

COLOSSIANS

PART ONE: Introduction (1:1-14)

A. Greetings (1:1-2)

1. The author is Paul and this reminds us that God uses people to communicate His purpose.
2. He is stated to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.
 - a. The word "Apostle" means that He was one sent by Jesus Christ. This means that his message was to be recognized and responded to by obedience of those who received it.
 - b. His authority as an Apostle is by God's will and not by his own will or choosing.
3. The fact that Paul was an Apostle pertained to not just His authority but to the fact that this was his spiritual gift.
 - a. Paul knew his spiritual gift which was Apostle and reminds us that we need to know our spiritual gift(s).
 - b. This reminds us that all of us as believers have at least one spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7).
 - c. The words "of Jesus Christ" remind us that our spiritual gift is for Christ's use and not our own use.
 - d. Our spiritual gift is God's will or choosing and not our own (1 Cor. 12:11, 18).
4. Timothy is identified as "our brother".
 - a. No matter how spiritually great we may be, we need other believers.
 - b. We as believers belong to a spiritual family by faith in Christ (John 1:12).
5. The recipients of the letter are clearly identified.
 - a. They are referred to as "saints." This means that they are holy and sanctified in their identity or positional standing. It means that they are set apart for God's special purposes. We are reminded that we are special to God.
 - b. They are referred to as "faithful brethren". This would be better translated "believing brethren" as in the NIV marginal reading. This emphasizes our family relationship to one another.
 - c. "who are at Colossae" tells us where these believers are located. There is a need for believers to identify with one another in a given locality and not isolate themselves.
6. Grace and peace are to be our desire and prayer for one another and for ourselves as believers. The source of these is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The way that this is worded shows that they are co-equal as the source of this grace and peace. This supports other scriptures that clearly teach that Jesus is God.
 - a. Grace needs to be appropriated for Christian living. We begin the Christian life by grace (Col. 1:6; 2:6) and are to continue it by grace through faith. Grace is to permeate our thought life (Col. 3:16: thankfulness=grace) and our speech (Col. 4:6). We appropriate this grace by faith with an attitude of humility (Jas. 4:6) through the use of prayer (Heb. 4:16).
 - b. Peace here is not dealing with the peace with God which all believers have (Rom. 5:1). Peace is dealing with peace in our thoughts and emotions and peace in getting along with other people. Christ offers us a peace which the world can counterfeit but not duplicate (John 14:27). Even though we face suffering in this world, we can experience peace through the word of Christ. By refusing to worry and continuing to

COLOSSIANS

go to God in prayer with specific requests and thanksgiving, we are promised a peace which defies human understanding to guard our thoughts and emotions through Christ (Phil. 4:6-7). In relation to others, we are to pursue peace with one another as believers (Rom. 14:19) and with other people (Rom. 12:18) – saved or unsaved.

B. Gratitude for their response to the gospel (1:3-8)

1. 1:3 – “We give thanks” – The word “we” (Paul and Timothy) shows the need for collective prayer among believers which requires coming together to pray. Thanksgiving needs to permeate our prayer life (cp. Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2).
2. 1:3 – “To God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” – Prayer is to be directed to God and not to people.
3. 1:3 – “Praying always for you” – Prayer is to be regular and persistent (Dan. 6:10; Ps. 55:17; Luke 18:1). Prayer is to be for specific people.
4. 1:4-5a – “Since we heard” – What we hear about other believers’ growth and what they have in Christ should give us reason to give thanks in our prayers for them in these specific things which are measures of maturity.
 - a. faith – This would encompass their initial faith in Christ for salvation (Eph. 2:8-9) and their continuing living by faith in Christ’s power and direction after salvation (Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:6).
 - b. love for all believers – seeking to bring about the likeness of Christ in other believers. Notice that our love is to be for all believers and not just those in our social circle, doctrinal group or denomination. This is to include the unlovable as well as the lovable. We are to thank God as we see manifestations of love by any believer for any other believer.
 - c. hope laid up for us in heaven – Our hope is not merely a desire concerning the future but is a certain expectation and anticipation. The words laid up are perfect tense in the Greek which means we received this hope at a point of time with ongoing results. This is spoken of in 1 Peter 1:3-4 in which we are told that our hope is imperishable which means death and decay cannot take it away. It is also undefiled which means it will not be ruined by sin. We can add that it will not fade away or lose value or meaning with passing of time. Finally, it is reserved in heaven for us. It is to be given to us when Jesus returns (Tit. 2:13) which will make us like Christ in character (1 John 3:2) and body (Phil. 3:21). We are to thank God for the fact that believers have this hope or expectation and how it is impacting their lives.

COLOSSIANS

5. 1:5b-7 – The gospel

- a. means by which we know our hope
- b. is part of the word of truth
- c. “Has come to you”. . . . “all the world” – must be brought to people through personal sharing of the gospel, local evangelism and missionaries. The phrase “all the world” carries the idea that it had spread over the known world of that time in the Roman empire.
- d. “Constantly bearing fruit and increasing” – This speaks of changed lives and spiritual growth in the areas of faith, love and hope – emphasizes quality.
- e. This growth starts the day we receive the gospel by faith by hearing and understanding the truth or reality of God’s grace, i.e. His goodness that we do not deserve.
- f. “Just as you learned it from Epaphras”

Rom. 10:14-15	Col. 1:6-8
Sent	On our behalf (8)
Preach	Learned (7)
Heard	Heard (6)
Believe	Understood the grace of God in truth (6)

In order for someone to come to faith in Christ, someone must share the gospel with them.

6. 1:7-8 – Epaphras is “Our beloved fellow bond servant”

- a. A “bond-servant” (Deut. 15:12-18) is willing to work under the direction of other believers (Eph. 5:18, 21).
- b. The description “fellow” shows that this bondservant is equal to other believers even though he is voluntarily submitting to them.
- c. “Beloved” shows that this believer was lovable.
- d. Spiritual leaders need those who are willing to follow directions in order for their ministry to be effective.
- e. Spiritual leaders need to utilize other believers to enhance God’s work and not try to do it all themselves.

7. 1:7-8 – “A faithful servant of Christ on our behalf”

- a. The word “servant” emphasizes that I am here to be used by Christ rather than to use Christ.
- b. “Faithful” demonstrates consistency and steadiness in service for Christ.
- c. The words “of Christ” stress the need to have the right object in our service. It is not to meet our needs but rather the needs of Christ. In addition, it is to exalt Christ not self.
- d. Since this service is said to be “on our behalf”, it will benefit other believers.
- e. The words “He informed us of your love” show how a servant encourages other believers with specific ways that he sees other believers growing. This would include their love for all believers mentioned in v. 4 and the working of the Holy Spirit with God’s word in their lives (1:5-6 cp. Gal. 5:22-23).

COLOSSIANS

C. Prayer for growth (1:9-14)

1. 1:9a – Pointers for effective prayer

- a. The words “For this reason” emphasize that the motivation for Paul’s prayer for them in vv. 9-14 is motivated by how mightily God’s word and God’s Spirit have already worked to produce faith, love and hope in their lives through the labors of Epaphras.
- b. The word “also” demonstrates that Paul did not stop at thanksgiving for what God was doing in their lives but prayed for God to do specific things for them.
- c. The words “since the day we heard of it” would remind us that specific prayer for specific believers is based on being informed concerning how God is working in their lives and their needs in the area of spiritual development.
- d. The words “not ceased to pray” like the word “always” in v. 3 speak of continuous prayer not continual prayer. Continuous prayer is prayer for other believers that occurs at regular times.
- e. The words “for you” would remind us that prayer is to be for specific believers and not just general. Notice that the requests that follow in vv. 9b-14 are specific requests.

2. 1:9b-14 Specific requests and thanksgiving

- a. Being “filled with the knowledge of His will” is the first specific request. This would suggest that something might have been lacking in their knowledge of God’s will. The same Greek word for “filled” is translated “complete” in Col. 2:10 which emphasizes that they have everything that they need in Christ. However, the problem is that they – and we by extension – need to know how to respond to what they have in Christ. To illustrate, we can have a complete set of tools, but we may not know how to use them.
- b. The phrase “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” represents two areas in which their knowledge of God’s will needs to grow. Wisdom is more than knowing God’s will through His word but putting it into practice as well. Understanding is about knowing how God’s word fits together with other parts of God’s word and how it fits to our life situation. This is why the study and the teaching of the word are important.
- c. The phrase “so that you make walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” is the purpose of the request for a thorough knowledge of God’s word in wisdom and understanding. That purpose is a lifestyle that accurately reflects the character and ministry of our Lord. This is to be done in specific ways: (1) to please Him (lit. “pleasing Him”) in all respects. The idea is to bring all parts of our life in subjection to Christ. (2) A worthy walk is demonstrated by every kind of good deed. These works do not save (Eph. 2:8-9) but as Eph. 2:10 explains are a result of living the new life. (3) The phrase “increasing in the knowledge of God” helps one to ask if he or she is seeking to know God better by spending time in prayer and Bible study and letting him make changes in one’s life.

COLOSSIANS

- d. The next request is that we are to be strengthened with all power. This would refer to “all kinds of power” as the word “all” is translated in Mt. 5:11. This is not power as measured by human exertion but in keeping with the superabundant power of Christ. Notice that the purpose of this power is not the spectacular or miraculous but changes in the believer’s character in the areas of: (1) steadfastness which is the ability to stay in fellowship with God during testing, (2) patience which is being able to endure without complaining, (3) joy being shown in steadfastness and patience.
- e. The words “giving thanks” would remind us that we have specific items for which we need to thank God. This thanksgiving is to be addressed to God the Father which shows a relationship to Him which is necessary for answered prayer (John 1:12). Note the specific items for which we are to thank God: (1) qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. The verb tense of “qualified” speaks of an unrepeatable past act by Christ’s finished work. Christ’s work qualified us to share in an inheritance. This inheritance is based on a relationship which was established by the new birth which is mentioned in 1 Peter 1:3-4. This inheritance is of the saints, i.e. believers. (The term “saints” refers to those who have been sanctified in standing by their faith in Christ (Acts 26:18). The phrase “in light” describes our inheritance in contrast to the domain of darkness. (2) The next item of thanksgiving is the fact that God has delivered us from the domain of darkness. The Greek word for “domain” sometimes translated “power” is normally translated “authority”. This realm is the world which is ruled by Satan and his demons (Eph. 6:12; 1 John 5:19). Acts 26:18 explains that this occurred when we trusted Christ for salvation. We believers are no longer under Satan’s authority. (3) Another reason we are to be thankful is that God did not just save us out from under Satan’s authority but transferred us into the kingdom of His Son. Presently the kingdom functions as a spiritual kingdom and not as a political kingdom (John 18:36) and is said to be in the midst of this present dark world (Luke 17:21). We enter that kingdom by the new birth (John 3:3, 5) which God undertakes for us the moment we trust the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (John 1:12-13). In this we are also reminded that Jesus is the special object of God the Father’s love. (4) The final reason mentioned for giving thanks is the fact that we have redemption. The word translated redemption emphasizes being set free from the penalty of sin because of a payment given. That payment is the shed blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The “forgiveness of sins” clarifies that the redemption is the release or setting free from our sins and Col. 2:13 explains that this includes all our sins – past, present and future – and not just our past sins.

COLOSSIANS

PART TWO: The exalted Christ (1:15-23)

A. Christ's Character (1:15-19)

1. 1:15 – Christ is declared to be:

- a. The image of the invisible God: The Greek word for “image” would tell us that He is the perfect expression and representation of God. Christ is the visible member and revealer of the invisible God (John 1:18; 14:8-9).
- b. The firstborn of all creation: This does not mean that Christ was the first created being. The emphasis is on priority of position (not origin) in relation to creation. Israel is not the first nation but they are first in the reckoning of God (Ex. 4:22). Micah 5:2 states Christ was from everlasting. John 17:5 states that He kept on being with the Father prior to the creation of the world. In other words, there never was a time when Christ was created because He is eternal. Christ is the head of the church which is His new creation (Col. 1:18) and as the firstborn of all creation, He is the head of the old creation. Keep in mind that Christ is the head of the old creation, but part of it is in rebellion against Him. This means that even the angels as part of the old creation are subordinate to Him. A group of false teachers called the Gnostics were exalting angels and this along with Col. 1:16 and 2:18 are meant to refute this error.

2. 1:16 – The word “for” introduces the reason Jesus is the head (i.e. firstborn) of all the creation. The first word translated by most translations “by” is actually better translated “in”. The idea is that in Christ all things were created. This establishes Christ as the architect of all things that were created. In the last part of the verse that states that all things were created by Christ, a different word for “by” than the first word for “by” shows that Christ was the builder of all creation. In Rom. 11:36, God the Father is involved in a similar way. The first use of the word “created” is aorist tense in the Greek showing that the action took place at a fixed point of time. The second use of the word “created” is perfect tense showing that the action of Christ as the builder took place at point of time with ongoing results. Christ created all things visible (the material universe and the visible objects and life forms it contains) and the invisible (the angels – both fallen and unfallen - and the angelic realm, the third heaven where God dwells and the non-material part of human beings such as soul and spirit). The other words “thrones, dominions, rulers” and “authority” refer to the angels and their ranks. The fact that Christ is the creator of all of these establishes His lordship over all creation. Finally, we see that all things were created for Christ. This shows that both the animate (living such as angels and human beings and other living things) and the inanimate things (non-living things) exist to serve the purposes of Christ and not vice versa.

3. 1:17 – Christ is said to be “before all things”. This further emphasizes Christ’s headship over the whole creation because He preceded it (John 17:5; Mic. 5:2). This obviously includes the angels (Col. 1:16; Ps. 148:2, 5). We also see that in Christ everything holds together. This tells us that Christ sustains the creation. For example, what prevents the earth or the angels from falling or blowing apart? This clearly demonstrated Christ’s superiority over the angels and reminds us of our utter dependence on Him.

COLOSSIANS

4. 1:18 – Christ is the head of the body, the church which makes Him head over the new creation.

- a. Christ's spiritual body, the church, is formed by the Holy Spirit's baptizing work (1 Cor. 12:13).
- b. Christ is the head of this body – not angels, nor are angels in any way intermediate between Christ and His church (1 Tim. 2:5).
- c. Just as the body is the means by which our minds carry out their thoughts, so the church is the means by which Christ carries out His work.
- d. Christ is said to be "the beginning". The word can mean supremacy in rank, but that is probably not the meaning here because the word "head" would communicate that concept. It can also mean precedence in time. However, that meaning is probably not in view as v. 17 stated that "He is before all things." The word can also mean "source". Since this is tied to the fact of His headship over the church, this would fit well as Christ is the source of the church's existence. According to 1 Cor. 12:13, the church is formed by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit and Mt. 3:11 tells us that Christ is the source of this work as He is the baptizer and the Holy Spirit is the agent by which this baptism is accomplished.
- e. Christ is the firstborn from the dead. The term "firstborn" primarily emphasizes His rank more than the fact that He was the first one to be permanently raised from the dead. Other people in both the Old Testament and New Testament were raised from the dead before Christ was raised but subsequently died. However, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was unique in that He will not die again (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). To be the firstborn from the dead requires both that Jesus died and that He was raised from the dead. This is in keeping with Rom. 14:8-9 which declares Christ's headship over the dead and the living. The fact that the term "firstborn" is connected with beginning (source) show that Christ's death and resurrection are foundational to the existence of the church. Not only does Holy Spirit baptism unite us to Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) but also unites us to His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4 cp. Col. 2:11-12) so that we as the church share His death and His life.
- f. The phrase "so that He might have first place in everything" is based on the fact that Christ as God was the head, creator, sustainer and prior to the old natural Creation. In addition, through His death and resurrection He became the source and head of the church. These two facts gave Christ first place in everything because He already had headship over the old creation. Now He had first place over the new creation.

COLOSSIANS

5. 1:19 - Finally, we deal with the phrase in v. 19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." The word "For" explains God's reasons for Christ's headship over all things. These center around Christ's person, specifically His deity as supported by the words "all the fullness" and Christ's work of reconciliation (Col. 1:20-22) through His death. The words "it was the Father's good pleasure" tell us that the basis for this was God's sovereign will and plan in relation to Christ's deity and death. The phrase "for all the fullness to dwell in Him" is present tense meaning that all the fullness keeps on dwelling in Him. It fits with Col. 2:9 which states that all the fullness or completeness of the deity continues to dwell in Christ bodily. Therefore, He is all God not just half God. This part of v. 19 makes it clear that Jesus has every aspect – all the fullness not part of it – of deity. He does not just have some aspects of deity with the angels having the rest of the aspects. This summarizes Paul's argument in Col. 1:15-18 which showed Christ to be God and Lord in every aspect to creation, the angels and the church.

B. Christ's Cross Reconciles (1:20-23)

1. 1:20 – The provision – The first occurrence of the words "through Him" speak of Christ as being the means of reconciliation. When the verse speaks of reconciling all things to Himself (=God the Father), it speaks of the provision for reconciliation in the cross of Christ. The word "reconcile" means to change. What changed was that God had made a provision for human beings and all creation so that they can be in harmony with God. This makes it possible for people to be saved and creation restored to its former glory. The words "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" tell us that the reconciliation or change of relationship between God and people as well as God and creation was accomplished at the cross and through the bloodshed death of Christ. The words "all things" do not mean that all people will be saved as this reconciliation is like forming a bridge between Holy God and sinful people. Notice that fallen angels are not included in this reconciliation as the sphere "under the earth" mentioned in Phil. 2:10 is omitted. See also Mt. 25:41, 46; Jude 1:6. The second occurrence of "through Him" emphasizes that the word of changing the state of alienation was through Christ and Christ alone. The phrase "things on earth" tell us that the first sphere where reconciliation took place was the earth. The state of alienation of creation has been changed so that it can be restored. However, this restoration will not begin until believers are revealed at Christ's second coming and setting up the 1000 year kingdom (Rom. 8:19-23; Isa. 11:6-9; 35:1-7). The curse will be relieved but not removed at that time (Ezek. 47:8-11). The final removal of the curse awaits the new heaven and new earth following the 1000 year reign of Christ (Rev. 22:3). The phrase "things in heaven" (lit. "the heavens") reminds us that there is a state of alienation in the heavens because of the angelic rebellion led by Satan (Job 4:18; 15:15; 25:5). This state of alienation has been changed. The removal of the present heaven and earth in the future mentioned by 2 Peter 3:10-13 cp. Rev. 21:11 would tell us that their removal and the creation of new heavens and new earth will implement this reconciliation that was provided at the cross.
2. 1:21 – The past – The word "formerly" in the NASB introduces 3 things true of us before we experienced salvation when we appropriated by faith the reconciliation that Christ provided at

COLOSSIANS

the cross. These truths explain our need for reconciliation. The first term used to describe our problem is the word “alienated” (Greek “apelotriomenous” = belonging to another) which would refer to Satan’s domain in Col. 1:13. The second problem was that we were “hostile in mind”. This is simply a mental attitude opposed to God’s viewpoint of life. Col. 1:12-13 implies that our minds are now in spiritual light but were in the domain (literally “authority”) of darkness. The third term used is that we were “engaged in evil deeds” which shows the outgrowth of a mind hostile to God and belonging to another, i.e. Satan.

3. 1:22a – The present - The key words in this first half of v. 22 are “now reconciled you”. This shows that the receiving by faith of Christ’s provision of reconciliation or peace with God. The words, “in His fleshly body through death”, let us know that the death of Christ’s physical body was necessary to bring about our reconciliation.

4. 1:22b – The purpose – The words “in order to present you before Him,” i.e. God introduce 3 qualities that will be true of us believers when we are presented to God by Christ. Col. 1:23 indicates that the second coming of Christ would be the time of this presentation. The 3 qualities are:

- a. holy – completely set apart for God’s purposes and use.
- b. blameless – without visible sin.
- c. beyond reproach – beyond the point of any charge or accusation of sin that might be made.

5. 1:23 – The proof – This verse shows whether or not the reconciliation mentioned in verse 1:22a actually occurred or whether it was an empty profession of faith. The word “if” is a first class condition which assumes that these things will be true. There are four things mentioned. These do not save us or keep us saved. They are a future and present test to show whether or not we truly received the reconciliation in Col. 1:22a by faith in Christ. These four tests are:

- a. “continue in the faith” – The term “the faith” speaks of Christ’s commandments (Mt. 28:20) or Christ’s Law (1 Cor. 9:21). When the word “faith” is preceded by the word “the”, it carries the idea of the truths of the New Testament as in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 or Tit. 1:12-13 rather than saving faith, the faith by which we live our Christian lives after salvation, the spiritual gift of faith and faith for answered prayer. This test is consistent with 1 John 2:3-4 which shows that believers will generally and consistently - but not without lapses of sin - obey the commands of Christ.
- b. “firmly established” (lit. grounded) with the right foundation which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). Simply summarized: True faith for salvation continues.
- c. “steadfast” (or fixed or settled) – This clarifies that our adherence to the faith, i.e. the commands of Christ, will be firm but not necessarily flawless.
- d. “not moved away from the hope of the gospel” – cp. Col. 1:5 – A true believer will not abandon his expectation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel that he is referring to, is set forth in 1 Cor. 15:3-4 and Rom. 1:16. This is the gospel that the Colossians had heard. The fact that it was proclaimed in all creation refers to the fact that it was preached extensively in the whole Roman Empire unlike the false Gnostic gospel which had limited circulation. The term “all creation under heaven” like “every nation under heaven” in Acts 2:5 is used as an idiom which referred to the whole Roman Empire. Like Paul, we believers are servants of the gospel. The last 2

COLOSSIANS

items help evaluate whether or not the true gospel is being presented: They are Paul's Apostolic authority recorded in the Bible and a universal evangelistic thrust.

PART THREE: Christ's Workman (1:24-29)

A. Sufferings (1:24)

1. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake" - We must ask ourselves, are we willing to suffer and sacrifice to help other believers grow, or are we just concerned with our own comfort and feelings? Are we going to complain or rejoice as we experience these sufferings?
2. "in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church)"
 - a. Paul emphasized that his suffering was for the church to present everyone mature (Col. 1:28) and to promote a unity of love (Col. 2:1-2).
 - b. Again, we must ask for selves, are we willing to put the church and its Christlikeness, unity and love ahead of personal comfort, or are we willing to extend ourselves for it?
3. "filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"
 - a. This does not refer to Christ's suffering for sins because that was accomplished at the cross (Heb. 9:26-28; John 19:30; Heb. 10:10, 12, 14, 18),
 - b. Christ's sufferings on behalf of the church are still being completed as the church is persecuted (Acts 9:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:26). These sufferings do not in any way pay for sins but are a result of the fact that Christ and His body are inseparably united.
 - c. When it mentions the word "lacking", it is not saying that these sufferings are deficient. The TEV translation uses the words "what still remains". The point is that Christ's sufferings on behalf of His body are not finished, and there is more to be endured by His servants.

B. The church (1:24-25)

1. "His body (which is the church)" – In Col. 1:18 speaks of Christ's headship of the church. This verse is more focused on His ownership of the church so that in every respect, He has the right to direct the body individually and collectively.
2. "Of this church I was made a minister" – These words emphasize an attitude of being at the disposition of the church as a servant rather than as a lord. In order to be effective, a servant heart is essential.
 - a. "According to the stewardship from God" – This shows a God-given responsibility to Christ's church. The words "bestowed on me" let us know that was Paul's personal responsibility not to be delegated or pushed off on someone else. The phrase "for your benefit show us that Paul's responsibility – and by extension our responsibility – is not for personal gain or glory, but for that of the church. We need to see to edify (=make more Christlike) those in the church.
 - b. "that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God" – Paul's ministry was specifically to preach God's word, and it involved evangelism and instruction (cp. Col. 1:28). The words "fully carry out" are clarified in Rom. 15:19 where we can see that Paul had a large geographical area to cover and shows the missionary character of Paul's ministry and the ministry of the church.

COLOSSIANS

C. The preaching of the word of God (1:26-1:29)

1. God's word or message is called a mystery in vv. 26-27. In the New Testament, a mystery is not something which cannot be understood, but a truth previously concealed in the Old Testament but now revealed in the New Testament.
2. "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generation" – This mystery now revealed had been hidden from past groups of people and time periods. This shows the sovereignty of God in revealing His program and demonstrates the unfolding nature of Divine revelation.
3. "mystery" "has now been manifested to His saints" – This emphasizes that a mystery is a revealed truth previously concealed. We notice that it is revealed to believers not unbelievers.
4. "to whom God willed to make known" – It was by God's will and plan that this mystery was made known to New Testament believers.
5. "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery" – To put it in simple terms, it is saying how tremendously great is the praiseworthiness of this revealed truth, i.e. mystery.
6. "among the Gentiles"
 - a. Isaiah 49:6 – The Old Testament clearly reveals that the Gentiles were to be saved.
 - b. Eph. 3:5-6 – Gentiles were to be part of the same spiritual body as Jews. This was a newly revealed truth. John 14:20 expresses this relationship. The believers (including the Gentiles) are to be "in Christ" and Christ was to be in the believers (including the Gentiles). For this reason, the phrase "among the Gentiles" is included in Col. 1:27.
7. "Christ in you" – Rom. 8:9-10 and John 14:17, 20 suggests that Christ indwells the believer through the Holy Spirit. However, others see the deity of Christ as directly indwelling the believer. The fact that Christ would indwell each New Testament believer is the mystery that has now been revealed. The fact that He would indwell all believers – Jews or Gentiles – is even greater. In our study of Col. 3:11, we will see that this included other distinctions.
8. "the hope of glory" – What this is saying is that the fact that Christ indwells us is our certain hope (=expectation) of sharing His glory at His second coming (cp. Col. 3:4). This parallel between divine indwelling and future glory is also drawn in Rom. 8:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14.
9. "we proclaim Him" – The object of God's word is Christ and not moral or social issues and not taboos built on man-made spiritual commandments or pet doctrines.
 - a. "admonishing (=warning) every man" – This deals with the negative side of proclaiming Christ. This would be sin, eternal judgment and hell for unbelievers. For believers, this would be sin, God's discipline, loss of blessing and loss of future reward (not salvation). The emphasis is responding with faith and obedience to the information of God's word.
 - b. "teaching every man" – This deals with giving the needed biblical information for the purpose of evangelism of the lost and edification of believers.
 - c. "with all wisdom" – This admonition and teaching is to be proclaimed in a wise manner for both evangelism and instruction (Col. 3:16). This also makes it imperative that we as believers walk in wisdom meaning that we obey the truth of God's word (Col. 4:5 cp. Mt. 7:24-27).

COLOSSIANS

- d. “that we may present every man complete in Christ” – The aim of evangelism and teaching is to present everyone who responds positively as mature individuals as the outcome of our having proclaimed Christ. This rules out hit-and-run evangelism. There must be follow-up in order for this to occur after successful evangelism. Col. 2:6-7 teaches the sufficiency of Christ and His word for our salvation and for Christian living. God is not fully pleased if we just help a person trust Christ but do not disciple them to bring them to maturity.
10. “for this purpose” – This speaks of bringing people to salvation and then to maturity. This is why we should be working and struggling so hard.
- a. “I labor” – To evangelize and to do follow-up for the purpose of discipleship and maturity requires work and discipline on our part. It shows that this is to be active and not passive.
 - b. “striving according to His power” – The sacrifice, work and struggle we undergo to evangelize and instruct is to be in harmony with God’s working, not out of harmony with it. Otherwise, our efforts would be of the flesh.
 - c. “His power which mightily works within me” – This is the dependent aspect of a Christian’s work; whereas, “I labor” is the discipline aspect of the Christian’s work of evangelism and instruction. We must trust Christ to supply this power and to activate it within us. Notice that His power is not just working in us, but mightily working in us. In summary, since Christ indwells us, it is His power working within us that enables us to evangelize and instruct in a wise manner.

PART FOUR: Christ’s Wisdom (2:1-10)

A. Sufficiency of Christ’s wisdom (2:1-4)

- 1. “For” – This word introduces new thoughts but expresses itself as “for” in the sense of “because”. Because Paul had been working in harmony with Christ’s working in him to reach unbelievers for Christ and to disciple them to maturity, he wanted the churches to know the intensity of his struggle.
- 2. “I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf”
 - a. The struggle was tempered by discipline and dependence on his part to reach people for Christ and disciple them to maturity.
 - b. The struggle was on their behalf, i.e. for their benefit so that they would be occupied with Christ and not with strange doctrines. It also included the Laodiceans and everyone else who had not personally seen him.
- 3. “that their hearts may be encouraged” – This states the purpose of the struggle.
 - a. “having been knit together in love” – Their thinking was already encouraged by being united in their love for one another as believers.
 - b. Paul’s revealing and explaining his struggle to them would encourage their hearts.
- 4. “attaining to all the wealth”
 - a. This wealth is the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in 2:3.
 - b. This is the means of their hearts or thinking being encouraged.

COLOSSIANS

- c. “that comes from the full assurance of understanding” – This is the means by which we appropriate this wisdom and knowledge as we have complete conviction and confidence in understanding the sufficiency of Christ for knowledge of the mystery (=newly revealed truth) which is Christ Himself.
- 5. “resulting in true knowledge of God’s mystery”
 - a. The word “resulting” is in italics meaning it is not in the original text.
 - b. The complete confidence of understanding is in really knowing this mystery (=New Testament truth not revealed in the Old Testament).
 - c. We noted that this newly revealed truth is the very person of Christ Himself.
 - d. As we see the sufficiency of Christ for wisdom and knowledge, this helps us to readily see and understand that we do not need something else extra in the way of special light or knowledge. In this way our hearts or thinking is encouraged by laying the foundation for avoiding the cults and other false teachers who claim to have special knowledge or insight.
- 6. “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”
 - a. This shows why Christ Himself is sufficient and why extra-special knowledge is not needed.
 - b. The words “are hidden” tells us that this wisdom and knowledge is concealed from the unsaved (1 Cor. 2:14). However, it is less concealed from the carnal believer than the natural man (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The believer who is spiritual and demonstrates this by obedient living finds more disclosure or understanding as he obeys (John 14:21).
 - c. Not only does this show us Christ’s sufficiency but His deity as shown by the word “all” that He is the all-knowing God.
- 7. “I say this” – “This” refers to the fact that Paul has been struggling to encourage their hearts by helping them to fully understand with conviction the sufficiency of Christ for wisdom and knowledge.
- 8. “in order that no one may delude you with persuasive arguments”
 - a. This summarizes why Paul said what he did in Col. 1:28-2:3.
 - b. Paul said this to keep these believers from being deceived by the persuasive arguments of false teachers who would want them to add something more to Christ and His word. The arguments of false teachers can indeed be persuasive.
 - c. This statement in v. 4 shows that they had not yet been persuaded and deceived.

B. Christ’s wisdom requires faith for salvation and Christian living (2:5-7)

- 1. “For even though I am absent in body” – The word “for” indicates that this is a reason for what is said in v. 4. Paul, although he is physically absent, knows what these believers are going through and what they are encountering.
- 2. “nevertheless, I am with you in spirit”
 - a. Even though he was not personally present with them, his thoughts, concerns and prayers were with them.
 - b. He understood the persuasive pressure these believers were encountering.
 - c. The next phrase of this verse shows us that he knew where these believers were in their spiritual walk and their response to this persuasive pressure.

COLOSSIANS

3. “rejoicing” – Rather than being despondent by focusing on what was going wrong in these believers lives, he focused and built on what was right in their lives and rejoiced about it.
4. “to see” – The following qualities that these believers were showing were openly visible and should be visible in our lives as well. As a result, the church was maintaining a good front against the foe.
 - a. “your good discipline” – The word for “discipline” is “order” and is a military term. This false teaching had not caused them to break ranks and desert by embracing false doctrine. When such false doctrine works to destabilize us, we must show this quality and not leave the place where God has put us.
 - b. “stability of your faith in Christ” – One commentator stated, “their faith was stiff in adhering to one object”. In this case, they had stiffly adhered to depending on Christ day by day in the face of this destabilizing false teaching. Many believers have a wishy-washy faith which depends on Christ one day and on something else the next day. For this reason, when we like Paul see stable faith shown in another believer’s life should thank God as in Col.1:3-4. This living by faith forms the positive emphasis in Col. 2:6-7.
4. “therefore” - This word refers to the stability of their faith and its importance
5. “As you ... have received” – This shows that they received Jesus by faith (John 1:12), and they are to live the Christian life by faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20). This faith is in Christ’s person and word to supply the power to obey God’s word. The Greek verb tense shows that our faith in Christ occurred at a past point of time.
6. “Christ Jesus the Lord” – The object of our saving faith in Christ’s person is the fact that He is God for salvation and Christian living. To accept Christ as Lord or as God means that there is a sincere recognition that Christ is the final source of authority in the believer’s life. To define any god as less than the final source of authority would mean that the so-called god is not a god to the one who professes it to be a god. However, we must recognize that Jesus as God being the final source of authority in our lives does not mean that we are yielded in all respects. We accepted Him as Lord at salvation, but it is not yet fully activated and actualized. Otherwise, there would be no need for spiritual growth.
7. “so walk in Him” – This would be better translated “to continue or keep on walking in Him. The present tense in the Greek tells us that this is speaking of a continual action. The word “so” notes that we are to keep trusting Him for the power to obey just as we trusted Him at that point of time to save us from sin’s penalty. The words “in Him” emphasize that Christ is to be the object of our ongoing trust in His power just as He was the object of our trust when we received Him by faith as our savior. This also reminds us that our faith is not in “faith” itself but in Christ and His word.
8. “Having been firmly rooted” – In the Greek, this is perfect tense. It is a past completed action with present continuing results. This means that while we were saved at a point of time that we continue to be saved. Effective Christian living is not possible unless we are already saved. Notice that we are to be rooted “in Him”, i.e. Christ.
9. “now being built up” – This is talking about our spiritual growth. It is present tense in the Greek and speaks of a continuing action. This would tell us that our spiritual growth is a process not a quick instant fix. Being built up is the process of being made more and more like

COLOSSIANS

Christ. The passive voice of “being built up” and the words “in Him” shows our dependence on Christ Himself for this growth (cp. Col. 2:19).

10. “established in your faith” – The words “in your faith” are literally “in the faith” which speaks not of saving faith or the faith we live the Christian life by but speaks of the truths of the New Testament as in 1 Tim. 4:1-3 and Tit. 1:12-13.

- a. The word “established” talks of being stabilized and is continuing action. It is the word of God which gives this stability so that the believer is not carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).
- b. “just as you were instructed” – For the Colossians, the frame of reference for “the faith” (=truths of God’s word in the New Testament) was the Apostolic instruction. However, for us, it is the written word of God in the New Testament in particular.
- c. In summary, we are to walk (live our Christian life) in Christ after being saved, continuing to grow by depending on Him. Then we are to be continually stabilized by regular intake of God’s word.
- d. “overflowing with gratitude” – Effective Christian living based on dependence on Christ’s power and directed and stabilized by God’s word should result in thanksgiving. This is to characterize our lives as we see the Lord working in our lives.

C. Christ’s wisdom and His person (2:8-10)

1. “See to it that no one takes you captive” (i.e. enslaves you) – The words “see to it” form a warning. True freedom is in Christ and obedience to His word (John 8:31-32) and is not to be found in human viewpoint philosophy. According to Col. 2:5, they have good order (discipline) and stability of faith, i.e. fortified faith; but there is a real danger of being taken captive.

2. “philosophy and empty deception” – These words go together and point out that these can destabilize us. Not all philosophy is wrong, but the kind being spoken against here is wrong. There are 3 distinguishing marks of enslaving philosophy.

- a. “according to the tradition of men” – Some traditions are okay and are biblical (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6). However, other scriptures condemn man-made traditions especially when they add to or subtract from scripture (Mt. 15:2-3; Gal. 1:14 cp. Deut. 4:2).
- b. “according to the elementary principles of the world” – The basic principles of the world are found in 1 John 2:15-16: (1) the lust of the flesh (pleasure), (2) the lust of the eyes (possessions) and (3) the boastful pride of life (prominence). Here the basic philosophy involved prominence through man-made commandments incorporating the law of Moses, Jewish traditions (Col. 2:16-17, 20 cp Gal. 4:1, 9-10). Rom. 7:1-7 and 1 Cor. 9:20-21 make it very clear that we are not under the Law of Moses and certainly not any traditions associated with it (Mark 7:1-13). This heretical and unscriptural philosophy also involved devotion and worship of the elemental spirits (i.e. angelic beings) in charge of the elements or various parts of the universe (Col. 2:15, 18-19).
- c. “rather than according to Christ” – Wholesome philosophy is based on Jesus Christ which includes His person, His work and His word. The omission of these is a mark

COLOSSIANS

of enslaving philosophy. Enslaving philosophy might give Christ prominence but fails to give Him preeminence. The whole thrust of this heresy is that you need something more than Jesus Christ to effectively live the Christian life. However, the next verse answers this heresy and its modern day versions. Some of these practices include Ouija boards, transcendental meditation, astrology and movements which center attention on the Holy Spirit rather than the Lord Jesus (John 15:26; 16:14).

3. “For” – In v. 9 this word introduces the reasons that we do not need something more than Christ. Col. 2:9-10 focus on the person of Christ while Col. 2:11-15 focus on the work of Christ.

4. “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form”

a. All that constitutes God dwells in Christ as shown by the words “all the fullness of Deity”. Unlike the views of false teachers such as the Gnostics, this shows Christ is 100% God. False views that were facing the Colossians divided God’s essence (= the unique qualities that make God to be God) among a series of angels.

b. Christ’s Deity is united with a human body, and this is shown by the words “in bodily form” showing His humanity (see also John 1:14; Phil. 2:7; 1 John 4:1-3). Heb. 2:17 which employs the words “in all things” tells us that Jesus is 100% human in addition to His being 100% God.

c. The word “dwells” emphasizes continual truth. In other words, this Deity continues to dwell in Christ in bodily form. Christ has been God from eternity past (John 1:1; Phil. 2:6) but at a point of time became man and continues to be both God and man.

5. V. 10 tells us “In Him you have been made complete.

a. This speaks of past action at a point of time with ongoing results (Greek perfect tense).

b. By virtue of the fact that we are in Christ, we have been made complete. No one can add anything to completeness. We have everything that we need for salvation and for spiritual growth (2 Pet. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3; John 1:16). The believer does not grow by addition but by appropriation. Beware of those groups – both believers and cults who say you need something else. The application of Col. 2:10 is found in 2:6-7.

6. “He is the head over all rule and authority” - The terms “rule and authority” refer to angelic beings (Col. 1:16). Since Christ is the head over the entire angelic world and since we are complete in Him, the angelic world has nothing to offer the believer for salvation or godliness (cp. 2 Pet. 1:3). There is no need to deal with subordinates when the boss has given you everything you need and you can go directly to Him (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:16).

PART FIVE: Christ’s Work (2:11-15)

A. Change of our identity (2:11-12)

1. “And” - This connects the thoughts in vv. 11-15 with v. 10. This material in vv. 11-15 explains how Christ’s work has made us complete.

2. “in Him you were also circumcised” – False teachers were pushing actual circumcision as being required to receive salvation, or to retain salvation. In other cases, they would push it as a means of being more spiritual. However, the following phrases describe this circumcision as occurring at a fixed point of time (the Greek language uses the aorist tense).

COLOSSIANS

3. “with a circumcision made without hands” – This is obviously a spiritual circumcision and not a physical circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:2-3).
4. “in the removal of the body of the flesh” – The word translated “removal” is better translated “putting off”. This demonstrates that our sinful nature is not separated or removed from us when we trust Christ for salvation. It shows us that our sinful nature is no longer in a position to control us. The words “the body of the flesh” explain that the entire or whole sinful nature has been dethroned by this spiritual circumcision. This contrasts with physical circumcision which only dealt with a part (not the whole or body of) the flesh.
5. “by the circumcision of Christ” – This phrase shows us that Jesus Christ is the one who performs this spiritual circumcision. In summary this spiritual circumcision is the dethroning of the whole sinful nature but not its extinction.
6. “having been buried with Him in baptism” – This tells us how this spiritual circumcision which dethroned the sinful nature took place. This speaks of Holy Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). By means of this Holy Spirit baptism into Christ’s spiritual body, Rom. 6:1-10 explains to us that we share Christ’s death and that this work of the Holy Spirit broke the power of the sinful nature.
 - a. Christ died to sin.
 - b. Holy Spirit baptism united us with Christ’s death
 - c. Therefore, we died to (in the sense of having been separated from) the sinful nature and its power.
 - d. The Greek verb tense here in Colossians and in 1 Cor. 12:13 and Romans 6:1-10 speaks of an unrepeatable act (aorist tense in the Greek).
7. “in which you were also raised” – See also Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:4-6. This discusses our spiritual resurrection which occurs at the moment (Greek aorist tense shows that this is an unrepeatable experience) we trust Christ; whereas our bodily resurrection is future. Our spiritual resurrection is part of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. The word “also” communicates that this spiritual burial and resurrection were through the same baptizing experience. Col. 3:1-3 reminds us of what our response is to be to having been raised with Christ. We are to focus our thoughts on God’s ways and thoughts (heaven) rather than the world’s ways and thoughts (earth).
8. “through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead”:

Col. 2:12	Rom. 10:9
“through faith”	“believe in your heart”
“in the working of God”	“that God”
“who raised Him from the dead”	“raised Him from the dead”

This shows that this Holy Spirit baptism takes place when we place our faith in Christ for salvation.

B. Canceling our sins (2:13-14)

1. “And when you were dead” – speaks of our condition prior to salvation. We were spiritually dead or separated from God and lacked God’s life, i.e. eternal life.
2. “in your transgressions” – This state of separation from God showed itself by sinful actions.

COLOSSIANS

3. “the uncircumcision of your flesh” - This state of spiritual separation showed itself by a sinful nature which had not been dethroned or put off. This speaks of a lack of spiritual circumcision which deals with the sinful nature not physical circumcision. The remedy for this was our spiritual circumcision (Col. 2:11) accomplished by our identification via Holy Spirit baptism with the death of Christ (Col. 2:12).
4. “He made you alive together with Him” – This occurred at a time when we were up to that point spiritually dead. Even with forgiveness of sins and justification, we still would have been spiritually dead without the imparting of new life. The fact that this was “together with Him” shows that this being made alive was an experience made in identification with Christ and refers to the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:13).
- 5 “having forgiven us all our transgressions” - The problem of being dead in transgressions is dealt with by forgiveness. This forgiveness extends to all – past, present and future – our sins so that they will no longer spiritually kill us. This forgiveness is received by simple faith (Acts 10:43). The Greek verb tense of “having forgiven” is simultaneous with being “made alive”.
6. “having cancelled out the certificate of debt” – The term “certificate of debt” was a familiar term to the Roman world. If you did a crime, you owed Caesar your life, your hand or 40 lashes depending on your crime. This was your certificate of debt. Here Paul is obviously using this imagery with the Law of Moses.
7. “consisting of decrees” – This phrase demonstrates that the Law of Moses is referenced here.
 - a. “against us” – This means that the law brought a charge of “guilty” against us.
 - b. “hostile to us” – The law not only brought a charge of guilty but kept hounding us like a bill collector trying to collect a debt which we could not pay.
8. “cancelled” – The Greek word pictures the idea of erasing or blotting out.
 - a. The debt of guilt is erased. No punishment is owed to God.
 - b. “taken it out of the way” – The debt of guilt has been taken out of the way of a relationship between a holy God and sinful man. The perfect tense of “taken” shows that it happened at a point of time with perpetual results. We cannot be charged again.
 - c. “having nailed it to the cross” – The debt of punishment that we owed was paid at the cross by Jesus. God did not just cancel the debt. He also arranged for its payment which kept His justice intact.

C. Conquering opposing angelic beings (2:15)

1. “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities” – At the cross, Satan and his demons lost their rule over the realm of death (Heb. 2:14) and saw their work undone (1 John 3:8).
2. “He made a public display of them” – The word public shows us that this was open to at least the angelic world and to us through the testimony of scripture. His victory at the cross made it obvious that Satan and his angels were defeated.
3. “having triumphed over them” – The powers of darkness had been arrayed against Jesus at the cross (Luke 22:53) led by Satan (John 14:30). However, John 12:31-32 shows that Jesus took the world’s judgment at the cross and was triumphant over Satan.

COLOSSIANS

4. “through him” – This phrase can be understood two ways
 - a. At the cross, God won this victory over Satan and his hosts through Christ.
 - b. Christ won this victory over Satan and his hosts through it, i.e. the cross. I prefer the second explanation although good and godly scholars can be found to support either understanding.

PART SIX: Christ’s Warning (2:16-23)

A. Mosaic rules (2:16-17)

1. The word “Therefore” introduces the prohibition against letting others determine our response to the Old Testament laws. This refers back to Col. 2:14 where Christ is said to have set aside the Law of Moses at the cross.
2. “let no one act as your judge” – No one should decide our response to these components of the Law of Moses (cp. Rom. 14:1-6):
 - a. Certain foods were forbidden in the Old Testament Law of Moses as detailed in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14:1-21. New Testament teaching gives us believers guidance on what and when we should not eat (1 Cor. 8:8-9; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Tit. 1:12; 1 Cor. 6:19; 10:31.
 - b. drink – Prohibitions on what was forbidden by the law of Moses are also given in Lev. 11 and Deut. 14:1-21). New Testament guidance on this component is given in Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 10:31.
 - c. festival – These were yearly and commanded under the Old Testament and are listed in Leviticus 23. The only New Testament festival was the love feast (shared church meals). This is included in Jude 1:12 and in 1 Cor. 11:17-34 along with instructions on the Lord’s Supper). However, the love feast itself is not commanded, but the Lord’s Supper is commanded.
 - d. The new moon (monthly) – The Old Testament briefly refers to these in 1 Sam. 20:5-6, 18; Ps. 81:3; Hos. 2:11; Num. 10:10. The New Testament does not reference them.
 - e. Sabbath day – The basic Old Testament command is in Ex. 20:8-11. The key reference to the Sabbath in the New Testament is found in Rom. 14:5-6.
3. Modern questions concerning which we are guilty of judging one another are such things as drinking alcohol, observing Christmas, Easter and Halloween, Sunday activities outside of church.
4. “things which are a mere shadow of what is to come”
 - a. The Old Testament commands and rituals were shadows of Christ.
 - b. “but the substance belongs to Christ” – Christ Himself was the reality of which these things were the shadows. It is like deciding which is better: a shadow of a good steak or a real steak.

B. Mystical focus on angels (2:18-19)

1. “Therefore” in 2:16 – introduces not only the prohibition in 2:16-17 with regard to the Law of Moses but also introduces a second prohibition in 2:18-19. This involves giving to angels a value or worth which belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ which is related to 2:10, 15.

COLOSSIANS

2. "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize" – Other professing believers – counterfeit or real can cause us to lose rewards by their unbiblical influence or direction in our lives. We have a definite responsibility to not let them succeed. The response to this unbiblical influence or direction is clarified in 2:19. We see that rewards can be lost, but salvation cannot be lost. When we look to someone or something other than Christ to live our Christian lives, we are letting others cheat us of God's rewards.
3. "delighting in self-abasement" - This delighting in or insisting on self abasement puts the emphasis on a phony humility which is not honoring to God. It involves man-made rules for spiritual living in 2:23. When we deny ourselves for the sake of self-denial and not for the sake of obeying biblical norms, the result is a phony humility which hinders our growth in the likeness of Christ.
4. "worship of angels" - Rev. 22:8-9 clearly forbids this. Gnostic philosophy saw angels worthy of worship because they believed these angels were part of the Godhead, i.e. deity. The principle behind this for each of us as believers is that we are not to give worth or value which belongs exclusively to Jesus Christ to anyone or anything (Col. 2:15).
5. "taking his stand on visions he has seen"
 - a. The authority of teaching which robs Christ of His rightful place is external to God's word (in this case, on visions which these false teachers had seen).
 - b. "inflated without cause" – The one who stands on visions has no reason to be taken seriously, but has the "big head".
 - c. "by his fleshly mind" – The source of this pride is the sin nature's control of the mind.
 - d. Mysticism focuses on the seer and his experience rather than Christ and God's word. Rather than being content to explore and respond to what God has revealed in His word, the mystic continues to seek and focus on experiences rather than studying what God's word has revealed and the need to believe and obey it.
6. "And not holding fast to the head"
 - a. The words "holding fast" carry a two-fold meaning. One of these is depending on the power of Christ. The second is adhering to Christ and His word as the source of authority.
 - b. The word "head" in reference to the body of Christ refers to Jesus Himself (Col. 1:18).
 - c. The loss of reward in 2:18 is caused by a failure to depend on and to obey Jesus Christ. We depend instead on our own self-denial and things to which we give value or worth (in the Gnostic case, the angels), and we look to non-scriptural and even unscriptural teachings and rules for our basis of authority.
7. "from whom the entire body being supplied and held together"
 - a. Christ is the source of supply (strength and nourishment) and unity for all not part of His spiritual body the church.
 - b. "supplied" - This speaks of nourishment (Mt. 4:4; Heb. 5:11-14) and strength (Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:29).
 - c. "held together" = "knit together" in Col. 2:2. Christ gives His body unity and cohesiveness of purpose.
 - d. Since it is the "entire" body which is supplied and united by Christ, no one believer can "wing it" without drawing on Christ for His strength and nourishment.

COLOSSIANS

8. "by the joints and ligaments"
 - a. These parts of the body correspond to believers who are parts of the body of Christ.
 - b. These parts of the body give nourishment, strength and unity to the body. They are the ones whom Christ the head uses to supply and unify the body. Therefore, it would appear that these correspond to spiritual leaders particularly those with the gift of pastor-teacher. They are used by the Lord Jesus to give nourishment and unity through leadership to His spiritual body.
 - c. Since Christ the head uses these parts of the body to strengthen, nourish and unify His body, it is plainly obvious we cannot be a "lone-ranger" Christian. We need the body of Christ.
9. "grows with a growth which is from God"
 - a. We must depend on and obey Christ to supply and give us purpose as individuals and as a group.
 - b. We must realize that Christ will use spiritual leaders in the body of Christ to accomplish this purpose.
 - c. The result will be growth, i.e. greater Christ-likeness.
 - d. This growth will be from God. This will make it genuine and not phony or counterfeit. The extra-biblical rules, self-denial for its own sake and looking outside of Christ will produce a pseudo-growth comparable to a tumor in our physical body.
 - e. This growth will be collective for the body as a whole, but the application must be individual.

C. Manmade spiritual commands (2:20-23)

1. There are two basic errors dealt with in this section.
 - a. asceticism: The basic premise is the more I deny my body of its natural desires, the holier I am. It may or may not have some extra-biblical rules to go along with it. Much of it here appeared to be based on the Law of Moses.
 - b. legalism: The basic premise is the more that I conform myself to certain non-biblical rules (commands or rules not forbidden or commanded in the New Testament), the holier I am.
2. "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world"
 - a. The word "if" carries the meaning of "assuming that" or in this case "since".
 - b. We died with Christ (in our identity) through the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12) which took place when we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - c. The elementary principles of the world are discussed in more detail in these notes under Col. 2:8. The basic aspect or issue under discussion in this passage are man-made commandments and teachings. These also include the Law of Moses (Gal. 4:3, 9-10) to which we are dead (Rom. 7:1-7). These man-made commandments include other taboos as well which are intended to restrict the sinful nature (cp. 2:23).

COLOSSIANS

3. "Why, as if you were living in the world"
 - a. The New English Bible translates this verse, "Then why behave as though you were still living the life of the world?"
 - b. The Good News Bible also called Today's English version translates this verse, "Why, then, do you live as though you belonged to this world?"
 - c. The idea is that we have been crucified to the world, i.e. we have died to it - or better separated from it - to live in the newness of life with Christ (Gal. 6:14 cp. Rom. 6:4). These believers were being confronted for living like their identity was with the world rather than Christ.
4. "why do you submit yourself to decrees" – Examples are: "do not handle", "do not taste" and "do not touch". Col. 2:22 states that this refers to the commands of people but not to the commands of scripture (1 Cor. 9:21). Some man-made commandments are to be obeyed because they are scriptural so long as they do not conflict with God's word (Acts 5:29): government (Rom. 13:1-2); husband (Eph. 5:22); parents (Eph. 6:1); employers (Eph. 6:5) and spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17). Scripture gives us commands to obey (Mt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 9:21). The phrase "things to perish with the using" refers to rules (unscripturally man-made) spoken of in this section in v. 22 regulates things which will perish and which have no eternal benefit.
5. "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom" - Notice that man-made, man-based rules have only the appearance of wisdom but lack the substance or reality of wisdom. Because they bypass the centrality of Christ who has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2-3), they are, at best, cheap counterfeits. There are three ways man-made, man-based rules have the appearance of wisdom:
 - a. "in self-made religion" – This is self-imposed devotion or dedication. Unfortunately, it is devotion to that which leaves out Christ rather than devotion to Christ Himself.
 - b. "self-abasement" – There is self-denial involved, but it is not in harmony with the scriptures and, for this reason, lacks reality. There is such a thing as godly, Christ-centered self-denial (Luke 9:23; Tit. 2:11-12), but that is not what was being promoted by the false teachers who were trying to influence the Colossians.
 - c. "severe treatment of the body" – It is one thing to abuse our bodies for show, and it is quite another thing for us to undergo severe treatment (because of our service and stand for Christ) at the hands of others (2 Cor. 11:23-27).
6. 'but are of no value against fleshly indulgence' – The man-made, man-based rules do not hold the sin nature in check. The means of holding the sin nature in check are set forth in Col. 2:6-7, 19 and Gal. 5:16, 22-23.

PART SEVEN: Christ's Resurrection and Our Lives (3:1-4:6)

A. The foundation of resurrection living (3:1-3)

1. "If then you have been raised up with Christ" – The word "if" carries the idea of a reality that is assumed to be true. In this case, it could well be translated, "since you have been raised up". The resurrection for believers which is mentioned in this verse is not our future bodily resurrection outlined in 1 Cor. 15:51-54. In Col. 3:1 the resurrection for believers which is mentioned is a past event. This occurred when we trusted Christ and the Holy Spirit baptized us into Christ and His resurrection (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 2:12-13). This truth forms the basis for

COLOSSIANS

the commands for God-honoring obedient behavior in Col. 3:1-4:6). Being raised with Christ is a new quality of life within us which enables us to implement the positive admonitions in Col. 3:1-4:6. This new quality of life is described in Col. 3:4 as being Christ Himself (note the phrase, “Christ who is our life”).

2. “Keep seeking the things above”

- a. “Seeking” refers to our activities and the direction of our activities and energies.
- b. The “things above” has to do with positive qualities of life discussed in Col. 3:5-17 and Col. 3:18-4:6.
- c. This direction of our activities and energies is to be persistent (“keep seeking”).
- d. The resurrection life of Christ which we share (“have been raised”) is our motivation to put our energies in this direction.

3. “above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God”

- a. Those heavenly things developed in Col. 3:12-4:6 have their origin not in angels but in the ascended Christ who is presently seated at God’s right hand.
- b. Since Christ is seated in the position of supreme authority and privilege, there can be no greater commands, no greater empowerment and no greater blessing than what comes from Christ.

4. “Set your mind”

- a. This reminds us as believers to direct our thoughts and attention and to discipline our thoughts. In order to do these things, we must think them and then do them.
- b. “on the things above” – This speaks of the virtues in Col. 3:12-4:6.
- c. We often hear the objection some have made to this verse by saying, “He is so heavenly-minded, he is no earthly good.” Those who take the passage in that light take it out of context. For example, a worker who is heavenly-minded will be carrying out Col. 3:22-25 instead of witnessing on company time or continually talking about prophecy at work.

5. ‘not on the things that are on earth”

- a. This refers to the sins in Col. 3:5-9; 18-4:6. In 3:5 the term “members of your earthly body” = “the members which are upon the earth” (literal translation). The CSB helpfully translates this, “Put to death what belongs to your earthly nature”.
- b. We are commanded not only to put our thoughts and attractions on heavenly things, but to avoid these earthly things in our thought lives.
- c. Notice the balance: We are not just to think on the virtues but to also put our thoughts on avoiding the sins.

6. “For you have died”

- a. The Greek shows that this happened at a fixed point of time in the past. Col. 2:12 cp. with Rom. 6:2-4 teaches that this happens by means of Holy Spirit baptism.
- b. Based on the word “for” in Col. 3:3, it is the reason that we do not set our minds on the earthly things of 3:5-9 and 3:18-4:6 nor the earthly things of Col. 2:20-23.
- c. Death emphasizes a separation from the old pre-salvation life and things of that old life.

COLOSSIANS

7. "your life is hidden with Christ in God"

- a. "your life" refers to the new life we have in Christ by having been raised with Him.
- b. Col. 3:4 says that this life is Christ Himself.
- c. This life is said to be "hidden." It is hidden because it has not yet been revealed and will not be revealed until Jesus comes (3:4). The word "hidden" obviously means "concealed" more than "protected". It is concealed from unsaved individuals. 1 John 3:1-2 states we are not known for our God-given identity of being children of God just as Jesus was not known for being the unique Son of God. The only way that this new quality of life can be revealed at the present time is by avoiding the sins and practicing the virtues in Col. 3:5-4:6. Even then, the world does not fully understand. Many of them see the practice of these virtues and avoidance of these sins as evidence of weirdness rather than the new life we possess.
- d. This life is "with Christ" – Col. 3:1; 2:12 explains this identification by Holy Spirit baptism. John 14:18-20 and 17:21 tells us that we are in Christ as a result of the Holy Spirit's work and in answer to the prayer of Christ.

8. "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will be revealed with Him in glory"

- a. Christ's second coming is spoken of as a certainty and not just a possibility as shown by the word "when".
- b. Jesus Christ is presently "our life." This life is hidden or concealed with Him according to Col. 3:3. It is ours by being raised with Him (Col. 3:1) through Holy Spirit baptism (Col. 2:12).
- c. The word "revealed" is in contrast to the word "hidden" in Col. 3:3 and emphasizes that Christ's second coming will be visible (Rev. 1:7; Mt. 24:30) because all people – saved and unsaved – will see Him.
- d. At that time, we will be revealed. Our new life is now hidden, but then at Christ's return, it will be fully revealed.
- e. We will be revealed with Christ because we will come back with Him (1 Thes. 3:13).
- f. We will be revealed with Him in glory. This means that we will be with Him in a glorified state in a resurrection body (Phil. 3:21) and character (1 John 3:2) like Him.

B. Forsaking sins for resurrection living (3:5-9)

1. "Therefore" – This refers to what has preceded in Col. 3:1-4 as the basis for separating ourselves from these sins stated in vv. 5-9.

- a. The fact that we have been raised with Christ argues that we have a new life to live. It also argues that we had to have died. This death separated us from the old life.
- b. The fact that our entire sin nature has been put off or dethroned (Col. 2:11) argues for us putting off these sins.
- c. The fact of our sharing of Christ's death and life furnishes the first motivation for putting off these sins.

COLOSSIANS

2. “Consider the members of your earthly body as dead” = “put to death (i.e. separate) the members which are on the earth”. The idea is to separate the parts of our bodies from sinful use by the sin nature. As death separates our human spirits from our human bodies (Jas. 2:26), we are to separate the parts of our bodies from these sinful acts listed below:

- a. immorality – Greek “porneo” – refers to open acts of sexual sin such as premarital sex, adultery and homosexuality.
- b. impurity – mental attitude sex sin
- c. passion – letting our feelings dictate our behavior.
- d. evil desire – wanting anything contrary to God’s word.
- e. greed – preoccupation with material things and their procurement at the expense of others and even God. When we want material things so bad that we are willing to violate scriptural norms to hang on to material things or procure them, we make them a god. Therefore, greed = idolatry.

3. “For” – This word introduces the 2nd and 3rd reasons for putting these sins away.

- a. The word “therefore” referring to our sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection gave us the first reason.
- b. “it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come.” Eph. 5:6 adds the words “upon the sons of disobedience”, i.e. the unsaved. Although believers are delivered from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9), God is not pleased when His own people do the very things that will bring His wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. This gives us the 2nd reason for not doing them.
- c. “And in these, you also once walked when you were living in them” – This 3rd reason for putting away these sins is that they were part of our pre-salvation character. The word “walked” in the Greek is a verb tense showing that this was part of our character before salvation. Our past life prior to being saved is viewed as a whole. The words “were living” in their Greek verb tense show that there was a past pattern or continuity which we had in these sins.

4. “But now you also put them all aside” – This verse stresses what we are to be doing in the present time in contrast to the past time of sinful living in Col. 3:7.

- a. The word “you” tells us that he is talking to Christians, i.e. believers.
- b. The word “also” points back to the sinful practices set forth in Col. 3:5.
- c. The words “put them all aside” refers to the sins listed in Col. 3:8-9. The picture is putting aside an old garment which you have been wearing – in this case the old garment of sins listed in Col. 3:8-9. The Greek verb tense of the word translated “put” emphasizes that this is to be a decisive once-and-for-all action.

COLOSSIANS

5. "them all"

- a. anger, wrath – In this passage these are sins. However, not all anger is sinful (Mark 3:5; 1 Sam. 11:6). There are 3 kinds of sinful anger: (1) Eph. 4:26 – anger which leads to sin, (2) Eph. 4:26 – anger which is harbored, i.e. a grudge, (3) James 1:19-20 being quick-tempered. Here it would appear that we are to put away the types of anger that involve being quick-tempered and that involve harboring a grudge, and especially as they affect our speech.
- b. malice – This quality is the opposite of love as set forth in Rom. 13:10. Malice desires to work harm or wrong to our fellowman. In this context, it would deal with what we say to or about others.
- c. slander – cp. Eph. 4:29 – This refers to speech that tears down and does not edify or build up. Speech that edifies or builds up promotes the likeness of Christ in other believers and attraction to Christ in unbelievers.
- d. abusive speech – Check with Eph. 5:4 where the Greek word translated "filthiness" is translated from the same Greek word as this word. Most translators translate the word "abusive" as "foul", "filthy" or "obscene." This would mean dirty words, curse words and dirty jokes are part of the old life and not for the Christian. The words "from your mouth" are a qualifying phrase for the words "slander" and "abusive speech."
- e. "Do not lie to one another" – This is a present command in the Greek and would tell us as believers to stop lying to one another. The prohibition against this sin is stated in strong language to show that lying and pretense have no place among believers.

6. "since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices"

- a. This is a past once-and-for-all event when our sinful nature was dethroned by our being baptized into Christ (by the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 12:13) specifically His death (Rom. 6:2-6; Col. 2:11-12; 3:3).
- b. Our sinful nature and its practices are pictured as clothes which have been put off. In this verse, our standing or identity is in view while in Col. 3:5, 8, we are exhorted to make our practice or behavior conform to our identity or standing.
- c. The fact that our sinful nature and its practices were dethroned at salvation is one of the motivations to lay aside the sinful speech behaviors mentioned in Col. 3:8-9.

C. Features of Resurrection living (3:10-17)

1. "And have put on the new self"

- a. This describes an action which occurred in the past with the result that it is still true of us.
- b. The idea of clothes being put on is the imagery used here. The new nature which we receive at salvation is put on like a garment.
- c. This new nature received at salvation is Christ Himself (Gal. 3:26-27). This occurs at salvation when the Holy Spirit unites or joins us to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:12-13 cp. 1 Cor. 12:12-13) through the Holy Spirit's baptizing work. This new nature is a quality of life which is Christ Himself (Col. 3:4).

2. "who is being renewed" – This new nature is being continually renewed. This reminds us that our practical sanctification is an ongoing process and not an instant transformation.

COLOSSIANS

3. "to a true knowledge"

- a. This is not a pseudo-knowledge like that promoted by the Gnostics or that which is often substituted in many circles today.
- b. This true knowledge is the sufficiency of Christ (Col. 2:2-3) who is all we need for salvation and godly living (2 Pet. 1:3).
- c. "according to the image of the One who created him" – This renewal is in God's image. We lost God's moral image in the fall of man. However, we did retain the personal image (=the attributes of being a person with thoughts, emotions and wills). Our true knowledge is in harmony with God's moral image which is true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). Just as God originally created man, He also created the new man or the new self in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10).

4. "A renewal in which there is no distinction between" – This tells us the very nature of this continual renewal involving a true knowledge of Christ. It starts describing what this renewal is not:

- a. "Greek and Jew" – It is not racial.
- b. "circumcised and uncircumcised" – It is not physical or outward nor a matter of undergoing or not undergoing an outward ritual (cp. Gal. 6:12-15).
- c. "barbarian, Scythian" – It is not cultural. A barbarian was one who did not know Greek cultural norms. To us, it would be someone who does not know our cultural norms. The Scythians lived in what is now the southern part of Russia and were considered the lowest of barbarians. New Christians often get confusing signals from us because we expect cultural changes in their lifestyle or behavior which are not commanded by scripture. As a result, we unwittingly hinder not only our effectiveness in sharing the gospel but hinder the growth of these new Christians from a different culture.
- d. "slave and freeman" – This renewal has nothing to do with social status.

5. "but Christ" – This introduces what this renewal is:

- a. "is all" – Christ and not these earthly distinctions of race, outward ritual, culture and social status are what are critical. Christ is all (the total or wholeness) of this renewal of the believer. For the renewal of the believer, Christ is all that is needed. Nothing, but nothing should be or needs to be added to it.
- b. "in all" – Christ is in all believers to use them and to empower them (Col. 1:27) regardless of these manmade distinctions mentioned above.

6. "And so" – Because of Christ's sufficiency and the presence of our new nature or new identity, we are to develop the virtues mentioned in Col. 3:12-17.

7. "as those who have been chosen of God, holy, and beloved" – These are the additional motivations for development of these virtues which are part of the "things above".

- a. "chosen" – The fact that God chose us (Eph. 1:4) should motivate us to develop and practice these character qualities.
- b. "holy" – The fact that God has set us apart for His purposes and that we are special to Him should also inspire us to show these qualities of "things above" to one another and the watching world.
- c. "beloved" – This reminds us that we are special objects of God's love. For that reason, a heavenly-type life is more fitting for us than an earthly-type life.

COLOSSIANS

8. "put on"

- a. This explains how we put in practice doing those virtues in Col. 3:12-17 and the practical outworking of putting on the new self (=nature) and the new quality of life mentioned in Col. 3:10. This also explains how we set our minds and efforts on things above mentioned in Col. 3:2.
- b. The illustration of putting on clothing continues to be used of doing these virtues to show that they need to characterize us just as our clothes do.

9. The specific virtues to be put on:

- a. "compassion" - This involves sorrow or concern for the sufferings and problems of another with the urge to help (cp. Luke 10:33). The essence of this virtue involves sharing one another's problems and sorrows rather than isolated self-sufficiency. Genuine biblical love requires this virtue (1 John 3:17).
- b. "kindness" – doing good in a way to ease or expedite something for someone.
- c. "humility" – the recognition and expression of our inadequacy apart from God.
- d. "gentleness" - It is a quality in which we show sensitivity for the feelings, outlooks and rights of other people.
- e. "patience" – ability to control ourselves when wronged, insulted or inconvenienced without hasty retaliation or seeking revenge. There are two areas in which this quality is important: (1) "bearing with one another" – This involves overlooking irritations and faults (not sins). This calls for tolerance in the biblically gray areas as well as those things which are matters of preference without biblical relevance. (2) "forgiving each other" – This is the second area in which we are to manifest patience. The table below helps us to see how this quality of patience is to be demonstrated in the area of forgiveness.

Forgiveness

- (a) Luke 17:3-4 – It requires patience to repeatedly forgive, and it implies repentance as an integral response on the part of the offending party.
- (b) The forgiveness discussed in this passage in Colossians has to do with forgiveness within the family of God which restores fellowship with one another.
- (c) This forgiveness is commanded and is not optional.
- (d) Prov. 17:9 – This type of forgiveness is not committed to forgetting but treating it as forgotten.
- (e) "whoever has a complaint against anyone" – This states that there are no exceptions as to the sin. The words "anyone" should be understood in reference to the words "each other", i.e. any believer.

- g. "beyond all these things put on love" – better translated "above" or "on top of these things". The image is that of love as an over- garment to cover all these virtues. Love is said to be the most important of all virtues in 1 Cor. 13:14.
- h. "which is the perfect bond of unity" – The idea of the word "perfect" is complete. When we say that love is the complete of unity, we mean that it binds or holds together all the other virtues so that they are expressed in a balanced or harmonious way. The unity in this text speaks of the unity of the virtues and not the unity of the believers.

COLOSSIANS

10. “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (3:15)

- a. John 14:27 tells us Christ’s peace is a freedom from worry and fear. It is not the peace that the world gives which is nothing more than a false sense of security.
- b. This is part of what it means to think on and strive for heavenly things (Col. 3:1-2).
- c. This peace is to rule or control our thought life. Some commentators have the view that God’s peace is to act as an umpire or arbitrator in our heart. It is not certain though that the word had that meaning by Paul’s day. Since most translators choose to use the word “rule”, this would be the most probable meaning and would be in keeping with Phil. 4:6-7. In addition, the “umpire” or “arbitrator” view opens us up to be manipulated by our feelings or emotions.
- d. “to which indeed you were called in one body” – God called us to participate in this peace not only individually but as a corporate body. It involves: (1) peace with God which every believer has (Rom. 5:1), (2) peace with one another positionally (Eph. 2:15-18) and on a practical level (Rom. 14:19); personal or inner peace (Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 3:15).
- e. “and be thankful” – Thanksgiving for this peace is an incentive or a motivation to let this peace rule in our hearts.

Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:18b-20a comparison chart:

Colossians 3:16	Ephesians 5:18b-20a
Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you	Be filled with the Spirit
With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another	Speaking to one another
With psalms and hymns and spiritual songs	In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
Singing	Singing and making melody
In your hearts	With your heart
To God	To the Lord
With thankfulness	Always giving thanks

11. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” (3:16).

- a. This is another key action we must take if we are to be heavenly-minded (Col. 3:2).
- b. The centrality of God’s word to the believer’s life – both when assembled and when not assembled is seen in this verse.
- c. By using music as one of the means to accomplish this, we enhance the teaching ministry of the church in equipping believers. This is not saying that music is the only way to do this, it is one of several means such as: read, hear, study, memorize and meditate.
- d. The Greek word for “dwell” means “to be at home in”. This word tells us that God’s word must completely permeate our lives. This goes beyond knowing God’s word or even having convictions concerning it. It goes to the very core of our lives affecting our thoughts, speech, behavior and prayer.
- e. The fact that God’s word is to richly dwell in us implies wealth rather than just enough of God’s word to be a part of us. Singing God’s word as described before can help to accomplish this.

COLOSSIANS

12. "with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another"

- a. In order for God's word to richly dwell within believers, i.e. permeate a believer's life, teaching of that word is necessary. Information must be given. In many cases, there is a failure to give Bible facts. The excuse is, "Information does no good unless it is applied." On the other hand, information will not be applied unless it is given. If a physician failed to give a patient a needed medication because it may not be taken, that would mean the patient would not receive the needed treatment. In the same way, there can be no transformation without information.
- b. The word "admonishing" reminds us of another use of God's word to permeate the lives of God's people. This deals more with what we are going to do with the information that is taught. It includes counseling, advising and even rebuking.
- c. "with all wisdom" – Our teaching and admonition by music must be with wisdom. We must use songs that have a scriptural message. We must use songs that have understandable words. We must use songs that are helpful to the particular people with whom we are dealing.
- d. The importance of church music being scriptural cannot be underestimated. No one is to be singing what is not biblically true just as no one is to be teaching what is not biblically true. The message and not the beat must be the primary test of music. Songs should teach Bible truths and move us to apply them.
- e. "with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" – Psalms are set to music directly from God's word and use musical instruments. The singing of Psalms from the Psalters (Psalms paraphrased into music) has fallen on hard times in Christian circles and has impoverished the ministry of the church. However, it has seen revision in certain circles. Hymns are primarily music written to praise the Lord. Spiritual songs are written by believers to address each other.
- f. "singing with thankfulness in your hearts" – This shows that the attitude with which we are to sing is one of thankfulness to God for who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised to do. The word translated "thankfulness" could also be translated "grace." Most translations render the word as "gratitude" or "thanksgiving." This fits best with the verse before (3:15) and the verse after (3:17).
- g. "to God" – Notice that Christian music is not only to teach and admonish one another, but it is to be directed to God. As a result, we see the horizontal dimension of music ("one another") and the vertical dimension of music ("to God").

13. "And whatever you do in word or deed" (3:17).

- a. We have seen the sufficiency of the peace of Christ and the word of Christ for ministering to the inner man. In Col. 3:17 we see the sufficiency of the name of Christ in measuring our words and actions. The first phrase of this verse explains that anything we are to say or do should be measured with the idea, could I preface it with the phrase "in Jesus' name". This verse can be very helpful in deciding what to do or say or not to do or say in situations where there is no clear-cut command or prohibition in God's word.
- b. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" - If we act or speak in someone's name, we need to be sure that it has their approval. It is obvious that when we speak or act, we should

COLOSSIANS

check with the scriptures to be sure we have the approval of Christ. Likewise, when we speak or act in someone's name, we are that person's representative to whom we are speaking or acting.

- c. "giving thanks" – It is important to be sure that not only can we preface our speech or action "in Jesus' name", but that we can thank God "in Jesus' name for what we have said or done. This is a good way to develop sensitivity to sin in our lives.
- d. "through Him to God the Father" - We are to pray in Jesus' name to God the Father (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24). Christ is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5). This would instruct us that prayer should be primarily addressed to God the Father in Jesus' name, although it is not improper to pray directly to Christ (Acts 7:59-60).

D. Family relationships for resurrection living (3:18-21)

1. "Wives, be subject to your husbands" (3:18)

- a. Wives are to obey their husbands. It does not say that husbands are to be sure or make their wives obey them. The Greek middle voice used in this verse makes it clear that this obedience is to be voluntary.
- b. cp. Eph. 5:22 where it says that wives are to be subject to their own husbands. The addition of the word "own" tells us that this is not a general call for all women to be obedient to all men in a society.
- c. This call for subjection is not a call to simply "adapt" or "adjust" as in the Phillips translation. Many have leaned on the "adapt" idea, but Eph. 5:22 states wives are to "be subject as to the Lord", i.e. to subject themselves just as they would to Christ. Jesus Christ calls for more than just an adaptation or adjustment. He calls for our obedience.
- d. This subjection does not mean that the wife is inferior. For example, 1 Cor. 11:3 tells us that God the Father is the head of Christ. However, John 5:17-18 points out that Christ and the Father are equal. 1 Cor. 11:3 goes on to say that the husband is the head of the wife, but Gal. 3:28 and 1 Pet. 3:7 make it clear that they are equal in Christ. The fact of equality does not destroy the obligation of the wife to voluntarily subordinate herself to the husband just as Christ does to the Father. The idea that subordination or obedience means inferiority has its roots in modern American democratic ethics and not in scripture.
- e. This subjection does not mean that the wife has to obey commands which require her to violate God's word (Acts 5:29).
- f. This subjection is not dependent on whether the husband obeys God's commands for the treatment of her. However, it would be logical that his obedience to God's word in how he treats his wife would greatly facilitate her willingness to obey.
- g. "as is fitting in the Lord" – Submission is fitting in the natural order (Gen. 3:16). It is also fitting in the new relationship which is "in the Lord."

2. "Husbands love your wives" (3:19)

- a. Notice, it does not say, "Wives be sure your husband loves you and is not bitter". The responsibility belongs to the husband. Just as a husband does not have a right to an obedient wife, so a wife does not have a right to a loving husband.

COLOSSIANS

- b. cp. Eph. 5:25 – The husband’s love for his wife is to be self-giving and self-sacrificial like Christ had when He voluntarily died on the cross for the church. The husband as the leader in the marriage must continually ask himself as he makes decisions, “Who is on the cross in this decision, me or my wife?”
 - c. Love seeks the Christ-likeness of the other party without thought to personal cost.
 - d. This command is another way believers are to seek and think on heavenly things.
 - e. Regardless of whether the wife obeys or not, it is still the husband’s responsibility to love her.
 - f. “and do not be embittered against them” – An attitude of bitterness is earthly thinking (Col. 3:2). It is shown by harbored anger (Eph. 4:26) and an unforgiving attitude (Eph 4:32).
3. “Children, be obedient to your parents” (3:20)
- a. This command is to be enforced with discipline and instruction by the parents (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 29:15).
 - b. From the standpoint of the child, this is a command and part of heavenly living and thinking.
 - c. Gen. 2:24; Heb. 11:24; John 9:23 – This would indicate that when the child leaves home or is of age that this command is no longer applicable.
 - d. “in all things” – This states that there are no exceptions unless the parents command the child to disobey the word of God (cp. Acts 5:29).
 - e. “for this is well-pleasing to the Lord” - One of the motivations for children to obey their parents is that it pleases the Lord Jesus Christ. This connects fellowship with parents (horizontal) with fellowship with God (vertical).
4. “Fathers” (3:21)
- a. This term can refer to both parents and is translated that way in Heb. 11:23. The fact that parents in this verse is translated “parents” in 3:20 gives support to the view that both parents are being referenced. My own preference is to understand the verse to be saying, “parents, especially fathers”.
 - b. “do not exasperate your children” – The word “exasperate” means to stir up in a negative way. The effect clause suggests that demands beyond the capacity of the child (1 Cor. 10:13) cause him to give up. We are clearly commanded then not to needlessly provoke negative attitudes and behavior in our children.
 - c. “that they may not lose heart” – This is telling us that we are not to make excessive demands so that the child simply gives up trying to meet our expectations. The conclusion is that we must develop reasonable expectations.
- E. Field of work for resurrection living (3:22-4:1)
1. “Slaves in all things obey those who are your masters on earth” (3:22)
- a. It is clear that slavery is not sinful if the government allows it (Rom. 13:1-2).
 - b. The best application, however, is to apply those principles to our work situation.
 - c. Obedience is to be total (with the exception of Acts 5:29 which covers situations in which obeying authority would conflict with the word of God). It includes doing the unenjoyable tasks as well as the enjoyable tasks.
 - d. This is part of a heavenly life in our actions and thoughts (Col. 3:1-2).

COLOSSIANS

- e. This emphasizes that we have a duty to obey our employers in this earthly life.
 - f. “not with external service” = “not only when they are watching you” (TEV) – This involves pretending to be more productive and ambitious when you are really not is nauseating not only to fellow-employees but to God as well.
 - g. “but with sincerity of heart” – This is in contrast to “external service”. Our motivation should be not to just work when noticed by people but when noticed by God (which is all the time). We should be doing a good job and obeying orders whether or not the supervisor is watching or not.
 - h. “fearing the Lord” – Having the supreme respect for the Lord Jesus Christ should motivate us to do consistently good work on our job.
2. “Whatever you do” (23)
- a. This covers all aspects of our work – pleasant or unpleasant, important or unimportant.
 - b. “do your work heartily – We are to do our work with a good attitude and put ourselves into it.
 - c. “as for the Lord rather than for men” – We need to view ourselves as taking orders from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself when our boss tells us to do something – which in essence we are (“Things above” – Col. 3:1-2). The phrase “rather than for men” might be better understood “rather than merely for men” (things on earth – Col. 3:1-2).
3. “knowing” (3:24)
- a. Notice that God will reward at the judgment seat of Christ faithful job performance done with the right attitude (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). This promise of reward is something we know that we will receive and not something that we might receive or something that we would wish that we would receive.
 - b. “from the Lord” – We serve the Lord Jesus, and He will be the one who will reward us. Jesus and not any earthly master or supervisor will give us the reward worth having.
 - c. “you will receive” – This shows us that rewards are future in contrast to salvation which is a present gift (Eph. 2:8-9; Luke 7:50).
 - d. “the reward of the inheritance” – Rewards are held out as one of the positive motivations for totally obedient service in our employment if it is done with the right attitude.
 - e. “It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” – A reminder that obedient service with the correct attitude is truly service to the same Christ who is coming again to reward us.
4. “For” – (3:25) introduces another motivational reason for completely obedient job performance with the right attitude. This motivation is of a negative nature concerning the consequences of not doing what we should be doing.
- a. “he who does wrong” – This discusses the failure to obey in all things (3:22) and doing what is right but with the wrong attitude (3:23).
 - b. “will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done” - This will be at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Luke 19:15-26). However, 1 Pet. 2:18-20 speaks of natural consequences which will occur in this life.

COLOSSIANS

- c. “and that without partiality” – This is one of God’s attributes. Earthly bosses may not give you your due in terms of being fired or demoted for bad performance but God certainly will. God will not excuse us because we were significant or insignificant on earth (e.g. Ex. 23:3, 6).

5. “Masters” (4:1)

- a. This command is for those who have subordinates and tells us the heavenly mindset and actions needed (3:1-2).
- b. “grant to your slaves justice and fairness” – The word “just” or “right” carries the idea of that which is morally correct as measured by God’s word. The idea of “fairness” or “equal” emphasizes no playing of favorites in reward or punishment.
- c. “knowing that you have a master in heaven” – This is the motivation for God-honoring treatment of subordinates. The basis for the motivation is our accountability to Christ. Therefore, the Lordship of Christ is paramount.
- d. Just as the subordinates’ actions and attitudes are subject to scrutiny and had to meet approval, so those of us in a position of authority are scrutinized by the Lord and must meet His approval cp. Mt. 7:2).

G. Focus on prayer and testimony for resurrection living (4:2-6)

1. “Devote yourselves to prayer” (4:2)

- a. Again, this is part of living a heavenly life and developing a heavenly mindset.
- b. The word devote is translated: “be persistent” (TEV), “continue steadfastly” (RSV), “be persevering” (NJB). The present tense which is used in the Greek shows that we are to make prayer a habit and that we are to set aside periods of time for it (e.g. Dan. 6:10; Ps. 55:17; Acts 3:1).
- c. We are to persist in prayer in 2 ways: (1) by being alone not just going through the motions; (2) by being specific in praying for specific people and specific things for them.
- d. “keeping alert in it” – We must be watchful or alert by paying attention to what we are praying for and not just go through the motions.
- e. “with an attitude of thanksgiving” - One of the biggest helps for alert praying is practicing thanksgiving. The words “an attitude of” were added by the translators and are not part of the New Testament text. We see the importance of thanksgiving in prayer in these verses in Colossians: 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:15-17.

2. “praying at the same time for us as well” (4:3)

- a. Paul wanted himself and his helpers to be prayed for consistently during these times of prayer.
- b. Prayer is to be for specific people: missionaries as here, evangelists and any believer who is sharing their faith.
- c. No matter how spiritual and significant a believer may seem, he needs our regular prayer.

3. “that God may open to us a door for the word” (4:3)

- a. Prayer must not only be specific as to the person for whom we are praying, but it also is to be specific as to what we are praying for in relation to that person.

COLOSSIANS

- b. We need to pray that God would open up opportunities for sharing the gospel for other believers as well as for ourselves.
 - c. This reminds us that witnessing opportunities should not be forced but should await an open door from God which argues against “button-hole” evangelism.
 - d. Trust God not our own strength to open opportunity doors for witnessing.
4. “so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ” (4:3)
- a. Once God does His part in opening an opportunity, we must be faithful in opening our mouth. Witnessing cannot simply be by example. It must include opening our mouth. Remember, our message is Christ so do not let yourselves be diverted from the subject. It is not about: “What about the 144,000 in Rev. 7?”; “You ought to go to church”; or “You ought to quit sinning.”
 - b. The word “mystery” emphasizes that our message has an aspect that is now revealed in the New Testament but was unknown in Old Testament times. Eph. 3:5-6 clarifies that the mystery was not the salvation of the Gentiles but the fact that Gentiles and Jews would be part of the same spiritual body on an equal footing before God.
5. “for which I also have been imprisoned” (4:3)
- a. The matter of Gentile inclusion in the same spiritual body as the Jews caused the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to have Paul imprisoned.
 - b. This reminds us that our witnessing may bring suffering. Even though it brings suffering, we are to persevere in our gospel witness like Paul did. Because of the fact that those who witness suffer in some way, they need our prayers even more.
6. “in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak” (4:4)
- a. It is important to pray for those who present the gospel to others (missionaries, evangelists, those sharing their faith including ourselves) to make the gospel issue understandable to the lost person.
 - b. Effective witnessing requires making the issue clear. Why is salvation needed? How is it provided? How is it received? Those who fail to do so reap many false professions. Others cancel the gospel by adding works or baptism as a requirement to receive salvation. Still others cloud the gospel with conditions such as walking an aisle. Then there are those who leave off essentials such as Christ’s deity, His bloodshed death as our substitute, His bodily resurrection, His being the only way and the issue of sin and its punishment. Still others reduce salvation to the repetition of some verbal formula.
7. “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders” (4:5)
- a. Wisdom is knowing and obeying God’s word (Mt. 7:24-27).
 - b. Behavior among unbelievers must be with wisdom so that it does not needlessly offend.
 - c. This speaks of affirming our verbal witness in Col. 4:3-4 by our conduct.
 - d. “making the most of the opportunity” = lit. “redeeming the time” – When we fail to affirm the gospel, this tends to turn off the unsaved and wastes precious time that it takes to reaffirm our witness by our conduct. Therefore, when we affirm the gospel by wise conduct, we make the most of the opportunity or time. Time is a precious commodity, and we are stewards of it just as we are stewards of our spiritual gifts and talents.

COLOSSIANS

8. "Let your speech always be with grace" (4:6)

- a. Not only must we be careful how we live, but we must also be careful about what we say.
- b. cp. Eph. 4:29 – Speech should positively edify by attracting unbelievers to Christ and helping believers be more like Christ. It should not needlessly tear down but show grace to the hearers. This means our speech will be a blessing to others even though they do not necessarily deserve it.
- c. "seasoned as it were with salt" – Salt in our speech suggests 2 things: (1) Salt is a preservative so that what we say should not tear down but edify. This concept best fits with grace. (2) Another idea is that salt pictures purity.
- d. "so that you may know how you should respond to each person" – If the grace principle governs what we say and do, then we will better know what to say to everyone. 1 Peter 3:15 adds that Christ's lordship in our thought life is essential for knowledge.

PART EIGHT: Connections (4:7-18)

A. Tychius and Onesimus (4:7-9)

1. Tychius

- a. "all my affairs" – "will bring you information" – We need to seek to learn about other believer's circumstances so we can pray intelligently and specifically for them and share their burdens and joys (1 Cor. 12:26). In the same way as they learn about us, they can do the same for us. For this reason, we need to keep other believers informed of our situation.
- b. "that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts" – When we give or receive information, it should be to encourage or be encouraged. This discourages indiscriminate dumping.
- c. "beloved brother" – This man was lovable to other believers. We need not only to love but to be lovable. The word "brother" emphasizes he had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation and was part of God's family (John 1:12).
- d. "faithful servant" – He was a servant to Paul as well as a bondservant to the Lord. Gal. 5:13 commands us "through love to serve one another". He was faithful. He could be depended on to assist Paul's ministry. We must evaluate not only our faithfulness to the Lord but to other members of the body of Christ.
- e. "fellow-bondservant" – A bondservant is a slave by free choice (Deut. 15:12-18). The prefix "fellow" emphasizes he is not alone in his service to Christ. We are not to be "lone-ranger" servants but to direct our service in cooperation with other believers.
- f. "in the Lord" – The connection which unites us as believers and which we share is the fact that we are in Christ (Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 12:13).

COLOSSIANS

- g. His biography in scripture – (1) Acts 20:4 tells us he helped Paul in Greece which was the beginning of his servant character. We must start somewhere. (2) Eph. 6:21-22 shows his ministry was not only to the Colossians at this time but also to the Ephesians. He could be counted on to do a number of tasks. (3) 2 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12 shows that he was continually used by Paul as a courier or messenger.

2. Onesimus

- a. “brother” – This speaks of his spiritual relationship to God and other believers because of his faith in Christ (John 1:12).
- b. “faithful” – He had been a runaway slave and very undependable in his past but Jesus Christ had changed all that.
- c. “beloved” – He was not very lovable before he came to Christ but now he was lovable.
- d. “who is one of your number” – He is to be accepted because of his relationship to Christ and not what he was before trusting Christ. He had been a believer for a short time yet had proved himself to be faithful and lovable.
- e. “inform you about the whole situation” – He would share information on Paul’s circumstances so the Colossians could pray intelligently and specifically. He would be able to give a perspective on Paul’s situation that Tychius could not.
- f. His biography in scripture is recorded in Philm. 1:10-18.
- g. Why were both Tychius and Onesimus sent -why not just one of them ? 3 possibilities are: (1) The concept that 2 witnesses establish truth or facts (Deut. 19:15; Mt. 18:16); (2) Tychius was to encourage their hearts and inform while Onesimus was simply to inform. Paul wanted them not only to be informed but to be encouraged so he sent someone with the spiritual gift of encouragement (Rom. 12:8) which Onesimus may have possibly lacked. Also Onesimus was sent back because as a former runaway slave he had to go back (Philm. 1:12-14). (3) It may have been a combination of possibility 1 and possibility 2.

B. Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus/Justus (4:10-11)

1. The 4 things these believers had in common:

- a. “fellow-workers” – As believers, we need to work with other believers to do God’s work.
- b. “for the kingdom of God” – This reminds us that our work is to be purposeful. The kingdom of God is presently spiritual in form and has not been fully revealed yet. This same aspect of the kingdom is revealed in Col. 1:13, and we enter it by the new birth (John 3:3, 5).
- c. “from the circumcision” – This explains that they were Jewish Christians or possibly Jewish proselytes (became a Jew prior to the time that they became Christians).
- d. “proved to be an encouragement to me” – Paul was a spiritual giant but needed encouragement. This is a timely reminder that our spiritual leaders need our encouragement.

2. Aristarchus

- a. “my fellow prisoner” – service to Christ by helping Paul meant suffering.
- b. “sends you his greetings” – shared Paul’s concern for the growth and acceptance of other believers.

COLOSSIANS

- c. biography – (1) He was a traveling companion of Paul (Acts 19:29) who was willing to risk his life for the gospel. To do this, he valued service more than comfort.
- (2) He shared the dangerous sea journey and shipwreck with Paul (Acts 27:2).
- (3) By comparing Col. 4:10 with Acts 27:2, we come to the conclusion that he was Jewish proselyte who had become a Christian.

3. Mark

- a. He was probably led to Christ by Peter (1 Peter 5:13 cp. 1 Cor. 4:14-17).
 - b. His mother was heavily involved in service for Christ (Acts 12:12).
 - c. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:2-5).
 - d. He deserted the missionary work and went home (Acts 13:13 cp. 15:38) and caused Paul and Barnabas to part ways (Acts 15:36-40).
 - e. “Barnabas’ cousin” – Barnabas was the key to Mark’s restoration. He was noted for being an encourager (Acts 4:36) and continued to work with John Mark (Acts 15:30).
 - f. Because Paul was willing to practice what he taught about forgiveness (Mark 3:13), John Mark became a useful servant (2 Tim. 4:11). The lesson for us is, if we fail, don’t quit. Encourage those who fail to keep going. Finally, keep in mind that Mark wrote the gospel of Mark.
4. “Jesus who is called Justus” – There is no other information on this man other than what is written here. Based on Mt. 6:4, 6, there may be a lack of recognition from people, but there will be from God.

C. Epaphras (4:12-13)

- 1. “who is one of your number” – identified with these believers in their church fellowship, brought the gospel to them (1:7) and was currently with Paul.
- 2. “a bonds slave of Jesus Christ” – He was enslaved to obey Christ not by external force but by free choice (Deut. 15:12-18).
- 3. “sends you his greetings” – show of concern and friendliness.
- 4. “always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers”
 - a. The word “always” shows that prayer was a habit with this man and not just during a crisis or when the mood struck him.
 - b. “laboring” – The same Greek word is translated “striving” in 1:29. In his prayers, he was struggling against the adversaries (Eph. 6:12) who were promoting false teaching in Colossae (1 Tim. 4:1-2).
 - c. “earnestly” – Prayer was serious business for him and not just business as usual.
 - d. “for you” – His prayers were for specific people.
 - e. “that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God” – His prayers were not only for specific people but for specific things in their lives. The word “perfect” carries the idea of complete. The idea is that he wants the people he is praying for to be completely in the center of God’s will as revealed in His word. To be fully assured in all of God’s will as revealed in His written word, we need to have real convictions that God’s word is His will for us (Mark 3:35 cp. Luke 6:21). “All the will of God” stands in contrast to the pseudo-knowledge of God’s will of the false teachers.

COLOSSIANS

- f. “For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you” – As believers, there needs to be a concern about one another’s struggles and progress. We need to let others know not only that we are concerned but that other believers are also concerned. We observe that our concern is to be deep and not superficial. In this case, he showed his deep concern by his intense prayer for them. The added phrase “and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis” shows that his scope of concern went beyond one local church to several local churches. He was not provincial in his outlook and concern.

D. Luke and Demas (4:14)

- 1. Luke
 - a. “the beloved physician” - He was recognized in his line of work. He was a lovable person showing that we need to not only love but be lovable.
 - b. He was a constant companion of Paul on his missionary journeys and sufferings (word “we” in Acts 16:10; 20:5; 27:1)
 - c. Probably a Gentile as he is not mentioned as a Jew in Col. 4:10-11.
 - d. cp. 2 Tim. 4:10-11 – Luke stayed with his ministry of helping Paul until the end.
 - e. The phrase “sends you his greetings” shows Luke’s concern for other believers.
- 2. Demas – 3 references tell a sad story.
 - a. Philm. 1:24 – identified as a fellow-worker of Paul.
 - b. Here in this verse he is noted as showing concern and interest in other believers.
 - c. cp. 2 Tim. 4:10 – Demas deserted Paul when his circumstances became difficult. He valued the present (this world= this age) more than eternity at this time. This does not mean that he was not a believer, but that he made a sinful decision to be more concerned with the here-and-now rather than the future eternity.

E. Sharing information (4:15-16)

- 1. “Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea” – This instruction to the church at Colossae regarding the church in Laodicea shows the need for contact between local churches.
- 2. “Nympha and the church that is in her house”
 - a. Besides Colossae, 2 cities are mentioned: Hierapolis and Laodicea (4:13). It would appear that the church mentioned here was either in Laodicea and or Hierapolis. Nympha appears to be a prominent believer in this particular church.
 - b. House churches were common in the New Testament era (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philm. 1:2). However, churches met wherever they could as in the case of the church at Ephesus which met in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10).
- 3. “And when this letter is read among you”
 - a. God’s word is not only to be shared with unbelievers but also with the believers in the local church.
 - b. The fact that this is to be read points to the importance of the public reading of the scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13).
- 4. “have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans” – We need to share God’s word with believers in other local churches including Bible study materials.

COLOSSIANS

5. "read my letter that is coming from Laodicea"

- a. This is possibly the circular letter titled "Ephesians".
- b. This demonstrates a need to receive materials for instruction from other churches.
- c. This also shows that we are to focus on all the scriptures and not just one portion (cp. Acts 20:27).

F. Archippus (4:17)

1. "say to Archippus" – The church was to encourage Archippus in his ministry to carry it out to its completion. Some see this as a rebuke, but that is far from certain. By way of application, we need to think of those who have ministries in our church whom we need to exhort and encourage in their duties.
2. Some identify Archippus as the son of Philemon, but this is not completely certain (Phlm. 1:2).
3. "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it"
 - a. "Take heed" – He needed to give attention to the ministry he had received. The words imply being on guard probably because of the false teaching which was circulating and giving some of them problems (Col. 2:8).
 - b. "to the ministry which you have received in the Lord" – In Christ, every believer has a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:4, 7) and a ministry (1 Cor. 12:5). The idea here is not to identify his ministry but to emphasize the need of concentrating his efforts on it and not being sidetracked.
 - c. "that you may fulfill it" – To fulfill it means to carry it to its God-directed end. The verb "fulfill" is present tense which stresses continual repeated action and persistence.
 - d. In summarizing this verse, we see a dual responsibility. The congregation had a responsibility to exhort or encourage him. In turn, he had a responsibility to carry out the ministry entrusted to him.

G. Personal note from Paul (4:18)

1. "I Paul write this greeting with my own hand" - This let the readers know that Paul – and not some imposter had personally written this letter (cp. 2 Thes. 3:17). According to Rom. 16:22, Paul at times had a stenographer to write the body of his letters. In doing this, Paul helped his readers distinguish truth from error. Based on the scripture, we must help believers distinguish truth from error.
2. "Remember my imprisonment"
 - a. This involves sharing one another's problems or sufferings. See also Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 13:3.
 - b. The word "remember" means to remember in the sense of meeting a need. See also Gen. 8:1; Luke 23:42-43; Gal. 2:10. The needs of a prisoner could be met: (1) in prayer (e.g. Peter in Acts 12:5-12) and (2) by sharing material aid as the Philippians did for Paul in Phil. 4:14.
3. "Grace be with you"
 - a. Saving grace – Col. 1:6 cp. Eph. 2:8-9
 - b. The grace by which we live the Christian life (Col. 2:6 cp. Heb. 4:16; James 4:6).