



## THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

### Lesson Number 8



**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 -----

# THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SAINTS

“ 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; <sup>24</sup> Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: <sup>25</sup> Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.” <sup>KJV</sup> (Colossians 1:23-25)

## INTRODUCTION

Within the Christian community, there is considerable philosophizing about the role individuals play in salvation. Articulated opinions range from men having no role whatsoever, to men having the most prominent role. Some are of the persuasion that once men are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's Son (Col 1:13), their personal involvement is merely coincidental. Their salvation is more or less finalized at that point, and Jesus will bring them to glory regardless of their thinking or conduct. Others see salvation as wholly reliant upon man's conformity to a sort of moral and spiritual code, with those in Christ flopping in and out of salvation like a fish moved on and off the beach by the tide.

Such views bring no glory to God, honor to Jesus, or comfort to the saints. They contradict the nature of salvation,

which requires the constant involvement of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the holy angels. The salvation of God requires His Word, the intercession of Jesus (Heb 7:25), the leading and intercession of the Spirit (Rom 8:14,26-27), and the ministry of holy angels (Heb 1:13-14). **What would possibly lead any person of sound thought to the conclusion that such a circumstance obviated the necessity of human involvement?** Conversely, how could any sane person conclude that salvation was an up-and-down and in-and-out affair, with no ground for assurance?

The truth of the matter is that there is a lot of religious folklore being hawked by religious charlatans that has muddled the theological waters. **In Christ Jesus we become participants, not spectators.** We are not merely the objects of Divine attention,

but have ourselves been called into that activity. We are the ones being saved, and salvation postulates extensive involvement.

### THE EXAMPLE OF ISRAEL

The Holy Spirit makes a point of this by referring to the first and foremost example of a people being saved – the children of Israel. The Spirit refers to their deliverance from Egypt in these words: “having **saved** the people out of the land of Egypt” (Jude 1:5).

We are not left to conjecture on this matter – **their deliverance is a depiction of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.** A determined point is made of this comparison in the exposition of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

In a remarkably extensive exhortation, believers are urged to

## OUTLINE

- ▶ IF YOU CONTINUE IN THE FAITH (1:23a)
- ▶ GROUNDED AND SETTLED (1:23b)
- ▶ BE NOT MOVED FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL (1:23c)
- ▶ YOU HAVE HEARD IT (1:23d)
- ▶ PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE (1:23e)
- ▶ MADE A MINISTER (1:23f)
- ▶ REJOICING IN SUFFERING (1:24a)
- ▶ AFFLICTIONS LEFT BEHIND (1:24b)
- ▶ FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE (1:24c)
- ▶ ACCORDING TO THE DISPENSATION OF GOD (1:25a)
- ▶ TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD (1:25b)

consider Israel's deliverance. All of them passed through the Red Sea, were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, did eat the same spiritual meat, and drank the same supernatural water. Notwithstanding, God was not pleased with many of them, and they fell in the wilderness, coming short of the promised land.

On the basis of that comparison, those in Christ are admonished **not** to "just after evil things," be "idolaters," "commit fornication," "tempt Christ," or "murmur." What happened to Israel is said to have "happened unto them" **for our example**, and are "written for our admonition" (1 Cor 10:1-12). It simply is not possible for the relevancy of their experience to be made more clearly.

- ✚ Those in Christ are admonished not to harden their hearts, considering the Israelites who fell in the wilderness AFTER they were delivered (Heb 3:15-19).
- ✚ We are admonished to "fear," lest any of us come short of realizing the appointed "rest" like many in Israel came short of the promised land (Heb 4:1-3).
- ✚ In writing of "the common salvation" that is found in Christ Jesus, Jude reminds us "how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed

them that believed not" (Jude 1:5).

✚ The salvation of Israel from Egypt is clearly credited to God Almighty. He is the One who "saved the people out of the land of Egypt" (Jude 1:5). The Lord "brought" them out of Egypt (Ex 13:3). He is said to have "sent an angel," and brought them out (Num 20:16). The Lord took them, and brought them "out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt" (Deut 4:20). He brought them out "by His mighty power" (Deut 4:37), and "with a mighty hand" (Deut 6:21), with an "outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders" (Deut 26:8). Of their exodus God Himself declares, "I brought them out of Egypt" (1 Sam 8:8).

There is no question about this. If God had not brought the people out of Egypt, they would have forever remained there. **Their deliverance was wholly of the Lord, and could not be attributed to any other power.**

### WAS ISRAEL INVOLVED IN THE DELIVERANCE?

The deliverance of the people from Egypt was clearly something accomplished by God Himself. Also, that deliverance pertains to the salvation we experience in Christ Jesus. It is categorically revealed that the deliverance and the events that followed "happened unto them" for an example to us, and that they are "written for our admonition."

Therefore, it is in order to ask whether or not the Israelites were themselves involved that deliverance. Once they were delivered, were they always delivered? Once they were saved, were they always saved? Was their security guaranteed, regardless of their own response to their deliverance and the working of the Lord? Just how much were the Israelites themselves involved in this deliverance?

- ✚ On a specific day, and according to the house of their fathers, "every man" had to select a lamb (Ex 12:3).
- ✚ A judgment had to be made concerning the consumption of the lamb. If the household was too small, they were to include the neighbor next door in order that the lamb be

fully eaten (Ex 12:4).

- ✚ The lamb had to be carefully selected: without blemish, a male, and under one year old (Ex 12:5).
- ✚ The lamb was to be kept until the fourteenth day of the month (Ex 12:6a).
- ✚ On the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, the lamb was to be killed (Ex 12:6b).
- ✚ The blood of the lamb was to be meticulously applied to the two side posts, and the upper post of the door posts of their houses (Ex 12:7).
- ✚ The lamb was to be eaten during that night (Ex 12:8a).
- ✚ The lamb was to be roasted with fire (Ex 12:8b).
- ✚ The lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex 12:8c).
- ✚ The lamb was not to be eaten raw or cooked in water (Ex 12:9a).
- ✚ The lamb was to be roasted with its head, legs, and inward parts (Ex 12:9b).
- ✚ No part of the lamb could remain until the morning. Anything that remained was to be burned with fire (Ex 12:10).
- ✚ The lamb was to be eaten while they were fully clothed, with the shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands (Ex 12:11a).
- ✚ The lamb was to be eaten in haste (Ex 12:11b).
- ✚ The people had to leave around midnight – all at the same time (Ex 11:4; 12:39)
- ✚ When they came out of Egypt, every woman was to borrow from her neighbor "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," to put upon their "sons" and "daughters" (Ex 3:22; 11:2).
- ✚ The people had to leave quickly, taking their bread dough before it

*In the Matter of Salvation, Once saved, there is no point at which the saints are no longer active— by Given O. Blakely*

was leavened (Ex 12:34).

- ✦ They baked unleavened cakes to take with them “out of Egypt” (Ex 12:39).
- ✦ The people had to take their kneading troughs bound up in their clothes on their shoulders (Ex 12:34).
- ✦ The people took all of their flocks, herds, and cattle with them (Ex 12:38).

All of that was involved in leaving Egypt – to say nothing of journeying “from Ramese to Succoth” (Ex 12:37),

crossing the Red Sea (Ex 14:29), gathering manna (Ex 16:16-18), and pitching their tents (Ex 17:1). **I wonder how those Israelites would respond to an advocate of a “you-don’t-have-to-do-anything” philosophy of salvation, or deliverance!**

There are a number of other things that could be said on this matter, but this will suffice to introduce our subject. **The Holy Spirit has made a point of paralleling our situation with that of Israel, and we do well to take it to heart.** Their deliverance was after the Divine manner. This is how God

saves.

Now the Spirit will provide some amplification of the revealed purpose of God – **the reason for redemption:** “to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (1:22). This **does** have to do with going to heaven, being forever with the Lord, and standing up in our appointment with the Judge of all the earth.

**Our theology must, therefore, make room for these expressions.** They are the way the Spirit has of expressing truth.

**IF YOU CONTINUE IN THE FAITH**

“ 1:23a **If ye continue in the faith . . .**” Other versions read, “*If indeed you continue in the faith,*” <sup>NKJV</sup>

First of all, no standard English version of Scripture translates the word in this manner – i.e., “*since.*” **Second,** the

**THE “IF” FACTOR**

“*If . . .*” The word “*if*” is a specific word translated from a specific Greek word. It is not a literary expression supplied by the translators. This word is translated from the Greek word εἴτε (i-gheh). This is a compound word consisting of two parts. “*ei*” is a conditional particle: i.e., it attaches a condition to a previous statement. <sup>THAYER</sup> “*te*” means indeed, truly, or at least. <sup>THAYER</sup> The full rendering of the word, therefore, is “*If indeed.*” Other versions reflect this meaning by reading “*if so be,*” <sup>ASV</sup> “*provided that you,*” <sup>NAB</sup> “as long as you,” <sup>NJB</sup> and “*if also ye remain.*” <sup>YLT</sup>

**If men contradict this revelation in their theology, it is only because their thinking is contrary to the mind of the Spirit.**

“*provided that you continue,*” <sup>NRSV</sup> “*if so be that you continue,*” <sup>ASV</sup> “*if indeed ye abide in the faith,*” <sup>DARBY</sup> “*provided you persevere in the faith,*” <sup>NAB</sup> “*as long as you persevere and stand firm on the solid base of the faith.*” <sup>NJB</sup>

To confirm the tenacious grip that erroneous teaching can have upon the soul, the following is a footnote contained in many standard Bibles.

“This verse is not teaching that loss of salvation is possible. The Greek first-class conditional sentence [ei, Gk., ‘If, since,’ plus the indicative mood] expresses Paul’s certainty that they will in fact continue. The word ‘if’ could well be translated ‘since’: ‘He has reconciled [you] . . . since indeed you continue in the faith.’ Paul’s purpose is to lead them to appreciate their reconciliation, not to doubt it. Every true believer will endure to the end (John 10:28-29; Phil 1:6).” <sup>BSB NOTES</sup>

condition that is being delineated is not reconciliation, but being presented “*holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.*” **Third,** the solemn warnings of this book would all be pointless if every true believer will, after all, endure to the end.

First, let it be clear, there is not the slightest bit of ambiguity in the language of the text. There are no questionable words, no expression that is difficult to translate or comprehend. **If men contradict this revelation in their theology, it is only because their thinking is contrary to the mind of the Spirit.** They are, in fact, “*alienated and enemies*” in their “*minds,*” which is certainly not an enviable state (Col 1:21). No amount of purported scholarship or philosophical reasoning can erase that fact.

The meaning of the word, therefore, fully coincides with the doctrine of Scripture.

This precise form of the word is used five times in Scripture.

- ✦ **2 Corinthians 5:3.** “*If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.*”
- ✦ **Galatians 3:4.** “*Have ye suffered so many things in vain? IF it be yet in vain.*”
- ✦ **Ephesians 3:2.** “*IF ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.*”
- ✦ **Ephesians 4:21.** “*If so be that ye*

have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

✚ **Colossians 1:23.** *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister”*

As used in this text, the word “if” does not assume the condition mentioned has already been met. **That should be obvious, because the presentation of reference has not yet taken place, and the redemption has not yet been culminated.** The “redemption of our body” has not yet taken place. In fact, we are presently waiting for that to occur (Rom 8:23-25). That will be when we are finally “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29), and will be “like Him” (1 John 3:2).

Until then, we are in the period of the “IF FACTOR. This is the time of pilgrimage (1 Pet 2:11), striving (Lk 13:24), running (Heb 12:1), fighting (1 Tim 6:12), and wrestling (Eph 6:12). We are not in a vacuum, but a moral wilderness in which jeopardy and opponents exist – just as Israel was in route to the promised land. It is true that our faith will sustain us in the journey – but that is the whole point of the text. **Faith must be sustained, nourished, kept, and increased.**

The use of the word “if” fully reflects the character of our Lord’s teaching, as well as the doctrine of the Apostles, in which the church continues.

Because of the corrupt teaching that abounds within the professed church on this point, some examples of similar conditions are in order.

✚ Believers are likened to salt that can lose its “savor.” *“Ye are the salt of the earth: but IF the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men”* (Mat 5:13).

✚ Forgiveness is conditioned upon an

“if.” *“For IF ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (Mat 6:14).

✚ Discipleship is conditioned by an “if.” *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, IF ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”* (John 8:31). *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, IF ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35).

✚ Friendship with Jesus is conditioned on an “if.” *“Ye are my friends, IF ye do whatsoever I command you”* (John 15:14).

✚ Believers are told righteousness will be imputed to them on an “if” basis. *“But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, IF we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead”* (Rom 4:24).

✚ The “if” factor is associated with living or dying toward the Lord. *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall*

*live”* (Rom 8:13).

✚ Goodness is toward the saints on an “if” basis. *“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).

✚ We are Christ’s household on an “if” basis. *“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”* (Heb 3:6).

✚ Being partakers of Christ is on an “if” basis. *“For we are made partakers of*

*Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”* (Heb 3:14).

There is, then, a perfect consistency throughout Scripture on the subject before us. **From the very beginning, the salvation of God has been associated with the involvement of the ones being saved.** There is no such thing as salvation for mere spectators, the slothful, and the idle – nor has there ever been. Noah had to build an ark – and it was associated with his salvation. Abraham had to leave Ur of the Chaldees – and it was associated with him being accepted by God. Lot had to get up and leave Sodom – and it was associated with his salvation. **God has never represented His salvation as excluding the involvement of those He is saving.** Further, it is a sin of the greatest magnitude that men have so represented Him.

Before going further, an additional word must be said concerning this matter. Over the years, I have noted that those who speak so vociferously about the possibility of falling, are rarely noted for

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any consistent or zealous quest for the kingdom of God and His righteousness. I come from a religious heritage that valiantly fought against the “once-saved-always-saved” dogma. Yet, these people were not noted for pressing toward the mark, growing up into Christ in all things, or laying hold of eternal life. It is altogether too easy to become involved in arguments about this subject without working out ones own salvation “with fear and trembling.” **I respectfully suggest that any and every person who is not obviously living unto the Lord, refrain from any comments on the subject at hand.** Their lack of involvement will only serve to muddy the waters for others. This isn’t an area where vagueness is in order.

**CONTINUE**

“... ye continue in...” The word “continue” means to remain, abide, to stay at, and persevere. <sup>THAYER</sup>

Here is an aspect of spiritual life that has been decidedly neutralized by professional and institutionalized religion. **When the emphasis is place upon getting into Christ, there is an unavoidable diminishment of the necessity of abiding in Him.** When Christians are told that the main thing is saving the lost, the necessity of working out their salvation with fear and trembling is shrouded with the dark and foreboding cloud of ignorance. When

4:2), and “continue in the things” they have learned (2 Tim 3:14). Brotherly love is to “continue”(Heb 13:1).

**How is it that with all of these exhortations and admonitions the modern church is so little known for consistency, growth, and stability?** Has not the Spirit said enough on the subject? Indeed, He has, and zealously so. Yet, if His words are not consistently spoken to the people of God, they will soon forget them.

Let this be clear in your mind. **You being presented to God holy, unblameable, and unreprieveable, is**

16:5).

- ✚ “Watch ye, stand fast **IN THE FAITH**, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor 16:13).
- ✚ “Examine yourselves, whether ye be **IN THE FAITH**; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Cor 13:5).
- ✚ “Rooted and built up in him, and established **IN THE FAITH**, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col 2:7).
- ✚ “Whom resist steadfast **IN THE FAITH**, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet 5:9).

What does “in the faith” mean? Various translations emphasize that this is personal faith: “continue in **your** faith,”<sup>NIV/NIV</sup> and “continue to believe.”<sup>NLT</sup>

**An Erroneous Teaching**

There is a strain of teaching that views “the faith” as the body of doctrine that was delivered by the Apostles. This view would mean the text was an admonition to maintain the doctrine that was first delivered to them. While this sounds very noble on the surface, and seems to blend well with the admonition to speak things becoming “sound doctrine,” and maintain the “form of sound words,” no clear word of Scripture presents such a meaning for “the faith.”

The postulate that “the faith” refers to a body of doctrine is largely built upon Jude 1:3: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**” (Jude 1:3).

The phrase “the faith” comes from the Greek expression τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει (“to the saint’s faith”). The argument is that since the word is in the dative case, it refers to doctrine that promotes faith, and not to faith itself. Some linguists acknowledge this is a possibility.

**How is it that with all of these exhortations and admonitions the modern church is so little known for consistency, growth, and stability? Has not the Spirit said enough on the subject?**

outreach is the fundamental thing, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is not given the emphasis the Spirit has assigned to it.

Our text does **not** say we will be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprieveable, if we win the lost. That presentation is not associated with the evangelization of the world, or the exponential numerical growth of the local congregation. It is not connected with domestic tranquility, social rectitude, or debt-free living. All of these things may be good, but they are not good enough. They may have some importance, but they are not important enough.

**There must be continuity in our spiritual lives.** They are to be noted for abiding, remaining, and standing fast. Jesus spoke to His disciples about **continuing** in His Word (John 8:31). On the night of His betrayal He urged them to **continue** in His love (John 15:9). Believers are urged to “**continue in the grace of God**”(Acts 13:43), “**continue in the faith**”(Acts 14:22), and “**continue**” in God’s goodness (Rom 11:22). They are exhorted to “**continue in prayer**” (Col

**directly related to you continuing, remaining, abiding, and growing.** There is not the slightest chance that God will continue to work in those who themselves do not “continue.” Any argument to the contrary is pure imagination, false to the core, and is to be thrown down with our spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:3-5).

**FAITH**

“... the faith...” And, in what are we to continue? This particular text declares it is to be “in the faith.” **Faith, then, is not a step in a preconceived idea of “the plan of salvation,” and it is nowhere so represented in Scripture.** So much is said on this matter, that is remarkable that this doctrine could be corrupted.

✚ “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue **IN THE FAITH**, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

✚ “And so were the churches established **IN THE FAITH**, and increased in number daily” (Acts

However, the argument is drawn from etymological inference, not a doctrinal affirmation. That is, no inspired man made such an application of the word "faith." There is a Greek word for "doctrine," and it is frequently used (John 7:17; Acts 13:12; Rom 16:17; 1 Tim 4:16; 6:3; Tit 2:10; Heb 6:1; 2 John 1:9).

When referring to faith proceeding from the Gospel we read of "the faith of the Gospel" (Phil 1:27). However, this is not the way our text is expressed. It rather states that standing unreprieveable before God depends upon us continuing in the faith. It seems to me to be a stretch of the imagination to say this means continuing in the doctrine – although that is, indeed, to be done (1 Tim 4:16).

This refers to continuing to have faith, for "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). It is living "unto God" (Gal 2:19), walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and holding the "beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Heb 3:14). This is persevering in believing – believing that is firmly based upon the Gospel.

#### The Devil's Assault On Believing

In his attack against the people of God, Satan has perpetrated a view of believing that departs from the kingdom norm. Quite often people equate "what I believe" with believing. Thus the touchstone of valid fellowship is generally

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based upon what a person believes about this or that. People will ask, "What do you believe about . . . ?"

However, believing is not approached in this manner in the Word of God. Abraham "believed God" (Gen 15:6), meaning he trusted Him and yielded himself to the will of the Lord. Rather than saints represented as believing in this or that, they are said to "believe in God" (John 14:1; Tit 3:8; 1 Pet 1:21). Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). We also read of "faith in the blood" (Rom 3:25), "faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26), "faith in the Lord Jesus" (Eph 1:15). The nature of faith demands that it be in an object, not a mere tenet.

Continuing in the faith is continuing to live by faith. It is maintaining fellowship with Jesus, into which we were called (1 Cor 1:9), and abiding in Him. That is clearly what is

intended in Acts 14:22, where the phrase "continue in the faith" is also used.

I have often pondered the obvious lack of an emphasis on continuing in the faith that exists within many churches. Among those with whom I have walked, there is very little talk about faith. Faith is certainly not their strong point, and they subject themselves to very little that actually builds faith.

#### The Role of the Gospel

Faith does come "by hearing," and the message that is heard is clearly the "Gospel of peace," and those bringing it have beautiful feet (Rom 10:14-17). **Continuing in the faith postulates continual exposure to the Gospel – to the proclamation of both its nature and content.** Without that exposure, it is not likely that any person can actually continue in the faith. Faith must be fed by the Gospel of Christ.

### GROUNDING AND SETTLED

"<sup>23b</sup> . . . grounded and settled . . ." Other versions read, "grounded and steadfast," <sup>NKJV</sup> "firmly established and steadfast," <sup>NASB</sup> "established and firm," <sup>NIV</sup> "securely established and steadfast in the faith," <sup>NRSV</sup> "stable and steadfast," <sup>RSV</sup> "founded and firm," <sup>DARBY</sup> and "stable and steadfast." <sup>ESV</sup>

**The words that follow confirm that the faith that accesses God's grace is the environment of continuance, not a body of doctrine.** While the maintenance of sound doctrine is absolutely imperative, we "stand by faith," not by doctrine (2 Cor 1:24). We must not confuse the means through which faith comes and is nourished with

the faith itself. We are not saved "by grace through doctrine," but "by grace through faith" (Eph 2:8).

#### GROUNDING

" . . . grounded . . ." The word "grounded" refers to being erected on a solid foundation. It speaks of stability and establishment. This word is used in Ephesians 3:18, where it is affirmed to be the result of Christ dwelling in our heart by faith. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17). The next clause indicates that **comprehension and true spiritual understanding result from being "grounded."** "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).

#### SETTLED

" . . . and settled . . ." The emphasis of this word is firmness and immovability. It has to do with being settled and steadfast. This word is used in First Corinthians where it is also associated with being unmoveable. There it is translated "steadfast." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"

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(1 Cor 15:58).

The idea behind being “*settled*,” or “*steadfast*,” is that of a mighty tree that stands through great winds of trials and adversity. Yet, it goes further than that, speaking of a condition in which the individual consistently contends for the faith, runs the

confirms that **salvation is calculated to produce spiritual adulthood**. If the Spirit is not quenched, and if the Word of God is ingested, men **will “grow up into Christ in all things”** (Eph 4:15). That is what the Holy Spirit does within. It is what faith is calculated to do.

Where, after a period of time,

– there is a sort of spiritual poverty of understanding and lack of stability in the faith.

**Clarifying the Matter**

Allow me to clarify this matter. Our text has associated being “*grounded and settled*” with being exonerated in the presence of the Lord. It has to do with being presented “*in His sight*” as “*holy and unblameable and unproveable*” (1:22).

Who is the person willing to affirm that such a status can be attained by those who are not “*grounded and settled*,” and who have not “*continued in the faith*?” While it is not our place, or role, to condemn others, we do have a responsibility to lay the real issues before all who wear the name of Jesus. **There is no promise of eternal life to those who remain immature**. God is nowhere said to have prepared an inheritance for those who are **not “grounded and settled.”** There is not so much as a syllable of hope held out to those who do not “*continue in the faith*.”

These words are designed to provoke us to more steadfastness and continuance in the faith. They are calculated to point us in the right direction, and stir within us a fervent desire to have done with being babies and requiring a steady diet of milk and the reassertion of the elementary doctrines. When taken to heart, the child of God will find that every conscientious effort will be met with Divine grace.

**No endeavor to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ will be in vain.** It will consistently be blessed by the Lord, aided by the Holy Spirit, with holy angels ministering to assist us in our labor. I cannot conceive of anyone of tender heart not being encouraged by such a prospect, willing to throw themselves into the effort to be stable, consistent, and unmoveable, thereby prepared for the day of judgment.

**Where, after a period of time, there is no spiritual maturity, the Spirit has been quenched, and the individual is not living by faith. There is no need to haggle about this point. That is simply the way it is, and no amount of defensive arguing can change that fact.**

race, resists the devil, and seeks those things that are above.

**Spiritual Maturity**

Being “*grounded and settled*” has to do with being spiritually mature. In the book of Hebrews this condition is described as being “*of full age*,” being able to “*discern both good and evil*” (Heb 5:12). It is a condition that is associated with “*time*,” not intellect – with “*time*” not earthly aptitude. As it is written, “*For when for the time* [by this time <sup>NASB</sup>] *ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*” (Heb 5:12-14).

By associating spiritual maturity with time (“*by this time*”), the Spirit

there is no spiritual maturity, the Spirit has been quenched, and the individual is not living by faith. There is no need to haggle about this point. That is simply the way it is, and no amount of defensive arguing can change that fact. There is no possible way that a person in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9) and enjoying the “*communion of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Cor 13:14) can remain immature. **When people live by faith, walk in the Spirit, and set their affection on things above, they cannot remain “babes”** (1 Cor 3:1). **It is impossible for such a condition to occur when spiritual life is nourished.**

**This Present Time**

The rarity of grounding and being settled within the professed church is most alarming. There is a wave of spiritual infancy that seems to be prevailing among those who wear the name of Jesus. Even among those who function in the role of spiritual leaders – preachers, teachers, elders, and the likes

**BE NOT MOVED FROM THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL**

“<sup>23c</sup> . . . and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .”

It is becoming more and more apparent in this text that the involvement

of the saints in their salvation is **not** an option. **Every person who is in Christ**

*In the Matter of Salvation, Once saved, there is no point at which the saints are no longer active– by Given O. Blakely*

**Jesus must have done with wavering too and fro, being unstable, and juvenile in their views and perceptions of spiritual matters.** Now the Spirit takes the matter even further, showing us something of the involvements that attended our salvation, when we first turned from idols to serve the living God.

**BE NOT MOVED AWAY**

“... and be not moved away...”

Other versions read, “are not moved away,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “without shifting.” <sup>NRSV</sup> “immoveable” <sup>DOUAY</sup> and “never letting yourselves drift away.”

The word “moved away” means to move from a place, <sup>STRONG'S</sup> or to be pushed away from <sup>FRIEBERG</sup> the position where we have been placed.

**Herein we find a summation of the intent of all opposition. It is to move us off of the foundation, and carry us into an area in which we were not placed by the grace of God.** Every Satanic effort is directed to this end, and designed for this purpose. The flesh in all of its wretchedness, also has this as a solitary objective – to move us away, dislodge us, and cause us to drift. The world, with all of its machinations is also working to this end – to push us away from where we were placed, and where we belong in Christ Jesus.

In its most subtle form, our opposition consists of allurements, drawings, charms, and enticements. Seduction is the mode of our enemies’ attack. In its most apparent pattern, the opposition takes the form of persecution and all forms of external aggression. But whether subtle or apparent, the design is the same – to move us away.

And how does the Spirit address this matter. He tells us that **being presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable in His sight is contingent upon us not being “moved away.”** Child of God, it is your business not to be moved. At some point we must be able to shout with the Psalmist, “I have set the LORD always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psa 16:8).

**THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL**

“... from the hope of the gospel.” And from what are we NOT to be moved

away? Is it a favorite doctrine of men, or the official position of a sect? God forbid! It is more personal than that – something that is harmonious with the Gospel, and fundamental in God’s “great salvation.”

The reality from which we must not be “moved” is “the hope of the Gospel.” This is the hope that was mentioned at the very first of this Epistle, by which their faith in Christ and love of the saints was fueled. “Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5).

**The Object of Our Hope**

In both verse five and verse thirteen, “hope” is a noun, not a verb. It refers to the object for which we “hope.” As a verb, “hope” means joyful expectation, and involves a dominating anticipation of realizing the objective for which we “hope.” This is the “hope” by which we “are saved” (Rom 8:24-25), and

*An Eternal Inheritance*

This hope also includes obtaining the promise of an “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Stated yet another way, this hope is “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). This includes a resurrection in which we put on immortality (Acts 23:6; 1 Cor 15:53), receiving the “crown of life” (James 1:12) and the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim 4:8), judging the world and angels (1 Cor 6:1-3), reigning with Jesus as a “joint heir” (2 Tim 2:12; Rom 8:17), inheriting “all things” (Rev 21:7), and much more. This represents God’s incentive program, and it is set before us from the time we enter into the kingdom. The Gospel testifies of it from the very beginning.

This “living hope” is what enables us to maintain the posture of strangers and pilgrims in the world, abstaining from fleshly lusts (1 Pet 2:11). **As soon as the glorious future recedes into the background, we immediately cease to make progress, and our future becomes gloomy.**

**Herein we find a summation of the intent of all opposition. It is to move us off of the foundation, and carry us into an area in which we were not placed by the grace of God.**

for which we were “begotten again” (1 Pet 1:3).

*Jesus Himself*

Encapsulated in a Person, that “hope” is the Lord Jesus Himself, who is referred to as “Christ Jesus, who is our hope” <sup>NASB</sup> (1 Tim 1:1). Jesus is “our Hope” in the sense of being the Image to which we are being conformed (Rom 8:29). The Holy Spirit is changing us into that “image” by stages – “from one degree of glory to another” <sup>NRSV</sup> (2 Cor 3:18). We heard of this “hope” by means of the Gospel, and immediately were dominated by it. That hope is, in fact, the reason we “fled” to Jesus for refuge – “to lay hold on the hope set before us” by that Gospel (Heb 6:18).

You will be hard pressed to find a group of people today who have this kind of hope. The seriousness of the condition is that it confirms those without this dominating hope have been moved away from it. No person is born again in a hopeless state. No one who rises with Christ from the waters of baptism is lacking a determination to dwell with the Lord. Salvation is “with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10), and hope is the thing that links us with that glory while we remain in this world.

There is no promise of being presented “holy, unblameable, and unproveable in His sight” if we have been “moved away from the hope of the Gospel.”



Further, a vibrant and expectant hope is the only means of continuing in the faith, and being grounded and settled. If our future is not certain, our faith will, at the very best, be “*little*” and “*weak*.”

You cannot “*continue*” in that kind of faith. It simply cannot carry you through the rigors of spiritual life in this world. **A feeble hope (hope is faith in its forward posture), is not long**

**enough, so to speak, to connect you with heaven.** It does not enter “*into that within the veil*” (Heb 6:19). Those are the facts of the matter, and the acknowledgment of them is imperative.

**YOU HAVE HEARD IT**

“<sup>23d</sup> **which ye have heard . . .**”

This is an elaboration of the Gospel, which brought the news of “*the hope*” that is essential to our salvation.

**WHICH**

“ . . . *which . . .* ” The word “*which*” refers to the Gospel itself – the Gospel of Christ. Thus the NIV reads, “*the hope held out in the Gospel*” – the Gospel which was “*heard*.” If men have not heard of “*the hope*,” they have not really heard the Gospel. The Gospel brings a message that opens up the

*Gospel of peace*” (Rom 10:15), announcing a satisfied and blessed God – “*the glorious Gospel of the blessed God*” (1 Tim 1:11). This Gospel declares the good news of your salvation – “*the Gospel of your salvation*” (Eph 1:13). It was also “*preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven*” (1 Pet 1:12).

This is the Gospel that came to the Colossians – the Gospel that told them of the hope they so gladly embraced.

**HAVE HEARD**

**For those who believe, the Gospel unfolds a glorious future, or hereafter. It is an inherent part of the Gospel.**

future, therefore enabling “*hope*.” For those who believe, the Gospel unfolds a glorious future, or hereafter. It is an inherent part of the Gospel. The heart of the Gospel is Christ Himself – and He is presently remaining “*in heaven*” (Acts 3:21), “*enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (Heb 1:3). The Gospel announces “*this same Jesus*” has determined to come and gather us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also (John 14:3). It declares a time when we shall “*ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thess 4:17). It affirms we will not only be “*with Him*,” but that we will be “*like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:1-2).

The Gospel announces a dominating and eternal kingdom – “*the Gospel of the kingdom*” (Matt 4:23). It proclaims the grace of God – “*Gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). It is a message that publishes peace – “*the*

“ . . . *ye have heard . . .* ” The hearing of the Gospel means more than being subjected to the sound of words. It is true, there is a sense in which everyone subjected to the Gospel “*hears*” – but that hearing is of a “*sound*,” and is not the hearing by which faith comes. Thus it is written, “*But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world*” (Rom 10:18).

The hearing to which Paul refers is “*the hearing of faith*” (Gal 3:2,5). It is the hearing through which faith “*comes*” (Rom 10:17). By speaking in this manner, Paul is saying **the Colossians heard the right message, and responded in the correct manner.** Remember, he was not the one who preached the initial message, because the Colossians had not yet seen him (Col 2:1).

**THE CENTRALITY OF THE GOSPEL**

The centrality of the Gospel is evident throughout this passage. Thus far, the focus has been placed upon it. It is woven throughout all of the reasoning to this point, and the affirmations have been placed squarely upon it’s foundation.

- ✚ God has made us “*meet*,” or qualified, to be partakers of the “*inheritance of the saints in light*” (v 12).
- ✚ He delivered us from “*the power of darkness*” (b 13a).
- ✚ He “*translated*” us into “*the kingdom of His dear Son*” (v 13b).
- ✚ We have “*redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*” (v 14).
- ✚ Christ is “*the image of the invisible God*” (v 15).
- ✚ All things were created by Him and for Him (vs 16-17).
- ✚ He is the “*head of the body, the church*” (v 18a).
- ✚ He is “*the Firstborn from the dead*” (v 18b).
- ✚ It pleased the Father that “*in Him should all fulness dwell*” (v 19).
- ✚ God “*made peace through the blood of His cross*” in order that He might “*reconcile all things unto Himself*” (v 20).
- ✚ We who were “*alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works*,” He has now reconciled “*in the body of His flesh through death*” (v 21).

**Not a single one of these statements, or any portion of them,**

is understandable apart from the Gospel of Christ. Take away “the record God has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11), and there is not a person on earth or an angel in heaven that can make any sense of these texts. In fact, they are both a declaration and an exposition of the Gospel.

Those who recoil at the idea of the

Gospel being preached to the church do not do well. Salvation does not move us away from the Gospel, for our salvation depends upon us not being “removed away from the hope of the Gospel” – or the hope that is generated and maintained by the Gospel. **It is not possible for hope to flourish if the Gospel ceases to be proclaimed, for that Gospel fuels hope, keeping it**

**alive and flourishing.**

Let us have done with a theology that easily discards the Gospel of Christ, constraining us to move to other matters that are more closely associated with life in this world. Such a theology is dangerous, and actually brings jeopardy to the soul. It opens the door for the worldly wise to enter among saints.

## PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE

“<sup>23e</sup> . . . and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven . . .”

This verse will underscore the absolute essentiality of the Gospel, for it is what is preached. That is, the good news of Jesus, or the “record God has given of His Son,” is what is being declared.

### PREACHED TO EVERY CREATURE

“ . . . and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven . . .” Other versions read, “which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven,”<sup>NASB</sup> “has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven,”<sup>NIV</sup> “in all creation under heaven,”<sup>ASV</sup> “given to every living being under heaven,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “has been preached all over the world.”<sup>NLT</sup>

The strength of the statement is evident in every translation. This is not a hyperbole, or a mere figure of speech. It is significant, for preachers cannot preach “except they be sent” (Rom 10:15). Anywhere and everywhere the Gospel is preached, it is “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” (1 Pet 1:12). More than any other word, the preaching of the Gospel fulfills the words of the Psalmist: “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psa 68:11). In the most precise sense, “the word of salvation” is “sent” (Acts 13:26).

Ultimately, this word is not a commentary on the activity of the church, but on the strong arm of the Lord. It is not the result of the supposedly brilliant strategies of men, but of the magnificent

purpose and wisdom of God.

This word perfectly coincides with the commission Jesus delivered to His

Christ. These multitudes are described as “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt,

**However a person may choose to view this passage, we are left with the unavoidable conclusion that the preaching of the Gospel had been most extensive. Within less than fifty years of the day of Pentecost, it had penetrated into every quadrant of the world, with no part of it being neglected.**

disciples: “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). Whatever is intended by Christ’s word is declared to have been done in this word. The Gospel is intended for everyone, and is therefore to be declared to everyone. It is for all nations, and is therefore to be declared to all nations. It is for all languages, and is therefore to be declared in all languages. It is for all people, and is therefore to be declared to all people.

However a person may choose to view this passage, we are left with the unavoidable conclusion that the preaching of the Gospel had been most extensive. Within less than fifty years of the day of Pentecost, it had penetrated into every quadrant of the world, with no part of it being neglected.

In the very first preaching of the Gospel, men from all over the world heard it, believed it, and were baptized into

and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians.” (Acts 2:9-11) – and that was only the beginning of the Gospel’s widespread influence.

A short time later, when a severe persecution caused believers to be dispersed, “they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Before ever an Apostle came to them, churches sprang up in Rome and Colossae. James wrote to believers described as “the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Peter wrote to Gentiles described as “strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet 1:1). Within the space of two years, it is written that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

The Gospel was preached extensively in cities of commerce, where

nations intersected: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, and the likes. It was declared among island peoples as well (Acts 13:6; 28:1).

History records the extensive

- ✚ **Matthew** – Persia, Ethiopia, Greece
- ✚ **James the son of Alphaeus** – Jerusalem
- ✚ **Lebbaeus** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia)
- ✚ **Simon the Canaanite** – Armenia

**They had not been subjected to a regional Gospel, or an ethnic one, or a sectarian one. They were the products of a Gospel tailored for “every creature” – one that had already been carried throughout the world.**

travels of the Apostles themselves – to say nothing of the multitudes that heard their word and carried it to others also.

- ✚ **Simon Peter** – Britain, Gaul (France and Germany), Rome
- ✚ **Andrew** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia), Scythia (Central Asia), Asia Minor
- ✚ **James** – Martyred early after impacting Jerusalem
- ✚ **John** – Asia (Including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Arabia, Egypt, Bangladesh, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Mongolia)
- ✚ **Philip** – Britain, Greece
- ✚ **Bartholomew** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia), India, Africa
- ✚ **Thomas** – Babylon, Persia, India

(Turkey, Russia), Britain, Egypt, Cyrene, Africa, Lybia

- ✚ **Matthias** – Armenia (Turkey, Russia)
- ✚ **Paul** – Britain, Greece, Asia, Italy, Spain

THE SEARCH FOR THE TWELVE APOSTLES  
William Steuart McBurnie, Tyndale House Publishers, 1978

If we read this verse in the context of the modern American church, it will prove too challenging for our intellects. **If we read it within the context of the book of Acts, it makes perfect sense.**

The truth of the matter is that the church of the contemporary Western world bears little, if any, resemblance to the church that existed from 30-40 years after Pentecost. With all of its super-tuned organization, technology, educational

institutes, and rapid modes of travel, the modern church has not approximated the zeal and effects realized by those early believers. With parachurch organizations bounding, and an abundance of specialized ministries and resources, we hear more about who has NOT been reached with the Gospel than of those who have been reached.

**THE POINT OF THE TEXT**

The point of this text is that the Colossians had been partakers of a universal Gospel that had been extensively declared. **They had not been subjected to a regional Gospel, or an ethnic one, or a sectarian one.** They were the products of a Gospel tailored for “every creature” – one that had already been carried throughout the world.

In the end, the saved are described as “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9). The Revelation also declares the Gospel, by Divine intention, was to be preached to “them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6). **The world is appointed realm for the preaching of the Gospel, and no one in it is excluded from its message.** Seeing this, early disciples carried the Gospel throughout the world, announcing liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. The Colossians were included in this remarkable spread.

**MADE A MINISTER**

“<sup>23f</sup> . . . whereof I Paul am made a minister.”

Paul now identifies his area of kingdom expertise. It is the area of work to which He had been appointed, and for which Jesus Himself had qualified and commissioned him.

**WHEREOF**

“...whereof.” Other versions read, “of which,” <sup>NKJV</sup> and “of this Gospel.” <sup>RSV</sup> The comments that follow pertain to the Gospel of Christ Jesus. This is “the word

of the truth of the Gospel” that announced the hope to which the Colossians were called (1:5). “The hope of the Gospel” is the pole star of our faith, declaring the purpose for which we have been called, and the ultimate destiny to which we have been appointed (1:23a).

**Without the Gospel, therefore, there can be no lasting incentive to come to Christ, or to remain in Him.** This is the Word through which the Father declares the Son (1 John 5:10-11), setting Him forth to be the propitiation

for sins (Rom 3:25).

Whether speaking to the church or to alienated multitudes, the **theme** of Paul’s ministry was always the Gospel. With unswerving consistency, he brought the minds of his readers and hearers back to the good news of Christ’s person and accomplishments. Those who imagine that believers move on from the Gospel to more mature matters could not possibly be more wrong.

**I PAUL**

*"I Paul . . ."* Every version reads exactly the same: *"I, Paul."* Paul often referred to himself in this manner, confirming his words were coming from the deepest part of his person. *"I Paul myself beseech you . . . Behold, I Paul say unto you . . . I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ . . . we would have come unto you, even I, Paul . . . I Paul have written it"* (1 Cor 10:1; Gal 5:1; Eph 3:1; 1 Thess 2:18; Phile 1:19). **Paul himself was in what he said.** He neither wrote nor spoke as a robot, or the representative of a religious system or organization. **What came from his mouth was in his heart as well as in his mind.**

Often I have heard preachers say, "Now I did not say that. That is what God has said." Such expressions have the faint sound of humility, but that is not really what they are. If the words that we speak in the name of the Lord are not our own, then we had best not speak them, keeping them to ourselves. That is why Paul referred to the Gospel as *"MY Gospel"* (Rom 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8).

**MADE A MINISTER**

*" . . . am made a minister."* Other versions read, *"became a minister,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"have become a servant,"* <sup>NIV</sup> and *"appointed by God to proclaim it."* <sup>NLT</sup>

Paul was not trained by men to be a minister of the Gospel. He was *"made a minister"* – a minister of the Gospel. Thus he spoke of himself as *"ministering the Gospel"* (Rom 15:16).

Some versions read *"servant"* instead of *"minister."* <sup>NIV/RSV/BBE/ NIB/NJB</sup> While this is technically a proper translation of the word *διάκονος* (dia-ok-o-nos), from which we get the word *"deacon,"* it does not convey the real intent of this passage. Although Paul was, indeed, serving the Lord in declaring the Gospel, it is **the activity itself** that is being emphasized – declaring and expounding the Gospel of Christ. Capturing this sense of the text, the NLT reads, *"appointed by God to proclaim it [the Gospel]."* **In this case, what the servant DOES is the point, or what he ministered.**

Paul was chosen by Christ and *"made a minister"* – a person who

declared the Gospel of Christ. He was a *"minister"* in the same sense as Jesus was, although not in exactly the same capacity. Jesus once said, *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).

Paul was made a *"minister"* of the Gospel in the sense of serving it to others in the name of Jesus. He placed the nourishing Gospel before those who were hungry and thirsty, feeding and nurturing them in Christ's behalf.

– and He does know the hearts of all men (1 Kgs 8:39; Acts 1:24). The Lord also tries, or tests, the heart, seeing what is in it (Psa 7:9).

**The employment of men in God's kingdom does, in part, depend upon what the Lord finds when he searches their hearts.** If that heart is fundamentally corrupt, or is not kept *"with all diligence"* (Prov 4:23), the Lord Jesus will not put the individual into the ministry.

**The employment of men in God's kingdom does, in part, depend upon what the Lord finds when he searches their hearts. If that heart is fundamentally corrupt, or is not kept "with all diligence," the Lord Jesus will not put the individual into the ministry.**

**Some Implications**

Using Paul as an example – his placement into the ministry because the Lord considered him faithful – accounts for the scope of His understanding of the Gospel. **God unveiled much to Paul because he could be trusted to handle the truth properly.** He did not spend a little time declaring and expounding it. In addition to being *"counted faithful,"* Paul said he had also *"obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful,"* or *"by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy."* <sup>NIV</sup> (1 Cor 7:25).

**When the situation called for a declaration of the Gospel, Paul was able and willing to do so. When it required an exposition of the Gospel, he was also faithful to do so with insight and zeal.**

This may serve to explain why some professed ministers have very little understanding of the Gospel, and therefore indulge in rather anemic efforts to declare and expound it.

Paul's expertise in the Gospel was not the mere result of much study and research. It was rather traced to the fact that Christ had *"made"* him a *"minister,"* placing him in the body in that capacity.

Elsewhere Paul refers to his Divine placement into the ministry of the Gospel. *"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry"* (1 Tim 1:12). This is a remarkable synopsis of Paul's call to the Apostleship. He was *"enabled"* by the Lord Jesus to accomplish the ministry. He was considered by Jesus to be *"faithful."* Other versions say of Jesus, *"He considered me faithful,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"He judged me faithful,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"He took me to be true,"* <sup>BEB</sup> and *"He considered me trustworthy."* <sup>NAB</sup>

**The Lord Looks on the Heart**

When the Lord calls someone, He does not look at their worldly credentials. Men may do that, but Jesus does not. The Lord *"looketh on the heart"* (1 Sam 16:7)

**REJOICING IN SUFFERINGS**

*“ 24a Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you . . . ”*

To this point Paul has focused on the Colossians, and their rescue from the power of darkness. They were delivered from that power, and translated into Christ’s kingdom. They possessed faith in Christ and a love for all saints, both of which grew out of the strong hope declared through the Gospel.

Because of their glorious

**being moved away from the hope of the Gospel.**

This is how faith is lived out – in the crucible of suffering! Faith uproots us from this evil world, and sufferings are the result of that process. Our faith is not philosophical or theoretical. It has very real consequences, and erupts in very real conduct under duress.

**The life of faith is not lived out in a vacuum. That is precisely**

and perfect will of God (Rom 12:2). They come because of the conflict between the children of God and the children of the wicked one. **They are the experience of the world’s reaction to a person who speaks for God.**

Our blessed Lord once said, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matt 5:12). Early in the history of the church, the Apostles were subjected to suffering for righteousness’ sake. After being beaten by the Jewish leaders and commanded *“not to speak in the name of Jesus,”* they *“departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (Acts 5:41).

**There is a sense in which the reward reserved for us in heaven determines the degree of suffering we are called to endure.**

condition, Paul had prayed they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This was in order that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, and be patient and longsuffering with joy.

All of this was set within the context of the Person of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and in whom all fulness dwells. He created all things, and for Him they were all created. He is the one who *“made peace through the blood of His cross,”* reconciling us to God. **The objective of it all was the presentation of the saints holy, unblameable, and unproveable in God’s sight.**

Paul has further declared the necessary involvement of the saints. They are to *“continue in the faith,”* in a grounded and settled condition, not being moved away from the hope produced by the Gospel.

Now Paul turns our attention to himself. **He is doing so as an example of one who is himself continuing in the faith. Here is a man who is grounded and settled, and is not**

**why spiritual wisdom and strength are required to live by faith.**

**NOW**

*“Who now . . . ”* Other versions read, *“I now,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> and *“Now I.”*<sup>NASB</sup>

The use of the word *“now”* shifts the emphasis to another related subject. This word is not used in the sense of *“right now, at this time”* – although Paul is currently experiencing what he will mention. The sense of the word is like saying, *“And now, consider this. . . ”*

**REJOICE IN MY SUFFERINGS**

*“. . . rejoice in my sufferings . . . ”* Other versions read, *“I have joy in my pain”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“It makes me happy to be suffering,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“I am glad when I suffer.”*<sup>NLT</sup>

This kind of language makes no sense at all to the disinterested the lukewarm, and the apathetic. **No person can say or understand this who is not in fellowship with the Father and the Son** (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3).

These sufferings are the result of involvement in the good and acceptable

Whether we are speaking of the sufferings of those early days of the church, those of Paul, or others, **we must be able to make the association between suffering and the inheritance.** Jesus said our sufferings should enable us to recall a *“great”* reward in heaven: *“great IS your reward in heaven.”*

**There is a sense in which the reward reserved for us in heaven determines the degree of suffering we are called to endure.** It is with this in mind that the Thessalonian brethren were told, *“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer”* (2 Thess 1:4-5).

**FOR YOU**

*“. . . for you . . . ”* Other versions read, *“for your sake,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“because of you.”*<sup>BBE</sup>

These were genuine *“sufferings.”* The word is not used to portray mere personal inconvenience, or social

difficulties. Paul was in prison, no doubt in chains, and enduring much of which he said absolutely nothing. From his perspective he was the “*prisoner of the Lord*” (Eph 3:1). That is, it was because of his labors for Jesus that he was incarcerated. He was not a social rabble-rouser, nor was he imprisoned for social disobedience or sounding out objections to government policy. However noble those things may be, they are not to be compared with suffering for Christ’s sake (Phil 1:29).

Here, however, Paul adds another

dimension to suffering. He says he is suffering for the sake of the Colossians. By this he does not mean they had caused his suffering, for he had never been to Colossae. Rather he was suffering in prison that they might hear his word, and be strengthened by what he had been given to see – “*for you*.” Just as John was on the Isle of Patmos to receive the word of God (Rev 1:9), so Paul was in prison to receive a word for the Colossian brethren.

While in prison Epaphras had declared to Paul certain matters concerning the Colossian church. They

had faith in Jesus and love to all saints. They were also being assaulted with trying doctrines, and stood in need of having their faith strengthened (2:16-18). Thus, Paul concluded his sufferings were for the sake of the Colossians – that is, that they might receive stabilizing truth from him, and thus be enabled to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**This is a sterling example of how the spiritual mind functions – one that is filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding – the “*mind of Christ*” (2 Cor 2:16).**

**AFFLICTIONS LEFT BEHIND**

“<sup>24b</sup> . . . and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh . . .”

Paul now elaborates on his sufferings, confirming there is Divine purpose in them, and that they are not without objective. In the words that follow he unfolds an aspect of salvation that is most lofty.

**FILL UP**

“ . . . and fill up . . . ” Other versions read “*complete*,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “*completing*,”<sup>RSV</sup> “*am filling up*,”<sup>ESV</sup> “*fulfill*,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> and “*make up*.”<sup>NJB</sup>

The idea is that there is something left that is to be completed – a work that remains to be accomplished. This is an area in which we participate in the salvation – where we have a particular and productive fellowship with the Son of God. **Suffering is something that, according to Divine purpose, is ongoing.** The primary sufferings – i.e., the ones in which there are both merit and redemptive effectiveness – are those of Christ. These are the sufferings associated with the cross, where Jesus was “*made sin*” and “*made a curse for us*” (2 Cor 5:21; Gal; 3:13). These were the sufferings of which the prophets wrote (1 Pet 1:11).

There is, however, another aspect to Christ’s sufferings that is made known in this marvelous text. These are

sufferings that are “*filled up*” by those who are in Christ Jesus. This is the “*fellowship of His sufferings*” to which Paul alluded in Philippians 3:10.

**AFFLICTIONS LEFT BEHIND**

“ . . . that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.” Other versions read, “*what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions*,”<sup>NIV</sup>

**Him**” (Rom 8:17). That is precisely the sufferings to which Paul refers – “*the fellowship of His sufferings*” (Phil 3:10). **When God called us “*unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1 Cor 1:9), it involved suffering with Him.**

This is one of the ways in which God is conforming us to the “*image of His Son*” (Rom 8:29). It is involved in the

**Conformity to the image of Christ, being changed from glory unto glory, being made partakers of the Divine nature, and being partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), are, indeed, extensive involvements.**

“*whatever is still needed to make the sorrows of Christ complete*,”<sup>BBE</sup> “*fulfill the rest of the afflictions of Christ*,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “*all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ*,”<sup>NJB</sup> “*what remains of Christ’s sufferings for his body*,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “*things lacking of the tribulations of the Christ*.”<sup>YLT</sup>

There is a most wonderful perspective declared in this text. **Paul, in suffering for the sake of the body of Christ, is a partner with Christ.** The Word affirms that we will be glorified “*together with*” Christ if we “*suffer with*

Spirit changing us from one stage of glory into another (2 Cor 3:18). Those who do not suffer with Jesus are not participating in the Divine nature to an acceptable extent (2 Pet 1:4). **Conformity to the image of Christ, being changed from glory unto glory, being made partakers of the Divine nature, and being partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), are, indeed, extensive involvements.**

Paul also alludes to this conformity in Second Corinthians – a conformity that involves sufferings that have been left behind for us to experience.

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor 4:10). “Sufferings” are, in this view, the death throes of the flesh, or Adamic nature. They assist in severing us more completely from “this present evil world,” confirming we are “strangers and pilgrims” in it (1 Pet 2:11). Our primary citizenship is in heaven, “from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20), and **sufferings endured for the sake of Christ and His kingdom confirm that is the case.**

The Spirit testifies, “Yea, and all

through which our fellowship with Christ is gloriously enhanced. It is also one of the means through which we are **qualified** to obtain the eternal kingdom. “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, **that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer**” (2 Thess 1:5).

**IN MY FLESH**

“ . . . in my flesh . . . ” The sufferings to which Paul refers are not mental – like anguish, distress, or anxiety

In remarkable detail, Paul once testified of the extent of his sufferings for Christ, and for His body, the church. “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in **stripes** above measure, in prisons more frequent, in **deaths** oft. Of the Jews five times received I **forty stripes save one**. Thrice was I **beaten with rods**, once was I **stoned**, thrice I suffered **shipwreck**, a night and a day I have been **in the deep**; in **journeyings** often, in **perils** of waters, in **perils** of robbers, in **perils** by mine own countrymen, in **perils** by the heathen, in **perils** in the city, in **perils** in the wilderness, in **perils** in the sea, in **perils** among false brethren; in **weariness** and **painfulness**, in **watchings** often, in **hunger and thirst**, in **fastings** often, in cold and **nakedness**. Beside those things that are **without**, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28).

In our text Paul takes such sufferings and wraps them in a single expression: “*what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church.*”<sup>NIV</sup> That is a most arresting statement!

These sufferings really belonged to Jesus, yet were experienced by Paul, who was in fellowship, with Jesus. They are also experienced today by those who walk in the light as He is in the light, declaring His Gospel, and bringing solace and encouragement to His brethren – the church, which is His body.

**Those who do not, to some extent, endure persecution are simply not living godly in Christ Jesus. The word “all” provides for no one to be excluded.**

that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution**” (2 Tim 3:12). It is not that such ought to suffer. They WILL suffer the oppositions of this world. This is not a goal, it is a reality. **Those who do not, to some extent, endure persecution are simply not living godly in Christ Jesus.** The word “all” provides for no one to be excluded.

These are sufferings that have been “left behind,” and are the means

– even though some of those may very well be involved. These were sufferings “in the flesh” – sufferings that were more readily apparent.

Elsewhere Paul said, “I bear **in my body** the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Gal 6:17). Again he said he was “Always bearing about **in the body** the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest **in our body**” (2 Cor 4:10).

**FOR HIS BODY’S SAKE**

“<sup>24c</sup> . . . for His body’s sake, which is the church . . . ”

The sufferings to which Paul refers are experienced WITH Christ. But they are FOR the sake of Christ’s body, “which is the church.”

**HIS BODY’S SAKE**

“ . . . for His body’s sake . . . ”

Other versions read, “on behalf of His body,”<sup>NASB</sup> “for the sake of His body,”<sup>NIV</sup> and “for the salvation of the body.”<sup>BBE</sup>

The interest and welfare of the church required Paul to suffer. In order for Christ’s body to receive the succor and correction it needed, Paul had to suffer in his body. **Just as the salvation of God was brought to us through the sufferings of Christ, so the edification of the body comes through the sufferings of His ministers.**

It is not that Paul suffered in the place of the church, bearing, as it were,

the pain that properly belonged to them. That is the kind of suffering Jesus bore. This, however, is suffering of another kind or type. **In order for the church to be built up, Paul had to be, as it was, extruded through the narrow straits of affliction.** Just as surely as all saints enter the kingdom “through much tribulation” (Acts 14:22), so those who minister for Jesus pass through the crucible of conflict in order to build up Christ’s body.

This circumstance is owing to several different conditions.

- ✦ The flesh lusts against the Spirit, requiring that the minister of the Word press toward the mark with great aggression.
- ✦ The devil is set to resist any effort to strengthen the saints of the most High God.
- ✦ There are principalities and powers aligned against any effort to build up the people of God.
- ✦ Many who profess allegiance to Christ strongly object to the edification of the body, preferring spiritual froth to spiritual substance.
- ✦ Religious institutionalism will vigorously oppose independent efforts to minister to the people of God – as Jewry did to the ministry of Paul.

**Any individual who determines to bring advantages to the saints of God will experience suffering of an extraordinary measure.** When this happens, the servant of God must remember these are sufferings that have been *“left behind.”* They are a means whereby we invest of ourselves in the purpose of God.

**There are such fierce forces aligned against the church that it cannot be advantaged without some suffering in order that the advantage can be realized.**

**WHICH IS THE CHURCH**

*“ . . . which is the church . . . ”*  
 Christ’s *“body”* is constituted of individual members through whom He works (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19). There are no nonfunctional members in Christ’s body – no members that do not need to grow, be built up, comforted, and matured. **There is not a single member in the body that has been placed in a position from which nothing is required.** The church is not a mere institution or organization. It is, in the strictest sense of the word, an organism, or living thing. For that reason, it must be fed, nourished, stabilized, and matured. **Every member is included in that process. None are excluded from it.**

However, the edification of the body will cost those who minister to it. If a church is not growing up into Christ in all things, the true minister *“travails in birth again until Christ be formed in”* them (Gal 4:19). That is the kind of

suffering to which our text refers. It is the suffering of travail, required in the faithful servant in order to bring needed resources to *“the church.”*

This is *“the church”* Jesus Himself is building – but He is doing it through faithful ministers. That *“church,”* or assembly whose names are written in heaven (Heb 12:23), remains in a hostile realm. **There are such fierce forces aligned against the church that it cannot be advantaged without some suffering in order that the advantage can be realized.**

Ultimately, this is most precisely seen in Jesus Christ Himself, and the redemption that He accomplished. **But it is also realized in the work that has been left behind, and the suffering related to it.** Those who would minister to believers cannot avoid this suffering. It is a part of laboring and having fellowship with Christ.

**ACCORDING TO THE DISPENSATION OF GOD**

*“ 25a Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God . . . ”*

**WHEREOF**

The word *“whereof”* refers to Christ’s body, which is *“the church.”* Other versions read, *“of which,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“Of this church,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“I have become its (the church’s) servant,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“I became its servant,”*<sup>RSV</sup> and *“God has given me the responsibility of His church.”*<sup>NLT</sup>

Elsewhere Paul clearly states that he was sent by God to *“preach the Gospel.”* As it is written, *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest*

*the cross of Christ should be made of none effect”* (1 Cor 1:17). **Some have in, error, limited the preaching of the Gospel to those who are in sin, and not in Christ.** Indeed, Paul was determined to *“preach the gospel in the regions beyond you [the Corinthians], and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand”* (2 Cor 10:16), and where Christ had not already been named (Rom 15:20).

Paul also determined to *“preach the Gospel”* to the well established church in Rome (Rom 1;15), bringing the *“fulness of the blessing of the Gospel to them”* (Rom 15:29). He did not see them as beyond the need to hear the Gospel.

Paul declared the Gospel again to the fledgling Corinthians (1 Cor 15:1; 2 Cor 10:14; 11:7). The realization of partaking of God’s *“promise in Christ”* is ever *“by the Gospel”* (Eph 3:6). Paul’s ministry consisted of defending and confirming the Gospel, as well as initially declaring it (Phil 1:7).

Life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10), two aspects of spiritual life that are rarely, if ever, known in the beginning of newness of life. Peter told seasoned believers the Gospel was *“now reported to you through those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; things which angels*



*desire to look into*" (1 Pet 1:12). **Is it possible that those in Christ have now ceased their inquiry into the Gospel, while holy angels continue such pursuits?** I should think one to be foolish indeed who dares to embrace such a postulate. Peter later affirmed to believers, *"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Pet 1:25). Is there such a thing as an enduring word that ceases to be preached?

**Can there be a people who no longer have need of an enduring word – which is preached, or declared, "by the Gospel?"**

stood in danger of being moved away the hope produced through the Gospel.

Therefore, as a *"scribe which is instructed in the kingdom of heaven,"* Paul reaches into the treasury of the Gospel to bring out *"things new and old"* (Matt 13:52). He will tutor them from the same message that initially was delivered to them.

**ACCORDING TO THE DISPENSATION**

*" . . . I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God . . . "* Other versions read, *"according to the stewardship from God,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"the commission God gave me,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"the Divine office which was given to me,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"the*

God had placed the Gospel of His Son into the hands of Paul, charging him with making it known. One of his fundamental responsibilities was to declare this Gospel to the body of Christ, who is the primary audience to whom the Word of God is addressed. That is why no book of the Bible is addressed to the heathen. It is why all of the spiritual gifts, including Apostles and Prophets, were placed within the church for *"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Eph 4:11-12).

Those, therefore, who say the Gospel is not to be preached to the church could not possibly be more wrong. **The church is the fundamental, or primary, audience to whom the Gospel is addressed.** That is precisely what Paul has affirmed. The *"dispensation of the Gospel,"* he says, was given to him *"for you"* – the saints.

To be sure, the Gospel is to be *"preached to every creature,"* and is the means through which disciples are made (Matt 28:18-19; Mk 16:15-16). But we are not finished with the Gospel once we are *"added to the church,"* and nothing in all of Scripture suggests such an idea. That is not an insightful suggestion.

There is no need to further establish this point, for **the very Epistle of Colossians is confirmation enough of the criticality of the Gospel to spiritual life.**

The power of God unto salvation is still *"the Gospel"* – whether that is salvation initially, or when it is being worked out (Phil 2:12).

**Is it possible that those in Christ have now ceased their inquiry into the Gospel, while holy angels continue such pursuits? I should think one to be foolish indeed who dares to embrace such a postulate.**

Paul has been *"made a minister"* of the Gospel, and He is now, in fulfillment of his ministry, declaring that Gospel the Colossians. They were in Christ (1:2), possessed faith in Christ and love to all saints (1:4), and *"knew the grace of God in truth"* (1:6). They had been *"delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son"* (1:13). Yet, because of false teachers (2:16-19), they

*purpose of God which was given to me,"* <sup>BEBE</sup> and *"the responsibility of serving the church."* <sup>NLT</sup>

The word *"dispensation"* means administration, economy, or stewardship. It refers to the management of a household, and the proper administration of property belonging to someone else. <sup>STRONG'S</sup> It is associated with a plan or purpose that did not originate with the steward, but with the Owner.

**The Reasoning**

**TO FULFIL THE WORD OF GOD**

<sup>25b</sup> *" . . . which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God."*

**GIVEN TO ME FOR YOU**

*" . . . which is given to me for you."* Other versions read, *"bestowed on me for your benefit,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"God gave to me to present to you,"* <sup>NIV</sup> and *"which is given me towards you."* <sup>DARBY</sup>

What was *"given"* to Paul was a stewardship of the Gospel – the responsibility of proclaiming and clarifying it to people – in particular to the church – *"for you."* Obviously, it is necessary that the church hear it.

The economy (which is the meaning of dispensation) of God gives a

preeminent place to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Where this Gospel is declared, God will work. Where it is not proclaimed, salvation will not be realized, for the power that works salvation is found in the Gospel of Christ.**

It should not surprise that the

fruit of salvation is not found where the Gospel is not regularly declared and expounded. Newness of life, the fruit of the Spirit, and righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, cannot spring up in soil that is not watered with the Gospel. It simply cannot happen! **If “the record God has given of His Son” recedes into the background of the agenda of the church, God will cease to work within it.**

- ✚ **The Gospel of God** (Rom 1:1). How is it possible for any thoughtful person to associate such a Gospel only with beginnings, or one’s initial entrance into Christ Jesus?
- ✚ **The Gospel of His Son** (Rom 1:9). Has everything about “the Son” been exhausted with the initial declaration of the Gospel? Indeed, the whole letter to the Hebrews is about “the Son” – a most extensive proclamation of Him.
- ✚ **The Gospel of Christ** (Rom 1:16). “The Christ” is God’s Anointed One, through whom every Divine benefit comes. Who can affirm nothing more is to be declared or reported of Him after one has been baptized into Him?
- ✚ **The Gospel of peace** (Rom 10:15). Are we finished with the declaration of peace after we have “put on Christ?”
- ✚ **The Gospel of your salvation** (Eph 1:13). Is the church to hear no more of God’s great salvation? Is that a message reserved for “that which was lost?” What honest disciple cannot confess that he has learned more of salvation AFTER being born again, than he ever imagined when the newness of life was first experienced?
- ✚ **Glorious Gospel of the blessed God** (1 Tim 1:11). Is there a single person within the body of Christ who at the first saw with clarity how thoroughly God was blessed by the accomplishments of His Son?

May the saints of God have done with this nonsense about the Gospel being preached only to sinners. Such a postulate can in no way be supported. Paul has

clearly stated that he received a stewardship of the Gospel for Christ’s body, which is the church.

In the Epistles there are no less than seventy-nine references to the “Gospel.” By way of comparison, there in all of its varied forms, *baptism* is mentioned fourteen times directly, and twice indirectly. *Repentance* in all of its literary forms is mentioned eleven times. “Church” is mentioned forty-nine times. The words “husband” and “wife,” in both singular and plural forms, are mentioned forty-one times, with fourteen of them being found in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians. The phrase “Word of God” is mentioned nineteen times. Teach, in all of its varied forms is mentioned fourteen times. How is it possible miss the Apostolic emphasis.

In keeping with the declaration of the Gospel, the word “faith” is mentioned in the Epistles (Romans through Jude) one hundred and ninety-seven times, and “believe,” in all of its forms, is mentioned fifty-three times.

and nourishes hope.

There is no other message, no other word, no other teaching, that has Christ at its center – which declares and expounds His Person, purpose, and works. He alone is the Vine. He alone is the means through we come to God – whether initially, or in the twilight of a godly life in this world.

**Those who would take the Gospel from us take Christ from us.** Those who refuse to preach the Gospel have taken away the means of faith, and the way of illumination.

Here is a most salient word. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Another version reads, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”<sup>NKJV</sup>

This is why Paul says a dispensation of the Gospel was given to him “for you” – for the people of God. In

**Those who object to this line of reasoning are obliged to tell us what the emphasis of teaching is to be in the church. Is it the home? Is it our manner of life? Is it interpersonal relationships? Is it the purported pattern of the church, or its government?**

**Those who object to this line of reasoning are obliged to tell us what the emphasis of teaching is to be in the church.** Is it the home? Is it our manner of life? Is it interpersonal relationships? Is it the purported pattern of the church, or its government? Just where is the emphasis to be placed? What kind of word is to be found in its preachers and teachers? With what food is the flock to be fed?

The church has a solitary message – only one. All doctrine, or teaching, revolves around that message. It is the only message by which salvation in all of its facets comes. It is the only message that can stimulate and maintain faith. This is the solitary message that produces

this message we find germ of every good and perfect work. It is the seat of all power, and the resource for everything pertaining to life and godliness. The Spirit never minimizes the Gospel of Christ!

**FULFILLING THE WORD**

“ . . . to fulfil the word of God.” Other versions read, “that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,”<sup>NASB</sup> “to present to you the Word of God in its fullness,”<sup>NIV</sup> “to make the Word of God fully known,”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “by proclaiming His message in all its fullness to you Gentiles.”<sup>NLT</sup>

To “fulfill the word of God” means to fully carry out its proclamation, presenting a thorough declaration of the

great salvation of God. It is to declare “*the whole counsel of God,*” withholding nothing from the people (Acts 20:27). Essentially, this involves proclaiming Christ and the redemption that is in Him. It also includes declaring the implications of the Gospel, which include the promises to those who believe and obey that Gospel, and the consequences of not doing so. **If the Gospel is true, any other core message is untrue, and will not be**

*God*” with “*the Gospel*” (1:5,23,25). This representation is found throughout Scripture. The Gospel is called “*the word*” (Acts 4:4; 8:4,14; 10:36,44; Acts 16:6,32; 17:11; 1 Pet 1:25) “*the word of the Lord*” (Acts 8:25), “*the word of truth*” (Eph 1:13), “*the word of the Gospel*” (Col 1:5), “*the word of God*” (Acts 6:7; 11:1,19; 13:7,46,48; Rom 10:17), “*the word of His grace*” (Acts 14:3), and “*the word of this salvation*”

appointment, but it certainly was not the whole of it. Here is what Jesus told him. “*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 26:16-18).

**If the Gospel is true, any other core message is untrue, and will not be attended by the power of God.**

attended by the power of God.

#### Another Gospel

All of this begins with the proclamation of the Gospel itself. It becomes the Divinely appointed touchstone by which all other messages are measured. Thus Paul wrote to the Galatians, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Gal 1:8-9).

“*Any other Gospel*” is one that is not centered in Jesus Christ. It is one that offers hope by some other means. Such a Gospel; is the vehicle of condemnation, for God will not bless through it.

Keep in mind, by his own word, the Colossians had never before seen Paul’s face (Col 2:1). They had already heard the Gospel, believed it, obeyed it, and were producing fruit to God. They were already believing on Jesus and loving all the saints. Yet, Paul associates preaching the Gospel to them with the commission that Jesus had given him – a commission that involved fully, or completely, declaring that Gospel.

Notice, Paul equates “*the word of*

(Acts 13:26).

#### The Idea

The idea is that Paul, as a faithful custodian of the Gospel, declared it with an aim to its blessing being realized. This text does not insinuate that fulfilling the Word is accomplished when every jot and tittle of it has been delivered. **That is the means to the appointed end, but is not the end itself.** Jesus was sent “*to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities*” (Acts 3:26). The proclamation is not fulfilled, in the sense of our text, until the intended blessing is realized – until men are turned away from their iniquities.

The “*word*” that was delivered was one described as “*preaching peace by Jesus Christ*” (Acts 10:36). As used in our text, that word is not fulfilled until the declared peace is actually experienced.

Paul did preach to discharge his duty, as he himself declared: “*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me*” (1 Cor 9:16-17). Yet, this was not the totality of what constrained him.

When Jesus commissioned Paul, He did not command him simply to preach the Gospel. That preaching was imperative to the fulfillment of his

Paul’s preaching was calculated to accomplish these things – to “*fulfill the word.*” Now he is going to preach to the Colossians with a mind for these things to happen, for the Gospel is the appointed vehicle through which men’s eyes are opened, they are turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. It is the means by which they receive forgiveness of sins and appropriate the inheritance that is common to those who are sanctified by faith.

As long as there is a church among whom a person or persons exists whose eyes are not opened, the Gospel must be preached. As long as there is anyone in the body of Christ who is waffling between darkness and light, the Gospel must be preached. Where there is a professed believer who is in the grip of Satan, the Gospel must be preached. Wherever a Christian can be found that is not sure their name is written in heaven – who is unsure of their inheritance – the Gospel must be preached.

**Anyone who is honest knows that the churches of our land are filled with people who have been overcome by sin and the devil.** Multitudes are in the grip of spiritual darkness, unable to navigate in the light. Satan has his way with countless numbers of people who once professed the name of Jesus and rose from baptism to walk in the newness of life. Who is able to estimate the masses of church members who are totally lacking the full assurance of faith and the rejoicing of the hope?

**These conditions are why Paul**

**preached the Gospel to the churches.** He knew that was the only message that is attended with *“the power of God unto salvation”* (Rom 1:16). Although men may

fiercely object to these conclusions, all of their arguments are like weightless motes and powerless wisps of smoke. **The church needs to hear the Gospel!** It is

the elixir that comforts the weary soul, strengthens the feeble knees, and causes hope to shine brightly within the heart of believers.

## CONCLUSION

Thus Paul presents himself as an example of continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel. With him, this was not a theoretical matter. It was associated with fulfilling his role in the body of Christ, for there is no abiding in Christ without fulfilling our function in His body.

The personal perception of the Gospel was essential for Paul to continue in the faith. It simply is not possible to be faithful while ignoring the message through which faith comes and is sustained.

**Where there is an underlying ignorance of the Gospel, it is not possible to continue in the faith.** Spiritual life cannot be sustained when the very Word by which we live is strange to us. This is the failing of the Western church. It is fundamentally ignorant of the Gospel itself, which is God’s power unto salvation. Its view is too much on the surface, and too lacking of moral and spiritual power.

The Gospel is declared and expounded throughout the Epistles, as I have already pointed out. **The Gospel affirmations that are spoken to believers are staggering for number.** Allow me to cite just a few of them from the first ten chapters of Romans. These are indicative of the kind of affirmations that are found throughout the Epistles.

- ✚ The righteousness of God is revealed (Rom 1:17).
- ✚ The righteousness of God is revealed without the law (Rom 3:22).
- ✚ We are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ (Rom 3:24).

- ✚ God has set forth Jesus to be the propitiation for sins (Rom 3:25).
- ✚ God is just and the Justifier of the one believing in Jesus (Rom 3:26).
- ✚ In Christ, God imputes righteousness without works (Rom 4:6-8).
- ✚ Righteousness will be imputed to us if we believe on Him who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 4:24).
- ✚ Jesus was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification (Rom 4:25).
- ✚ We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1).
- ✚ By Christ we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (Rom 5:2).

- ✚ By Jesus Christ, the grace of God and the gift by grace has abounded to many (Rom 5:15).
- ✚ By the righteousness of Christ, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life (Rom 5:18).
- ✚ By the obedience of Christ, many were made righteous (Rom 5:19).
- ✚ Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom 5:20).
- ✚ We have become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to Christ (Rom 7:4).
- ✚ There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1).
- ✚ What the Law could not do, God did by condemning sin in the flesh of

**Where there is an underlying ignorance of the Gospel, it is not possible to continue in the faith. Spiritual life cannot be sustained when the very Word by which we live is strange to us.**

- ✚ When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6).
- ✚ God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
- ✚ When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom 5:10).

- Christ (Rom 8:4).
- ✚ He that spared not His own Son, will much more freely give us all things with Him (Rom 8:32).
- ✚ It is Christ that died, yea rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom 8:34).
- ✚ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who

believes (Rom 10:4).

✚ If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Rom 10:9).

There are twenty four affirmations – solid declarations of the result of Christ’s accomplishments. They are all Gospel – good news concerning the Person and works of Christ Jesus.

What is more, these were rarely

delivered to alien sinners. They were nearly always preached to those who were in Christ Jesus. If you are honest, you will acknowledge that very few of these were known by you when you were buried and raised with Christ. For some of us, it was a long time before we actually heard any declaration of them.

**Such things ought not to be!**

Paul faithfully carried out His commission by preaching the Gospel to the Colossians. He did so because

continuing in the faith and being grounded and settled cannot be realized independently of that glorious Gospel.

**If we expect to not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel, we must hear the message of the Gospel from which that hope is realized.** It must be proclaimed with power and spiritual insight to the churches. That is a stewardship that must not be neglected.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/14/2003. In this session, we will be covering verses 26-29 of the first chapter. The title of our lesson is, “**THE MYSTERY REVEALED.**” The purpose of God, fulfilled in His great salvation, was hidden to previous ages. They could not uncover it, or gain a full sense of its intent. But now, the matter has been unveiled in Christ Jesus. What was formerly concealed has now been revealed. It is no longer justifiable to remain in ignorance of that purpose. 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 Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>**

**COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>**