



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of COLOSSIANS

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### COLOSSIANS

#### Introduction

Colossae (pronounced Ko-LOSS-eh) was a city in Asia Minor in what is now called Turkey. It lay about 100 miles east of Ephesus, which was on the western seacoast of Asia Minor (called Asia in New Testament times but now Turkey). Colossae was about 1000 miles from Rome by the route that ships had to follow. Two prominent nearby cities were Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 2:1; 4:13-16; Rev. 3:14). Colossae straddled the Lycus River (also called the Little Meander). About 12 miles downstream lay Hierapolis and Laodicea, on opposite sides of the river, about 6 miles apart. The Lycus River ran into the Meander River, which flowed on eastward and emptied into the Aegean Sea just beyond Ephesus. The region around Colossae is very mountainous. The Cadmus range rose behind Colossae. Colossae was very important in ancient times because it commanded the roads leading to the mountain passes. The area of the Lycus valley was known for earthquakes. Severe earthquakes still occur frequently in Turkey. The area had a rich volcanic soil. It's rich soil made sheep-raising profitable. Laodicea was famous for its production of fine woolen garments. The waters of the Lycus River carried much powdered chalk which caused several effects: (a) it deposited curious white formations and incrustations, which could be seen from far off; (b) it was not good for irrigation because the crustations destroyed vegetation; (c) but it did cause the waters of the river to be extra good for color-dyeing. The chalk in the water made the dyes take hold of fabrics well. Colossae was in the ancient country of Phrygia, located in central Asia Minor (Acts 2:10; 16:16; 18:23). The name Phrygia was derived from a Thracian tribe that in early times invaded and drove out (or absorbed) the earlier inhabitants (including Hittites). Many Phrygian ruins remain in the area today, including tombs bearing the names of kings Midas and Gordius. The Phrygians absorbed many religious superstitions from the Asiatics they contacted. Almost every known pagan religion could be found in Phrygia. This may be the reason why the Colossian heresy was such a mixture of ideas. The Phrygians were known as a lazy race, and were sometimes referred to as a race worthy only of being slaves. The Syrian king, Antiochus the Great migrated by force 2000 Jewish families into Phrygia about 170 B.C. These Jews multiplied until it is estimated by the amount of money they sent annually to the Jerusalem temple as taxes that there were 50,000 Jews in the area in New Testament times. Paul encountered much Jewish opposition in this general area during his missionary trips. The presence of so many Jews in the area may explain why the Colossian heresy included some Jewish ideas, and also why the nearby Christians of Galatia were affected by Judaism. In Roman times (the NT period) there was no country of Phrygia as such. The land of the Phrygians had been divided so that the largest part of it was in the province of Asia and the rest in Galatia. However the line was not sharply drawn between them. Also by NT times Colossae had dwindled in importance until it was a very insignificant city. It has been called the most insignificant city to which Paul ever wrote a letter. By Paul's day Hierapolis, and

particularly Laodicea, had far overshadowed Colossae. Hierapolis had a famous spa (vacation locale for rich Romans). Laodicea had become the highway center, the trade center, the center of the wool business, and the government administrative center of the district. Not a trace of the city of Colossae remains visible today!

Colossae probably would never have been mentioned in the NT had it not been for the church there. The city is never named in the book of Acts. Paul did not start the church nor, according to the biblical record, did he ever visit it. Paul had heard of their faith (1:4,9), but he had never seen these believers personally (2:1). Yet the church in Colossae was the outgrowth of Paul's 3-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19—20:38). So effective was the witness of the church at Ephesus that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). This would include people in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Examining the persons involved in the prison correspondence of Paul (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy), we can just about put the story together of how the Colossian church was founded. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, at least two men from Colossae were brought to faith in Christ—Epaphras and Philemon (Philemon 9). Epaphras apparently was one of the key founders of the church in Colossae, for he shared the gospel with his friends there (Col. 1:7). He also had a ministry in the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea (Col. 4:12-13). Philemon had a church meeting in his home (Philemon v. 2). It is likely that Apphia and Archippus, mentioned in this verse were, respectively, the wife and son of Philemon, and that Archippus was the preacher of the church (Col. 4:17). There is a good lesson for us here: God does not always need an apostle or a "full-time" Christian worker to get a ministry established. Nor does he need elaborate buildings and extensive organizations. Here were two "laymen" who were used of God to start ministries in at least 3 cities. It is God's plan that the Christians in the large urban areas, like Ephesus (and like Springfield, MO, St. Louis, MO, Kansas City, MO, etc.) reach out into the smaller towns and share the gospel.

Paul, under "house arrest" in Rome (Acts 21:17—28:31) had met there a runaway slave, Onesimus, who belonged to Philemon, one of the leaders of the church in Colossae. Paul led Onesimus to Christ and wrote his letter to Philemon asking this friend to forgive Onesimus and receive him back as a "brother in Christ." About the same time Epaphras showed up in Rome because he needed Paul's help. Some new doctrines were being taught in Colossae and were seducing the believers. Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians to refute those heretical teachings and establish the truth of the Gospel.

The heresy that threatened the church at Colossae was a combination of Eastern philosophy and Jewish legalism—with elements of Gnosticism (pronounced, NOS-tuh-cizzem). Gnosticism grew out of the philosophical question: "Where (not "why") is the evil in this world if creation was made by a holy God?" Gnostics came to the false conclusion that all that is physical is evil. Their next false conclusion was that a holy God could not come into contact with evil matter, so there had to be a series of "emanations" from God to do his creating. Jesus Christ was merely one of God's many "emanations" (or "demi-urges"), not God-Incarnate. They claimed God was "Wholly-Other" (i.e., mind, thought, idea) and must

forever remain that way. Added to these speculations was a form of Jewish legalism. Since to the Gnostics matter was evil, they had to find some way to control their own human natures in their pursuit of “perfection” (i.e., “knowledge or wisdom”). Two different practices resulted. One school of thought held that the only way to conquer evil matter was by means of rigid discipline and asceticism (2:23). The other view taught that it was permissible to engage in all kinds of sin, since matter was evil anyway! It appears that the first opinion was the predominant one in Colossae.

This false teaching was a deceptive combination of many things—Jewish legalism, oriental philosophy, pagan astrology, mysticism, asceticism, and even a touch of Christianity. There was something for everyone, and this was what made it so dangerous. The false teachers claimed that they were not denying the Christian faith, but only lifting it to a higher level claiming to offer fullness and freedom, and a satisfying life that solved all the problems that people face. Gnosticism is as “up-to-date” as today’s Kierkegaardian/Barthian “neo-orthodoxy.” It is as up-to-date as Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science. It is as up to date as “the emerging church.” It has infected hundreds of “Christian” churches in every “main-line” denomination in Christendom—and even into certain segments of Roman Catholicism! It’s the religion of practically every American television program from the “news” to Oprah, to “Soap Operas,” to even the History Channel! It is in modern Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Shintoism. It is as old as the Garden of Eden. Essentially, it is the religion of do whatever makes YOU feel good—never mind your conscience or God’s revelation, the Bible.

But Paul teaches the true Gospel in his letter to the Colossians: (a) Jesus Christ of Nazareth was God in the flesh—and lives evermore as the eternal co-Creator and Sustainer of the universe; (b) Jesus worked out the human sin problem on the cross, defeated once and for all, all the Satanic forces (2:15), put an end to the legal demands of the Law of Moses, and gives grace to those who believe; (c) anyone who believes in Christ and who is “in Christ” is full and complete (2:10,17). **THUS THE THEME OF COLOSSIANS IS: COMPLETE IN CHRIST!**

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### COLOSSIANS 1:1-29

The “hope of heaven” was something the Christians at Colossae definitely had! It was causing them to become “famous” all over Asia Minor (Turkey). Paul had heard about it. But what was the source of that “hope”? There was nothing mystical or subjective about its source. The hope was not a result of some religious “feeling.” Their hope was what caused them to “feel” saved and secure. But the cause of the hope was the Gospel which they had “heard before.” And that Gospel had to “come” to them through preachers or teachers (or personal evangelists—i.e., other Christians). Their hope originated on “the day they heard and understood the grace of God in truth as they learned it from Epaphras (Col. 1:5-6). Hope is not something you get by praying! Hope is what you get by hearing, learning understanding the gospel of Christ and obeying it! You pray because you hope! You worship because you hope. You exhibit Christian love because you hope! The Christian faith is the only faith that gives “assurance of things hoped for, and conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Any hope based on any “thing,” “idea” or “person” but the historically, empirically accomplished redemptive work of Christ is a false hope. That kind of hope is based on “feeling,” “wishing upon a star,” “whim,” or “fancy.” There is no evidence to confirm such a subjectively-based hope will ever be accomplished. Christians hope in the promises of God and they have absolute evidence (as absolute as any evidence in this life can ever be) that his promises will be completed (see 1 Cor. 15:1-58). Paul also tells us that we have access into God’s grace by faith which will bring us suffering which will result in endurance which will result in character and which ends in hope (Rom. 5:1-5). **TO GET HOPE WE NOT ONLY HAVE TO BELIEVE, WE HAVE TO BELIEVE ENOUGH TO OBEY CHRIST AND SUFFER FOR HIM!** Hope based on Christ, because he was real, based on reality, based on history, was producing “fruit” in the lives of the Colossians. This “hope” was bearing fruit in “the whole world” of Paul’s day and age (the ancient Roman empire). Christians in Colossae were living their lives on this earth in anticipation of the next life! What happens when Christians live in anticipation of heaven? (a) they are interested in character, in goodness, in purity, in truth, in love (agape love), in right, in justice, in thankfulness; (b) they consider this world a stewardship from God to be used to bring glory to his name and to save as many as will from eternal damnation; (c) the obsession of their lives is knowing God and Jesus Christ from his word, because they anticipate spending eternity in Christ’s presence; (d) though they are frustrated by the transitoriness of this life, they are not devastated by its futilities and decay (cf. Rom. 8:18-25) and sufferings—they anticipate an eternal existence of no more sin, no more pain, no more death, no more mourning or futility. Their hope made these Christians at Colossae “lovers” of mankind! Their love was not mere sentiment, but real, honest, helpful, caring love. It made them servants of the church and of the saints. Remember! There is no hope for the Christian in this world! The Christian’s hope is in heaven!!! Christians have “written off” this world and are hoping in the “new world” to come when Jesus comes! This world is doomed. And every “work” in this world that is not in

harmony with heaven is also doomed! No hiding place here! Nothing permanent here! Even the “elements” will pass away (2 Pet. 3:10). If Christians are to give other people in this world any hope at all, it is in the gospel of heaven! Otherwise, they are without hope—HOPELESS! (Eph. 2:12).

The Colossians were to “lead a life worthy of the Lord” by being “filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” The word “worthy” comes from the Greek word *axios* from which we get English words, “axiom, axiomatic” and means “value, intrinsic worth, self-evident truth.” In other words, the Christian’s life is to be “walked” according to the value he places upon the Lord. The Christian’s outlook and conduct is to be commensurate with who the Lord IS, and what the Lord HAS DONE FOR HIM! Those who value most this life of the flesh value a world which is passing away, and are not “worthy” of the Lord (see Phil. 1:27-30). The Christian’s life is to be lived commensurate with his “hope of heaven”! Unbelievers scoff at the “hope of heaven” as a motive for conduct. They say, “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,” or, “Take all the gusto you can, you only go around once.” NOT TRUE! You go to a place that is forever! Now, the only way to know the value of the Lord is through the knowledge of his revealed will (the Bible) and believing it! The Greek word *epignosei* is translated “knowledge” in 1:9 and “understood” in 1:6. It does not mean that we must know all there is to know about God, but that we are to learn all we can about him—all that he reveals of himself—and we must understand what we know! God promises us that we can know all we need to know (Deut. 29:29) and understand about him in order to be as complete as he wants us to be (Col. 1:11,28; 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). Notice the clear connection here of the Scriptures to our knowing everything we need to know about God. Paul expected the Colossians to have “all” power! The Greek word in this text translated “power” is *dunamoumenoi* and its root word we get the English word “dynamite.” All the “dynamite” that was necessary for them to be complete was in Christ and in God! That “power” was to be able to strengthen them for “all” endurance and “all patience” (endurance), and “all” joy, and “all” qualification to share in the inheritance of the saints in light! And how were the Colossians to “get” that “all” power? By being filled with the knowledge of his (Christ’s) will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. This would cause them to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Notice—there is no mention whatever here of miraculous gifts. Miraculous gifts did not make Judas, or Peter, or the Corinthians have “all” power for endurance, patience and joy. Miraculous gifts do not qualify anyone for sharing in the inheritance of the saints. Indeed, the power of God in us is “Christ in us, the hope of glory” (1:27). The power of God in us is “according to the might of his glory.” “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God, and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7). It is our faith in Who God is (“mighty and glorious”) and what he has done that gives us “all” the power we need to have faith, endure, be patient, and have joy. Many people are seeking “power” to endure, and “power” to find joy, but they want it to come to them miraculously, without any effort, without any cost, without any surrender, without any faith in Christ. They want it in this world and right now. They cannot spare the time from indulging themselves to “know” and “understand” and “walk worthy” (notice that’s not “worthily”—there is a difference) of the Lord’s gospel. The vast majority of human beings cannot take the time from their own pursuits to “increase in the knowledge of God” so they



have no power! The Greek word *hikanosanti* (Col. 1:12) is translated “qualified” in the RSV and “meet” (or “fit”) in the KJV. It means, “sufficient, competent, enough, having reached, having attained.” It is the word Luke used to record Jesus’ statement about the two swords when he said to Peter, “It is enough” (Lk. 22:38). It means “enough to do the job,” nothing more is needed. There are two things Paul says which “qualify” us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light: (a) deliverance from the dominion of darkness and transference to the kingdom of his beloved Son; (b) redemption, and the forgiveness of sins. Both of these “qualifications, competencies, or attainments” have been accomplished for us by God, in Christ. We have nothing to do with earning it or accomplishing it—we merely accept it as a gift by pledging our allegiance and loyalty to him in faithful obedience to his commandments. An interesting Greek word is *merida*, translated “share” RSV and “partakers” KJV. It means, “divide, distribute, impart.” It is the word from which we get the English word, “meridian.” God’s heavenly kingdom is divided up among his saints! Each has his part! The Greek phrase is, *merida tou klerou*, literally, “Division of the lot.” God “qualifies” those “complete in Christ” (who have learned of his grace) for the “division of God’s lot” among the saints. God does this because they have been qualified by his grace, and they live with faith, endurance, joy and thankfulness. This characterizes the life of the saints in their daily living in the light of Christ (Jn. 8:12; 9:5). The “dominion of darkness” is where Satan dwells. It is outside the parameters of “God’s light:—outside the parameter of life and truth—there is no truth in Satan at all (Jn. 8:44). Dwelling in darkness means dwelling in vulnerability. Human beings are never so vulnerable as when they are in the darkness of night—without light. Try to move about, try to feed yourself, try to keep from being paralyzed with fear in a situation of total darkness! To be in total darkness is to be shut off from everything and everyone except oneself! To be in total darkness is to be without knowledge, without ability, helpless, waiting only to be victimized. The physical darkness of this world was created by God to do more than merely give us time to sleep. It was to show us how vulnerable we are without light! And this is even more a reality in the mental and moral realm! Without Christ (in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2:3) human beings are in mental and moral darkness. They are “in the evil one” in whom is death and isolation and torments! The Greek word translated “dominion” is *exousias*, often translated, “authority.” People not transferred into the kingdom of God’s Son by having learned and appropriated his grace are under the “authority” of darkness. It rules them. They are subject to falsehood, wickedness, fear, and death. This is what rules them. It motivates and directs and controls them. They are incapable of breaking out of it by themselves. They must accept redemption and transfer from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light by faith in God’s grace and obeying the gospel through Christ. Else they will spend eternity in darkness! Those who do not obey the gospel will receive God’s vengeance (2 Thess 1:8).

The Greek word *metestesēn* is the aorist tense of the verb *methistēmi* which means, “change of position, change of sides, transfer.” It is in the active voice, meaning it is an action of the subject of the sentence. And the subject of the sentence (1:13) is “he” (God). Our “transfer is not something we have done! God changes our position from being dominated by darkness to being dominated by light. He writes our name in the Lamb’s book of life. He “transfers” us to a new duty station. He changes us from “siding” with the devil, to “siding” with God! He puts us on the winning side (see Rom. 8). Our “transfer” involves

something both objective and subjective. God arbitrarily transfers us, in spite of our sinful guilt, when we believe and are baptized. This is clearly taught in this epistle as well as in Romans, Ephesians, Acts, Galatians, and inferred in others, that baptism is the point in time at which God “transfers” us into the kingdom of Christ (the church). But because of his grace, and through our faith in him, he regenerates us by our increasing knowledge of him (the Holy Spirit) within our minds and souls. When we let him take us for transfer, his truth comes in and takes us over from the side of darkness to the side of light. His Spirit and his power—his mind and his character “transport” us upon the “glory road” (the “highway” of Isa. 35) to a “new and better country” where freedom reigns! But this freedom is not without its cost! It comes only by total loyalty and service to the King of the kingdom. Kingdom means sovereignty, kingdom means citizenship, kingdom means participation. In ancient times, the title “firstborn” (Gr. prototokos) does not refer necessarily to the order of birth, but to title, status, or importance. In only one place is it used of Christ about the order of his actual birth (Lk. 2:7). In Psa. 89:1-36 (esp. v. 27) we read that the Lord is going to make Solomon “the firstborn” of all the kings of the earth. Solomon was certainly not born first in order of all of David’s sons, yet he was named the “firstborn” because he was first in rank! See these scriptures about Jesus Christ being “firstborn” (Col. 2:15,18; Rev. 1:5; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6; Ex. 4:22). The Greek word eikon is translated, “image” and is the word from which we get “icon” or “idol.” Jesus is the very likeness, representation or manifestation of God in the flesh (see Heb. 1:1-3). No man has seen God at any time, but Jesus Christ has “declared” him (Jn. 1:18). Jesus IS God. He was not the “beginning” of creation (Rev. 3:14, Greek, arche or “chief”)—he was with God before the beginning of creation (Jn. 1:1-18). Paul makes very clear here in Col. 1:15-20 that all the fulness of everything God is was in Jesus—and Jesus was God, bodily (Col. 2:9-10). The Christian has, in his faith and following of Jesus, all the fulness of God needed by any human being. There is nothing else in God that anyone needs, besides what Jesus gives the Christian! There are some theologians who say Jesus never claimed to be God in the flesh. How would you answer that? (See Jn. 1:1-18; 5:18; 10:33; 14:1-11; 19:7). Jesus is said by the Scriptures to be the Creator. If he is Creator, he could not have been created! Have you ever meditated on the fact that the awesome Creator of all that exists came to earth and allowed himself to be misunderstood, blasphemed, spat upon, hated, crucified, by his creatures???

The Greek word sunesteken is translated “consist” KJV, and “hold together” RSV. It literally is, “stand together.” It means, “constituted together, compacted together.” In Hebrews 1:3 we are told that Christ “upholds” (Gr. pheron, “carries along”) all things by “the word of his power.” By the mere force in Christ’s word, everything that exists, materially and morally, “holds together” or, is sustained and moves inexorably toward the pleasure (see Rev. 4:11) or will, or purpose of the One who created it. The Father created all things by the Son, through the Son, and for the Son. Jesus is the primary Cause, the instrumental cause, and the final cause of all that exists (other than the Father and Holy Spirit). That includes the devil, demons, angels, heaven, hell, earth, man, and matter—all things visible and invisible. When we think of creating and sustaining (“holding-together”) we usually think of material things. But, Christ is the Creator and Sustainer not only of what we know of this material cosmos, but also of love, justice, faithfulness, goodness, beauty, satisfaction, truth, life—all those things that are right—that are valuable—that make persons whole and societies whole!



Take Jesus Christ (God-Incarnate) out of any individual's life and his life is futile, fragmented, scattered, never satisfying, never complete, never justified or vindicated. The same is true of any component of society. Take the One who is "The Way, The Truth, and The Life" away, and all components of society (home, school, nation, and even church) eventually flies apart! Jesus demonstrated that his word was the power that created and cohered in both the physical and moral realms. He brought life back to dead physical bodies that had come apart, and sustained the brotherhood of believers—all through his word! **THINK ABOUT IT— WE HAVE HIS WORD IN WRITTEN FORM TO HOLD IN OUR HANDS AND HEARTS! — TREMENDOUS POWER IS AVAILABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN!**

How can a holy God ever be reconciled with sinful man? Shall God lower his standards, close his eyes to sin, compromise his absoluteness? If he did the universe would fall to pieces! He must remain absolutely sovereign—he must remain absolutely consistent with Absoluteness or everything physical and moral will disintegrate. No ordinary man could somehow make things right with God on his own behalf. No ordinary man could take the initiative and work out some program of attainment which would satisfy God's demands. This is so because: (a) in the first place, when man violates God's absolute law, man begins a life of hostility toward God (Rom. 8:7-8). Man in his hostile state wants to be his own sovereign, yet he does not want to suffer the consequences of his own rebellion, so he tries to appease God through means which will not require surrender of supposed human autonomy; (b) secondly, man is finite, dependent, contingent—he is absolutely unable to satisfy an absolute God's wrath against rebellion—his conscience tells him so. Because Jesus Christ was and is God and became the perfect human being, he is able to do what no other human could ever do—reconcile lost and hostile humanity to a holy God. If there is to be a reconciliation between man and God, the initiative and accomplishment must come from God and by God or through God. So, it was through Christ and in Christ that God came as Perfect Man. God took the initiative and made the accomplishment. Job's cry, "would that there were an umpire (mediator) between us who might lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33) is answered in Jesus Christ. The "fulness" of God had to dwell in a human being in order that deity and humanity might be reconciled. Deity was distrusted, dethroned, and be-damned by humanity! Mankind declared war on Deity. The culprit (man) must be caught, punished, and, at the same time, extended pardon! That requires a sacrifice commensurate with the rank of the One offended. That requires a perfect (culprit) sacrifice! That requires a man who is perfect—God-in-the-flesh—as sacrifice. Sinful man is incompetent and unacceptable as a satisfactory sacrifice to vindicate the majesty, holiness and absoluteness of an Almighty, Absolute God. Absolute love spurned and detested cannot be content with anything less than Absolute Love in return. Absolute love must be reciprocated with absolute love. Without that there is alienation, disharmony, injustice, and death. That is why God loves us "in Christ"! That is why we "come to fulness of life in him (Christ)" Col. 2:10. God was "in Christ" reconciling the world unto himself (2 Cor. 5:16-21). What we could not do ourselves, because our minds were hostile toward God, give back perfect love to God, God fully in Jesus did for us! God declared "peace" on condition of the cross of Jesus Christ. That was the only thing that would bring peace between God and man—a perfect man as a sacrifice—a vicarious (substitutionary) atonement. Nothing more than an obedient faith is now needed for man to be completely in God's grace and favor! There is no need for a "second work of

grace.” Everything God wants of us may be had by faith in Christ’s accomplishment of reconciliation. God is satisfied with Christ! Are we????? The purpose of this reconciliation is personal, human holiness. Clearly, God does not make peace so that human beings can continue to be rebels! He has reconciled us to himself so that we may share his life and his holiness (his character). We are presented to God “holy and unblameable and unproveable” (Col. 1:22). The word holy means “being set apart, devoted to God’s use.” The OT animal sacrifices were “holy” unto God. They were to glorify God—to express the worshiper’s relationship of adoration, obedience, thankfulness, esteem of, surrender to, and dependence upon God. The animal offering under the Old Covenant was an imperfect, unwilling substitute “predicting” the Perfect Willing Sacrifice (Jn. 12:27-28; Mt. 20:28; 26:36-39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:41-44; Heb. 10:1-18). The lamb, and later Jesus, took the place of the worshiper and because of God’s grace in accepting it, the worshiper was, and is, to set himself apart as devoted to God. “Unblameable” means “without blemish.” It is a word also applied to the temple sacrifices which had to be, as far as possible, without defect. It is amazing that God looks at his children, in Christ, and sees no defect in them! God chose us to be “holy and without blame” (Eph. 1:4). “Unproveable” means “free from accusation.” Once we have been reconciled to God, no charges can be brought against us (Rom. 8:31-34). Satan, the accuser of mankind (Rev. 12:1-12) would like to hurl charges at us—but God, as he predicted, will not accept them (see Zech. ch. 3:1-10). People may have accusations to bring against us, but they cannot change our relationship with God—only unbelief and impenitence can do that! The important thing in our own Christian lives is not how we look in our own sight, or in the sight of others (1 Cor. 4:1-4), but how God looks at us “in Christ!”

Man has to “continue” (Greek, epimenete, “remain with”) in the faith (i.e., in the “doctrine”). He must be “stable” Greek, tethemeliomenoi, perfect tense participle, meaning he must have been “stabilized at the beginning of his faith and continue in a stabilized condition in the faith.” God puts a premium on stability. Tethemeliomenoi is the word often used for “foundation” in the NT. Our entrance “into” Christ requires that a solid “foundation” of the facts and principles of what believing “in Christ” requires and means and demands! Believing in Christ is not so complicated as to be incomprehensible or impossible. But believing “in” Christ has its demands and costs and foundational to it is knowing his word! Man has to “continue steadfastly” (Greek hedraioi, “to be seated, to be settled”). Hedraioi is the Greek word from which we get “cathedral” because the cathedral was where the “religious leader’s chair of authority was located.” Whatever it takes to make people settled in Christ is what the church must do. It should be obvious that the strongest Biblical, evidential (apologetic) program we can carry on for all members of the congregation is what will bring stability and steadfastness in the faith to Christians. That is why the N.T. scriptures emphasize the resurrection of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 15). Man has to continue, “not shifting” from the hope of the Gospel which he has heard. The Greek word is metakinoumenoi and is the word from which we get the English words, “kinetics, cinema” and means, “moving, motion.” The Christian must say, “I shall not be moved away from my hope in heaven!” The Christians must not be moved away from the teaching of the Scriptures for any circumstance, any person, or any “thing.”! Let no hurt feelings, no slight, no other person’s hypocrisy, no offense, no opinion (yours or someone else’s) no unscriptural teacher, move you away from

your hope of heaven!

There was nothing lacking in Christ's suffering for our sins! His atonement was complete! It was verified as complete by God when he raised him from the dead! There is no suffering for any man to do in order to make up some lack in Christ's redemption. Christ was the perfect, complete sacrifice for man's sin—once for all time (see Heb. 10:12-14). But Christ's "body" in the world still has suffering to do. His "body" is the church—Christians. Jesus told Paul that his call to the ministry and apostleship involved inevitable suffering (Acts 9:15-16). Jesus informed all his disciples they would suffer merely because they believed and followed him (John 15:18-27; Matt. 10:16-42). The church (Christians) is not to "wonder" that the world hates it (1 Jn. 3:13). Christians are not to be surprised at persecution as if it were something strange happening to them! (1 Pet. 4:12-19). A suffering church is normal! A church that resists the devil will suffer (1 Pet. 5:6-11). All who live godly lives in this world will suffer some kind of persecution—that's a promise of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:12). The word Paul uses in Greek is *husteremata* and is translated "lacking"—from this Greek word we get the English word "hysterectomy, and hysterical." If the church is going to carry out its ministry of "making the word of God fully known" it is going to have to suffer. The church is not "perfected or completed" until it leaves this world of woe. While it is here, God is perfecting it in holiness through suffering! Suffering is the "calling" to which Christians are called (1 Pet. 2:21ff). I have a suspicion that if the church is not suffering, it is not making the word of God fully known—not fulfilling its ministry! It is through enduring suffering that godly character and hope is formed in the Christian (Rom. 5:1-5)

The Greek word *plerosai*, translated "make fully known" (1:25) would be more literally translated "make full the word of God," but it should be translated as having to do with Paul carrying out his ministry which was to "make the word of God abound—to carry it into effect to its fullest." It is best translated to mean the same thing as Paul says in Col. 1:28-29. The word "mystery" (Greek, *musthri,ou*) in the New Testament means "a revealed secret." The Greeks had their religious cults which had "mysterious" (secret) rites and information which they "revealed" to their "initiates." They were somewhat like modern lodges with their secret rituals. These "secret" things were called "mysteries." In the Bible the term "mystery" does not mean something that is totally incomprehensible or beyond human understanding. In the Bible the apostles used the word "mystery" to mean something that can be understood once it is "revealed." The gospel of salvation through God becoming flesh (incarnated) was a "mystery" because it was not revealed in all its fulness in OT times (only in types and shadows to the Israelites, and only in nature to the Gentiles). God did not reveal salvation by his incarnate substitutionary atonement until Jesus Christ was born. This was so that mankind would have full opportunity to learn by hard experience that he could not save himself nor his world by laws, by philosophy, by military might, by economic progress, by any inherent goodness within man, by idolatry, by magic, by great architecture and culture, or by any other means imaginable to man. Finally, at the right time, God revealed the "mystery" that man is saved by grace. This salvation was accomplished by God in the Perfect Man doing the saving—and he revealed it to fishermen in the Person of Jesus Christ—to shepherds, tax collectors, tentmakers, slaves, to the lowly—to "babes" (Matt. 11:25-30).

These “lowly” people were eager to know the gospel message; the self-righteous were not

Christ must be “in” any person before God will forgive that person. To put it another way, a sinner must be “in Christ” before God will save that sinner. Being “in Christ” and having “Christ in you” are one and the same (see John 14:23; 15:7,10; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 2:24; 3:23; 4:12,13,15, etc.). In Ephesians 3:17 Paul tells us that “Christ dwells in our hearts through THE faith” (i.e., the doctrine of Scripture)—a faith that trusts and obeys. Paul wrote in Galatians that “as many as had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26-27). Jesus used a very strong figure of speech to explain that human beings got him into themselves by “eating his flesh and drinking his blood.” Christ, himself interpreted this metaphor to mean that we get Jesus into our hearts by knowing, believing and doing his words (see Jn. 6:63). Peter said we “partake of the divine nature” (which is the very same thing as getting Christ into us) by a knowledge of Christ and his precious and very great promises (see 2 Pet. 1:3-4). Paul wrote the Corinthians that when we, with unveiled face (stripped of all human presuppositions and prejudices) behold the glory of the Lord, we are changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). Paul wrote the Galatians that by telling the truth he was “forming Christ in them” Gal. 4:16-19). There is nothing “mysterious” about it—nothing existential or subjective. God has revealed in the NT how it takes place. Sinners can read God’s book and know how to get Christ “in themselves”—and that’s all God is going to say on the subject! The “faith” or “body of doctrine” has been once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). THERE AIN’T NO MORE TO BE DELIVERED!

Now, notice that the phrase “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” is directly connected to the phrase, “him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ.” THE faith (doctrine) has to be proclaimed in order for Christ to dwell in anyone! Christ cannot, by the limitations he places on his own sovereignty, dwell in people unless they believe in him and love him. And people cannot believe in him and love him if they are not taught the Gospel. “Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ” Rom. 10:17. After a person gets “into” Christ or gets “Christ into himself,” he is “matured” through the very same process of “warning and teaching.” The Greek word teleion is translated “mature” or “perfect.” It means to “make complete, to fulfill, to finish.” The major work of the ministry of the gospel is to “equip” the saints so that they may grow, develop, come to fruition or manhood in Christ. That is done today through “evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11-16).” The Greek word nouthetountes comes from the Greek nous (“mind”) and means “to put in mind.” The other Greek word is didaskontes, and means “teach, instruct” and is the word from which we get the English word, “didactic.” Maturity “in” Christ does not come by osmosis, or by irresistible, miraculous grace. It is not mysterious, subjective and reserved for only a few. It comes by having the apostolic word of God taught and learned and believed and obeyed. Isn’t it interesting that the Christian is matured through “warnings” just like the child growing up in the home is matured through warnings. There are some who would tell us that we must not inhibit a child by warning or admonishing or disciplining. Some “psychologists” admonish us “Let them alone so they may mature all on their own.” Nope! MATURATION WITHOUT ADMONISHMENT, WARNING,

TEACHING, DISCIPLINING CANNOT BE DONE EITHER FOR THIS WORLD OR THE  
NEXT



## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### COLOSSIANS 2:1-23

The Greek word *apokruphoi* is translated “hidden” and is the word from which we get English words, “cryptic, cryptograph, crypt.” The Greek word means “concealed, covered, kept secret.” But like a cryptograph (coded message), the knowledge is there and available to anyone who “knows the code” or is able to “uncover” what is concealed. It is not totally unknowable but is revealed to all who have the “key” to understand it. Paul says “all the riches of assured understanding” are “secreted—deposited” or “coded” in Christ. We sing, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine—heir of salvation...” That is what “understanding” the “mystery” (Greek, *musteriou*) of God gives us—assured knowledge of the hope laid up in heaven. *Musteriou* in the ancient Greek religious cults denoted the initiation rites of each cult. It was somewhat like the modern “Lodges” (i.e., Masons, Elks, Oddfellows, etc.). Only those who belonged to each religious cult knew the “rites” of that religion. Paul appropriated this word to describe the gospel. The gospel “initiation” rites were “hidden” from everyone except those who knew the Scriptures and became Christians. *Musteriou* does not mean something that cannot be known by anyone. If you have the literature (i.e. Gospel accounts), you can know it! Assurance is a feeling, but that feeling is based on understanding the coded message which is “the grace of God in truth” which we learn (see Col. 1:5-7). There is no assurance short of learning and believing and being continually “matured” in Christ. And there is no learning and maturing without “toiling and striving mightily.” Now, what about that statement, “in whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”? Is there no wisdom apart from Jesus Christ? Is there nothing to know except Biblical information? What about mathematics, biology, politics, physics, literature, anthropology, philosophy and hundreds of other areas of human “knowledge”? (you notice I did not include sociology and psychology—because they are mostly subjective and speculative and therefore not really knowledge). The details and specifics of all these are not necessarily (some are) found in the Bible. But the primary, essential question is: What do all the facts and hypotheses of these “disciplines” MEAN? WHY do we know all this? WHAT is the PURPOSE—what is the goal—what is the ultimate point of all this “secular” knowledge? The ultimate point in knowing all this is what is encrypted or “coded” in Christ!!! All TRUE secular knowledge together with the Bible is to “conform us to the image of God’s dear Son,” Jesus Christ, and thus qualify us for the heavenly inheritance of the saints in light.” Christ, as we know him, believe in him, and partake of him through the Bible (God’s word), becomes the “KEY”—the “DECODER” of all the secrets of God’s creation that he wants us presently to know. Christ is the “key” to the purpose of all that man knows. The origin of all that exists—the consistency of all that exists—the reason or purpose for all that exists is “deciphered” to the person who learns of Christ, believes Christ and follows Christ. Those who reject Christ, however, never learn of him or believe in him, or keep on being matured in him, must go through this life and into the next ignorant of the “secret” of the Creator. That “secret” is Christ IN man, the hope of glory for man! Man without Christ will never know what glory God could give him! If all this knowledge and wisdom is IN Christ, from whom is it hidden? Even

Jesus thanked God that it was hidden from some people!!! Matt. 11:25-30. It is hidden from the “wise and understanding” but revealed to “babes.” Get this text (Matt. 11:25-30) in its context. Jesus had just condemned the impenitent cities for their arrogance, unbelief, and refusal to think and reason honestly about the miracles he had done right within their very streets and houses which demonstrated his deity. They refused to “take his yoke upon them, and learn from him.” All the wisdom and knowledge of God is “hidden” in Christ to those who think they know too much to allow Christ to “teach” them anything. All who reject the Bible as the revelation of God—as God speaking to man—these are the “wise and understanding”—that is they think they are wise. Jesus gave thanks that God had hidden divine truth from them. Jesus will not tolerate arrogant, self-wise, unteachable, impenitent know-it-alls. If you want the “code” to wisdom in Jesus you have to be teachable, malleable, humble, and hungering for righteousness and allow Jesus to teach you through his word! C. S. Lewis said, “Humility is not thinking less of oneself, it is thinking of oneself less.”

Yes! Indeed! Faith in Christ is produced by teaching. The capacity to believe is, of course, inherent in human beings by divine fiat. We are created with the capacity to believe (trust, choose, will, desire, love). But the object (or Person) to whom, or upon whom, we relate or exercise that capacity, is deemed worthy by what we know of him (or it). I suppose there is always a risk factor in “believing.” In other words, we cannot know any person or thing in any absolute sense. That is true in every facet of life as we know it and live it—in marriage, in friendships, in purchases, in eating and drinking, in getting up in the morning or going to sleep at night. We cannot completely know an Infinite Being. We can’t even know the concept “eternity” in an absolute sense. But we can know enough to trust Christ that what he promises, he is able to fulfill. We can know people and things in this life enough to know that what they promise they will try to fulfill—or not! And we know that on the basis of past performance—information—about them. Christ was a Person—on this earth. That is exactly how we believe in Christ. We believe beyond a reasonable doubt that the evidence proves Christ is who the Bible says he is and he is capable of doing what he promises. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Jesus did many “other signs in the presence of the disciples (eyewitnesses)” which were not recorded, but what has been recorded is sufficient that any man or woman may believe that Jesus is the Anointed of God, and believing have life in his name (John 20:30-31). We are born with the capacity to believe, but the exercise of that believing is entirely up to us. We will believe something or someone. Everybody is trusting in some one else, or in himself, or in God and Christ. Ultimately no one believes in matter, or things! Mankind believes in “selves” or “persons”—the burning question is—“Which person?” Which person do you know to be most able to fulfill your life beyond death??? WE MAY BELIEVE IN THAT PERSON!

Philosophy has everything to do with “the elemental spirits of the universe.” In fact, that is all philosophy does have—“the elements of the cosmos.” The RSV is not a literal translation here. The Greek has *stoicheia tou kosmou*, so the text literally would read, “The elements of the world (or universe—cosmos).” The word “spirits” (Greek *pneumatoi*) is not in the Greek text. Philosophy builds its concepts from only that which is seen—the elements of the created universe. Philosophy can say nothing about origins or purposes in the specific

sense. It can reason to generalizations that there had to be origins and there may be purpose demonstrated. Romans 1:18ff; Acts 14:15-18; Acts 17:22-28; Psa. 19:1ff, etc., grant that much to human reasoning. But philosophy can do no more than that! Philosophy can know only the “shadows,” never the substance. The substance is not in the elements but in the Person who made the elements. And he (the Creator) must reveal himself to the creature in order for the creature to know him because the creature is limited to knowing only the elements. But the sad thing is that philosophy in the mind of unbelievers builds up “traditions of men” (Greek *paradosin ton anthropon*)—i.e., that which is handed down. With age and majority-consensus, these traditions are accepted by some people as the sum total of all that can be known! That leads men away from God who wants man to know the SUBSTANCE (reality, essence, meaning) of all things by knowing his Son through revelation. Human reason without divine revelation “preys” upon men’s minds to turn them away from the sovereignty of God—from the grace of God and his goodness. Human reason without revelation becomes a god unto itself!

The “elements of the cosmos” are contrasted against the “fulness” to which a Christian comes in Christ because the “elements”: (a) give no ultimate information about where the “elements” came from, why they are here, and where they are going; (b) give no guidance in distinguishing good from evil, right from wrong; (c) give no freedom from the guilt into which the human soul is bondage through a stricken conscience; (d) give no hope of a “new creation” which will be free of the futility and decay and death so very apparent in the “elements” themselves; (e) give no promise of ultimate justice or vindication for the suffering experienced at the mercy of the “elements” themselves; (f) give no experience of satisfaction of peace or security; (g) give no indication that there is a divine, infinite “Lover” of man’s personhood who is intimately, personally, immanently involved in man’s reclamation and salvation. Nowhere do the elements of “nature” tell us all this. This information comes by incarnate revelation.. God came to earth in flesh and demonstrated and revealed all this. We know that if we have “brought every thought captive to obedience to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5) we do not need philosophy, for in Christ we have all the “fulness of life.” There is nothing else to add to Christ’s interpretation, or revelation, about life’s, existence, or destiny. He is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Savior, Goal, Purpose, Point of Life! This is eternal life, that we know him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom God has sent (Jn. 17:3). We not only do not need philosophy, we need to “look out” (Greek *blepete*) or beware or be alert that no one be “robbed”(Greek, *sulagogon*, “looted, plundered”) of the Substance of life itself by philosophy.

Circumcision (Greek *peritome*, “a cutting around”) was instituted in Abraham as a sign or token of God’s covenant with him (Gen. 17:10-11; Rom. 4:9-11).. Until Abraham, we assume, not one male was circumcised, since God chose it as a special “sign” for Abraham and his descendants of promise (through Isaac). After Abraham, Hebrew male infants were circumcised (had the foreskin of their penises cut off) when they were 8 days old. Their circumcision could not have been a sign of their personal faith prior to circumcision (as was Abraham’s, see Gen. 15:6). An 8-day-old infant does not believe anything, because he does not know anything! The circumcision of an 8-day-old male infant was only a “sign” of their

relationship to God through Abraham (it was “fleshly” in its significance). Circumcision symbolized “cleanness.” If these circumcised infants did not, by faith, live righteously as they grew up, their circumcision alone did not make them acceptable to God (see Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:25,29). Abraham was justified and declared “righteous” by faith (Gen. 15:6). Circumcision was an essential act to be in covenant relationship with God, but the act was rendered worthless if the person’s life was unbelieving and ungodly. Col. 2:11-12 teaches that Christ gives us a perfected (completed, reached-the-goal) “circumcision” (i.e., “covenant cleanness”) and this is accomplished by Christ for all who will believe in him, repent and keep his commandments. As circumcision in former times marked a child as being in covenant relationship with God through Abraham, in a like manner Christians are circumcised and marked as being in covenant relation with God through Christ’s Holy Spirit dwelling in them and out of them. Christian “circumcision” is not of the flesh but of the Spirit: (a) by putting off the body of flesh (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:17,19,23; Col. 2:11)—i.e., by repentance; (b) in the circumcision of Christ (Col. 2:11) by accepting in faith the righteousness Christ accomplished for us (his atonement and his justification for us); (c) in baptism (Col. 2:12; see also 1 Pet. 3:21). As a result of these three things, Christians become the “true circumcision”—the people who are in covenant with God (see Phil. 3:2-3; Gal. 6:15-16). The failure to recognize the differences between baptism and circumcision as well as their similarities has led to a grievous error—many interpreters argue that as infants were circumcised, so infants should now be baptized. And, they erroneously teach, that as infants were brought into God’s covenant by circumcision, so now infants are brought into God’s covenant by baptism. This argument is used by almost every advocate of infant baptism. But Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:1-13 show that people would not enter the new covenant relationship as infants under the “coming” New, Messianic covenant. Those entering the new covenant would have to “know” the Lord prior to covenant relationship. Faith and repentance is required of NT “circumcision” in Christ—no 8-day-old infant is capable of believing and repenting.

<u>Circumcision</u>	<u>Baptism</u>
For the OT age	For the New Testament Age
Related men to Abraham and God's covenant Genesis 17: 9-10	Relates us Abraham and God's Promise Galatians 3:27, 29
A physical putting away of flesh	A putting away of the sinful deeds of the flesh
A sign (token) of God's covenant, Genesis 17:11	Not called a sign of anything. It is not “an outward sign of an inward grace.”
Righteousness required of those circumcised Deuteronomy 10:16	Righteousness required of those baptized; Romans 6:4,6
For infants; Genesis 17:11	For those who have faith Colossians 2:12
For males: Genesis 17:12	For all Galatians 3:27-28
Essential; Genesis 17:14	Essential: Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4

Paul does not say who these “principalities and powers” are (Greek archas, “rulers,” and exousias, “authorities”). We may assume he is talking about Satan and his host of demons. Other NT scriptures tell us that until Christ died and was raised from the dead, Satan had gained (by the consent of unbelievers) a broad and pervasive power over almost all mankind through the “fear of death” (see Heb. 2:14-18). But Christ’s work on the cross and his resurrection defeated Satan’s great power over sinful mankind. The point of Colossians 2:8-15 is that Christ “nailed” the condemnation of the Absolute Law of the Absolute Law-Giver (the law of Moses and all other laws man might make for himself) to the cross (i.e., vicariously suffering the penalty for sin). Christ took away the armament of Satan. Satan’s threat was that he could bring accusation against all human beings because they had sinned (at his urging) against the Almighty and Absolutely Holy God. In fact, the devil is not a “ruler” or “authority” over anything or anyone! He merely deceives the world into thinking he is. **ALMIGHTY GOD IS THE ULTIMATE RULER OVER EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE!** There can be no dual-absolute-sovereignty (that would be an oxymoron). The devil figuratively, metaphorically, and deceitfully “rules” people when he can seduce them into rejecting Christ’s atonement—but the devil does not even rule hell—God made hell and rules over it (see the book of Revelation). All who go to hell go there at God’s sentence—not the devil’s. The important point is that Christ openly (Greek edeigmatisen en parresia, “publicly exposed, plainly displayed”) despoiled (Greek apekdusamenos, “disarmed, stripped”) the “rulers and authorities.” Whatever Christ did to the rulers and authorities, he did historically, openly and plainly to the public!! Christ’s defeat (“disarming”) of Satan is no secret! It is to be known and understood! Christ’s death and resurrection, seen publicly and plainly, should keep the whole world from being “preyed upon” by secular, humanistic philosophy and vain deceit. What Christ did on the cross and at the empty tomb (resurrection) demonstrates historically that in Christ dwells all the fulness of Godhood, bodily.

Self-abasement (i.e., asceticism) is a translation of the Greek word tapeinophrosune which is often translated “humility” and literally means, “lowliness of mind.” Sincere and unaffected humility is necessary to be “in Christ” and go to heaven (e.g. Matt. 18). But Paul is talking here about “self-imposed” or “would-be” humility—a false humility. In 2:23 he speaks of it as ethelothreskia kai tapeinophrosune, literally, “affected (pretended) worship and humility”! He is really talking about hypocrisy but just doesn’t call it that! The Gnostics with their mixture of Jewish mysticism and legalism, and secular philosophy, i.e., stoicism were advocating a “severity to the body” (Greek aphedia somatos, “unsparing treatment of, total neglect of, ascetic deprivation of the body—much like the ancient Spartans). What Paul warns against was not done for humility, but for pride! It was a “faked” humility! Nothing is more plainly taught in the New Testament than that all dietary restrictions are abolished by Christ (Mk. 7:19; Rom. 14:2,3,17 1 Cor. 6:13; 8:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-10; Heb. 9:10, etc.). Punishing the flesh in ascetic deprivation or flagellation is almost always a “faked” humility which takes pride in showing-off how humble one is. Our liberty to eat and drink does not do away with instructions against gluttony, intemperance, drunkenness, waste, or causing others to stumble. We must beware lest we be brought under slavery to any food or drink and lest we become a stumbling-block to others (1 Cor. 6:12; 8:9; 1 Pet. 2:11-12; 2 Pet. 2:19). On the other hand, Christians are liberated from bondage to a set of rules about the



body. No man can judge us about non-observance or observance of fasting or feasting. For men to force themselves and others into restrictions imposed to make people holy through works and rules of asceticism is “faked humility.” Real humility is receiving by faith and obedience, as a free gift, the salvation of Christ by grace recognizing that such conviction is what brings us under control through the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14ff).

Asceticism, deprivation to the body, imposed restrictions, severe rules, all have indeed a show (Greek *logon*, “word” or “reputation”) of wisdom. It does, indeed, take a lot of will power to live up to asceticism. Men who live without meat, or fast for days, or wear odd, uncomfortable clothing, or take vows to remain unmarried or poor, or who sleep on spikes, or walk on hot coals, or crawl on hands and knees for great distances in acts of “worship,” or beg, or become recluses in monasteries, or torture one another, are looked upon as especially holy by millions of unthinking people even today! Such ascetic-living men and women are really not all that holy—they glorify their holiness! Furthermore, pride and self-glorification, in what ascetics are doing does not satisfy or check the urges of the flesh. Such actions are really designed “to make a good showing in the flesh” (see Gal. 6:11-16). And glorification of the flesh through asceticism is one of the most “fleshly” indulgences a person can make! Asceticism can never bring spiritual contentment or satisfaction to the soul of human beings. It only compounds the guilt and frustration of the soul which has been not cleansed by grace. All schemes of self-justification end in unresolved guilt. The Christian life is not a life primarily based on the denial of the body. Christians may freely enjoy all foods, drink, marriage and family as long as these things do not rule our lives and desires, or injure us, or cause others to stumble. We may choose to deny ourselves of something for the flesh so that we can make a sacrificial gift for God through giving to men. But we cannot demand that others do as we do in these actions. We must remember that all the things of the flesh are mere shadows at their best. The whole human being (Gr. *soma*, “body”) must be redeemed (bought again) in Christ!

In Colossians, chapter one, Paul used synonyms for “learn” “understand” etc. 21 times! Notice Paul’s use of these words (12 of them) in Colossians chapter two: (a) assured understanding; (b) knowledge; (c) wisdom; (d) knowledge; (e) speech; (f) taught; (g) tradition; (h) insisting; (i) reason; (j) mind; (k) human precepts; (l) human doctrines. In 51 verses Paul uses 33 words synonymous with “knowing.” YOUR MIND MATTERS! Spirituality and true holiness is in direct proportion to the setting of the human mind upon God’s word, the apostolic doctrine, i.e. Biblical teaching. John R. W. Stott says in his little booklet, *Your Mind Matters*, “Wherein lies the liberating power of the truth? To begin with, we need to have a clear picture of the kind of person God intends us to be. We must know God’s moral law and commandments...That good which the mind cannot discover, the will cannot choose, nor the affections cleave unto. Therefore, ‘in Scripture the deceit of the mind is commonly laid down as the principle of all sin.’ The best example of this may be found in the earthly life of our Savior. Three times the devil came to him and enticed him in the wilderness of Judea. Three times he recognized that the devil’s suggestion was evil and contrary to the will of God. Three times he countered the temptation with the word *gegraptai*, ‘it stands written.’ There was no room for debate or argument. The matter was settled in his mind at the outset.

For Scripture had laid down what was right. This clear Biblical knowledge of God's will is the first secret of a righteous life. It is not enough to know what we should be, however. We must go further and set our minds upon it. The battle is always won in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become transformed.....Self-control is primarily mind-control. What we sow in our minds we reap in our actions." This is because in Christ are deposited all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. When one sets one's mind on and fills one's mind with, the "riches of assured understanding in Christ" he comes to the fulness of Godhood which is in Christ. A person cannot come to knowledge, wisdom and understanding more complete and satisfying than in God fully revealed in Christ. In Christ, God holds nothing back that every man must have to be fully man. In Christ every man finds his true identity, his purpose, his destiny, his reason for being! Everything else is mere shadow! Even Judaism is shadow! Setting the mind on philosophy, mysticism, human traditions, precepts and doctrines, of asceticism will never fulfill man! He will always be incomplete in humanism.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

### COLOSSIANS 3:1-25,

YES! Man can, does and must direct his mind! The Bible everywhere assumes it. Even in the O.T. which is so filled with the daily and minute instances of the providential interventions of God into the affairs of this world, it's the mind that matters. In the Old Testament people are said to have been the masters of their own minds and wills (Ezek. chs. 18, 33; Psa. 119, etc.). Romans, ch. 1, definitely teaches that even the heathen who do not believe in God have control over what they think and do and choose. They "did not honor God," "they exchanged the glory of the immortal God," they exchanged the truth about God for a lie," "they did not see fit to acknowledge God," etc. Everywhere Paul went to preach, "he reasoned with them from the Scriptures," Acts 17:2-3; 17:29-31, etc.. All his letters exhort the readers to "think," "set their minds (Rom. 8:1-11; 1 Cor. 14:13-15), etc.," "learn," "understand," "be not ignorant," "teach." The Lord's great invitation is: "Come, learn of me." His great commission is, "Go, teach." Evolutionary and philosophical determinism are moral cop-outs. Determinism posits that all human actions are determined by circumstances and environment. Determinism states that human behavior is not a matter of choice but a "knee-jerk" reaction to nothing more than physical stimuli. However, all unbelief is a moral decision to disbelieve according to Romans 1. "We ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver," said Paul in Acts 17:29 to the philosophers at Athens! To think or not to think is a moral choice of the will and mind. Calvinism, which says all men are "fixed" within their mentalities or thinking processes, and can never think God's revealed thoughts until a supernatural work of God literally directs their thinking for them, is a theological, scriptural error and also a "cop-out." The Bible on almost every page assumes an unbeliever can read the Gospel and direct his own mind to believe it or not believe it!

How do we ever find time to "set our minds on things above" when we have to spend so much time every waking hour on things down here? We do so by "setting our minds" to take the time! God gives us each 24 hours every day. Eight of these hours is usually all an employer requires on the job. Eight hours of sleep per 24 is enough for most people. Now what do we do with the remaining 8 hours? "There are things to do around the home!" O.k., so we give four hours per 24 for whatever needs to be done around the home. We still have 4 hours left! What we usually do is give those 4 hours to the television which for the most part is a mental "waste-land" of ungodliness and drivel! Did you know that just 4 hours per day "setting one's mind on things above" (mainly by reading the Bible or some good book about the Bible) would be 1460 hours per year in which our mind is thinking God's thoughts and mining the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge?! And just one (1) hour per day would be 365 hours per year. And that would be better than our usual 104 per year (2 hours each Sunday except those who do not attend Sunday School, in which case they may spend a total of 25 hours per year listening to a sermon)! What would a man give in exchange for his soul—365 hours per year? It is simply a matter of our value-system! And

what we value depends upon our perspective (outlook, viewpoint). And that depends upon what we believe. And what we believe depends upon what we think! Everyone believes “in” something. If our “hope” is truly in heaven because we are really convinced Jesus is telling us the truth, then there should be no problem as to where we “set our mind.” What is the “object of my affections”? To whom am I grateful? Who do I trust with my life—that is where I’ll fasten my thinking! That is why it is so imperative that we know why we believe! Christian apologetics, reasons for faith, evidence for faith, cannot be stressed or taught too much! We are not teaching apologetics enough in our church program (see Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 3:15, etc.)! Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:1-58 that the facts of the gospel are of FIRST IMPORTANCE!

The context in which Paul says, “For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God,” is extremely important! It is in the context about what to do with our minds, our thinking. And he goes on from 3:5 to show what being “dead” and “living hidden” in Christ means. It means death to the old way of thinking and a newly created thinking or mentality. Paul is saying precisely the same thing here that he says in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21!!! If we accept the death of Christ as payment for our sins, we must also accept the mind or thoughts of Christ in our viewpoint or outlook as having been “resurrected” in him. We must actually start thinking as Christ would think about everything in our total life—no area of life is to be left outside the thinking of Christ. We are “secreted” “covered up” “hidden” with Christ in God. (This verse does not mean so much that we are “protected” by being hidden, as it means we are his, lock, stock and barrel!). We are in no sense “hidden with Christ in God” if all we want is protection without the mentality of Christ! In other words, he cannot be our Savior if we do not allow him be our Lord and Master. We must be so “secreted” in Christ that we are constantly turning our thoughts to heaven! We are to live every aspect of our life here with heaven in mind! We do nothing, think nothing, or hope for nothing as if this world is the ultimate happiness or ultimate, good or lasting existence. We do not belong to this world (Col. 2:20). We must never think or act like we belong to this world. Whatever good there is in this world is a mere shadow of what the reality in heaven is! There is nothing here with which to compare our eternal weight of glory in heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-18). THINK ABOUT IT!

Once again the context is important. We “put to death what is earthly in us” specifically by “putting on a new nature which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator” (3:9-10). The mind of man is renewed through the difficult and unspectacular process of knowing what the Bible says about our Creator, our Savior, our Lord, Jesus Christ, trusting him and obeying him! AND THAT AIN’T EASY! This “putting to death” in our minds all that is not fit for heaven (the earthly) does not happen over night. There is no instantaneous renewal! Charles Swindoll says: “Christians need to be told that difficulty and pressure are par for the course. No amount of...deeper-life conferences or super-victory seminars will remove the struggles of humanity. God promises no bubble of protection, no guaranteed release from calamity.” If Jesus and Paul had not intended the “renewing in knowledge after the image of its Creator” to be traumatic, they would not have said, “Put to death.” Turning one’s mind away from fleshly, worldly attitudes and objectives is a mental death struggle! Jesus and the apostles talk about this experience as a “war” between flesh and spirit the factions that are hostile to one another (see Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:15-23; 8:5-8; 2

Tim. 2:1-7; James 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11, etc.). To win a “war” one must plan a strategy. To win a “war” one must sacrifice. To win a “war” one must be expert with his weaponry. What do you think? How is the church doing according to these criteria? How are individual Christians doing? Is “renewing through knowledge” too tough, too costly, impossible, or simply too much trouble?

As we learned already, the “humility” of chapter 2 (or “self-abasement” RSV) was an outward humility, a “pretended” humility for the very sake of self-glorification in human accomplishment. It’s a “Look at me suffering or fasting etc.—I am very righteous.” Isn’t it frightening how perverse and self-deceiving the human mind can be? Severe punishing of the body in order to show off how humble one is, is a deception the devil plants in our minds. The “humility” Paul says the Christian must “put on” is that humility of Christ (see Phil. 2:1-11). It is translated “lowliness” in 3:12. But it is the same Greek word, tapeinophrosunen —“lowliness of mind”—as is used in 2:23 and translated, “self-abasement.” It is “doing nothing from selfishness or conceit—counting others better than self—looking to the interest of others (Phil. 2:3-4. It is “outdoing one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). As a matter of fact, the true incarnate humility of Christ is the motive for the godly man to be willing to suffer deprivation, sacrifice, and self-imposed disciplining of the flesh. But it is the motive that is all important! The motive for acts of humility is decisive as to whether fasting, or deprivation, sacrifice or discipline, is good or bad. If we fast to be seen of men (see Matt. 6:1ff) then severity to the body is evil—an abomination before God. If, however, we fast to accomplish the glorification of God, keeping it from being a “show” or an attempt to be justified before God (see Lk. 18:9-14) and men, then it becomes pleasing to God! Jesus’s humiliation (Phil. 2) had the will of God for the salvation of men as its motive and purpose. That was why God exalted him! Jesus’s washing the feet of the apostles symbolized his infinite kenosis (Greek for “emptying” or “humiliation”) showing that service to others is what humility is all about! (See Romans 12:10; 14:1-23; 15:1-13). The truly humble, serving Christian will probably give everyone the impression he knows who he is, what he is doing, and why he’s doing it! That isn’t arrogance but true humility because it is done in subservience to Christ and God.

The Lord has forgiven you, as he has me, freely and completely. He has made no requirements which we must merit for being forgiven except trusting acceptance of it! He has left the choice of forgiveness up to us! He has told us how he expects trust to be exercised should I choose to accept his forgiveness. But the exercise of the trust in no way accomplishes my forgiveness. That is granted. It was worked-out once for all (Heb. 10:12-14), as far as God is concerned, at the cross and the empty tomb. God has no reservations in our forgiveness. He has qualified no large sins as unforgivable, except the rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is the conviction of the world of sin, of righteousness and the judgment to come Jn. 16:7-11. The work of the Holy Spirit of God is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” If we reject that we can have no forgiveness. But every wickedness, crime, sin, depravity, perversity and disobedience he is willing to forgive if we ask and earnestly seek to be renewed in our minds about our wickedness after the knowledge of the image of our Creator! Now, if we are “being renewed in knowledge after



the image of our Creator” that is the way we will forgive others—just as freely and completely as God has forgiven us! Does the Lord forgive us even when we make the same mistake over and over again? Does he forgive us when you are so dumb we make mistakes we wouldn't have made had we been smarter (about his word)? Does he forgive us when we don't deserve it? Does he forgive us when we are so dumb we don't know we have done something to offend him? That's the way we are to forgive one another! AND THAT AIN'T EASY, BROTHER!

The Greek word *brabeueto* is an imperative-mood, present-tense verb translated “rule” (RSV, KJV, NASV, J. B. Phillips). The noun form, *brabeion* means, “a judge, arbiter or ruler” in the public games—“an umpire or referee”). In Col. 3:15, the “peace of Christ” (Greek, *eirene*) is to be arbiter, umpire, judge, which arbitrates in our thinking and acting. “Peace” in this verse is apparently being used synonymously with “accomplished redemption.” Paul says in Ephesians 2:11-22, “He (Christ) is our peace” because he has reconciled us to God and given us access to the Father and made us into a holy temple, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Since Christ has redeemed us and reconciled God to us, and us to God HE IS our peace. There is no more war between us and God. Therefore, he is to be the umpire of our thinking, willing, and doing. He is to rule, to direct us. What does an “umpire” do? He controls the game. He enforces the rules. He decides what is right and wrong—safe or out—winning or not winning. And he does it “arbitrarily,” as an “arbiter.” Webster's Dictionary says, “an arbiter is anyone having absolute power of judging and determining.” And remember, the verb *brabeueto* is imperative mood in Greek! That means it is a command, not merely a suggestion! To “arbitrate” is to make a decision, to make a determination, arbitrarily—without taking a vote or asking anyone else's advice or opinion. That is what Christ (“our peace”) is to do at the very center of our being! How is Christ to do this? First, we must acknowledge that this is what Christ has “called” us to—his rule, his direction, his deciding. Second, we must be thankful. Letting him rule cannot be grudgingly! Christ will not rule our hearts if we begrudge it! (Remember the parables of the prodigal and “elder brother,” and the one about the two sons—(i.e., the son who promised but disobeyed). Third, and very important, we must let the word of Christ dwell (Greek, *enoikeito*—“in-house” imperative mood verb) in us richly, not poorly, not beggarly, not destitutely. Fourth, we must do everything we do, “in his name” (within his will, according to his authority) and for his sake.

There is no doubt that the Hebrews and the early Christians had a wide variety of music with lyrics by which they praised God, exhorted one another, and made known their petitions to God. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) says: “the music to which these songs were sung is irretrievably lost, but it was, no doubt, very similar in character to that of the Arabs at the present day—limited to a very few notes repeated over and over in long recitations or ballads.” But as Paul points out in 2 Cor. 14:13-19, the lyrics, words, or message, was of most importance! If music is lyrically incomprehensible (because of instruments too loud to hear the words) it is useless, or, worse than useless, it creates disorder and confusion which Paul soundly condemns in 1 Cor. 14! GOD IS A GOD OF ORDER, NOT CONFUSION! Our text here (and a parallel in Ephesians 5:18-20) instructs us to the same point! Lyrics are the primary function of Christian music. If one cannot be taught

or edified by Christian music, so that the word of Christ dwells in one's mind, one would be better off without the music! The Lord needs to be allowed to "arbitrate" in the minds of Christian song-writers (rather than style, sale-ability, artistry, feeling) as much as in the minds of Christian preachers and teachers! Check out the Psalms of David—look at Luke chs. 1 & 2 which some think might have been prophecies chanted. Check the music being "sung" in heaven (in the book of Revelation). Christian music must give the distinct message of God's revealed word—not some generalized, commercialized, ego-stroking, all-inclusive conglomeration! What is wrong with putting the precise words of Scripture to music?

"In the name of" in ancient times meant, "under the rule of—for the sake of—by the authority of—for the purpose of." It means the same thing today! Any ambassador of the U.S.A. to any foreign country speaks and acts "in the name of the government and people of the United States of America." Whatever he says or does is "under the rule of, for the sake and purpose of, and by the authority of" the American nation and its Constitutional government. An ambassador does not speak for himself, except as he is a citizen of his government. It is assumed, of course, that an ambassador is in sympathy with the one (or Constitution) for whom he speaks and would, thus, in a sense not be speaking for himself—but only as he is a member of the nation as a whole. His personal ambitions, desires, preferences, opinions are to be set aside when he says, "In the name of the U.S.A." That is precisely what Paul means in Col. 3:17. Colossians 3:17 is the practical outcome of Colossians 3:15 ("making Christ and his word the umpire of our heart). We are his ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Personal ambitions, desires, preferences, decisions, directions are set aside and everything we say and do is "in the name of" (under the rule of, for the sake and purpose of, and by the authority of) Christ! As "ambassadors" of Christ we "no longer see anyone or anything from a human point of view" but from Christ's point of view (2 Cor. 5:14-21). And where do you suppose we find Christ's point of view? In the apostolic Word (see 1 Jn. 4:1-6), in the Bible, especially, in the New Testament. We do not decide what Christ's point of view is—he decides that and tells us what it is. We don't find his point of view in any place other than the Scriptures!!! "In his name" means "in the name of the Word—in the name of the Scriptures."

## TEACHER'S NOTES

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### COLOSSIANS 3:18—4:18

In the first place, whatever God has commanded is fitting! No amount of rationalization or feelings to the contrary will make what God's word clearly teaches to be "not-fitting." In the second place, the word "subjection" in the scriptures does not mean "enslavement," abuse, "ignominy," "inferiority," of any such disrespect. The Greek word *hupotassesthe* is from a compound Greek word in their ancient military vocabulary, *hupo* which means, "under," and *tasso*, which means "to arrange in order." It has to do with a hierarchy, a "chain of command," a proper order or arrangement. There is definitely a "proper order" to the "hierarchy" of humanity as God has ordered it (see Sunday School notes on Ephesians 5:1-33). See also 1 Corinthians 11:1-16! To challenge the Biblical order is to challenge the infinite wisdom of God. That doesn't seem to bother some people! Just because God has assigned man to be the head of the family does not mean man is smarter, superior, more free, or better than woman. And no woman should feel inferior in any way to man just because of her place in God's system. What applies to "members of the body (the church)" in 1 Cor. 12, should apply to man and woman in the human family situation. In the third place, the Greek word translated "befitting" in 3:18 is *aneken* and literally means "have come up to." In other words, Paul says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as you have 'come up to this' in the Lord." When women (and men) become Christians, the Lord brings them "up"—not "down." The family hierarchy is spiritually, morally, and physically "up" in divine order from any system the smartest and most caring human society could ever devise! In establishing wives to submit to their husbands, God has elevated wives! How many today believe that? You will find that in Ephesians 5:21-33 that Christian husbands and wives are to be "subject to one another"! And when Paul writes about sexual intimacy he says "the husband rules over the body of his wife, and the wife rules over the body of her husband" (1 Cor. 7:1-7)! Look it up! There is a mutual subservience in the marriage of man and woman!

Husbands have all kinds of ways of being "harsh" with their wives! The Greek word is *pikrainesthe*, from the word *pikros*, meaning, "to be sharp, pointed, pungent, or to cut, to stab," or sometimes translated "to be bitter." To refrain from *pikrainesthe* means "do not embitter, do not irritate, or make bitter." The RSV has translated it "harsh" signifying the harsh action of a husband that "makes a wife bitter." Husbands who complain make their wives bitter. Husbands who critique their wives without warrant make them bitter. Husbands who humiliate their wives make them bitter. Careless, thankless, thoughtless, overbearing husbands embitter their wives. Husbands who do not "carry their end of the load" with housework, with the children, with the budget, with making a marriage work, make their wives bitter. Whoever said all the work in keeping a house repaired, cleaned, picked-up, hospitable, and functioning belongs only to the wife? My grandmothers used to work in the fields and barns helping the men-folk, but when everyone got back to the house, all that was

left to do belonged to the women alone! I wonder sometimes how their marriages stayed together! I, personally, think that a husband who does not assume the role of leader of the household also makes his wife bitter. A Christian husband is not a dictator, tyrant, or despot, but leader (making it so others can follow him is what makes a leader). An unfaithful husband makes his wife bitter!!! That doesn't mean a husband has to be a paragon of public and profuse paroxysms of sweetness. And marriage never makes any man impervious to being tempted. But by the fear of God and the grace of God he can be faithful!

Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord" (3:20). "Obey...in everything" is qualified by "this pleases the Lord." Children are to "obey in everything...that pleases the Lord." In Ephesians 6:1, Paul wrote, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Children are to obey their parents so long as the parents do not tempt them or order them to do something clearly, plainly, unequivocally, and scripturally, contrary to the Lord's written word. When parents forbid children to become Christians, they are doing something that is contrary to the written word of God (so long as the child is able to know the meaning of the word of God). But when a parent orders a child to do something that is in the area of Christian opinion or liberty, the child is to obey the parent until the child becomes an adult and assumes full responsibility for his life (his physical sustenance, his legal responsibilities, his moral responsibilities). Even after "coming of age" it is always the will of God that children respect, care for, seek the wisdom of, and "honor" their parents. Beverly LaHaye quotes from feminists: (a) "By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God"—Gloria Steinem in Ms.; (b) "It's a dilemma. In order to raise children with equality, we must take them away from families and communally raise them."—Dr. Mary Jo Bane, Tulsa World, Aug. 21, 1996 (AP); (c) "What happens to children depends not only on what happens in the homes, but what happens in the outside world. We really don't know how to raise children. If we want to talk about equality of opportunity for children, then the fact that children are raised in families means there's no equality."—Caroline Bird in Born Female. And of course, we had a "First Lady" in our U.S. White House (Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton) who advised America that parents alone cannot rear their children as they should—"It Takes A Village." Bah! Humbug! There was no "village" in the Garden of Eden! Adam and Eve were responsible for rearing their children. God's word assumes Christians are responsible, and fully capable, with God's word as their guide, to rear their own children in their own homes, without any outside advice! And the Old Testament book of Proverbs indicates even non-Christians are also capable if they will only follow "common sense."

Paul's instructions here are to slaves (Greek, *douloi*, "in bondage—not free"). He was not writing to employed servants. It is to Christians who were slaves he was writing. Slavery was the rule, not the exception, in the ancient Roman empire of the 1st century. Any person under Roman rule, not a Roman-born citizen, was "fair game" to be made a slave, bought and sold like cattle. Slaves might become "free-men" by purchasing their freedom with a specified amount of money—by fighting to be freed in the arenas against gladiators and wild beasts—or by being awarded freedom by masters through adoption into their families, taking on their family name. We notice first, Paul did not advocate any violent slave

revolution! (See Philemon; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Cor. 7:20-24). The basic Christian duty of a slave was to “obey in everything those who were their earthly masters.” The obedience required of slaves was, however, coupled with equally strong instructions to Christian masters to act toward their slaves as “a brother.” Now it would be ridiculous to conclude from this one statement about slaves obeying “in everything,” that Paul meant a slave was to rob, steal, murder, lie, worship idols, or do anything else contrary to the revealed will of God even if his master ordered him to do so! Jesus taught that when it comes to that, a wife must choose the Lord over her husband, a son over his father, a father over his son, and a Christian slave (read, “employee”) must choose the Lord Jesus over a master who orders him to act contrary to the explicit word of God. That being the case, a Christian slave must choose the Lord over his master when scriptural necessity dictates. What Paul demands is that the Christian slave “work heartily” (Gr. ek psyches, “from the soul”) in any and all tasks assigned him—whether cleaning out horse stables, taking care of master’s children, or scrubbing bathrooms. Furthermore, the Christian slave is not to do his master’s orders from “eye-service” (done well only when the master’s eye was upon them). The Christian slave was to do his master’s bidding with sincerity, with honesty, with singleness of purpose (that purpose being to please Jesus Christ by serving earthly masters well). Now why would God give the slightest sanction to slavery? First, when God tells the Christian slave to serve his master well he is not condoning slavery. There are worse things than slavery! Anarchy, for one! Violent revolution, for another (i.e., the French revolution and the consequent anarchy was worse than the French people had it under their monarchy—so was the Russian revolution and the anarchy that ensued and “communism” whose leaders were more despotic than the Tsars!). By the way, the American War for Independence (often called the “American Revolution”) was not a “revolution” at all—it was merely an armed defense of citizen’s rights granted all English subjects under the Magna Charta and Parliament! Second, a Christian slave behaving as God directs through Paul, would be such a “spectacle of what is good and right” he would probably be treated much more humanely, and have opportunity to tell his master of his reasons for faith in Jesus Christ! Do these instructions apply to a modern society free of slavery? Is modern society free of slavery? Any man who works for a salary from another person or group of persons has indentured himself to “serve.” An “employee” is, for all practical purposes, a slave! There is no such thing as absolute freedom (not politically, economically, or socially)! All people must surrender certain personal liberties in order to survive, have protection, and form social structures in order to obtain their “unalienable rights” of life, liberty, and proprietorship. So these principles apply to the Christian “employee” and “employer” in his “job,” in his earthly citizenship, in everything he does. Every person should do what he agrees to do “with soul” and not just when Jesus (the “boss”) is watching because the Ultimate Boss is always watching!

There is no partiality with God—no “respect” of persons. God will punish evil doers whoever they are—slave or master. God puts no special premium on being a slave or on being a master. God gives no special preference to slaves, nor is he afraid of masters! The justice and fairness Paul insisted upon from Christian “masters” was for them to treat their “slaves” as they would have Christian slaves treat them as masters. If masters gave their slave just and equal treatment, they would pay the slaves the same wages hired workers got for the same services. The masters would allow the slaves the same freedom of movement



they themselves enjoyed. The practical result of such treatment would, of course, be the end of “slavery” in every household where it was practiced. And history records that in hundreds of Christian homes in the ancient Roman empire of the 1st century, slaves became fully or nearly free men. Many slaves desired to stay and work for their masters, and their service became a blessing for both slave and master. The most prominent Biblical example of slave/master relationships is the case of Onesimus and Philemon. And remember, the Creator of the universe, the Lord God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, emptied himself of absolute master-hood and took the form of a slave (Gr. *doulou*), and “worked heartily” at our redemption, even to death on a cross (Phil. 2). If God’s Son did the absolute best for us, we can surely make every effort to do our best at whatever we are doing because we’re doing it “in his name” (for his purpose, his glory, his kingdom). The novel/movie, “Ben Hur” portrays this relationship.

“Wise conduct” for a Christian in this context has to do mostly with speech! The power of speech is a gift from God, and it must be used the way God ordains. James compares the tongue to (a) a bridle and a rudder; (b) a fire and a poisonous animal; (c) a fruitful tree and a fountain. These 3 pictures teach us that the tongue has the power to direct, destroy and delight. Solomon said much the same in his Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. In this section 4:1-9 Paul pointed to four important ministries of speech: (a) prayer, a faithful, watchful, thankful, purposeful prayer 4:2-3. Yes, even our prayer is “wise conduct” toward those “without.” Praying for open doors for the word of Christ in the nations and among the peoples of the earth (including Joplin, Missouri); (b) proclaiming the word 4:3b-4; exhorting one another and teaching the lost; remember Col. 1:28-29! Remember the repeated and repeated and repeated emphasis on learning, knowing, teaching, understanding, preaching the word of Christ in this epistle. People do not put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator by listening to subjective experiences, neither ours or other’s. People put value in, believe in, only that for which they have evidence to value. And there is no evidence of life after death in a human personal experience; the evidence of life after death is Jesus Christ’s resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-58); (c) answering everyone properly, or as we ought, 4:5-6; at every opportunity. Jesus and Paul are primary examples. They took time, made opportunities, and always gave a reason for their message. Even when bound as prisoners they took time! “Seasoned with salt” means “pungent, interesting, full of charm, tasty, not repelling.” The Christian, as he talks with outsiders, must make himself a “good conversationalist”—enjoyable, like a well-seasoned meal—not flat, dull, tasteless. The Christian wisdom Paul calls for here is a speech that is gracious—words which are like gifts and presents being bestowed upon someone. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver” (Prov. 25:11). Not false gifts like flattery or fawning—but true gifts, gifts that help, build, strengthen (even reproof, rebuke, and discipline may be ‘gracious’ if delivered in love and sincerity); (d) sharing burdens, 4:7-9. This is another wonderful ministry of speech. Christians may verbally share their needs and burdens with other Christians and they can encourage and assist those needs. Even the great apostle Paul felt the need to verbalize his circumstances with the church at Colossae and the church at Corinth, and the churches at Philippi and Thessalonica and Ephesus, etc. He did this through Tychicus and Onesimus, not to beg for money, or sympathy, but for prayer. If you want to be able to fulfill Paul’s exhortation about speech, immerse your mind in

the words of the Scriptures! Talk like the prophets, like Jesus, like the apostles in the book of Acts! Their “speech” is verily seasoned with salt! These are people “redeeming the time toward those outside!” You could not do any better than to simply imitate what you find in the Bible!

Epaphras had “worked hard” for the Christians at Colossae in order that they might “stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.” Paul wrote that this is what Epaphras “always” remembered about the saints at Colossae in his prayers! It was in Epaphras’s constant consciousness! Their maturity and assurance in all the will of God was lodged in Epaphras’s mind to give to the Colossians! And not just for Colossae—but for Laodicea and Hierapolis as well! Paul says Epaphras was “always agonizing or struggling” (Gr. pantote agonizomenos) on their behalf in prayers—and that Epaphras had much travail, pain, misery, and labor for them. What Epaphras had done was hard work, slavery, misery, painful. Is that what it takes to bring Christians to maturity—to all the will of God? Is the church involved in something agonizing, hard, misery-producing, painful? Is any kind of “growing-up” ever without pain? Without agony? Without struggle? No! No! We know it isn’t true in the physical life or the social life of this world. But we do not want to face the reality that it must be equally, or more, true of maturation in the things of the Spirit of God! Do not enter Christianity or the Christian covenant hastily! Do not seek the office of an elder lightly or insincerely! Do not minister to the church as a deacon as if it were fun and games! Do not become a teacher of the word of God in the Sunday School unless you are willing to pay the price—agony, pain, hard work, and travail.

Paul wrote this letter about A.D. 60. The church at Laodicea had been ministered to by Epaphras’ “hard work.” They had received a personal letter from Paul (not now available). They were to have Paul’s letter to Colossae read (taught) to them. Laodicea was a place where people were rich. Even the church was “rich” which was unusual for the 1st century. The city of Laodicea had a sophisticated society with a school of medicine located there along with much industry. When John the apostle wrote Christ’s letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) some 30 years later, the church was characterized as affluent and complacent. Its affluence had made it arrogant! It “had need of nothing” not even repentance! The church at Laodicea had, in some 30-35 years from its beginning, grown smug, self-satisfied, and would take no stand on any doctrine of the faith. They were “lukewarm”—neither hot nor cold. They weren’t against any truth, but then they weren’t for any truth either! That is what they told themselves. But Jesus says, “he that is not with me is against me.” “He that does not take up his cross daily and follow me, cannot be my disciple.” Laodicea’s unconcern and non-commitment was due to her blindness. She chose to remain ignorant of her spiritual condition. She said of herself that she was rich and would remain that way and needed nothing else. But Jesus saw 30-year-old Laodicean church as she really was—blind, wretched, poor, pitiable, sick, and naked! What had happened? Had she not enough ministry to her? No! She had no commitment! She was comfortable with her money! She rejected chastening! She wouldn’t let Christ in her door! O church of Christ, today, in the 21st century, take heed to Laodicea! Let us not become “Laodicean” Christians!

### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

### Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

