



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 1



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV=English Standard Version (2001), KJV=King James Version (1611), NKJV=New King James Version (1982), NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

PAUL AND TIMOTHY TO THE FAITHFUL BRETHREN

“ 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” ^{KJV} (Colossians 1:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL

The Epistles are an exposition of the Gospel of Christ, which is the exclusive “*power of God unto salvation.*” That exposition opens up the implications of the Gospel – the logical relationships that are inherent in the Gospel itself, and how they are brought to bear upon life in this world.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

The Gospel is more than appears to the casual mind. It is not like a flat map, with no depth or varied perspectives. It is rather like a series of profoundly deep “*wells,*” out of which refreshing water is drawn. Thus Isaiah prophesied, “*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*” (Isa 12:3).

The Love of God

The love of God and Christ, proclaimed by the Gospel and delineated by the Apostles, is noted for its extensiveness. That is why we read of the desire that we “*May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*” (Eph 3:18-19). The marvelous copiousness of Divine love cannot be contained in a statement, or fully comprehended in a word. It must be opened to us through Divinely appointed means. Thus we are strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ can, in fact, dwell in our hearts by faith. Then, and only then, will

we be able to be “*rooted and grounded in love,*” and thus enabled to begin to grasp the scope of Divine beneficence (Eph 5:16-17).

The Grace of God

The grace of God, wonderfully proclaimed in the Gospel, is noted for being exceedingly rich: “*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*” (Eph 1:7). “*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:7). The grace of God and of Christ is noted for its rich and essential resources. There are no liabilities in grace, no deficiencies, or weaknesses. For this reason, it is not possible to place too

OUTLINE

- ▶ PAUL, AND APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1A)
- ▶ TIMOTHEUS OUR BROTHER (1:1B)
- ▶ TO THE SAINTS (1:2A)
- ▶ TO THE FAITHFUL BRETHREN IN CHRIST (1:2B)
- ▶ WHICH ARE AT COLOSSAE (1:2C)
- ▶ GRACE BE UNTO YOU (1:2D)
- ▶ PEACE BE UNTO YOU (1:2E)
- ▶ FROM GOD THE FATHER (1:2F)
- ▶ AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (1:2G)

much stress upon the grace of God. **Only things and personalities that are not of themselves sufficient can be over-emphasized.** Like other Divine qualities, grace can be misrepresented, misunderstood, or misapplied – but it is not possible to speak about it correctly, and yet say too much about grace itself.

The Glory of God

The glory of God, most fully declared in the Gospel, is also noted for its richness: *“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”* (Eph 3:16). This is an aspect of the Lord that He is on the initiative to make known. As it is written, *“And that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory”* (Rom 9:23). **God’s glory is the outworking and revelation of His Person, and it is central to Apostolic proclamation.**

Christ Himself

When speaking of the benefits flowing from the Person of Christ, riches are again the appropriate description. *“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph 3:8). Christ Himself is adequate for all things. **There is no need to combine Him with something or someone else to obtain Divine benefits.** He who has Christ has everything, for all riches are resident in, and obtainable through, Him alone.

The Holy Spirit

In regeneration, men receive the

Holy Spirit of God. That reception is spoken of in remarkable words: *“according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior”* (Titus 3:5-6). As is characteristic of every aspect of salvation, what men need is given in rich and copious supply!

Riches of His Goodness

The goodness of the Lord is also loaded with staggering benefits. How appropriately the Spirit speaks of them. *“Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* (Rom 2:4). There is an abundance to be realized when the “goodness” of the Lord is comprehended and received by faith.

Wisdom and Knowledge of God

The wisdom and knowledge of God, particularly as they are made known in His great salvation, are also noted for their plentitude and abundant provision. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”* (Rom 11:33).

Full Assurance and Understanding

Even the assurance and understanding that proceed from the belief of the Gospel, are characterized by richness. *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ”* (Col 2:2).

The Reproaches of Christ

There is such a fulness in Christ Jesus, that even bearing His reproach is laden with benefits and advantages. It is therefore said of Moses, *“By faith Moses,*

when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb 11:24-26).

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL

Nowhere is such magnificent abundance used to describe human experience or accomplishments. The church, which is the body of Christ, is never spoken of as, of itself, having such magnificent abundance. The perceived mission of the church has no such copiousness. The family, home, or government is never spoken of as having such abundant provision.

With unwavering consistency, the Epistles hold forth the Gospel itself as the central message, and Jesus Christ as the fundamental and pivotal Person. In Apostolic doctrine, nothing is ever allowed to upstage the substance of the Gospel or the centrality of the Son of God. There is no Apostolic writing that leaves the hearers or readers looking at something or someone other than the Lord Jesus.

Much, if not all, of the deficiencies of the church are owing to a misplaced emphasis. Most of the Epistles were written to re-establish the preeminence of the Person of Christ and the message of the Gospel. The following is a sampling of this fact, and is by no means exhaustive.

✠ **ROMANS.** The centrality of Christ (1:1,3,6,7,8,16; 2:16; 3:22,24; 5:1,6, 8,11,,15,17,21; 6:3,4,8,,8,11,23; 7:4, 25; 8:1,2,9,10,11, 17,34,35,39; 9:1, 3, 5; 10:4,6,7; 12:5; 13:14; 14:9,10,15, 18; 15:3,5,6,7,8,16-20; 16:20,24,25). The priority of the Gospel. (1:19,15,16; 2:16; 10:14-17; 11:28; 15:16,19,20,29; 16:25).

GOD’S GLORY IS THE OUTWORKING AND REVELATION OF HIS PERSON, AND IT IS CENTRAL TO APOSTOLIC PROCLAMATION.

✚ **FIRST CORINTHIANS.** The centrality of Christ. (1:1-13,17; 2:2,16; 3:11,23; 4:1,10,15; 5:4,7; 6:15; 8:6,11-12; 9:1; 10:4,9,16; 11:1,3; 12:12,27; 15:3,12-23; 15:57; 16:22-24). The priority of the Gospel (1:17; 4:15; 9:12,14,16,18; 15:1) .

✚ **SECOND CORINTHIANS.** The centrality of Christ. (1:1-5,19-21; 2:10,12,14, 15-17; 3:3,4,14; 4:4-6; 5:10,14,16-20; 6:15; 8:9,20; 9:13; 10:1,5,14; 11:2,3, 10,31; 12:9,19; 13:5,14). The priority of the Gospel (2:12; 4:3,4; 8:18; 9:3; 10:14,16; 11:4,7).

✚ **GALATIANS.** The centrality of Christ (1:1,3,6-7,10,12,22; 2:4,16-17,20-21; 3:113-14,16-17,22,24,26-28; 4:7,14,19; 5:1-2,4,6; 6:2,12,14-15,18).

1:5; 2:2, 4,8,9; 3:2; 2 Thess 1:8; 2:14).

✚ **FIRST AND SECOND TIMOTHY.** The centrality of Christ (1 Tim 1:1,2,12, 14-16; 2:5,7; 3:13; 4:6; 5:11,21; 6:3, 13; 2 Tim 1:1,2,9,10,13; 2:1,3,8,10,19; 3:12,15; 4:1,22). The priority of the Gospel (1 Tim 1:11; 2 Tim 1:8,10; 2:8).

✚ **TITUS.** The centrality of Christ (1:1,4; 2:13; 3:6). The priority of the Gospel (1:3).

✚ **HEBREWS.** The centrality of Christ (1:2,5,8; 2:6; 3:1,6,14; 4:14; 5:5,8; 6:1,6; 7:3,28; 9:11,14,24,26,28; 10:10, 29; 11:26; 13:8,21). The priority of the Gospel (4:2).

✚ **JAMES.** The centrality of Christ (1:1; 2:1). The priority of the Gospel

14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9,10; 21:6,7,14,22, 23; 22:1,3,9,13,16). The priority of the Gospel (1:2,9; 3:8,10; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11,17; 14:6; 15:5; 19:10; 20:4).

WHAT WE WILL SEE IN COLOSSIANS

The book of Colossians is rich with Apostolic emphasis. It shines the light of heavenly riches **upon areas of human difficulty and challenge, showing they are not as significant as they appear.** In doing this, the Spirit elevates our vision to behold the richness of Divine provision. Here are some of the central points that will be made.

✚ Grace and peace are conferred upon the saints(1:2).

✚ The affirmation of the hope laid up in heaven for the saints (1:5).

✚ The Gospel is said to be bringing forth fruit in the saints (1:6).

✚ A prayer for the saints to be filled all knowledge and spiritual understanding (1:9-11).

✚ Deliverance from the power or darkness and translation into Christ's kingdom proclaimed (1:13).

✚ Redemption and forgiveness are affirmed(1:14).

✚ An extended declaration of Christ superiority is given (1:15-19).

✚ The accomplishments of Christ's atoning death are affirmed (1:20-22).

✚ The mystery hidden from the ages and generations is said to now be made known to the saints (1:26-28).

✚ Things hidden in Christ are declared to belong to the saints, and to be apprehended by them (2:1-3).

✚ It is powerfully affirmed that we are complete in Christ (2:10-15).

✚ The implications of being risen with Christ are delineated, and the saints urged to enter into them (3:1-4).

✚ In Christ the "new man," or new creation has been put on (3:10-11).

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The priority of the Gospel (Gal 1:6-11; 2:2,5,7,14; 3:8; 4:13).

✚ **EPHESIANS.** The centrality of Christ (1:1-5,10,12,17,20; 2:5-7,10,12-13,20; 3:1, 4,6,8-9,11,14,17, 19,21; 4:12-13,15,20, 32; 5:2,5,14,20, 23-25,32; 6:5-6,23-24). The priority of the Gospel (1:13; 3:6; 6:15, 19).

✚ **PHILIPPIANS.** The centrality of Christ (1:1,2,6,8,10,11,13,15-16,18-21,23,26-27,29; 2:5-8,11,16,21,30; 3:3,7-9,12, 14,18,20; 4:7,13,19,21,23). The priority of the Gospel (1:5,7,12, 17,27; 2:22; 4:3, 15).

✚ **FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS.** The centrality of Christ (1 Thess 1:1,3,6; 2:6,14,19; 3:2,11,13,16; 5:9,18,23,28; 2 Thess 1:1,2,8,12,14,16; 3:5,6,12,18). The priority of the Gospel (1 Thess

(1:18,21).

✚ **FIRST AND SECOND PETER.** The centrality of Christ (1 Pet 1:1-3,7,11,13,19; 2:5,21; 3:16,18,21; 4:1, 11,14; 5:1,10,14; 2 Pet 1:1,2,8,11,14, 16; 2:20; 3:18). The priority of the Gospel (1:12,23,25; 2:2,8; 3:1; 4:6,17; 2 Pet 1:19; 3:5,7).

✚ **FIRST, SECOND, THIRD JOHN.** The centrality of Christ (1 John 1:3,7; 2:22-24; 3:8,23; 4:9-10,14,15; 5:5,9-13,20; 2 John 1:3,9). The priority of the Gospel (1 John 1:10; 2:5,7,14; 3:18; 5:7, 10,11).

✚ **JUDE.** The centrality of Christ (1:1,4,17,21). The priority of the Gospel (1:4,17).

✚ **REVELATION.** The centrality of Christ (1:8-18; 2:23; 3:17; 5:6,8, 12, 13,6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 12:11; 13:8;

- ✦ The Word of Christ can dwell richly and productively in saints (3:16-17).
- ✦ The saints will receive the reward of the inheritance, and are to live in view of that reality (3:24).

In some form, these affirmations are found in all of the Epistles. **The perception of these things draws the saints into productive involvement in the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.** If they are not ascertained to some extent, living by faith and walking in the Spirit are rendered virtually impossible.

These affirmations are pillars of sound reasoning. They represent a foundational way of thinking that reflects God's "eternal purpose." **Everything that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy** (Phil 4:8), **intersect with these realities.**

When these are clear in our hearts and minds duty makes sense and refreshment is realized. When they are not perceived, a diversion to lesser and unprofitable things is inevitable.

SATAN'S INITIATIVE

These are also the realities that are most vigorously attacked by the prince of the power of the air. His diabolical aim is not simply to disrupt churches, families, and governments. That is not at the heart of his dark agenda. All of his efforts are focused on two things. First, to obscure the Lord

Jesus and the Gospel. Second, to oppose those who show forth the life of Christ and proclaim His Gospel. Thus the Spirit encapsulates Satan's initiative in these words: "And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the

The serious of these activities is seen in what is said of those perpetrating them. Such teachers are **not** said to be honest, simply ignorant, or fundamentally good. Rather, it is affirmed that they are "not holding the Head," from whom spiritual nourishment is ministered. The sustenance that is

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testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17).

Throughout history, the church has been tempted with distraction and diversion. Satan has offered it another Savior, another Christ, another answer to the human dilemma. In this effort, he transforms himself into an angel of light, and his ministers come disguised as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14). Some of the results of this initiative are addressed in the book of Colossians. They include men imposing Old Covenant distinctions upon men (meats, drinks, holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths. These efforts also included the imposition of certain human disciplines upon believers (self abasement and the worship of angels) – 2:16-17.

The Seriousness of Such Things

realized by holding to the Head results in believers being "knit together," and increasing "with the increase of God" (2:19). **However, the teachers of reference aborted that process, introduced division, and nullified the increase of God.**

Although the devil seeks to get the church to change its emphasis, he himself has never changed his thrust.

APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

The Apostolic writings carefully address these two matters: (1) The glorious realities, accomplishments, and benefits of Christ and, (2) The Gospel, its nature and content, and its impact upon Satan's initiative. Much of this will be confirmed in teaching of this brief but pungent book.

THE CITY OF COLOSSAE, AND THE EPISTLE

This Epistle is written to "the saints and faithful brethren which are at Colossae" (1:2). This city was located in Phrygia, but was politically in the province of Asia. It was around 500 miles from Jerusalem, across the Mediterranean Sea (called "the Great Sea" in Scripture, Num 34:6). By way of land, it was around 800-900 miles from the holy city. Located on Lycus river, Colossae was about twelve miles above

Laodicea, and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates. EASTON BIBLE DICTIONARY It was considered a significant city.

TIME OF WRITING

The Epistle was probably written around A.D. 57, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16). Although this is incidental, we conclude it from several facts.

- ✦ Timothy was with Paul at the time of writing (1:1 w/Philippians 2:19).
- ✦ Epaphroditus had recently come from Asia Minor, and was now with Paul in prison (1:7; 4:12 w/Phil 2:25; Phile 1:23).
- ✦ Paul was in prison, and had been preaching during his detention (4:3,18 w/Acts 28:30-31).

✦ Tychicus and Onesimus were with him, and carried the letter to Colossae, and another letter to Philemon as well (4:7 and Philemon 1:12 w/Ephesians 6:21).

It appears this Epistle was written later in Paul's imprisonment, as indicated in his letter to Philemon, written about the same time. In that letter, Paul seemed

Because of the persecution that provoked the dispersion of the disciples, their activities were not directed by the kind of organization and systemization that characterizes modern day efforts. Yet, those early advances were significantly more successful than most of the ones succeeding generations have been able to achieve.

bring them to this perception. In fulfillment of his Apostleship to the Gentiles, Paul writes to correct this condition. He did not found the church in Colossae, and he had not seen them face to face. Another person, Epaphras, was a faithful servant among them (4:12). Yet, upon hearing of the condition of the church, the faithful Apostle at once steps into the circumstance.

Summation

In summary, this Epistle will expound the worthiness and dignity of the Lord Jesus together with His sole sufficiency and thorough adequacy. In matters pertaining to life and godliness, nothing more is needed than Jesus! We are *"complete in Him"* (Col 2:10).

The Nature of Kingdom Work

The Apostle did not recognize sectarian boundaries. To dignify such boundaries is not the manner of the Kingdom. **Truth is to be freely declared wherever it is needed.** Although there are good reasons to support the idea of congregational autonomy, where groups of believers are not under the dictatorial authority of an absent leader, that idea must not be taken too far. **No body of believers is free to disregard the truth of God, or venture into theological deserts that lead people away from Jesus.** Such departures are sinful and bring great reproach upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our very area, there are a significant number of *Christian* congregations who are conducting their affairs just as though Jesus Christ had not been *"highly exalted"* (Phil 2:9). All manner of teachings are being perpetrated among believers that are nothing more than tributaries of human wisdom. Yet, certain denominational walls and sectarian authorities not only allow such practices, but protect their continuance. **Thus no small number of believers are being starved to death, while made to wander in spiritually arid wastelands.**

Paul did not allow this to happen at Colossae. **Note, he did not ask the elders for permission to send a letter to the church.** He did not recognize any earthly head of the



to suggest he expected to be released very soon. For this reason, he told Philemon to prepare a place for him (1:22).

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH

It appears as though the church was founded by Epaphras (1:7). Because Paul affirms the brethren there, and in Laodicea, had never seen his face (2:1), it is assumed it was founded after Paul had gone throughout that particular area, *"strengthening all the disciples"* (Acts 18:23).

The Spreading of the Word

If this assumption is correct, here is another church, like Rome, that was **not** founded by the Apostles. This confirms the zeal that characterized the spread of the Gospel in those early years.

The energetic promulgation of the Gospel following the scattering of the disciples (Acts 8:4) is a remarkable circumstance to consider, particularly in view of our present circumstances.

THE OCCASION OF THE WRITING

Although Paul had not been to Colossae, he had learned of their state through Epaphras, their faithful servant (1:6-7; 4:12).

Both the tone and content of the Epistle suggest that among the Colossian brethren, there had been a shift of emphasis away from Christ. The influence of Judaistic teachers was found among them (2:16-17). There was also a philosophical accentuation that tended to upstage the Son of God (2:8). Additionally, some among them were pressing the idea of achieving spirituality through various disciplines and regimens of life (2:20-23).

The result of these diversions was that the Lord Jesus Christ was thrust into the background of theological thought. Although God Almighty had given Him *"preeminence"* in *"all things"* (1:18), the Colossians were being subjected to teaching that did not

congregation through which all teaching was to be directed. The condition of the church demanded that a word be delivered from the Lord, and Paul was faithful to do it. **Truth needs no earthly permission to be proclaimed!**

SIMILARITIES WITH EPHESIANS

There are a number of similarities between Colossians and Ephesians. They were in general proximity to one another, and were both written while Paul was

irrelevant.

- ✦ If knowing the truth makes “free” (John 8:32), then a failure to proclaim it contributes to bondage.
- ✦ If Satan was noted for abiding not “in the truth” (John 8:44), then a failure to declare the truth is only possible while one is under his influence.
- ✦ If we are “sanctified through the

THERE IS NOTHING REQUIRED TO PREPARE US FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT THAT IS NOT REALIZED IN JESUS CHRIST. WE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM! THERE IS NO RESULT OF SIN THAT IS NOT FULLY AND EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED BY JESUS CHRIST.

imprisoned in Rome.

- ✦ Ephesians 1:15-19 with Colossians 1:9-11
- ✦ Ephesians 1:20-23 with Colossians 1:15-19
- ✦ Ephesians 1:10 with Colossians 1:20
- ✦ Ephesians 2:1-10 with Colossians 1:21-23
- ✦ Ephesians 3:7 with Colossians 1:25
- ✦ Ephesians 3:9,10 with Colossians 1:26,27
- ✦ Ephesians 3:17 with Colossians 2:7
- ✦ Ephesians 2:11-22 with Colossians 2:11-15
- ✦ Ephesians 4:14 with Colossians 2:8
- ✦ Ephesians 4:15,16 with Colossians 2:19
- ✦ Ephesians 4:25 with Colossians 3:9
- ✦ Ephesians 4:22-24 with Colossians 3:9,10
- ✦ Ephesians 4:32 with Colossians 3:12
- ✦ Ephesians 5:19,20 with Colossians 3:16,17
- ✦ Ephesians 5:21 with Colossians 3:18-22
- ✦ Ephesians 6:6-9 with Colossians 4:1
- ✦ Ephesians 6:19 with Colossians 4:3
- ✦ Ephesians 5:16 with Colossians 4:5
- ✦ Ephesians 6:21 with Colossians 4:7

Apparently both of these churches had been subjected to similar assaults of philosophy and corrupted Judaism. We will find that our own times are characterized by remarkable similarities.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BOOK

The fact that Colossians is truth makes it relevant, **for truth, because of its very nature, cannot be**

truth” (John 17:19), then Divine rejection is inevitable where truth is not being affirmed.

- ✦ If “every one who is of the truth” hears the voice of Christ, then there is no way of determining who is of God, and who is not, where the truth is not being made known.
- ✦ If “speaking the truth in love” is the means of facilitating growth in Christ (Eph 4:15), then spiritual growth is not possible where truth is not heard.

Spiritual growth, recovery, and stability depend upon the proclamation of “the truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:5). For that reason alone, the book of Colossians is important to us.

Yet Another Reason

There is yet another reason for the importance of this book. **We are living in times when, within the professed church, Jesus has been upstaged.** Other things have become the central proclamation. Such things as the church, the family, the mission of the church, the name of the church, youth ministry, the relief of the poor, and even the Holy Spirit, are given a place of prominence and honor that God has given to Jesus

alone. The day of promoting various disciplines of life did not end during the time of this Epistle. The church is still plagued with such teachings. It is not that these things are wrong or sinful of themselves. **However, when they become the main thing, they become wrong.**

The essentiality of knowing we are “complete in Him,” is as necessary today as when this Epistle was written. **There is nothing required to prepare us for the day of judgment that is not realized in Jesus Christ.** We are complete in Him! **There is no result of sin that is not fully and effectively addressed by Jesus Christ.** We are complete in Him! **There is no Divine benefit that does not come to us through Him.** We are complete in Him! **There is no spiritual or true advantage that is not accomplished in Him.** We are complete in Him! Everything that is required for fulfillment, joy, peace, and satisfaction is found in Christ alone. **We are complete in Him!**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We therefore come to this Epistle for nourishment, enlightenment, and encouragement. Here we will find food for the soul and strength for the heart. We will “live” by this word (Luke 4:4), and become “thoroughly furnished” by it (2 Tim 3:17). Our faith will be impacted by this word (Rom 10:17), and we will be “sanctified and cleansed” through it (Eph 5:26). When this message is comprehended, it will become the Spirit’s sword in our hand to wage war against the devil’s devices (Eph 6:17).

Let us receive the word to the Colossians in the same manner as the Thessalonians received the Words of Paul to them. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess 2:13). We will find these words, their tone, their meaning, and their implication profitable for eternity. This is undoubtedly a word from God, and, like all of His words, it is for us today!

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

"¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ . . ."

PAUL

"Paul" means "small or little." However, the man with whom this name is most commonly linked is by no means associated with smallness. He may have been small in bodily stature, but he was a giant in the faith. He was humble, or "little" in his own eyes, like king Saul was in his beginning (1 Sam 15:17). He considered himself "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8), and "the least of the Apostles," and "not meet to be called an Apostle" (1 Cor 15:9). Because he "humbled" himself "under the mighty hand of God," the Lord has exalted his name and his work (1 Pet 5:6). That is why the words "the Apostle Paul" evoke such respect among believers. God has exalted this faithful servant in this world, and will do so to even a greater degree in "the world to come."

Saul of Tarsus

Prior to being an Apostle, Paul was known as "Saul of Tarsus." Our first exposure to him is in the book of Acts. The time during which this exposure takes place was approximately A.D. 35, or about five years after Christ's ascension to the right hand of God.

The Stoning of Stephen

The occasion was the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr for Jesus. When a mob of angry Jews stoned Stephen, "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 7:58). These were the "witnesses" who were "set up" to speak against Stephen before the Jewish council (Acts 6:13). The eighth chapter of Acts begins by referring to this incident – when witnesses laid down their garments at Saul's feet: "And Saul was consenting unto his death" (Acts 8:1). Twenty-two years later, Paul stood before a group of angry Jews and told them how he had confronted the Lord after his conversion, while he was praying in the Temple. Jesus told him to leave Jerusalem at that time, "for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." Saul then referred to the incident of Stephen's stoning. "And when

the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts 22:20).

The Persecution of the Church

Our next exposure to Saul of Tarsus came during the period following the stoning of Stephen. He led an unparalleled assault against the church. It is written, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). At least twenty-three years later, Paul stood before Agrippa and confessed, "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and

religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal 1:13). "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church" (Phil 3:6). "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim 1:13).

Advanced in the Jew's Religion

Prior to his conversion, as Saul of Tarsus, Paul was advanced in the Jew's religion, excelling his peers in both knowledge and zeal. Of this time Paul wrote to the Galatians, "And [I] profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions

PRIOR TO HIS CONVERSION, AS SAUL OF TARSUS, PAUL WAS ADVANCED IN THE JEW'S RELIGION, EXCELLING HIS PEERS IN BOTH KNOWLEDGE AND ZEAL.

delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4).

The aggressiveness with which he persecuted the church is also duly noted. "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:11).

Paul spoke to the saved of his aggression against the church. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:9). "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews'

of my fathers" (Gal 1:14).

Under the Tutelage of Gamaliel

Saul of Tarsus was a protege of Gamaliel, who was a "doctor of the Law, had in reputation among the people" (Acts 5:34). Paul was "thoroughly trained in the Law of our fathers," and was "zealous for God" (Acts 22:3). His education was not secular, but was in "the Jews religion." He was an expert in Moses and the Prophets.

Among the Hebrews

Among the chosen people, Saul excelled. He referred to himself as "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil 3:5).

A Pharisee

In his relationship to the Law, Saul was a Pharisee: "as touching the Law, a Pharisee" (Phil 3:5). Pharisees led separated lives – that is, their entire life

was given to Judaism. In this regard, he followed Gamaliel, who was also a Pharisee (Acts 5:34). Years after his conversion, when speaking to a group of angry Jews, Paul still referred to himself as a Pharisee, whose father also was a Pharisee. *“Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee”* (Acts 23:6). This manner of life, he confessed, was after the strictest and most rigid manner: *“... after the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee”* (Acts 26:5).

He Lived An Impeccable Life
Prior to being called into the

Their solid consistency in the faith (Phil 1:5) enabled them to receive his testimony without being unduly distracted by it. In his only elaboration on this subject Paul provided the following details of his commitment to the Lord.

- ✦ The religious profitability he had attained in the Jews religion was willingly forfeited – *“counted loss for Christ”* (Phil 3:7).
- ✦ He counted all competing interests *“but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus”* his Lord, considering them *“but dung,”* in

reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

Paul confessed these attitudes to be the kingdom norm, urging fellow believers, *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you”* (Phil 3:15).

Just as Paul had been a *“Hebrew of the Hebrews,”* so he excelled among those who are in Christ Jesus.

Paul’s Labors

When comparing his labors with the other Apostles he humbly confessed, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Cor 15:10).

Wherever the name of Jesus is embraced, Paul the Apostle is known. **In him, we find a notable example of what God can do in a submitted person.** Paul himself makes a point of this when he writes, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting”* (1 Tim 1:15-16).

We are not speaking, therefore, of any ordinary person. Paul’s words are adorned by his own consistent and unwavering life.

APOSTLE

The word *“apostle”* means a delegate, an ambassador of the Gospel, one who is commissioned, or sent forth, with orders. An *“apostle”* is one who is sent out to deliver the message of another.

In all of Scripture, only Paul and Peter refer to themselves as *“an Apostle”* (Col 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). **This is most fitting, for these two men headed up the Gospel initiative to the entire world** – Peter to the Jews,

WHEREVER THE NAME OF JESUS IS EMBRACED, PAUL THE APOSTLE IS KNOWN. IN HIM, WE FIND A NOTABLE EXAMPLE OF WHAT GOD CAN DO IN A SUBMITTED PERSON.

Apostleship, Paul lived an impeccably holy life. Of this he confessed, *“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”* (Phil 3:6). Again, when standing before a group of Jews that was seeking his life, he said, *“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”* (Acts 23:1).

In his persecution of the church, Paul was not motivated by a mere prejudicial hatred of Christians. **He persecuted them, conscientiously thinking he was doing God service.** Of this he said, *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9). Paul confessed that he was forgiven these monstrous sins because he was ignorant of what he was doing, and did not believe. *“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Tim 1:13).

His Commitment to Christ

Paul’s commitment to Christ was unequalled. Although he did not speak of this commitment often, he was able to share it with the brethren at Philippi.

order that he might *“win Christ”* (2:8).

- ✦ He determined to be found in Christ *“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Phil 3:9).
- ✦ Concerning Christ Jesus, Paul’s unwavering determination was to *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”* (Phil 3:11).
- ✦ Realizing he had not yet reached the goal appointed for him, he followed hard after Jesus, that he might *“apprehend that for which also”* he was *“apprehended of (by) Christ Jesus”* (Phil 3:12).
- ✦ His awareness that he had not yet taken hold of the fulness of the inheritance moved him to confess, *“this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and*

and Paul to the Gentiles. As it is written, *“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles)”* (Gal 2:8).

Called to the Apostleship

As with all Divinely appointed offices, **those who fill them must be called into them by God.** Therefore Paul twice wrote he was *“called to be an Apostle”* (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1). That call involved being *“separated unto the Gospel of God”* (Rom 1:1) – that is, his commission was to preach the Gospel.

Out of Due Time

The uniqueness of Paul’s Apostleship is seen in the fact that he was *“born out of due time”* (1 Cor 15:8). In this expression, Paul is comparing himself with the other Apostles. **The birth to which he refers is his spiritual birth, not his birth in the flesh.** When Stephen was stoned, which was roughly five years after Pentecost, Saul of Tarsus was a *“young man”* (Acts 7:58). Therefore, according to the flesh, he had been born in time to be called to the Apostleship in the same manner as the original twelve.

The change in Paul’s character took place more suddenly than that of the other Apostles. His call was not at all like that of the others. He was suddenly wrested from his aggression against the saints on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). It was at that time that Jesus told him, *“I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18).

Immediately Paul *“showed”* what

he had seen to *“them in Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea”* (Acts 26:20).

The ordinary qualifications of an Apostle were stated in the first chapter of Acts, when, under the direction of the Lord, one was chosen to take fill the *“bishopric”* vacated by Judas. Of the candidate, Peter affirmed, *“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who*

PAUL IS THE ONLY ONE WHO WROTE OF THIS TABLE, AND HE DID SO WITH AN UNDERSTANDING THAT IS NOT DECLARED BY ANYONE ELSE.

have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”^{NIV} (Acts 1:21-22). **Paul did not meet those qualifications:** he was *“born out of due time.”*

For this reason, special tutelage was given to Paul by Jesus Himself. Paul did not confer with the Apostles to obtain his understanding, as the rest of the world would have to do. Speaking of his activity following Christ’s appearance to him, Paul wrote that it pleased God *“To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days”* (Gal 1:16-18).

The teaching he received directly from the risen Christ was so thorough, that after meeting with the James, Peter, and John, he confessed, *“those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me”*^{NASB} (Gal 2:6).

The Lord’s Table

There was one particularly important event that involved only Jesus

and the Apostles, following the exit of Judas. It was the institution of the Lord’s table. No one was there except Jesus and the *“the eleven.”* Anyone who learned of this event, and of its place in the church, would have to learn about it from the Apostles. Yet, this is not how Paul learned of it. In a telling testimony, he told the Corinthians of the personal instruction he received from Jesus on this matter. *“For I have received of the Lord that which*

also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:25).

Paul is the only one who wrote of this table, and he did so with an understanding that is not declared by anyone else.

- ✚ As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we show forth, or declare the Lord’s death until He comes (11:26).
- ✚ Whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (11:27).
- ✚ A person is to examine himself before eating this bread and drinking this cup (11:28).
- ✚ The person who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself (11:29).
- ✚ Those who conduct themselves inappropriately at this table can be

judged with sickness, and even death (11:30).

Not A Mere Formality

Paul's Apostleship, therefore, was not a mere formality. He was "chosen" and "set apart" for this Apostleship from his "mother's womb." Although he was unaware of this prior to his calling, he became aware of it later and confessed, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with

Gentiles than any other man.

OF JESUS CHRIST

Like "the twelve," (Matt 10:8; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5; Rev 21:14), Paul was an "apostle of Jesus Christ." That is, he was commissioned and sent directly by the Lord Jesus. Peter referred to "the Apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Pet 3:2). Jude called them "the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:17). John the revelator was told of "the Apostles of the Lamb" (Rev 21:14).

In this case, the emphasis is not on

- ✚ "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (1 Tim 1:1).
- ✚ "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 1:1).
- ✚ "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (2 Tim 1:11).
- ✚ "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1).

The Apostles are first in rank within the household of faith. As it is written, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles" (1 Cor 12:28). If those of first rank were humble, not imposing themselves upon the members of Christ's body, what must those of lesser rank do? If they came in the name of Jesus, only binding upon men what He had bound, what must be said of those who occupy lower and less authoritative positions?

As an Apostle, Paul did not come as one who had academic expertise about Jesus and His words – although He displayed such knowledge. His separation and appointment were confirmed in his insight and faithfulness to proclaim it. He was acutely aware of the fact that he as a steward, and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful (1 Cor 4:2). That is, in the end, when the books are opened, the faithful custodian of the goods given to him will be the only one who is accepted and honored.

Paul could not speak of his Apostleship without bringing Jesus into the limelight. When he spoke of the church, he shined the light upon Jesus. When he spoke of proper living, the emphasis was upon Jesus. If he spoke about last things, Jesus was prominent. He was an "Apostle of Jesus Christ." Whatever he said or whatever he wrote constrained him to lift up the Lord Jesus, speaking primarily of Him.

ALTHOUGH AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST HAS AUTHORITY (2 COR 10:8), IT IS NOT POLITICAL AUTHORITY, OR THE RIGHT TO TAKE CONTROL OVER OTHER PEOPLE. THE AUTHORITY LIES IN THE ONE WHO SENT THE APOSTLES, AND NOT IN THE APOSTLES THEMSELVES.

flesh and blood" (Gal 1:16). This kind of separation was also vouchsafed to Jeremiah. God said to him, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer 1:5). John the Baptist was also characterized by this kind of calling. "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" ^{NKJV} (Luke 1:15).

If great grace and an unusual calling mandates an unusual ministry (and this is the case), we will surely find it fulfilled in Paul. And, indeed, we do. He was a prodigious laborer, thus confirming his perception that God's grace had made him what he was. Let Paul's critics see if they can measure up to him in calling, insight, or labors. And, if they cannot, let them place their hands over their mouths. As for me, I give honor to the Apostle Paul who saw more and declared more among the

"apostle," but on the One who sent the Apostle. Although an Apostle of Christ has authority (2 Cor 10:8), it is not political authority, or the right to take control over other people. **The authority lies in the One who sent the Apostles, and not in the Apostles themselves.**

Paul is careful to make this point in all of his writings.

- ✚ "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1).
- ✚ "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God" (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 2:1).
- ✚ "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal 1:1).
- ✚ "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (Eph 1:1; Col 1:1).

BY THE WILL OF GOD

“ . . . by the will of God . . . ”

Paul affirms he is an Apostle *“by the will of God,”* or according to God’s purpose and determination. **He did not seek the Apostolic office, or volunteer to be used in that capacity.** God separated him to the Apostolic office before he was born, as affirmed in Galatians 1:15: *“But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased . . . ”*^{NASB} (Gal 1:15).

THE DECIDING ISSUE

When it comes to things pertaining to life and godliness, **the deciding issue is not the will of man, but the will of God.** The new birth itself is *“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:13). The words spoken by holy men *“never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Pet 1:21).

THE FACTS

Speaking academically, the words *“the will ”* are mentioned thirty-six times in the New Covenant Scriptures. The emphasis reflected in these references is unquestionably clear.

- ✦ *“The will of My Father”* (Matt 7:21; 12:50).
- ✦ *“The will of your Father which is in heaven”* (Matt 18:14).
- ✦ *“The will of his father”* (parable of two sons, Matt 21:31).
- ✦ *“The will of God”* (Mk 3:35; Acts 13:36; Rom 1:10; 8:27; 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:1; 6:6; Col 1:1; 4:12; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:18; 2 Tim 1:1; Heb 10:36; 1 Pet 2:15; 3:17; 4:2,19; 1 John 2:17).
- ✦ *“The will of the flesh”* (the new birth is **not** by this means, John 1:13).
- ✦ *“The will of Him that sent Me”* (John 4:34; 6:38,40).
- ✦ *“The will of the Father”* (John 5:30).
- ✦ *“The will of the Lord”* (Acts 21:14; Eph 5:17).
- ✦ *“The will of the Gentiles”* (something now repudiated, 1 Pet 4:3).

✦ *“The will of man”* (Prophecy did **not** come by this means, 2 Pet 1:21).

The following expressions are not found in the New Covenant Scriptures: “man’s will,” “our will” “your will,” and “free will.” The words *“Thy will,”* referring to God, occur five times (Matt 6:10; 26:42; Luke 11:2; Heb 10:7,9).

The word *“will,”* as used in our text, is a noun, coming from the Greek word *θελήματος* (thel-ama-tos). It means **design, purpose, or what is determined to be done.** In this precise form, it is used fourteen times in Scripture.

counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11).

✦ A prayer for believers to be *“filled with the knowledge of His will”* (Col 1:9).

Care must be taken to avoid using these texts to formulate a rigid theology, or move beyond the Spirit’s use of them.

PURPOSE AND DETERMINATION

The word *“will”* is often equated with mere desire – something that may or may not take place. In such a view, a thing that is *“willed”* is actually determined by circumstances other than the will itself. From a human point of view, Paul expressed this when he said,

WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS, THE DECIDING ISSUE IS NOT THE WILL OF MAN, BUT THE WILL OF GOD.

✦ The new birth is not accomplished through *“the will of the flesh”* or the *“will of man”* (John 1:13).

✦ Paul’s desire to come to the Romans by *“the will of God”* (Rom 15:32).

✦ Paul was an Apostle by *“the will of God”* (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:11; 2 Tim 1:1).

✦ A person having *“power over their own will,”* determining his daughter to remain a virgin during the time of crisis (1 Cor 7:37).

✦ Believers giving themselves to the work of God *“by the will of God”* (2 Cor 8:5).

✦ God predestined believers to the adoption of children *“according to the good pleasure of His will”* (Eph 1:5).

✦ God has made known *“the mystery of His will”* (Eph 1:9).

✦ God works all things *“after the*

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18). The word used in the above passage, however, is not the one used in our text. This word comes from *θέλειν* (thel-ein), which means to desire, consent to, or be ready to. This is a *“will”* that actually reflects the purpose of someone else. Specifically, it has to do with consenting to the will of God, and being desirous to do it.

The *“will”* of our text, however, does not reflect a mere wish on the part of God. Rather, **it is a Divine determination, or decision – made in strict accord with His character and His eternal purpose.** God does not have the difficulty expressed by Paul: i.e., *“how to perform that which is good I find not.”*

The Lord DOES what He wills – what He purposes. As it is written, *“He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the*

earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35). What He purposes, He brings to pass (Isa 46:11). **A God who cannot implement His own purpose is no god at all!** This is a point made concerning idols, who "cannot profit or deliver," and "cannot save" (1 Sam 12:21; Isa 45:20).

What About Not Willing That Any Should Perish?

The sophist may remonstrate, saying that God is not willing that any should perish, as stated in Second Peter 3:9. Does this mean something God willed was actually frustrated, or that what He did not will actually came to pass?

The word used in this text is not

Paul's Apostleship, therefore, was an outworking of God's "eternal purpose." In his travels, preaching, and writing, he was not simply doing what God wanted men to do. **Rather, he was doing what God had determined he himself should do.**

God chose Paul to unfold His eternal purpose to men – to open to their understanding something of the involvements of His great salvation. The commission given to Paul confirms this, and is most remarkable. ". . . for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee . . . I send thee, to open their

this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ**" (Eph 3:7-9).

Paul was "THE Apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13), and exercised his office faithfully. In fact, Paul confessed Christ Jesus "considered me faithful, appointing me to His service"^{NIV} (1 Tim 1:12).

Elsewhere he also said he had "obtained mercy to be faithful" (1 Tim 1:12). Later, he will say in this Epistle, "I have become its (Christ's) body, the church) servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness"^{NIV} (Col 1:25).

WHEN PAUL WRITES

When Paul writes, therefore, he is not doing so as a talented counselor, or one whose opinions excel those of his peers. **He writes as one through whom God is speaking. He writes as one who is faithful to communicate what the Lord wants His people to know. He communicates things relating to God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.**

Paul was not raised up to comment on the customs of the times, or to deal with Roman and Grecian manners. He is not applying well trained human wisdom to life situations, and teaching people how to live successful lives in this world. **Every word he delivers intersects with the Gospel of Christ.** All of his teaching has directly to do with God's "great salvation." The words and teaching to which we will be exposed in this Epistle are immediately associated with God's "eternal purpose."

Because of this circumstance, the doctrine will help us understand what the Lord is doing through Christ Jesus. When it is believed and embraced, it will tend to orient us for "the world to come," and prepare us to stand before "the judgment seat of Christ." **Hearing or reading the words of an Apostle of Jesus Christ is nothing less than being**

HE WRITES AS ONE THROUGH WHOM GOD IS SPEAKING. HE WRITES AS ONE WHO IS FAITHFUL TO COMMUNICATE WHAT THE LORD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW. HE COMMUNICATES THINGS RELATING TO GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE IN CHRIST JESUS.

the same as the one used in Colossians 1:1. Here the word used comes from βουλόμενός (boo-lom-enos), which means wishing, or preferring – not determining. The idea is that God finds no delight in people perishing, nor do they do so because God has determined they will perish. **This is not something toward which He works, but is the consequence of opposing what He has determined.**

That being said, it is not wise to base teaching upon original words. **The Scriptures confirm in their doctrine that there is a Divine will, or purpose, that cannot be contradicted or successfully resisted.** This is expressed in the phrase, "worketh all things after the **counsel of His own will**" (Eph 1:11), and "According to **the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Eph 3:11), and "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which **He hath purposed in Himself**" (Eph 1:9).

PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP

eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16-18).

Paul also reflected this in several expressions.

✦ "If ye have heard of **the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit**" (Eph 3:2-5).

✦ "Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is

exposed to the mind of Christ and the purpose of God.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF SCRIPTURE

Because we are living in a time when academia and human reasoning have been assigned unwarranted value, there is considerable dialog concerning the authenticity of the Scriptures. Some teach that it has, over the years, been corrupted. Others say it contains human opinion. Such postulates are extremely dangerous, and are not to be heeded. If the words given to Paul came from Jesus, and if they reflect the nature of God's eternal purpose, ponder the consequences of their perversion.

If these words have, in fact, not been protected and preserved by God:

- ✚ Salvation has been pushed away from us.
- ✚ Fellowship with God may no longer be possible, and walking in the light may very well be impossible.
- ✚ Our perception of God, His Son, His

CONFIDENCE AND ASSURANCE, INDISPENSABLE TO THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH, CANNOT SURVIVE IN A CLIMATE OF DOUBT, WHERE THE INTEGRITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS QUESTIONED.

Spirit, His salvation, and His purpose can be distorted, and even totally erroneous.

- ✚ Critical matters like the atonement, justification, grace, and faith may be completely misapprehended.
- ✚ Matters such as our approach to God, our posture in the world, and our role in the body of Christ may very well be out of reach.

It is not possible to live with such conditions. **Confidence and assurance, indispensable to the good fight of faith, cannot survive in a climate of doubt, where the integrity of the**

Word of God is questioned.

All believers must determine in their hearts that they are unwilling to live with such doubts – if, indeed, such a life is even possible. Until that decision is made, the Word of God will exercise little power in the individual. It will not dwell within a person “richly” until it is perceived as it is “*in truth, the Word of God*” (1 Thess 2:13).

The lack of this decision is confirmed by the general disinterest in the Word that exists in the modern American church. It simply is not being given the priority God has given to it, and thus God has sent a famine of hearing it.

TIMOTHEUS OUR BROTHER

“ . . . and Timotheus our brother.”

TIMOTHEUS

The name “*Timotheus*” is a transliteration of the Greek Τιμόθεος (Ti-moth-e-us) – a letter for letter transposition of the word into English. The translation of the word is “*Timothy*,” and is so rendered in most versions of Scripture. The name means “honoring God,” ^{STRONG'S} and the Scriptural record of him confirms this is precisely what he did – honor God.

Identified with Paul

Timotheus, or Timothy, is included in the opening of several Epistles.

- ✚ “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the*

saints which are in all Achaia” (2 Cor 1:1)

- ✚ “*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*” (Phil 1:1)
- ✚ “*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother*” (Col 1:1)
- ✚ “*Paul . . . Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess 1:1)
- ✚ “*Paul . . . Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess 1:1)
- ✚ “*Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and*

Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlaborer” (Philemon 1:1).

It is assumed from the reference in Philemon, written around the same time as Colossians, that Timothy was in prison with Paul at the time of writing. We know from the book of Hebrews that Timothy was once in prison: “*Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released . . .*” ^{NASB} (Heb 13:23).

Our Introduction to Timothy

We are introduced to Timothy in the book of Acts. This occurred immediately after the separation of Paul and Barnabas. Paul had chosen Silas, and they departed “*being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*” (Acts 13:40).

As they were going throughout Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches,

they came into contact with Timothy. This is the record.

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.” (Acts 16:1-3).

From this we learn several preliminary facts.

was held in reputation among mature believers – something that is not at all common for young believers in our time.

His Early Life

We know from the Scriptural record that Timothy had a noble beginning in the Lord. Paul alludes to this in his second letter to Timothy.

✚ He was taught by his mother and grandmother, in whom the faith first dwelt. *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (2 Tim 1:5).

the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6).

✚ Paul admonished Timothy to live in strict accord with the prophecies that were made concerning him. *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare”* (1 Tim 1:18).

✚ He was granted a spiritual gift, which was given to him through prophecy and the laying on of hands. *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”* (1 Tim 4:14).

TIMOTHY CONFIRMS THE VALUE OF FAITHFUL TUTORING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD. FURTHER, THIS WAS DONE BY HIS OWN MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, WITHOUT ANY APPARENT ASSISTANCE FROM A GODLY FATHER.

There was a sense in which Timothy did not choose his own vocation. There were prophecies concerning him which appeared to announce his role in the body of Christ. **Someone was alert to the spiritual endowments of Timothy, and in the Spirit declared what he would be.** A special gift accompanied those prophecies, and Paul exhorted Timothy to stir it up and live in accord with what had been prophesied about him. It is difficult to conceive of such a thing taking place in our time and nation. But it is still possible, and we should be alert for such occasions.

He Some Health Disorders

Paul alludes to Timothy’s health in his first letter to him. *“No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”* NASB (1 Tim 5:23). In keeping with the tenor of the New Covenant, Paul does not make a big issue of Timothy’s *“frequent illnesses,”*^{NIV} but simply admonishes him to take wise precautionary measures. It is at once apparent that Timothy did let his health interfere with his labors for the Lord.

In Ephesus with Paul

During Paul’s productive ministry in Ephesus, Timothy is said to have been among those who ministered to him.

After the Word of God grew *“mightily”* and *“prevailed”* in Ephesus (Acts 19:20), Paul purposed in his spirit to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achai (19:21). In

✚ Timothy was already in Christ when Paul met him (*“a certain disciple.”*)

✚ He came from a divided home. His mother *“believed,”* but his father was *“a Greek.”*

✚ He had a good reputation among the brethren at Lystra and Iconium.

✚ Paul selected him to go with them as they continued on their tour to strengthen the churches.

✚ Timothy was circumcised because of the Jews, so there would be no question about his loyalty to the Lord.

✚ He was from the same general area as Colossae, Lystra being to the East of Colossae, and Iconium to the Northeast.

Although flesh might have found good reason for Timothy not to serve the Lord, he determined to do so anyway. He

✚ From the time he was a child, he knew the Holy Scriptures. *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim 3:15).

✚ He made a profession of faith before many witnesses. *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”* (1 Tim 6:12).

Timothy confirms the value of faithful tutoring in the ways of the Lord. Further, this was done by his own mother and grandmother, without any apparent assistance from a godly father.

Timothy had Special Gifts

✚ Timothy was admonished to stir up the gift that was in him by the putting on of hands. *“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by*

preparation for that journey, he sent Timothy and Erastus *“into Macedonia.”* They are described as *“two of them that ministered unto him”* (Acts 19:22).

His Labors

- ✚ He traveled extensively with Silas (Acts 17:14,15; 18:5).
- ✚ He accompanied Paul to Asia (Acts 20:4)
- ✚ Paul describes him as his *“yokefellow”* (Rom 16:21).
- ✚ He is described as Paul’s *“beloved son”* (1 Cor 4:17).
- ✚ Paul said of him, *“he worketh the work of the Lord”* (1 Cor 16:10).
- ✚ Paul wrote to the Philippians of Timothy saying, *“For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state”* (Phil 2:20).
- ✚ He is referred to as *“our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith”* (1 Thess 3:2).
- ✚ He was spiritually competent to detect faith and love, and accurately report them (1 Thess 3:6).
- ✚ He was young, or youthful, at the time of Paul’s prison Epistles. *“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe”* (1 Tim 4:12)
- ✚ He was sensitive, known for being moved to tears. *“Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy”* (2 Tim 1:4).

The Scriptures provide us with details of Timothy’s life that extend over a period of approximately 14-15 years. The first mention of him is dated around A.D. 50 (Acts 16:1), and the last around

with clubs.” Niceph. Hist. Eccles. 3,11; Photius, Cod. 254

- ✚ Some are of the opinion that, if he continued as the bishop of Ephesus, he was the *“angel”* of Ephesus to

THE SCRIPTURES PROVIDE US WITH DETAILS OF TIMOTHY’S LIFE THAT EXTEND OVER A PERIOD OF APPROXIMATELY 14-15 YEARS. THE FIRST MENTION OF HIM IS DATED AROUND A.D. 50 (ACTS 16:1), AND THE LAST AROUND A.D. 65 (HEB 13:23). IN ALL OF THAT TIME, THERE IS NOT A SINGLE ACCOUNT OF HIM DEFECTING, WAVERING, BEING DISOBEDIENT, OR BEING UNRESPONSIVE.

A.D. 65 (Heb 13:23). **In all of that time, there is not a single account of him defecting, wavering, being disobedient, or being unresponsive.** He is the Joseph and Samuel of the New Covenant. We read of young Mark balking (Acts 15:38), and Demas forsaking Paul (2 Tim 4:10). But nothing of this sort is ever said of Timothy.

Church History Speaks of Him

Church history also has considerable to say about Timothy. This does not carry the weight of revelation, but does provide some index as to the character of this man, and the longevity and faithfulness of his ministry.

- ✚ Eusibus (A.D. 310) writes, that according to the old traditions, Timothy continued as the bishop of Ephesus. Hist. Eccles. 3, 4, 2; Const.Apost. 7:46
- ✚ He is to have been martyred during the reign of Domitian. The following is said of that occasion. *“The great festival of Artemis (a goddess) led him to protest against the license and frenzy which accompanied it. The mob were roused to fury, and put him to death*

whom Jesus delivered a personal message in Revelation 2:1-7.

OUR BROTHER

How does the Spirit move Paul to refer to such an illustrious young man? He simply refers to him as *“Timotheus our brother.”* Of course, that is by no means a lowly or condescending reference.

Paul refers to Timothy as *“our brother.”* That was how Timothy was viewed among their fellow laborers, and among the saints in general. He was their brother, because he was classed among Christ’s *“brethren”* (Heb 12:11-12). That is the loftiest of all human associations.

Terms like *“brother”* (Rom 16:23), *“brethren”* (Rom 8:29), *“sister”* (Rom 16:1), and *“sisters”* (1 Tim 5:2) reflect identity with Christ Jesus and with one another. This is how Ananas referred to Saul of Tarsus when sent to him by Jesus: *“Brother Saul”* (Acts 9:17; 22:13). Now Paul also uses the word to describe those who have been reconciled to God, and are laboring in the Gospel. He also speaks in a manner that promotes unity.

TO THE SAINTS

“ 2 To the saints . . . ”

Here is a common way of addressing God’s people – *“the saints.”*

Forty-three times it is used in the Epistles (Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25,26,31; 16:2,15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1,15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1,12; 13:13; Eph 1:1,15,18;

2:19; 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2,4,12,26; 2 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 5:10; Phile 1:5,7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 1:3,14). Four times it is used

in the book of Acts (Acts 9:13,32,41; 26:10). Once it is used in the Gospels (Matt 27:52).

The very use of this word accentuates the greatness of *“the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”* (2 Tim 2:10). The word *“saints”* refers to the quality of those being brought near to God. It means set apart for God’s purpose, dedicated, sacred, holy, and very pure. ROBERTSONS

THEIR RELATION TO GOD

First and foremost, the word

through the grace of God. They hear God (Heb 12:25), and God hears them (1 John 4:6). They draw nigh to God (Heb 10:22), and He draws nigh to them (James 4:8). They are His *“children”* or *“sons”* (Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1), and He is their *“Father”* (Gal 1:4).

These are people who are suitable for Divine use, and *“prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:21). They are *“sanctified in Christ Jesus”* (1 Cor 1:2), and therefore are *special “vessels”* prepared to contain *“mercy”* (Rom 9:23). God is *“among”* them (1 Cor 14:25),

were freed from the Law, that we might bring forth fruit unto God (Rom 7:4).

THEIR CHARACTER

The *“saints”* have a holy and righteous character. *“Holiness”* is a quality that confirms separation from the world. It is a condition in which the individual does not touch *“the unclean thing”* (2 Cor 6:17). Those who are *“holy”* have given heed to the admonition, *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”* (2 Cor 6:17). They know that *“the friendship of the world is enmity with God”* (James 4:4).

FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE WORD “SAINTS” DENOTES THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MADE SUITABLE TO COME TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

Those in Christ Jesus are *“new”* creatures. *“Old things”* have passed away, and *“new things have come”* NASB (2 Cor 5:17). These are the people who *“resist the devil”* (1 Pet 5:8), seek the things are *“are above”* (Col 3:1-2), and *“live by faith”* (Heb 10:38). They are *“strangers and pilgrims”* in the earth (1 Pet 2:11), and are *“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (Tit 2:13). The saints *“have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal 5:24).

“saints” denotes those who have been **made suitable to come to God through Jesus Christ.** These are the ones who have access to God (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12), and for whom, Jesus intercedes (Heb 7:25). They are the ones to whom the Holy Spirit has been given (1 Thess 4:8), and for whom He intercedes (Rom 8:27).

works *“in”* them (Phil 1:13), and they have become *“one spirit”* with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17). They are *“stewards”* of God (1 Pet 4:10), *“call upon Him”* (Rom 10:12), and God is in them *“all”* (Eph 4:6).

These are the people to whom God speaks through His servant Paul. **They are the ones to whom words of consolation, enlightenment, and strength are sent. They are to the holy ones, the separated ones, and the believing ones.** They have been raised above the ordinary and mundane.

This is not a mere formal identity, but reflects the change that has taken place in them

These are very real associations. A person is not as *“saint”* simply because they have made some religious profession. This is the result of being *“reconciled to God”* (Rom 5:10), being made *“alive unto God”* (Rom, 6:11), and bringing forth *“fruit unto God.”* In fact, this is why we

TO THE FAITHFUL BRETHREN IN CHRIST WHICH ARE AT COLOSSAE

“... and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae...”

The *“faithful”* are those who are full of faith, and therefore constant, reliable, and steadfast. These do not vacillate too and fro, moving back and forth between hot and cold. Just as surely as there are *“false brethren”* (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4), there are also *“faithful”* brethren (Eph 1:1).

Prior to Christ Jesus, *“faithful”*

people were exceedingly rare. God said of Moses, *“My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house”* (Num 12:7; Heb 3:5). Nehemiah’s brother Hanani is said to have been *“faithful”* (Neh 7:2). Abraham was *“faithful”* (Gal 3:9), and is described as one who had a *“heart faithful before”* the Lord (Neh 9:8). Daniel was also said to be *“faithful”* (Dan 6:4). By inference we know that Enoch was faithful (Gen 5:22), as well as Noah (Gen 6:9), together with the *“holy Prophets”* (Lk 1:70; Acts 3:21).

However, Israel as a whole was never described as *“faithful.”* Rather, they are said to have been a *“disobedient and gainsaying people”* (Rom 10:21; Isa 65:2). There were *“stiffnecked,”* and unwilling to turn to the Lord (Deut 9:13). Under that economy Solomon shouted out, *“a faithful man, who can find”* (Prov 20:6).

FAITHFUL BRETHREN

“... faithful brethren...” Faithfulness involves human effort and discipline, but that is not the secret to its

possession. Paul stated it succinctly when he confessed himself to be one *“hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful”* (1 Cor 7:25).

Unfaithful

The phrase “faithful brethren” does not suggest there are unfaithful brethren. That would be tantamount to saying “unholy saints,” “worldly believers,” “godly sinners” or “holy demons.”

The truth of the matter is that in Christ there is no room for unfaithfulness. Wherever it is found, it must be confessed and abandoned with great haste.

It is interesting to note that the word “unfaithful” is not found in most standard versions of the New Testament Scriptures. The NRSV translates *“the unbelievers”* as “unfaithful” (Lk 12:46), and *“did not have faith,”* as “unfaithful” (Rom 3:3).

Jesus spoke of *“good and faithful”* servants, declaring that any other kind of servant would be rejected (Matt 24:45,51; 25:21,23,20). **He clearly taught that the person who was unfaithful in what was given in this world would not receive anything else from Him** (Luke 16:10-12).

Faithful

“Faithful brethren” are trustworthy brethren. They are ones who can be trusted to carry out the will of the Lord, fighting the good fight of faith. These are good stewards, for *“it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Cor 4:2).

So, is this Epistle written to unfaithful brethren? Indeed, it is not. **There will be words addressed to those who are less than faithful, but they will not be the thrust of this book.** Words to those who are slumbering are always apart from the main message. Such are issued warnings, rebukes, and corrections. Unless those who are living at a distance from the Lord correct their wayward course, they will be rejected, being castaways – something to be avoided at all cost (1 Cor 9:27).

Some object to this, but their

objections are not worthy of note. There is no example in Scripture of an unfaithful person being looked upon with favor from God. There are no promises of good to the unfaithful, and never any commendation of them.

In Christ

“ . . . in Christ . . . ” The word *“faithful”* cannot be considered independently of Jesus Christ. Being *“in Him”* is what generates faithfulness, and being apart from Him is what causes unfaithfulness. **Those who walk in the Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and thus will be found faithful** (Gal 5:16). All others are shut up to being

you are in Christ Jesus you can never be disassociated from Him. That would be like saying once God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, it was not possible for them ever to be expelled from it (Gen 3:24). It is like saying once Israel came into Canaan, they could never be thrust from it (Deut 29:28; Lev 20:22). You just as well affirm that once Judas, by Jesus’ own choice, was an Apostle, he could never lose his bishopric (Acts 1:20-25). If one wanted to be foolish in the extreme, you might as well say, Once Satan and his angels were in heaven, they would always be in heaven (Rev 12:9).

Abide in Him

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT IN CHRIST THERE IS NO ROOM FOR UNFAITHFULNESS. WHEREVER IT IS FOUND, IT MUST BE CONFESSED AND ABANDONED WITH GREAT HASTE.

unfaithful, for faithfulness is the fruit of being *“in Christ”* – actually, of being *“married”* to Him (Rom 7:4).

God Himself puts us *“in Christ.”*

As it is written, *“But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption”* ^{NASB} (1 Cor 1:30). In that state there is *“no condemnation”* (Rom 8:1). That is the only place where *“the love of God”* can be realized (Rom 8:39). Redemption is *“in Christ”* (Rom 3:24). There is where we are *“sanctified”* (1 Cor 1:2). This is where we are *“established”* (2 Cor 1:21). *“In Christ”* we have been raised to sit together with Him in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6). This is where *“all spiritual blessings”* are found (Eph 1:3). The *“promise of life”* is *“in Christ”* alone (2 Tim 1:1). The grace that is so essential is only found *“in Christ”* (2 Tim 2:1). Salvation in its entirety, whether initially or in its consummation, is *“in Christ”* (2 Tim 3:15).

At this point the church world is seriously divided. Some declare that once

The requirement is to remain in Christ, where God has placed believers – to abide in Him. That is why Jesus said, *“Abide in Me”* (John 15:4,7). To Gentiles like those at Colossae Paul wrote *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off”* (Rom 11:22). John also admonished believers to *“abide in Him”* (1 John 2:28).

Abiding in Christ is linked with the ministry of the Holy Spirit – the *“anointing”* which we receive in Christ. *“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him”* (1 John 2:27).

Abiding, then, is not something that takes place automatically. It is a result of walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), living by faith (Heb 10:38), and continuing in fellowship with Christ, into

which we have been called (1 Cor 1:9). The “*faithful in Christ*” are those abiding in Him.

At Colossae

“... *which are at Colossae*” Even though the Gospel and its exposition is for all, yet the presentation of it is tailored for specific congregations and individuals. The Gospel itself is not tailored. None of its facts are in the slightest altered. It is not rearranged, with differing priorities for different recipients. **It is the application of the Gospel that is adjusted to te circumstance**, thereby “*handling the Word of God aright*” (2 Tim 2:15).

Thus the faithful in Christ who

pervades Scripture. It is **not** the philosophy of men, but a certain way of thinking – a Divine way. Those who do not perceive this will find it easy to ignore Scripture, or even to wrest it.

Particularly in the Apostolic writings, **the message is basically to the new creation** – whatever is “*born of God*” (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). **The flesh, or fallen part of man, is never addressed.** Nor, indeed, is there any effort to make flesh wise in the ways of the Lord.

There is a reason for this situation. “*The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom

words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised”^{NASB} (1 Cor 2:14).

When, therefore, a congregation is referred to as “*the church of God,*” and “*sanctified in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor 1:1), this does not mean everyone in the congregation is accepted. Some teach that those who were called “*carnal*” in the third chapter of First Corinthians (3:3-4) were really “*carnal Christians.*” They had the privileges of all of the saints, maintaining their status in Christ, even though they were living in contradiction of His will.

This kind of rationale cannot be supported. Later in First Corinthians, Paul referred to someone who was “*called*” a brother, yet was immoral. Such a person was to be excluded from their assembly, and was referred to as a “*wicked person*” (1 Cor 5:10-11). The intent was not to condemn the man, but to put him in a position where God could work with him through “*the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord*” (5:5). In such a case the “*new man*” could be awakened and brought into prominence, thereby enabling the person to again receive the Word of the Lord and, when granted repentance, recover himself from the snare of the devil (2 Tim 2:24-26).

Speaking to the New Man

The salutation of this book is, in fact, speaking to the “*new man*” – the part of us that is born of God. That will become more apparent as we proceed through the book. In fact, the very next expression confirms that is the case.

THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AT COLOSSAE THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED, AND PAUL WILL DO IT BY CORRECTLY APPLYING THE GOSPEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

are “*at Colossae*” are addressed. Jesus knows them “*by name,*” as He does all of His sheep (John 10:3). **There are special circumstances at Colossae that must be addressed, and Paul will do it by correctly applying the Gospel and its implications to those circumstances.** Special comforts will be required, particular encouragements, and unique perspectives.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCRIPTURE

There is a certain philosophy that

8:7). For this reason, neither Christ nor the Apostles sought to reason “*in the flesh.*” There is a hostility in flesh that will not allow it to hold dialog with Deity, or receive what the Lord says. This circumstance is also presented to the Corinthians. There Paul affirms that he carefully crafted his words so that spiritual people could understand them. “*Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual*

GRACE AND PEACE BE UNTO YOU

“*Grace be unto you and peace ...*”

Here is the most common Apostolic greeting – “*grace*” and “*peace*” to the people (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 2:11 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim

1:2; Tit 1:4; Phile 1:3; 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; 2 John 1:3; Rev 1:4).

This greeting is never directed to the flesh. It is exclusively for those who are “*born of God*” and “*in Christ Jesus.*” These are Kingdom commodities that are found in “*heavenly*

places.”

Grace and peace mingle well with the mercy God. Thus we read, “*Grace, mercy, and peace, from ...*” (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; 2 John 1:3). These can also be possessed in large measures without generating any

deficiency or weakness. Therefore we read, *“Grace unto you, and peace, ne multiplied”* (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2).

Both of these are essential to the successful navigation from earth to glory, from the cradle to the grave, and from time to eternity.

GRACE

The grace of God has to do with His favor, and is **always associated with accomplishment, or doing something.**

- ✦ When Paul and Barnabas launched out on a missionary tour, they were *“recommended to the grace of God for the work”* (Acts 14:26).
- ✦ Disciples are said to have *“believed through grace”* (Acts 18:27).
- ✦ The *“Word of His grace”* is *“able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified”* (Acts 20:32).
- ✦ We are *“justified freely by His grace”* (Rom 3:24).
- ✦ The righteousness of God is referred to as *“the gift of grace”* (Rom 5:15).
- ✦ Grace has *“abounded to many”* (Rom 5:15).
- ✦ An *“abundance of grace”* promotes a *“reign in life”* by Jesus Christ (Rom 5:17,21).
- ✦ Spiritual gifts are *“according to the grace that is given to us”* (Rom 12:6).
- ✦ The grace of God made Paul a *“wise masterbuilder”* (1 Cor 3:10).
- ✦ The grace of God made Paul a prodigious laborer in the vineyard of the Lord (1 Cor 15:10).
- ✦ Abounding grace brings to the saints all sufficiency for all things (2 Cor 9:8).
- ✦ Grace is sufficient, making us adequate for both trials and blessings (2 Cor 12:9).
- ✦ God’s call is facilitated by His grace

(Gal 1:15).

- ✦ We are saved by grace (Eph 2:5,8).
- ✦ Grace was given to Paul to preach *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph 3:8).
- ✦ Grace enables us to teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16).
- ✦ Everlasting consolation and good

Everything that grace does comes with it!

PEACE

Peace is that spiritual commodity which grants the soul equilibrium in a troublesome world. It hoists a sail that causes the winds to move the boat instead of destroying it.

Peace is within, where no eye can see, and no hand can touch. **It cannot be conferred by the world.** Thus Jesus

THE GRACE OF GOD HAS TO DO WITH HIS FAVOR, AND IS ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH ACCOMPLISHMENT, OR DOING SOMETHING.

hope come to us through the grace of God (2 Thess 2:16).

- ✦ Faith and love are brought to us in abundance through the grace of our Lord (1 Tim 1:14).
- ✦ The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Tit 2:11-12).
- ✦ It was by the grace of God that Jesus *“tasted death for every man”* (Heb 2:9).
- ✦ Grace brings us *“help in the time of need”* (Heb 4:16).
- ✦ Grace enables us to serve God acceptably (Heb 12:28).
- ✦ The grace of God establishes the heart, making it spiritually stable (Heb 13:9).
- ✦ God’s grace equips us to minister to one another (1 Pet 4:10).
- ✦ Grace is the heavenly soil in which we are caused to grow (2 Pet 3:18).

said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27).

We are urged, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* (Phil 4:6). This does not necessarily mean the Lord will remove conflicting people and circumstances – although He is fully able to do this. The promise that is held out to us relates to peace. When we make our requests known to God with supplication and thanksgiving, we have this promise. *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:7).

Stephen had this peace when he prayed for those were stoning him (Acts 7:60). Paul had this peace when he faced great suffering (Acts 20:24). Peter had it when it was revealed to him that he was going to die shortly (2 Pet 1:14).

The peace of God cannot be explained to the carnal mind. It defies explanation because it *“passeth all understanding.”* Yet it will surely **“guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus”** ^{NKJV} (Phil 4:7), protecting us from distraction. Elsewhere it is written that *“the peace of God will rule in your hearts”* (Col 3:15).

You see how remarkable is the work of the grace of God. **When, therefore, “grace” is conferred upon the saints, all of the abundance of salvation is being brought to them.**

Peace is the spiritual soil in which the *“fruit of righteousness is sown”* (James 3:18). **Where there is turmoil and agitation, there will be no spiritual advancement.** But where the peace of God is found, there will growth be found also! Troubled souls cannot

advance far in the faith. But for those with the peace of God, advance is sure.

Who is able to estimate the value of peace, or quantify how much of it is required? The smallest measure of it can yield immense benefits that ripple into

eternity. As with grace, when peace is brought to us, it brings all of the benefits that are associated with it. It contributes to spiritual stability and effectiveness. It helps to clear our eyes, unstop our ears, and put strength in our hands. Thank God for His peace!

FROM GOD THE FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

“... from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Spirit speaks expressly on this matter. **Grace and peace are not the products of mere human endeavor.** They do not come through some form of discipline or routine. Taking deep breaths

brings them to us.

This kind of language is common in Scripture, and it is glorious to consider. These gifts cannot be overstated.

✦ *“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you*

with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 6:23).

✦ *“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2).

✦ *“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior”* (Titus 1:4).

✦ *“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love”* (2 John 1:3).

GRACE AND PEACE ARE NOT THE PRODUCTS OF MERE HUMAN ENDEAVOR. THEY DO NOT COME THROUGH SOME FORM OF DISCIPLINE OR ROUTINE. TAKING DEEP BREATHS AND TRYING TO CLEAR THE MIND WITH A PROCEDURE WILL NOT BRING GRACE AND PEACE TO YOUR HEART.

It should also be remembered that both grace and peace are associated with the work of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22; Heb 10:29).

The reconciliation accomplished by the Lord Jesus is thorough and pleasing to the Lord. God has seen the travail of Christ’s soul, and is *“satisfied”* (Isa 53:11). Now, the entire Godhead joins in bringing grace and peace to us. Such plentitude cannot be measured by the human mind – but it can be experienced by every person who is in Christ Jesus.

and trying to clear the mind with a procedure will not bring grace and peace to your heart.

These come to us from both the Father and the Son: *“God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Our relationship to God as sons brings these benefits to us. Our relationship to Jesus as brethren also

and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:7; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:2; Phile 1:3).

✦ *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2).

✦ *“Peace be to the brethren, and love*

Wherever there is a *“saint,”* an abundance of grace and peace is coming down from heaven, making the child of God adequate, and joyful as spiritually well! Grace and peace, precious twins of Divine will.

CONCLUSION

Thus we have been introduced to an Epistle that is filled with rich morsels for the soul. It is written by a spiritual

prince who is noted for abundant labor and unexcelled faithfulness. It was written within the framework of profound

fellowship, while Paul, was with a faithful servant who naturally cared for the condition of God’s people.

This Epistle is for the "saints and faithful brethren." It is a needful message, and will strengthen their hands for battle, comfort their hearts in

tribulation, and equip them for effectual ministry. It will sharpen their focus to see through erroneous reasoning, and lay hold of the rich promises of God.

Do you very best to take in these words of life, to perceive them and enjoy them. You will not regret it! Let them confirm that you are complete in Christ.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/8/2003. In this session, we will covering verses 3-6 of the first chapter. The title of our lesson is, "GIVING THANKS FOR THE BRETHREN." We will find that thanksgiving for the brethren is based upon kingdom realities and evident participation in the kingdom of God. The role of hope in the life of faith will also be introduced. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

The Refreshing Waters Renewal will be held next week.

July 29-31, 2003, in

Indianapolis, Indiana

The theme is "The Grace of God"

15 Sermons, 5 Sermonettes, Testimonials

Audience Discussion

Renewal Website: <http://wotruth.com/renewal.htm>