

Comments on

Colossians

By

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Colossians 1:3-4 "We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, **4** since we heard of your faith in Christ and of your love for all the saints."

It is not easy to pray!

It is even harder to faithfully lift up all those on our prayer list day in and day out. We get weary, we doubt, we fall out with someone on the list, we get distracted. But in these verses Paul encourages the Colossians by reminding them that he prays for them always. Not only does he pray for them always; he exceeds that and says *he gives thanks to God for them*.

Now praying for others is easier than giving thanks for them. Actually, it is easier to find what to condemn in others than it is to find what to appreciate. Thus, when we give God thanks for others we generally look for their best qualities and similarities to our nature and preferences and thank Him for them. Really though, we should be thanking Him for their weaknesses and their failings and the qualities about them we find uncomfortable because, in so doing, their weaknesses and failings will eventually be overcome and our prejudices will diminish.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I don't like that man; I better make a friend of him."

Agape love is not love that simply tolerates others. Rather it is love that seeks another's highest good at our personal cost. So Paul was praying for the best outcomes for all the assembly at Colossae. He did not pray just for his favourite clique, the intelligent, the leaders etc., but the whole assembly. The babes, immature, carnal, faithless and the faithful.

Why? Because, despite their weaknesses, they had a reputation which he had heard about; they had faith in Christ. They believed He was the Messiah. They believed He was worth living for. They believed He was worth dying for. And, they believed He lived in their fellow brethren, despite their weaknesses and unloveable characteristics. Simply put: they loved one another as Christ loved them.

What a great reputation. They loved the Messiah and that was seen in their love for one another. Their love was something the lost world found attractive. They had something worth living for and the world wanted it.

Does the world want what we have in Christ? Are they crying out for what we have in Christ? They will when we start loving one another enough to give God thanks for one another. They will when we are willing to maintain our prayer lists at all cost. They will when we looked for Christ living in each other despite our differences, personal failings and status in life.



Colossians 1:5a "Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel".

While living in Xian, China and teaching English in a university, I asked one of my fellow Christian teachers how he was converted. He was in his late thirties and had not married.

He told me that before coming to China he had worked in a London retirement home and his conversion was the result of an elderly man of 93 speaking only one word to him.

I was curious and asked him to continue.

He went on to tell me that each morning this gentleman would come to breakfast with his Bible under his arm. He would sit down in his usual seat, place the Bible in front of his place mat, eat his breakfast and return to the lounge for the day.

My friend then told me that after observing this for a few weeks he decided to ask the gentleman why he brought his Bible to breakfast.

One morning he plucked up the courage and asked. The old man looked down at his Bible, reached out his hand, placed one finger on the cover and without looking up said, "Hope."

From that day onward my friend concluded that if this 93 year old man had found hope in the Bible, then he had to find it as well. He began reading and found Jesus. From that moment on he was with me in China sharing HOPE.



Colossians 1:5b-6 "...of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you as it has in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth."

Have you ever thought about this? If the great commission is so great, why aren't we telling everybody?

Imagine for a moment that a lawyer knocks on your door and informs you that a distant uncle you didn't know you had made a fabulous fortune and you're the sole heir to his billions. Upon hearing this news you shake the lawyer's hand, take the bank cheque, close the door and put the cheque in a drawer for banking one day in the future when you're not so caught up in your urgencies. Then you return to what you were doing before you were rudely interrupted by the lawyer. Over time you forget about the cheque and never get around to banking the money. Folks, it wouldn't happen!

Well, in the first century the priceless gospel spread throughout the entire world bearing fruit because it was exciting truth. It was indeed the pearl of great price that one would give anything to possess. It was worthy of great celebration. The gospel was exciting news and had to be shared, just like it would be if one did have a rich uncle who left you his fortune.

That is why Jesus came in the Year of Jubilee when celebration was at fever pitch because the forgiveness of all debt and the restoration of all inheritances was under way. But, beyond the wonderful blessings for the Jews in that Year of Jubilee came the grace of God for all mankind. God was throwing a party for all who had been made in His image. Now all sin would be forgiven and God's house was open to all who obeyed the gospel call; gentile and Jew. God was throwing a party and the cost was on Him! (Luke 15:7, 20-24).

The disciples at Colossae were so excited about this God-initiated hope in Jesus that the lost and hopeless were beating a path to their door to find out why. And, when the lost got there, not only did they hear the gospel; they saw the gospel! What they saw were the Colossians celebrating the good news of their joint-heirship with Jesus, (Romans 8:17). The Colossians were contagiously joyous and were contaminating others with the joy of salvation and hope everywhere they went.

Is it possible that we have quarantined ourselves in our homes, careers, social lives and meeting halls and no longer contaminate others with our joy of salvation and hope? Are we fearful of infecting others with our genuine exuberance about our salvation? Maybe we haven't realized the value of it yet! Have we possibly filed Jesus away amongst our self-interests? Are we waiting for a more convenient time to get excited about the hope we can bring to the lost world outside of our Sunday meeting halls and entertainment worship arenas?

Surely it must be time for us to take a moment and bank that cheque God wrote with the blood of Jesus when He sent Him to save us from sin in the Year of Jubilee 2000 years ago? Wouldn't you say it is time to count our blessings and celebrate in the streets, homes, workplaces and nations so sinners just have to have what we have and will cry out, "How do we get what you've got!"



Colossians 1:7-8 "even as you learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, **8** who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

What a privilege to have your name mentioned in the Word of God. Yes, but how much more of a privilege to have your name written in God's book of life?

I am sure that Epaphras was not too concerned that his name was mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians. He was most probably not aware that the letter was eventually going to become a selected book of the Bible.

And, something more precious than the mention of his name was the mention of his heart. To Paul, Epaphras was a beloved fellow-servant. He had a heart after the nature of Paul's sacrificed heart. They both had the heart of bondservants and their master was Jesus.

Not only was Epaphras' heart mentioned by Paul, but his reputation was mentioned also. Epaphras was a faithful ministering bondservant. And who did he faithfully

minister to as a bondservant? His Lord Jesus who was living out His life through the apostle Paul.

Despite what others thought, or what the consequences might have been, Epaphras faithfully served Christ's fellow-servants, the apostles. He was not envious or covetous of their apostolic call or close relationship with Jesus. He had a close relationship with Jesus and a servant's role from Him, and in it he served his Master faithfully.

Jesus calls us all to different ministries and roles in the Body of Christ and it is our duty to be faithful in them. It is not for us to question why we aren't used or honoured like others in the Body of Christ. We must accept the fact that we are all called to serve Christ as He lives in others, regardless of personal cost, fame or recognition among the brethren. Faithful bondservants only care about what their Master wants done and that He gets the glory. (II Thessalonians 1:11-12)

Jesus said that in serving the least fortunate of mankind, we serve Him, (Matthew 25:31-46). Let us therefore rejoice that our names are written in God's book of life and faithfully get on with ministering unto Him as He lives in others, just as Epaphras did.



Colossians 1:9-10 "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

Prayer is the most demanding of all spiritual disciplines. Prayer is also the most rewarding of all spiritual disciplines. Unselfish prayer is the most difficult of all spiritual disciplines. The apostles mastered these three disciplines and never ceased to pray for others; and especially for their intimate spiritual development.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians and told them not to be ignorant of God's will for their lives (Ephesians 5:17). He wanted them to have an intimate and rewarding walk with God. And, in his letter to the Colossians, he goes beyond just knowing God's will for their lives: he prays that they understand the *spiritual implication* of God's will for their lives.

Why? So they could walk worthy of the Lord and please Him in the tasks *He planned* for them before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 2:10). This involvement with God, according to His will and His planned works, would lead to an intimate and informative relationship with Him.

God wants all disciples to have an intimate and informative relationship with Him. He wants to lead us continually with His Spirit (Romans 8:1-17). But, it is we who fear such intimacy. So, we set about inventing all kinds of church programs, worship activities, events etc., which have the appearance of spirituality, but feed us little

spiritually and keep us from prayer and studying God's word. These indulgences often fail to produce something very basic; intimacy with the Father.

Our activities and programs seldom originate from intimacy with God, either on a personal or corporate level. They usually result from the consensual wisdom of men and woman in leadership who then bring their plans to God for His blessing rather than seeking His plans for the church. Church boards, committees etc., tend to want to control God rather than be God-controlled.

Paul calls individuals and assemblies to these three simple but costly endeavours: 1. Know God's will for our lives and live in that knowledge wisely. 2. Seek after spiritual understanding not worldly religious understanding as we live in His will for our lives. 3. Exercising the first two will then result in walking as the Lord wants us to walk, individually and corporately. Then the world will see our good works and declare that we know Him and have an intimate relationship with Him.

Lasting intimacy with God will seldom, if ever, be found in the decisions of church boards, committees, activities, programs, worship services etc., but only while we hunger and thirst for righteousness, study God's word and spend more time on our knees seeking His daily will for our lives.



Colossians 1:11 "We pray that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, to exercise every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy." (Amplified Version).

There is nothing more memorable or enjoyable in life than an invigorating experience. It is something you treasure and often talk about.

Well, Paul prayed for the Colossians that their life in Christ would be an invigorating one. Not only that; he said he sought God on their behalf so they would be strengthened with *all* power. He did not seek God for *some* power or *enough* power; but ALL power for their lives in Christ.

Too often we rob ourselves because we do not seek God's best. We settle for the crumbs that fall from His table rather than the complete meal He sets before us. Paul wasn't about to settle for the crumbs; he wanted God's very best for the Colossians and for himself.

We should not settle for crumbs any more. We must hunger and thirst for God's best. There is no question that we certainly need it at all times!

But, Paul went further and prayed that God provide His best according to His might and His glory. It is one thing to receive God's best, but it is another thing to know how to live in it. So, Paul asked God to not only provide His best, but to enable the Colossians to live in it, comprehend it, appropriate it and reach new God-empowered heights in it.

When disciples live in God's best it will always attract the attention of Satan, other believers and the world.

Satan pays attention to believers who become disciples and start to live their lives in the promises and empowerment of God. Such disciples threaten his kingdom and endanger the success of his dark realm.

Church-going believers are also attentive to fellow-believers who suddenly start to break the mere church-going mould and begin praying more, reading more, trusting God's promises more and seeking to serve in His power and glory regardless of the cost. Such commitment soon brands one as fanatical, fundamental etc.

The world also pays attention because its sinful activities are challenged by disciples who are strengthened with *all the power of God* (Ephesians 1:15-23). The world only has two options when confronted by the lives of committed disciples: join them or kill them.

So, because such invigorating, powerful lives are a threat and attract persecution, Paul prayed for the Colossians that they would joyfully endure persecution from Satan, their own brethren and the world.

In the light of Paul's concerns for the Colossians we also need to remember these wonderful words of Jesus if we determine to seek God's best in our service unto Him: **Matthew 5:11-12** "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely for My sake. **12** Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."



Colossians 1:12 "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light."

God wants us to communicate with Him. He also wants us to take account of all the things He's done for us and continues to do for us. When we do, then we really know how to thank Him.

Thanking Him is easy because He has done all He can to establish a relationship with us in His unapproachable light. Besides that, He has made it possible for us to feel welcome there (Hebrews 10:19-26).

So, not only do we have a relationship with our eternal Father through Jesus; we have an inheritance. As a matter of fact we are joint-heirs with Jesus to that inheritance (Romans 8:17). Surely then, we have much to be thankful for.

Over the years I have attended numerous prayer meetings but, I have never attended a follow-up thanksgiving meeting. Think about it. We go to prayer meetings and make all kinds of requests, praise God for who He is and what He's done for us and then leave. At the next prayer meeting we do the same again.

In the light of such action, let's think about this for a moment. We call a prayer meeting and at that meeting we list two or three items to be prayed about and for the next hour or so that is all we concentrate our prayers on. Over the next week or two we note God's answers to our prayers and then we hold a follow-up thanksgiving prayer meeting. At that prayer meeting we spend an hour or two thanking God for answering the prayers we offered up at the previous meeting.

Makes sense to me because it teaches us two things: God answers prayer which, in turn, encourages us to pray again and again with thankful hearts.



Colossians 1:13 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

Sorry about the length of this article, but this is a very important subject which deals with modern day "**generational sins deliverance ministry**" and needs to be addressed.

There is a saying that goes something like this: "Why fix it if it ain't broke?"

In the verse above, Paul used past tense to convey a fantastic state of being to the Colossian disciples. He told them that all God could possibly do to bring sinners into abundant life had been done. The Colossians did not have to go back after they were saved and improve on what God had done for them *in Jesus*. At conversion they were delivered from the power of darkness that had controlled their lives. They were not just delivered from darkness; they were delivered from *the power* of darkness.

Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient to deliver them from *all of their past*; *all of the power of darkness* over their lives. His sacrifice was sufficient to deliver them from *all* that would confront them in the present. His sacrifice *was sufficient* to convey them into the presence of God at death. They did not have to go back into their past or their parent's past or their grandparent's past and chase out demons or deal with the generational sins of their forefathers. They were *once and for all* delivered from the *power of darkness*.

Deliverance ministries, which are practiced in some churches today, are an attempt to improve on what God has done in Christ. How can you improve on that which needs no improvement? There is no need to chase demons out of believers or deal with the sins of their ancestor's past. What is needed is true conversion in the first place. Conversion that is based on what the word of God teaches not raising your hand and receiving Jesus into your heart.

If believers struggle to live the Christian life the problem is not their past; it is their conversion. They have not had a full encounter with Jesus or a full disclosure of what He did at the cross to deliver them the power of darkness and appease God once and for all at conversion. When believers struggle with their Christian lives it is not their past that is to blame; it is their conversion and lack of exposure to what God's word promises in the present. Poor preaching and poor teaching produce impoverished, doubting believers!

How can we improve on the past tense of the verse above: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness"? Or how about II Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." The old is passed away; ALL THINGS are now new; without exception!

Forget the past; you have been forgiven and delivered from the power of darkness. If you can't believe and appropriate it, then go back to the gospels, fall in love with Jesus, and get renewed. Then rejoice in your present state of being as God sees it; not as you see it! Remembering what the rest of the verse above says, and it is again in past tense, "and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love". If you are in His kingdom and in His Son, then you are in His love. You have come out of darkness and the power of darkness into Christ and His kingdom and you can't improve on that; no matter how many believers pray over you or lay hands on you!

You are loved! You are going home! God has dealt with your past once and for all! Don't be deceived by doctrines of men which have no biblical basis to support their practice or existence.

If you are converted; you are indeed converted! Metamorphosis has occurred and you are no longer a grub! You are now a butterfly because God is *absolutely, utterly, totally and completely* satisfied with everything He has done in Jesus. If you are in Jesus then the old, and the power of the old is passed and He is absolutely, utterly, totally and completely satisfied with YOU! Your past is now His present; SO LIVE IN IT! You're a King's kid (I Peter 2:9-10); REJOICE IN IT! You have been delivered from the POWER of darkness; ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF IT!



Colossians 1:14 "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins".

On one of my return business trips from China I went via Bangkok. I had booked a room in a hotel that offers "preferred guest" status to regular clients. When I arrived they upgraded me to a very comfortable business suite. During my two day stay they continually sent tropical fruits of various kinds and other dainties to my room. In the evening I met my business contact in the lounge and added coffee, eats etc., to my account for both of us.

At the hour of my departure for the airport I went to reception to check out and pay for the extra services I had used. I took my credit card out of my wallet and offered it to the receptionist. She looked down at the computer screen, examined my account and said, "Mr Chapman, your account is paid in full; you have nothing to pay. You have been our preferred guest for the last two days and the hotel thanks you for using our services; have a nice flight home."

Paid in full! I was delighted. Not only was I delighted, I was excited and I have shared this story of their grace many times. It is not often that you can enjoy opulent comfort

and sumptuous food and have someone else pay for it. My debt for two days was redeemed in full and I was very grateful.

Well, that is what Jesus did, except He did it for eternity; not just two days. He paid our IOU to God in full (Colossians 2:13-14). We were sinners and now we are redeemed. We had fallen short of God's glory, but now we have been forgiven. We had nothing to pay our debt with, so Jesus paid it in full with His blood. Talk about exciting. Talk about wanting to tell others. We are "preferred guests" for eternity in the house of God because Jesus paid our debt in full!



Colossians 1:15 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation".

We can either get inspired by this passage, or we can get theologically entangled. I preferred to get inspired myself.

We are actually going to stand in the presence of Jesus, who stood in the presence of His Father before we were created, and who came to earth and manifested Him. Beyond that we are going to stand in the presence of Jesus, who stood in the presence of His Father before we were created, who came to earth to manifest Him, and who returned to His Father's presence and was given authority from His father to rule over all of creation.

But what is even more inspiring is: God considers that we are already in His throne with His Son who has *all authority* over every minuscule and major aspect and function of creation. And, He has given us *all authority* in Him to rule with Him as priests and kings over *all* of creation NOW, as well as in the age to come. Here are some passages that reveal this exciting truth:

I John 3:2 "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." NKJV

John 1:18 "No man has ever seen God at anytime; the only unique Son, the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [that is in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him - He has revealed Him, brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him, and He has made Him known." (Amplified)

Revelation 4:10-11 "The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.'" NKJV

Revelation 5:8-10 "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. **9** And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, **10** and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'" NKJV

Revelation 5:13 "And *every* creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessings

and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the lamb, forever and ever!." NKJV

Ephesians 2;6 "And *raised us up* together, and made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." NKJV

Ephesians 1:20-22 "Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, **21** *far above all* principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. **22** And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be *head over all things* to the church." NKJV

Therefore, my question is: seeing we are already in His presence - in His throne - with all authority over all creation NOW - and also in the age to come, why are we so timid and full of doubt when it comes to living this positional truth? Let us hear the encouraging words of Jesus to His disciples as He taught them the facts of positional truth after He took authority over created gravity and the dimension of time, **John 6:20-21** "It is I; do not be afraid." **21** Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going."

Remember, only Peter got out of the boat and found out personally that Jesus did indeed have control over creation! Peter took Jesus at His word and for a moment or two lived in positional truth, overriding the physical laws of gravity. In other words: Jesus said it, Peter believed it and by faith experienced it. So did Philip after he immersed the Eunuch **Acts 8:38-40**.

Are you and I willing to get out of our boats which fly the flags of denominational God-controlling legalisms and religious doubts and fears? Or, are we more worried about what those in the denominational boats will say rather than hearing Jesus say to us, "Come out here on the water and find out for yourself that I control the molecules of the air and the sea and the universe, and do not fear for we go a fish'n for men"? Peter did!



Colossians 1:16-17 "For it is in Him that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers or authorities; all things were created and exist through Him (by His service, intervention) and in and for Him. **17** And He Himself existed before all things and in Him all things consist - cohere, are held together." (Amplified Version)

Isn't it great to know that Jesus has time for us? So much time that the very hairs of our heads are numbered. And isn't it good to know that not one bird falls to the ground without His knowledge and yet; we are of more value than that bird?

Isn't it also encouraging to know that if we seek His kingdom and not worry about things, He will supply all our needs because we are of greater value than the lilies of the field and the birds of the air?

Isn't it also great to know that Jesus is ready to carry our load when it gets too heavy for us?

All this *personal attention* from the One who created and maintains the atoms of the universe? Yes, that's right, the very same One.



Colossians 1:18 "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence."

I recall visiting a leaning pagoda in a remote farming community of China which was built around the fourth century AD . It was listed as a national treasure and attracted many Chinese and Asian Buddhist disciples.

It had begun to lean because the foundation walls supporting it had weakened following an earthquake in the sixties. When the contractors began to dig beneath it in an attempt to prop it up, they discovered four levels of crypts and vaults which contained fabulous treasures donated by emperors and officials over the centuries. The treasures were so numerous they had to build a multi-million dollar museum next door to house them.

When I entered the complex surrounding the pagoda I walked through hallways housing large golden Buddhist idols of all shapes and sizes, each with its own unique features. In the crypt hall beneath the pagoda several finger bones were on display in a circular shaped enclosure. The finger bones were surrounded by thousands of coins and bank notes which had been tossed by Buddhist believers who hoped for atonement in the after life and prosperity in this life. These imported finger bones were reportedly from actual Indian Buddhas who lived a thousand years or so before Christ.

As I walked around the complex I quietly repeated over and over these words, "Jesus lives; Jesus lives." After a while my Chinese minder's wife who had accompanied me and several of my students on the four hour journey, began to also say aloud in Chinese, "Jesus lives; Jesus lives".

I was delighted to hear her because only weeks before I had prayed in Jesus name for her ten year old incapacitated son. He had been ill from birth with an enlarged heart and God healed him instantly.

To her; Jesus did indeed have the pre-eminence over Buddhist idols and all things. All the treasure and all the religion associated with these Buddhist relics could not compare with the living Jesus who had risen from the dead and healed her son; her most precious treasure!

You and I serve the One who is alive and rules over all things; even death. We serve the One who rose from the dead to substantiate His claim that if we believe in Him we will not see death.

We serve Him in His kingdom, no matter where we are in the world. We do not serve the doctrines of demons or man's religions; we serve a risen, living, pre-eminent Saviour who reigns over both men and demons and is forever going forth conquering and to conquer, **Revelation 19**.



Colossians 1:19-20 "For it has pleased (the Father) that all the divine fullness - the sum total of the divine perfection, powers and attributes - should dwell in Him permanently. **20** And God purposed that through -by the service, the intervention of - Him (the Son) all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, as through Him (the Father) made peace by means of the blood of His cross." (Amplified Version).

Nothing makes others happier than a job well done. They are ecstatic when they assign a task to someone and do not have to go back and make one improvement on what that person has done.

When the Father sent His Son to reconcile the world and make peace through the shedding of His Son's blood; He did a thorough job. Nothing can be improved upon.

Not only did the Father sort out the breakdown sin caused to His relationship with mankind; He dealt with sin once and for all on earth and in heaven where it began **Revelation 12, Hebrews 9**.

He is now *absolutely, utterly, totally and completely satisfied* with all He has done in Jesus. Religious living etc., by mankind cannot improve on what God Himself has done to appease Himself.

But, beyond that, He took one more step. He allocated to His faithful Son, upon His return to heaven, the sum total of His divine perfection, powers and attributes forever **Revelation 4,5,6**.

But, what about Mankind? More importantly though, what about born-again mankind? Well, He places the born-again in His Son at conversion and because they are in Jesus, in whom dwells all the divine perfection, powers and attributes of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9-10), they are the most powerful people on the planet.

So now it is time we started living like it!

We have a right relationship with God because of Jesus.

We have peace with God because of Jesus.

We have peace with others because of Jesus.

We have authority over all principalities and powers because of Jesus' name.

We know for sure that we have eternal life because of Jesus.

But, does the world **KNOW** we have all this?



Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled **22** in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."

Often religious language confuses us and we have to take time to study the meaning of certain words if we want to understand what the writer is seeking to convey. "Reconciled" may well be one of those words. So instead of getting hung up on the meaning of it I would like to share with you an event that illustrates the intent of the word and the great joy and hope reconciliation brings.

Twenty years ago an evangelist of a large conservative assembly invited me to join him to teach discipleship to new converts. Among their number was a lady with long-term chronic arthritis. This poor soul, who was in her mid-forties, was in constant pain and could barely walk. When she came to worship she would either lay on a pew or on the floor.

Not long after I joined the work, she telephoned the evangelist and asked if he would come to her home and pray for her healing. He telephoned me and asked if I would go with him as he had never laid hands on anyone for healing before. I said I would, but I'd like to spend a while in prayer before I joined him.

An hour later I met him at the woman's home and we knocked on her door. She crawled to the door and opened it. We went in and sat on the couch. She remained on the floor and leaned up against a chair. She wasted no time and asked us to pray. I then said that before we pray I would like to share something with her which the Lord had shown me about her life an hour earlier. I then told her that if she would let me share it I believed she would be healed. She agreed to let me share it.

I told her that the Lord showed me a vision of her eighteen years earlier. In the vision she was standing on one side of a VW motor vehicle and her sister was standing on the other. She and her sister were having a bitter quarrel over the car and that she had never forgiven her sister for the things that were said on that occasion. I then told her if she forgave her sister and reconciled the matter she would be healed.

When she heard this she became quiet angry and asked me who had told me about this event. I told her nobody, but the Lord showed me only an hour before. She confirmed that this was the case and that she had had a terrible fight with her sister and had never forgiven her. We laid hands on her, prayed and departed.

The following Sunday this lady came into the church building foyer like a whirlwind; bright eyed and excited. She said she wanted to give a testimony. We agreed. She stood in the pulpit that morning and with great joy and excitement told the 350 people present how we had revealed the secret of her heart and prayed for her. She went on to say that when we left she lay down on her bed and repented, forgave her sister and wept sore. About an hour later she said, she felt a hot sensation pass through her body. She then got off her bed without pain and realised she had been healed. That was Tuesday, now it was Sunday and she had not had another moment of pain. To this day, as far as I know, she continues in good health.

Reconciliation is not a theory. As far as God is concerned it is a fact. We have been made right with Him. We have been forgiven. In His eyes we are blameless in Christ. We are no longer His enemies. He has paid the price and bought us back. What joy! What peace! What hope! What healing of heart and elimination of fear! We are blameless and without reproach in His sight!



Colossians 1:23 "If so be that you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister."

Continuing in the faith is not always about upholding right doctrine, though that is essential. It is more than that. It is living in the context of faith. Faith in the promises of the Lord. It is in knowing He will never fail nor forsake you as you live in His promises. It is about knowing that the gospel indeed is the truth in word and fulfilment; not just in word only.

I am reminded of an actual case where a new Christian put his faith into action, despite all the theological opposition toward his "simple faith" in the hope of the gospel.

This new Christian contacted a renowned missionary society here in Australia. He told the society director that he believed he had a missionary call to go to Mongolia and was wondering if the society had any missionaries in Mongolia who he and his wife could join. The society director told him they did not and then asked him if he had any missionary training. The new Christian said no. The society director then told him they couldn't send him there unless he had four years training in their college.

The new Christian told the society director that he believed God's call on his life was urgent and that he could not wait around for four years studying in their college. The society director then asked him what he and his wife did; hoping he might be employable in Mongolia. The new Christian told him he was a qualified deep sea diver and his wife was an opera singer. The society director said he couldn't see any possible way that a deep sea diver would find employment in Mongolia as Mongolia is land-locked between Siberia and China. So the director encouraged him once again to go to college. The new Christian said no and left it at that.

Three months later the society director received a letter from the new Christian with a postal address in Mongolia. The director wondered who could be writing to him from Mongolia. The new Christian explained in his letter that just a few days after talking with the society director he saw an advertisement in the employment section of their local newspaper. The advert read, "Deep sea divers wanted in Mongolia to dive in several deep lakes". He applied and was employed. So now his wife and he were living in Mongolia and teaching the gospel to a few people in their home. Could the society therefore send some tracts in the Mongolian language to help teach the local people!

Being grounded and steadfast in the gospel is more than knowing the truth and upholding its principles. It is knowing and applying the truth in faith; mustard seed faith at that!

So often it is easy to be doctrinally *dead right* but dead as far as living by faith is concerned. People want to see and know the living Jesus who keeps His promises through faithful servants who willingly go where He goes and do what He does.



Colossians 1:24-25 "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, **25** of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God."

PREACHERS ARE NOT "EMPLOYEES" OF THE CHURCH!

Well, Paul sure got rid of the mistaken concept many western churches have about the role of ministers as their "professionals" on the payroll of the church with dozens of bosses sitting in the pews, each believing they know better than their preacher how to do his "job".

Paul came straight out and said he was happy to be suffering for the Colossians? Why? Because he was not cloistered in a church office doing a nine-to-five administration job watching over carnal babes in Christ who didn't want to grow up on God's word or have their nappies changed (I Corinthians 3:1-9), and who were happy to continue their easy-going "social-church programmes" that make them feel like Christians a few hours a week.

For him it was out in the highways and byways where the lost were. He put his life on the line day in and day out to challenge believers to grow up and become disciples and get out there with him. In some cases he even ministered to brethren from behind prison bars because he dared to preach a meaty gospel that challenged lives. And, for whose sake was he doing this? The church's? That's right; the church's. He wanted them to go home to be with the Lord and to take as many others with them as possible!

Paul expanded it further and said that his ministry was a "stewardship" appointed to him by God. He was a bond slave to Christ and it was for the glory of God that he was set aside to save the lost and lead them to maturity in Christ. But, the key to his stewardship was that it was unto God and **not** unto men.

He wrote to the Galatians and told them that if one serves men; they are no longer serving Christ, **Galatians 1:10**. Yet, too many churches today are doing just that. They are employing "professional preachers" with minimum academic BA, MBA or PHD levels to carry out a "job"; the nature, of which often spiritually immature believers determine with job descriptions, work place agreements, constitutions etc., but not scriptures or the leading of the Holy Spirit.

They even now ask preachers for extensive resumes, rather than ask if they have a calling from God to serve His people making up His body in that place. They forget to let God send His Spirit-filled, appointed steward to them and preach His message to them. Then they expect him to work on a twenty-four-hour-a-day call basis and pay him according to an acceptable standard, which is usually just above the lowest paid

working group in the congregation. That level is also usually determined by a Church Board of educated, well-off worldly qualified professionals.

In reality, if these comfortable, worldly leaders of men did their maths, they would see that even at low hourly rates for the eighty hours a week at least that their preacher is reading, studying, praying, visiting, evangelising, teaching, motivating, marrying, burying, marriage counselling, etc., etc., they would have to pay him at least one hundred thousand dollars a year. That, is of course, without taking into consideration overtime rates and double hourly rates on Sunday; all of which no member in the congregation would agree to do if their employer said they could not be paid such legally arbitrated rates for more than a 38 hour week or weekend work!

Folks, you cannot afford your preachers as paid employees! You are ripping them off according to normal worldly pay scales! Worst still if you expected them to have degrees then their pay scale should support your expectations!

So, the way congregations get around paying a worldly pay scale matched to the qualification and work load of their preacher is; they expect their preachers to live by faith. They expect them to take what they get, despite their qualification criteria, and trust God for anything above what may be needed for their kids to have a life, their wife and themselves to have decent clothes, their car to run well and to have something members on church boards seem to know something about; holidays in places beyond a hundred miles from home in something called resorts!

So, the next time you are discussing your preacher's salary and his having to live by faith, think about this: it is **not his faith** that you are expecting him to live and support his family by; **it is your faith you are expecting him to live by!** Your faith determines how much you will contribute each week to keep yourself spiritually alive and him and his family physically alive.

So, once a church has their "living-by-faith" preacher employee, who has dozens of bosses who seem to know his job better than he will ever know it, they expect him to be the "five-fold ministry" all wrapped up in one. Or, in some cases, they find subordinates called juniors or administrators etc., to help run the worldly enterprise they unashamedly call God's church. Then, from his first day of employment they scrutinize their new employee's every move; both in the church and in his home to see whether or not he makes the grade they expect of their professional preacher. Everyday he lives on a knife's edge not knowing from one day to the next if he will have a "job" tomorrow because, it just may happen that, one of his bosses has their nose put out of joint by something he preached, or said, or his wife didn't look well-dressed for a preacher's wife etc.

You know, I think Paul got it a lot easier even though he was beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, hunted down, hungry, naked harassed by brethren, was a poor public speaker and failed often, **II Corinthians 11**.

Brethren, bless your preachers for they are stewards unto your heavenly Father who lives in you and you are **not their bosses** and they are **not your employees** and they don't fill job vacancies as determined by men; they answer the call of God for your

sakes. They are called of God to serve Him as He lives in you and in that, and only that, are they expected by Him to be found faithful.

Increase your love toward them and don't expect them to live and survive by **your faith** until your faith **exceeds** theirs!



Colossians 1:26-27 "The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. **27** To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The good news is that God is absolutely, totally, utterly and completely satisfied with everything *He has done* in Jesus. Nothing we can do or even think of doing will ever appease Him. He is already appeased through everything He planned and accomplished in Jesus. All who are "in Jesus" benefit eternally.

God has appeased Himself! He alone paid the price for our sins. A price too high for us to pay!

He kept His plan to Himself for thousands of years and worked it out generation after generation.

He used both Hebrew and Gentile genes to bring it to pass. Sometimes the genes pool got down to one person through whom Emmanuel (God with us) would come. Sometimes He used kings, liars, murderers and prostitutes like Rahab to keep His precious mysterious Abrahamic gene pool alive.

Satan, angels, demons, kings and prophets all tried to figure out His plan, but failed. It ever remained a mystery in the heart of God.

Then one day an angel stood in a mud-brick house and spoke to a young teenage girl and told her that the power of the Highest would overshadow her and she would conceive the Son of God. Mystery fulfilled, but not revealed.

Years later on the road to Damascus a chosen vessel of God named Saul fell to the ground and struck blind in the presence of Jesus. Saul at the time was a violent, rebellious, religious bigot but he was God's choice to reveal His mystery in detail through the power of preaching and the pen. The mystery that Satan was cast down from heaven and the Son of God enthroned on the right hand of His Father along with faithful believers from the entire human gene pool. **Ephesians 2:6-7** "And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! He has done it all.



Colossians 1:28-29 "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ. **29** To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily".

"Time's up!" Words we hate to hear when we have so much to do and accomplish in life. Remember those hard exams at school, which we never got to finish on time?

What about getting the gospel message out there? Can we afford not to be urgent anymore? Is time nearly up?

These are questions we must wrestle with. We no longer have a choice to be complacent about it because the times are changing fast, very fast and especially so in the last few months.

It seems like the whole earth is convulsing as the evil of men begins to rise more and more to the surface. Even nature itself seems to be in rebellion against the unnatural lusts and greed of a few, the false gods of so many, and the Christian's compromising approaches to preaching the word of God so they can fill buildings.

Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Colossians that he preaches "Jesus" and Jesus alone. He is not pushing doctrines or slick ways for sinners to come into God's kingdom without true conversion, or personal kingdom building, but he is preaching repentance and life-changing circumcision of hearts **Colossians 2:6-15**.

I don't believe God is looking for Christian nations to pray unto Him anymore for protection and blessing because they're "Christian".

God is now calling all believers to repentance for we are failing to urgently warn every man of the coming of Jesus and the pending judgement that is coming with Him. We are failing to teach each other in the wisdom of God which comes from above and is found in His word. And we have given up seeking to perfect one another in love and righteousness and truth in order to have "feel good", politically-correct Christianity.

For Paul, seeking to persuade all men in anyway he could was something he strove to achieve. He spent every penny necessary to pay for it and wasted no moment in his pursuit of the souls of men and woman. He also encouraged all the churches to do the same. And while doing that he made himself fully available to God to work it all out as He willed in Paul's life. Ways which were not reliant upon the wisdom and talents of men, but on the Holy Spirit using whoever, however He wanted to.

For us who call Christ our Saviour it is now time to also embrace Him as our Lord, Master, Teacher and King of Kings and go to war with Him against the kingdom of Satan that is marching swiftly across our planet in increasingly destructive ways right now!

Comfortable, entertaining, compromising, easy-going church days are over!

It is time to get urgent and do all we can and spend all we can on saving mankind, wherever and however, and at whatever cost before the pursuits of men

which permeate Christendom, to the detriment of the gospel, are returned to the dust from whence they came.

Our priorities are wrong! The time has come to repent and get urgent about the message and the mission and preach "Jesus" the only way, the truth and the life, regardless of the cost in time, lives and finances!



Colossians 2:1 "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh".

Do we realise that those who lead us, teach us, and motivate us go through great conflict and anguish for our souls?

Are we aware that they seek God on behalf of our souls day and night?

True leaders in the kingdom are not self-seeking, but others-seeking. They strive for one thing and one thing only: making sure we keep the faith and get home to be with the Lord, despite all the circumstances, conflicts, and the personal cost to them.

Their whole focus is God's word and prayer as was the apostles', **Acts 6:4**. They delve deep into the heart of God for us so we will grow up in the things of the Lord. They stay near to God for us so they can be continually filled with His Spirit to minister to us, **Exodus 33:11**. They neglect their lives for us. They neglect their families for us. Yet, too often we demand more and more of them rather than learning how to draw near to God ourselves and hear His calling for our lives.

Let us be encouraged to not neglect our leaders, but get closer to them and understand their roles in God's kingdom. Let us not continually wonder why our elders and preachers don't visit us too often; let us visit or telephone them for a change. Let's not wait for them to tell us they are praying for us; let's tell them we are praying for them so they have the strength to continue in the ministries of the kingdom. Let's not choose the farthest seat from the podium, but the closest so as to encourage them.

Most of all let us hear and practice what they have to say from the word of God so that we do not end up locking Jesus out of our lives like the Laodicean disciples did when they fell in love with the mammon of their world. Remember, they went on to embraced God socially, not seriously and trusted in their wealth and health, not their Lord and Saviour, **Revelation 3:14-22**.

Let us take a moment today to pray and encourage our leaders, realising they are God's servants *called* and appointed by Him to watch on behalf of our souls, **1 Thessalonians 5:12-15**.



Colossians 2:2-3 "That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of

the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, **3** in whom are hidden *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Did you know that James wrote in his letter to the churches that if wisdom does not originate from above, then it is earthly, sensual and demonic? He also said we can tell which wisdom we are seeking and embracing because of the fruit it produces in our lives? See **James 3:12-18**.

Most assuredly the fruit which originates from earthly, sensual, and demonic sources does not encourage believer's hearts. Nor does it knit them together in love so as to enable them to attain unto all the riches and the full assurance of gaining an intimate knowledge of the mystery of God and Christ in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So if we want to gain a wonderful, intimate, and revealing relationship with the Father and Jesus which, by the way, is what eternal life is all about (**John 17:3**), then we better examine our lives for the fruit of righteousness which James mentions.

If the fruit of our lives originates from beneath, then we need to repent and take appropriate action to eradicate it from our lives. But if the fruit originates from above, then we need to nurture it that it may become an even greater blessing to ourselves and others every day.

Here is James' list of the fruit of unrighteousness which is from beneath: Bitter envy, self-seeking, boasting, lying against the truth; all of which result in confusion and every evil thing residing in our hearts.

Here is James' list of the fruit of righteousness which is from above: Purity, peace, gentleness, willingness to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, no partiality and no hypocrisy.

May the Lord bless us all with the fruit of righteousness as we seek to draw nearer to Him and His Son and allow ourselves to be filled, led, empowered, and anointed by the Holy Spirit **Romans 8:1-17**.



Colossians 2:4 "I say this in order that no one may mislead and delude you by plausible and persuasive and attractive arguments and beguiling speech." (Amplified Bible)

I can still vividly remember the moment I realised, after reading portions of the gospel of John, that I was a sinner and needed Jesus. I had not heard a sermon. I had not been to a gospel meeting. I had simply read a book entitled, "Planet in Rebellion". A book I heard advertised on the radio several years before but had never taken the time to read. After an argument with my best friend and my girlfriend at the time, I had turned to this book for answers to support my premise but instead of finding support for my argument I found Jesus.

It was at that point in my life I began to read the Bible. Not only did I begin to read it; I began to consume it. Hour after hour, day after day I read it and to this day I continue to study and read it.

After a month or two of reading I met some preachers who baptised me and gave me access to their library to read supporting evidence to confirm God's word. Then it was off to Bible College in the USA and back home again after two years.

From those days until now I have always sought to rely upon the word of God for all that I believe and all that I preach and teach. It is just too easy to accept things as gospel when they may not be. And sadly, in these times of instant gratification, I often find this to be the case. I hear and read so many things that have not been thought through or lined up with God's word. Not that I am encouraging anyone to be a policeman in God's kingdom; Jesus had enough of those to deal with in His time.

What I am encouraging us to do is to read God's word so that we may not be misled or deluded, but to know for sure what lines up with the truth of God's word.

Just because it sounds good, comes from a source that looks good, is supported by a group that has the numbers to prove it is good; doesn't necessarily make it good.

If we do not want to be deluded or beguiled by what appears to be the genuine article, as far as worldly standards of plausibility are concerned, then let us create scripture searching, Berean hearts **Acts 17:10-12**. Hearts ready to change when change is necessary and ready to cast out error when error is realised, despite the cost.

Some prospectors found a skeleton in a desert once. Among the bones that once formed a hand they found a leather pouch. In the pouch were a note and some quartz with golden veins running through it. On the note was scribbled, "At least I died rich!" When they examined the quartz it yielded only fool's gold.

If you and I are going to give our lives to Christ, and spend years serving Him, let's make sure we know what He and the other servants of God said!



Colossians 2:5 "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ."

There are two terms in this passage that should be highlighted.

Paul rejoices in their "good order". This appears to be another use of military terminology which Paul often wrote of in his letters. In his day the Roman military were a foreboding presence and all they did was precise, orderly and faithfully performed on behalf of their god; the Emperor.

Paul compliments the Colossians on their "steadfastness". With this word of praise he was referring to a troop of soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder, immovable and impenetrable. Nothing could confront them without being challenged by their death-defying resoluteness.

So we can see from this passage that our lives individually and corporately, as Christ's soldiers (**2 Timothy 2:1-4**), should be resolute because of our prayers, sacrificial living and uncompromising faith in Jesus.

Also we should endeavour individually and corporately to make our lives impenetrable to the fiery darts and wiles of the devil **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

Above all we should not forget one another and always esteem each other highly in one another's presence and the presence of strangers.



Colossians 2:6-7 "As therefore you received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in Him, **7** rooted and built up in Him, and established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

Many believers want Jesus as their Saviour, but few want Him as their Lord, Teacher, Master and King!

Also many want to receive Jesus into their hearts, but few want to *give* Him their hearts.

At the conclusion of Peter's first sermon in Jerusalem the audience was so convicted of their sin of murder that the Bible says they were "cut to their hearts" and cried out to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them to repent and be baptized **Acts 2:37-40**.

They were the first disciples to enter God's kingdom after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and their entry was a dramatic one. They had murdered the Christ and cried out in anguish and desperation for the salvation of their souls.

Their walk with Jesus began when they realised they were sinners and needed a Saviour. Their walk progressed when they willingly went on to be rooted and built up in Him through the apostles' teaching **Acts 2:42**.

They grew when they hungered after the word of God, developed an intimate knowledge of God through the infilling of the Holy Spirit and loved one another with thanksgiving and glad hearts **Acts 2:41-47**.

These first disciples did not fade away into the crowd of three thousand who got saved that day. Rather they began to grow and establish their faith in Jesus as their Saviour, Lord, Teacher, Master and King. They knew they had deserted the kingdom of Satan and entered the kingdom of God. And they rejoiced in the knowledge that that they were once lost, but now they were found!

We have a lot to learn from the events that occurred on the day God's kingdom came to earth. It is time to return to the basics of bringing sinners to conviction so that their hearts are cut and not merely willing to receive Jesus. It is time sinners once again cried out for salvation and not simply raise their hands in the presence of closed eyes

and bowed heads. It is time the saved began to crave God's word so they can be rooted and grounded in it and go on to know Jesus as their Saviour, Lord, Teacher, Master and King!



Colossians 2:8 "See to it, then, that no one enslaves you by means of the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by men and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ." (Good New Bible)

There is always a good use and a bad use for all things.

No one could argue against that fact, but unfortunately throughout history mankind has tended toward the application of the bad rather than the good despite the eventual detriment to all mankind at the time of its origin or in mankind's future.

At this time in history, especially with electronic communications as they are, both truthful and deceitful messages can be embraced worldwide at the speed of light. Sadly though, any opposition to "popular views" can be snuffed out or made to look ridiculous simply with a little editing here and there or by restricting access to the airways by critics of the proponents of the original message.

At the very centre of all this is the spiritual warfare that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13. There are two kingdoms vying for the souls of men; the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Despite Jesus' revealing this fact, the world chooses to ignore it and, sadly, some believers have varying views regarding its relevance in these days of "educated" thinking.

I am a fundamentalist and proud to be one. I believe the Bible is God's inspired word to mankind from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. I am a disciple of the "*first fundamentalist*" from God's kingdom; **JESUS!**

Jesus believed in Eden, Adam and Eve, Noah, Jonah etc., and did not compromise these truths. Therefore, if He was uncompromising about these fundamental truths in God's word, I also will not compromise these truths.

Thus, I have this question to ask of believers; how can one be a disciple of Jesus and not be a fundamentalist? You can't! To deny the fundamental truths Jesus taught is to denounce the word of the One who advocated those truths! Also to compromise His word on these matters is an attempt to embrace both the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God and that cannot be done.

So don't be led astray by "peer pressure" either from the world or from compromising, non-fundamentalist believers who tend to want to please men by embracing worldly theories to compliment to the word of God. Those theories don't compliment God's word; they seek to undermine it!

Stand firm against the wiles of the devil with regard to these matters and take the time to read and study to give an answer for the hope that lies within you (1 Peter 3:15). Remembering always that the Bible says that men's hearts are deceitfully wicked and

their imaginations are constantly working on the invention of evil from the provision of what God originally called good (Genesis 1:31; 6:5; 8:21; Romans 1:21; 2 Corinthians 10:5).

Know assuredly that since sin entered the world, destruction follows such vain pursuits and many are they who go in by the wide paths and wide gates which lead to this vanity from the hearts of men (**Matthew 7:13-14**).

Use and appreciate what is good, but be repulsed by the good that has been compromised for evil (**Philippians 4:8-9**).



Colossians 2:9-10 "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power."

The fullness of the Godhead dwells in disciples

In Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit abide there and every believer who is in Christ has entered into the Godhead's fullness. **Galatians 3:27** "For as many of you as were baptized *into Christ* have put on Christ." **Romans 6:3-4** "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized *into Christ* Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." **John 14:23** "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

How full is the disciple? Does all the fullness of the Godhead *really dwell* in them because they are in Christ? Are they as full of the Godhead as Christ? Yes! For, if *all* the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus, then disciples who are in Him are indeed made full in Him as **Colossians 2:10** states, "and in Him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." **Colossians 1:19** "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell."

Disciples can be certain that the fullness of the Father, the fullness of the Son and the fullness of the Holy Spirit dwell in them. **John 1:16** "For of His fullness we all received, and grace for grace." This fullness enables the disciple to live according to God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit accomplishing God's plan which was purposed for all disciples from the foundation of the world. **Ephesians 3:19** "to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be *filled with all the fullness* of God." **Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Therefore, if disciples have the fullness of the Holy Spirit as well as the fullness of the Father and the fullness of the Son dwelling in them, they should lack nothing physically or spiritually to enable the Father to fulfill His call on their lives. All they need to minister to the body of Christ will be provided. **2 Peter 1:3-4** "As His divine power has given to us *all things that pertain to life and godliness*, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us

exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”



Colossians 2:11 "In whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ."

“Doctor Livingstone I presume!”

When I think of circumcision I think of two things. **One:** God could not have chosen a more relevant place on a man's body to remind him many times a day that he was in covenant with to the Ruler of the Universe. **Two:** That the covenant promises of the Ruler of the Universe are in the "yea" and in the "Amen" (**2 Corinthians 1:20**).

During the nineteenth century British newspapers began to report that the eminent Doctor Livingstone of the Royal Geographical Society was missing in darkest Africa. When this news broke in America a newspaper reporter named Stanley announced to the Society that he would organise a search party and leave for Africa immediately.

At that time, Stanley had stomach ulcers and required a daily intake of goat's milk to relieve his constant pain. So upon arrival in North Africa he purchased a goat which accompanied him on his journey down the Nile.

Upon reaching the source of the Nile he turned west and headed for the Congo. After several days journey he and his interpreter entered the principality of a powerful king. Stanley was then advised by his interpreter to cut a blood covenant with that king if he wanted to go beyond the borders of his principality. Stanley was confused and asked what cutting covenant meant.

The interpreter informed him that the king would cut his wrist and pour his blood into a cup. Stanley would do the same and then they would drink the blended bloods and exchange gifts. Stanley then asked what gifts would be exchanged. The interpreter told him that he would give the king his goat. The king would in turn give him his wooden staff with some copper plate wrapped about the top of it.

Stanley refused. He needed the goat's milk and was not willing to venture forth without it. The interpreter pleaded with him for two days until Stanley finally agreed. He gave the king his goat, took the king's wooden staff and headed off to find Livingstone.

Years later when recalling the success of his mission he told how he and the interpreter encountered many fierce tribes on their way through the jungles, but every time their lives were threatened or their pathway blocked, he simply raised the staff and the natives fell down before him and paid homage. He had a blood covenant with the most powerful king in the region and no one dared challenge those who had a blood covenant with that king.

So it is with believers. We have a blood covenant with the King of Kings and He keeps all His covenant promises. No principality or power in the heavens or on the

earth can challenge His authority or the heavenly authority of those disciples He sends in His name (**Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:8-13; 6:10-20**).



Colossians 2:12 “Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein you were also raised with him through *faith in the working of God*, who raised him from the dead.”

Baptismal immersion is a command. **Matthew 28:19**: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Here is a simple question put by Jesus to His disciples: “Do you love Me?” He also said: “If you love Me, keep my commandments” (**John 14:15 and 15:14**). The first two commandments Jesus gave His disciples, after His resurrection, instructed them to preach repentance and remission of sins to all the nations in His name and, to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing (immersing) them in the name of the Godhead (**Luke 24:46-47; Matthew 28:19**).

Peter obeyed these two commands at the end of his first sermon and preached repentance and immersion for remission of sins when his listeners were cut to their hearts and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Following their repentance and immersion, God then added these new disciples to His kingdom (**Acts 2:37-47**).

So, the word of God states that the final step those convicted of their sins have to take in becoming disciples and following their belief, repentance, and confession of Jesus as the Christ is immersion in order to wash away their sins as they call on the name of the Lord, *just as Paul* was instructed to do by Ananias (**Acts 22:16**), Lydia by Paul (**Acts 16:14-15**), *the eunuch* by Philip (**Acts 8:35-40**), the jailer and his household by Paul and Silas (**Acts 16:27-34**) and *the Romans* by Paul (**Romans 6:1-4**).

Another thing disciples who seek to make other disciples should be aware of is that they cannot teach *Jesus* without teaching *immersion*. When Philip was instructed by the angel to get into the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch, he found the man was reading **Isaiah 53**. In **Acts 8:35** Luke records that Philip taught the eunuch *Jesus*, beginning from **Isaiah 53** which was the passage the eunuch was reading. There is no record that Philip taught the eunuch about immersion. Yet the eunuch stopped the chariot by a river and requested to be immersed and Philip immersed him. So the question is where did the eunuch learn about immersion? Obviously from Philip’s teaching *Jesus* to him, because you cannot teach *Jesus* without teaching immersion. He commanded repentance and immersion when making disciples and the apostles obeyed and taught it just like that after His ascension.

Finally, it is clearly stated in this verse in Colossians that immersion *is not a work* as some would advocate. Paul told the Colossians immersion is an act of *faith in the working of God*; faith that believes when one is immersed they are enacting the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and rising to walk in newness of life just as Paul taught the Romans to appreciate (**Romans 6:1-4**).



Colossian 2:13 “And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.”

I am surprised at how often the word all is used in the scriptures yet it so often overlooked by the reader and too often overlooked by the preacher or teacher.

There are so many believers who would be greatly comforted by such a little word, but it is just not emphasised by those whose responsibility it is to emphasise it.

In this passage sinners are dead in the eyes of God as Paul also told the Ephesians (**Ephesians 2:1-6**). But he also told the Ephesians they could rejoice because they were forgiven and in Christ. They had been made alive together with Christ even unto the heavenly places and all their sins were forgiven.

This is such a vital truth to hear, meditate on, savour long and rejoice over. Why? Because all our past sins have been forgiven and not one is remembered by God. Faith begins at this point for each and every sinner who chooses to become a disciple.

If we cannot grasp the reality of this fact early in our walk with Jesus, then we will often be led astray into bondage and religious death in which the joy, love and peace of the Holy Spirit is elusive.

Yes, the greatest enemy to all disciples is *religious* Christianity. This passage above is a call to all believers to go on their way rejoicing, making every effort to listen to the leading of the Spirit of God who produces holiness so as to live victoriously in the knowledge that they have been set free and are assuredly born again (**Romans 8:1-17**). The old has passed away, behold all is new (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

And the final thing we need to hold dear to our hearts is the fact that nothing we have done or will ever do will appease God. He has done all that is necessary to appease Himself through Jesus. He is absolutely, utterly, totally and completely satisfied with all that He has done in Jesus. It is our response to what He has done and to His gospel call through Jesus that causes the angels in heaven to rejoice over our repentance (**Luke 15:7**).

Let's get on with the facts as they are revealed in the word of God and begin to live our lives worthily of this passage in Romans; **Romans 8:1** “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”



Colossians 2:14 “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

When we see the cross either on a building, on a wall or around someone's neck we limit our thinking too often to the death of Christ.

The cross is more than that. What it really represents is well beyond what I can write in this column. Its effect is personal, worldwide and even reaches into the spiritual realm of heaven itself. It reaches to all humans, demons and even to the throne of God.

In this passage from Colossians it deals with us personally. Every day of our lives before we met Jesus we had a debt hanging over our heads. The debt of our sins was like an IOU before God. Then when we realised we had really fallen short of His glory and we were indeed sinners, we agreed with Him, surrendered our debt of sin to Him and believed He paid it in full **John 3:15-21**.

But more than that, the cross reaches beyond the day we were born again. It reaches into every moment of our lives every day and will do so, today, tomorrow and on into eternity. Those occasional days of sin that have overwhelmed us since we were born again have been taken care of at the cross as well.

Yes, we can confidently believe God is faithful in all His work at the cross in the past the present and the future. He will continue to forgive us if strive to walk in the light and confess all sins that overwhelm us **1 John 1:5-2:6**.

But, let us not abuse His love and crucify His Son afresh. Rather let us strive against sin even unto blood as Jesus did if needs be **Hebrews 12:3-4**.



Colossians 2:15 “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

One thing I find intriguing when reading God’s Word is how often angels and even the Lord Himself carry or wielding swords in fierce battles for the hearts and souls of men and woman.

Why would spiritual beings and the Lord of Lord and King of Kings be carrying and wielding swords in a spiritual dimension if they weren't at war?

Also it is interesting to note in **Ephesians 6:10-20** that disciples aren’t given armour or swords but are told to put on (get into with Him) God’s armour; not their own. They are called to wield His sword because they are at war and will be until Jesus returns and puts death, His last enemy, under His feet (**1 Corinthians 15:25-26**).

Then there is the city of Babylon that was controlled by Satan’s disciples where battles in the heavenlies raged for weeks because faithful men of God in that city did not compromise their faith or daily prayer times. Such men, (*not quaint Sunday School heroes*), as Daniel and his partners Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

What about the time Jesus said to Peter that Satan wanted to sift him as wheat (**Luke 22:31-32**)? Or the time when Elisha prayed that his disciple’s eyes would be opened to see the fiery horses and chariots that accompanied him, despite the raging Syrian army that surrounded them.

We would be the most foolish of all men and woman that ever lived if we were to dismiss the fact that principalities and powers are really raging in the heavenlies against us! Since the moment we deserted Satan's kingdom and enlisted in Jesus' Kingdom we have been at war!

Jesus Himself warned us to be alert and ever vigilant, and we ignore His warnings at our own peril (**James 4:1-10; 1Peter 5:8-11, Revelation**).

But, it is true; we will never be a threat to Satan or rejoice in the victory over Him afforded to us by Jesus, as described in today's verse, if we just embrace Jesus as our Saviour and join a comfortable, social church community.

Satan has no problem with those who stay in boot camp always preparing, always strategizing and just playing war games. He fears only those who go to war! Those who embrace Jesus as their Saviour, Lord, Teacher and King! Those who believe they have already won with Jesus!



Colossians 2:16-17 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day: 17 which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's"

When I left Australia and went to Bible College in America in 1969, I was confounded by the different terminology I heard from time to time. For instance, in Australia the hood of a motor vehicle is the bonnet. The boot is the trunk. A utility is a pick-up truck. Confusing? Yes, but in reverse it was often just as confusing.

For instance, one morning I went into my first 7/11 store and bought a drink and a cake. I paid the girl then headed for the door only to hear her say, "You all come on back now," which is exactly what I did. I turned and went back to the checkout and asked her what she wanted. She was stunned and asked, "Where do you come from?"

Now you are most probably wondering what all this has to do with today's passage of scripture. Well, there is still one more saying the Americans use regularly, which I want to relate to today's passage. They often say that you should not major in the minors. Or in other words, don't get bogged down with irrelevant details.

What amazes me is that so many believers do just that; they get bogged down in minor issues. Paul told the Colossians not to act as spiritual policemen in the church. Most things spiritual policemen arrest other believers for are usually irrelevant. Rather than arresting others they should be encouraging them do all they can to glorify Christ in their bodies at all times.

All disciples should keep themselves so God can shine Christ into and out of their lives in a way that non-believers can clearly distinguish His presence. Sinners should not have to look through a magnifying glass to see Christ living His life in us because

our lives are bound up in religious observances that have no substance as far as God is concerned (**2 Corinthians 4:5-6**).

If any of life's necessities or activities does not let Christ shine clearly from our lives, then let's quit them. And let's remember we don't need to be policing one another; the world will do that the moment we declare we are Christians. The world knows how Christians ought to live and they will hold us to that life style as they see it. Our call is to pray for one another, forgive one another and love one another so the world urgently wants what we have in Christ.



Colossians 2:18-19 “Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he has seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, **19** and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.”

Always strive to grow beyond your personal testimony and experiences in the Lord. Sure, these can be treated as treasures from which you draw illustrations and parables when teaching others or speaking to audiences (**Matthew 13:52**), but they must never become the be-all and end-all of your Christian witness.

Paul said that he sought only to know Christ and Him crucified (**1 Corinthians 2:2**). That is all he wanted to talk about. That was his whole life; to proclaim Jesus.

Paul had many wonderful experiences while in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Experiences he could talk about for hours, but he found it a strain to do so (**2 Corinthians chapters 11 and 12**). To him, his life and what he held precious was but dung when compared to his new life of wanting only to know Christ and His resurrection (**Philippians 3:1-14**).

Personal testimonies are great, but so often believers seldom go beyond their testimonies when they preach, teach or evangelise. Certainly it is wonderful to know that old sinful ways have passed and new ways have begun (**2 Corinthians 5:17-18**), but to know very little else does not make for powerful witnessing of the one who really matters; **Jesus**.

Reading God's word, studying God's word, applying God's word, teaching God's word, meditating on God's word begins to replace personal testimony and soon there will be nothing more that one wants to talk about other than Jesus.

Let us remember **Acts 4** and may the following be what the world declares of us, “...and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” (**Acts 4:13**)

And may the following be the charge of the world against us, “And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” (**Acts 4:18**)

And finally, may our response to the charge of the world against us be “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen

unto you rather than God, you judge: 20 for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.” (Acts 4:19)



Colossians 2:20-23 “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations – 21 ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ 22 which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

Why do we continue to try and help God out with our salvation? That’s correct. Why do we continually demand of ourselves and others “extras” that will supposedly make our salvation absolutely secure?

God doesn’t require it of us – He is already absolutely, utterly, totally and ecstatically satisfied with what He has done in Jesus to achieve our salvation. He can’t improve on what He has done in Jesus and He is not even attempting to do so.

So where do all these “extras” come from? From men; that’s where. How do I know that? Well, Paul proclaimed it to be so as today’s verses reveal.

All the glory for our salvation will go to God and God alone. Nothing we do, or can ever do, will improve on our salvation. Certainly, some “extras” make for holier living, but they don’t make disciples more saved than saved!

It is time we rested, by faith, in what God has accomplished in Jesus. Nothing can make Him happier than He already is. So let us give Him all the praise and glory for His abundant grace towards us who were once dead in our sins, but who are now made alive in Jesus (**Ephesians 2:1-10**).



Colossians 3:1 “If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.”

There is a saying, “Winners are grinners” and as far as this verse is concerned we need to believe we really are winners.

As a matter-of-fact as far as life in Christ is concerned we are winners beyond description and we’re just not capable of putting into words the state of our being as God sees it. God always views us as if we have already attained what He sees as His state of truth. Some say this is living in a state of positional truth.

In this verse He is highlighting the state we are now dwelling in since our enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus at our immersion (**Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:1-4**). As far as God is concerned, because we are now in Christ (**Galatians 3:27**), we are in His throne with Christ (**Ephesians 2:6**).

Therefore, God is encouraging us to grasp the reality of our present and our future and challenging us to discard all that is of this world; the lust of the eye and the vain glory of life (**1 John 2:16-17**). He is challenging us to stay faithful and seek those things that are above where Christ is and to embrace our pilgrimage through this world (**Hebrews 11:13-16**).

Paul didn't say to occasionally think or dream about the things that are above; he said *seek* the things that are above. We need to cast off *all* that is hindering us from building God's kingdom, which is the only thing that will continue on into eternity.

We need to examine our perspective on what living in Christ really means because it is easy for us to become too attached to what is passing away (**2 Peter 3:1-13**).



Colossians 3:2-3 “Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. **3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

When someone misuses superglue and welds two fingers together, they usually have to have surgery to separate them unless there is a powerful solvent available.

So it is when one sets their mind on the things above. You weld your mind to them so permanently that nothing will separate you from them.

And really, nothing in this world is worth abandoning heaven for. Look around your part of the world and read the book of Ecclesiastes and you will see that the preacher who wrote it three thousand years ago knew what He was talking about. And, by the way, his conclusion about this world was the same as Paul's (**Ecclesiastes 12**).

Then why should we even contemplate abandoning the life we now have in Christ? It is the only life that will go on into eternity. Therefore, we need to spend as much of our time as possible to get to know both God and Jesus, because that is what eternal life is all about, as **John 17:3** says.

And, besides that, Paul says that we died to the world and all that it offers. Sure, we still remain on the earth, but our home is with God and as soon as we have finished the ambassadorship He has called us to, we will go home to be with Him and live out our joint-heirship with Jesus (**2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2; Romans 8:17**). It can't much better than that.



Colossians 3:4 “When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with him be manifested in glory.”

God has *not* asked disciples to live *like* Jesus – He has asked disciples to *let Jesus be Jesus* in their lives!

He wants Jesus to *live as Jesus* in us and for Him to have free reign over our lives doing all that He did in the first century.

Through us God wants Jesus to walk the streets of this world once again loving the unlovable, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, calling the Christian religious and the sinners to repentance, caring for the destitute, setting the oppressed and possessed free from the bondage of Satan, and going to war against the kingdom of darkness in every place.

Jesus wants to be Jesus in our lives just as God wanted to be God in Abraham's life (**Genesis 17:1-10**).

God is not interested in anything less than our being *filled, led, empowered* and *anointed* (**Luke 4:1,14,18**) with His Spirit so Jesus can walk as He walked and teach as He taught and love as He loved and die for the Father's will as He died in the battle against the sinful pride of this world.

In this we will then manifest His glory in this life and in the life to come.

So, let us let Jesus *be Jesus* in our lives today! It is time the world saw the real Jesus, (not the church's impression of Jesus), in the workplace, the church building, the classroom, the university, the home and especially man's halls of knowledge and wisdom where they darken counsel without knowledge because they do not honour Him who knows all (**Job 38:1-3**).

Let Jesus *be Jesus* in your life today!



Colossians 3:5-6 "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, *which is idolatry*; **6** for which things' sake comes the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience."

Has there been a tendency in recent years to forget why Jesus died? Have we forgotten that He died for *our sins* and not so we can make Him feel welcome in our hearts because we raised our hand in a gospel meeting?

Have we forgotten what sin is and why sinners scurry to hide in the darkness when the real gospel is preached in its fullness (**John 3:15-21**)? The gospel that identifies sin as it really is and calls sinners to abandon it. The gospel that cuts sinners to the heart and calls them to repentance if they want to get saved and experience God's refreshing (**Acts 2:37-39; 3:19**)?

Well, in recent years sin is no longer called sin. Hollywood has made adultery an affair. Lying; merely stretching the truth. Sexual perversion: normal. Homosexuality: a quirk of nature and "gay". Materialism: the birthright of this age and to be worshipped above all other gods. Christians are their enemies.

The shame is that as long as preachers' pulpit invitations to sinners are offered without condemnation of sin and a call to repentance and death to self, all this Hollywood

normality and shallow, politically correct, “New Age” pseudo Christianity we are seeing and hearing will continue on its merry way from pulpit to pulpit, and heaven will be poorer for it!

It is time we called sin; sin! It is time we stopped telling people to accept Jesus into their hearts; an appeal that is *not recorded anywhere* in the Bible! It is time we called all sinners, in the world and in the church, to repentance.

Its time we began to do what the Lord commanded us to do and *make disciples*; not church members. But this will not happen until we take the Bible's perspective of sin more seriously and call for sinners to die to their public and private sins (**Romans 6:1 and 15**).

It will not happen until we preach the gospel message and call all sons of disobedience everywhere to repent and take up God's offer of forgiveness through Christ before it is too late as Paul proclaimed in **Acts 17:30-31**, “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commands men that they should all, everywhere repent: **31** inasmuch as He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead.”



Colossians 3:7-10 “Wherein you also once walked, when you lived in these things; **8** but now do you also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: **9** lie not to one another; seeing that you have put off the old man with his doings, **10** and have put on the new man that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created Him.”

I was out knocking doors twenty-five years ago when I came across a sign on the front porch of a house. The sign read, “No preachers, no salesmen, no Mormons, no Jehovah Witnesses etc., all are NOT welcome”

Well, I knocked anyway thinking that a soul is more important than a black eye. Sure enough, this gentleman comes to the door with a gruff attitude and asks, “Yeah, what do you want?” I told him I was new in the area and that I was out introducing myself. He said he was not interested in talking to preachers, so I turned to leave. As I was heading down the steps he called to me and said, “Hey, if you can answer this question I will study the Bible with you.” I said, “Fine; ask away.” He said, “Tell me right now what the trinity is.”

I paused for a moment and then said, “Trinity is a not a word used in the Bible. The Bible uses the word Godhead. To understand that you only have to read **1 Corinthians 12:4-6** which says that the Father is the master architect, the Son is the supervisor, the Holy Spirit provides the tools and the Christians are the workers.” All three are directors of the one heavenly organization of which Christians are now a part.

He looked at me and said, “I never thought about it like that; I will study with you.”

So we read through Mark's gospel, then John's and then started in Acts. Nothing happened until the day I said to Him, "You have read about Jesus and His gospel message in detail so don't you think you need to respond?" He looked at me and said, "If I had ever sinned I would need to I guess."

I was astonished but proceeded to take him to the list of sins in the Bible like those written above. Then we read Romans chapter one and Galatians chapter five. By the time we had read half of the lists of sins his wife piped up and said, "Honey, I see a lot of these in your life!"

The whole family repented, confessed Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and I baptised them all that afternoon. He then went on to Bible College and preached for many years in a country town.

The other day I visited his widow of nine months and we talked about that day when sin became real to her husband and they all got saved. We then went on to rejoice that he was now with the Lord.

It is time we returned to calling sin; sin. So many people don't realize they are sinning or have sinned and need to put on the new man created in Christ's image. And we can be sure that they won't realise it unless we go and tell them.



Colossians 3:11 "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all."

Regardless of race or colour we all start off with God in the same place; *dead in our sins* **Ephesians 2:1**.

That's right; all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory **Romans 2:23**.

Yes, it is correct; we all need the Saviour Jesus Christ to get to eternal glory. No nation or race of people is special in God's eyes and will be exempt from salvation through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ only.

This is indeed an urgent matter. It is a race for the souls of men in a spiritual war that we treated too lightly. Every minute of the day, every day, souls are lost to Satan because those who have been saved are quickly deluded into believing "church" is all that matters to Jesus. Wrong! Very Wrong!

All that matters to Jesus is that we get up off our pews and go into all the world, calling men and women to repentance and making disciples of them, baptising them, and teaching them to observe all things that Jesus taught **Luke 24:47; Matthew 28:18-20**.

"Somebody has to stay behind and support those who go." I have heard this many times. Wrong again. In **Matthew 10** Jesus sent the first disciples out without anything more than what they had on at the time. When they returned He asked them if they lacked anything when they went and they said no **Luke 22:35**.

So what is keeping us tied down? Fear and mammon (materialism), all of which is about to be swept away.



Colossians 3:12-14 “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; **13** forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do you: **14** and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Loving others is hard! That is why Jesus said that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. And He also said that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. He concentrated on our self-centredness to enable to us to begin to understand the intensity required to love others. He calls on us to drag ourselves away from ourselves and look out for the best in others.

In God’s eyes we are holy and beloved, though we have sinned and fallen well short of His glory. So we have an example of the Father loving us and seeking our highest good and our best at His great cost. Therefore we have no excuse for not exhibiting compassion and every other spiritual quality mentioned herein.

Some of those spiritual qualities mentioned herein are demanding. Actually some of them are extremely demanding. Yet Jesus set us an example in all of them. An example He calls us to follow.

From my years in ministry I must say that verse 13 would happen to rank at the top as the one most of us fail to uphold. Yet when Jesus said to Peter that he should forgive his brother seventy times seven He was speaking of divine love as exhibited by the Godhead toward mankind.

In Hebrew numerology, seven is the number for divine and ten for complete. So Jesus was saying to Peter that he should forgive his brother with multiples of divine completeness just as God forgives us (**I John 1:5-2:3**).

One final thing we need to always remember is that we cannot, in our own power, keep all the things mentioned in these verses and that is why God has placed His Spirit who produces holy living in us. Let us listen to His personal guiding day in and day out (**Romans 8:1-17**) and surprisingly, we will find that we have indeed *put on* these spiritual attributes without even realising it.



Colossians 3:15 “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be you thankful.”

Have you ever noticed God has supplied all we need and continues to supply all we need to make our lives an abundant blessing? Notice I did not say, supplies all our

wants. His supply reaches beyond the material and physical; it reaches into the spiritual part of our lives.

God knows we cannot, in and of ourselves, love as He loves. God knows that we cannot, in and of ourselves, be as joyful as He is. God knows that, in and of ourselves, we cannot live peacefully as He lives.

So, to overcome our lack He simply gives us His Holy Spirit to live within us and, if we allow ourselves to be filled and led by Him, He will manifest God's nature through our lives, which includes love, joy and peace.

But beyond this truth we can also believe we have received the fullness of the Godhead bodily to dwell in us. Therefore we also have the love, joy and peace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in all its fullness living within us (**Colossians 2:9-10**).

Acknowledging this truth is not enough though. The passage above challenges us to *let* the peace of Christ *rule* or reign in our hearts. Belief in God's word says it resides there; active faith lets it reign there!

When the Godhead's love is allowed to reign there then our relationship with others in our home, our workplace, our school, our college and particularly our church will result in a life of peace. Also we will be a peace with ourselves.



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

It is with great sadness that I write about this verse today. Yet one would think that is such a wonderful passage I should be able to offer some great thoughts about it. Well, I would have done so if I hadn't have had the following experience.

The other day I was having a little fast food at McDonalds with another preacher. We were talking away when a middle-aged couple sitting next to us asked if we were Christians. We said yes and they introduced themselves as fellow believers.

As the conversation between us progressed she asked us what we thought of a recent event that they had experienced at a large congregation in the city. She said that as they entered the auditorium someone handed them a pair of ear plugs and said they may need to use them during the worship as the music gets very loud.

My jaw hit the table in front of me. My stomach did somersaults and I nearly threw up! I was so astounded by what I heard I asked her to repeat it. She did and confirmed it was so. Since then I have heard it from other sources as well.

Shame! Shame! And more shame! What has happened to the Body of Christ ministering unto itself as Paul taught in **1 Corinthians 12**? Is the toe no longer part of the foot because the foot wants to run faster? Is the nose no longer part of the head

because the mouth wants to do all the breathing? Is Christ, who is the head of the church, His Body, no more part of the Body?

It is time to repent of this exclusive, aggressive action by musicians and worship leaders. This is blatantly anti-Christ. How in the world can we teach and admonish one another if one part of the Body is excluded from hearing the words of psalms and hymns because of loud music played by self-glorifying musicians and over the top worship leaders?

It is obvious the *word of Christ does not dwell richly* in those who are practicing such exclusion of others during worship. **1 Corinthians 14:26** reads, “What is it then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying.*”

Where is the edifying of the whole Body of Christ in worship if ears are stuffed with plugs? Shame! Shame! And more shame – shame unto repentance I hope!



Colossians 3:16-17 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. **17** And whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

I just had to come back to this passage and write some more.

The first thing I ask Bible College students who attend my discipleship class at the beginning of a new semester is if they have read their Bibles through at least once since they became believers. Seldom do I see one hand. Then I ask if they have at least read the New Testament. Astonishingly, few hands are seen. Worse still; many of the students have been believers for more than ten or twenty years.

It is a sad inditement on the times. You can't blame the students; you have to blame the preachers for not challenging those who sit at their feet to bring their Bibles to worship or classes (if there are any offered). They're the ones who should be setting the example and preaching more often from God's word.

These passages above call upon believers to let the word of Christ dwell in them *richly*. In other words; to treasure it above all else in life and make it our whole purpose for living. To make it the sustenance of our existence just as Jesus did when He was tempted to trust in His own prowess in the wilderness, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” He said to Satan.

Without such love for God's word, how can we grow wise in the faith, teach others, admonish the brethren in love and minister *unto* God in our calling? How can we do all things in the name of Jesus and give thanks unto God if we do not let the word of God dwell richly in our hearts?

Without a love for, an urgent desire for, an absolute need for the word of God in our lives, we will always remain believers and mere church-goers and never become disciples and warriors advancing the kingdom of God against the extremes of these times.



Colossians 3:18-25 “Wives, be in subjection unto your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. **20** Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. **21** Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged. **22** Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: **23** Whatsoever you do, work heartily, *as unto the Lord*, and not unto men; **24** knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: you serve the Lord Christ. **25** For he that does wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he has done, and there is no respect of persons.”

The Bible records that those who serve God do not minister *for* God but rather minister *unto* God (**Exodus 28:1**). When disciples realize this they are then willing to do the unpleasant things God calls them to do. Jesus said that when disciples do the unpleasant things to meet the needs of others they are really doing it *unto* Him (**Matthew 25:31-36**).

Living as a disciple automatically makes one a bondservant to God. And bondservants, like Jesus, give up *all* to do the will of the Father (**Philippians 2:1-11**; **John 12:26**).

The reality of it all is; disciples are not being employed by God in His kingdom to serve others, but rather they are constantly dying unto themselves and living *unto* Him. Jesus becomes their *Master* – not their boss.

Beyond this disciples don't offer God their talents and worldly qualifications – they offer Him their lives (**2 Timothy 2:1-13**). And no one in God's kingdom who seeks to be a disciple is excused. All are called to minister *unto* God and are called to do so in the follow ways:

When teenage disciples minister to their parents, they *minister unto* the Lord.

When parents love and nurture their children, they *minister unto* the Lord (**Ephesians 6:1-3**).

When husbands and wives love one another, they *minister unto* the Lord (**Ephesians 5:22-23**; **1 Peter 3:1-7**).

When employees do what is required of them, they *minister unto* the Lord (**Ephesians 6:5-8**).

When employers treat their employees well, they *minister unto* the Lord (**Ephesians 6:9**).

When leaders in ministry minister to others they *minister unto* God, **not for** God (**Ephesians 4:11-12**). But when leaders in ministry *minister for* God, they choose employment over God's call, which soon sees them serving and pleasing men (**Galatians 1:10**).

Therefore, when disciples *minister unto* God, they serve Him and not others. They build His kingdom, *not* their's. They go wherever He sends them. And they do what He wills regardless of the cost.



Colossians 4:1 “Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal: knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

We in the western world, which only represents about 8-10% of the world's population, live in a very unusual time as far as social classes are concerned. Since World War One there has existed a class of people in the western world that has never existed in history before. That class is the middle-class.

Before World War One there were only the rich and the poor. Two classes, and even if you were able to break through the class barrier and make it into the environment of the wealthy, you were segregated by the money dynasties or treated as a curio that had come into money. If you were not born into family money that had existed for generations, your sudden wealth counted for nought on the social scale.

Really though, little has changed. Even Jesus said the poor will be amongst us always **John 12:8**. The world is still suffering from the creator of the poor, which is the greed of the haves to the exclusion of the have-nots. And, if this world is your love then you will seek to embrace it at the expense of others. This is reflected in the obscene salaries senior executives are paying themselves today.

For Christians though, the love of the world and the things of the world *are not of Christ* **John 2:15**. And when love for the world dominates even the hearts of Christians, they often exclude their brethren from sharing in the Lord's bountiful blessings which He has granted to them. Alarmingly, this is a very, very thin line to tread and thus there is now so much trouble arising over issues involving the “prosperity doctrines”.

Today's passage in Colossians is a word of warning to Christian employers. Treat your employees well is the Lord's inditement to you. Make sure your employees' needs are met before your own and He who sees all and knows all shall continually bless your business. Neglect your brethren in this matter and your days in business will be numbered and sorrows, worse than your greed has inflicted on your employees and others, will surely follow you.



Colossians 4:2-4 “Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; **3** withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; **4** that I many make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

Prayer is the hardest of all the Christian disciplines. It is second only to the discipline of reading and studying the word of God.

Prayer was the only thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them **Luke 11:1**. They had everything else sorted out; or so they thought. Prayer was the area of discipleship they failed miserably in **Luke 18:1**. They knew they were inadequate in this discipline because they observed (when they could stay awake) Jesus praying in the valleys and on the mountains; sometimes all night.

Paul pleaded with the Colossians to remain steadfast in prayer and encouraged them to watch for answers and give thanks when those answers came. Also he valued their prayers for him. Not that he would be prospered or comforted or blessed, but that doors to preach the word would continually open despite the fact that he was in chains.

Only two things mattered to Paul! They were the salvation of the lost and the going home of the saved. He knew the peril of the lost falling into the hands of the living God, and the stumbling into temptation of the saved and their failing to finish the course set before them.

I have attended many prayer gatherings over the years and I must honestly say I have wondered sometimes what they were all about. Most of the time there exists a fear to pray so people sing and talk to waste time and then in the moments of prayer that are left they pray for anything that happens to come into their mind.

Paul was specific about what the Colossians should pray for and we should be specific also. The next time you attend a prayer meeting, choose two or three things to pray for and spend the *whole* time praying for those two or three specific things. Then over the next days or weeks as those partitions continue and are finally answered, hold a thanksgiving prayer meeting then get on to new specific partitions. As Paul said above, "Watching therein with thanksgiving."

Also your institutionalized preachers should be released to pray and study the Word of God **only Acts 6:4**. This is so they may clearly identify the open doors of the Lord to the lost in their community and the needs of the saints.

Your institutionalized preacher is not supposed to be a company executive of a "manmade" corporation under the banner of God's name and working to a "job description" that we commonly see today. So set him free to pray and pray and pray and read and study and read and study! When you do, he will be enabled to boldly enter through the door God opens and declare God's word for the salvation of the lost and the equipping of the saints!

God will take care of all the things *we imagine* institutionalized preachers are suppose to do on a corporate level just as **Romans 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 12:27-31** promise. The ministries in these two scriptures are the Holy Spirit's responsibility as they are "charismata" for the members of Christ's Body who He wills to fill, lead, empower and anoint so as to meet the needs of the Body as a whole **1 Corinthians 12:11**.

It is time we handed back the "management" of Christ's Body to the Holy Spirit and returned to how God's word describes the Body's function under His equipping and anointing in the five-fold ministry. Let Him lead us to prayer and to the open doors

and let Him equip us to go through them as He wills and when He wills (**2 Corinthians 2:11**) for the benefit of the lost and the saved.



Colossians 4:5-6 “Be wise in the way you act toward others who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone.”

While at Bible College in 1970 I read a great book. During the years that have followed I have applied the principles found in that book to great effect in leading others to Christ. Surprisingly it was not a religious book at all.

The book was entitled: “The Awesome Power of the Listening Ear” by John W Drakeford. Drakeford advocated listening twice as much as you speak. Although he applied it to the secular world of sales and the art of communication I found his approach very interesting.

It is amazing how much we can learn about the foundation stones of life that a person stands on if we listen twice as much as we speak. Then, as they talk away, we can carefully replace those foundation stones they rely so heavily on with a need for Jesus.

Of course, as Paul writes in today’s verses, we ought to be ready, through much study of God’s Word to know how to replace those worldly foundation stones with the truth. It is vital that Christians know more and more of God’s Word so they can defeat the arguments of the lost who love their sin and seek to keep justifying it with weak arguments based on the theories of evolution, doctrines of demons and superior intelligence. But defeating them by listening – that’s the challenge.

The art of listening enables you to define the flaws in their premise and once you know it you can bring it to their attention.

Also this is urgent business. There is much time being lost, so let’s use every opportunity to persuade men and woman (**2 Corinthians 5:11**) to seek salvation in Jesus. Let’s keep studying God’s Word and become powerful, effective witnesses to the kingdom of God.

Jesus said, “We must do the works of Him who sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work.” **John 9:4**.



Colossians 4:7-9 “All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: **8** whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that you may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; **9** together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here.”

Boring! Skip over this part and get on with it!

Yes, I have heard such remarks about the end of these letters of Paul. But, I tell you what; if the names of those who say, “Boring” or “Get on with it” were in the list of names recorded in God’s Word, they would never read the first portion of the letter on their way through to the end to where their name was recorded!

We can be sure that *all* that is written in God’s Word is written for our edification and learning; including these names and these faithful brethren’s deeds in the Lord.

These were:

Brethren Paul the apostle of God could entrust with his most confidential affairs.

They were beloved of his heart.

They were faithful in all their ministries God had called them to.

They were fellow bondservants with Paul regardless of the cost of such stewardship.

Though Paul was in prison they fearlessly ministered unto His needs and yet, he was willing to send them off to the ministry needs of the Colossians. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that their needs were above His in the matters of the ministry of the Lord.

Paul knew the Colossians were grieved and concerned for his state and, rather than allow their hearts to be greatly troubled, he put them first and sent away those he needed most in his life at that time. This was the agape love of Paul for God’s kingdom.

Boring! Skip over this part and get on with it! *Never!* These are pearls of great price and worthy of our closest scrutiny!



Colossians 4:10-11 “Artistarchus my fellow-prisoner salutes you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching who you received commandments; if he comes unto you, receive him), **11** and Jesus who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort to me.”

No matter who you are; you need comfort from time-to-time.

Here the Apostle Paul is pleased to tell the Colossians that he needed a hug from his faithful brothers from time-to-time. Prison is, no doubt, not the kind of place one would expect to get much comfort in.

So for Paul these fellow-prisoners and faithful servants like Mark were making a great contribution to his spiritual need at the time. So much so that Paul was able to get on with the Lord’s work in growing His kingdom on earth.

Growing the kingdom of God should also be paramount in our hearts. We need to take back this mentality of growing God’s kingdom, no matter what the personal cost. If it

means prison; then prison it is. If it means losing half a congregation because we suddenly begin to make disciples instead of church members; then so be it.

The other thing that is apparent in these passages is that Paul wanted no discrimination. He wanted the principles of James chapter two applied by the Colossians. The messengers he was sending were Jews and they were to be treated with the highest honour because they were his fellow-workers, despite their race.

All that matters in God's kingdom is ministry unto the body of Christ by bondservants who have died to this present world and are now made alive unto Christ **Galatians 2:20; 6:14**.

The barriers are down in God's kingdom. Denominational division doesn't exist in God's kingdom. Race doesn't exist in God's kingdom. But in churches created and maintained by men, such divisive barriers do exist.

So when Paul and those with him worshipped God in chains, only the kingdom of God mattered. Surely there is a lot to learn from this; lessons that would make a great impact on the power and progress of God's kingdom throughout the world; especially how it is viewed by those in the world!



Colossians 4:12-13 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus salutes you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. **13** For I bear him witness that he has much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis."

Laodicea; the church that, by AD 90, was just *lukewarm* and called to repentance by Jesus Himself through John the apostle **Revelation 3:14-22**! And yet here, in its early stages of growth, a faithful bondservant of Jesus was labouring in prayer for them.

He was praying that they would stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God, which is only possible if they were willing to abide in the Word of God and also faithfully commit to growing God's kingdom and making disciples which, it appears, they finally forgot to do in their wealthy church.

Not only did Epaphras, this faithful bondservant of Jesus, strive in his prayers for them, he laboured for them. He went beyond normal concern for their welfare and growth in the kingdom. He expended his energy so that they could fight the good fight of the faith and finish the course and go home to Lord.

Yet, despite his labour of love, the church at Laodicea became lazy, lukewarm and hard-hearted toward Jesus. Their prosperity made them fat and disinterested in the things that really mattered. They were healthy and wealthy and lived in the pleasure and entertainment resort of the Roman Empire. They lacked for nothing, not even a church membership association with Jesus.

But sadly, Jesus had become an optional extra in their lives and when He wanted to fellowship with them, they just closed the door of their hearts, settled back in their

church membership and went on enjoying the Roman sports, luxury housing, medical balms, best foods from all over and the finest clothes in the world at that time.

But what did Jesus think as He remembered back on the prayers and labour of His faithful servant Epaphras some thirty years earlier? Well, He told John; and here is what Jesus said to him.....“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and have gained riches, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked” **Revelation 3:15-17**.

Were the prayers and labour of Epaphras in vain? No! Some of the Laodicean church, in the early days, when its vision was not impaired by wealth and health and materialism, would have been saved. In its later days, unless they repented they were going to be spewed out of Jesus’ mouth!

There is a message here for the comfortable western church today. Save others, disciple them and get hot for Jesus or we will soon be wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked! Let’s save souls at whatever cost and make disciples of them now!



Colossians 4:14-18 “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you. **15** Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. **16** And when this epistle has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that you also read the epistle from Laodicea. **17** And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it. **18** The salutation of me Paul with my own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.”

So comes to an end these words from the Letter to the Colossians, but contained within this conclusion are some good lessons for each of us.

There must have been something about the spirit of Luke which was admirable. He seems to be held in high esteem and appears to be one who was faithful in all that he did; including writing the book of Acts. Faithfulness is all that the Lord requires of us. When He gives us a ministry to fulfil, He provides all that is necessary to fulfil it.

There is also reference to a house church. How many of those exist today and are flourishing in many countries? Some can openly worship while others are filled with faithful brethren living under the threat of death?

There is something about the intimacy of house churches. Large churches should always be striving to maintain spiritual intimacy among members in home groups. Gatherings that do not merely reproduce what happens on Sunday, but rather minister to the needs of all present in the filling, leading, empowering and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Also the ministry in the Lord, as Paul refers to it, is vital. Each person in God’s kingdom has a call to fulfil some ministry *unto* the body of Christ. A ministry that

God planned for them from the foundation of the world **Ephesians 2:10**. A ministry He wants them to discover and fulfil according to His will **Ephesians 5:17**.

And finally, as if it was a minor matter, Paul asks them to remember his bonds. He was in prison and in chains yet his main concern was their welfare. It is true that the more we seek to minister to others, the more God comforts us. Let us remember **Matthew 25:31-46**.
