our living and the details of each day (and so what is done in it) - living is not to be instinctive, but deliberately obedient
- b. The "all" here must be understood as "everything" and so, everything is under the jurisdiction/authority of the Lord Jesus Christ - this reason and governor over us (our words and actions) is commonly ignored/forgotten throughout daily practice
- c. This also carried with it the realization we represent Him in what we say and do

The expectation to actually live by means of and under the authority of these things seems oddly missing from what would appear to be "normal Christians" - the obligation (being under authority) seems unexpected

With the Word of Christ dwelling in us (richly), this would explain the gratefulness - we will see the true purpose in everything and the privilege to do His will

Always working for the relationship hinders working from it

- d. As we do all we do in the Lord's name, it is to be accompanied by (as is to be expected with such an honored association and profound purpose in living) thanksgiving - this is stressed throughout this epistle (Col. 1:12, 2:7, 3:15 and 4:2)
- e. This is in contrast to what the errorists were promoting, where they pushed a standard of always trying to "clear the slate" with God and to keep it that way (no opportunity for true, (pure service)) - they also promoted superstitions associated with actions and the materialistic

XIII. How a Life Focused on "Above" is Lived Within Family and Societal Situations - 3:18-4:1

A. It may seem like an abrupt change in topic from the previous into verse 18 and on - yet this is a logical next point of focus - the categorical "put offs" and "put ons" are followed with the impact of focus it will have on familial and social institutions (and how Christians approach them)

1. Each of these categories was instituted by God and each was severely damaged by sin - each is foundational to how life is set up and will, generally, be where we will live out who/what we now are
2. The marriage relationship is foundational to the family structure, and this has been, since the start, a major point of failure in society (openly and privately), impacting not just society, but the Church

A Christian home is to be just that... "Christian"! Our purpose is more than our fulfillment in these relationships for its purpose is far beyond personal fulfillment - there will come some of this, but it is to be seen through eyes "on things above, not on things on the earth."

- a. The Christian home is to be a place where we expect not only the Gospel truths to be taught, but to be lived - it is the training ground for life for children (positively and negatively)
- b. The marriage is a picture used by Paul in Ephesians 5 of Christ and the Church, which alone, should produce in true believers a revered approach to the union
- c. We know the greater priority is on the spiritual realizing that beyond this life, these human relationships will no longer be how we are "related" in Heaven
- d. We cannot become so "busy about the work of the Lord" that we lessen the priority on these fundamental relationships, for these, by God's design are to be seen for His purposes now - as Paul lays out here, these are fundamental to the Lord's work (marriage, family and work)

B. Wives and Husbands - the overriding (must haves) basics... submit and love - vs. 18-19

1. Wives are to be in subjection to (from υποτάσσω a word used of one under authority such as in Romans 13:1 ("be subject")) - it is a passive (she accepts (yields to) submission of herself to her husband, and not that the husband is supposed to make her do so) - vs. 18

See also Eph. 5:22-24 and Titus 2:3-5

This does not say that submission is only when the husband is loving (though he should be) - see I Peter 3:1-6, dealing with a disobedient husband (who "does not obey the word") and his potential being "won" without a word

Focus on the controller, at "the right hand of God"

- a. The reason specified here is that it is "fitting in the Lord" (as in it is "appropriate", it is the right thing to do in light of the Lord) - He is the one who set it all up - it is His structure!
- b. It might be noted that the word for "wives" could also be used of women and that the word for "husbands" could also be used of men - some might try to take this to mean that all women are to be subject to all men, but this cannot be the case - this verse is addressing a marital union and it is a woman in marriage (a wife) submitting to her man in it (husband)
- c. This is addressed to the wives (in the Church) and they are the ones who are to actively/determinedly do this, realizing its being "right in the Lord" - this would include the idea of a wife submitting rightfully (in WHAT is right), so not so if ever told to sin (actual sin)
- d. Again, as is the context, this is looking beyond the temporal into Heaven for proper motivation - it is clearly an act of faith

2. The husbands are to love their wives - vs. 19 (cherish, faithfully live with, lead and protect)

Read I Peter 3:7 regarding the instruction to the husband and his overall approach to his wife

So many of what are to be the basic, gracious responses we are to have with each other, supporting/encouraging each other, are hindered by the painful, energy draining obstacles that have become "normal" in Christian families

- a. The word for love here (ἀγαπάω) is more than an affectionate "love" but one that is determined to care for the other, for their best and, as exemplified by God (the Father and Son), is to give - compare to Eph. 5:25-28
- b. The contrast to this love would be when the husband becomes "embittered" against her (from πικραίνω describing one irritated, exasperated and so bitter/angry/begrudging) - she is not to be treated as a "subject" in her subjection to him - if he thinks himself above her in quality, she is likely to be viewed as a bother
- c. The husband is (because of his true love for her) to sacrifice for her, give himself for her - many husbands become impatient or even degrading of their wives because of the needs she has yet he, in love, is supposed to long to meet (not begrudge) - this is love more than romance

C. Children obey, and in this their obligation, fathers are not to exasperate it (make it worse/harder) - vs. 20-21

1. Children are to literally "listen to heed" (from υπακούω, literally to "hear under") - vs. 20

Since our parents are from the Lord, it is well-pleasing to Him when obeyed

- a. The first (essential) part of obedience is listening (in a submissive spirit) - as the underlying word pictures, they need to learn and live as those under authority (given by the Lord)

Disobedience to parents is one of the listed sins of those (or a society) that casts off God (Rom. 1:30) and is the result of a depraved/debased mind

It is also pleasing because it is in keeping with His order/structure/norm

Also considering "in all things" we see the expected challenge of obeying continually

It could involve returning in like (anger for anger) or mocking them in their struggle with obedience (or just the maturing process altogether)

Fathers continually finding fault with no encouragement and support in the children's struggles are who this is intended for

Compare this to Eph. 6:5-8 where another motivation is added in the reality that every "good thing" done will "receive back from the Lord" (regardless of status, for we are all the same in Christ)

see also Rom. 8:14-17 - our being "in Christ" and because of this, true "sons of God" we are to never lose sight of where our value resides - we must not allow our standing now, in this age, to be our defining worth

All that is seen and done is before the Lord which ought to always be our greatest motivator/influencer in the quality of all we do

If the motive is just "with eye service as men pleasers" then our work/quality would be low - but if doing it for the Lord (His eyes), then it will be truly quality work

- b. The concept of obedience to parents (both father and mother) is frequent throughout Scripture- note Ex. 20:12, 21:17, Prov. 1:8, 20:20, 30:17
- c. The "in all things" scope of this obedience must be in keeping with "well-pleasing to the Lord" also (though if one has unbelieving parents, they (children) must still seek to obey in all things unless it is defiant of the Lord, or truly sinful (immoral, unlawful, etc.))
- d. Paul includes the truth that this is "well-pleasing to the Lord" (from εὐάρεστος literally "good pleasing", as if a double positive) - God is particularly pleased with this which is core to the reason to do it - it necessitates faith and the realization that God gives us our parents
- e. This is addressed to children, so they are to be taught to obey their parents (here, assumed to be Christians since Paul was writing to Christians), doing so because it pleased the Lord
- f. In summarizing part of what is meant by "in all things", John Eadie wrote, "The principle involved in his admonition is, that children are not the judges of what they should or should not obey in parental precepts."

2. Fathers, considering the command to children, don't make it unnecessarily harder - vs. 21

- a. The word for "exasperate" (NASB) is ἐρεθίζω meaning to stir up or actively provoke anger- it would carry with it the idea of picking on them or even bullying them - no doubt children will get angry as their wills are challenged (not yielded to), but what is described here is what used to be phrased as "stirring the pot"
- b. Fathers are told not to come at their role irritating/hounding them into obedience so as not to cause them to "lose heart" (from the verb ἀθυμέω literally describing the losing of passion (spiritless)) - as in Eph. 6:4, Fathers are to "nourish them in the instruction and admonition of the Lord." (YLT)
- c. Fathers are to see their role with their children as one of motivating them toward the Lord (toward what is right/best), envisioning their potential and focusing them on their relationship with the giver of all grace - see Psa. 103:13, Prov. 4:1-4, I Thes. 2:10-12)

C. Slaves/servants, obey as working for the Lord, masters (bosses) be just and fair - vs. 22-4:1

- 1. "Slaves" are to "obey" their earthly "masters" - these terms are typically not used anymore - society is very different (e.g., there is no more slavery of this type in our society (though still present in others))

- a. It must be noted that the word for "obey" is the same as for the children to their parents, but not the same word for wives in submitting to their husbands
- b. Slaves were common in the first century, and though we don't have an exact parallel in our society, it is in keeping with anyone who must work for a living and is under a "master" (boss/ authority) - the main point here (anyway) is the motivation in/of their service/work
- c. We also know (historically) that Onesimus (the slave dealt with in Philemon) was from Colosse, so this topic would have been of special interest to slave and master alike - 4:9
- d. Once again Paul uses "in all things" (as with the children) when describing the scope of their obedience... their obedience would be ongoing - with the addition of "on earth" it is to be clear that this is just in the standing in this world/age, but is not a term that defines our ultimate/ true value (which is found in Christ, we not only His slaves, but his fellow heirs... brothers)
- e. Paul does not propose escape from slavery - he presents the proper way to look on it (with eternity's values in view), to leverage it in the service of the Lord in it all (for our purpose in it all is above what we do in our earthly responsibilities, for in all we do we are to shine as lights and be as salt (enhancing and even contradicting this world's norms and even its bests))
- f. For all that is done, since we are Christ's slaves, we then do all we do (the "whatever" of 3:23), not just "external" (what can be observed while we are being watched), but that the quality of work is high even when not seen, even when not inspected
- g. This text is particularly encouraging when realizing the value that it places on our day-to-day jobs/responsibilities - all is for Him, not just the "religious" and "spiritual" - the Lord's purposes (our Master) are to be considered in all our labors - it is all seen/tracked
- h. In detailing the results of this text, Barclay wrote of Paul, "He insists that the slave must be a conscientious workman. He is in effect saying that a slave's Christianity must make him a better and more effective slave. Christianity never in this world offers escape from hard work; it makes a man able to work still harder."
- i. The purpose must never be just "to please men" (we must not be superficial)

These are to be genuinely good workers, not truly requiring a boss, and they are conscientious of the quality of their work - they do this because it is what they are and not what they want to just appear to be

- j. In contrast to “eye-service,” Christian slaves (workers) are to be principled (not motivated to avoid punishments (of sorts), but to do what the do to their best always, seeking to meet the standards as if their boss was right there with them (for He (the Lord) actually is)
- k. Instead, the standard (again, as a Christian laborer) is “sincerity of heart” (also “singleness/ simplicity of heart”) - the Greek word “ἀπλότης” pictures an uncomplicated focus/purpose/ approach - since it is “who they are” no plan need be in place to “keep the story straight” - the same core word is used in Mt. 6:22 describing the “eye” (focus of life), and if it is “single” then the whole body is full of light (if not, it is full of darkness)
- l. The overriding motive being “fearing the Lord” (in reverential awe/respect) - as is to be discussed, He is the One we are actually serving in “whatever you do” - even if one does not necessarily respect their boss/manager/master, they are still motivated by respect of their Lord

2. Enthusiasm in all that is done (focused on the one we are serving) - vs. 23-24

The phrase “Whatever you do” in Greek gives the sense of “whatever you happen to be doing” or “whatever comes your way to do” - it includes anything we weren't expecting to do also

This makes all work spiritual work, for the Lord... the Lord's work!

Temporal reward (pay/praise) is what motivates the “natural man” but not us - even if not compensated as we believe is fair/equitable, we are not robbed of our proper enthusiasm

Serving such a master in such service, we can afford to “spend” our earthly resources (practical and emotional) to their end knowing the infinite/ eternal resources coming

- a. The attitude of enthusiasm mentioned here is “ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε” (“from the soul work”)- it is far more than putting on a happy face; it is to be from the heart (“heartily”) so the true judge of this won't be the “master” but the one who sees the heart (the Lord)
- b. This verse is often quoted to motivate to good/better work, but it is more challenging than that when we realize it is to be genuine (of the heart) - the only way this is practically possible is if we work with the constant awareness of Who we are serving - compare with Rom. 12:11
- c. The motivation is expanded, stating the fact of the matter - “knowing” (being aware of and alert to) where the actual reward comes from - even lazy (unenthusiastic) workers can get paid (by earthly institutions), but we are to do all we do for the reward of our actual Master
- d. “Enthusiasm” is a good word to describe how we come at all we are tasked to do (responsible)- then, even if we do not get praise for exceptional, thorough, diligent work, we're still OK since we weren't doing it for that reason anyway - the Lord misses nothing (He sees it all!) - see Mt. 10:42
- e. Those not living by this, or that are not in Christ, are likely to soon find their work/labors soul-draining - this is why so many are soulless in their life's responsibility (their expectations (and so emotions) are misdirected) - compare to Paul's attitude to hardship in II Cor. 4:16-18
- f. The motivation is that, from the Lord we will receive not just a “reward” but “the reward of the inheritance” - the “unfading” (never growing dull /boring) inheritance - I Pet. 1:4
- g. It is guaranteed, for it is “the Lord Christ” that we work for (serve) - slaves (in that time) could not (generally) receive an inheritance, but now, because of Christ, being in Christ, as far as their eternal standing is concerned, they are “sons” and so are then “inheritors” - Gal. 4:7

3. Doing wrong receives consequences, and the wrongdoer is the one who will receive it/them - vs. 25

The word for “receive the consequences” is the core word “κομίζω” which is used of repayment - the Lord will deal with all of us in our wrongs with such interactions and responsibilities, not in condemnation, but in correction

Neither will/can satisfy us anyway... we were not wired for such by our Creator

- a. The one meting out the consequences is God - these consequences are for the wrongs of the slave as well as the master (though here it is directed at the slave) - note again Eph. 6:8-9 where masters are addressed regarding this
- b. The Gospel frees us (from sin and its rightful/deserved condemnation), but it is never to be used to get out of rightful responsibility, “The Gospel, the great charter of liberty for man, always refuses him license , even where he is the victim of oppression.” CBN
- c. God is “without partiality” even to the poor (note Ex. 23:3 and Lev. 19:15) - we do (as people) have a bias toward different types of people, but the point here is that wrong is wrong even for the oppressed (to do) - the NET Bible had this as “...and there are no exceptions”
- d. It is true that we are no longer “under the Law” though this does not mean we are without responsibility - we were not saved/freed to live in idleness or self-service

4. “Masters” must treat those under them (structurally/organizationally) justly and fairly - 4:1

The authority structure and hierarchy are God's design even though those filling them are flawed - as Christians, we honor the structure/positions for its designer, not its participants

How nice it would be to work under a boss who knows the true God is their boss!

- a. We need to understand that all these commands are addressed to Christians (slaves/masters), though the slaves may have unbelieving masters and the masters, unbelieving slaves
- b. Masters (Christians) must realize their obligation to treat those under their authority rightly (lawfully, as in “do what is right by them”) and equally (again, no partiality of the person(s)) - again, the slave's responsibilities are in focus - this doesn't forbid forgiveness or mercy at times, but this sets the overriding norm for their leadership
- c. Masters must be fully aware (constantly) that they also have a Master “in Heaven” and so are answerable for all aspects of the leadership (in all their work... secular and “sacred”)
- d. These are accountable for how they handle those accountable to them

XIV. Devoted to Prayer, Wise in Conduct and Speaking With Grace - 4:2-6

A. Consistently dedicated to prayer - vs. 2-4

1. This is more than a statement just to pray - it is a purpose/plan and so focus/determination to stay "with it" - this indicates it is to be ongoing, not just a once for all "request" - I Thes. 5:17, Eph. 6:18

Prayer is much more than asking and receiving - it is a constant reminder (and practice) of dependence, an expression of the will and surrender of it

Note that Paul asks for prayer to do the work... not prayer for himself

Life (for us) is not to be seen as if a civilian (protected by others to live at ease), but as soldiers in the fray... which keeps us steady in prayer

The act of praying most often takes a very deliberate act on our part, fighting off distractions of thought- laziness of focus is a constant enemy

Thankful also for being able to be any part of the Lord's work

- a. Frequency and fervency both are indicators of devotion - it is more dedication to praying and not just an endorsement of prayer - give yourself to prayer (as in "it's what you do")
- b. In the text of Eph. 6:18, prayer follows the listing of the spiritual armor, and in that context demonstrates prayer for what it is... an ongoing line of communication in the battle
- c. Praying is core to fulfilling Prov. 3:6, "In all your ways acknowledge Him..." - to "acknowledge Him" in this verse is literally to "know Him" - prayer is key to this process in recognition of His presence/watching and asking His will while expressing ours (submissively) - prayer is also the requests, seeking direction for fulfilling all the commands/instructions that have preceded
- d. "...keeping alert in it..." from "γρηγορέω" a word for staying alert/awake (so focused) - this is understandable when we consider the work we are actually in - prayer is the active part of alertness (what it actually looks like to be "watchful")
- e. In trying to better describe this watchfulness, John Gill wrote, "... a watchfulness in it, which is opposed both to sleepiness of body, and to coldness and indifference of mind, to all careless airs and negligent manner of performing it; and designs an intenseness of mind, an application of thought, and fervency of devotion, and affection in it."
- f. Prayer is also to always include thanksgiving (ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ, with gratefulness) - it is an appreciation of what has already been given and for what will be given/done (anticipation)

2. Pray for an open door for the word/Word - vs. 3

Note that it is analogized as "a door" which is a normal point of entry, versus differing types of forced entry (illegitimate, not normal)- the Gospel presentation needs to be seen as normal and not forced (on our part)

The reason for his imprisonment was known "throughout the Praetorian guard" and instilled courage in other Christians to share the Gospel

- a. The sense in connection with verse 2 is, "and while you are praying, pray for us" and this, specifically - note carefully his prayer request and consider if we ever pray like this
- b. Paul's wording is that "a door for the word" be opened - this carries two ideas, that he and his team have an opportunity to speak (word), with the particular opportunity that it (the speaking opportunity) be the Word
- c. Paul references the Gospel as "the mystery of Christ" (as also mentioned in 1:27) - the mystery now revealed that salvation could come to all peoples, and the most significant part of this revealed mystery being that the salvation would come by means of the Son of God (His work applied and not human effort) - summed up as "Christ in you the hope (expectation) of glory"
- d. Paul clearly knows it is because of this "word" (message) that he was imprisoned (still) - if this was the same time as when he wrote Philippians, then we know he even had a significant opportunity for this in prison itself - see Php. 1:12-14

3. The last detail to pray for, that when he has this door of opportunity, that he is clear - vs. 4

Understanding the magnitude of the message, he was not self-reliant

Note also that Paul says this differently where he wants to speak "boldly, as I ought to speak" in Eph. 6:20

- a. Note the careful wording though - "clear" is not to be seen as a subjective word (clear to Paul) - it must be clear as, of course, he ought to speak - he was not confident in himself
- b. There is nothing noble in using ambiguous or overly complex terms - the goal is that it be clear/understandable - some who are either proud (desiring to sound intellectual or above others) or are those trying to hide what the Gospel truly includes (and so are vague and not specifically clear) - see also I Cor. 2:3-5

B. Live a life (conduct) of wisdom, and providing well-seasoned responses (and that with grace) - vs. 5-6

1. To "walk in wisdom", in this context, is more than being or seeming smart - it is to be insightful

We are to live ever aware of our being watched (by those "outside")... not resentful or afraid, but seeing opportunities

see II Cor. 5:17-21 - this is who and what we are, and this "wisdom" is our strategic thinking in how we go about this calling

Consider how to best represent the Gospel (unadulterated) and yet as a positive answer to those with whom we get to share it

- a. Not in a deceitful sense, but in a strategic sense, always aware of the spiritual cause in which we live, for which we live - as will be dealt with in verse 6, this deals (quite often) with our speech - it is, though, inclusive of our overall conduct - compare to Mt. 10:16
- b. The "without" are those not in Christ (not in/of the Church) - ours is more than a life of just "living by the rules" and posturing ourselves as though we are agreeable to the rightful (deserved) judgment on the lost - we are (agreeable) theologically as in keeping with the holiness of God, but are also, in keeping with His love and mercy, desiring for the lost to be saved... sinners to repentance - we are not (now) judges, but are messengers, ambassadors for Christ
- c. Too many see themselves more in keeping with the Old Testament prophets (as far as in calling down judgment), though the prophets also sought for reconciliation (via repentance)
- d. So, don't stand personally in condemning judgment of them neither become like them, for there is a difference between God's wisdom and worldly wisdom

It is patience to wait for God-given opportunity and then the diligence and insight to seize it when it comes

A similar verse dealing with speech/communication is in Eph. 4:29, yet more with a "let not" approach - not allowing "corrupt communication" out of our mouths, but only that which is constructive and "administers grace to the hearer" (it is served up graciously)

This may seem to be an overly burdensome task, yet we are to take all conversations seriously and constantly be preparing ahead of time - we all need to work at being skilled conversationalists

So much of our learning and thinking is to be for the purpose of conversations and answers to others - it is an ongoing ministry for all of us and one to be constantly being equipped for

The message (especially the Gospel) is never altered, just served-up with discernment of the conversation, the hearer(s) and the setting

It is to be speech as I ought, not as I feel

d. We are to be maximizing each opportunity, eagerly watching for them to use them fully/wisely, as a farmer in planting and harvest time (both deliberate investments), or with the enthusiasm of a shopper looking passed inconveniences to take advantage of a "super-sale"

2. Communicate with grace, using well-seasoned speech - vs. 6

- a. Still in the line of thought with "conduct yourself with wisdom toward outsiders" Paul lays out how they are to approach others (which can include "insiders"... Christians) - speaking is never to be a practice done without preparation - we could look on this verse as we look on food prep and delivery - guests are graciously treated and the food prepared to their liking (or more so, for us, to/for their need) - see Ecc. 10:12, Pro. 16:21-24
- b. It is too easy (too normal/common) to react to others ungraciously either because of their approach (lacking grace/graciousness) or because their speech or conduct is offensive/disagreeable to us - to "react" is to act impulsively/emotionally (and so typically contains little pre-thought (preparation), while "responding" is deliberate, thoughtful and considers ahead the consequences of what is about to be said - it "thinks before you speak") - see Mt. 12:34-35
- c. Along with graciousness, it is "seasoned with salt," an analogous phrase basically meaning it is tasty, not dull - its goal, as with seasoning food, is to get the consumer to take another bite and to continue - note I Peter 3:15 (preparedness (defense), including gentleness)
- d. Eadie, illustrating this concept when dealing with outsiders (in I Pet. 3:15), "...so that he at once he might receive enlightenment and impression, be charmed out of his hostility, reasoned out of his misunderstanding, guided out of his difficulty, awakened out of his indifference, and won over to the new religion under the solemn persuasion that it was foolish to trifle any longer with Christianity, and dangerous anymore to oppose the claims divine revelation..."
- e. The reason for all this prep and practice is for the purpose of discerning (recognizing) how each person is to be answered - different people with different life situations and differing questions will need to be treated and responded to differently - the content of our message is consistent, but its delivery will fluctuate with the person being talked with
- f. This is how Paul ends his teaching/exhorting section of this letter, so it sums up and finalizes the end/objective he was aiming at - we grow (are grown) not just for our own good, but to be so used as God's ministers/messengers to others - it must be taken seriously!

XV. Faithful, Good Friends, Fellow Ministers - 4:7-18

A. Paul is about to list his faithful few, introducing them, pointing them out with key traits

Bold	1. These were those who stood with him while he was in prison - they were not dominated by fear nor the pursuit of popularity (as if security and fulfillment is to be found there)
Selfless	2. These were of a heart to minister to others a. They were drawn to Paul for opportunities to learn - far too many come to spiritual leaders as opportunists or that are impatient to learn (or not <u>thorough</u> in it) b. They were drawn to Paul for opportunities of service (the Lord's work to/for others)
Alert	3. They were men responsive/submissive to God's leading - they would learn, follow and then lead a. They would learn what true leadership is - primarily, servants of the Lord, promoting His message, His work, His glory/honor (none of these, theirs) - His legacy b. Paul was a source of direction to them and they were faithful to it (not seeking prestige)
Obedient	4. These were those who went where they were sent (not their own bosses)
Loyal	5. They were those not out to vie for power (knowing true power was in the Truth not themselves)
Faithful	6. They were men entrusted with a message (the Message/Gospel), to carefully/accurately share it
Motivated	7. They were men with burdens for God's work (realizing the privileged calling/assignments)

B. Tychicus - vs. 7-8

1. He was sent to give an account of Paul and his team's dealings
 - a. He could not be a man given to exaggeration (a messenger, not a story teller)
 - b. He would also have to be an encourager since Paul was in prison
2. He was called by Paul "beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow slave"
 - a. Paul clearly references him as one deeply loved/appreciated (a true friend) - Paul shows his value to the Colossians in sending one so close to him (and one trustworthy)

Not a seeking to escalate anger against Rome/Jews nor a fear monger

Those truly faithful demonstrate consistency, not simply declare it

It is a "military devotion"

The sense of accountability is essential in keeping one focused/faithful

Often, gossip spreaders are not open to correction - there is nothing wrong in trying to "set the record straight" with others

see also Eph. 6:21-22

b. Tychicus was proven "faithful", carrying with it the idea of dependability - note Pro. 25:19

c. To be faithful, he had to be characterized as one not to give-up on the ministry/cause

3. It was this type of man Paul was looking for "ministry" to be passed on to - note II Tim.2:1-6

a. A "faithful man" is one who will pass on the faith to other "faithful men"

b. Faithfulness is seen/proven in "enduring hardships"

c. It is non-entanglement with "the affairs of this life" - "entangled" from ἐμπλέκω, "...entwined or involved so thoroughly that freedom of movement or single-minded purpose is hindered."

d. The driving motive of faithfulness is to be pleasing "to the one who called us" into service

4. He was a "fellow slave" so a slave working with/for other slaves in the Master's service

a. His service would be that of a messenger back to Paul which would, then, act as a point of accountability - one major part of ministry/service is the reminder of accountability

b. He would let them know "about our circumstances" so that false impressions/conclusions could be addressed - the best way to deal with malicious gossip is by confronting it (though this might only need to involve those impacted by it... not always those spreading it)

c. All this to "encourage your hearts" - this encouragement is standing with others, comforting them with truth and camaraderie in the battles/struggles of life - often, "bad news" (true or not) can come to dominate thinking/focus, and some like Tychicus come and help put things in their correct perspective (in faith)

C. Onesimus - vs. 9

1. He was an escaped slave led to Christ by Paul in Rome (as dealt with in Philemon)

• He was willing to return to his earthly master - he did what was right/best - he was now "one of you" (the church at Colosse)

2. He, as a result of his conversion, faced God-given responsibilities - he returned to what he had fled (positionally) and as a result it opened up to him new opportunities

• Fear stifles/stops/stagnates... faith keeps us moving/progressing

D. Aristarchus - vs. 10

1. Paul references him as a "fellow prisoner" - he is also seen in Acts 19:21-41 as one dragged by a mob into a "theatre" likely to be beaten or killed (though he survived)

He was proven also to be a true friend, suffering and willing to suffer with Paul in this work

a. It is not certain if he was literally in prison with Paul (though it is safe to assume), and if not, he was clearly (because of his close association with Paul and the amount of time he was with Paul) "captive" for the cause

b. He was clearly one who was "all in" for the work of Christ and His church

2. He is also mentioned in Acts 20:4 accompanying Paul with the gift for Christians in Jerusalem

a. This was also a dangerous trip - he had to be a man of courage and loyalty

b. A "fair-weather friend" is not a true friend at all!

E. Mark - vs. 10

1. Mark had accompanied Paul on his first ministerial journey - Acts 12:25

a. At some point he turned back (he left the team) - Acts 13:13 - this was apparently for poor reasons (possibly fear) and because of this, Paul and Barnabas later disagreed and separated when Barnabas wanted Mark to rejoin them (Acts 15:36-41)

Failures do not have to define us, but our responses to them do. Mark was not defeated by his failures - see Pro. 24:16

b. At some point Mark had been proven faithful again and was considered useful in ministry (II Tim. 4:11) - Peter also mentions him in I Pet. 5:13

2. As to Mark, Paul specifically tells them to "receive him" (welcome him)

a. Paul had apparently provided special instructions concerning Mark and we do not know what the content was - it is commonly believed by many that this was dealing with the resolution between Paul and Mark (that things had been resolved/restored)

It is oddly encouraging to see that relational conflicts also happened in the early church, but that ones like these were resolved

b. They were to be receptive/welcoming of him (if he was able to come)

c. We have so many relationships in the church that fail (unresolved conflicts), but it is of exceptional joy and relief when some (though few) are restored - some resolutions wrongly compromise truth/right, but these end up eating away at the soul/purpose/integrity

F. Justus - vs. 11 (one who demonstrates "encourager" possibilities)

1. Justus and Mark were the only two Jewish believers ("fellow workers for the kingdom of God") who were encouraging (from παραγορία a word used also as a medical term (to "alleviate")), and here, picturing a soothing/calming in times of pain/stress

2. There were others who “preached Christ” but who had other (selfish) motives - we see such in Php. 1:15-17 - their motives were, at best, questionable - Paul could “rejoice” that at least Christ was being preached (even though by those with self-serving purposes), yet he was not comforted by these
- Justice clearly encouraged Paul (mainly because their focus/agenda/motives were the same)- much of our encouragement throughout life will come from being with others seeing life the same way, for the same purpose... so with the same priorities/perspectives

It is likely he had an objective to encourage Paul

G. Epaphras - vs. 12-13

Col. 1:7

1. He was one of their own (from their church) - he came to Paul to give a report of things at Colossae and in so doing became (stayed on as) a learner (disciple) - he looks to have been a man of initiative (not one to idly stand by) and would be an example of an authority under authority (accountable)
2. Paul identifies him as a “slave of Jesus Christ”

It ought to be our goal to make this position of ourselves obvious for others to see - independence or self-rule must not be what we demonstrate

- a. And so, this would make it clear to all understanding the significance of not only this “slavery” but the significance of his master - as a slave his will was to be wholly invested in the one he served (the one owning him)
- b. They would now expect that he would work for/toward an agenda that was not his own- being one of their own, he would be an excellent example of how they were to see themselves
- c. Our lives are to be ones that are always on the lookout for the next point of obedience (as all slaves were to do) - compare to Gal. 1:10

3. He was a man of an unquestionable burden/concern for their well-being (mainly spiritual)

Paul identified his character as one praying for others... not himself

- a. He was described as “always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers” - the Greek word for “laboring” being “ἀγωνίζομαι” (as in agonizing in fighting/struggling for someone) - his working for them was in his prayers first of all (which is the way a true burden for another can be seen - those we care for most (are most concerned for) we will be praying for)
- b. He was a slave burdened for the burden of his Master - this burden was for their maturity and continued growth - the content of his prayers for them being that they “stand (established) mature” (τέλειος, complete, so fully equipped for life and the opportunities and challenges to come) - it’s the difference between a child and an adult as far as readiness for life - the opposite are those catering to the “weaker” (fearing their reactions and so controlled by them (the “weaker”)) - faith is often so “weak” or unfocused that even prayers are weak, praying that circumstances be easier so the weak don’t fully rebel, rather than praying for their actual strengthening proven in the growth challenges God takes them through - see Jude 1:24-25
- c. The second focus of Epaphras’ prayer was that they be “fully assured in all the will of God” - “The thought is the attentive obedience which holds sacred each detail of the Master’s orders” CBN - “fully assured” from “πληροφορέω” which basically describes one fully persuaded and so fully trusting

See Php. 3:12-15 where Paul describes how the “mature” think and what they aim for (always improving/growing) and also Heb. 5:12-14- prayers are to be more for the thinking and focus of our fellow Christians to be on unshakable things

This aspect of faith in God’s will (all of it, every detail) is seen in the life of Abraham in Rom. 4:18-22

4. In summary (understanding the content of this letter), was that they not be deceived...

The “spirituality” defined more by what one does not do

All of this in keeping with Paul’s prayer for them in Col. 1:9

Who around us has such a burden for our spiritual growth and strength and are we so burdened for others?

- a. By spiritual elitists such as the Judaizers - that “spirituality is gained/defined by self-effort/works, or even by the amount of material things one avoids
- b. Not deceived by those downplaying/undermining Christ’s authority (those denying the deity of Jesus Christ) - this must never be out of balance (that Jesus was fully man and fully God)
- c. Not deceived by their own inclinations (e.g., misguided affections), understanding that the pain of the death of carnal inclinations is a good thing - as seen in Col. 3
- d. So that the reality of all this would be seen even in their closest earthly relationships (family)
- e. His concern (heart) for them was genuine and strong as testified by Paul - we need more like this around us and we need to recognize their value (rather than resent them)

H. Luke, Demas sent their greetings also - vs. 14

1. Luke was “the beloved (deeply loved) physician” - it would seem apparent that Paul was not against those trained in the medical sciences (as if only the gift of healings be sought by Believers) - Luke was also a documenter of events (being the writer of Acts) - he was one of the few still with Paul to the last - II Tim. 4:11 - Luke was also the writer of the Gospel of Luke
2. Demas also sent greeting, though a later reference to him (II Tim. 4:10) tells of his departure from Paul (and the faith) motivated by “loving this present age” - we are not given any more details if this love of “this age” was evidenced in his fear of persecution and sacrifice, or if he just loved living for this life so much that he sought something more lucrative and naturally appealing

I. Greet those in Laodicia and share what has been taught - vs. 15-16

1. These churches are a good example of how things started and even, to some degree, what we long to have again (in a genuine way... versus just official organizations/structures)

The true Church is united whether its members recognize it or not - our encouragement should be focused on God's continually building His Church and our fortunate part in it

- a. Paul wanted the Believers in Laodicia to know his concern and love for them also and this was to be communicated by the Believers (the Church) in Colossae.
- b. The unity of the true Church (universal... the "Body of Christ") needs to be recognized by all - too often focus is placed on how divided the Church appears to be, even competitive at times
- c. These are "brothers" - Paul never indicated any idea of a comparing church to church in a competitive way - they were to support each other and see themselves as united, though each one was to be led/guided directly by qualified leadership

2. The church in Laodicia is described first as "brethren" and then "also" those (the church) meeting in the house of "Nympha" - it may have been another "church" within Laodicia, or this is where the entire church met

There is some controversy as to whether "Nympha" was a man or woman - it makes no difference for many women were used of God in such ways

- a. Churches did not start with their own buildings/properties - houses (especially of those well-off financially) were used - clearly, these families had to be hospitable to make such an offer and then to house the local church in this way
- b. This is another reminder that the "Church" is made up of people and not property

3. Paul wanted this letter shared with the church in Laodicia - vs. 16

The process of forming the "New Testament" was very "organic" (normal) yet divinely produced

- a. The way this is stated shows that the letters were typically read aloud to those present - this would also be a type of accountability (all hearing it together)
- b. We see also how the "canon" of the New Testament was being formed - it would be made up of letters and Gospels from Apostles or those approved/validated by them
- c. A letter from Paul to the Laodicians was also to be shared with them - we do not know what this letter was (for certain), many speculating that it was the letter to the Ephesians

J. A special exhortation to Archippus - vs. 17

1. Archippus is also mentioned in Philemon 1:2 and is believed to be the son of Philemon - there he is called a "fellow soldier"

We no longer have direct appointments by the Lord to us, but we are to treat the admonitions given through-out Scripture with the authority as coming from the Lord for us to obey

- a. It is also believed he may have been leading the Church at Colossae in the stead of Epaphras or along with him
- b. His "ministry" (service) was "from the Lord" - this looks to be more than a casual use of this phrase and looks to have some type of special ordination with it - he was to pay special attention to this ministry (high priority) - this was going to be read before everyone

2. He was to "take heed" specifically to "fulfill it" (finish it to the end)

- a. This may also have been communicated this way to empower him (to demonstrate his special responsibility (and so accountability) to the Lord... not the people)
- b. It is helpful for us all to recognize, first, our personal answerability to the Lord in obedience before we defer to the wishes and preferences of each other

K. Paul ends and signs the letter personally - vs. 18

1. Paul takes up the pen from his scribe and writes this final line of greeting - this made it personal and was also a way to authenticate it as being from him
2. His conclusion seeks their "remembering" his imprisonment - it would promote particular care and concern for him along with a reminder of the high costs that often come in the work of the Lord
 - a. Circumstances like this help maintain a serious focus in life - it wards off a lazy approach to responsibility and helps weed out pretenders
 - b. He ends as he began - "Grace to you" - God's goodness and enablement in the work