

STUDIES IN COLOSSIANS

JESUS, PROMINENT OR PREEMINENT

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Studies in Colossians
“Jesus, Prominent or Preeminent”
Bible Notes and Outline
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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

The following Bible notes are intended to be used in ministering God’s Word, and as a supplement to your own reading and study of Colossians. Keep in mind that the primary theme for the book of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ. It takes Jesus Christ from a place of being prominent in our lives to a place of being preeminent.

It’s my prayer that as you spend time in Colossians “...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of our Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...” (Colossians 1:9-10).

COLOSSIANS 1:2 TO THOSE CALLED SAINTS

In Colossians 1:2 the apostle Paul said, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.” Paul often called the faithful followers of Christ saints.¹ In the Greek language the word “saint” is “hagios.” It comes from a prime root word that means “sacred” or “holy” and signifies a separation to God.

It should be understood that the word “saint” doesn’t refer to a person’s position that’s determined by what they have done, but rather to a person’s position that’s determined by their relationship with Jesus Christ. The word “saint” refers to those who have been separated from sin and set apart to God. In other words, it refers to those who are saved through faith in Jesus, those who are born again, those who are “in Christ” and who are true followers of Christ. It refers to those who are holy in Christ washed by His blood, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and recipients of

His righteousness. Being a saint is part of God's grace given to everyone the moment they receive Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. This was evidenced by the early Christians in Jerusalem who were called saints.²

Paul wrote Colossians to counter a false teaching in the church at Colossae. That false teaching was an amalgamation of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation and Oriental mysticism. The false teaching diminished the importance of Christ, His work and relationship with His followers. Paul clearly taught Christ's preeminence³ and Christ's preeminent relationship with His followers. We're "saints...in Christ."

With that relationship comes responsibility. Paul used the phrase "saints and faithful brethren." These aren't two different groups of people. They're one and the same. Our responsibility as saints in Christ is to be faithful followers of Christ. We're to be faithful to His Word walking as He walked.⁴ We're to be faithful in serving Him using our spiritual gifts.⁵ We're to be faithful witnesses for Christ throughout the world.⁶ Many people have impressive credentials, but the greatest credential is being known as saints in Christ.

REFERENCES: 1) Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1. 2) Acts 9:13. 3) Colossians 1:17-19. 4) 1 Peter 4:10-11. 5) Acts 1:8. 6) 1 John 2:6.

COLOSSIANS 1:3 PRAYING FOR PEOPLE'S CORE NEEDS

In Colossians 1:3 the apostle Paul said, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." There are several lessons we can learn from Paul's prayers. First, even though he was imprisoned at Rome and chained to a Roman guard he still prayed. Shackles cannot prevent us from praying. Neither can any government law, regulation or any mandate from any person or organization prevent us from praying. We can pray "always," "without ceasing"¹ and "in every place."² There's another lesson we can learn from Paul and that is how to pray for one another:

- Paul always prayed.³
- He gave thanks to God for Christ's followers.⁴
- He prayed that Christians would be "filled" with the knowledge of God's will in wisdom and understanding.⁵ In the Greek language the word "filled" is the word "plēroō" which means "to the brim." If we want to be filled to the brim with the knowledge of God's will in wisdom and understanding, then we must saturate ourselves with God's Word.
- He prayed that Christians would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in their knowledge of God.⁶
- He prayed that Christians would be strengthened with all "power" according to God's glorious "might" so they would be steadfast (in their faith), patient (with God, others and themselves) and joyously giving thanks to God.⁷ The Greek word for "power" is "dunamis" from which we get the English word dynamite. It refers to the power that comes from within and is an inseparable part of an object like the powder in a stick of dynamite. The Greek word for "might" is "kratos." It's the power manifested when a

stick of dynamite explodes. For Christians these two words refer to the power and might manifested by God's Spirit working in and through us.

Perhaps we should rethink the way we pray and how often we pray for one another including our spouse, children and grandchildren? Paul prayed for the core needs that people had. Let's do the same.

References: 1) 1 Thessalonians 5:17. 2) 1 Timothy 2:8. 3) Colossians 1:9a. 4) Colossians 1:3-4. 5) Colossians 1:9b. 6) Colossians 1:10. 7) Colossians 1:11-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14 FROM DARKNESS TO CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Colossians 1:13-14 says, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." The phrase "domain of darkness" refers to Satan's realm of authority where deception, lies, hatred and wickedness dwells.¹ The "kingdom of His beloved Son" is where all followers of Christ live in truth, love, righteousness, peace and joy in a current and eternal relationship with the Father and Jesus.²

Before we became Christians, born again by God's Spirit,³ we lived in the domain of darkness under Satan's authority and influence. The Bible meant very little to us. We rarely read it and when we did it was hard to understand. We were influenced by those who claimed the Bible was a collection of stories, myths and outdated moral values. In addition, we didn't truly understand who Jesus was. We gave little thought to the salvation He offered. We knew nothing about His Deity and if we did we questioned or rejected it. And, far too often His name was just another cuss word.

However, all that changed when we became born again Christians. The Holy Spirit took up residence within us. We began to grow spiritually. Our eyes were open to truth. We started to read and study the Bible. We learned that Jesus was not only our Savior and Lord, but God the Creator of all things, our King, our High Priest and the Almighty with whom we will spend eternity. We were transferred from darkness to light, from slavery in sin to freedom from sin, from God's judgment to God's forgiveness, from the influence of Satan to the leading of God's Spirit and from rebellion against God to serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

Being transferred into Christ's kingdom is part of God's grace, but it comes with certain responsibilities. We're to give thanks to God for the inheritance He gave us with all the saints in Christ.⁴ We're not to exalt ourselves, but rather Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.⁵ And, we're to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord honoring Him.⁶

References: 1) Ephesians 2:1-3, Ephesians 6:12, 1 John 2:9-11. 2) Romans 14:17, 1 John 1:1-4. 3) John 3:3-7, Titus 3:5-7. 4) Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:12, 1 Thessalonians 2:12. 5) Philippians 2:9-11. 6) Colossians 1:10.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-20 THE FULLNESS DWELLS IN CHRIST

Colossians 1:19-20 says, “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or in heaven.” In the Greek language the word “fullness” is “plērōma,” which expresses the sum total of our Lord’s divine power and attributes. Unfortunately, the Gnostic heretics infiltrated the church and denied the deity of Christ. They did not believe that the “Word (Jesus) was God” and that the “Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”¹ They didn’t believe Jesus could be God and man at the same time. Therefore, Paul used another Greek word to denounce that teaching. He used the word “dwell” which means “to be permanently at home.” In other words, Christ’s deity was not added later. Jesus has always been God. He and the Father are One.² “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,”³ which gives Him the authority to reconcile all things.

We should understand that when Adam and Eve sinned it not only destroyed the relationship God wanted with people but it also brought a curse into His creation.⁴ Christ’s redemptive work upon the cross reconciles all things to God starting with us,⁵ then things on earth and things in heaven. Through Jesus all things are and will be reestablished in righteousness and brought into a right relationship with God. All creation will be set free from corruption and eventually there will be a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.⁶

We should also understand that only God forgives sin⁷ because all sin is ultimately against God.⁸ Therefore, God had to enter the human race, become man, go to the cross and pay the price for our redemption.⁹ There was no other way for us to be forgiven and for all things to be reconciled with God. Not only must we be made ready for heaven, but heaven must be made ready for us. Only Jesus in whom all the fullness of Deity dwells does that.¹⁰

References: 1) John 1:1-3 and 14. 2) John 10:30. 3) Colossians 2:9, Matthew 1:19-23. 4) Genesis 3:17, Romans 8:20-22. 5) Romans 5:1, Romans 5:10. 6) 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1. 7) Mark 2:7. 8) Psalm 51:4. 9) Philippians 2:5-8. 10) John 14:6, John 14:2-3, Acts 4:12.

COLOSSIANS 1:26 A MYSTERY REVEALED

In Colossians 1:26 the apostle Paul said, “...the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints...” Before Paul revealed this amazing mystery he made something very clear. In the previous verse Paul said he was fulfilling a stewardship, an assignment, given to him by God. That stewardship included preaching the word of God.¹ In other words, the mystery that Paul revealed was not some religious doctrine or new revelation conceived by Paul or anyone else for that matter. It was the Word of God. This mystery was God’s plan all along that He kept to Himself until it was the right time to reveal it through Jesus and by the apostle Paul. So, what was this mystery?

Paul revealed the mystery in the next verse when he said the mystery was “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”² The Old Testament clearly taught that the Redeemer would live and walk on the earth.³ It also revealed that the Redeemer would be Immanuel, which translated means “God with us.”⁴ However, the Old Testament did not reveal that the Redeemer (Jesus) would permanently dwell in the hearts of His followers by the Holy Spirit, which included both Jews and Gentiles. Only the New Testament reveals that mystery.⁵ Christ in us defines true

Christianity. We should understand that Christianity is not a religion and was never intended to be a religion. Religion is man reaching out to God while Christianity is God reaching out to man. True Christianity is a personal relationship between God and believers, and between believers and God made possible through faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling Spirit of God.⁶

In addition, we're told that this mystery involves "the hope of glory." The indwelling Holy Spirit is a guarantee to every believer of a future inheritance in glory with Jesus.⁷ He is the One who gave His life for us and now abides in us giving His life to us, so we will be with Him forever.⁸ Jesus is our hope of glory.

References: 1) Colossians 1:25. 2) Colossians 1:27. 3) Job 19:25, Isaiah 9:6-7. 4) Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:19-23. 5) Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. 6) John 14:16-17, John 14:23, 1 John 1:1-3, Revelation 3:20. 7) Ephesians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:13-14. 8) Galatians 2:20, Revelation 3:21.

COLOSSIANS 1:28-29 WE PROCLAIM HIM

In Colossians 1:28-29 the apostle Paul said, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." The phrase "We proclaim Him" refers to much more than just sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹ Paul proclaimed the fullness of Christ,² His redemption, the forgiveness of sin,³ His kingdom,⁴ His creation of all things,⁵ His preeminence in everything,⁶ His possession of all wisdom and knowledge,⁷ His Deity⁸ and the fact that He is head over all rule and authority.⁹ Paul declared the full person of Christ and the full work of Christ. As Paul proclaimed Christ he used the phrase "every man" three times to reveal the following:

- He admonished every man. Jesus is the theme of this passage. Therefore, Paul's admonishments most likely warned people about the false teaching taking place about Christ and the consequences of that teaching. He strongly encouraged everyone to accept Christ as God the Redeemer and His forgiveness of sin.
- He taught every man with all wisdom. Paul taught the full counsel of God's Word and how it revealed Christ as God the Messiah, Redeemer and Creator. That included the teachings by Christ Himself and the Old Testament Scriptures that pointed to Christ.
- Paul's mission was to present every man complete in Christ. Paul wanted everyone to be spiritually mature in Christ and to be more Christlike. He wanted people to be equipped for every good work.¹⁰ Paul shared the gospel so people would receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord, however he didn't stop there. He disciplined people so they would be fully mature in Christ.

Notice that Paul labored (worked hard to the point of exhaustion), striving (agonizing like an athlete) to allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through him. Also notice that Paul used the word "we" twice in verse 28. Let's proclaim the fullness of Christ putting in the effort like Paul.

References: 1) Colossians 1:25-27. 2) Colossians 1:19. 3) Colossians 1:14. 4) Colossians 1:13. 5) Colossians 1:16. 6) Colossians 1:18. 7) Colossians 2:3. 8) Colossians 2:9. 9) Colossians 2:10. 10) 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

COLOSSIANS 2:4 DON'T BE MISLEAD

In Colossians 2:4 the apostle Paul said, “I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.” In the Greek language the word “delude” is “paralegōmai” which means “to reason falsely.” When Paul wrote these words gnosticism had infiltrated the church. Among other things the gnostics denied the deity of Christ. They used persuasive arguments to further that teaching. They taught that the body was evil, therefore Jesus couldn’t be man and God at the same time. That seemed reasonable but it was misleading. Paul countered that teaching saying, “For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”¹

Today, deluders are everywhere misleading people of all ages using persuasive arguments. They deny the deity of Christ, and try to undermine the accuracy and authority of the Bible. For example, some say there are many ways into heaven and that Jesus isn’t the only way, rejecting what Jesus said and did.² Some falsely claim that evolution is fact and creation is false, therefore Jesus can’t be God the Creator.³ Some teach you need more than Jesus to be saved introducing a system of works for salvation, undermining God’s grace.⁴ Some push a false gender identification, denouncing what God said and did.⁵

Paul didn’t want anyone to be misled. The term “I say this” points to the previous verses where Paul said he wanted everyone to have a full understanding and a true knowledge of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁶ All truth is centered in Christ, He is truth.² The more we know about Jesus and what He did the more we can stand against the persuasive arguments made against Him.

We must learn about the excellencies of Jesus Christ. That includes His fulfillment of prophecy, His work of redemption, His kingdom, His creation of all things, His preeminence in everything, His possession of all wisdom and knowledge, His Deity and that He is head over all rule and authority. Let’s tell people and especially our children about His excellencies.⁷ If we don’t they’ll be misled by persuasive arguments.

References: 1) Colossians 2:9. 2) John 14:6. 3) John 1:1-3 and 14, Colossians 1:16. 4) Ephesians 2:8-9. 5) Genesis 1:27. 6) Colossians 2:2-3. 7) 1 Peter 2:9.

COLOSSIANS 2:8 DON'T BE TAKEN CAPTIVE

Colossians 2:8 says, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

In the Greek language the phrase “see to it” is in the present tense indicating we’re to continually watch out for those who try to take us captive.¹ The Greek word for “captive” is “sulagōgeō” which means “to carry off as spoil.” It was commonly used in reference to the

plunder of someone's home. As Christians we are not to allow ourselves to be plundered by false teachers and carried off as their spoil.

The Greek word for "philosophy" is "philosophia" which literally means "a love or pursuit of wisdom." In Paul's day it referred to man's wisdom focused on man's theories about God, the world and the meaning of life. It was the guiding principle used by the gnostics in understanding these subjects. However, we should understand that human reasoning, no matter how intellectual it may be, isn't the source of wisdom to understand these things. Paul compared philosophy that takes us captive with "empty deception." God's Word and the fear of the Lord² is where we find the wisdom to learn about God, the world and the purpose of life.

The Greek word for "tradition" is "paradosis" which means "a handing down." The Greek word for "elementary principles" is "stoicheion" which means "things in a row." It refers primarily to the fixed order of letters in the alphabet. Man-made traditions can take us captive. They often become a fixed order of religious practices that are considered equal to or more important than God's Word. That was certainly the teaching of the Pharisees, which Jesus strongly condemned.³

The elementary things of the world can keep people in bondage away from Christ.⁴ Today, people use various organized religious practices, rules and rituals as traditions in the worship of God causing people to worship in vain, not in spirit and truth.⁵ Let's "see to it" that no one takes us captive with false teaching.

References: 1) Matthew 7:15, Acts 20:29-31, Philippians 3:2, 2 Peter 3:17. 2) Proverbs 1:1-7. 3) Matthew 15:2-9. 4) Galatians 4:3-9. 5) John 4:24.

COLOSSIANS 2:9 THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Colossians 2:9 says, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form..." The wording in this verse is precise. In the Greek language the word "fullness" is "plērōma," which expresses the sum total of divine power and attributes. The Greek word for "dwells" is "katoikeō" which means "to be at home." Also, the word "dwells" is in the present tense in the Greek language indicating that Christ's deity continually resides in Him. The Greek word for "bodily" is "sōmatikōs" indicating Jesus was fully human. In other words, Jesus was fully human and fully God at the same time.

Many claim Jesus never said He was God. However, Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."¹ He also prayed to the Father saying, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."² The Father confirmed Christ's deity saying, "But of the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."³

What happened in Bethlehem, in fulfillment prophecy,⁴ sets Jesus apart from everyone else. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born by the virgin Mary and a descendant of king David.⁵ He was born as a baby in whom "all the fullness of Deity dwells" continually "in bodily form." A body that grew into a man without sin. A body that died on the cross and rose again for our redemption. A body that ascended into heaven where He received back His glory and is now

seated at the right hand of the Father. A body that will return to earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords on the throne of king David. A body that Jesus will have forever as the second person of the Godhead.

To reject the deity of Christ is to deny who Jesus is, and what He has accomplished and will accomplish because of His deity. Everyone should know that ultimately all that matters is what we believe about Jesus and if we received Him as our Savior and Lord.⁶

References: 1) John 10:30. 2) John 17:5. 3) Hebrews 1:8. 4) Micah 5:2, Matthew 1:22-23, Matthew 2:4-6. 5) Luke 1:26-35. 6) Romans 10:9-10 and 13.

COLOSSIANS 3:4 WITH CHRIST IN GLORY

Colossians 3:4 says, “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” This is one of the greatest promises in the Bible given to every follower of Jesus Christ. The phrase “Christ, who is our life” refers to Christ’s followers.¹ It refers to us who purpose to live as Christ would live by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us as we go about our daily routines. That includes living a life that demonstrates love, goodness, truth and godliness in an ungodly world.² It includes serving the Lord by doing the good works He has designed and equipped us to do.³ It includes living in obedience to God’s Word and being a testimony for Christ.⁴ While we do all of that we should not lose sight of our future.

The phrase “When Christ...is revealed” refers to His return as King of kings and Lord of lords.⁵ Jesus is currently seated at the right hand of the Father waiting for His Father to make His enemies His footstool.⁶ When that happens Jesus will return “with power and great glory” for all to see.⁷ We should understand that Jesus came once in grace, but He is coming back in glory. He came once to redeem, but He is coming back to reign. He came once as the Savior, but He is coming back as the Sovereign. However, He is not coming back alone. The phrase “revealed with Him in glory” means when Jesus returns we are coming back with Him, in glory.⁸

Knowing that Christ is our life and what our future will be with Christ, Paul said, in the previous verses: “keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at he right hand of God.”⁹ Unfortunately, trying to keep up with all the demands made upon us can cause us to lose sight of our ultimate destiny. Let’s slow down, stay focused and remember that we are in the world, but not of the world.¹⁰ Christ is our life and there is a day coming when we will be revealed with Him in glory.

References: 1) Galatians 2:20. 2) Ephesians 5:1-2, Ephesians 5:8-10, Philippians 2:15, 2 Peter 1:3. 3) Ephesians 2:10, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. 4) Matthew 4:4, Acts 1:8. 5) Revelation 19:11-16. 6) Hebrews 1:3 and 13. 7) Matthew 24:29-30. 8) Philippians 3:20-21, Revelation 19:7-8 and 14. 9) Colossians 3:1-2. 10) John 17:16.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-13 THE CHOSEN OF GOD

Colossians 3:12-13 says, “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy (set apart as sacred) and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” These verses are addressed to the “chosen of God.” However, the concept of being “chosen of God” raises many questions. What about free will? Does God pick and choose? So, what does it mean?

Being chosen of God is like a marriage proposal. When a man loves a woman and wants to spend the rest of his life with her, he asks her to marry him. However, even though he chose her because he loves her, she still has the free will to say yes or no. When she accepts his proposal he gives her a ring as a pledge. He sets her apart from all others. She becomes his bride. The same is true with God with one exception, He chose the world. God so loved the world that He sent His Son, so we can spend eternity with Him.¹ However, even though God chose us because He loves us, we still have the free will to say yes or no. When we accept His proposal we are given the Holy Spirit as a pledge.² He sets us apart from everyone else. We become the bride of Christ.

As the chosen of God we’re to put on godly virtues. In the Greek language the phrase “put on” is in the imperative indicating it’s a command not a suggestion. We’re to put aside worldly behavior and put on godly behavior.³ We are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling⁴ with a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We’re to forgive one another as God in Christ forgave us.⁵

Let’s walk by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us.⁶ Our godly behavior in Christ is what this world needs to see so people are drawn to Jesus.

References: 1) John 3:16. 2) Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. 3) Colossians 3:5-8. 4) Ephesians 4:1-2. 5) Ephesians 4:32. 6) Galatians 5:16-25.

COLOSSIANS 3:14 NO LOVE, NO UNITY

Colossians 3:14 says, “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” The phrase “Beyond all these things” refers to the previous verses where we’re told to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another and forgiving one another.¹ Love is the motivation for expressing these virtues. When love is the motivation for our behavior, then unity will be preserved. It’s the glue that holds the church, our families and even our society together.

In the Greek language the word used in this verse for “love” is “agapē.” It describes God,² and His sacrificial and continual unlimited love³ that He gives to us through Christ.⁴ In addition, God enables everyone who receives Jesus as their Savior and Lord to love as He loves. It’s one of the fruits of the indwelling Holy Spirit.⁵ This kind of love isn’t something we do when we feel like it. Rather, it’s an act of our will in obedience to God. Every born again Christian is expected to love as God loves.⁶

It’s important to understand that when people reject Jesus they reject God’s love. Love does not become the motivation for their behavior. As a result, people tend to hate rather than love. People tend to lust rather than love. People tend to stir up strife rather than unity. It’s no wonder we see riots in the streets and divisions within society, the church and in the home. It’s no

wonder people go out of their way to tear someone down rather than give a compliment and build them up. Far too many people have rejected Jesus Christ and God's love.

Certainly, God wants unity. Jesus prayed for unity.⁷ However, before we will ever see unity people must have God's love in their heart. For that to happen God's love must be the motivation for our behavior so people are drawn to Jesus, and receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We must find ways to demonstrate love to one another, and ways to share the love of God with our friends and neighbors. We must "put on love."

References: 1) Colossians 3:12-13. 2) 1 John 4:8. 3) John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:38-39. 4) Romans 5:5. 5) Galatians 5:22-23. 6) Ephesians 5:1-2. 7) John 17:22-23.

COLOSSIANS 3:15 GOD'S METHOD FOR PEACE

Colossians 3:15 says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." The phrase "the peace of Christ" has three primary applications:

- First, when we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord we have peace with God the Father.¹ We're no longer at enmity with God.² We become His adopted children.³
- Second, we're given personal peace by Jesus.⁴ We have an inner calm when we pray about everything and follow the instructions of God's Word.⁵
- Third, We can have peace with others. Jesus is our peace who brought both Jews and Gentiles together into one group and broke down the walls of division.⁶ When Jews and Gentiles receive Jesus, the Messiah, as their Savior and Lord we become one in Christ. Jesus is the key to peace and His peace is to rule in our hearts.

In the Greek language the word "rule" is "brabeuō" which literally means "to act as umpire." As Christians we're given the ability through the indwelling Holy Spirit to let the peace of Christ rule. Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit working in and through us.⁷ In other words, we can allow His peace to be the umpire making the call that directs our behavior. We can allow the peace of Christ to determine our actions, decisions and the words we use so peace is maintained in our relationships and in our hearts. For example, the way and when we communicate influences that peace. Sometimes we know the right thing to say but communicate it at the wrong time or in the wrong way, which can stir up strife rather than peace. We need to allow the peace of Christ to be our umpire.

God wants the peace of Christ to rule in people's hearts. As Christians we have been called and uniquely equipped for that purpose. For that we can all be thankful. Let's put it into practice. Let's share the good news about Jesus with people and show them by our example how the peace of Christ can rule in their hearts.

References: 1) Romans 5:1. 2) Romans 5:8-11. 3) Romans 8:14-15. 4) John 14:27. 5) Philippians 4:6-9. 6) Ephesians 2:14-16. 7) Galatians 5:22-23.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

GOD’S WORD SUNG BACK TO GOD

Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” The word of Christ, God’s Word,¹ is to richly dwell within us. How’s it done? What’s the result?

In the Greek language the word for “dwell” is “enoikeō” which means “to be at home.” The Greek word for “richly” is “plousiōs” which can also be translated “abundantly.” God’s Word should be very much at home in our lives, so much so that it influences every aspect of our lives. It should influence our thoughts, behavior, motives and the songs we sing. For that to happen we must get the Word of God out of our Bibles and into our hearts. We do that by memorizing it, meditating on it, studying it and applying it to our daily lives² including putting it to music.

God’s Word should be the basis for the songs we sing to God. For example, the Old Testament psalms are songs that express the majesty of God and His majestic name.³ They often express joy and thankfulness to God giving Him praise for who He is and for what He has done.⁴ They express real life situations and our thankfulness for how God works.⁵ Hymns also praise and exalt God, and Jesus. They often express Biblical doctrines and our obedience to those doctrines. Spiritual songs are more personal that express our thankfulness to God for His presence and grace in our lives. They too convey God’s Word and our praises to God. Much more can be said about psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Nevertheless, notice that they’re not to be entertaining but rather sung with thankfulness in our hearts to God, and used to teach and admonish one another.

Let’s don’t focus on the type of songs we prefer or a particular style of music. Instead, let’s focus on whether God’s Word richly dwells within us and whether His Word is put to music to teach and admonish one another, and to express our thankfulness to God.

References: 1) Hebrews 1:1-2. 2) Psalm 119:10-17, Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 2:15. 3) Psalms 8:1-9. 4) Psalm 136:1-26, Psalm 148:1-14, Psalm 150:1-6. 5) Psalm 51:1-17.

COLOSSIANS 4:2

DEVOTED TO PRAYER

Colossians 4:2 says, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving...” Let’s don’t miss what this verse is really saying. Being devoted to prayer means more than being dedicated to prayer or spending a lot of time praying.

In the Greek language the word used for “devote yourselves” is “proskartereō.” It’s a compound word made up of the word “pros” which indicates “a motion toward a place” and “kartereō” which means “to endure,” “to bear up,” or “to remain unwavering” especially in times of adversity. Our prayer life is to move toward a place of endurance, unwavering in the most difficult of times.

In addition, we’re to be “keeping alert in it.” The phrase “keeping alert” means more than staying alert physically. It also means staying alert spiritually, so we look for and see specific

prayer needs. We shouldn't wait for someone to ask us to pray. There are many things we can and should already be praying for. For example, we're to be on the alert for those who try to draw away Christ's disciples to follow their false teaching.¹ We can and should pray that we all understand and stand firm in the teachings of God's Word. We're to be on the alert regarding the deceitful schemes of Satan who is doing his best to find someone to devour.² We can and should pray for one another that we remain strong in our faith, and put on the full armor of God.³ This is even more important today for those who have children and grandchildren growing up in this perverted world. Let's remember that we're dealing with the world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness.⁴ Therefore, let's stay alert and be devoted to praying for one another, even without being asked.⁵

As we move towards a place of endurance and unwavering in our prayer lives let's don't forget to prayer "with an attitude of thanksgiving." As we devote ourselves to prayer let's thank God for what He has done, what He is doing and what He is about to do.

References: 1) Acts 20:29-32. 2) 1 Peter 5:8-9. 3) Ephesians 6:13-17. 4) Ephesians 6:12. 5) Ephesians 6:18.

COLOSSIANS 4:3-4 A SPECIAL PRAYER REQUEST

Before looking at Colossians 4:3-4 we must look at the previous verse, which is part of the same sentence. In the previous verse the apostle Paul said, "Devote yourselves to prayer."¹ In other words, our prayer life is to move towards a place of endurance, unwavering in the most difficult of times. With that thought in mind Paul said, in Colossians 4:3-4, "...praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak." Paul needed enduring and unwavering prayer.

Paul was imprisoned in Rome (under house arrest) for about two years. During that time he was chained to various members of the praetorian guard twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. The praetorian guard was an elite military force of about 9,000 men protecting the Roman emperor and his palace. In essence, Paul had a captive audience with whom he wanted to clearly communicate God's Word and the good news about Jesus Christ. So, he asked for prayer.

Was Paul's prayer request answered? Yes, it was, big time! Paul said, "Now, I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for a greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else..."²

Paul's prayer request ought to be at the heart of every follower of Jesus Christ. If the apostle Paul needed prayer in this area, then so do we and even more so. Let's pray for one another that God would open a door for His Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's pray that we all communicate it well, as we ought to speak. There's a time coming and in many ways is already here when people will not want to hear God's Word and the gospel of Christ.³ Much prayer is needed and needed now.

References: 1) Colossians 4:2. 2) Philippians 1:12-13. 3) 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

PROPER CONDUCT AND PROPER WORDS ARE A MUST

With sharing God's Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ still on his mind,¹ the apostle Paul teaches the right approach to take and how to communicate the good news. In Colossians 4:5-6 he said, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." Paul often shared what he did as an example for us to follow.²

Remember, Paul was imprisoned at Rome for about two years. During that time he was chained to various members of the praetorian guard with whom he shared God's Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ.³ Each praetorian guard had a different background. Each had a different personality. Some were open to the gospel, others were not. The same is true with the people we know. Therefore, our approach in telling someone about Jesus is important.

Paul said we should conduct ourselves wisely. Our conduct speaks louder than our words. Our conduct will either nullify the words we speak or give them value. It will cause us to lose credibility or establish credibility. It will push people away from Jesus or draw people to Jesus. Therefore, act wisely.

Paul also said we should make the most of our opportunity. Paul had a limited time with each praetorian guard. He had to be ready and prepared. The opportunities that we have to tell someone about Jesus will either be very brief or it will be a life-long opportunity with friends and family. Either way, we're to be ready and prepared.⁴ Let's make the most of our opportunities.

Paul went on to say that our speech should always be with grace as though seasoned with salt.⁵ The way we talk, our tone of voice, the language we use will either cause us to lose our effectiveness for Jesus or cause our testimony for Jesus to be strengthened. Let's learn to use the right approach and communicate in a way that causes people to want to know more about Jesus.

References: 1) Colossians 4:3-4. 2) Philippians 3:17. 3) Philippians 1:12-13. 4) 1 Peter 3:15. 5) Ephesians 4:29.

COLOSSIANS 4:12

A NEW PARADIGM FOR LEADERSHIP

In Colossians 4:12 the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians church saying, "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." Epaphras was a leader within the church at Colossae,¹ and demonstrated the kind of leadership every leader should have.

Epaphras was a "bond-servant," a term rooted in the Old Testament.² If a Jewish person was sold into slavery, in order to pay a debt, they would be treated as a hired laborer. After six years of service they would be set free from their obligation. However, if they wanted to remain a servant to their master, out of a love for their master, then they would make that known. The

master would then take an awl and pierce it through their ear into a door to indicate they had become a bond-servant to their master forever. Epaphras was forever committed to being a bond-servant of Christ whom he loved, preaching the gospel, teaching God's Word and devoted to those he served.

Part of being a bond-servant of Christ included being a servant-leader. Epaphras labored in prayer, praying that those he served would be "perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." He traveled to Rome to get help from Paul concerning a heresy that influenced the church. To do that he traveled 100 miles by land from Colossae to a sea port at Ephesus or Myra. From there he boarded a ship and sailed 1,500 miles across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome. To visit Paul he put himself at risk of being imprisoned with Paul, which he was.³ Epaphras did whatever was necessary to provide people the leadership they needed.

Epaphras demonstrated a commitment in leadership that was Christ honoring. He never exalted himself or did anything for personal gain or recognition. We need more leaders like Epaphras who are not self-serving or in leadership for the recognition, power, glory or prestige. Let's change the paradigm for the leaders we follow. It is time we hold leaders to a higher standard.

References: 1) Colossians 1:3-8. 2) Leviticus 25:39, Deuteronomy 15:12-17. 3) Philemon 1:23.

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