



THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Lesson Number 10



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 -----

GREAT CONFLICT FOR THE CHURCH

“^{2:1} For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; ² that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; ³ In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” ^{KJV} (Col 2:1-3)

INTRODUCTION

In all of God's dealings with the world, **His people are central**. This is the Divine manner, and has always been.

PRIOR TO THE LAW

After the fall, and prior to the Law, God gave extended attention to those who were, due to His own initiative, in relation with Him. This included Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchisedec, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. If the Lord revealed consideration for anyone else – like Abimelech (Gen 20:17) – it was for the sake of those with whom He already had chosen affiliation.

DURING THE LAW

During the administration of the Law, and the First Covenant, this manner continued. Israel was the heart of God's attention, and were referred to as “*My people*” (Ex 3:7), “*My servant*” (Isa 41:8), and “*the apple of His eye*” (Deut 32:10).

Of them Moses said, “*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen Thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deut 7:6).

Commenting on the uniqueness of Israel, Paul wrote, “*For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*” (Rom 9:3-5).

While there were occasional displays of the Lord's mercy upon Gentile people (Nineveh – Jonah 3:5-10,

Nebuchadnezzar – Dan 2:18, and Cyrus – Ezra 1:1), it was within the context of His dealings with Israel. During the era of the First Covenant, the Lord's primary workings centered in Israel.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

The time during which John the Baptist ministered was a special time. It represented a sort of line of demarcation between the dominance of the Law and the Prophets and “*the day of salvation.*” Jesus said, “*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John*” (Mat 11:13).

The exclusive ministry of John the Baptist was toward the Jews. If any Gentile profited from his ministry, it was because they chose to be identified with the Jews. John did not go to the Gentiles, but to the Jews. He came preaching “*in the wilderness of Judaea*” (Matt 3:1), Betharaba (John 1:28), and Aenon near to

OUTLINE

- ▶ I WANT YOU TO KNOW (2:1a)
- ▶ A GREAT CONFLICT (2:1b)
- ▶ COMFORTED HEARTS (2:2a)
- ▶ KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE (2:2b)
- ▶ A DIFFERENT KIND OF RICHES (2:2c)
- ▶ ACKNOWLEDGING THE MYSTERY (2:2d)
- ▶ HIDDEN TREASURES (2:3)

Salim (John 3:23).

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The ministry of Jesus was primarily among the Jews. He *“went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people”* (Mat 4:23). He was consistently found in Jewish *“cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues”* (Matt 9:35). Luke summarized the latter period of Christ’s ministry by saying, *“And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives”* (Luke 21:37).

When He sent out His disciples, it was exclusively to the Jews. As it is written, *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not”* (Mat 10:5).

Any Gentiles benefitting from His presence – like the wise men from the East (Matt 2:1-12), and the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:25-30), – were generally found in Jewish areas. If Jesus went into remote areas like Gadara, where He healed the man dwelling among the tombs (Mark 5:1-18), He did not stay long. Such visits were the exception to His ministry.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT MEAN

These circumstances do not mean the Lord had no interest in the Gentiles. The Prophets had foretold that His mercy would be extended to the Gentiles, and that the coming Messiah would be sent to them as well as the Jews (Isa 11:10; 42:1,6; 49:6,22; 60:3; 62:2; Jer 16:19; Mal 1:11). **Rather, this reflects God’s**

manner of focusing upon those with whom He has established identity. This is brought to its fullest revelation in the body of Christ, which is the church.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Although this had once escaped my attention, it has become very clear to me that God’s focus is upon the body of Christ. This is now so apparent that I find it difficult to comprehend why it was hidden to me. I know now that it was because of a distorted emphasis designed to perpetuate a religious institution. Because this text is an expression of this principle, I believe it is necessary to establish that **the attention of heaven is upon the church** – God’s people. This by no means suggests that the Lord has no interest in anyone else. I am speaking of focus, emphasis, or thrust – where the burden of the attention is given, and the majority of the work is done.

- ✚ Jesus is building His church (Matt 16:18).
- ✚ The saved are added to *“the church”* (Acts 2:47).
- ✚ When God worked among the Gentiles, it was reported to *“the church”* (Acts 14:27).
- ✚ Paul exhorted the elders of Ephesus to *“feed the church of God”* (Acts 20:28).
- ✚ All of the Epistles are to the churches, or individual members of the church.
- ✚ All of the spiritual gifts have been placed within *“the church”* (1 Cor 12:28).
- ✚ Spiritual excellence is associated with edifying *“the church”* (1 Cor 14:12).
- ✚ God is teaching principalities and powers in heavenly places His

“ manifold wisdom of God” by *“the church”* (Eph 3:10).

- ✚ Glory is being, and will be, brought to God by *“the church”* (Eph 3:21).
- ✚ Jesus *“loved the church and gave Himself for it”* (Eph 5:25).
- ✚ The Lord nourishes and cherishes *“the church”* (Eph 5:29).
- ✚ *“The church”* is God’s house, the *“pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim 3:15).
- ✚ Jesus declares God’s name in the midst of *“the church”* (Heb 2:12).

Jesus Is Reigning for His Church

The reign of Jesus Christ is for *“His body, which is the church, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Eph 1:23). All of the resources that Jesus gives are deposited with His church, which is *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim 3:15). Apart from the church, there is no point to Jesus, as the glorified Man, being *“Lord of all.” His supremacy over all did not require Him to humble Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Phil 2:8). He is *“before all things,”* and being *“in the form of God”* was already Lord.

Jesus Christ has been exalted over all, and has been given in that capacity to the church. As it is written, *“And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way”*^{NIV} (Eph 1:22-23). These are the people for whom He intercedes (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). They are the ones He leads and protects (John 10:27-29). Grace, mercy, peace, love, and faith come to the church from Jesus (Eph 1:2; 6:23). **There is not the slightest suggestion that**

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these graces are given in sizeable measure to anyone else.

AN UNFORTUNATE EMPHASIS

Today, there is an unfortunate emphasis within the professed church of focusing attention on those outside of the church. Whether it is called “evangelism,” “missions,” “ministries,” or some other term, the people of God are made to feel that the most important work of the church is reaching the outsider. This is such a generally accepted approach that anyone who questions it is viewed as peculiar, or maybe even apostate. Let it be clear, no person of understanding is set to oppose any effort to reach the lost, rescue sinners, or minister to the needy. I am not speaking of the legitimacy of such activities. **However, when the body of Christ is neglected in order to supposedly carry out these missions, we have a serious situation on our hands.**

There has NEVER been a person

influenced by godly Jews – and that is not the question being addressed here. We are speaking of an emphasis.

What About the Lost Sheep

This may appear to contradict the spirit of Christ’s parable concerning the retrieval of the lost sheep. *“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”* (Matt 18:12-13).

This was our Lord’s commentary on seeking and saving *“that which was lost”* (v 11). Note, the sheep that was “lost” was one from the fold – one of the one hundred originally in the fold. The sheep was further brought back to that very fold, as confirmed by Luke’s account of this parable (Lk 15:6). Also, the fold

to preferences, Jesus chose to be with His disciples – the ones who delighted to sit at His feet. Those are the ones He took into the garden, on the mountain, and to observe the Passover. There were even times when He *“withdrew Himself with His disciples,”* in an obvious preference for them (Mark 3:7).

So far as the record is concerned, Jesus never withdrew from a Mary, who sat at His feet, to speak to the uninitiated. Nor, indeed, is He ever depicted as leaving His disciples to minister to the uninformed. Such activities, therefore, cannot be what is intended by His reference to leaving the *“ninety and nine.”*

The Lord Jesus will not withhold the truth from wayward souls like the Samaritan woman (John 4), the Greeks (John 12:21-26), and others. **But He will never do so at the expense of those who have received the love of the truth, and it is wrong to represent Him as condoning such a manner.**

THE REASONING

The current condition of the body of Christ – particularly in America – requires that something be said on these things. All manner of purported evangelistic activity is taking place within the professed church. However, much of this is being done at the expense of feeding the *“lambs”* and *“sheep”* of Christ’s flock (John 22:15-17). Our text will show how such a contradiction is totally unacceptable. The words of our text come from the Apostle to the Gentiles – one who zealously avoided building on *“another man’s foundation”* (Rom 15:20). Yet, the burden of his heart was for the people of God – those who had been reconciled to God. He had great conflict within for the saints of God – particularly those who came from the Gentiles. There is no question about Paul’s focus. All of his writings are alive with it.

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sent from God who neglected the people of God in order to reach those uninitiated in the ways of the Lord. Moses, all of the Prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles did not engage in such neglect, nor did they suggest that others do so. During the Egyptian bondage, no prophets were raised up for the Egyptians to the neglect of Abraham’s seed. During the Babylonian captivity, no prophets were sent to the Chaldean Empire. All of the prophets of that era were sent to Israel. There is no question that many Egyptians and Babylonians were

was not abandoned. Luke reminds us that the parable was given in response to the Pharisees and scribes who had *“murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them”* (Lk 15:2).

Jesus had refused to spend time with the Pharisees and scribes, choosing rather to speak comfortably to sinners who sought to hear Him. **But He did not leave His disciples to do so.** There is no record of Jesus forsaking His disciples in order to speak to the lost. He rather took them with Him. And, when it came

I WANT YOU TO KNOW

^{2:1} **For I would that ye knew . . .** Other versions read, *“I want you to know,”*^{NKJV} *“I would have you know,”*^{ASV}

and *“it is my desire.”*^{BBE}

Paul has spoken extensively about

his participation in the body of Christ.

✚ He is an *“Apostle of Jesus Christ”*

(1:1).

- ✚ He gives thanks for the Colossians, and prays for them (1:3).
- ✚ He has prayed that they will be *“filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (1:9).
- ✚ He prays to the intent they may walk *“worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (1:10).
- ✚ His objective is for them to be *“strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”* (1:11).
- ✚ He rejoices in his sufferings for their sakes, knowing he is filling up *“that which is left behind of the afflictions of Christ”* (1:24).
- ✚ Jesus has given him a ministry for the brethren, to *“fulfill the word of God”* (1:25).
- ✚ According to God’s dispensation, he is making known *“the riches of the glory of the mystery”* of the Gospel among the Gentiles (1:27).
- ✚ He is preaching and warning every man in all wisdom in order that he may *“present every man perfect in Christ Jesus”* (1:28).
- ✚ His arduous efforts were *“according to His working, which worketh in me mightily”* (1:29).

AN ECONOMY OF INVOLVEMENT

The salvation of God is an economy of involvement. To be sure, men are delivered from sin and its power. They are delivered from Satan and the power of darkness, as well as the world and its corruption. **All of that, however, is in order to partake of Christ** (Heb 3:14), **the Divine nature** (2 Pet 1:4), **and the inheritance of the saints in light** (Col 1:12). The grace of God enables us to become participators in both the nature of God and His work.

This involvement is not intended

for selected members of the body of Christ – like Apostles and Prophets. It is for all who are in Christ Jesus. **There is no such thing as an “eternal salvation”** (Heb 5:9) **that does not bring people into involvement and intimacy with God Himself.** The salvation of God is *“not of works”* (Eph 2:9), but neither is it without them. In fact, the very next verse after the proclamation that salvation is *“not of works”* states, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10).

These works are not confined to being good neighbors, helping the needy,

The fundamental weakness of religious systems is that they do not require participation in the Divine nature, and walking in the “good works” God has ordained for us.

and general good behavior. Paul’s life is an example of this. The *“labor”* of which he spoke was of different order. It required the power of God to work within him – doing so *“mightily.”* **Any work that does not require Divine enablement is not inherently “good.”** There is not the slightest suggestion in Scripture that God will ever honor a work in which He Himself cannot be found.

What Paul is now expressing is his desire for the Colossians to participate in the life and work of God. He was seeking for God to work in them *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:12). He is seeking for Christ to live in them, and for their lives to be lived *“by faith in the Son of God”* (Gal 2:20). In keeping with the purpose of God, his aimed was that these people *“should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again”* (2 Cor 5:15). He knew that the purpose for being *“married”* to Christ was in order to *“bring forth fruit unto God”* (Rom 7:4).

A lethargic and uninvolved church is out of synch with the

purpose of God. A congregation that has been diverted to engagements that do not require the mighty power of God is out of the way and stumbling in the dark. Paul’s understanding of this is precisely why he is writing to the Colossians. They were being exposed to a form of powerless religion that rested in routines and disciplines. While they had not yet been diverted into the darkness, a very real danger was present among them.

Paul has presented himself as an example that spiritual discipline and labor is not according to the wisdom of this world. It involves a living fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3), and working together with God (1 Cor

3:9).

The weakness of Religious Systems

There is a certain weakness in religious systems, even though there is an undeniable propensity among men to gravitate to such things. It is handy for the flesh to embalm its religion in a theological creed or system. Such things make men more like lifeless puppets than those who are *“alive unto God.”*

The fundamental weakness of religious systems is that they do not require participation in the Divine nature, and walking in the “good works” God has ordained for us.

That is a polite way of saying God is not in them. If men could be saved by crystallized theology and physical routines, then Israel would have surely been saved. That is exactly what they had – and it was given to them by God. Their conduct was molded by a moral code, and their understanding of God was by precept. They were not born again, did not have the indwelling Spirit, and were not reconciled to God. Yet, they were intensely religious – and that by Divine

compulsion and ordination.

This is precisely the point that Paul makes to the Galatians, who had already been diverted from the Gospel and spiritual life by false teachers. *“For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law”*^{NASB} (Gal 3:21). The Law was never given to promote life, but to point out that men were actually dead toward God, and thus needed a Savior. Yet, if men could actually be saved by routine, surely the God-given routines of the Law would have done so. **You may rest assured, if God’s holy, just, good, and spiritual Law could not bring life toward Him, the laws and disciplines of men will be totally impotent to do so!**

PAUL’S DESIRE FOR THE

COLOSSIANS

There is a certain *“fellowship”* among those who are in Christ Jesus that cannot be realized outside of Him. Paul’s fellowship with the brethren included profound and godly desires for them. He was not content for them to merely master moral behavior, enjoy domestic tranquility, and be generally beneficial to society. **Salvation is larger than these things, although it effectively impacts upon them all.**

Now, because of Paul’s closeness to and fellowship with the Lord, he divulges his profound desires for the Colossians. Even as Jesus Himself did, Paul tells the brethren what he wanted for them. It is not a secret desire, but an open and public one.

It is tragic that many of the

saints of God are rarely exposed to anyone who has strong and godly desires for them. Further, it is not at all common for believers to be told what is expected of them, and what is being prayed and sought for them. Many religious leaders do not carry a burden for the people over whom they preside – at least they do not reveal such a burden.

Let it be clear, that we are being exposed to the manner of the kingdom – the way godly leaders view those in their care. This is not an exception to the rule, but is the rule itself. Where such a frame of mind is not found, leadership, to say the least, is grossly deficient. **Spiritual advancement will generally take place in a spiritually public arena, with godly desires being articulated – where the focus of prayers are shared.**

A GREAT CONFLICT

^{1b} *“... what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh...”*

WHAT GREAT CONFLICT!

“... what great conflict I have...” Other versions read, *“how great a struggle I have,”*^{NASB} *“how much I am*

generally measured by institutional and numerical success. Perhaps the church grew from fifty to one thousand, or the meeting facility is unusually impressive, or the congregation has been a major contributor to the social needs of the community. Such things may be very impressive to men, but they are never cited as being commendable in Scripture. Whatever a person may choose to think of this kind of success, no minister or congregation was ever commended for such things. There is not a single church in Scripture that is lauded for its young people’s ministry, divorce recovery, counseling services, or assistance of the poor in their community. No man of God was ever commended for bringing a numerically small congregation to one with large and impressive numbers. This simply is not the way the Spirit commended kingdom laborers.

This may very well be viewed as an unnecessary observation, and wholly without merit. However, when one considers that such things are almost the sole contemporary means of measuring the success of a preacher or teacher, it is necessary to underscore the total wrongness of such evaluations.

IN	BY	BY
Much Patience	Pureness	Honor and Dishonor
Afflictions	Knowledge	Evil and Good Report
Necessities	Longsuffering	Deceivers yet True
Distresses	Kindness	Unknown yet Well Known
Stripes	The Holy Spirit	Dying, yet living
Imprisonments	Love Unfeigned	Chastened and not Killed
Tumults	Word of Truth	Sorrowful Yet Rejoicing
Labors	Power of God	Poor, yet Making Rich
Watchings	Armor of Righteousness	Having Nothing, Yet having All
Fastings		
MEASURING EFFECTIVE MINISTERS		

Here we are exposed to the heart of the Apostle. He did not view his labors for the Lord as a mere profession or occupation. A professional doctor or lawyer can fulfill most of the demands of their occupation without having a real care for and interest in those to whom they sell their services. A good mechanic can fix your car without having any particular concern for you personally. This, however, is not the manner of the kingdom.

struggling,”^{NIV} *“how greatly I strive,”*^{RSV} *“the great fight I am making,”*^{BBE} *“what combat I have,”*^{DARBY} *“what manner of care I have,”*^{DOUAY} and *“how much I have agonized.”*^{NLT}

In the arena of professional religion, men have a primary concern for their careers, salaries, etc., and choices are made on the basis of such considerations. When evaluations are made of religious professionals, it is

Paul is revealing how commendably he has carried out his Apostleship. He makes no reference to numbers and organizational success – and he is the premier laborer for Jesus among men, having “*labored more abundantly than they all*” (1 C or 15:10).

At one point, the Apostle spoke of the manner in which he was approved as a minister of God. He refers to these points as a standard for those who are in “*the ministry*.”

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Cor 6:4-10).

The “*great conflict*” to which Paul now refers falls into several of the categories mentioned in the Second Corinthians text: afflictions, labors, watchings, longsuffering, kindness, love unfeigned, honor, true, and making many rich. This is significantly different from a purely professional association with the people of God. **Paul had a genuine interest in the people, thereby reflecting the life of Jesus Himself.**

An interest was expressed to the Galatians that reflects the nature of Paul’s expression, “*what great conflict I have*.” The Galatians had been even more distracted than the Colossians, and thus the expression is very strong. “*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*” (Gal 4:19).

The “*conflict*” or struggle Paul was experiencing includes the idea of travail – giving birth to spiritual life in others. It also is associated with the experience of opposing influences – like

Satan making every effort to keep Paul from delivering edification to the Colossians, for which he had been empowered (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10).

Here Paul was, in Rome, having conflict for the brethren in Colossae.

An Application

There is a sense in which all believers partake in this conflict for all saints of God. An interest in the welfare and continuance of all saints everywhere is woven into the fabric of spiritual life. When delineating “*the whole armor of God*,” the Spirit makes particular mention of this matter. The final word concerning this indispensable armor is this: “*Praying*

caused him to become involved in the daily details of the lives of the brethren. Although this kind of interest is often promoted in religious bodies, this is not the manner in which the Lord brings His people along. That approach is more psychological than spiritual, and does not produce a godly walk of life. Those who insist on men and women of God becoming involved in the minutia of the brethren’s life are not doing well.

While believers do have a closeness to one another, it is based upon their love of the truth and their quest for glory. Early in the history of the church, when brethren met “*daily*,” from “*house to house*,” and were of “*one accord*” (Acts

This is one of the great functions of the assemblies of the brethren. When saints of God come together in one place, and at one time, there are precious resources ministered to them. Jesus is especially among those who meet in His name.

always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph 6:18). This is the kind of conflict Paul to which Paul is testifying. It is something that is impossible to avoid if we walk in the light.

FOR YOU AND THEM AT LAODICEA

“ . . . for you, and for them at Laodicea . . . ”

When the incarcerated Apostle heard of the things to which the Colossians were being subjected, it caused a great turmoil within. This was not the agitation of unbelief of carnal concern, but of godly travail and interest. It was the expression of a good steward, who is not only faithful to deliver the message, but is profoundly concerned about it bearing fruit in the hearers.

Paul did not stand aloof from the people, but came along by their side to assist them in their pilgrimage to glory. This was not the kind of interest that

2:46), it was not to discuss the domestic and social issues of life. However critical those areas may be, the context in which spiritual growth and stability occur is that of “*the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

This is one of the great functions of the assemblies of the brethren. When saints of God come together in one place, and at one time, there are precious resources ministered to them. Jesus is especially among those who meet in His name. As He Himself said, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Mat 18:20). Following His resurrection, Jesus joined His disciples when they were “*assembled*” (John 20:19,26). Remembering this, the admonition to “*forsake not the assembling of yourselves together*” (Heb 10:25) takes on a fresh meaning.

Even in this Epistle, Paul enjoins the brethren to read this among

themselves, and also “in the church of the Laodiceans” (4:16). Also, he admonished them to “read the letter from Laodicea” – that is, the letter that he wrote to the Laodiceans, and which they were bringing to the Colossians.

Paul’s concern for them would become evident as they read his letters. **Also, the assembly of the brethren would provide a most excellent context in which the optimum benefit could be realized from his expressions.**

AS MANY AS HAVE NOT SEEN MY FACE

“ . . . and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh . . . ” Other versions read, “those who have not personally seen my face,”^{NASB} and “all who have not met me personally.”^{NIV}

There is a special blessing to be realized by seeing the brethren “face to face.” When Paul left the Ephesians to go to other areas, he told them they would see his face “no more.” This brought great sorrow to those brethren. As it is written, “Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, **that they should see his face no more**” (Acts 20:38). When Paul was taken from the Thessalonians, he wrote that he “endeavored the more abundantly to **see your face with great desire**” (1 Thess 2:17). He even stated that he prayed “night and day exceedingly” that he might “see” their “face” (1 Thess 3:10).

When writing to the saints in Rome, Paul also addressed people who had, for the most part, never seen him. He longed to personally be with them. “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto

you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established” (Rom 1:11).

John wrote to the “elect lady” that he had “many things to write” to her. However, he trusted that he would be able to speak to her “face to face, that our joy may be full” (2 John 1:12). John said much the same thing to Gaius: “But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face” (3 John 1:14).

Longing to see brethren personally is a kingdom quality – something that is a part of the new heart and spirit received in Christ Jesus. Having strong desires for the betterment of the saints is involved in all genuine spiritual labors. **Where these two qualities are missing – desiring to see the brethren, and fervently seeking their betterment – serious deficiency exists.**

COMFORTED HEARTS

“^{2a} . . . that their hearts might be comforted . . . ”

Here is Paul’s expression of the great conflict he was enduring for the saints in Colossae and Laodicea. This is what he desired for them, and what he fervently sought to obtain for them. His desires were honed to a fine edge in the crucible of conflict and warfare.

THEIR HEARTS

“ . . . that their hearts . . . ”

The “heart” is the most critical

to the total man what the human “heart” is to the flesh and blood body. To my knowledge, the Word of God rarely speaks of the heart that is resident in our body. Of the 830 times “heart” is used by the Holy Spirit, very few of them apply to man’s physical constitution (exceptions include 2 Sam 18:14). This is a rather elementary observation, but is necessary to affirm in order that a sound perspective of our salvation can be maintained.

The Centrality of the Heart

Notice the way the Spirit speaks of the heart.

were only evil continually” (Gen 6:5).

- ✚ Following the flood, the fallen race was described as one in which “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21).
- ✚ When Abraham entertained an unspoken thought, it was said to be in his “heart” (Gen 17:17).
- ✚ Words that were spoken honestly were said to have been said with “the integrity of my heart” (Gen 20:5).
- ✚ When Pharaoh became obstinate and would not yield to God’s command, it was described as the hardening of his heart (Ex 7:3; 8:15).
- ✚ The ability of people to love God is traced back to the circumcision of their heart, which enabled them to love God with their whole heart (Deut 30:6).
- ✚ The determination of David to build a house for God is said to have been in his heart (1 Kgs 8:17).
- ✚ God is said to try, or test, the heart (1

As used by the Holy Spirit, “the heart” applies to the central part of man’s spiritual constitution. It is to the total man what the human “heart” is to the flesh and blood body.

part of our being. As used by the Holy Spirit, “the heart” applies to the central part of man’s spiritual constitution. It is

✚ Prior to the flood, the degeneracy of the human race was described as one in which “the thoughts of the heart

Chron 29:17).

- ✦ The prophecy of regeneration was described as God giving people a “*new heart*” (Ezek 36:26).
- ✦ When Lydia was enabled to respond favorably to the word of the Lord, it was described as the result of the Lord opening her heart (Acts 16:14).
- ✦ The blinding of men to the glory of God is described as “*their foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom 1:21).
- ✦ The perception of God’s great love is said to be the result of the Holy Spirit pouring out God’s love into our hearts (Rom 5:5).
- ✦ Obedience that is wholly sincere is described as being “*from the heart*” (Rom 6:17).
- ✦ Believing is done “*with the heart*” (Rom 10:10).
- ✦ Regeneration is described as God shining “*in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6).
- ✦ The heart is mentioned with the mind, but is always given priority over it (1 Chron 28:9; Matt 22:37; Phil 4:7; Heb 10:16).

The “*heart*” is at the core of our being. This is the engine of our person, and determines what we really are. When it comes to sin, “*out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*” (Matt 15:19). When it comes to words, “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matt 12:34). When it comes to thoughts, “*as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Prov 23:7).

The Nature of Regeneration

When a person is born again, the fundamental person is changed. This is depicted by certain words and phrases portraying the newness found in Christ Jesus.

- ✦ “*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and*

I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek 36:26).

- ✦ “*And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh*” (Ezek 11:19).
- ✦ “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Col 3:10).
- ✦ “*. . . according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit*”

are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

In all of these expressions, the “*heart*” is pivotal. **Regeneration changes man’s essential nature!** It is not a mere external procedure, as the various washing and ceremonies found in the First Covenant (Heb 9:10).

Why Say These Things?

It is necessary to draw our attention to these fundamental considerations because of the doctrinal distortion that exists in our time. The present day demands being placed upon

The thrust of Apostolic doctrine is addressed to the “new man,” also referred to as the “inner man,” or “inward man.” God has no word for “the flesh,” other than “keep silence”

(Titus 3:5).

- ✦ “*I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts*” (Heb 8:10).
- ✦ “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom 6:4).
- ✦ “*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom 6:11).
- ✦ “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*” (Rom 8:2).
- ✦ “*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30).
- ✦ “*And such were some of you: but ye*

preachers and teachers are actually at variance with the entire tenure of the Gospel and its exposition. As is characteristic of an apostasy, men are, “*after their own lusts,*” heaping “*to themselves teachers, having itching ears*” (2 Tim 4:3). That is, their preferences are at variance with those of God, and thus they demand preachers and teachers that God has **not** placed in the church. Because they have departed from God’s agenda, they have variant requirements.

The thrust of Apostolic doctrine is addressed to the “new man” (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), **also referred to as the “inner man”** (Eph 3:16), or “**inward man**” (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 4:16). God has no word for “*the flesh,*” other than “*keep silence*” (Habakkuk 2:20). The “*flesh,*” or unregenerate part of man, is to be “*crucified,*” not cultured (Gal 5:24). Its desires are to be subordinated, not given the ascendancy. The **ONLY** life that God accepts is “*newness of life*” (Rom 6:4). **Even the legitimate activities of temporal life are to be lived out in**

the name of Jesus and for the glory of God (Col 3:17; 1 Cor 10:31). This is elementary, yet has escaped the attention of many professed believers.

One of the great secrets to powerful preaching is addressing it to the proper part of man. For the saints, this means speaking to the part of them that is in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17), seated in heavenly places (Eph 2:6), in fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9), and reconciled to God (Col 1:21).

Now Paul tells the Colossians he is

Other versions read "encouraged."^{NASB/NIV}

The word "comfort" is a key one in the Divine vocabulary. It comes from a word meaning "to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort."^{STRONG'S} It also means to relieve sorrow or distress, to cheer up. The picture is one of the believer being pressed down, strength depleting, and falling into disheartenment. In the case of the Colossians, their subjection to flawed teaching was creating this condition. This is one of the aspects of false doctrine that makes it so serious. It actually throws people upon the flesh, in which there is

thing producing a need for comfort or encouragement. Persecution can also have this effect upon the soul. Paul expressed this experience in these words, "we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor 1:8).

Thus the apostle has had a "great conflict" for the hearts of all those who had not seen his face. **He wanted them to be encouraged, strengthened in the inner man, and made equal to the challenges they were facing.**

It is essential that the saints be continually encouraged. We cannot fight the good fight of faith while in a discouraged state. **Therefore, those who are sources of discouragement do great harm to the body of Christ.**

When a person is "comforted" faith and hope sit upon the throne of the heart. The work of God does not seem too great, and the enemies of the people of God do not appear formidable. Confidence and assurance are summoned to the foreground, and boldness enters with joy. **Every spiritual advantage is found when the heart is comforted.** Then, the commandments are not grievous, and afflictions experienced because of faith seem brief and light. Heaven comes closer, and God is seen as a "very present help in the time of trouble" (Psa 46:1). Comfort is a most marvelous and needful provision!

It is essential that the saints be continually encouraged. We cannot fight the good fight of faith while in a discouraged state. Therefore, those who are sources of discouragement do great harm to the body of Christ.

writing with a primary consideration for their heart. He has the "hearts" of the brethren in mind – who they really are in Christ Jesus.

COMFORTED

"... might be comforted . . ."

"no good thing" (Rom 7:18). It deprives the "new man" of needed nourishment, giving the ascendancy to the flesh. As a result, spiritual weakness begins to make inroads.

False teaching is not the only

KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE

^{2b} "... being knit together in love . . ."

A Divinely appointed means whereby the saints will be "comforted" is now expounded. While comfort does come from the Lord to individual believers, that is not the particular focus of this text. **This is addressed to the whole church, and the benefits that will be accented are those which are realized within the context of brotherly fellowship.**

KNIT TOGETHER

"... being knit together . . ."

Other versions read, "having been knit together,"^{NASB} "united in,"^{NIV} "being joined together,"^{BBE} "brought together,"^{AB} and "bind them together."^{NJB}

The expression "knit together" is most accurate from both the etymological and doctrinal points of view. The word "knit" means, "to drive together, unite in association or affection, to compact."^{STRONG'S} Other meanings are "to cause coalesce, to join together, put together."^{THAYER}

This is togetherness like that of a cloth that is made up of interwoven threads, or blocks that are cemented

together so they adhere to one another. It involves both thought and affection, together with preferences and objectives. This is the kind of unity that is depicted by the words "one body in Christ" (Rom 12:5), and "we being many are one bread" (1 Cor 10:17). It is also seen in the very challenging expression, "and every one members one of another" (Rom 12:5).

The practical outworking of this knitting is stated in First Corinthians. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and

members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27).

A Particular Kind of Unity

This is more than institutional camaraderie. It is not the result of adopting the same creed, or even understanding the Word of God the same way. While it is true that faith brings unanimity in the understanding of Scripture, and a oneness in the Object of our faith, that is not the oneness that is intended in this text.

The book of Ephesians, which bears many similarities to Colossians, expresses this thought most precisely. *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”* (Eph 4:16).

Growing Up Into Christ

In order for the real work of the Lord to be done within the church, every member must grow up into Christ. That is the objective being served by the various gifts Jesus has placed within the church (Eph 4:8-15). If the individual members of the body are immature and dwelling at a practical distance from the Lord, the will of the Lord will **not** be done among them. **A church program, therefore, that does not target the personal growth of every member into Christ Jesus is actually contributing to the exclusion of that church from participation in the working of the Lord.**

Compacted

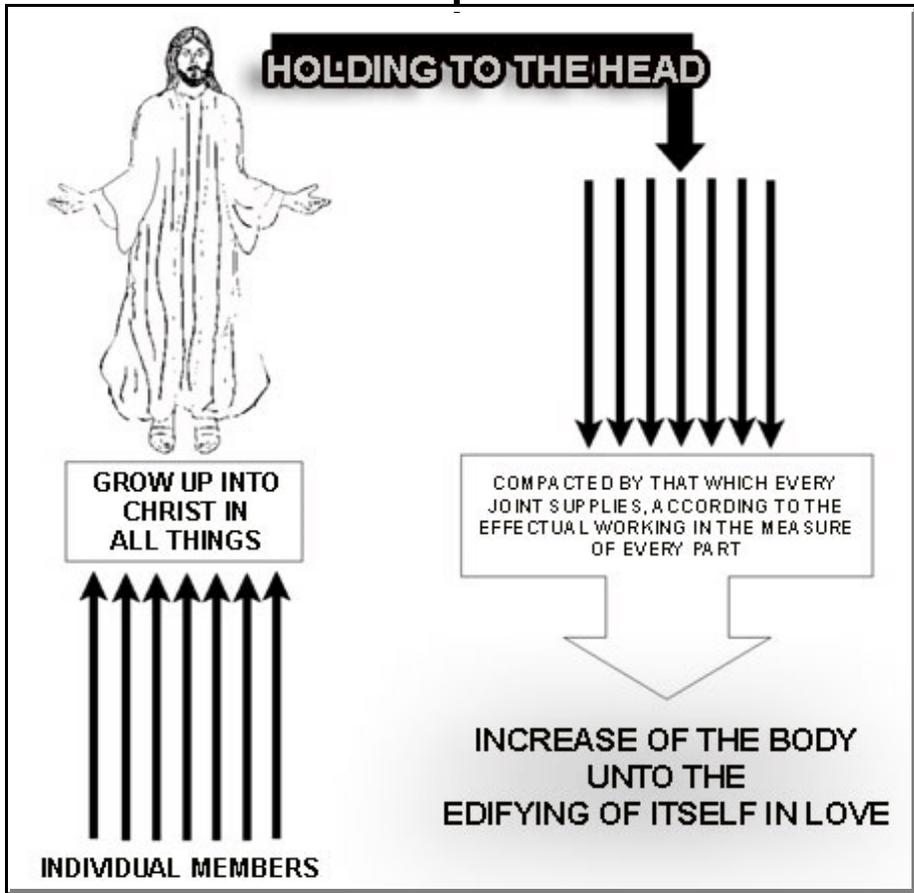
The word *“compacted”* speaks of the solidity of the body – as a building whose stones are held together by strong mortar or cement. Elsewhere it is called *“the unity of the faith”* (Eph 4:13), or *“perfectly joined together”* (1 Cor 1:10). The church is *“the body of Christ,”* which implies the productive unity of diverse members. Like any other house, a church *“divided against itself”* will fall (Mark 3:25).

In order for the church to function, the Lord Jesus must work

within it. If this does not happen, there is no purpose for a congregation. It is not honored in heaven, and is useless upon the earth. Such an assembly might have a name that it is alive, but it is not, for **where Jesus does not work, spiritual life does not exist** (Rev 3:1).

The question is, How does Jesus work within the church? What is the manner of the Kingdom? The next clause spells it out for us.

in Christ, He ministers through them to the other members of His body. In this way nourishment is *“ministered”* by Jesus to His people (Col 2:19). With this in mind, statements concerning *“spiritual gifts”* can be seen with greater clarity. *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each*



Every Joint Supplies

First, every member must be holding to the Head (Col 2:19); that is, be in vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus. This fellowship is initiated by God Himself when we are brought into Christ. He calls us into this fellowship (1 Cor 1:9), and it is the business of each believer to develop that fellowship by living by faith, walking in the Spirit, and walking in the light.

As the individual members abide

one for the profit of all” (1 Cor 12:5-7).

The Effectual Working

The effective working takes place in *“the proper working of each individual part”* ^{NASB} (Eph 4:16). The *“proper working”* is according to the *“measure”* of faith that has been given to each member (Rom 12:3) – a measure that is designed to assist the whole body to reach spiritual maturity.

Increasing the Body

As seemingly sacred as the

concept may appear, the purpose of God for the church is not its numerical growth. The Lord is not effected by numbers as men are. When He chose a nation for Himself, for example, it was “*the fewest of all people*” (Deut 7:7). His people are often referred to as a “*remnant*” (Isa 11:11; 37:32; Jer 31:7; Joel 2:32; Zeph 3:13; Zech 8:12; Rom 9:27; 11:5; Rev 12:17).

It is true that in the end, a great host will be among the saved – a great multitude which no man can number (Rev 7:9). However, the number itself is not the point, but the transformation and maturity of them before the Lord of hosts, and the heavenly hosts themselves.

The “*increase of the body*” is

The Edifying of Itself

The Spirit is even more specific, not leaving this matter to be settled by the surmisings of men. The increase that Jesus accomplishes through the individual members is “*the edifying of itself in love.*” That is, the church is built up by the effective ministry of each individual member – as the Lord Jesus works through them.

The revealed function of the instructive gifts to the church is this: “*for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*”^{NKJV} (Eph 4:12). This is the stated objective for “*Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*” (Eph 4:11). The “*work of the ministry*” does not belong to a “*church staff,*” but to the

IN LOVE

“*... in love ...*” Edification is not accomplished by an empty routine, like the ceremonies under the Levitical order. It comes through individuals in whose hearts the love of God has been “*shed abroad*” by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Building up in the most holy faith is aided by those who have received “*the love of the truth,*” and have a fervent love for the brethren (2 Thess 2:10; 1 Pet 4:8). **These are people who have been effectively taught by God to love one another** (1 Thess 4:9).

“*Love*” – love that is the fruit of the Spirit – is **the environment in which spiritual life is nurtured and matured.** This love has a wide scope, including God (1 Cor 8:3), Christ (Eph 6:24), the truth (2 Thess 2:10), and the brethren (1 John 3:14). This is a love that is “*unfeigned*” (1 Pet 1:22), “*fervent,*” and “*with a pure heart*” (1 Pet 4:8). It is brought to us by the grace of God, and is coupled with faith. As it is written, “*Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph 6:23). And again, “*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 1:14). Where such an environment exists, members have been growing up into Christ, and Christ Himself is ministering through them to His body, “*which is the church*” (1:24).

When we speak of the church edifying itself in love, we are not speaking of a law, but of a purpose – a Divine objective. The salvation of God is calculated to produce this kind of result – **a church edifying itself in love.** The gifts Christ has given to the church are for this purpose.

Holy men and women labor for this intent, and their prayers are that it will be accomplished with power.

It is true that in the end, a great host will be among the saved – a great multitude which no man can number. However, the number itself is not the point, but the transformation and maturity of them before the Lord of hosts, and the heavenly hosts themselves.

nothing less than the preparation of the people for presentation in the sight of God – a presentation that will find them “*holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight*” (Col 1:22). This is the presentation of “*every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*” **No church that is lacking in this respect has experienced true “*increase,*” regardless of the number on the church roll.** What is more, this “*increase*” cannot take place unless it is ministered by Jesus to the members. Furthermore, that ministration will not take place unless the individuals have grown up into Christ – a work for which all valid ministries are designed.

individual members of the body. **The church is not to hire people to do “*the work of the ministry,*” but is itself to become a working body of living members.**

I know of relatively few assemblies capable of edifying themselves – where individual members, holding to the Head, minister nourishment to the body of Christ. **This condition contradicts the revealed purpose of God, and is indicative of a great falling away** that is maintaining a form of godliness, yet refuses the power that is extended to the church through the glorified Christ. This is a most serious situation.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF RICHES

“^{2c} ... and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding ...”

The nature of spiritual life is seen in these expressions. **The particular thing to be noted here is the**

progression from glory unto glory – moving from one stage of glory to another. This is how the Spirit is

conforming us to the image of God's Son, which is God's predetermined purpose (Rom 8:29). Notice the progression that has been affirmed thus far.

Paul's Prayer

Filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding **IN ORDER THAT** we might walk worthy of the Lord *"unto all pleasing"* (1:9-10a). Walking worthy of the Lord **IN ORDER THAT** we might be *"fruitful in every good work,"* and increase *"in the knowledge of God"* (1:10b). Increasing in the knowledge of God **IN ORDER THAT** we might be *"strengthened with all might according to His glorious power"* (1:11a). Strengthened with all might **IN ORDER THAT** we might have *"all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"* (1:11b).

Christ's Glorious Accomplishments

God reconciled us to Himself through Christ **IN ORDER THAT** we might be presented *"holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight"* (1:20-22).

Paul's Preaching

Paul preached, *"warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom,"* **IN ORDER THAT** every man might be presented *"perfect in Christ"* (1:28).

Paul's Great Conflict

The passage presently being expounded is also an expression of Paul's intention to provoke a change from glory unto glory. He fervently desires that the hearts of the brethren be *"knit together in love"* **IN ORDER THAT** *"all riches of the full assurance of understanding"* might be experienced. The *"full assurance of understanding"* is **IN ORDER THAT** *"the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ"* might be realized.

This, then, is the mode of the Kingdom. It is how the Lord works, and what salvation is designed to do. **Let it be clear that there is no such thing as a salvation that does not do this.**

ALL RICHES

" . . . and unto all riches . . . "
Other versions read, *"all the wealth,"*^{NASB}
"full riches,"^{NIV} *"the full wealth,"*^{BBE} and

"all the richness."^{NAB}

Here is the appointed outcome of *"comfort"* and being *"knit together in love."* *"all riches of the full assurance of understanding."*

There is a plentitude in salvation that is scarcely known in the American church. Because much of the spread of the Gospel has come from America, there is a certain spiritual poverty that also characterizes Christianity throughout the world. This spiritual deprivation is of such magnitude that an honest and hungry soul is thought to be a mature one. This, however, is not necessarily true. A hunger and thirst for righteousness is not the

knowledge" (Lk 11:52). Like the scribes and Pharisees, they have *"shut off the kingdom of heaven from men"*^{NASB} (Matt 23:13).

"ALL Riches"

The economy of redemption is NOT one in which mere samples are acceptable. If God provides an abundance, it is expected that an abundance is to be desired and appropriated. **Nothing about salvation suggests that the benefits of Christ can be realized in small and paltry measures.** There is not a syllable of revelation that leaves the impression believers can survive the assaults of the devil and be well pleasing to God while choosing to neglect the

The tendency to settle for introductory knowledge and remain in spiritual infancy has not come from God. As Paul would say, "This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you"

indication of spiritual maturity, but is rather the means, or path, to that maturity. Desiring *"all riches"* that are found in Christ Jesus is not the same as possessing them. It is, however, the necessary prelude to receiving them.

The appropriation of the rich provisions of salvation is conditioned upon two things. First, there must be awareness that they exist. Second, there must be a desire for them. The awareness of these provisions comes through exposure to the Gospel of Christ. The desire to appropriate them is stimulated by faith, or the belief of the record God has given of His Son.

Wherever the Gospel is not preached, a poverty of understanding exists concerning the richness of salvation. The consequence of that poverty is that a desire for what Christ has provided cannot be spawned within the heart. Those, therefore, who do not preach the Gospel, opening it to the hearts of the people, have actually, like the lawyers of old, *"taken away the key of*

richness of redemption.

The tendency to settle for introductory knowledge and remain in spiritual infancy has not come from God. As Paul would say, *"This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you"* (Gal 5:8). This is a way of thinking that has been prompted by the devil himself. It is designed to keep people out of heaven. Furthermore, unless it is overcome, it will do precisely that!

This is the very point the Spirit is developing when He challenges the thinking of lethargic souls. ***"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"***^{NKJV} (Heb 2:3-4). **What soul is foolish enough to imagine that God would honor a person who despised the greatness of His salvation, or ignored His Son?**

Note, our text does not say “*some riches*,” but “*ALL riches*.” **Men are expected to obtain ALL that has been provided for them.** They may not offer the miserable excuse that they are not able to obtain them, for the salvation of God equips them to receive them, and puts them within their reach. That is why we are given new hearts and spirits, and the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (Ezek 36:26; 2 Tim 1:7).

Our text will now focus upon one aspect of these “*all riches*.” As ordinarily perceived, what is now mentioned is not considered riches – but that is only because “*the natural man receiveth not*

is a lesser measure than “*FULL assurance*.”

Certainty

“*Full assurance*” speaks of certainty, certitude, confidence, conviction, and sureness. The words “*full assurance*” come from a single Greek word: *πληροφορίας* (play-rof-or-ias). It means “full assurance, complete certainty, and full confidence.” Contrasting words are suspicion, uncertainty, disbelief, unsureness, and doubt.

There is a level of “*spiritual understanding*” that dashes doubt to the ground. Believers do not have to live in a

answers. They will spend more time “wondering why” than rejoicing in the truth. Of course, there is an approach to religion that attempts to sanctify mystery, considering that a thing that is not known will somehow bring great blessing to the soul. This is, however, a delusion, and there is no truth in it.

FULL ASSURANCE

Assurance is associated with three things. Each of them comes from God. Each is remarkably affective as well. An exposure to these expressions will confirm the nature of assurance, and how precious it is to the tender of heart.

“Full Assurance of Faith”

“*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Heb 10:22). Here, drawing close to God requires the assurance that is produced by faith. This is being assured of Divine acceptance because we have believed the report (1 John 5:10-11), hearts have been cleansed from a defiled and condemning conscience (Heb 9:14), and we have obeyed from the heart the form of the doctrine, being baptized into Christ (Rom 6:17).

It is not that it is unlawful to attempt to come close to God without the full assurance of faith. Rather, it is that it is hardly possible. A condemning conscience will drive us from God, not bring us to Him. However, when faith “*groweth exceedingly*” (2 Thess 1:3), it constrains us to draw near to God with great confidence and expectation.

“Full Assurance of Hope”

“*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end*” (Heb 6:11). The hope that saves us (Rom 8:24-25) also brings great assurance to us. Hope clarifies the future – our eternal destiny. It move us to proceed through life with joyous expectation and the anticipation of dwelling forever in the courts of the Lord. The stronger the hope, the fuller the assurance.

“Full Assurance of Understanding”

“*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance*

A religion that majors on appearance necessarily deprives the people of “full assurance.” The same may be said of a religion of law, procedures, and routines. The more a person is locked into ceremony and tradition the more prominent ignorance becomes. Certainty will not be found in such environments.

the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14).

FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING

“ . . . of the full assurance of understanding . . . ” Other versions read, “*complete understanding*,” ^{NIV} “*assured understanding*,” ^{NRSV} “*certain knowledge*,” ^{BBE} “*fulness of understanding*,” ^{DOUAY} and “*fully assured understanding*.” ^{NAB}

How will those who speak of a “simple Gospel” and making things easy enough for a child to understand respond to a text like this? Our text does not refer to the “full assurance of feeling,” or “the full assurance of miraculous experience,” but to “*the full assurance of understanding!*” It does not speak of “some assurance,” but of “*full assurance*.”

It is possible to receive the Gospel “*in much assurance*,” as confirmed in the Thessalonian brethren: “*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance*” (1 Thess 1:5) – which

state of uncertainty, wondering whether they are accepted by God or not, or whether or not their names are written in heaven. **While such poor souls are found in abundance in the professed church, it is not because of any inadequacy in the salvation of God!** There is nothing about the Gospel that promotes or condones such unacceptable attitudes!

A religion that majors on appearance necessarily deprives the people of “full assurance.” The same may be said of a religion of law, procedures, and routines. The more a person is locked into ceremony and tradition the more prominent ignorance becomes. Certainty will not be found in such environments.

Those who are deceived into thinking a mere sampling of spiritual benefits is sufficient will find that surface views make for confusion rather than assurance. Those who linger on the surface of truth, like a spider walking upon water, will inevitably have more questions that

of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col 2:2). Our text speaks of an assurance that proceeds from understanding – *"spiritual understanding."* **This assurance has to do with our perception of God and Christ, and is most marvelous.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

If we are to be effective in our lives, pleasing the Lord and becoming ready to stand before Him, **we must be delivered from a religion of opinion.** Personal views of a matter may obtain some value in this world, but they have

none in matters pertaining to life and godliness. **The best of this world's wisdom is vain in the arena of redemption. God's ways are inaccessible to the natural mind.**

The *"full assurance of understanding"* has nothing whatsoever to do with human opinion or mere fleshly persuasion. It is not the result of accepting statistical surveys, the views of scholars, or archeological finds. It does not come by means of logical presentations and impressive philosophies. It cannot be birthed by a theological creed or an impressive

religious movement.

The kind of "full assurance" we are speaking of can only come from a spiritual understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That understanding brings a certitude to the believer that enables him to walk confidently in *"this present evil world."* It moves the child of God away from a doubting and halting religion in which fear and uncertainty produce a flood of questions for which no answer seems available. It will move the child of God beyond the boundary of unbelief, which is a most blessed and satisfying experience.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MYSTERY

"2d . . . to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ . . ."

It will become very apparent that this language has a strange sound to the mind schooled in contemporary Christianity. There is no place for this kind of expression in the mega-church movement. The modern praise and worship trend does not speak like this. Religious education does not generally speak in this manner. The sentence simply does not blend well with the ordinary concepts of God, Christ, salvation, godly living, and the church.

That condition exists because of the off-centeredness of modern Christianity. **When expressions employed by the Holy Spirit become strange to the ear, the individual has wandered into forbidden and dangerous territory.** It is not possible to understate the seriousness of this circumstance.

One of the aspects of the New Covenant is that of **the language employed by its constituents.** Through the prophets God promised a time when a pure language would be given to the people. *"For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent"* (Zeph 3:9). This language would impact upon

both prayer to God and serving Him. That promise is fulfilled in the Gospel of Christ, and its exposition, as made known in *"the Apostles doctrine"* (Acts 2:42). **When Apostolic expressions become confusing to us, or do not blend with the ideas we have concerning the Kingdom of God, we have fallen upon hard times.**

Even though the following expression may sound strange at the first, the tender and sensitive heart will eventually be able to make sense of it.

means, "precise and correct knowledge, absolute" or "recognition." STRONG'S/THAYER The English meaning of the word *"acknowledgment"* is "recognition." The idea is that the thing that is acknowledged is seen to be the truth. Its reality is recognized. This is NOT knowledge as in book learning, memorizing mathematical tables, being familiar with history, and the likes. It is a higher form of knowledge.

The word from which *"acknowledgment"* is translated is ἐπίγνωσις (epi-gno-sin), and is used

When Apostolic expressions become confusing to us, or do not blend with the ideas we have concerning the Kingdom of God, we have fallen upon hard times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

"...to the acknowledgment of . . ."

Other versions read, *"to the knowledge of,"* NKJV *"resulting in a true knowledge of,"* NASB *"in order that they may know,"* NIV *"and have the knowledge of,"* NRSV *"the certain knowledge of,"* BBE *"the full knowledge,"* DARBY and *"have complete understanding."* NIV

The word *"acknowledgment"*

several times in Scripture.

✚ *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"* (Rom 3:20).

✚ *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"* (Eph 1:17).

- ✚ “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of **the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).
- ✚ “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in **the knowledge of God**” (Col 1:10).
- ✚ “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).
- ✚ “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto **the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Tim 2:4).
- ✚ “Paul, a servant of God, and an

the Father, and of Christ . . .” Other versions read, “*the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,*” ^{NKJV} “*of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,*” ^{NASB} “*the mystery of God, namely, Christ,*” ^{NIV} “*the secret of God, even Christ,*” ^{BBE} and “*God’s secret plan, which is Christ Himself.*” ^{NLT}

As you can see, the various translations introduce a somewhat confusing picture. Two completely different meanings are introduced. First, the mystery consists of both the Father and Christ: “*of the Father, and of Christ.*” ^{KJV/NKJV/DOUAY/YLT} Secondly, the mystery is represented as Christ Jesus Himself: “*that is, Christ Himself,*” ^{NASB/NLT} or “*even Christ*” ^{NIV} As Adam Clarke points out, there are numerous translations and

The acknowledgment of that mystery comes when God Himself is known, perceived, or recognized. What is revealed in this “*mystery*” cannot be seen in nature. It is true that the creation bears witness to the God’s “*eternal power and Godhead,*” or Divinity (Rom 1:20). The heavens do, indeed, “*declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night uttereth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard*” (Psa 19:1-3). It is a marvelous witness, indeed.

However, in all of creation there is not so much as a syllable, or even the faintest whisper, of the things revealed in the Gospel. Even the things to which nature testifies were not grasped by humanity. The only understanding of God that has ever been appropriated has been the result of God revealing Himself to certain men. No one wrote of God until God spoke to them! Not a single soul had, in any sense, a proper view of God until He spoke to them. Those are the unvarnished facts in the case.

The Role of the Gospel

Now, in “*the mystery of the Gospel,*” (Eph 6:19), what was formerly hidden is made known. The “*mystery of God*” is “*acknowledged,*” or recognized. God is seen as He really His, and His purpose is opened to the understanding. This is all accomplished through His Anointed One, “*Christ.*” It has pleased God that all of His fulness should dwell in Christ – not some of it, but all of it (Col 1:19). That is, apart from Christ, God cannot be known. Outside of Christ, who God is and what He is doing are hidden, thus remaining a mystery. Only Jesus can make God known. As He Himself declared, “*All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*” ^{NKJV} (Mat 11:27). Jesus also affirmed that He wills to reveal the Father to all who come to Him (Matt 11:28).

The exclusive message that acquaints us with Christ is the Gospel, and Christ alone can acquaint us with God. Because the fulness of God dwells in Christ, the full

As used in our text, “acknowledgment” means that the truth of Divine utterance has been recognized, or perceived. It is the reaction of the believing heart to Kingdom realities, as declared in the Gospel of Christ.

apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and **the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness**” (Titus 1:1).

- ✚ “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through **the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20).

As used in our text, “*acknowledgment*” means that the truth of Divine utterance has been recognized, or perceived. It is the reaction of the believing heart to Kingdom realities, as declared in the Gospel of Christ.

It is important to note that this knowledge has to do with the Gospel itself, and the message that it proclaims.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD, EVEN THE FATHER AND OF CHRIST

“ . . . *the mystery of God, and of*

views of this text. Here are some of them:

- ✚ The mystery of God
- ✚ The mystery of God in Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God who is in Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God concerning Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God who is Christ
- ✚ The mystery of the God Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God and Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God the Father of Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God the Father, and our Lord Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God and the Father of Christ
- ✚ The mystery of God the Father, in Christ
- ✚ The mystery of the God Christ Jesus, Father and Lord.

The very existence of these diverse translations and interpretations confirm the truth of the text. There is a very real “*mystery*” that is to be known – a “*mystery*” that involves both the Father and His Anointed One – Christ Jesus.

It Is the Mystery of God

The mystery, or what is hidden, is God Himself. It is “*the mystery of God.*”

knowledge of God is attainable only through Him.

A Clearer Statement of the Case

The meaning of this verse is this: when the saints are comforted, being knit together in love, their understanding will be brought to maturity, thereby producing “full assurance.” This understanding is the immediate result of perceiving the truth of the Gospel, which is the primary message of the church. **It is the Gospel itself that is referred to as “the mystery of God.”**

That “mystery” is unfolded in the simplistic yet profound phrase, “both of the Father and of Christ.” That is, the Gospel is a record of the workings of the Father through Christ, and of Christ fulfilling the purpose of the Father. The Father promised the Christ and brought Him forth. He commissioned the Christ, sustained Him, and laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The Father raised Christ, exalted Him, enthroned Him, and gave Him all power in heaven and in earth. **In all of that, there is a certain revelation of God – a revelation that cannot be obtained outside of the Gospel of Christ.**

Let us hear the testimony of one who acknowledged this “mystery” – one who has perceived and recognized the true God. *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day”* (2 Tim 1:12). **That is an acknowledgment of “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.**

John also speaks of the acknowledgment of the mystery of God. He approaches it in this way: *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we*

may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

No person will ever see the truth about God until they have comprehended the Christ of the Gospel. Furthermore, no person will comprehend the Christ of the Gospel until they have been comforted, and knit together in love with the other members of the body.

Stated Yet Another Way

No person will ever see the truth about God until they have comprehended the Christ of the Gospel. Furthermore, no person will comprehend the Christ of the Gospel until they have been comforted, and knit together in love with the other members of the body.

It is not possible to know God apart from the salvation that is found in Christ Jesus, and is announced by the Gospel. **It is in the rescue of sinners and perfection of saints that God is made known.** He cannot be comprehended philosophically, or through human reasoning alone. Only the faith that comes by hearing the Gospel brings an understanding of God to men.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is a considerable amount of confusion among professing Christians concerning the Father and Christ. Some feel that Christ is an independent creation, and is not God. Others are persuaded that the Father and Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, are a single personality, functioning in differing roles – like John the carpenter, and John the

husband. There is also much discussion concerning whether or not Christ is God.

These varied opinions are an admission that God is not known among those professing them. They are not able to “acknowledge the mystery of God.” **They are confused about both the Father and Christ because their understanding is not shaped by the Gospel.** That is precisely why they have formulated their own unique message, choosing to corrupt the Gospel rather than to declare it. Those who do not preach the Gospel enable such men to

have more success.

When men acknowledge the mystery, perceiving the Father and Christ, faith leaps forward, taking hold of the truth. As long as the Father and Christ are vague, faith lies weakened upon the ground. But when a perception of the Father and Christ is possessed, as revealed in “the Gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13), a bold confidence follows that enables one to confidently fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). **No person can assume their acceptance with God, or surety of glory, until they possess this marvelous knowledge.** Let every child of God know that this precious knowledge can be possessed. It is inherent in the great salvation of God, and is accessible by faith in Jesus Christ..

HIDDEN TREASURES

“³ In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

The spotlight of revelation now

focuses upon the Person of Christ, who is the Subject of the Gospel, which contains the “mystery of God.”

IN WHOM ARE HID

“In whom . . . ” That is, in Christ – the Christ in whom the Father is made known.

Elaborating on “the

acknowledgment of the mystery,” the Spirit now reveals the thoroughness of what is possessed in Christ Jesus. **Not only is there a plentitude in Christ, that copious supply is the ONLY one of its kind.**

What is found in Christ cannot be

the makeup and needs of men shape their ministry, and are the means of defining what they do in the name of the Lord. Men like Sigmund Freud, Spencer, and the likes, have actually shaped their understanding of the human personality. **It ought to be evident that an appropriate knowledge of humanity**

the wealth itself, but to where it is stored – like a treasure house, or the United States Treasury. The word “*treasures*” has a primary meaning of “treasury, treasure box or chest, storeroom, storehouse.”^{FRIBERG} “the place in which goods and precious things are collected and laid up a. casket, coffer, or other receptacle, in which valuables are kept.”^{THAYER} It has a secondary meaning of the precious goods themselves: “the things laid up in a treasury, collected treasures.”^{STRONG’S}

What is found in Christ cannot be found anywhere else. He is not one of the needed resources, but the exclusive one. God has nothing of eternal value to give to us that does not come from Christ.

found anywhere else. He is not one of the needed resources, but the exclusive one. **God has nothing of eternal value to give to us that does not come from Christ.** There is no other way of becoming “*worthy of God,*” or obtaining what is required for that condition. It comes exclusively through Jesus Christ. This is involved in Christ’s word to His disciples on the night He was betrayed: “*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*” (John 14:6). He who has Jesus is on the way to God, has the truth of God, and is alive to God. The one who does not have Christ is wandering, has no knowledge of the truth, and is dead in trespasses and sins.

Since the scholars and psychiatrists have captured the church, the need for Jesus has been reduced in the minds of the people. A plethora of things are offered by the modern church that have little to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Some actually place a greater emphasis upon pedantic forms of knowledge than on Jesus. For them, a library has become a replacement for the Son of God. They spend more time there than with Christ, and have more confidence in the writings of men than the words of Christ Jesus. It is not that it is sinful to read after godly men, or to acquire lawful knowledge of various things. **However, the acquisition of such knowledge must be subsidiary.**

For others, human assessments of

cannot be gained from those who themselves come short of the glory of God.

The heart must not be drawn away from Christ in order to acquire knowledge. **Whatever moves us away from Christ moves us toward damnation.** That may appear brutally frank, but it is precisely correct, and must be seen as such. When it comes to the key to understanding, it is “*HID*” in Christ: *i.e., “in whom, are hid.”* **That is, it can only be found in a living relationship with Christ.** God has hidden these things in Christ, so that they cannot be found apart from intimacy with Him. It is thus **ONLY** in the fellowship of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9) that the knowledge of God can be acquired – and men cannot be saved without that knowledge.

When the text says “*IN whom,*” it means that those who obtain these resources must themselves be in Christ. **No one who is outside of Christ can obtain the things resident in Him.** There is no human science or power that can grant one who is outside of Christ access to things that are hidden in Him. Something that is “*hid in Christ*” cannot be found in any measure anywhere else.

ALL THE TREASURES

“... are hid all the treasures...”

“*Treasures*” speak of wealth – something that enhances one’s worth. The word “*treasures*” does not refer to

Here the idea is that all of the required resources have been gathered together and deposited in Christ. They are “*hidden*” there, so that the very idea of them cannot exist with the knowledge of, and familiarity with, Jesus Christ. **The person outside of Christ, or in whom Christ does not dwell, has no idea these treasures even exist.** They are hidden like a treasure in a field – unseen and unknown (Matt 13:44).

The further people are from Christ, the more unaware they become of “*all the treasures.*” When Jesus recedes into the background of thought, the contemplation of “*all the treasures*” ceases as well. **At precisely that point, the cheap baubles of this present evil world begin to appear valuable, the praise of men is coveted, and cursed things are thought to bring personal advantage.**

If you have ever marveled that a person who was once in Christ could suddenly be wafted into iniquity, bartering their soul for the cursed thing, here is the answer. They drifted from Jesus Christ. He became vague to them, and thus “*all the treasures*” that are hidden in Him were no longer remembered or desired. This may not be what a counselor would tell such souls, but that is really what happened. It is not possible for Christ to be our central consideration and sin to have a primary appeal to us at the same time. It simply cannot happen. In order for “*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*” to dominate our thoughts, Christ must cease to be prevalent in them.

If it is true that “*all the treasures*” are “*hid*” in Christ, then they are perceived only to the extent that Christ is loved and known. When a person can truthfully say, “*I am crucified with*

Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20), the repository of Divine goodness is fully accessible and will be fervently sought.

Under the Law

During the Old Covenant, treasures were associated with the house of God. When Israel sacked Jericho, they were reminded of this. Joshua commanded them, *“And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD” (Josh 6:19).* When they burned the city with fire, *“the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD” (Josh 6:24).*

In Solomon’s day, when he built the Temple, he was careful to consider the treasures associated with it. *“So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD” (1 Kgs 7:51).*

When the Temple service was restored under Nehemiah, consideration was given to these treasures. *“And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house” (Neh 10:38).*

In a sense, all of these treasures were hidden in God’s house. They were not accessible to those who were not in the house of the Lord. However, they were provided for the Levites, who served the Lord in His house (Neh 12:44).

The Parallel

The situation under the Law perfectly parallels our place in Christ

Jesus. **The treasures of reference are not only hidden in Christ, they are intended for the ones who are themselves in Christ.** No one else is aware of them, or has access to them.

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

“ . . . of wisdom and knowledge. ”

Definitively, *“wisdom”* refers to *“the ability to use knowledge for correct behavior insight, understanding, and skill.”* ^{FRIBERG}

“Knowledge” is *“the possession of information; what is known.”* As used here, it is

knowledge. If, on the other hand, we do not know Christ, we are paupers in both areas.

When our text says that wisdom and knowledge are *“hid”* in Christ, it means that the person of Christ Himself obscures them. That is to say, to the world, *“Christ and Him crucified”* does not appear to be a place where wisdom and knowledge can be found. Such a Savior is repulsive to the world, for He does not appear to be either wise or knowledgeable. As it is written, *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a*

In the world, the life of a leader is what contributes to his greatness and effectiveness. However, with Christ, it is His death that is heralded as His greatest triumph among men.

“the result of Divine enlightenment,” when certain realities are made known to men. ^{FRIBERG}

Technically speaking, *“knowledge”* comes before wisdom, for wisdom involves the proper use or employment of knowledge. However, here the two are listed in order of their priority, with *“wisdom”* being first, for *“wisdom is the principle thing”* (Prov 4:7).

For some, this is a peculiar treasure, indeed: *“wisdom and knowledge.”* The very idea of *“the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* militates against ignorance, which has no place in the kingdom of God. It puts the lie to any view of religion that allows professing believers to remain bereft of spiritual understanding. **Those who are content to remain fundamentally ignorant of what is found in Christ have neither honest nor good hearts.**

The *“wisdom and knowledge”* of reference pertain to *“life and godliness.”* They have to do with the things *“God has prepared for them that love Him”* (1 Cor 2:9). **The clear meaning is that if we know Christ, we are in no way deficient in either wisdom or**

stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24).

In the world, the life of a leader is what contributes to his greatness and effectiveness. **However, with Christ, it is His death that is heralded as His greatest triumph among men.** It is in His death that He destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15), reconciled the world (Rom 5:10), and made peace (Col 1:20). All of this makes no sense at all to the carnal mind. Carnal men choose to think of Jesus, at the very best, as a noble man. Thus they *“stumble”* over Him, and are deprived of all wisdom and knowledge.

The knowledge that is hidden in Christ is not primarily intellectual – although it challenges the intellect. It deals with certain facts, but they are of a different order. Some of the things those in Christ “know” accent this fact.

✚ *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* (Rom 8:22)

- ✦ “**And we know** that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28)
- ✦ “**For we know** that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor 5:1)
- ✦ “**Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many**

knowledge has no relevance whatsoever. Further, if out of human curiosity, such poor souls should attempt to acquire such knowledge, they would find such a thing impossible. This knowledge is “hid” in Christ, and only those who are in Him can acquire it. **Even then, the reality, preference, and effectiveness of this knowledge is directly proportionate to one’s desire for Christ Himself.** If the driving compulsion is not to “know Him,” all of these things fade from view. Unless the individual arrives at a point where the all

- ✦ “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a **wise** masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” (1 Cor 3:10)
- ✦ “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of **wisdom** and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” (Eph 1:17)
- ✦ “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as **wise**.” (Eph 5:15)
- ✦ “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all **wisdom**; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col 1:28).
- ✦ “If any of you lack **wisdom**, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5)

This knowledge is “hid” in Christ, and only those who are in Him can acquire it. Even then, the reality, preference, and effectiveness of this knowledge is directly proportionate to one’s desire for Christ Himself. If the driving compulsion is not to “know Him,” all of these things fade from view.

- antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*” (1 John 2:18)
- ✦ “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but **we know** that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)
 - ✦ “**We know** that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” (1 John 3:14)
 - ✦ “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby **we know** that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.” (1 John 3:24)
 - ✦ “And **we know** that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)
- To those outside of Christ, such

consuming desire of the heart is to be “found in Him,” condemnation is inevitable (Phil 3:7-13).

The “wisdom” of reference is also most unique, having no earthly parallel. A few statements concerning it will confirm its essentiality.

- ✦ “I would have you **wise** unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” (Rom 16:19)
- ✦ “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and **the wisdom of God**.” (1 Cor 1:24)
- ✦ “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us **wisdom**, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor 1:30)
- ✦ “Howbeit we speak **wisdom** among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the **wisdom** of God in a mystery, even the hidden **wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory” (1 Cor 2:7)

It is not possible to appropriate such wisdom apart from Jesus Christ. It is “all” hidden in Him. **It is made available to us only to the degree that we abide in Him.** What is more, if we are not in fellowship with Him, we are not even aware of such wonderful wisdom.

If Christ is not dwelling within us, and we are not abiding in Him, none of the benefits that He brings are accessible to us. Separation from Christ includes separation from all the benefit resident in Him. If He does not abide in us, all of the benefits realized in Him are beyond our reach. As simplistic as that may seem, there are multitudes of professing Christians who are attempting to obtain “wisdom and knowledge” apart from fellowship with Him – living in practical aloofness from Him. Such efforts are **totally** vain.

The thrust of our religion must be to “win Christ,” and be “found in Him” (Phil 3:8-9). God has nothing to give us that is not found in Christ – nothing at all. Everything God provides for us comes with Christ, and without Him nothing comes. He is the Divinely appointed means fore appropriating all knowledge and all wisdom. Praise be to God!

CONCLUSION

The strength of this text confirms the danger of being diverted from the Lord Jesus Christ. This diversion does not always occur by reverting to the baser things of this world. Sometimes it happens – in fact the more frequently – by turning to powerless religion. This is what happened to the Galatians, and it is what was threatening the Colossians.

Note with what somber tones the Apostle addresses those who had relegated Jesus to a secondary position.

✚ “O foolish Galatians, **who hath bewitched you**, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes

Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” (Gal 3:1)

✚ “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, **Christ shall profit you nothing**” (Gal 5:2)

✚ “**Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.**” (Gal 5:4)

✚ “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because **thou hast left thy first love.**” (Rev 2:4)

If God has made everything

contingent upon His only begotten Son, it is the epitome of ignorance to disregard Him. If every spiritual resource is hidden in Him, what can be said of those who do not seek Him and abide in Him? What hope is there for any person or group of persons who choose to follow a course that minimizes Jesus, or views the Gospel as a secondary matter? If Christ “in you” is “the hope of glory,” what possible reason is there for neglecting Him?

God has exalted Christ in order that “He might have the preeminence” (Col 1:18). It is our business to fall in line with that Divinely established agenda.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/12/2003. In this session, we will be covering verses 4-8 of the second chapter. The title of our lesson is, “WATCH OUT FOR MEN.” Jesus had revealed Satan’s intentions against the church – those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17) . His strategy includes the employment of men who propagate false and damaging doctrines. Paul now reveals the inspired counterattack he has launched against imaginations and contradicting high thoughts. 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.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH’s Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA’s Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Jonathan (Jonstalk@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)
Adah Hutchcraft (ALHutchcraft@milligan.edu), Jason Hutchcraft (hutchcraftj@esr.edu)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

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

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

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