

The Correction of Sons of God
Lessons in Colossians
BY Mary M. Bodie

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth"-Prov. 3:11, 12.

DIVISIONS OF COLOSSIANS

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| CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH | 1:1-29 |
| CHRIST THE HEAD OF ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER.. | 2:1 to 3:4 |
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INTRODUCTION

Colosse was a city of Phrygia (Roman Asia) situated on the river Lycus. It was destroyed by an earthquake in the seventh year of Nero's reign. The latter fact may be an earnest of the destruction of all false teaching with the fall of the anti-Christ (figured by Nero) in the end of the seven years of judgment that are soon to come upon the world. The church at Colosse was not founded by Paul himself but by Epaphras, and subsequent to Paul's visitation to the churches of "Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" - Col. 2:1; 1:7; 4:12; Acts 18:23. Otherwise, he would have visited the Colossians, which Colossians 2:1 implies he did not. There are no allusions in this epistle to his being their father in the faith, such as we read in some of his other letters. It was probably while Paul was those "two years" at Ephesus, when "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus," that Epaphras, Archippus, Apphia, and other men of Colosse (which was on the main road from Ephesus to the Euphrates) were converted and went with the Gospel to their own city - Acts 19:10-26. Paul had personal acquaintance with, and love for, those fellow workers; and, they also for him and his fellows, as their salutations prove.

This epistle was written from Paul's prison house in Rome and sent by the same bearer Tychicus, and at the same time as those to the Ephesians and Philemon - about 63 A.D.

The general purpose of the letter was to correct the false teaching which had arisen at Colosse. It was generally supposed to be an error called Gnosticism, or Knowledge. Christian Science, so-called, is simply a last day's development of the same false teaching (with several others combined) though clothed in different phraseology. The apostle wrote to the church in support of the authority of Epaphras and confirmed the Truth of his teaching, that they might have confidence in him rather than in the false teachers.

The word "Colosse" has a double meaning which, in itself, is very significant and instructive. It means "correction," and also "monstrosities." From this we may infer that, if professed people of God do not take the correction but rather heed the false teaching exposed in this epistle, they will become monstrosities instead of corrected ones. The three epistles - Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians - have a decided connection with one another. Ephesians emphasizes the teaching that the saints are IN CHRIST. Colossians portrays CHRIST IN the saints. In Philippians the saints are viewed in the world, running a race to WIN CHRIST as the Prize. These epistles are like a sandwich: Ephesians and Colossians the bread on each side, with Philippians the meat in the center. They were all written by Paul from his prison in Rome, where he was suffering bonds for the Gospel. Therefore, we should give the more earnest heed to the things therein. They are the expression of the deepest revelations that the apostle received; and are the fruitage of his yielded, pruned, and corrected life.

COLOSSIANS
THE CORRECTION OF THE SONS OF GOD
Mary M. Bodie
CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH
Colossians 1:1-29

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" - Colossians 1:1, 2. The theme of the epistle to Colosse is THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST. He is viewed in His relationship to the universe of God as LORD OVER

ALL. It is as a MAN that He is exalted to this place of sovereignty, for as GOD all things were made by Him and He was before all things; hence, He could not be any greater, nor have any honor added to Him. It all belonged to Him. It is as Man that He became dependent upon His

Father. It is a wonderful mystery, and it is true: The second Person in the Godhead emptied Himself of His glory and honor, and chose to be identified with man; and, as Man, He is exalted and made Head over all creation. The first chapter of the epistle emphasizes His Headship over the Church, which is His Body; therefore, the saints share His honors. He has not only lifted humanity out of the wreckage and ruin into which it had fallen, but much more. A select company - the Church - will reign with Him upon the throne of the universe far above all other creatures, angels, principalities, and powers whether unfallen or fallen. Man, originally the weakest and lowest of all created intelligences, has been lifted because of redemption to the highest heights. The Author and Executor of all this marvelous scheme of salvation desires that we know the Truth of our exalted destiny and walk worthy of our calling. Hence, it is the STATE of the saints which is emphasized in the letter to the Colossians, rather than their STANDING. Paul put the seal of his authority at the very beginning of this letter. He stated that he was "an apostle," "a sent one"; and he insisted that his apostleship was of God and not of man. He was no self-made apostle; neither was he constituted one by any other man or set of men. His authority and office were altogether of Divine allotment and commission. Paul was sent of God, in the will of God; hence, no one dare question his right to correct wrong teaching, nor question his right to set in order that which is out of harmony with the doctrine given to him for the Church. The apostle's home and study, at that time, were a prison in Rome. Is it not significant that the highest notes of the blessings of the Gospel were struck by Paul when he was in the deepest depths of sorrow, according to man's outlook? But, it was generally when exiled, that holy men received the holy Word from a holy God and were moved by the Holy Spirit to write. They all suffered for the Truth of which they were the advance agents. Our dear Apostle Paul suffered more, in many respects, than all; for he had the greatest revelation. The apostle associated his "brother Timothy" with him in the writing of this epistle. He was moved by the Spirit to set some of his authority upon the head of this loyal soldier of the Cross who was then with him in prison, and later was to carry on the work of Paul when he had departed to be with Christ. The letter was addressed "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." The inference is that there were some "faithful brethren" in that place, which is refreshing news. If there are any saints that we prefer before others, it is the faithful ones. Those folks were not only holy in their standing, as all saints are, but they were faithful in their state as well. They had appropriated the Word of God, which had been proclaimed; hence, they were corrected ones. They dwelt in Colosse - the place of correction. Paul was there in spirit, at the time of this writing; hence, he was qualified to write, not only because of his revelation but also because of his experience. He was in God's "house of correction," and could not get out, until he had served his time. It is there that the "faithful brethren" are found. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth (corrects), and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" - Hebrews 12:6. If we are not willing to be corrected, we will never come into the knowledge of the mystery of which Paul wrote nor into his personal experience of "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" - Colossians 1:27. To all such Colossians, the apostle sends words of cheer - "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." There is plenty of grace for the time of correction which, if laid hold of, will bring peace regardless of circumstances or pressure. It is marvelous what peace the Lord can give to us in the midst of trial, when it is taken from His hand as His corrective measure for us. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" the prophet inquires - Job 34:29.

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE which ye have to all the saints, for the HOPE which is laid up for you in Heaven" - Colossians 1:3-5.

What a man of prayer was Paul! He prayed always for them. His heart was stirred in their behalf, ever since he heard of their faith and love and hope. Epaphras must have written to Paul of their state. He was delighted at their growth in grace and in the knowledge of God. They were in victory, regardless of all the trouble and chastening that they were enduring at that time. They stood firmly entrenched in the Word of God, which they had heard from Epaphras who preached the same Gospel which Paul proclaimed. He told them of the Good Tidings of grace, grace as boundless as the sea, which brought great victory to those that received the Message.

Paul thanked God for their faith. Faith is an essential asset in the Christian life - "Without faith it is impossible to please Him (God)" - Hebrews 11:6. We must all begin with faith. But, it was their

"faith in Christ Jesus," about which the apostle was especially emphatic. Some folks have faith in themselves; others have it in their creed, their church, or their money. But those Colossians had their confidence in the One that was able to justify them for their faith in Him. Furthermore, we believe that was an advanced state of faith - a faith that had stood the test and had not wavered - to which Paul alludes.

The apostle also praises God for their love. Faith cannot live alone. It must have its two children - love and hope - with it continually. Love that is begotten of faith is Divine. It is fervent and sincere, always seeking the good of others. We cannot have perfect faith without love, and vice versa. Paul eulogizes such love - love that sacrifices and labors and serves others - love that has hands and feet.

There is a faith that can remove mountains, and yet has not love. Paul tells us of it; but he does not praise God for that kind of faith. It adds nothing spiritually to the one possessing it, though it may fill his pocketbook and give him a large bank account and an exalted standing with folks - I Cor. 13:2. This was not the Colossian's faith. They possessed faith with love and hope. I believe this hope was a special hope, too. It was a hope laid up in Heaven for the faithful overcoming saints in Colosse, the place of correction. These had a greater hope than other saints. It, no doubt, was the same hope that filled Paul's soul and swayed his life - the hope of being among the out-resurrection and out-translation company of believers.

These Colossians had heard of this hope from Epaphras. He preached all the Truth - the whole counsel of God - even Paul's Message of grace. The latter is one great grand scheme of Truth. There is an unfolding of the mystery of the Gospel, as we are able to bear it. Like the rose which commences with the bud and gradually, as the sun and rain fall on it, opens more and more until it is in full bloom; so with the Gospel. Or, we may compare the mystery of the Gospel to a hope within a hope - a wheel within a wheel; for, to those that have ears to hear, there is a wonderful development in Paul's Message of grace. As we grow, so the Message grows. There is a gradual unfolding, as we are able to understand.

In meditating on the life of Abraham, we see the marvelous development of his faith which brought forth the greater love and hope. As he walked and talked with God his faith increased, and vice versa. As his faith increased, his fellowship with God developed. He increased with the increase of God; hence, his love and hope were unbounded. Likewise it was with those corrected, pruned, and disciplined saints at Colosse. They had a particular hope - a hope born of a steady unwavering faith in God's Word. It was laid up for them in Heaven. The news of this great hope came to them in the Gospel, but not to them only; for wherever the Gospel of Paul is proclaimed in sincerity and truth, the hope is also proclaimed, as we read -

"Whereof ye heard before in the word of the Truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" - Colossians 1:5, 6.

Is that not wonderful? The Gospel of grace not only brings love and hope to folks that have faith in its Message; but it also makes them fruitful. I want all legalists to get that marvelous statement. The tidings of grace, which Paul proclaimed, bring forth fruit in those that have ears to hear. Observe that he says that, "THE TRUTH of the Gospel" brought forth fruit in all the world, even as in Colosse also. But when did they begin to bear fruit? When they were converted? No. The Gospel does not make folks fruitful until they know "the grace of God IN TRUTH." Grace must be appropriated before the fruit will be manifested. In other words, we are dependent upon Christ for "the fruit of the Spirit." We must yield to Him and receive His life abundantly, then the result will be in evidence - the fruit that abides will be abundant.

The above citation explains why so many of the people of God are barren - why their lives are full of failure. They are not acquainted with Paul's Message of grace in truth. They refuse God's grace as to fruitbearing; hence, are hard, bitter, and cold. Others know grace as a theory, just in their heads, but have not received its sweet Message in their hearts. These, too, are unfruitful. They are lacking in the love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance which are the positive signs of spiritual life. It is only Paul's Gospel of grace, taken hold of in faith, that will bring forth such heavenly fruit. We must know it in truth, in order to get all the fruit.

EPAPHRAS, A FAITHFUL PASTOR

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ" - Colossians 1:7.

Oh, yes! Epaphras preached the Truth that was given to Paul. He did not try to proclaim something different, in order to get a following. Paul was the pioneer and advance agent with the Truth of the Gospel; and Epaphras was one of those vessels of election chosen to cooperate with him. He was a "dear fellow servant," and "a faithful minister." What a comfort he must have been to the heart of Paul. The apostle did not boast of himself, nor exalt himself above Epaphras. He was Paul's disciple; yet, Paul put him on an equality with himself, calling him a "fellow servant." That is humility, indeed. It is such a refreshing change from the assumption of dignity and power and the pretenses of the clergy today. They take to themselves titles and places of authority, which the Scriptures do not warrant. They lord it over "God's heritage," which Peter forbids; though the Roman Church claims him as the first pope. Good it were, if they would heed his words. Furthermore, Paul does not hesitate to commend Epaphras; and, in a sense, eulogize him for his faithful loyal service. Some folks err on this line (though, of course, it does not compare with the error of clericalism); and they imagine that they must never give a word of encouragement to the servants of the Lord. They insist that it might puff them up with pride, but that is a mistake. Ministers like Epaphras and Timothy are not liable to be overcome with pride; for those who know the Message of grace in truth and proclaim it are not in danger of being inflated. There are too many enemies of the Cross around, who will give them a dozen blows for every caress that they receive. Therefore, do not hesitate to hand them a bouquet of encouraging words occasionally. Epaphras was not lacking in his kind words to Paul, as we may easily read between the lines. He commended the assembly at Colosse, and brought their words of greeting to the apostle. He told the Apostle Paul of their deep fervent love for him with, no doubt, many other tender allusions of regard. He was not at all afraid that the dear humble apostle would become lifted up with pride. No, indeed. The knowledge of their deep appreciation of him, gave Paul a greater interest in them, as the following verse of Scripture indicates. He knew, if they loved him, that it was because of the Truth which he preached. For, even as the Master, no one appreciates the true worthy follower of the Lord except those that have a revelation of the grace which has been bestowed upon the Church and are growing thereby. They loved him, but not for his personal magnetism; for they had never seen him.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THEM

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" - Colossians 1:9. The faithfulness of these saints and their expressed love for Paul gave him an added interest in them, and called forth this striking prayer in their behalf. He desired their further progress. He was interested in their spiritual development. He knew that their standing was perfect; but he wanted their state to correspond therewith. Some folks - teachers and preachers - claim that the STATE of the saints is not important. They stress their STANDING. In other words, they emphasize objective truth. Others stress subjective truth. In both cases, the result is lopsided Christians. It is sad to see the many that are in such a condition, and all because they do not know the will of God concerning them. They are at a standstill - no growth or spirituality manifested in their lives. As in the natural, the fact is evident that they are not getting the correct food for an all-round development in the Christian life. Paul's writings - the revelation of the Gospel given to him for the Church - studied, appropriated, and assimilated into the spiritual being, make sturdy whole-hearted men and women. They show that they are well-fed and have good spiritual digestion, even as is evident in the natural. Of course, we sometimes find spiritual dyspeptics who, though they hear the Word, do not absorb the life and power of the Truth; but these are exceptions. The Colossians were not of the latter character. They had good spiritual digestion. They were a progressive and growing church - not along the lines of modernism, but rather fundamentalism. They had good provender; for only such are capable of being filled with "the exact knowledge of His will" (Diaglott) as the apostle prayed for them. Saints are running hither and thither doing many things, good in their way but not the will of God - much less His exact will. It is painful to read some of the religious literature that is sent forth, presumably by the direct command of the Lord, when it is not according to the revealed will of God but far worse - contrary to the Truth. It is more painful still to listen to the reports of the doings of some religious men - self-appointed we are sure; for their works are so contrary to the revealed will of God. What is the trouble? The people do not know the will of God. They do not know the Truth; hence, they are not working according to the plans and specifications of the great Builder.

They do not read Paul's writings, wherein God's will regarding these things is outlined and written.

It is sad but true that, even some sincere believers are not laboring with God, though they are

ostensibly working for Him. What would a great architect and builder say if his workmen refused to build according to the blueprint furnished them, and insisted on doing what appeared reasonable and expedient to themselves, not even reading the specifications? We know that he would not countenance such an outrage, but would discharge them and hire others who would intelligently cooperate with him. He would tell those self-appointed bosses that he was employing "laborers" not "managers." We are assured that the Divine Architect is not a whit less concerned for His objective, nor more lenient in His criticism of His laborers, than are those earthly builders. He does not need advisers, but workers with Him.

A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL

The above was the essence of the prayer of the apostle. He desired the saints to be filled "as to the exact knowledge of His will"; for he knew that only thus could they come up to the standard, and be what God purposed them to be; only thus could they labor effectively for Him. Such knowledge is a necessity for spiritual growth as the next verses, the continuation of the prayer, indicate.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" - Colossians 1:10.

Here we have the reason for the deep desire of the apostle's soul for those saints to be filled with an "exact knowledge" of the will of God. It was that their state spiritually might correspond to that perfection of their standing in Christ, for which the will of God had made provision. It is sevenfold: First, that they "might walk worthy of the Lord." Second, "unto all pleasing." Third, "being fruitful in every good work." Fourth, "increasing in the knowledge of God." Fifth, "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Sixth, "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." Seventh, "giving thanks unto the Father." Paul's ambition for their state was Divine. His prayer was the outward expression of the deep inward yearning of the heart of God for the state of His people. He is concerned for their growth and attainment. It has been provided for them in the atonement of Calvary. There is no lack in the atonement, nor any lack in the power of the enabling that is at the disposal of our faith. If we fail to avail ourselves of the privilege of overcoming, it will not be on account of any lack on God's part.

Oh! What unfathomed progress and attainment are voiced for us in the Apostle Paul's writings! What a standard of spirituality he sets before us! It surely is possible for us to reach it, if we believe what He says to us. God is not putting before us a false hope - a mirage of impossible attainment to tantalize us. No, indeed. This prayer of Paul's does not create an illusion in the mind. It shall be absolutely fulfilled in our experience, if we so desire.

"Fruitful in every good work" is a part of the standard of perfection. It is marvelous to contemplate. A possibility never entered into the heart of man to conceive of such a state. It was conceived in the heart of God. The reason that it is difficult for folks to believe that such a victory is possible, and that they generally deny it, is because they are looking at themselves in the natural. They are so conscious of their own shortcomings and limitations that any such an attainment seems improbable. So it is, if we are not depending upon God to undertake for us as we believe and yield to Him. Paul was not telling those Colossians that they must reach this perfection by their own efforts. Oh, no! He was praying for them that they might be filled with a knowledge of the will of God, that they might see to what heights of glory they have been called by His Gospel of grace and that they might lay hold of it.

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" - Colossians 1:11.

"Oh! It is too good to be true," someone says. But there must be the possibility of such an experience, or the apostle would not so pray. The Lord will strengthen us "with all might," if we believe His Word and yield to Him. Then it is not our strength, but His might. It is "according to His glorious power," not according to our feeble efforts or little measure of apprehension; but it is according to the magnitude of His exaltation as Head. The risen glorified Son of God, Lord of all, will strengthen us - His Body.

There is no excuse for saints being powerless and useless. All "might of His glory" (Greek) is at the disposal of the faith of His people to appropriate. But only those who are willing to walk in His will, as they learn it, will be able to take hold of His sufficiency to be so strengthened. For

instance, when trials and affliction come our way, that is the opportunity to prove the strength of the Lord and not yield to discouragement and murmuring. Strength of muscle in the spiritual, even as in

the natural, comes from exercise; hence, the more we are necessitated to take hold of Christ's strength, the faster we will develop. Oh! What spiritual giants we may become! It is not everyone who realizes the scope of God's grace to usward. It is not His will that we be weaklings, but strong in our ordained path. But, notice, the manner of its manifestation. It is rather peculiar according to man's reason. We would infer that the strength derived from this "glorious power" of the Lord is to be shown in the salvation of souls, and in healing and miracle working, bringing to pass mighty things. But Paul's words are not according to this manner. He says the power to be evidenced is "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Who would guess it? Not even one! We always imagine that patience is a feminine virtue. Women are supposed to be endowed with patience. Surely we all admit their need of it in bearing and bringing up children, as well as in other duties of life; but this is not Paul's meaning. He says that patience is wrought out in the Christian life by a knowledge of the will of God manifested in the Gospel of grace. It is a proof that we have been strengthened with might by God's glory. Such a state of spirituality is altogether heavenly. It is Divine to be able to suffer the persecutions and afflictions - the "all things" - that come to those who have taken the narrow way with Paul. Is it not a glorious victory to be patient under all provocations, and to be joyful at the same time? Oh! The marvels of the grace that are sufficient to bring this state about, and cause us to so live in this present evil age. Paul's Message, believed with the heart, will be our enabling. It will make us strong to endure the hardest trial and be patient, though we are buffeted on every side and bruised by everyone. The apostle proved the power of his own Message. He ate it, as it were. Though afterward it did become bitter in his belly when it was made practical, yet it was sweet to his taste. He proved its worth and power. In other words, he took his own medicine and found it worked out in his everyday life, just as it was revealed to him that it would do; hence, he passes it on to us, with his very best recommendation. Then he tells us that the above victory calls for deep thanksgiving to the Author of it.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" - Colossians 1:12. There is further progress noted here - an advance in the knowledge of His will. As we come into the victory which is ours in our exalted Head, we are more and more conscious of His grace which is able to make us what He purposed that we should be. This fact causes us to praise our Father, not only in our heart but with our tongue. We voice our thanksgiving in words. We open our mouths and express our appreciation of the Father's goodness, in that He has made the sufficient provision for our fitness to partake of the inheritance of holiness which entitles us to a place among the glorious assemblage of the saints in light. Notice, that it is our Father who has done this stupendous thing; and, furthermore, observe that it has been done. We do not have to make ourselves fit. We have but to accept the fitness which is offered to us, and believe in the power of our Father to make it a reality. He will then work this fitness in us. We will be actually fit to sit in the Presence of a holy God without fear or trembling, for His holiness will be in us. We will be partakers of His holy life. Then the apostle tells us how the provision for such a condition was made for us.

THE BASIS OF VICTORY

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" - Colossians 1:13, 14.

In the above citation we have the basis for the magnitude of Paul's prayer. If the Son of God had not redeemed us by His blood, thereby delivering us from the wrath of God, no attainment in spiritual things could be possible for us. Atonement for sin had to be made, sin's penalty had to be met, before we could be translated from Satan's power and kingdom of darkness into Christ's Kingdom of light. The consciousness of guilt of sins must be gone, or we would never have confidence to come into the Presence of God or address ourselves to Him - much less call upon Him as Father. The provision for our salvation not only had to be finished (God doing it for us), but we must accept of that grace on God's part. Then we are born again (this, too, being God's work in us), and the Father translates us out of one kingdom into the other. Therefore, we have had one translation already - a spiritual one. The Father does not want His children in nor under the power of Satan. He puts them in and under the authority of His Son - "in whom we have redemption" - the Head of the Church. Who can take us out of His authority, when once we have been put there by the Father? How could it be done? It is foolish to even ask such questions. Yet there are some saints, who have

not the knowledge of God's will, who imagine and teach that we may take ourselves out of Christ's Kingdom and go back under the authority of the devil. If that were the case, we would have to unborn ourselves also; for we cannot take the Father's life into Satan's domain of darkness. No! No! That is impossible! For the Father has translated the children of God out of the one place and put them into the other. They are out of the realm of darkness, and into the realm of light and love and joy and peace and home. This first translation, this spiritual change, fits us for the physical translation which will take place when our Head appears. The Lord Jesus Christ is now responsible for all the Father's children. They are under His authority, in His Kingdom and care. The father looks to Him for the welfare and safekeeping of His people. He expects Him to reign over them for they have been put into His keeping, into His realm. It is wonderful and precious to enter into the joy of such a salvation. We are not held responsible for our safekeeping. Christ has undertaken our case. He is the Head of a new creation, and He must bring all His progeny into the harbor safe and secure. We are only responsible to learn the will of God, and let Him work out His purposes in us. We must obey Christ.

Let us notice further. We are now told who and what our great Head and King was and is: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" - Colossians 1:15, 16.

The apostle does not say that only when Christ was upon earth He was the visible image of God, but that He is so now. In Him God has manifested, and does still show Himself to man. If we want to see God, we must look at Christ. If we want to know God, we must learn Christ. He is "the express image of His Person" - Hebrews 1:3. He was and is God.

"What then does it signify, that He is the firstborn of all creation?" someone may inquire. Does it mean that He was an emanation from God? No, indeed. Christ was God. But He was the firstborn of all creation in the sense that there would have been no creation, either natural or spiritual, if it had not been for Him. All things came into being because of Him. They were conceived in Him, in the mind and purpose of God, before they were actually in existence. The word translated "by" in our text should be "in." The life of the universe was conditioned upon Jesus Christ. It was absolutely dependent upon Him and His redemptive work for its manifestation. That is, there would have been no creation, if God had not purposed redemption through His Son. In other words, the Son gave birth to all the visible and invisible things in the universe.

All the demons and the devil, all the wicked principalities, all the angelic hosts of God - good as well as bad - were created in the anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ as a Man. They were all conditioned on that event. If it had not been purposed that the second Person in the Godhead was to be born into the world and redeem mankind, God would not have created man or anything that is now in existence. These were all dependent upon Christ. They were created in anticipation of His redemptive work. He was "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" - Revelation 13:8. Paul, the inspired writer, is here ringing out the challenge as to the Deity of Christ against the erroists that were at Colosse. He is emphasizing the eternal majesty and transcendent glory of His Person; for they were teaching, as we noted, that He was simply an emanation from God. Hence, the all-inclusive argument-forbidding language used here, in reference to Him. The apostle insists that Christ is not only a Divine Being, but He is God manifest in the flesh. We can truly voice the following. It is the expression of the Truth, as set forth by the Scriptures, concerning Christ as the Son of God:

The finite mind may travel far into the ages past, and wander into future aeons and view creation vast. Yet He was there and will be there forever He stands fast - Eternal God, the Great I AM, the First and yea the Last.

As was said, it was the Deity of Christ that was attacked by those false lights who were broadcasting their erroneous doctrine at Colosse. According to them, He was an angel and not even the greatest of them. But, Paul stamps that statement as a lie of the devil, by emphatically declaring that He was not even the mightiest angel but much more. He was the Creator of them;

and not of them only but of all things from the highest - thrones, dominions, principalities, powers - to the very least in the universe. All were created by Christ, the Son of God. Then notice: "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" - Col. 1:17.

There is a distinct allusion here to God's sublime declaration concerning Himself - "I AM THAT I AM" - Exodus 3:14. He is, not only was, before all things. The latter were created. He is Self-existent. Again we say, the apostle is speaking of Christ as the Eternal, the Divine, the Almighty

God. He is speaking of Him as He was in a past eternity, and as He is now in the present, and as He will be in the future. It is thrilling and marvelous to meditate upon the mystery of Christ. The incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead is so far beyond anything that we could ever imagine, that we are lost in wonder and amazement at His condescension to the death of the Cross.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY SET FORTH

"And He is the Head of the Body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence" - Colossians 1:18.

Now the apostle begins with Christ's humanity. The grace of God is seen in a blaze of glory. The Church is declared to be His Body, linked up with Him in an eternal union - a Divine organism, of which the natural figure is a pattern. Hence, the Church is one with Him in His sovereignty over all things, even as in the natural the body shares the exaltation of the head. But, in the spiritual, Christ has the highest place. He is Head over the Church, the Master and Lord of the whole Body. It rules as subject to Him. Though we know from other Scriptures that there will be a company of saints taken out of the Body of Christ who shall jointly reign with Him sharing equally with Him in His dominion as a wife with her husband. Adam and Eve are the type of this. But this phase of Truth is not included in the teaching to Colosse.

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" - Colossians 1:19. The Diaglott renders it - "Because in Him it was thought good that the Whole FULNESS should dwell." The above is a most unusual though weighty statement. Its significance is rather veiled, but marvelous when seen. We find in it another proof of the eternal Oneness of the Trinity. It was the united good pleasure or will of the three Divine Persons in the eternal counsels, that all the fulness of the authority and sovereignty of the Infinite God should dwell in "the Christ" - the Head and the Body joined together. All that is predicted of God is said of Him as "the Head over all things"; but, it is as joined to His people, that He is so honored. As One in the eternal counsels, He so willed it. But, He was not alone, in this Divine edict. The Trinity was unanimous in thus decreeing that all the fulness of God should dwell in Man.

Oh! We are again filled with rhapsody with the knowledge of who and what we are, as joined to Christ. It is beyond all that we could ever have conceived that the Infinite, Eternal, Self-sufficient One, who needs nothing and no one to add to His majesty and splendor, should stoop down to man's low estate. It is marvelous and incomprehensible, except that He has revealed the mystery - He has made us to know the reason of such condescension. He desired to manifest His love; hence, He must have an object for its display. To more fully set forth that love, the object must be unworthy in himself; otherwise, love's magnitude would not be realized. Therefore, man's fall and full redemption is the sequel. God is thus known as He could never have been known, as "the God of all grace" and the Redeemer of lost and ruined humanity, as the following citation indicates.

"And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" - Colossians 1:20. Christ made peace by His stoop to the death of the Cross - the death of shame and loss. There was no peace between God and man. Man was a rebel in the universe of God, hating Him and plotting against His authority; but the Son became a Man and made peace. God is no longer angry with mankind. He has been reconciled. He is at peace with man. Men have but to come and accept the reconciliation which has been accomplished at Calvary. Christ has bridged the chasm which sin had made. He stepped into the breach, in order to make peace with God for men. His body, as it were, has been stretched across the gulf of sin which kept men from God; and now they can reach God through Him. All things on earth have been reconciled. But this is not all - all things in heaven have also been reconciled.

Now that is a strange and marvelous statement. It informs us of THE INFINITE EXTENT OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTION, which may well fill us with wonder and awe. The true greatness of Christ is again emphasized as a contrast to the angels and all creation. For the apostle says that

far from Christ being only one of the angelic hierarchy, the heavenly hosts themselves needed, in some sense, His atonement - Hebrews 9:23. Their abode had been defiled by the sin of Satan - one of their company. He had fallen, as also a third of the principalities and powers in the heavenlies; hence, the blood was effectual in cleansing their abode, though not the sinning angels. They still await judgment. Redemption was not effected for them.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now

hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" - Colossians 1:21, 22.

Men are enemies of God by their natural birth. They do not desire "to retain God" in their hearts; but, they are not aware of the fact, until after they have accepted the reconciliation effected by the Cross. Then they realize that they had been running away from God and that He had finally overtaken, arrested, and convicted them; and then had saved them.

The fact is especially emphasized at this place that it was by way of death, the vicarious death of Christ, that we have been reconciled to God. This fact was the particular one that the Gnostic element at Colosse denied. The apostle declares that it was the rent body of Christ which opened the way for us to draw near to God, even as the rent veil in the temple symbolized - Hebrews 10:19, 20. Our flesh, because of sin, hindered our approach to a holy God; hence, His sinless flesh, counted sinful and so dealt with, was the means of our reconciliation. We are not only negatively reconciled, but more; we shall be presented positively "holy and unblameable and unproveable," or rather "unchallengeable" (Greek), in the Presence of God. He Himself will not be able to find a blemish in the perfection of our humanity, when we stand before the throne in the glorification which redemption has purchased for us. We shall be holy as God the Father has purposed, unblameable as God the Son has provided, unproveable to the extent that God the Holy Spirit has actually possessed and perfected in us the purpose and provision of Deity. Hence, not even God Himself will be able to find any fault with the glorified saints, much less anyone else, when He has finished His work in them. Satan will not dare accuse them, neither any man. They will be unchallengeable before the court of Heaven; therefore, if God is satisfied, who dare murmur? He will stand off, as it were, and admire the work of His own hands; and all of this as the glorious result of the death of His Son upon the Cross of shame.

Last night, I seemed to see that lonely Man of Calvary in a vision. He was walking along, bearing His Cross. The people were throwing stones at Him, as well as cursing and mocking Him, saying all manner of evil against Him. He bore it all with meekness - all the shame, reproach, and laughter, suffered in silence - the Sheep led to slaughter, that we might be presented "holy and unblameable and unproveable" in glory. No one will be able to mock, reproach, or shame us there. No one will be able to find a spot or wrinkle in the glorified saints; and this all as the result of that death on Golgotha's tree. But, listen, there is an "if" connected with this marvelous magnificent appearance at the court of the Most High. There is a condition attached to this unparalleled consummation.

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

"If ye continue in the faith" is the point at issue. Some folks' faith wavers. They may continue in the religious sect to which they belong, and may continue going on with the outward profession; but their faith flickers. They are not overcoming as they began; hence, are not "grounded and settled." The roots of their faith are not deep. Their vision of the hope of the Gospel, which is the coming of Christ, has faded. They are indifferent to the heavenly things; but they are wide awake and running after the things of this world. They are settled and grounded in the earth, not in the faith of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They have been moved away from the hope of the Gospel, and are not looking for Christ's return. They will fail to qualify for that great presentation at the court in the skies. Some great folks in this world strive to be presented at an earthly court. They spare no expense or trouble, and endeavor to overcome every obstacle in their power to receive an invitation to the court of their choice; and then they work to qualify for that great event. The effort is often in vain; and, even when they achieve their ambitions, the results are disappointing. They have no reward of their toil and money. But, oh, how different it is with the saints that seek the court above, who seek that presentation before the unsullied throne of Heaven. They will not be disappointed, but rather satisfied; and their reward is sure and enduring. Their hope is not a chimera, or a will-o-the-wisp, to vanish away with the day. Nay, it is

"the hope of the Gospel." It will be realized to those that have been grounded deep in their faith in the Gospel of Paul. This was the Glad Tidings which the Colossians heard, and of which Paul was the advance agent and promulgator.

Many Christians do not realize the exalted place to which the apostle was called in the will of God. He was made the minister, the leading herald, of the Gospel of grace which carries with it the enabling to lift up fallen humanity and fit them for that marvelous presentation at the court of Heaven. Therefore, his Gospel must be heard and heeded; otherwise, saints will fail to attain the

necessary faith for the transformation which is a matter of daily growth. Paul so rejoiced in the glorious ministry given him, that he counted all the suffering which attended it as of little importance in view of the destiny set before him and the Church that he served.

PRICE OF REIGNING

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church" - Colossians 1:24.

Is that not a most significant statement? The apostle suffered for the sake of the assembly of saints of this present age. He suffered for others; not to make atonement, but by way of making known the fulness of the results of the atonement. Observe that these sufferings were purposely left for him and for others. Some saints are to share jointly Christ's throne; therefore, they must jointly share His sufferings. The price of the throne is suffering, but not suffering for our sins nor for our failures or foolishness; but it is suffering because of our faithfulness to God and the Truth. Paul knew what it meant to suffer in this way - a joint partaker with Christ. His flesh suffered. He was tried in every possible way, as we read - "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are

buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" - I Corinthians 4:11-13. He tells us further of the persecutions that he endured for Christ's sake - "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own country- men, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" - II Corinthians 11:24- 29.

These are the sufferings which were left behind of the sufferings of Christ; left on purpose, as it were, for him to endure that he might have the glad realization of sharing the place with Christ in the glory. He adds, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you" - II Corinthians 4:12. The Corinthians were a part of the fruit of his buffetings and afflictions; and we too are the fruit, in a measure, of his sufferings. His epistles were born out of pain and sorrow. He wrote all of them out of the travail of his soul (some while in prison), generally to correct errors that were creeping into the different assemblies even in his day; yet here, nineteen hundred years later, we get the benefit of them. It is simply marvelous how enduring is the influence and power of his consecrated Spirit-filled life! Only eternity will disclose the record and reveal the fruitage. But the fact that is emphasized at this point is that these manifold sufferings of the apostle were for a purpose. They were for the sake of the Body of Christ - the Church. We, too, even today may share these sufferings in our own measure and place as we yield to God and walk in His will. Do you not see by this statement that some saints are separated or rather stand out distinct from the Church as a whole? They are more absolutely given up to God, willingly offering themselves for His glory and the good of others; hence, are sacrificed upon the altar as burnt offerings. They are a sweet savor to God, for they pour out their lives in behalf of others. They drink deeply of the well of salvation; and, therefore, are qualified to fellowship the death and know the power of Christ's resurrection. Thereby, they are serving the Church in a measure unknown to the great majority of religious workers as well as saints. They are called into this supremely privileged place of sacrifice and service, not because of their good works; but, according to the will of God in their place, even as was the apostle in his divinely ordered service. "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God" - Colossians 1:25. "Of which I became a Servant, according to that stewardship of God which was given to me for you, fully to declare the Word of God" - Diaglott. Paul was especially called, equipped, commissioned, and sent forth as the Apostle of the Church, with a distinct Message to the Body of Christ. He was given a unique place on the program of this age, as the outstanding figure of the company of people gathered out of the world unto the Name of the Lord - Acts 15:14. More, he received a revelation of the eternal counsel and purposes of God concerning this heavenly company - secrets that had never been made known, but which were necessary to complete the Word of God. These mysteries of the exalted destiny of the Church were revealed to the Apostle Paul that he might fully set forth the Truth - "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but

now is made manifest to His saints" - Colossians 1:26.

It is in the epistles of Paul that we find these hidden things; but they are no more hidden. They are fully set forth or made manifest for our benefit, and are easily understood when our hearts have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Our God and our Father desires that we come into the exact knowledge of these revelations which were given to our apostle. They belong to us, and we cannot be all that God would have us to be without them. There is more, as we read further.

THE RICHES OF GLORY

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" - Colossians 1:27.

Here are depths upon depths. God not only revealed the mystery of the Church to Paul, but something far more - "the riches of the glory of this mystery." It was an added message, a hope within a hope, a wheel within a wheel, glory upon glory. It is the "Gentiles" who are thus marvelously favored. It is to them that the privilege is granted, "the riches of the glory of this mystery" revealed, that in a special way Christ's very own life may be manifested in them. There is a hope in this revelation that is peculiarly its own. A glory is implied which is far beyond even that which has been given to the Church as a whole. It is the pinnacle, the topmost stone, in the glorious temple of Truth revealed to the Apostle Paul. It is far beyond our finite minds to comprehend, or the deepest depths of our hearts to fathom, the infinite riches of glory into which we are invited to enter by this revelation. The vast wealth of Christ's life - His wisdom, righteousness, power, and holiness - may be reproduced in those who believe and let Him have His way with them. They are thus fitted for glory - fitted to inherit the riches of the glory which are the inheritance of Christ and jointly reign with Him, His equal upon the throne of glory. "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.

Paul proclaimed Christ with all that the preaching of such a Person signified - the mystery and the marvel of it all is amazing - that He should be revealed IN the saints. As he preached Him and the privilege that was accorded the Gentiles, he warned them of their loss if they did not yield to God and let Him form Christ in them. He warned saint and sinner. The sinner will lose all if he does not repent and believe the Message of Divine love; but, the saint will lose also, in the measure that he refuses to accept all the Truth and yield to the teaching of the apostle. He taught in all wisdom as inspired by the Holy Spirit; and all the preaching, teaching, and warning was for the Divine purpose of presenting "every man perfect (full grown) in Christ Jesus." Is that not some standard? How do the folk, that say there is no such experience as perfection in overcoming, explain that Scripture? How can Paul present the saints perfect in glory, if they do not accept the perfect Teacher whom the Lord has sent and the perfection He brings and yield to His warnings and words now? If the provision is sufficient for our perfection without our yielding or overcoming, then what is the use of the apostle's preaching and teaching? Do you not see how foolish was all his travail, tears, suffering, and toil in behalf of the Church, if there are no ranks in the resurrection nor any difference in the perfection of the saints? "If there are no different grades of the flesh of believers, and no different spheres of government according to the perfection of our presentation before the throne, what is the use of teaching?" - we may well inquire. But there is a difference - I Corinthians 15. Because Paul knew that there was a possibility of missing the best, he was so insistent in his ardor, and so incessant in his toil toward the saints, and so persistent in his warnings. He tells us that it was not he but Christ that strove in him, which fact makes the Church more responsible to heed his words.

PAUL'S PLACE AND POWER

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily" - Colossians 1:29.

Do you realize what a marvelous official place the apostle occupies in the Church? He has told us in another letter that he espoused the Church to "one Husband," that he "may present a chaste virgin to Christ" - II Corinthians 11:2. Now in this epistle we learn that he sought by precept, example, and labor to bring the saints into and up to the Divine standard of such a relationship. He had officiated at the betrothal of the Church; and, he ardently desires that he may have the joy of presenting the whole Body of believers of this age, at the wedding, in the perfection to which they

have been called. We say again, without fear of contradiction, that the Apostle Paul had a most unique and exalted place in the plan and purpose of God; and further that we must accept his teaching and let it move, mold, transform, and fit us as the chaste virgin - the meek and meet companion of the Lamb - if we ever expect to gain Christ as the Prize. The further marvel of which we are informed here is the fact that Paul not only labored to this end, but that God Himself strove in him in dynamite to bring up the saints in their state to the absolute perfection of their standing in their Head - Christ. Hence, we may realize in some little measure, the importance of the Truth revealed in this epistle to the Church.

CHRIST THE HEAD OF ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER Colossians 2:1 to 3:4

"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; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" - Colossians 2:1, 2. The first verse in the above citation is an allusion to what has preceded; but it also characterizes the whole of Paul's life. He was continually in conflict of soul, energized with Divine life, in behalf of the Church of God. The welfare of the saints was an all-consuming desire with him. He desired all of them to realize how desperately he labored for them - not only for those at Colosse, but for those also at Laodicea, and for all saints - even for us at the end of the age. He set an example for the whole Body of believers, in this respect as well as others, which we do well to imitate. So very few of the saints are filled with the zeal of the dear Apostle Paul in behalf of others. The majority will help others, if it does not inconvenience them or cost them anything; but it cost the apostle everything to serve the saints. He labored, sacrificed, and served at his own expense. He enriched others by impoverishing himself - praying while others slept, denying himself while others indulged themselves, working overtime and all the time while others took it easy. Well, he will get his reward. In fact, he has received much of it already in the blessings that have come upon the Church because of his poured-out victorious life which laid the foundation for his letters. If he had not been the consecrated full overcomer that he was, the Lord would not have used him as the channel of blessing to the Church; though we must ever remember that it was God that worked in him "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" - Philippians 2:13. He was a chosen vessel. Jesus said to Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" - Acts 9:16. According to this statement, the more favored we are of Jehovah, the more we suffer in this world; hence, we ought to rejoice if our way is thorny. True, it is contrary to the doings of the natural man; for the favored, of the kings of an earthly kingdom, fare well. Our King, though Lord of all, is rejected; and we are in the same plight. We suffer with Him. Our reward will come later. Paul has not yet entered into all the reward of his labors. He will receive full compensation at the resurrection of the just.

Paul was interested in all the saints. Every assembly was dear to him, whether he had founded it or not. The church at Colosse, as we have noted, was not the work of his hands; neither was the church at Laodicea. But his zeal and love toward them were the same. He had no limit of fellowship less than the "all saints." He was in travail of soul for all the "Church of the Firstborn" - Hebrews 12:23.

Laodicea was a city in close proximity to Colosse, and with Hierapolis is associated with Colosse. It was one of the seven churches of Asia addressed by Christ through His servant John - Revelation 1:11; 3:14. A Syrian king, Antiochus II, named it for his wife - Laodicea. It is mentioned four times in this epistle. There is a little hint here of the Church at the end. Laodicea of that day figures the lukewarm saints of the same name at the close of the age. Hence, we may say that Paul was in travail of soul for the indifferent and the careless Laodicean believers that refused correction, as well as for the disciplined, corrected, overcoming ones, who heeded his Message. The apostle's very soul was in anguish; his heart was wrung over conditions around him. How much greater would be his sorrow over the state of the Church today. Division and carnality are manifest on every hand; even the sects are quarreling, not only with each other but among themselves. Biting and devouring one another is the order of the day. The lack of unity among believers, for which Paul prayed, is appalling. Sad to say, the opposite condition to unity is manifest. Men make no headway toward uniting the clashing elements in the different factions. The religious confusion gets worse and worse. Why? Because the unity cannot be made. It is already a fact in Jesus Christ. THE CHURCH IS ONE BODY. We are nowhere instructed to make it so; but we are to recognize the

oneness, and endeavour to keep the unity. There is no other way to experience the harmony desired.

The human body is the pattern. There is no lack of unity in my physical body, nor in any physical body. It is moved entirely by the law of its life directed by the head. Likewise, it is with the Church which is the Body of Christ. He is the Head and Lord of all its members. Therefore, the apostle at the outset of the chapter - which emphasizes the Headship of Christ over every principality and power - declares that he was in conflict of soul, energized beyond measure for the saints that they would recognize the oneness of the Body and enter into harmony with every member therein. It is only thus that their hearts will be comforted and knit together in love. Observe the unity of that statement - "knit Together" - not apart. It signifies oneness, unity, and harmony - not only with "my church" (as many call the sect to which they belong) but with all believers. Knitting in the natural is an art, not easily learned; and a rent in a knitted garment means weakness and consequent destruction. Hence, how necessary that we yield to the needle of Truth as wielded by the Holy Spirit, and be made one with all saints experimentally as well as provisionally. The result of such oneness is a marvelous gain to us spiritually. There is an increase of knowledge as well as of love, and this is no little measure. But we "gain in all its richness the full assurance of understanding; truly to know the mystery of God, wherein are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge hidden" - Colossians 2:2 Conybeare. This secret that is unfolded to us is that we come into the realization of the three Personalities - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - as revealed in Christ. Thus, there is no room or desire for any "new thought" or "new light" as men call these errors - some of them being actually devilish that are broadcasted today. But Paul insists that to hold the Headship of Christ over the one Body is to come into union and fellowship with God and into an understanding of which there is no greater. For he adds:

"In whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" - Colossians 2:3. The apostle is emphasizing the superiority of the knowledge found in the Gospel which he preached, over all the supposedly higher wisdom that all the false teachers at Colosse or of any other place were teaching. All the depths of God are found in Christ. All the treasures of the Infinite are hidden in Him. He is the essence of the Gospel. We need never long for any knowledge, higher or deeper, nor go outside of Christ to search for any attainment of perfection. He is God's storehouse of wealth for humanity. Spiritual blessing of every kind is waiting our appropriation.

Paul was in earnest about these false teachers with their counterfeit wares. He was endeavoring to put the Colossians upon their guard against any teaching, which had the semblance of a religious cast, that had not come direct from their God-appointed teachers or pastor. He was warning those dear impressionable Colossians of the danger of those errors that were in their infancy then, but are full grown in Christendom today. That Gnostic teaching which began in such a small way has increased a hundred-fold. The Church as a whole has not been taught of her riches in Christ; hence, has been starved and hungry for the Words of Life. Thus, she has fallen an easy prey to error. Almost all of these deceptive cults, purporting to be higher revelations of wisdom and knowledge, have a little semblance of the Truth. They have hidden the error or lies in the covering of Scripture, like the bitter medicine of the pill is covered over with the sweet coating. The error is not tasted nor seen but is swallowed whole, because of the little of the Truth in which it is garbed; and it does its deadly work in the dark. The poison is assimilated into the system, and becomes so entirely a part of the individual that he is seldom delivered from its power. THE FIRST WARNING "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" - Colossians 2:4, 5.

Paul's whole heart was set upon the perfection of the saints of God. Like a father or mother of a large family in the natural desires that each of their children excel and make a mark in the world, so he longed with a deep steadfast yearning that each of the family of God would reach the

standard. He prayed and labored to this end. He did not want them beguiled by enticing words, for error is often found garbed alluringly. It entices the carnal Christian; hence, Paul desired to expose it. He would take off its enticing trappings and show it up as a hideous travesty of the Gospel. It was a serious matter with the apostle. It meant everything to him that the saints should not be deceived. Whether he was absent or present, his concern remained the same. God's people were his people, and his people were the Lord's. He loved them with Divine love and it was his joy and delight to behold their orderly walk in faith, steadfast and sure, established in the Truth and abounding therein with thanksgiving. The people were his "joy and crown," he tells us in another letter - Philippians 4:1. Hence, he continues:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" - Colossians 2:6, 7.

Here is the sum and substance of the whole matter. The simplicity of the Christian life is expressed in the above citation. Folks make it complex and cumbersome by their self-occupation and legality. As we received Christ, so let us walk in Him, is Paul's advice. How did we receive Him? Did we work to receive Him? Did we arrive at such a sanctified state by our own self-effort, that we deserved to have Him come in and take up His abode in us? Was it in any such manner? No, indeed. It was by simple faith that we received Christ, "the Head of all principality and power," as our Head and life; hence, that is the way we are to continue. It is a life of faith, that Paul is emphasizing. We are to walk not as the old man, but as the new man. We are to walk in Christ our new Head, "rooted and built up in Him."

The apostle believed in a good foundation. He goes back to the resurrection of Christ to show us whence we, the new man, came. When our Head arose from the grave, we arose with Him. More than this, deep in the eternal counsels of Jehovah before the foundations of the earth were laid, we were chosen in Christ - Ephesians 1:4. A new creation was chosen in Him; hence, our experience of salvation was a carrying out of that which had already been predetermined. We have deep and well-grounded roots. It is good to be well-rooted - a necessity, we may say, to a good tree. Observe a tree in the natural that has deep roots. The storm may come and the wind lay it almost even with the ground; but it is not uprooted. No. Its roots have taken firm hold of the earth in which it is planted, and no adverse power can move it from its security.

So with the new creation, the new man. Those who have received Christ have put on the New Head. They have been planted in the soil of grace; hence, they cannot be moved by winds or storms of any kind. In fact, like the tree after the storm, their roots are more deeply embedded than previously. They have taken deeper hold of the soil and are more settled and secure than before the terrific cyclone had passed by them. They are fixed and established in the Truth; hence, are ready for the building up. This, too, is IN HIM. There is nothing for us apart from Christ. He is seen here continually as the Head of the Body, the Church. We are to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" - Ephesians 4:15. That is, we are to take on more and more of His life, and thus become like Him in character in all things. There will be the growth upward, if there is the corresponding rooting downward.

Paul says that was the way the Colossians had been taught by their founder. He was not teaching them something different; but, he was simply hitting the nail of Truth on the head, fixing it more deeply in their hearts. He desired the saints to revel in the teachings which they had received - to abound in them with thanksgiving - for they were the doctrine of the Lord. Then he stops, as it were, with his words of encouragement and comfort to warn them again of the errorists that were in their midst. With their wrong doctrine they rob Christ of His glory as the all-sufficient One, the Head, in whom are stored up all that the Church needs or ever will need for her growth and perfection. He is God's source of supply; therefore, we are not to go to any other source for any blessing. Those false teachers would get the Colossians occupied with philosophy or self-effort of some kind, as the following words indicate.

THE SECOND WARNING

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" - Colossians 2:8.

Philosophy is a searching into the causes of effects. Also, it pertains in a religious sense, to those who practice self-control and endeavor to school themselves on a certain line such as being stoical and acting without anger or passion in every case. They strive and finally learn to show no feeling. Even their joy is tinged with calmness. It is a very subtle form of religiousness and self-effort. It is deceptive, for it is the old man dressed up in his Sunday-go-to-meeting togger. It is a species of man's religion, very attractive to the flesh; for it adds to his prestige and renown. The devotees of philosophy become so overly devout and apparently holy that they do not desire to eat; but they will fast more than the Pharisees - "twice in the week." They call attention to themselves continually by their additions to their supposed holiness, and seek to put on others their acquired counterfeit of sanctity. They become actually offensive to the truly spiritual, who want to get away from all make-believe and instead put on Christ. Such people draw no one to Christ, or to the Gospel; for they appear to have such a joyless existence, living such an ascetic life, that folks are repelled rather

than allured. But saints who are yet carnal and babes are easily snared by these deceivers. They become lifted up and imagine that they are more holy than others who are much farther on, because they are so self-controlled, stoical, and calm; in other words, they are so self-conceited.

But Paul says to BEWARE of all this put-on religion. It is after the traditions of the flesh and the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. It has nothing to do with real spirituality. The latter's fragrance cannot be counterfeited, nor put on. It is wholly of the Spirit, and needs no fast days nor fasting to make it better. Praise the Lord! It is the result of an inward life. The fruit grows on the tree in the natural; so in the spiritual. It is not hung on. Hence, if we have received Christ and are walking in Him by faith, it will be evident. Our fragrance cannot be hidden. We need nothing beside Him. Let us heed the apostle's words. Notice them carefully - "Lest any man spoil you." These self-effort, self-controlled, abnormal self-perfection religionists spoil true saints. Their adherents leave Christ as their all-sufficient Head and Source of holiness; and they become self-centered, and are spoiled or robbed of their reward and glory. Then he emphasizes the positive blessings and perfection found in Christ.

ABUNDANCE IN CHRIST

"For in Him (Christ) dwereth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power" - Colossians 2:9, 10.

When we have a vision of Christ - who He was, is, and ever will be - then we grasp in some measure the meaning of the above; and we do not endeavor to be anything or want anything apart from Him. We realize that we do not have to struggle to emulate or strive to be anything religious or otherwise, but to rest in all the fulness - the abundance of supply in Christ - for all our needs. What more can we desire than His fulness? All that He is, we may be, by simply believing and appropriating the fulness that is at the service of our faith. There is no lack in Him of wisdom, righteousness, and power; and we if are complete in Him." How foolish of anyone to seek anything less, when the best is found in Him. It would be as silly, and much more so, if a woman who possessed the finest diamonds, rubies, and other real and exclusive jewelry sought for imitation stones inferior to the real ones. Or, we may illustrate it, by the case of a man who was the possessor of an inheritance which was immense in value and perfection. Instead of investigating his possessions and enjoying his own fertile real estate with its great orchards and rivers of water, he was off in other parts trying to get hold of some inferior land at a fabulous price. That man, we would say, was simply a fool. There would be no question of such conduct in the natural. But the Lord's people are playing the fool continually in a much greater sense. Instead of staying at home "in Christ," they go off on investigation tours after spurious goods and are thereby spoiled and impoverished. Oh! How unworthy of our great God and Saviour! Let us camp right down on our possessions in Christ, and enrich ourselves eternally by appropriating what is our own. There is nothing better anywhere, nor in anything. "In Christ" we are blessed with every spiritual blessing without stint; therefore, let us believe God and enjoy our riches - Ephesians 1:3.

By union with Christ, we are complete in Him; and this is the only way we can partake of His fulness. "And in Him you have your fulness; for He is the Head of all the Principalities and Powers" - 2:10 Conybeare. "By union with Him alone, you can partake of the Pleroma of the Godhead, and not (as the Gnostics taught) by initiation into an esoteric system of theosophy, whereby men might attain to closer connection with some of the 'Principalities and Powers' of the angelic hierarchy" - Conybeare's note. How ridiculous! As though one who was joined by a spiritual birth to the Head over all principality and power and was complete in Him would desire any other place of fellowship or descend to any lower plane of glory.

THE REAL CIRCUMCISION

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" - Colossians 2:11, 12.

Here we have the manner or process by which we were joined to Christ and made complete in Him. It was by the way of circumcision; that is, the cutting off of Christ on the Cross. The rite of circumcision was the type of the death of Christ; hence, of the deserved death of the old creation. But the type was only a partial casting off of the body of the flesh. The death of Christ went much

further and shows us the whole old man cast off and buried in Joseph's tomb where, in the purpose of God, he was left. When Christ arose, He was not identified with the old creation; but we, all those that believe, were identified with Him as the Head of a new creation. He was identified with our old Adam and took him and all his progeny down into death, that thus we might be identified with Him in His resurrection. God raised us up with Him. It is by the power of God that we have been made one with Christ. We believe in the operation of God. This is not only so. But we believe that, what He has done judicially and provisionally after the sovereign counsel of His will, He can and will make a reality to us who do not struggle or endeavor to imitate Christ but just rest and rejoice in God's Word.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross" - Colossians 2:13, 14.

Here are stated some marvelous principles of God's dealings with both Gentile and Jew. The apostle says that it was the uncircumcised flesh of the Gentiles that took them down into death; but, even so, they were quickened together with Christ and all their trespasses forgiven them. That, of course, is provisional. The Gentiles come into the realization of sins forgiven when they believe the good news concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, even as the Jew. But observe, that Paul does not speak of the uncircumcised flesh of the Jew, for their flesh had been circumcised; though, only typically, of course. For the true circumcision was that of the Cross where all mankind were cut off provisionally in the cutting off of Christ. But it was "the handwriting of ordinances," the whole Mosaic economy, that was against the Jew. These laws or decrees had to be taken away before the Jew could be free. Paul declares that these restrictions or requirements, that were against the Jews, were completely done away in Christ. Hence, the Gentile from his uncircumcised flesh, and the Jew from his laws and regulations, have been made free by the bringing in of a new creation. They have been raised up with Christ to share His life - a holy life - over which death and decrees have no power.

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" - the Cross - Colossians 2:15.

This is a marvelous statement. When its power is realized, we become conscious of our liberty in Christ in a practical way. When our great Head ascended to Heaven, He showed His authority in His triumphant entrance into the Presence of God, having successfully passed all the wicked spirits in the heavens who were marshaled to keep Him down. But, He overcame all obstacles and led the heavenly hierarchy captive as it were in His train, publicly showing Himself their Conqueror. Oh! That was the moment of moments, when a Man ascended to Heaven thus opening Paradise again to mankind! The fact that a Man is there today, accepted into the full favor and fellowship with God, is the proof that God is reconciled to man and the guarantee that all who believe may enter into that perfect acceptance in Christ. All practical righteousness, holiness, and usefulness are consequent upon this attitude of faith. It is then that all these little two-by-four axioms of these flesh-promoters and self-glorifiers will be seen in their true value - nothing and less than nothing.

ANOTHER INTERPRETATION

The following paraphrase of this part of the epistle is interesting. "How can you still fear evil spirits when the Father Himself has delivered you from the kingdom of darkness and transplanted you into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who has victoriously ascended to Heaven to share the Divine might of His Father, with whom He now works in man? Moreover, He by His suffering has united you with the Father and freed you from the dominion of all the powers of darkness. He exhibits these wicked forces as captives in His triumphal pomp, and shows their impotence to harm His Kingdom. How can you still let doubts and fears of your conscience bring you into slavery to superstition, when Christ has nailed to His Cross and blotted out the record of guilt which testified against you in your conscience and has assured to you the forgiveness of all your sins? Again, how can you fear to be polluted by outward things? How can you suffer yourselves to be in captivity to outward ordinances, when you have died with Christ to all earthly things and are risen with Christ and live according to your true inward life with Christ in Heaven? Your faith must be fixed on things above where Christ is at 'the right hand of God'. 'Your life is hid with Christ in God', and belongs no more to earth" - Neander.

THE THIRD WARNING

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body is of Christ" - Colossians 2:16, 17.

We are not of this world; hence, we are under none of its fleshly restrictions. We are joined to Christ, and are in possession of a life that is perfect and needs no keeping of days or seasons to make it better. It cannot be improved. Therefore, we are urged to let no man judge us in these things. We do not attain to any perfection by eating or drinking or by any fleshly attitude of mind. It is the attitude of our heart upon which Christ looks. "Let no man incriminate you" is another rendering. Yes. That is exactly what these self-appointed teachers and legal self-righteous religionists would do. They would make us out to be criminals, because we believe the Word of God and put the responsibility of our salvation on Him. The devil is the accuser of the brethren, and he gets many poor ignorant dupes in his service. They would accuse the saints for drinking coffee or teas or eating pork, or not keeping Sunday holy as a Sabbath day. In fact, some of God's people have so little knowledge of the Scriptures that they do not know any difference as to Sunday and the Sabbath. If we are really going to keep the Sabbath, we must return to Saturday - the end of the week. Sunday is the beginning of another week of days, and must not be confounded with the past. Therefore, that is its very meaning to us. It signifies the establishment of a new order of things. "Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new" - II Corinthians 5:17.

The covenant of Law has passed away with its rules and regulations. The covenant of Grace has the throne, where there is no law but that of love. We are born in the house of the family of God and are at home. We are not endeavoring by our doing, or not doing, to get into the Father's favor; for we are already in His favor, even the favor of Christ - "accepted in the Beloved." We say again, we are at home; hence, we are acting like it. We are enjoying the "goodies" on our Father's table. We like His blessings, and we are growing fat and flourishing, and resting in His wonderful love. We are letting no man make us out criminals, because we are happy in the Lord. We are not keeping any certain days holy, for all our days are holy days and we are holy people; not because we are doing certain things, or not doing certain things, but because we are born holy. Our Father is the Holy God; hence, for us His children to deny the holiness that is attached to our lives is to deny the holiness of God. These are serious things, and should move us to serious consideration. Whom shall we believe - God or man? Has the Lord freed us on the Cross, or has He not? Did the Lord Jesus Christ assume the Headship of the old Adam and bear his penalty on the Cross, thus dying in our stead, or did He not? Was He raised up by the power of His Father as the Head of a new creation, assuming all its responsibility, or was He not? Let us study and find out the answer to these questions; and, when we know them, let us rejoice in our emancipation from all dead forms and ceremonies and from all the guilt of sins and all the power of sin and everything that brought us into bondage and condemnation. We are born not of the bondmaid (Hagar), but of the free woman (Sarah); hence, are not under the covenant of Law. These legal forms and ceremonies were but a shadow, Paul tells us. Who desires to hold the shadow when the Substance is at hand? Who would rather hug the resemblance of the Beloved One than the reality? Why, no one would be so foolish in natural things; and yet in the spiritual, because of ignorance, the saints are hugging the shadow when the body or Substance is Christ. He has come and put an end to the law for righteousness. To have Him is to have life, and life more abundant.

THE FOURTH WARNING

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" - Colossians 2:18.

The above is the fourth admonition of this character in this portion. They are most pertinent and powerful. In verse four, we hear Paul saying, "Lest any man should beguile you." Verse eight says, "Beware lest any man spoil you." Verse sixteen warns, "Let no man therefore judge you." Verse eighteen declares, "Let no man beguile (defraud) you," or rob you of your Prize. Each one of these warnings is slightly stronger than the preceding. When we come to the fourth, we can almost hear the words of Jesus to the overcoming Church of the end - "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" - Revelation 3:11. It would be sad, indeed, to be enticed from the Truth; but worse to be spoiled by philosophy and vain religion. It would be still worse, if our conscience is so under the power of legality that we are condemned and feel like a criminal.

These all betoken a dreadful state of bondage for the people of God; but the last admonition has the deepest knell of loss and irreparable damage. It is a warning against robbery, spiritual robbery, of which many teachers and preachers are guilty. The apostle strongly intimates that the Prize may be taken away from saints by false self-appointed leaders teaching them to worship angels – lesser creatures than themselves. Such practice seems to be very humble and pious. This could also apply to the worshiping of human messengers, of which there is such a tendency today. It appears to be very religious, apparently taking an exaggerated lowly attitude outwardly; while at the same time the one so demeaning himself may be, "as proud as a peacock and as empty as a drum," as one expressed the pride of the puffed-up old creation. This false humility is like that assumed by all ascetics, and has been evidenced at different times in the history of the Church. The voluntary taking on of a form of inferiority to the Angels has been prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church, and is so still. It is what Paul warns against. They actually worship the angelic hierarchy with its different grades and ranks, and pray to these servants of man. We read, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" - Hebrews 1:14.

To believe the Word of God is to be humble. Faith never puffs us up, for faith is dependent upon God's grace. When we read that we are joined unto the Lord Jesus Christ - "the Head of all principality and power," above the highest created intelligence - it is true humility on our part to accept and rejoice in the fact of our exaltation; It is humility to say, "As He is, so are we in this world," even if we do not feel or look like such could be the case - I John 4:17. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" - Hebrews 11:1. As we believe, we come to feel and act the part too in some measure. It makes us humble to believe and praise God for His great grace. He has lifted up the beggar from the dunghill, and made him to sit among princes and inherit the throne of glory. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He hath set the world upon them" - I Samuel 2:8. Shall the beggar pretend to act humble and say, "Oh! I am not worthy. Let me stay here on the dung pile and smell the steamy odor of the manure and worship Thy servants, the angels"? How silly that would be! No one in the natural would take such an attitude toward one who was promoting him to honor. But folks, in spiritual matters, appear actually without good sense. The religious cant in which the professed people of Jehovah indulge is ludicrous and almost unbelievable when compared with the Word of God. We have been raised up in Christ Jesus to the highest place in the universe of God, second only to Deity Himself, as the Apostle Paul our apostle declares again and again. What shall we say to such an expression of grace? Shall we refuse it? Or, shall we accept the exaltation and thank God for His Son our Head, to whom we are joined by the law of His life? All spiritual lack and carnality in the true Church are caused by failure in this respect. False teachers and preachers will have no effect whatever upon folks that are continually fed on Christ and built up in Him. They will thus be delivered from the fleshly mind. Paul declares that all these errors mentioned in this letter find a place in the Church, because they do not depend on Christ the Head, as the following indicates.

CHRIST'S HEADSHIP IGNORED

"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" - Colossians 2:19.

The full responsibility for man's salvation which includes justification, sanctification, glorification, and exaltation has been put over upon the shoulders of Christ, the Head of the new creation. In a special sense, in a more intimate way, is this the case as relating to the Body of Christ - the Church. He is the Source and Sustainer of the Divine life which we receive at our new birth; and in the measure that we hold Him as such, and depend upon Him for our every need, in that measure each part of the Body increases with the increase of God. Just like a tree and its

branches are one and each part grows with the increase of the tree so is the Christ, the Head, with the Body. Even as the branches are a part of the tree, and of the same life and nature, taking nourishment and strength from their source; so is the case with Christ and His saints. They cannot be separated from Him and be useful or grow, any more than the tree and its branches can be separated and still be fruitful. It is the branches that manifest the beauty, strength, and usefulness of the tree. In fact, there would be no tree without the branches. Likewise, Christ's life is shown forth through His Body. It is true that His people are useless without Him; for He said, "Without Me

ye can do nothing" - John 15:5. On the other hand, as a Man joined to His people, He can do nothing without them. His Body is absolutely necessary to Him. It is the channel by which He is made useful and fruitful. Hence, unless we hold Christ as Head - that is, receive His life by faith and depend upon Him for our every need in every case - we are hindering Him from blessing others. His life must be manifested through His people. We are to exhibit Jesus Christ by yielding to Him and bearing fruit. That alone glorifies Him, and increases Him and us. The figure of a healthy growing child may be observed profitably in this connection. As he takes the nourishment provided and it is assimilated by his physique, every part of his body grows in right relationship to the whole. So in the spiritual. The Nurse, the Holy Spirit, ministers the life of Christ to the saints. He feeds them and they are nourished - growing up, thereby, in all things unto the Head even Christ - Ephesians 4:15.

DIVINE UNITY

As in the natural, so all the "joints and bands" are necessary to the whole body. Being "knit together" is a very realistic expression. It emphasizes a Divine unity, an interweaving of one believer with another, a oneness which cannot be broken except by the destruction of the whole assembly. That is the case exactly. These little or large congregations, these sects and divisions of Christendom, do not express God's thought of the Church. His Assembly is one Body. It cannot be disrupted for it is made one by the Holy Spirit, as the Lord daily adds those that are being saved - Acts 2:47. The figure of "knitting" expresses the unity most beautifully. The knitter puts stitch by stitch on the needle, and thereby adds little by little to the garment (the figure used here) until finally it is completed. Likewise, the Lord the Knitter (if we may so speak) by the Holy Spirit joins one saint to the others, thus knitting them together. The needle is the power, the material is the Word. The Lord will not cease His work until the entire Body is completed. Observe that each joint and band - that is, every part - is nourished and strengthened by the Word of God administered by the Spirit of God. Thus, the increase is altogether of the Lord. Man has nothing to do with the building up of this Body. He cannot add one inch to its dimensions. It is altogether of heavenly origin; hence, its increase is on the same plane. It grows with Divine growth and by Divine power, and will be finished in Divine order. God has begun a good work and He will finish it, regardless of men's thoughts to the contrary. The Church of Jesus Christ is not of this world, even as its Head and life are not of this world. The names of its members are written in the Lamb's book of life. They are elected with Jesus Christ to sonship as well as to a spiritual priesthood, and are to reign with Him over the heavens and the earth when He takes His throne. The Christian is not reigning here now except by faith through the abundance of grace that is in Christ Jesus - Romans 5:17, 21. That is, her reign is spiritual and hidden; for the true Church is an invisible organism, and not a visible organization or the multitude of them which are before our eyes.

Men have attempted to show off a miserable parody of the Lord's beautiful Body by great religious systems, and call them "the Church"; but He does not acknowledge such. These legislated bodies, controlled and managed by men, are altogether after men's thoughts instead of the Divine plan. Human decrees and man-made laws are substituted and given precedence over the Word of God as ruling in the Church. Hence, the result is the dwarfed miserable caricature, on the one hand, of the invisible Body; as well as the monstrous counterfeit, on the other hand, that is in evidence. It is enough to make us weep, when we behold the pattern outlined in the Scriptures and then behold in the world what apparently answers to it. The contrast is so great that we can scarcely believe the sight of our eyes as we look, or the hearing of our ears as we listen. But God is over all. He will work, and none can hinder Him. That pattern Church, beautiful and holy, shall be manifested in due time. The Lord will triumph, regardless of men or the devil. He will consummate His purposes concerning the Body of Christ, and will present to Himself His people without spot or wrinkle. The following verses continue the instruction for such a consummation.

LIVING IN HEAVEN

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments (elements) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" - Col. 2:20-22. The apostle declares that we are not living in the world. What do you say to that? He will not allow that we have anything in common with earthly conditions or the present order of things. He is speaking

as Jehovah's mouthpiece. Why should we act as though we were in bondage to decrees of men, when we are dwelling in another scene altogether? This is his argument. We are from Heaven, and are under obligation to obey our Lord and Head. No earthly lord or authority has any power over the Church of God. We are not to do anything so foolish as to endeavor by any doing or not doing, to attain to a greater degree of holiness than we have in Christ. We are simply to hold our Head as Head, and maintain the oneness of the Body, drawing continually for our attainment and perfection from Him. Thus, we grow up into Him.

Paul insists that we are dead; and, if so, we are not of this world. This world is for its people - for those that are alive in the flesh. The natural man is dead to God, but alive to the things of the world. The spiritual man is alive to God, but dead to the world. Men put away the dead. They bury them out of sight. That is the very way Paul argues. The old creation was buried in the tomb of Joseph when Christ, who took the place of our fallen head Adam, was buried. We have thus escaped from all the laws of this world as well as its pollutions. We have passed out from under its power, elements, and decrees. Therefore, to be subject to any carnal ordinances or any man-made precepts in order to perfect our spiritual life in any measure, is to deny the fact of our death and burial with Christ. Obedience to outward form makes no change inwardly. Sin and self will still be unconquered.

On the other hand, the inward change - Divine life in the power of the Spirit - makes a great change outwardly. Sin in its manifestation will be no more. Self will be giving place to Christ. Righteousness will be on the throne. Love will be seeking the good of others, leaving its attainment with the Lord. There is no more perfection possible to that which is perfect. We have all goodness, truth, and righteousness in the life of Christ which we receive when we are born a new creation; hence, we need only to grow. Jesus said, "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" - Luke 12:27. The lilies are set forth as an example of the Christian's life and growth. They daily increase in beauty until they come to full development, without one effort of their own. The responsibility is upon the husbandman and nature, not upon the lilies. Likewise, in the case of the Church. The responsibility is on the Lord, and the grace of God is the abundant and productive soil in which we have been planted and in which we cannot help but grow as we let the Lord cultivate us.

MAN'S DECREES UNSCRIPTURAL

All these decrees of men - "touch not; taste not; handle not" - have no place in the Christian's creed. Doing or not doing are not the issue, but being and having. These commandments of men are merely for this world, not for a spiritual man. They have no power to make one better or worse. The Apostle Paul teaches that these things have no bearing whatever on Christian character. "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" - Romans 14:17. It is not what we do, but what we are, that counts. When we are born right and let the Lord have His way with us, we do right. We are inright, upright, outright, and all right. Yet it is difficult to make men see these facts. For these "things have indeed a shew of wisdom," Paul admits. They seem so proper. People appear very religious and pious, when they abstain from certain things and teach others to do so. We met a man once that would not blacken his shoes or ride a streetcar on Sunday or otherwise break the Sabbath, as he called the first day of the week. Some of the folks thought he was wonderful. They were throwing bouquets at him, saying that he looked like Jesus and other extravagant encomiums. But to us, who knew the Truth, he looked like a false prophet. And he was. Keeping certain days holy may have a show of wisdom; but that is all. It is only a show, a pretense, a spectacle, a make-believe holiness.

True holiness needs no show. The teaching of our apostle is that we keep every day holy by living a holy life. There are many false teachings on this line. Men and women claim that we must not drink tea or coffee, must dress thus and so, must not use powder or wear neckties, if we desire to get to Heaven. They have all manner of rules and regulations for those who desire the best that the Lord has to give. One woman was in our midst one time who said, "Women should not wear buttons or ornaments on their dresses." She carried a pair of scissors, and insisted on cutting off the buttons. She wanted the young girls to dress like old women, and the old women or the mothers to see how homely they could really make themselves look. But the Scriptures give no warrant for any such foolishness. The Lord knew that the majority of us were homely enough without adding anything to our ugliness.

Well, praise the Lord for Paul and his sound doctrine. This is the old-fashioned salvation; but we need not dress old fashioned, nor call attention to ourselves by any outward show. We should adorn the Gospel by our good works and holy living, and make ourselves presentable while we are left in this body of humiliation - not dressing gaudily nor flashily; but modestly, sanely, and sensibly. Ascetic practices lead to self-occupation, and finally to self-congratulation; for, though they appear very pious to some folks, they have no power to combat the desires of the flesh and will not succeed in keeping sin down. It is simply "will worship," as we read.

FALSE HUMILITY

"Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" - Colossians 2:23. Humility is not something that can be put on or taken off at will. It is a fruit of the Spirit. We do not need to tell out how humble or holy we are by our affectation or words. When folks tell how humble they are, we generally find them proud. Folks that are really humble are not occupied with their humility, but with the Lord. God will keep us humble as we hold fast the fact of the death of the old man. Hence, again we say, it is not our doings at all that have any value in checking the demands of the flesh. Cut off all the buttons you want, quit powdering your face, let your beard grow, and be as much like nature made you as you can; but the want-to-do wrong, the innate rebellion and sinfulness, are there just the same. You see, that is what these verses signify. The doing of these man-made laws, instead of making us humble, gratify our pride and make us offensive to God as well as to spiritual people. The following verses teach us the way of victory in our everyday life.

THE WAY OF VICTORY

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" - Colossians 3:1, 2.

Here we have the beginning of another chapter, but there should be no separation between the last verse of chapter two and these verses. There is a continuity of thought and teaching. Paul is using the same argument in this portion as he did in that preceding, against all fleshly efforts toward attainment of spirituality. He has declared that we died - died to sin, the flesh, and the world - on the one hand (and all fleshly motion stops with death). But now he goes farther in his argument, and declares that we also arose. We arose into another sphere altogether - the sphere of the Spirit, of Heaven, and of holiness. We arose when Christ arose, and in Him we ascended and are seated with Him above. This is judicial and provisional Truth, but it can be made practical in daily life. It works most wonderfully when we put it in action by our faith. That is why Paul says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." It is only by faith that we will prove the power of the unseen things.

How many of us are really alive with Christ, as to practical experience? It is not enough to acknowledge that we died with Christ. That is only negative. Are we risen with Him? Do we enjoy and live practically in the power of resurrection life? The proof of this lies in the fact of whether we are seeking the things above. Are we seeking the good of our heavenly country? Heavenly things will occupy our attention and engross our time, if we truly believe that we have been raised up with Christ and seated above the world and its vain, empty, glittering things. We are above all the power of Satan, in Christ; as well as above every principality and power, both good and bad. We are seated above angels, in the victorious Head of a new creation.

Herein is Paul's strong argument. We have not only died, but are alive - dead to one scene, but alive to another. No one likes death. The world says mockingly to the Christian, "You are a dead one." Well, that is true, on the one side. We are dead - dead to this world, dead to its interests, aims, and ambitions. We are not endeavoring to advance the interests of this little earth ball, making it a good place in which to live, by cleaning up its politics. Not at all. Our politics are in another world, and they are already clean. We are not to be linked up with any cleaning-up squad, political force, or prohibition legion. One who is seated in Heaven, linked up with the great Sovereign and Arbiter of our destiny, is not concerned with little things. His horizon has broadened, his vision has increased, and his interests are altogether in Heaven and of eternal things. He is interested in God's things and working with God.

The Church has been seated in the heavenlies in Christ. But, for practical victory and usefulness, we must take our place there. The devil will try to oust us, and we will have to "fight the good fight of faith" in order to hold our place. The government of Heaven has given us this heavenly seat; but, we must lay claim to it and hold it against any intruders, until we know that we have possession. That is the manner and method of the United States in its dealing with claims which it has given away. The one interested had to stay on the claim - occupy, and work on it for a certain length of time - before it actually became his own. So it is in the heavenly things. We must make them our own, by occupying them.

God is not dealing in theories, but in realities. His land is the only "real estate"; and it is not "blue sky" either, but beyond the blue sky. Our "real estate" is over yonder. We are not seeking any estate in this world. We are satisfied with our heavenly claim. It is getting more precious all the time; and, the longer folks wait to get in on this great offer, the more it will cost them. That is, it costs the flesh something to take up this claim on high. The nearer the time of the Lord's coming, the higher priced the heavenly things will become. The sooner we get in on the ground floor of this great heavenly enterprise, the easier it will be to get the things above.

These words, "seek those things which are above," are very emphatic in the Greek. They mean, "abide in these heavenly places, stay there where Christ is sitting." He is staying there, abiding in the place of power at the right hand of God, and we are to do likewise. This is the force of the language. Paul is telling us that we are a new race of humanity with a new Divine life. We are a heavenly people joined to the matchless invincible Conqueror Christ, and need nothing more. All things are ours already. Perfection of life as well as perfection of position are ours in our Head, Christ. As He is holy, so are we. As He is above all, so are we in Him. To believe these facts is to be holy in life, victorious in experience, happy in spirit, and well in our body. Our daily walk, as well as our talk, will be heavenly. If we live in Heaven, though it is only by faith, our manners will be heavenly. Our speech will betray us. This is the greatest antitoxin against sin that we know. It will eventually gain the victory over worldliness and self-effort of every kind. Our affections will be set on Christ above. "Set." That is expressive indeed. We cannot be moved from our purpose of heart. Nothing and no one can gain the citadel of our soul, nor make us false to our Lord and Head. He is our Treasure. He said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" - Matthew 6:21.

DEAD YET LIVING

"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" - Col. 3:3.

A better rendering is, "You have died." Again we say, that here is the way of victory. It is put in our hands. We have died to all that this world contains. The old things have passed away with our old creation life. God's grace has made provision for a new creation; and, we may even now live in the power of it, though its Source is hidden. We have the privilege, we say, even now in this present time to display the power and reality of our Divine life. We may make the people see Christ in us. We may have the joy of showing Him off in His beauty and drawing power by our daily victory. Our life may be hidden; but we may reveal it, in some measure, by the fruit of the Spirit. When the "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" are in evidence, the world must acknowledge that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. There is no substitute for this luxuriant fruit. It is more convincing than anything else. It cannot be hidden, though the Source is. It is the proof of the truth of the word of our testimony.

Furthermore, the above is a positive guarantee of the security of the believer. His "life is hid with Christ in God" - doubly hidden, protected, and safely kept by Omnipotence. It is as though God would not even give the keeping of our life into our hands; but has kept it Himself, secured eternally in His Son. The first Adam had entrusted into his hand the keeping of the life of humanity; but, when tested, he failed. Hence, we lost our life, as it were. We were born without spiritual life, born in sin, with a doomed life having the penalty of death attached to it. This was not through any fault of our own. Our head fell, and we fell in him. The responsibility was his alone. God put it on him.

But now humanity has been provided with another Head, Christ. He has the keeping of the new creation life. The responsibility is on Him. When we believe on Him, we become partakers of His life. We are born anew. Even as He cannot fail or lose His life, so neither can He lose our life. It is secure in Him. He has been proven already, and has been found "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" - Hebrews 7:26. Christ identified Himself with our fallen head, Adam; and, died in his stead, as it were. He came under the penalty and power of death, assumed the responsibility of our lost estate, and atoned for all the ruin that Adam incurred and brought upon the

human race by his one disobedience - Romans 5:19. He has put the old creation away through His matchless atonement on Calvary. He buried it in Joseph's tomb.

But that is not all that He has been enabled to do. He has risen again and thus is now able to bestow a new life, a heavenly life, upon all those who will believe the Gospel. More than this, He is the Keeper of that life, even as He is kept in God. As Head of the human race, He is responsible for all those that are joined to Him by the fact of the new birth. Men may strive about the doctrine of eternal life, and deny the eternal security of believers, if they choose; but that does not hinder the purpose of God, nor make the Word of God of none effect. It only proves and exposes the ignorance of such would-be teachers and preachers of the Gospel. They do not know the Scriptures; and, therefore, cannot comprehend the immensity of His purposes in grace concerning the saints in Christ Jesus. They do not know Paul's Gospel, for His glad tidings declare that our life is hidden "with Christ in God." It is twice hidden, doubly secure. How then can we lose something that is in God - something that is incorruptible and eternal? We cannot even touch or contaminate it, much less lose it. Though we are yet seen as identified with our old life, the fallen nature, it will not always be so. Our life will not be hidden forever. It is shortly to be manifested. We will put on immortality.

MANIFESTED WITH CHRIST

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" - Colossians 3:4. Herein is the Christian's sure hope. It is the answer to all our questionings. Christ who is the Source of our life, as well as the Keeper of it, will be manifested; and we shall be seen with Him. Our life will then be in evidence. The days of our humiliation will be past. We will be clothed upon with our mansion from Heaven.

All creation waits for that great consummation, when all the Church shall be with the Lord. All things are out of harmony while the Body of Christ is absent from the Head. All the groaning creation will be delivered from its corruption; for the travail and pain of this cursed earth will, in great measure, be gone at the manifestation of the sons of God. Marvelous results are to follow the emancipation of the human race from the fall of Adam, and all are dependent upon the manifestation of Christ with His Church. They all await that consummation. "Lord, haste the day," we cry. Here we are brought to the end of the second part of the letter of correction. May we indeed take heed and learn the lessons which have gone before, that we may be ready for what follows; for the one determines the other.

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL Colossians 3:5-17

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" - Colossians 3:5, 6.

We now commence our study of the third division of Colossians. It is made up of sundry admonitions, all flowing from and dependent upon the truth that has been set forth in the two preceding chapters - the truth concerning the Headship of Christ over the Church first, and then over every principality and power. All things are under Him. He is Conqueror having entered Heaven, stripping all His enemy captives of their power, and exhibiting the impotence of their kingdom to harm us. In other words, He has robbed Satan of his power - muzzled him, as it were - so that he is unable to wield his scepter of death over those that believe. He cannot bite, though he may bark and act like he is still all powerful. But he has no power over a dead man. He has expended all his might in putting Christ, our Substitute, to death. He has done his uttermost; hence, we are free as a new creation from his grasp, as we believe the Word of God and act upon its counsel as here set forth. For then we find Christ all powerful in our lives. He will demonstrate the fact that He is over all, as we hold to the fact that we have risen with Him and are one with Him in a new creation. All things - the world, the flesh, and the devil - will be subject to His sway. He will indeed be Master and Lord to the uttermost.

In these words, "mortify therefore your members" - or, quoting from another translator, "give, therefore, over unto death your earthly inclinations" - we have the moral results of union with Christ. To "mortify" is simply another way of expressing, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" - Romans 6:11. The exhortation implies

that we are not actually dead, but are so to count. If we were actually dead, there would be no need of any such admonition. Furthermore, to mortify a thing does not mean to kill it. No, indeed. It means that it is dead already, and the object will decompose and go to nothing without any help. It will eventually disappear, though for a time it may seem to be in evidence. Likewise is the teaching at this place. Paul declares, "Hold the flesh in the death state, and finally it will not be seen." We will have no consciousness of its earthborn desires. The inclinations of the old Adam will be a thing of the past. We put our will on the Lord's side, and shortly we are free from the dominance and despotism of earthly desires. We do not need to kill ourselves to get rid of ourselves as identified with the old Adam, but simply count on our death and burial with Christ. Then the Lord will take a hand in the affair, and make the clamorings of the old life to cease. He will put an end to him and his lusting after things of earth.

INHERITED PROPENSITIES

Observe the list of sinful tendencies to which we are prone as born of the flesh. Who would ever have imagined that covetousness was reckoned as idolatry? But so God counts. Men seldom realize that covetousness is sin. But here, the apostle is speaking of the nature of sin, rather than its acts. He is showing up the heart of mankind - the depraved sinful flesh - which may in some measure be controlled and not allowed to show itself; but, it is there, nevertheless. Paul himself at one time thought he was keeping the law, because he had excellent self-control in regard to his life before others; but later he found that sin was in the very warp and woof of the old creation. He found coveting in his heart - Romans 7:7. He was desperate until he found the way of victory - not by self-control, but by way of death and resurrection.

The flesh is always coveting, always lusting contrary to the Spirit, and cannot be stilled except by death. But, as we hold to the fact by faith that we died with Christ, we will shortly have the feeling that we want nothing but the will of God. The Lord alone can still the flesh. He insists that we are in the Spirit and not in the flesh, and He will see that our desires are spiritual as we believe and leave the matter to Him. We will want only His will.

OUR NEW REALM

"For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them" - Colossians 3:6, 7.

Here we are further instructed, that we are not to allow that we are living in the flesh. The Lord reckons us in the Spirit, and He desires us so to reckon. The whole world is going to be judged because of sin. The wrath of God will fall upon the disobedient; but our tender gracious Lord does not want any chastening to fall upon His people. He has already been judged in our stead; but, if we continue to walk as if we were still in the flesh, some of the judgments will be felt by us. We are not living in the flesh, according to the provisions of God's grace; hence, we should not walk where we do not live. Is that not logical? Our walk proves where we dwell. We need not tell ourselves that we are spiritual, or dwelling in the Spirit. The fact will be apparent by our desires, ambitions, and aims. There is more on this line.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" - Colossians 3:8, 9. We put off the old man when we get saved. The apostle so instructs us continually. But we are putting off his deeds little by little. The old man's clothing is not suitable for the new man. It does not become him; hence, we are instructed to lay everything aside that belongs to the old Adam. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying are all part of his wardrobe. We are familiar with his dress, for we have all worn it. But the Lord does not want us to wear it after we are saved. He has another wardrobe for us.

New clothing is for a new man. Old things have passed away. Old things have had their day. We are not to be found in the first Adam's garments, seeing we have put off the old man. Yet, alas, how very many are walking about in their old clothes. How often is this garment lying to one another seen, and others of like character. The folks do not appear to realize how unbecoming to the new man is any part of the old man's garb. Old clothes are not suitable for a new creation. Let us change quickly, shed these old habits fast, if we have not already done so.

Yet for this, too, we are dependent upon the Lord. He must come to our help, and give the power to lay aside the old raiment and put on the new. He will do so, as we trust Him; for He does not want us naked. It is not enough that we put the old things off. Some folks do that. They quit some evil

habits, such as lying, swearing, or stealing. They cease using obscene language. Filthy communication is put away out of their mouths, but that is not enough. That is only a negative condition. Those people are simply undressed. The old man's clothing has been laid aside, but the new man's attire has not been put on. They do not have the perfection of God's thought and purpose for a new creation. He has a beautiful wardrobe, suitable in every part for His new man. He desires that we dress up equal to our standing in our all-glorious Head. He wants us to look the part we are to play. The apostle urges for the positive side of our salvation to be exhibited in the world. He says that by faith we put our old garments off and put the new ones on when we were saved. That is, we changed clothes, in changing from the old Adam into Christ. Now we are to exhibit them.

NOT FOUND NAKED

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" - Colossians 3:10, 11.
The above are the key verses of this section. Everything depends upon the fact of our being IN CHRIST and CHRIST IN US. A new creation is on the scene - disguised or hidden, it is true - but a new creation, nevertheless. Nothing else in the world is of any consequence to God in comparison with the new man. It matters not what race in the natural we were born of - whether Israel or the Gentiles were our forefathers, whether the cultured Greek or the religious Jew is our boast, whether we came of the circumcision or the uncircumcision, what complexion or people gave us birth, whether our father was a Dane or a Swede, German or Irish, freeman or slave - it matters not in the least. HAVE WE PUT ON CHRIST? IS CHRIST OUR LIFE? These are great questions. Natural pedigree is of no consequence whatever with God. He has no respect for natural birth or honor. Whether our forefathers came over on the Mayflower, or whether they were the Indians on America's soil when Columbus discovered this country - these are of no importance. ARE WE IN CHRIST, AND OF HEAVENLY ORIGIN AND ANCESTRY, CREATED AFTER THE IMAGE OF GOD? This is what God is concerned about, and what should concern us. These are the things that count. Are we growing up, by being continually renewed, unto the attainment of a true knowledge of God the Creator? How is it with us?

THE HEAVENLY WARDROBE

The old garments speak of habits that were natural to the old creation, and which are to be changed with the change of headship. The old man's garments are not at all fitting for the new man, and vice versa. The new man's raiment is not suitable for the old creation. Hence, Paul urges -

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" - Colossians 3:12-14. Oh, what beautiful clothing! It is the latest style, too, for the new creation - not from Paris, but from Heaven. Divine garments - inwrought with gold, white linen, silken tapestries with all manner of lovely weaving and embroidery work - clothe the new man. Notice them in detail. They are for "the elect of God." No one else can wear them but the "holy and beloved" new man. "BOWELS OF MERCIES" is the first garment held up to view. This lies deeper than the skin. Depths of mercies is of far greater beauty than that schoolgirl complexion that is raved about in the world. Inward beauties, graces that are wrought deep in the heart, begin to be manifested as we yield to the Spirit. Whereas we formerly exhibited hardness and indifference to the needs of others, never caring for our neighbor but looking after ourselves on every occasion, now we show the opposite characteristics. We are filled with mercy. "KINDNESS" is the next garment to be manifested. This is right in line; for, if the depths of our being are filled with mercy, there will surely be the evidence of kindness - kindness to others, not to ourselves. What a wonderful change salvation works, as we trust the Lord and yield to our new Head.

"HUMBLENESS OF MIND" is next on the list of heavenly garments. How beautiful is humility. It is never worn by the natural man. He cannot wear it, though he oft has a counterfeit which is easily detected. But "humbleness of mind" fits the new man like the paper on the wall. It is part of his clothing, and is altogether real and lovely.

Closely following, and a very similar garment, is "MEEKNESS." One is an attitude toward men,

the other toward God, and both are of Divine workmanship.

"LONGSUFFERING" comes fifth in the list of underthings. It is of matchless worth. Only those who have worn it know what a price it costs. We must surely have all the preceding upon us, before longsuffering can be put on. It has a tendency to slip off at the slightest provocation, and must be held securely in its place by faith. It just suits the new man. It is a part of his very nature; but, as the new life is hidden, the beauty of his raiment is sometimes obscured. But, if longsuffering is worn continuously for awhile, the next piece of the new man's attire will be in evidence.

"FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER" is a beautiful garment. It is quite similar to longsuffering, and helps to make way for the silken texture and golden sheen of the seventh article of the new man's wardrobe which follows.

"FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER" is surely beautiful. It is Divine indeed. The old man never can wear this garment, for it is specified as forgiving - "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." The natural man says he forgives, but he cannot forget. But Divine forgiveness carries no hatchet nor brick. It forgets all the past, and reckons on the future entirely; forgiving even the one that has sought his downfall, if he comes and asks his pardon.

Then appears the outer garment, the overcoat that covers all the others and is constantly manifested if the others are beneath. "ABOVE ALL THESE THINGS PUT ON CHARITY" or "love," which is the significance of charity. This is the only "put on" that God endorses. The putting on of our new garments is right in harmony with His will. "Love," the apostle teaches, is "above all." It is the very essence of the life of the new man. He is born of God, and "God is love." Oh, in what a robe of glory we are clothed. Here is grandeur indeed. It is a long coat, covering us altogether.

When men see the new man, they see the love of God. Who would not want to show off such clothing to a world of the opposite character! Maybe, if we dressed up more in our heavenly attire, we might have more folks coming to us to inquire where we received these graceful clothes. Oh, let us put them on and wear them every day, and not only on Sunday. Let us wear them constantly, for everyone likes new clothes. These are our new creation wardrobe.

The wearing of this heavenly raiment - that is, really having these beautiful garments as part of our very character - is proof positive that we are being renewed unto the exact knowledge and image of the Creator of the new man. In other words, we are growing like unto God. LOVE is the bond of perfection or the binding power of the union of these garments and completes them all. That is, all the garments of glory and beauty - the raiment of the new man - are seen as one, under the golden garment of love. Oh, how glorious is the wardrobe of Christ. INWARD ADORNMENT "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body; and be ye thankful" - Colossians 3:15.

Peace must have the citadel, sitting as sovereign in our hearts, ruling arbitrarily in the depths of our being that we may be victorious at all times. There is no disturbance or trial that then can daunt us. Peace will rule everything out, that is contrary to us, if it is on the throne. As we yield to the Spirit, He will fill us with the peace of God - not a piece; but all peace will fill our hearts. Observe that it is "the peace of God." How wonderful! God's very own peace ruling in our hearts. The peace that rules and reigns in God will reign in us. He is never dismayed, never disturbed, never fretted over events and happenings which appear adverse to His throne and purposes. No. Peace is ruling. It is sitting supreme in the depths of His Being. He is at peace, perfect peace, with Himself and His surroundings. He knows who He is. He is confident that nothing, absolutely nothing, can be against Him in any measure - regardless of how things appear. They are rather working for Him at all times. We are called to this peace - not a piece of the peace of God, but all peace with all men - and especially peace with all saints. We are called to this peace in one Body; that is, the Body of Christ should enjoy peace. Each member of the natural body is at peace with the others, in sympathy and fullest harmony; likewise, should it be in the spiritual. Each part should be in fullest peace with the other part and with all the members. We are called to peace, having no quarrel with any member of the Body of Christ. We will make no trouble for any of them when peace is ruling. If we cannot fully agree with them all we will leave them alone, and let the peace of God continually reign in our hearts.

"And be ye thankful" is added, as though peace is strengthened and encouraged by gratitude. This does not only signify thankfulness to God, but toward men also. Many saints imagine that

they should never thank the others for kindness shown, though they have taught, encouraged, and otherwise blessed them - even giving them material help in time of need. They think it is robbing God to thank men. They say, "God sent these blessings, not men. I thank Him." Well, that is good. We should give thanks to God from whom all blessings flow; but, we should also thank our brother

and acknowledge his favor, if we have been shown a kindness. Often, peace is maintained and a saint's heart is made glad, by a little tactful word of gratitude. Furthermore, some folks would show more kindness and thus get a greater reward, if they were given a grateful word or a little praise. Then, too, Satan is often put to flight and his accusations stilled by a little gratitude shown to those who have given of themselves to help. Gratitude is a beautiful grace. We need not fear to display its beauty, for we are admonished to be thankful. Real gratitude is a proof of peace.

Everyone loves a grateful person, but a murmuring fault-finding believer is an abomination to God and man. Here, truly, is where carnality is quickly evidenced. We are assured, when we hear complaints of God's providences and man's treatment, that such folks are not in victory. "Giving thanks always for all things" is truly spiritual, for the natural man is far off from this standard. How precious, indeed, is the fellowship of a thankful soul. His speech betrays him. The peace of God is in his heart. Then the apostle adds -

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" - Colossians 3:16.

"Let the peace of God rule" and "let the Word of Christ dwell" are the apostle's admonitions. Our will is to be yielded, and the Holy Spirit will attend to the peace of God ruling and the Word of Christ dwelling. Our part is to be receptive. "Let" is very expressive of the Christian life in its Godward aspect. Like the earth in its reconstruction, we are simply to yield and let God have His way with us - Genesis 1. He will fulfill all the good pleasure of His will in us, as we let Him. The Holy Spirit will write the Word indelibly upon our hearts, as we read it. It will dwell in us richly. That is, it will abound in us. We will be full of the Word of Christ. He Himself is the Word. We will be full of Him. He will regulate our words, ways, and walk into all wisdom. Therefore, it is very important that we fill up on the Word of God - our "loins girt about with Truth" - that we may be fitted to teach and admonish other members of the Body of Christ.

These are everyday admonitions. They are for the girl that works in the factory, for the mother that serves in the home, for the mechanic, the butcher, and the baker, as well as for the brother or sister that ministers to the saints in spiritual affairs. All the saints can sing Psalms, even if they cannot carry a tune according to man's rule of harmony. God wants the harmony in the heart, the one-accordness which the Word of Christ develops when it dwells richly in the saints. Spiritual songs are born from Heaven, and tell of the joy and harmony manifested there.

The songs which Christians are to sing are contrasted with the songs of the world - impure carnal words, set to loud fantastic jazz music. Singing always formed part of the entertainments and banquets of the Greeks. Paul is thus teaching that the saints are to rejoice and sing songs at their gatherings. Christians are invited to a banquet, not a funeral, is the force of the apostle's words. The worldling imagines that the Christian has a dry lonely time as compared with him; but such is not the case. We admit that some folks have made the way unattractive by their additions of law-keeping and carnal observances and religious endeavors; but that is not God's way, nor the Bible way. Christianity, according to the Scriptures, is beautiful, inviting, restful, cheery, and satisfying. Worship of God is sublime, and singing with grace in the heart occupies a great part of that worship. Ah, here is the secret of the happiness prevalent in Christian gatherings where the Holy Spirit is having His way. "Grace in your hearts" makes all men merry. There is no real worship of God where souls are bound by the law or legal observances of any kind; for there is no melody in the hearts. Praise unto God is not welling up in the hearts of those who are under law. It has to be worked up by the visiting evangelist or someone else, and the effort is surely painful. God is not pleased, and the people are not happy. What they need is "the Word of His grace" which will produce grace in the hearts, and then the melody will be wonderful. Heaven will be still to listen. Angels will stop their singing and fold their wings, that they may hear the saints on earth singing when the melody or harmony is tuned by grace. Hallelujah! No long faces, nor doleful lamentations, nor dirges called hymns; but, joyful happy words and music filling all the place, because of the cheer in the hearts of the singers. It is marvelous, wonderful, and glorious to sing unto the Lord, when the harmony of Heaven is filling our bosoms.

There is a difference between the two musical words used here. The one, "psalms," signifies in Greek "strains" or "outbursts of melody" or "songs accompanied by stringed instruments." Therefore, musical instruments are not only permissible but actually profitable, when used with the music of the heart. "Hymns," the second form used, means "odes" - songs in general, either religious or otherwise; hence, it is here followed by "spiritual songs," to designate the acceptable ones. Music is wonderful in its effects. It has been said, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage

breast," which is close akin to the truth. It often has been known to break the power of the devil and clarify the atmosphere of his presence. We have a great gift in our possession, when we are able to sing and thus teach and admonish one another as well as worship God with our voices. We are mutually blest and God is glorified, and all in the Name of the Lord. Then follows the closing verse of this division:

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" - Colossians 3:17.

Note again, upon what is the emphasis in this letter - namely, the Lordship of Christ. He is Head, and there is not a doubt about it. He is the "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending" of this letter, as well as of all the counsels of God. Everything centers around Him. He has been exalted as Man above all things in the universe of God. Only as we exalt and give Him that place of honor, which has been accorded Him, are we pleasing to God. Especially in this letter is the Headship of Christ set forth and emphatically taught. He is ABOVE ALL, OVER ALL, AND MORE THAN ALL to His Father and God. It is written that every knee shall bow to Him, the God-Man, who shall occupy the center of the stage of the universe for one thousand years. All God's purposes revolve around Him; hence, only as we depend and hang on Him, in that measure are we pleasing to God and doing His will to the uttermost. Our work and prayers, the ministry in word or deed, must be in His Name to be acceptable to the Father. We are thus a sweet savor of Christ, and all that we do or say is fragrant of Him. We are a burnt offering and a peace offering also to God, as we are living the Christ life and thanking the Father continually for His Son and all that we are and have because of Him.

CHRIST, LORD OF ALL Colossians 3:18 to 4:18

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" - Colossians 3:18, 19.

These verses commence the fourth section of the letter to the Colossians. Natural relationships are introduced and admonitions given regarding them, to teach us spiritual things. "Doth God take care for oxen?" Paul asked at one time. He was teaching the Corinthians that the Scriptures were written for the Lord's people. Their welfare was the first consideration, oxen were second. Likewise, in the above portion of Colossians, Divine relationships are the great question here. It is for this cause, that the natural relationships have come into being and are discussed and provided for in the Scriptures. We are herein initiated into the deepest and most intimate secrets concerning God and His children, Christ and His Wife, husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants. In fact, all the family mentioned even the servants have their part in supplying spiritual instruction, as well as teaching us the right attitude to assume in these relationships of life in this earthly scene. The wife is mentioned first because, as representative of the Bride of Christ, she occupies a prominent place. Her subjection to her husband, "as is fitting in the Lord," emphatically manifests the submissive and yielded character of that choice company that will really enjoy that exalted place with Christ. It is implied that the man in the case here is a Christian; for only such could represent the Lord. Otherwise, how could the wife yield fitting respect and obedience to him? The union of the man and the woman must be in the perfect will of God, to be a typical picture. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" - Col. 3:19.

Observe that the wife is not told to love her husband. They generally do so without any admonition on the subject, women being more affectionate, tender, and demonstrative in their nature than men. But that is not the real significance of the omission of this admonition in her case. It is because the man is a type of Christ. To really represent Him, the husband must be more manifest in his love to the wife than she to him. It surely is wonderful to see these instructions in a spiritual sense. They really glorify the earthly relationship.

Some folk imagine that a man must be cold and indifferent in his attitude of love to his wife to constitute a real overcomer. Such teaching is not found in the Scriptures, but rather comes from

Satan - I Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:7. The marriage relation was instituted by the Lord. He built a woman, Eve, to be a real helpmeet for Adam and He gave her to her husband - Genesis 2:22. Adam expressed his love and loyalty to his wife in these marvelous typical words, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" - Genesis 2:23, 24.

In the New Testament, we read of Jesus sanctioning the marriage relation by attending a wedding feast and performing His first miracle - changing the water into wine - John 2. Hence, we say that marriage is a Divine institution and it must be so held by the man and the woman or they are not truly representing God's great thought of their union. How very little of the spiritual setting of these things is known. Sin has come into the world, and this most sacred holy institution is debased and made carnal.

The man is instructed to love his wife, because Christ loves His Wife deeply, tenderly, and continuously. Nothing ever chills His ardor, nor alters the character of His devotion. It is like a burning flame. It caused Him to stoop from ivory palaces above to depths of humiliation below; hence, it is vehement, eager, earnest, and Divine. There is no love like the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Wife. It is the most marvelous love that has ever been manifested in the world, because it is unselfish love; hence, the husband is admonished to love his wife, that he may fittingly represent the great Lover - Jesus, the Man. He is not to be bitter against her, though she may give him cause at times. She may not be as submissive or thoughtful or tender as she should be. She may even be cold and unappreciative of his devotion at times; but he is not to be daunted. If he is to represent Christ, he must love his wife without any cause being found in her to deserve such unbounded affection. He must not feel bitter because of her coldness and apparent change of sentiment at times. Christ's love never varies. It is always warm, whatever the state of His Love. She may not always respond to His advances; but, nevertheless, He loves her unchangingly. He does not "behave harshly" to her is another rendering of the word translated "bitter."

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" - Colossians 3:20.

We have four classes mentioned here, beside the husband and wife. These, also, have typical significance. They refer to God as Father and Master, and His people as children and servants. The instructions are very easy to understand. They are most necessary today, especially the one quoted above. Children are so prone to disobedience these days; and the parents are lax in their training. We often hear mothers say of their very young children, "I don't know what to do with that child, he won't mind a word I say." Oftentimes, upon inquiry, we learn that the child is not yet ten years of age. Well, as someone has said, "if parents will not or cannot make their children obey, the State will later take them off their hands and make them obey." A child that is allowed to rebel against the authority of his father and mother will do the same with the authority of the State. That is why we have juvenile courts, reform schools, jails, and penitentiaries. If a boy or girl gets to the place of disobedience with the State where most children are with their parents, the State will punish them. We heard recently of an ex-judge who said, "About ninety-eight per cent of the tens of thousands in the penitentiaries of the country are boys that wouldn't mind their parents." Oh! It is pitiful, but true. The State will take these boys off the parents' hands and make them obey. They will not argue with them either, nor treat them gently.

But, as we said, this has also a typical setting. God is the Father of all them that believe. We, as His children, are admonished to obey Him; and, as is the case in the natural, some children are disobedient. They insist on having their own way; hence, our Father is often necessitated to chasten them for their own welfare. As it is not good for a child to have his own way in natural things, likewise in the spiritual. If we yield and walk in His will, the trials that come upon us will be of a chastening character that the fruitful tree may be more fruitful. As God is pitiful and tender in His dealings with His children, so fathers in the flesh are admonished to be like Him. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" - Colossians 3:21.

All these admonitions are primarily in view of their representative character, as we intimated. The Lord would have us live in these natural conditions in His will, and deal with everyday problems even as He deals. Fathers are to be like God in their treatment of their offspring. They are not to provoke their children by too great severity. The pattern of the heavenly Father's actions is to be followed. Children must not be discouraged with over- much upbraiding or punishment. There is the extreme on both sides. Let us follow the middle course, and trust our God and our Father to teach us to train our children as He trains us.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God" - Colossians 3:22.

This admonition, even as the preceding, is in view of the spiritual application.

Jesus is our Master. The saints are His servants. Hence, in order to manifest the typical and more important setting, servants should obey their earthly masters and seek to show forth the wonderful life of Christ in so doing. He took upon Himself a servant's form, and was made in the likeness of

man, that He might serve God and humanity. He has thus glorified that humble sphere.

Furthermore, He will remain a Servant forever. He has had His ear nailed to the door of His Master's (God's) house, and refuses to go out free - Exodus 21:5, 6; Psalm 40:6.

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" - Colossians 3:23-25.

Here we have the conclusion of the whole matter. Our whole life is to be a life of service to God.

"Whatsoever ye do" comes under the observation of the Lord and is to be done as in His Presence and heartily as unto Him, not grudgingly. Nothing of our life day is to be separated from His house and His glory. Our every deed, the most trivial and apparently natural thing, is thus lifted out of the commonplace and glorified as being done unto Him. Our business deals, our household duties, may in this way become spiritual service performed unto God and not unto men. We shall receive a reward of all such deeds, wherein we "serve the Lord Christ." He that doeth otherwise, serves himself and his own interests, thus doing wrong. He shall also receive the due reward of his service. Remember that these admonitions are for believers. We thus infer that some believers do not live in the Presence of God, do not walk in the Spirit; hence, do not serve the Lord. As they sow they shall reap. It does not make any difference as to who they are, how great they are in the world's sight, what high places they occupy religiously or otherwise - "there is no respect of persons with God." He will give to "every man according as his work shall be" - Revelation 22:12. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven" - Colossians 4:1.

The above is still a part of the subject - admonitions to the family of God - which we have been studying. Here we are taught that masters also have a part in these sundry exhortations. They are to render a just wage for a just service. They are not to defraud their servants of what they really earn, but are to reward them according as their labors deserve. Thus they are showing forth the justice, as well as the faithfulness, of God; and their earthly life and all pertaining to it are linked up with Him and His heavenly Kingdom. Our life becomes supernatural, even though we are living in the world.

FURTHER EXHORTATIONS

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" - Col. 4:2

Men have written lengthy expositions on prayer, its method, power, and place; but the Scriptures tell us all that we need to know about this great ministry. After all, the only way to learn the value of prayer is to pray; and the best way to learn to pray is to get at it. The theory of prayer is all right; but the actual taking hold of God in earnest effectual prayer is much better. Some folk are not very good at method or rule; but, when it comes to getting right down to business and doing the work and getting results, they are right there. Likewise, it is with prayer. As we pray and continue in prayer, we will certainly learn to pray. "Watch in the same with thanksgiving," we are urged. That is, watch for the answer, thanking God that the answer is on the way even when there is not the slightest evidence in this direction. Delayed answers to prayer give character to our prayers. The muscles of our faith are strengthened, as we exercise ourselves in prayer. Prayer that cannot stand an apparent rebuff is not of much value. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" - Matthew 11:12. Let us keep up our asking, seeking, and knocking at the portals in the sky. The Lord will open eventually and give us what we ask, especially if it is in His will like the petition indicated here.

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" - Colossians 4:3, 4.

THE ESSENTIAL ITEM

We may learn for what to request prayer, by reading and meditating upon Paul's petitions. Observe that he never once prayed or asked the saints to pray, that he would hold out faithful or endure to the end or be humble or any of the other trivial requests that one hears so often today. Oh, no. His requests were large requests. They came from an enlarged heart, a heart that had an open vision of the needs of others. He knew he had a Keeper, even the Lord Himself; hence, did not need to pray

for himself. He knew the people needed the Word of God, the Message of grace which he had received, more than anything else. Hence, he prayed for utterance and for open doors, that his Gospel might get an entrance in greater measure. Oh, how his heart yearned for the multitude and their need of the Truth. He forgot himself and his needs in praying for others. God answered his petitions, and is yet answering them. Such Spirit incited petitions are like the boundless ocean. The limits are endless. Paul's prayers are yet being fulfilled.

Paul prayed that the Word of grace would "have free course"; that is, that it would run and "be glorified" - II Thess. 3:1. Then, several times, he requested prayer that "the mystery of Christ" might be made known in a manner worthy of such a theme. We know something of these groanings of that great soul that his Gospel of cheer might find open doors, for we have had some measure of these yearnings.

"The mystery of the Gospel" simply means that the middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been broken down by the Cross, and that all men may now be saved on the simple condition of faith. Satan hinders free speech when it is directed to this end. He will let us talk on any other subject, except the glorious Gospel of grace. He endeavors to stop the mouths of God's servants through fear, discouragement, trials, and force; hence, Paul coveted the cooperation of the saints in prayer.

He was in bonds for the Gospel at that very time. He was hindered in the preaching of the mystery of Christ by being shut up in prison in Rome. His zealous earnest soul was stirred, as he saw the legality and self-effort of men abounding on every hand. He was beating the wings of his faith against the bars of his cage, crying that he might be delivered. But God did not answer immediately. He had some other and greater purposes for him than setting him free at that time. He kept him in prison that He might answer him in another and greater way.

He revealed further Truth to him; and, he wrote these letters of wondrous worth - to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians - of unbounded unmeasured treasures and far-reaching significance, while he was in bonds in Rome. Thus, he answered his own longing travail of soul; for the going forth of "the mystery of Christ," "the Gospel of the grace of God," to the world has been made possible by the writings of the Apostle Paul. These letters are still going forth in triumph. He was bound, as he wrote later to Timothy; but the Word was not bound - II Timothy 2:9. He might have preached the Truth to thousands of thousands, if he had been at liberty and able to go from place to place with his Gospel; but by his writings, which came from his pent-up dynamic-charged heart in a prison cell, he has reached the millions of millions and he is still talking to souls. The mighty overflow from that welling-up heart is still reaching other hearts; and lives are being transformed by its force, though the heart itself has been stilled for centuries.

Wondrous grace!

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" - Colossians 4:5.

We have seven "walks" mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians; while here we have only the one - "walk in wisdom." It includes our whole life. If we have been corrected by this letter, we will manifest the fact by our wisdom. We will not fritter away our time, money, or life in a vain attempt to make a showing in this world; neither will we be idle. We will redeem the time or, as another translation gives, "we will buy up the opportunity." That is, we are instructed to take advantage of everything that comes within our reach - every circum- stance, every providence - to enrich ourselves spiritually. Thus, our everyday life will afford continual opportunities of advancing heavenly interests. There are bargains being offered to us, in fact that are lying at our doors, from which we may realize quick returns - eternal dividends; but only a wise man will recognize their value. Fools will not see them.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" - Colossians 4:6.

Our words are indicative of the state of our heart. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" - Matthew 12:34. Our speech betrays us; hence, we read much of the tongue in Scripture. The tongue is the index of our physical health - the physician always insists

that we put out our tongue for examination; so in the spiritual. When our heart - our inward state - is full of grace, our words will likewise be full of grace. "Seasoned with salt" expresses the incorruptibility of gracious words of Truth. The savor of fresh spiritual wisdom will exclude all corrupt communication and tasteless insipid conversation. All our words will be of profit, and will have some effect upon the hearers. The presence or absence of salt is always noticeable. It is a marvelous seasoner, as well as an antiseptic. It implies duration, fidelity, and purity which is very interesting when realized spiritually. There was a salt lake near to the city of Colosse; hence, the

image was most striking.

"All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here" - Colossians 4:7-9. The above citation is added proof that this epistle stresses the STATE of believers rather than their STANDING. The latter is perfect, nothing can be added or taken from it, but the state varies and needs attention and additions; hence, the instruction of the apostle. He had heard of their state from Epaphras, and of the error in doctrine which had crept into the assembly; and he was sending this letter to correct that doctrine and to correct their state. Also, these brethren were to inform them of his state spiritually, physically, and materially. He was happy and blessed, even though in prison; and he desired to hear further of their welfare.

"Tychicus" means "fortunate." He was associated with Paul as a brother beloved, a faithful minister, and fellow servant; and was indeed fortunate. The apostle cannot so designate every brother, though he is in the Lord. Many of these are very unbrotherly. They have no conscience before God. They will undermine a brother and seek, if possible, to get his flock from him; also to take money from them. The latter really does not belong to them, but to the minister whose flock they are; but they have no scruples.

Tychicus was not of this character. He was "a faithful minister" - faithful to his spiritual father, and faithful to the saints. He was a "fellow servant" - two fellows moving side by side, both interested in the same object, and with the same aim in life.

Onesimus the "profitable," the other brother, was not a minister in the same sense as Tychicus though he ministered unto Paul faithfully. He was a runaway slave, who had been saved while in prison with the apostle; and then became willing to return to his master. Paul interceded for him with Philemon; and, no doubt, he was set free from legalized servitude but became a love slave of Jehovah and His people.

"Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the Kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me" - Colossians 4:10, 11.

These three - Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus) - were Hebrew converts of Paul who were loyal to him and the Truth of the grace of God. He commends them as being a comfort to him. The inspired Word is so interesting and instructive. There is always so much hidden in apparently ordinary events or statements, as here for instance. The apostle's mention of these three men, their lineage and their loyalty, teaches us that the following men named were Gentiles; for they too were faithful brethren, though not Jewish saints.

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis" - Colossians 4:12, 13. Epaphras, "foam covered," expresses the man. He was of Colosse, probably the pastor and teacher as well as founder of the assembly. He was intensely interested in their welfare, as his name signifies. He was covered with foam, laboring in their behalf, travailing in spirit for them that they might measure up to the standard - "perfect and complete in all the will of God." Some standard! Yet there are saints so foolish as to imagine that there is no such overcoming possible. Why such language then? The Spirit does not deal in vain and foolish statements. He does not put before us an attainment, if there is no such possibility of reaching it. He does not show us a beautiful prospect and, as we reach for it, draw it away and leave us discouraged and daunted. No, indeed. He does not. Epaphras prayed until he was covered with foam, as it were, that these Colossians might really be corrected and grow up into Christ in all things; thus, attaining in their state to the perfection of their standing.

There is further instruction here in the fact of these other assemblies being mentioned in connection with Epaphras and his labors and zeal. He probably founded them all. This zealous servant of Jehovah is a representative character. He figures such saints of the end who are of like caliber. They labor and pray for all the people of Jehovah, represented by these three gatherings in these three cities. They were close together. Colossian saints, "corrected ones," answer to the full overcomers. The church of Laodicea, "just people," represents the lukewarm believers of the end - the worldly minded folk - who, though saved, seek their own things and walk in the flesh. The church at Hierapolis figures a third rank in the Body of Christ - the 144,000 - who are a mighty

people of the end time. The name signifies "sacred city." It is said that there were some hot springs at Hierapolis and cold springs at Laodicea, which seems quite a coincidence.

"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you" - Colossians 4:14.

Luke "light" as also Demas "popular" are connected with Epaphras as being Gentiles. Luke was a physician before he was saved. He continued his profession afterward, except that its trend was in the spiritual. He as the light, became a wonderful diagnostician, showing up all the need of sin-sick souls and then revealing the Remedy for soul and body - the Man, Christ Jesus. Luke is the only Gentile, with the exception of Job, that had any part in the sacred writings. It surely speaks volumes for him. He shows us in his accurate record, how fitted he was in the natural to examine minutely into every part of the circumstances and events of Christ's life. He has written an admirable biography of "The Man" for all men - Jesus the Savior.

Demas was not so well reported of later. He became too popular, as his name signifies, and departed from the narrow path of reproach with Paul - II Timothy 4:10. He "loved this present world." There are many brethren of this caliber today. For a little passing fame, a present reward, they leave the path of reproach and self-surrender which leads to highest exaltation later. Poor Demas! How repentant he will feel some day, when it is too late. We are sorry for the many popular fellows whom we know that are missing the best.

"Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house" - Colossians 4:15.

Paul sends greetings to the brethren in Laodicea. How refreshing! There were no sects in that day. All believers were brethren, not spelled with a capital "B" either; and we should hold to this simplicity. It is the Divine plan. How often we read of the church being in a certain one's house. This is comforting. They could not have had great multitudes in these different assemblies, for there would not be enough room in a house. There were no great large buildings in those early days as meeting places, neither are we given directions to the building of such today. It was never the Divine plan to build great synagogues - of most of which it may be said that they are the synagogues of Satan.

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" - Colossians 4:16.

The epistle referred to above was not preserved, as was the case also with one written to the Corinthian church - I Cor. 5:9. These letters probably were designed by the Spirit for no further use than these local churches. Otherwise, they would have their part in Holy Writ.

"And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" - Colossians 4:17.

Archippus, "governor of the horses," was the pastor in the absence of Epaphras. He was admonished to be faithful to his charge. It is no little feature to shepherd an assembly of the Lord's people. Heavenly wisdom as well as Divine love are necessary characteristics. These words, "take heed," are a wise caution for our day as well as Paul's. The keeper of the horses or racers needs to be running for the Prize, as the apostle states in another epistle; lest, when he has preached to others, he may miss the goal - I Corinthians 9:27.

"The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen" - Colossians 4:18.

This is proof positive, that the apostle wrote the letter.

TRUE RICHES!

POOR? No, of course not. Why, how could I be

When Christ the King is taking care of me?

TIRED? Sometimes - yes, more than tired,

But then I know a place where I can rest again.

LONELY? Ah well I know the aching blight:

But now, I've Jesus with me day and night.

BURDENS? I have them oft; they press me sore,

And then, I lean the harder, trust the more.

WORTHY? Oh, no! The marvel of it is

That I should know such boundless love as His.

AND SO I'M RICH! With Christ, I am "joint heir"

Since He once stooped my poverty to share.