

Let's Revel in Colossians

by

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Dedication

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Like sons of thunder,
Dr. Willard and Dr. John
taught,
prayed,
and served
beside one another as
associates,
brothers,
companions,
defenders,
enthusiasts,
friends

for more than 50 years.

With Dr. John taking the more public ministry
and Dr. Willard, as long-time president
of the Multnomah School of the Bible,
the more private,
the two served their Savior
with unrivaled devotion.

The one could not have served so well
without the other.

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Introduction

We come to the book of Colossians, just four brief chapters, one of the epistles written by the Apostle Paul about 64 A.D. when he was in prison at Rome. You remember, when he wrote to the Ephesian church, he called himself, “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.”

These three books, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians are an entity. We have the revelation of the church, the body of Christ, given to us in the book of Ephesians. And then the practice of the church among men is found in Philippians—how those of us who belong to the church of Christ should live. And then in the book of Colossians the doctrine of Ephesians is protected, is guarded.

In Ephesians it's the body of Christ that's really in view. When you come to Colossians, we're more concerned about Christ as the head of the church. In Ephesians, we have Christ who is our life; and in Philippians, He's our joy. In Colossians we are in Him, complete. Or if you want to put it this way—in Ephesians, we are in Christ, ascended; in Philippians, we are in Christ, satisfied; and in Colossians, we are in Christ, complete.

You see, all that we need to stand before God is found in Christ. It is not our works or our prayers or our ordinances or what we may do though they may be good things, religious things. But if a person is going to stand in the presence of God, he must stand in all the righteousness and merit and beauty of Christ Himself.

Christ is not a half-Savior; He's a perfect Savior. And when we ask men and women to accept Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior, we're asking them to receive that which God has done for them. You see, God has made the way of salvation. He's worked it out—He finished it. And He's offering to you and to me a salvation that's perfect and complete and eternal. And the only way we will ever stand in the presence of God must be in Christ.

In the book of Colossians, we're dealing not so much with the out-broken sins of society, which you might find in the book of Corinthians; but here we have the danger of false teachers, of the philosophies of men—the legalism of men. We have false mysticism instead of having Christ as the center of our worship.

Now concerning the Colossian church, we have no record that Paul ever went to Colosse. The church was possibly started by a man called Epaphras. You find that in chapter one, verse seven, “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.” And in the fourth chapter we read in verse 12, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

I take it that this man Epaphras must have gone down to hear Paul when he was at Ephesus. You see, Ephesus was the place where the Apostle Paul stayed for three years and from which the Word of God went out over all that part of Asia Minor. And the possibility is that this man Epaphras came down from Colosse, heard the gospel through the Apostle Paul, went back to his own town where he became a testimony for God and established that church. Epaphras, I take it, was the pastor of that church. And I personally believe, as I think through the New Testament, that there is the possibility that Epaphras may have started the work at Laodicea and also at Hierapolis, towns near Colosse.

This man was zealous on his feet, and he was zealous on his knees. You see, all Christian service can be put down in this one little statement, “We plead with God for men; we plead with men for God.” In chapter 1, verse 7, Epaphras is listed as a faithful minister of the gospel to the people of Colosse. He was faithful on his feet; he was a testimony for the Lord. In 4:12, he was faithful before God in behalf of the people—faithful on his knees.

Could I ask you, my Christian friend, if you are faithful on your feet in witnessing for Him? And are you faithful on your knees in pleading with God for men? Do you know you can't divide, you can't separate these two? If I'm faithful on my knees before God, I'll be faithful on my feet before men.

Now here's a man who came to hear Paul, possibly an idolater—I don't know much about his background—a man who came and heard the gospel and was so transformed that he went back to his home town. And that's a hard thing to do, by the way. He ministered the gospel of Christ to his friends, to his family, to his neighbors and a church was started.

It is difficult for a man or a woman, when you come to know the Savior, to go back to your own kin and tell them how to be saved. I know how difficult that is. It's easier to go and talk to somebody you've never seen before.

“Oh,” you say, “if I were a missionary, I could talk about the Lord; but the people around here know too much about me.”

Well, your life should be so transformed, you should be so in love with the Savior, that it would not be hard for you to bear testimony in some way or other. Your life and your actions should betray the fact that you belong to the Savior.

Now I know people will call you religious. They might even say that you're hyper-religious or some such word. Don't let that bother you. That's always been true. When you walk before God and seek to give forth the Word of life, you're bound to have those who will oppose you.

You know, too many of us Christians are occupied with the shadows. We're occupied with the byproducts of Christianity instead of getting right down to the real business of knowing our Savior.

Honestly now, do you really know your Savior? I'm not asking what you know about Him. I'm asking how much of the Lord do you really know? How much of His work do you know? How much of His purposes do you know? What I'm after is this—we are too much like some of the Colossian Christians who became occupied with side issues, with the shadows, and missed the real substance, the person of Christ.

When we get into the second chapter of this book, you'll find that Paul talks about these things. When you come to the third chapter, he talks about our wonderful union with the Savior and then gives us some practical advice. This is the book of Colossians. The Apostle Paul from prison in Rome is writing to a church he has never seen, but he knows something about the conditions in the church of Colosse. The people of God had been weaned away from the person of Christ. They had been sidetracked from the headship of Christ, the Lordship of Christ, the place that Christ should have in their life and family.

You know it's possible for men who have their doctor's degrees to know nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful salvation we have in Him. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, you remember in the first chapter, “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.” The wisdom of men is foolishness with God. He could say to them in the second chapter of Corinthians, “When I come to you in Corinth, I'll know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” What for? “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.”

That's his burden for the Colossian church: False teachers, Gnostics, had come in.

Now what about these Gnostics? They were a people who professed fuller knowledge. In fact, they claimed to know more than what had been revealed in the Scriptures. They loved to talk about religious things, but they had no place for Christ. They believed that all matter was evil; and, hence, of course, they denied the incarnation, that God should be made manifest in flesh. What they did say was that Jesus Christ was an emanation from God, a created being, and that He was not God. He was great, but He was not the greatest.

And by the way, every false cult and false philosophy dethrones Christ. They may talk about Him; they may claim that He's a wonderful teacher; they may say He's the most marvelous man that ever lived, but they dethrone Him of His rightful place—that He is God manifest in the flesh.

My friend, Paul is writing here to say that Christ must be supreme. And may I say that, when Christ is lost sight of as the One who is Lord, then the Spirit of God disappears as far as operating in a person's life. You remember what the Apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, chapter two, where we have the first message after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He said, "This Jesus whom you crucified, God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses." And God hath exalted Him, this Jesus, to be Lord and to be Christ. That's why in Philippians 2:9-10 we have, "God also hath . . . given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Who is Jesus? The same chapter declares that He who was in the form of God thought it not a thing to be held onto, but emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation. He took the form of a servant, was found in fashion as a man and humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God highly exalted Him. Now these Gnostics declared they knew more than the Bible. They declared they knew more than the writers of the Bible. They claimed fuller knowledge. And the result was that Jesus Christ had no place in their thinking as far as being the incarnate Word of God.

Now when you read the epistle of John, he even goes so far as to say, "He that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." This is the spirit of antichrist.

What is the spirit of antichrist? The denial of the incarnate Word of God. When people deny that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, the Scriptures declare that they have the spirit of antichrist. That's pretty hard language, isn't it? But, my friend, that's what the Bible says. And John, who was called the Apostle of Love, is the one who says it. In fact, our precious Savior, in talking to the religious leaders of His day, accused them of being the children of the devil. Why? Because they took Him who was God manifest in the flesh and declared He was demon-possessed.

He said to them, "I'm sinless. Which one of you convinceth me of sin?"

And their answer was, "You're demon possessed." I'm quoting the gospel of Luke, by the way.

Then He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad."

This Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the El Shaddai of Abraham, claimed to be the eternal God, claimed to be sinless, claimed to be the light of the world, claimed to be the bread of life, claimed to have the power of resurrection.

They said, "You're a blasphemer," and took up stones to kill Him. That's why He was crucified.

Why did the Jews crucify Jesus? Because, and I quote them saying to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).

Now these Gnostics at Colosse were coming among God's people with a superior attitude, claiming to know more than the Lord, more than Paul, more than the apostles, more than the Scriptures. Just like today—they come along and look upon some of us who believe the Bible to be the Word of God; and they look with pity upon us as if we are ignoramuses, as if we know nothing.

Well, my friend, when a person is blind, spiritually blind, what can he know about the things of God? Can a finite mind begin to fathom an infinite God? Let's face it. It is impossible for the natural man by his human reasoning to find God. God is not known by research; God is known by revelation. And that revelation has been given to us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. As He could say in John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any

time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

For all that I know of Christ is just what I know of God, and all that I know of God is just what I know of Christ. And that’s drawing the line pretty tight, isn’t it? But sit down and analyze it; don’t be afraid of it—analyze it. Look at it squarely.

If Jesus Christ is not God, what do you know about God? You look into the heavens and you see His power; you see His might; you see His sovereignty; you see His creative power; but what is He like? And I have said this before and I repeat it—we’re living in a day when people, because of their philosophical reasonings and boasted knowledge, look down their noses upon those who believe that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, that He’s the only Savior, that there’s only one way of redemption.

They call us narrow. That’s true. That doesn’t bother a person, does it? Jesus said, “Narrow is the way that leadeth to life and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.”

“Men by wisdom,” says Paul, “knew not God.” That was true in his day and it’s true in our day. And, if you want to meet those who have no place and time for God, oftentimes you have to go to a university where they sometimes do their best to destroy any image one may have of God.

My friend, let’s face the issue today: If Jesus Christ is not God, you have no revelation of God. These fellows who came down to Colosse professed a fuller knowledge than all the Scriptures. They had no place for Christ. And when you come to your Bible, you’re faced with the fact that if Christ is not supreme, if He’s not the Savior, if He’s not God manifest in the flesh, then we have no revelation of God.

When men have come to me and said, “I don’t believe in your Jesus and I don’t believe in your Bible. But I’m not a pagan. I believe in God.”

I just simply ask the question, “That’s wonderful, but what kind of a God do you believe in?”

If you rule out the Bible and if rule out Christ, my friend, you haven’t a word to say. You have no conception, no positive conception as to what God is. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” No, friend, God comes by revelation. That’s what Jesus said to Peter: “Blessed art thou,

Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood hath not revealed the Son to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.”

And you remember Jesus said in Matthew 11:25-26: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Now in the following pages, our Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, will want to reveal the things of Christ to your heart and to mine. May we receive them gladly and with great joy.

Chapter One

I'm not going to spend much time here because this is the regular way Paul starts his epistles. And in each one he always reminds us that he's an apostle by the will of God.

1:1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

1:2. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you come to the book of Galatians, he spends two chapters defending his apostleship and his message. In fact, the authority of his message depends upon his apostleship. Oh, how the Apostle Paul loves to tell them that he was an apostle by the will of God, not by the will of men. He wasn't called by man; he didn't receive the call from men, but he was called by God Himself. He was called by the risen Christ.

And then you notice he talks about Timothy, the brother. Timothy is in the same relationship to God as even the Apostle Paul. You know, I like this. We Christians today—we put some of the apostles in a special place by themselves, forgetting that we have just as great a place in the body of Christ as members of the same body, having the same standing before God as Paul and Peter and John. It may be we might occupy a different position in glory, but we have the same relationship, belonging to the same Savior, having the same Lord. It is wonderful. That is why he could say, "And Timothy, our brother."

Now here you have this man Paul, speaking of the ground for his thanksgiving. I tell you, when I read these epistles of Paul, I'm amazed at the size of this man's heart for God's people. My, how he prayed for them and how he longed for them. His was not only a life of prayer but a life of thanksgiving.

3. We give thanks to God and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.

You know, it kind of makes a fellow—how shall I put it—we feel kind of convicted when we realize our lives are filled so full with so many good things and so many petty things and inconsequential things—things that

don't count for anything. But the thing that God wants us to do is to walk before Him, to enjoy His Son.

Now that doesn't mean you're always going to be on your knees. I think Paul put it well in one of the other epistles when he said, "I have you always in my heart." Every time he came before God in prayer, they were on his heart. When he was out ministering the Word of God, they were still on his heart. In other words, his heart was full of thanksgiving to God for the ones who had come to know His Son as their Savior.

I wish we might learn from this man of the wonderful joy and the rich, full life that can be ours in the presence of God. Oh, how we have robbed ourselves of spiritual power; of spiritual blessing. We've failed, somehow or other, to draw on the riches we have in Christ—the riches of His grace, the riches of His mercy, the riches of His glory, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Now you see I'm again getting back into Ephesians when I say that because these things I'm quoting are from Ephesians. But Colossians is so very close, paralleling Ephesians; and so we'll have some of the same truth, no doubt. But I find here a life of prayer.

Now you'll notice what they had—three things they had in these verses. Let's examine each one in turn.

1:4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

1:5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Did you ever notice how Paul uses this both in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians? These three things—faith, love and hope. You'll also find them in Philippians.

Christ was the object of their faith. How about you? How about me? The important thing about faith, my friend, is the object of faith.

My, what rest, what peace, what joy; what comfort comes to us. My Savior, the Son of God, is the object of my faith. He's eternal; He's perfect; He's a real Savior. He is the object of faith, not some ordinance, not some works which we do, not some endeavors we want to do, not even our prayers. Our prayers are not the object of our faith.

Is He the object of your faith? Or are you trusting your church membership? Are you trusting your background? Are you trusting some religious thing to which you go week after week? And when you go Sunday

morning, you think you've done your duty. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

In other words, Christ must be the object of your faith.

It's not what you do; it's what He has done. It's the work of Christ for us that satisfies God. You know, some of those old Christians, in their singing, used to sing the truth. It's not tears or repentance or prayers; it's the blood that atones for the soul.

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.

And then the second thing he talks about is the love which the Colossians had toward all the saints—to ALL the saints, not to just a few. I would suggest you read 1 John, chapters three and four, where he takes up this question of love to the saints. And may I connect these two together? The more we realize that Christ is the object of our faith, the more we will manifest love to all the saints, not just to a few of them.

It's very easy for us to make cliques, maybe in our church, wherever we may be. It's so easy for us to kind of make a clique; we just do it naturally. We love those who love us. There are some, of course, who love the Savior but your personalities clash. You know, they clash. And you say, well, you'll dodge them.

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, I want to love them, but I can't.

Listen, Romans 5:5 says, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

When I talk about my faith, that's God-work. When I talk about my love, that's man-work. As I said earlier, God sees my faith and men experience my love. And Paul was rejoicing over these Colossians, thanking God for their love to all the saints.

You know, I've sometimes said, and I sometimes think that God has some very ornery children. Now I shouldn't say that. I'm saying it, however.

There are some of God's children that—I'd like to see them different, wouldn't you? And maybe they're saying the same thing about you and me. But to love all the saints—as John said, “If a man says I love God and sees his brother in need and doesn't go to his help, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

So Paul here is thanking God not only for their faith but also for their love toward all the saints. And then he begins to talk about the hope that they have in Christ.

You know, it's a wonderful thing to be a child of the living God. I'm amazed at times how people have no time for Christ. They go their own way; they live so many years and die without any conception of the wonderful love and grace of God. With Bibles in practically every home, churches on nearly every corner, the great majority of people know so little of our Savior.

Oh, I just pray that there will be in your heart and my heart a consuming desire to know Him in a real way. I may not be able to communicate the wonderful truth that is in Christ, but certainly we can enjoy Him and revel in Him and love Him with all our heart. I'm glad I'm not saved by my knowledge of Christ. I'm saved by trusting Him. And, when I trust Him, I learn to love Him. The more I know Him, the more I love Him.

Then we found the cause of his thanksgiving was what they had in verses 4 and 5. They had their faith in Christ; they thanked God for their love to all the saints; and again, I'd like to press on their love to all the saints—the nice ones, the ones who are not so nice, the sweet ones and the ornery ones, the mature ones and the babes in Christ, the ones who get into your hair. Yes, irrespective of whether they are fathers in the faith or young men or babies, he commends their love to all the saints.

I like that thought of Paul's when he speaks in Romans 14 and 15, urging them not to hinder other believers for whom Christ died. If they are the object of the love of Christ, my friend, they ought to be the object of your love and my love. And sometimes we have to recognize the divine love in us that causes us to love ALL the saints.

Then the third thing was hope. Now remember, faith, love, hope. Faith looks back to what Christ has done for us. Love to all the saints is the manifestation of faith toward others now. And then, our hope in Christ looks forward to the future. As he says in verse 5,

1:5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

The Apostle Paul in both books of Thessalonians and the other epistles speaks of these three wonderful things—our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our love toward all the saints and then our hope which we have in Christ. You remember 1 Timothy 1:1 speaks of Christ our hope and in 1 Peter 1:3 of a lively hope. Or as Paul, just before he was beheaded, could say to Timothy in the second book, that “there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

Christ is the object of our faith; He’s the power of our love and He’s the object of our hope. And I tell you, when He is the object of our hearts, then fruit bearing is the result as you find in verse 6:

1:6. Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.

Notice, they were fruit bearers. They had faith, love, hope and so they were fruit bearers. The truth of the gospel concerning the person of our Savior was evident; and, when a man has Christ as the object of his heart’s devotion, the logical result will be fruit bearing.

In the first few verses of the 15th chapter of John’s gospel, he quotes Christ as saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches, my Father is the husbandman.” And He goes on to say, “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” The great purpose of all our fellowship and work for God is to bear fruit.

Now that does not necessarily mean just soul winning. I know there are those who take John 15 and make that soul winning. Well, soul winning could be included, “for we are set out for the increase of the body of Christ.” But, my friend, fruit bearing—real fruit bearing— would be Galatians 5:22, 23. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace” and so forth. You see, if you and I make Christ the center not only of our faith, but of our affection and of our devotion, then you’ll have fruit bearing.

You won’t be concerned about it. You see, He produces the fruit; we bear the fruit. The Spirit of God and the indwelling Christ produce it; we become the bearers of it. You remember Titus 2:11-14. One could go into the Scriptures concerning this. Suffice it to say, they had faith, love, hope and so were fruit bearers.

I wonder, my friends, are you a fruit bearer for God? Are you bearing fruit for the Savior? There are some branches that do not bear fruit, and they have to be purged. "And herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." And sometimes the Lord has to discipline for the purpose of bringing forth more fruit, and it's done through the Word of God.

I'm quoting from John 15:5, 7-8: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

And Paul was thanking God for these Colossian Christians who were bearing fruit.

Now the channel through whom they heard the truth is in verses 7 and 8. Remember the word of the truth of the gospel is in verse 5, and then in verse 6 they "knew the grace of God in truth." Now in verses 7 and 8, we have the channel through whom the truth came:

1:7. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

1:8. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

I said at the very beginning of this book of Colossians that this man Epaphras in chapter 1:7 was faithful on his feet, bringing the gospel to people at Colosse; and then possibly he became the pastor of that church, faithfully giving them the Word of God. In chapter 4:12, he was faithful on his knees that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

God give to us men today who will be faithful on their knees and faithful on their feet.

And in this man Epaphras we have a good picture of the servant of the Lord, anxious that men should hear about his wonderful Savior and faithful on his feet. My, what a statement, when Paul could say, "He's my dear fellow servant, and he's a faithful minister of Christ."

I repeat it, he was faithful in bringing to them the gospel of the grace of God and for declaring unto Paul their love in the spirit. Then in chapter 4:12, we are told that Epaphras was "always labouring fervently for you in prayers."

If I might change the word, he was "agonizing" on his knees before God. That's the place of the intercessor. It's not dashing into the presence of

God for five minutes and then going out and doing your job. No, my friend, this man took the time to come into the presence of God and to plead with God for these babes in Christ at Colosse who were being affected by false teachers, men who had come in to lead them astray from the Lordship of Christ. And he was pleading with God—agonizing on his knees, laboring fervently that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

May God give to the church of Christ men who will know what it means to labor fervently on their knees in behalf of the people of God. And then, God give to us those who shall be witnesses to their friends and to their neighbors of a wonderful Savior who can redeem them from sin.

May the Lord grant to you and to me to be faithful servants, ministers, of Jesus Christ.

You say, “Mr. Mitchell, that’s for preachers.”

Oh, no—oh, no. I’m talking to you. There’s no reason why you couldn’t labor before God in prayer. There’s no reason why you can’t in some way by your actions, by your life, by your attitude, by your words witness for the Savior. I’m not asking you to be a preacher or a teacher or an evangelist. I’m just asking you to be a faithful minister of Christ—on your knees first and then before men. My, how it will enrich your life in the presence of God and how you will be found usable by God before men.

We’ve come now to verse 9 where you have the prayer of the Apostle Paul:

1:9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

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

1:11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Now when we come to verses 9 to 11, we have Paul’s prayer for these Christians. You know, it’s a wonderful thing that this man Paul had a tremendous capacity for prayer, unceasing prayer, for his people. You remember in the book of Ephesians we had two prayers of Paul’s, the prayer for knowledge in the first chapter and the prayer for fellowship and strength in the third chapter. In the book of Philippians chapter one we had a prayer of Paul’s, and now in Colossians 1 we also have a prayer. The purpose of the prayer is to know the will of God.

You know, it's a wonderful thing that we Christians can know the will of God. In the Philippian letter his prayer was that they might abound in knowledge, but here the purpose of the prayer in verse nine is to know the will and plan of God. This calls for diligent study of the Word of God. May you have a real relish to know the Word of God and the will of God.

Let me read the verse again, verse nine:

1:9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

So this is the purpose of the prayer—to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

You know, the trouble with us Christians, we're not willing to be diligent in our study of the Word of God. If you're waiting for a real hunger to be put in there, I wonder sometimes if God isn't waiting for us to start reading. It's very difficult to be diligent in the study of the Word of God. How in the world can we know the purpose of God, how can we know the will of God if we neglect the place where He has revealed His will?

Listen to what he says:

1:9b. That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

I repeat it, this calls for the diligent reading and study of the Word of God.

To Timothy, this young man in the faith, Paul could write: "Study to show yourself approved unto God." Approved unto God—not approved unto your class, not approved unto your teacher, but approved unto God. "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, holding a straight course through the word of truth."

And the measure of that knowledge is in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Truth is never learned through the intellect alone. There must be subjection of heart to what we read.

Now I'm going to stop here quietly and slowly to get this into your heart if I can. The revelation of spiritual truth is what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about mathematics or some of the sciences. We're talking about the knowledge of God's will. We're talking about the measure of that knowledge. Truth is not learned through the intellect alone. There must be a subjection of heart to what we read.

Spiritual truth is never revealed or received through argument. You know, if you and I were to argue about certain doctrines in the Scripture, I'm sure when we got through you wouldn't believe what I believe and I wouldn't believe what you believe. In fact, you would go to your concordance and find out all the Scriptures you could to back up what you believe. And the possibility is I might do the same thing; so that neither one of us would accept what the other one says.

Truth is never revealed that way. Truth is only revealed to open hearts, hearts that are wanting to know the truth—not to argue about it but to be open to it.

I remember being with some missionaries in Japan a few years ago when a certain doctrine was being discussed and one of the men said to me, "Well, Dr. Mitchell, you just can't change me in my—in what I believe."

I said, "Well, listen, brother, I'm not trying to change what you believe."

His attitude was "You can't show me. I'm so sure that I'm right that I don't care what you say. You're not going to change me."

That was his attitude. In fact, this is just about what he said.

And I said, "If these other brethren are feeling the same way as you do, we might as well say 'good day' and go on. Truth is never imparted by argument, and I'm not here to try to change your doctrine or what you believe. You invited me in to discuss this doctrine with you. I'm just telling you what I believe the Bible teaches; and, if you can reveal to me that you are correct from the Word of God, I'm willing to change what I believe. If I'm afraid to bring what I believe before the Scriptures, then there's something either wrong with my doctrine or wrong with me."

Truth is never imparted except by the Spirit of God to an open heart. Allow me again to remind you what Jesus said to Peter when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona. Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven." Truth comes by revelation from God's Word.

If I want to know the will of God, if I want to know the purpose of God not only for my own life but for the church of Christ at large, I must go to the Word of God. If I maintain that the Bible is the complete revelation of God and His purpose for man, then I must find the answer to my questions in the Bible.

In fact, the Apostle Paul in writing to Timothy said, “Give yourself to reading.” That calls for will power; that calls for diligence; that calls for some discipline. Give yourself to the reading of the Word of God. And if my mind and my heart are open, if I really want to know the truth, the Spirit of God will enlighten my mind to the truth as it is written in the Word of God.

Remember this, please. Again I say, there’s not a man on the face of the earth who knows the power of the Word of God in the human life. In the first Psalm, you remember, speaking of the Messiah, speaking of our Savior, we read that in the Word of God He did “meditate day and night.” In fact, Jesus said to the people of His day, “If you abide in my Word, if you stay in my Word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”

I want to speak very bluntly to you who love the Savior. If you really want to know the truth of God, if you really mean business with God, God will mean business with you. And I will never know the purpose of God or the will of God unless I get down into the Book.

Wisdom, as you know, is the use of knowledge; and the spiritual understanding of truth brings discernment. When we come to know the will of God, there ought to be and there should be and will be subjection to that will.

The main issue is, do I want to know it; do I really, honestly, want to know it. For I am very certain that God is more desirous of revealing His will and purpose to you than you are to have it revealed to you. God always means business.

And if I were to come to Him with an open heart and an open mind with the Bible before me and say, “Father, I want to know Your purpose and Your will as I read the Word of God with an open mind,” the Spirit of God will unveil before my mind the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

And when I think of the marvel of it all, the wonder of it all, and shall I say, the amount of it all—I’m reminded of that verse in Romans 11:33, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

I tell you, we haven’t begun yet to scratch the surface of what God has revealed to us in the Scriptures. But the question is, am I willing to take the time to get into the Word of God and to find out what God has to say?

Now this is the prayer of Paul in Colossians 1, this very first thing in verse 9. He prayed that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And this comes by reading the Word of God and asking the Spirit of God to make it real to you.

And again I repeat, spiritual understanding of the Word of God brings discernment. And when we know the will of God, there will be a desire to be in subjection to that will. This is the path God wants us to walk; this is the path the Savior walked in complete subjection to the will of His Father.

May God grant to you and to me the joy and the privilege today of walking in the will of God and growing in the knowledge of God.

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

1:11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

The great object of the prayer is that the people of God might walk worthy of God. I tell you, that's a wonderful thing. In Ephesians chapter 4 we have it set out before us in detail. There we had a walk worthy of the calling wherewith Christ has called us, and we are to walk in the unity of the Spirit. We are to walk in a new creation. We are to walk in love, in light, in wisdom, in subjection. Here we have this walk worthy of our calling.

Now in Philippians 1:27 we have "only let your conversation—your walk—be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 we have "that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory."

And you remember in Ephesians 5:1 we have "be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."

In other words, the object of the prayer is that we walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Is your life, is my life filled with the desire to please Him? The things that I do, the things that I say, do they bring honor to Him? Am I—as a child of One who is God, my Father, my Lord, my Savior—really walking as a child of God in the midst of a world that's full of sin? Is my daily life such that He is glorified?

You say, “Well, sir, I don’t want to be marked out from everybody else as an odd ball, as a religious fanatic.”

You think God wants you to be that? He’s just asking you to walk worthy of God and unto all pleasing. When you do your planning, is it to please God or is it to please yourself? Are your actions, your attitudes, your works, your words, are they bringing praise and honor to the Lord? Are they worthy of God? Or are you living in the lusts of the flesh and bringing dishonor to His name?

Now Paul is praying, first of all, that you might have the knowledge of His will unto all pleasing. He wants you to know the will of God. That’s why He puts the Word of God first. I can’t walk, you can’t walk worthy of God if we leave the Word of God out of our lives.

Now let’s face up to it; let’s just be realistic about this. God has given to you and to me a tool to use and that tool is the Scriptures. If I want to know the will of God for my life, it’s in the Scriptures. If I want to know the purpose of God for my life, I have to stay in the Scriptures. If I want to walk worthy of God, I have to stay in the Scriptures. If I want to be cleansed from daily sin, I have to stay in the Scriptures. If I want to live a life that will magnify Him, I’ve got to live in the Word of God.

You say, “Why, you give the Word of God a real place.”

Yes. This is the tool God has given to us. How much do I know of Christ? I find it in the Word of God. What is the purpose and plan of God for me and for the church of Christ and for the nation and for Israel and for the world? I find it in the Word of God. If I want to know my relationship to God and how I can please God, how I can serve God, how I can live for God, I have to find it in the Word of God. If I want to know what my relationship is to my family, to my neighbors, to my friends, to society—where do I find my responsibility? In the Word of God.

My friend, for you and me to say that we are children of God means that He is our Father and that He is holy and righteous and good and loving and gracious, compassionate, tender and longsuffering. Is your God like that?

You say, “He certainly is.”

Then if I’m a child of His, if I’m trusting Him, if I’m related to Him, I ought to live that way. This is what He’s talking about. First of all, He wants us to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual

understanding. This gives us discernment about things. It causes us to know what is right and what is wrong.

Now I'm not talking about the Ten Commandments. I'm talking about a life lived for God because of relationship to Jesus Christ. There are some things that are very good in themselves. As Paul could say in Philippians 3, "But if these good things, if these religious things, hinder my knowing God and going on with God, I'm going to put those things to one side."

But I repeat it. If I really want to mean business with God and if I want to know His will and His purpose, I better stay in the Word of God. My friends, listen. You can't honestly live a real Christian life apart from the Word of God. Oh, in some way I wish I could make real to you—and may the Spirit of God make it real to me—the power, the wonder, the marvel of the Word of God. We've got to stay in the Book.

Then he goes on to say,

1:10b. ... being fruitful in every good work.

If I'm going to walk worthy unto all pleasing, it means I want to anticipate the will of God. It means I want a preference for the will of God instead of my own. And we can only walk worthy of the Lord unto well pleasing as we know His will and His mind. The study of His Word and a godly walk always go together.

But now—and let me repeat it just once again—Paul goes on to say, "being fruitful in every good work." To walk worthy of the Lord brings forth fruitfulness. These Colossians were fruit bearers. The Lord produces fruit, and we bear it as in Galatians 5:22 and 2 Peter 1:5-8. He produces it and we bear it. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. It's the great desire of the Lord that we bear fruit.

He said, "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." That's in John's gospel 15:16. One could multiply the passages concerning this. And then He asks us to increase in the knowledge of God.

As the Psalmist could say, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." Then Paul goes on to say that a walk worthy of the Lord is manifesting fruit in every good work—EVERY good work. And remember, a good work is that work that pleases Him. And as Ephesians 2:10a says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

We are to walk worthily with a life that brings forth fruitfulness to the glory of God. Then He adds further: "... and increasing in the knowledge of God."

In verse 9, we are to be filled with the knowledge of His will. Now he goes on in 10c—we are to increase in the knowledge of God. And, by the way, here he's talking about experimental knowledge gained by fellowship with God.

When Paul said in Philippians "that I may know Him," he was talking about experimental knowledge, not a head knowledge so much though I'm not opposed to that. In fact, we need to have our minds saturated and filled with the Word of God, especially with good doctrine. But does it get down into our lives? Does it transform our lives? Are my actions, are my words, are my attitudes changed because of the knowledge of the Word of God?

Am I living my life for the glory of God or am I living it for the praise of men? Am I living it to satisfy my own thinking or am I living it for God?

So he speaks here about being pleasing unto the Lord in our walk, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Do you know more about the Lord intellectually and experimentally than you did a year ago? Or are you just marking time? Are you just fritting away the time that is given to you? Do you know more of God today than you did a few years ago? Do you know more of God today than you did six months ago? Have you experienced more of the presence of God now than you did two weeks ago? Are you growing or standing still?

Oh, that God may take this prayer and make it real to you and to me that we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, that we might be fruitful in every good work, that we might increase in the knowledge of God.

And then he goes on in verse 11. Notice this verse:

1:11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Listen to it! It doesn't say that we receive strength—"Strengthened with all might" to do miracles. No. It is: "Strengthened with all might unto all patience." We need His might; we need His power; but it's for all patience with joyfulness. Now here's an amazing—I must confess—here's a supernatural thing.

You know, if I were to ask the question, “Do you need power? Do you want power?” Why, of course we want power.

“What do you want power for?” And I’ll guarantee that in nine cases out of ten we want power to do some spectacular thing. Let’s be honest now. Is that not true? I want power. What do you want power for?

“Well,” you say, “I would like to heal the sick and open the eyes of the blind. I’d like to do some really wonderful things for God.”

Would you like the Lord to strengthen you for your patience? For the need of patience? To be longsuffering with your brother instead of being short-suffering? You know, it’s so easy for us to want power. I’m thinking of that verse in Ephesians 1:19: “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”

My, that’s the kind of power I want. The power of the spectacular. Colossians 1:29, “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

To do what? Power to do what? To do miracles? No. To do the spectacular? No. To be what? “Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

Do you remember that verse in Ephesians 3:16, where Paul prays: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

A literal translation would be “to be made powerfully strong according to His Spirit.” Where? In the inner man. And that power is according to His riches in glory. You have it in Philippians 4:19, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

We are to be made powerfully strong by the Spirit in the inner man. What for? Not to do the miraculous, unless your miraculous be unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

You remember that verse in 1 Corinthians 13, “Love suffereth long and then blows up?” Oh, no. “Love suffereth long and is kind.” Still kind. Does somebody irritate you? Are you ready to blow your top, if I can use that term? Do you have a hard time keeping your temper? And how you want to tell them what you think of them. But, oh, how long does it take you

to respond with joyfulness, patience and longsuffering? And I'll tell you, my friend, it's going to take the power of God to do that.

This is what Paul is praying for: "That you might be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Ah, there it is—longsuffering with joyfulness, still happy. "Love suffereth long and is kind—still kind."

You say, "Mr. Mitchell, that's a supernatural life."

That's true. I grant you that. But too many of us, when you talk about supernatural things, you're thinking of miracles and power instead of patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

So today, when things just don't go right, you ask the Lord to make you strong unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness instead of blowing up. Be happy in the Lord and be longsuffering. This is divine love operating in the believer.

I would like to enforce this fact again that the Christian life is a supernatural life. Anybody can lose his temper. Anybody can be shortsuffering instead of manifesting that patience, that longsuffering, that gentleness, that love which should be evident in every Christian. And Paul is praying that we might be made strong by God in this thing as we found in Ephesians 3:16, "To be made powerfully strong by the Spirit in the inner man, according to His riches in glory."

We need the power of God to live a consistent Christian life. We were quoting from 1 Corinthians 13, "Love suffereth long and is kind. Love envieth not. Love vaunteth not itself. Love is never puffed up and never behaves itself unseemly. It never seeks its own." This is the Christian experience. It's a supernatural one.

Our attitude too often is, "I'll forgive you now, brother, but never let it happen again." And if we're manifesting a little longsuffering, if we're manifesting a little patience, we do it with a long face; we do it as a religious rite because being a Christian, being a child of God, being indwelt by the Spirit of God, I should be longsuffering and I should be patient but not with joyfulness, eh?

"Yes," says Paul, "I'm praying that you'll be made so strong by the Spirit of God who indwells you, that you'll be patient; that you'll be longsuffering with joyfulness."

You remember, in Romans 5:3-5, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

The divine love that dwells in every believer can produce patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Let's be joyful Christians. I don't mean in a superficial way. I mean let's have a real, genuine, deep-seated joy in our patience, in our longsuffering one for the other.

Now I know someone is going to say, “Well, sir, if you were living where I'm living, if you were living under the circumstances or working where I work or if you had the husband or wife that I have,” etc., etc.

I know. We can excuse ourselves. I tell you, my friend, “There hath no temptation overtaken you but such as is common to man.” God is faithful to you and to me; and there is no reason why we shouldn't pray not only for the knowledge and will of God, but we should pray for strength to be patient and longsuffering with joyfulness.

Then following that from verses 12 to 14, Paul begins to thank the Lord for what God has done for the Colossians. Now in the first part of the chapter, he thanks the Lord for their faith, for their love, for their hope, for their fruitfulness. He's praising the Lord for the work of God in their hearts. Now he thanks God for what He has done for them from verse 12 down through verse 14. Will you go along with me on that? Let's read these three verses. These are wonderful verses:

1:12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

1:13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

1:14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

My, what a passage of Scripture. How Paul just pours into three verses so much truth. He concentrates the truth of what God has done for us into three amazing verses.

What's the first one in verse 12? “He hath made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

May I say this? He has qualified us; he has rendered us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. There are no degrees of fitness. Fitness does not depend upon one's experience but upon Him. Our fitness to be a partaker of the inheritance does not depend upon our experience or upon our faithfulness, but it depends upon Him. He has made every Christian, the strong ones and the weak ones, the mature ones and the immature ones fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints. You can't buy an inheritance. You can't work for an inheritance. Inheritances come to us through relationship. You inherit what your father, your mother leaves to you. And we have an inheritance.

This is what Peter talks about in 1 Peter 1:3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

In Ephesians 1:11, Paul writes, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

In Acts 20:32, Luke quotes Paul as saying, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

In Romans 8:18, Paul says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

And not only are we joint heirs with Christ, but we are also partners in the inheritance of the saints in light. This is not a sphere where we work ourselves into it; this is where we walk. We are "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." I repeat it, this comes because we're children of God. This comes because He has made us fit. It is ours because we're one in Christ.

You remember at the end of the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, "All things are yours." Why? Because you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

I wonder, my Christian friends, if you have ever sat down to think of the inheritance you have in Christ? Did you ever stop to think that you are not only an heir of God but you're also a joint heir with Christ and that God has made you fit to inherit that? Certainly you couldn't do anything to make

yourself fit. Praying and fasting will not make you fit. Adherence to any doctrine doesn't make you fit. Being baptized or going through any ceremony of the church doesn't make you fit.

Now these things have their place; please don't misunderstand me. But fitness to enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light, to enjoy the inheritance with Christ, my friend, this is what God has done. God has made us fit. Look at the verse:

1:12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

What I'm trying to give to you, my friend, from this verse is that God has done a tremendous thing. This is in the past tense. It's not something He is doing. Now I know He's doing a work in us; I recognize that. But to be fit for heaven, to be fit for the inheritance—God has done this in absolute, wonderful, sovereign grace because HE LOVES YOU! And, if you claim to be a child of the living God, the very fact that you are in that relationship with Him means that you are also a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

My, how wealthy we are; how rich we are. But we don't act like it; we don't revel in it; we don't look forward to it; we don't rejoice in it. We're occupied with passing, transient things when we could be occupied with the living God who has given to us an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that never fades away. And God is reserving it for us in heaven. For whom? For those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation yet to be revealed. I'm quoting 1 Peter 1:4-5.

Oh, listen, friend, listen—please, listen. Enjoy your inheritance in Christ. Revel in your relationship which makes you fit. God has fitted you because of relationship to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Why don't you revel in that today? Why don't you go around the house, around your job, around the office, rejoicing in the fact of the grace of God which has fitted you for the presence of God?

Now in verse 13, we come to another amazing thing. Not only are we fit to be partakers of the inheritance, but He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Will you please notice: He HAS delivered us from the power of darkness. He's delivered us from the tyranny of the devil. We've been rescued once for all, forever. You remember Paul in Acts 26:18, speaking of

his own ministry, said: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

In Ephesians 2:1-3, he speaks of the fact: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

In Hebrews 2:14, 15 we have, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

My friend, this is a wonderful deliverance. We have been delivered from the sphere where darkness and death reign—darkness, a sphere that is in direct opposition to God. I want you to mark this. No wonder in the book of Romans 8:7, 8 we have, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

It’s a wonderful thing, my friend, to be delivered from the powers of hell. You know, I’m sure of one thing. A great many people do not realize that their lives are more or less controlled by Satanic powers. In fact, the very minds of some of our so-called brilliant people today are energized by demon authority and power. You remember, the Apostle Paul spoke to Timothy about this that in the last days men would give themselves over to seducing spirits and to the doctrines of demons. In other words, their thinking apparatus is controlled by Satanic forces.

You can’t explain some of the things that are going on in the world today apart from this. We’ve had Satanic philosophy which is bearing fruit today here in our country. And let’s be realistic about this thing; let’s be clear about it. We are living in a day when lawlessness and sin and corruption seem to be coming more and more to the front and having more and more freedom to express themselves, which is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God. This is Satanic; this is devilish; and I believe that the great minds—some of the great minds of our day—are being affected by the

forces of hell. I am sure that Satan knows that his time is short; the coming of the Lord is near.

And those of us who are Christians and read our Bibles know that the apostles by the Spirit of God told us of these things. Hence it is wise for us not to give in and not to bow in subjection to the flesh, but to stand for the truth of God. We have been delivered from the power of darkness, from the powers of Satan and hell.

And you notice, in Hebrews 2:15 it's a divine deliverance: "God hath delivered us." Our thanksgiving goes to the Father who has delivered us. That's why I say that it's a divine deliverance and only God can deliver us from the power of Satan; only God can deliver us from the thralldom of sin; only God can deliver us from the powers of darkness. Satan was defeated at the cross, and we have been set free!

And I might say very bluntly that men are never freed any other way but by the Lord Jesus Christ. As we sing sometimes, "God's Son has set me free." John 8:36 says that he whom the Son sets free is free indeed. How else can a person be delivered from the forces of darkness and the tyranny of sin, from the power of Satan and death? Only God can do it.

And I want to say, my friend, when I see God's children leaving this scene, leaving this earth, it's true, they've got to go by the way of death. But death is a conquered foe, and it's wonderful to hear the testimony of God's people as they face this last enemy of man—this implacable enemy called death that plays no favorites, rich or poor, bond or free. And it's wonderful to know that we already have the victory. We go right into the very presence of God.

My friend, it's a wonderful thing to be saved. Aren't you glad you have a Father who has delivered you once for all forever from the powers of darkness, from the fury of hell and from the fear of death? And this is for you and for me. This is a past thing; it's already been accomplished. And, as you and I walk before God, we experience them—the things that He has done for us.

And I would plead with your heart today that, as we think of these things, we may know something of the delivering power of God in our lives and that we believe what He says. We've been brought now into the kingdom of His dear Son, the sphere where Christ's authority is owned, where love rules—not sin or death or hell, but where love rules. He has

removed us from darkness to light, from death to life, from Satan to God. We are in His kingdom.

You remember Jesus said in John 3 to this man Nicodemus, “Except ye be born again, ye cannot see (enter) the kingdom of God.” This is the kingdom where light reigns, where Christ rules, the kingdom where we are free from the tyranny of sin and death and hell. My, what a contrast. We are taken from where we were to where we are now. Or may I use the term, we have been transferred, moved, from one kingdom to another kingdom.

Somebody has well said, “We’ve already experienced one translation from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Now we’re waiting for the next translation from earth to heaven, from faith to sight, from weakness to power, from earth to glory.” I’ll tell you, what a thrilling experience is in store for everyone who has trusted the Savior.

Now this 14th verse is a wonderful verse. Paul uses the same terminology here in the 14th verse when he says:

1:14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

And may I suggest to you that this question of redemption has to do with sin. The word “redeem” means “to set free by the payment of a price.” In other words, our Lord purchased us with His own blood for the purpose of emancipating us, of setting us free.

And you had this in Ephesians 1:7, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” You had it in Romans 3:24, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

In Hebrews 9:12, we read: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Or if you take Acts 20:28, speaking of the church of Christ, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

It’s a marvelous thing that you and I have been emancipated—set free, liberated—from sin’s guilt, from sin’s penalty; and, thank God, we can enjoy the deliverance from sin’s power.

And I want to say this, that to be in the kingdom of God there must, first of all, be liberation from sin. God has provided such liberation; and the

ground for this redemption, of course, is the blood of Christ. And as we have said before and I repeat it, we are no longer under the authority of sin or the authority of the law and of the world for He has redeemed us from sin.

Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." In Galatians 3:13 we have, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

In Titus 2:14, He gave Himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

What a wonderful thing. We've been redeemed from three terrible things: from sin's authority, from the law and from the world. The provision has been made.

And then we have the second thing: We not only have been redeemed, but we also have been forgiven. This is a personal matter. This is divine forgiveness. And the ground of this, of course, is the blood of Christ.

You find that in 1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

This is the ground, of course, of forgiveness.

In 1 John 3:5: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." In Hebrews 9:26: "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Indeed, I would suggest, the very first promise in the New Testament in Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

And on the ground of that, when you and I come and receive Jesus Christ and yield ourselves to Him and put our trust in Him, we immediately have divine forgiveness.

I love what the Psalmist said in the 103rd Psalm, verses 2 to 4: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

In Ephesians 4:30: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

Then he goes on to speak of certain things that grieve the Spirit of God and ends the statement by saying, “Forgive one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

In 1 John 2:12, we read: “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.”

And one could multiply the passages concerning this question of forgiveness. You have it in Romans 4:7: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

In Colossians 2:13, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Likewise in Acts 13:38, in the first message of the Apostle Paul, he brings us this wonderful question of redemption, of forgiveness, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”

In Acts chapter 26:18 we have “that they may receive forgiveness of sins.”

Now how do you experience this? We’ve been talking about the reason for Paul’s thanksgiving. He thanks the Lord because he has been made fit through Christ to enjoy the inheritance. He has been translated out of the kingdom of darkness where sin and death reigned and is now in the kingdom of God’s dear Son where love reigns. And he has been redeemed out of all iniquity, redeemed from this present evil world which is under judgment, redeemed from sin—from all iniquity. We have the joy of a divine forgiveness. Oh, wonder of wonders!

We who are Christians, may we thank the Lord more and more. Let us not take too much for granted. Let us just rejoice in what God has done for us and thank Him today. May our life today be one of praise and thanksgiving. You will feel a lot better for it, too, in every way, body, soul and spirit when you give some time to praising the Lord for His wonderful grace.

Now the Apostle Paul begins to speak of the pre-eminence of Christ. And by the way, this is really the theme of the whole epistle. Christ must be the center. He is the all-sufficient One. He is the One who not only saves,

but He's also the One who can satisfy your whole heart, your whole life. I maintain that if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, is our Savior and our Lord, then I can declare unto you, my friend, that whatever you need He is sufficient for that need.

And then to know that He loves us with an everlasting love and that He never leaves us nor forsakes us. It's a wonderful thing, is it not, to know this? Sometimes I wish I could put into your heart the joy that is mine of talking to you about God's wonderful Son. And then, when Paul speaks of the kingdom of God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus, he immediately goes into verse 15:

1:15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

And then he follows on down through to the end of the chapter on the wonderful Savior we have, the work He has accomplished for us and the work He is doing in us. And by the way, there's a real difference between the work of Christ for us and the work of Christ in us. One has been settled forever—that's the work He accomplished at the cross. He is doing a work in us now, fitting us daily for fellowship with Himself that He might through eternal ages be glorified.

This is in connection with the saints in light, and I would say that this question of light qualifies somewhat the inheritance. This is the sphere where we Christians are. We're no longer in darkness, but we are saints in the light.

You remember in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 that we are not children of the night, but we are children of the day. Peter speaks of it in 1 Peter 2:9; and in Hebrews 10:10 we've been set apart, sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. It's an act wherein God has taken you and me to become His workmanship. We are children of light, we walk in the light and we are those who have our inheritance with the saints in light.

Now in the verses that follow, we're going to deal with the person of the Son of God and the pre-eminence of the Son. In verses 15-19 we're going to deal with His person.

Who is this Jesus who died and was raised again? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth that the Jews nailed to a cross? Who is this Jesus that was cast out by men, forsaken by God? Who is this Jesus who offers Himself as a Savior

of sinners? Paul takes a few verses on this and I'm going to read from verses 15 to 19:

1:15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

1:16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

1:17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

1:18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

1:19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

Here you have who He is in verse 15. Here we have the very subject of the epistle. This Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

You remember in Philippians 2:5, 6, the apostle writes: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

What an amazing passage.

You have it in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of Jesus, the Son of God: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person (or as the revised version says: "—the express character of God."), and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Do you ever stop to think of it? Second Corinthians 4:4, 5 says: "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

He is the image of the invisible God.

I have said this before and I'm going to repeat it: All we know of the eternal God is just what we know of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And all that I know of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is just what I know of God. As John 1:18 says: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

He is the eternal One. He did not become the image of God in incarnation; He always was God. But, as I read a moment ago from John 1:18, He was incarnate for the purpose of redemption.

You take, for example, the gospel through John. I think more than 40 times in that gospel Jesus speaks of the fact that He was sent—He was sent. That's why John's gospel starts with "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. . . . He came unto his own and his own received him not." Here is the preincarnate Son of God. Verse 14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He was the incarnate Son of God, as I say, for the purpose of redemption. He was sent on a mission. He left the eternal glory, worshiped by angelic beings, and took His place in humanity for the purpose of redemption because He loved you and me.

You remember that amazing verse in 1 John 4:9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

And then He repeats the same statement in verse 10 with this change: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

He came into the earth on a mission and the purpose of that mission was the redemption of the human race. We were estranged from God; we were enemies of God; we were dead in sin; we had no time nor room nor thought for God. As the Psalmist says: God looked over the battlefields of heaven and, behold, all were gone out of the way; all were unprofitable, none doing good, no not one. And He sent His blessed Son into this world to redeem us. My friend, if you want to know what God is like, just look at Jesus.

Sometimes I ask this question when people who don't believe the gospel, who don't believe in the Bible, say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I'm not a pagan. I love God."

And I generally say, "What kind of a God do you have? My God is love."

"Well, how do you know that? Have you seen Him? Do you know anybody who has seen Him? How do you know that God is love?"

My friend, you've got to look to the One who came, the very embodiment of love—the Son of God. And I repeat again that marvelous verse in John 1:18: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Wonderful thing, this, that God should come into the human race as a baby, born in Bethlehem of Judea, worshiped by the magi who brought their

gifts to Him, hated by Herod who sought to kill Him. Even the religious leaders of the day were coldly indifferent to Him.

He came to a world that was under the power and authority and slavery of sin and the bondage of death and under the authority and powers of hell. This is the human race into which He came, and He came to set us free. He came to emancipate us. Oh, what a Savior.

He's the image of the invisible God. The more I want to see Jesus, the more I read Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; and I'm amazed at the revelation of God. No wonder when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," He said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona. Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you but my Father who is in heaven."

You can't find God by research; God is only known by revelation. And He has revealed Himself to us through His Son. And we who are Christians, we who claim to know the Savior and put our trust in Him, don't you think it's high time that we did some walking with God so that He can manifest Himself through you and me to the world outside that they may know something of the character of God? How else are they going to know it unless they see Christ in His people.

May we walk today—never mind yesterday, it's gone—will you walk today manifesting something of the love and the righteousness and the compassion and tenderness of the Savior?

I wish in some way I could put into words the way I feel about this little simple statement that "He is the eternal God," that this one, Jesus, who was spurned and rejected of men today, scorned by the intelligensia, ridiculed by so many, is none other than the Son of God. Hated by all hell and yet the only Savior of men and women, He came that we might know the eternal God.

You know, some time ago I mentioned, when speaking on the incarnate Savior, an illustration I heard of a Brahmin in India who attended the university at Calcutta where, as part of his training in English they were using the Bible. He admired Christianity; he admired Jesus, but he could not believe that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. He couldn't get it through his head that the holy, righteous, eternal God should be incarnate in man.

One day, as he went across the fields and came to an ant hill, he noticed that, when his shadow crossed the ant hill, all the ants scurried down the hole and that, when he removed his shadow from the top of the ant hill, the ants all came out again. As he stood there and did this two or three times,

he was saying to himself, “Well—the foolish little things—don’t they know that I’m a Brahmin, that I wouldn’t for one moment hurt one of them?” It was against his religion to hurt anything that lived. It didn’t matter what it was—cow or snake or ant.

And then he began to meditate upon this and came to the conclusion that the only way he could make known to these little ants that he would not hurt them, that he loved them, would be for him to retain his personality and become an ant so he could move upon them without fear and reveal to them his character, his heart, his love.

And as he did this, it came to him like a thunderbolt that this is just what God has done in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son. God could not come down to this human race in unveiled glory. Man couldn’t stand the glory of God. You remember, Moses one time said to God, “Show me Your glory.” And God said, “No man can see Me in My glory and live.” It would be an impossibility.

My friend, when you come to this question of the glory of God, no man in this condition can stand before God. So how is God going to reveal Himself to man? Down through the centuries God, by prophet and seer, has informed His people Israel that One would come who would be eternal. As Micah 5:2 says, “He’s One—the governor from eternity of old.” Unto us a child is born, but the Son is given. The Son was never born; He came; He was sent into a human family. He became a man in the midst of men to reveal the very heart and character of God. He’s the image of the invisible God. I’m repeating this. I want it so clearly made known to your hearts.

Now what about the rest of the 15th verse? He’s “the firstborn of every creature.” Now there are those who say that here’s a verse which says that Jesus Christ was created. Just a minute. The Greek word here means to have the right of first born. When Jesus Christ died and was raised again from the dead and ascended to God’s right hand, He brought into being a new race of people; it’s called the church. Every one in the church is a partaker of the divine nature, according to 2 Peter 1:4. Every member of the church of Christ is baptized into the body of Christ. We’re joined to Christ Himself in a wonderful, indissoluble union; and the very life of God becomes our life—eternal life. This is what it is; it’s the life of God.

As Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” And there can be no life eternal apart from Jesus Christ. So He starts this new thing, this new creation. As Paul said, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” James says, “Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth.” Peter says, “We’ve

been born again of incorruptible seed of the Word of God.” We belong to a new nature, a new people. As our Savior said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born from above, he cannot enter (he cannot see) the kingdom of God.” And Jesus Christ in resurrection became the first one in this new race of people. That’s why in John 20 at the resurrection He could say to the disciples, “You go and tell my brethren that I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

He, in resurrection, became the first one in this new race of people, each one eternal, each one the object of the eternal love of God, each one in the kingdom of life—no longer in the kingdom of darkness. In that sense He’s the firstborn of every creature. He has the right of firstborn.

Five times in the New Testament Jesus Christ is called the only begotten Son of God. Now John the Apostle is the only one who ever called Him that—5 times. This speaks of His Deity. You find this in John 1:14 and verse 18. You find it in John 3:16 and 18. And then you find it in 1 John 4:9.

Now it’s rather remarkable that five times, also, we have the statement of Jesus Christ’s being the firstborn from the dead. You have it, for example, in this passage, in verse 15 where He’s the firstborn of every creature. You have it in verse 18, “the firstborn from the dead.” You have it in Romans 8:29 which says that we are to be conformed to the image of His Son who was the first born among many brethren.

You have it in Hebrews 1:6, “And, again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” And in Revelation 1:5, “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead.”

I say again, five times He’s called the begotten Son of God. This is by the Apostle John. That’s why I said a while ago in Isaiah 9:6 “Unto us a Son is given.” He’s the eternal Son of God. You have it in Micah 5:2, He’s the governor whose going forth, has been from eternity of old. You have it in Proverbs 8, where it speaks of our Savior, “I was with Him when He made the worlds, I was his daily delight as one brought up with Him.”

You see, when our Savior was raised from the dead, He was raised with a body that was nailed to the cross; but now that body is unlimited. He went back to heaven. He’s a real Man in heaven. This is one of the most astounding things because the Bible says in the Psalms that man was made for the earth; the heavens are the Lord’s. The 24th Psalm speaks of our Savior in resurrection and exaltation when it says, “Open up ye everlasting doors

and let the King of Glory come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty in battle.” Here’s a picture of our Savior in resurrection and exaltation. It’s a marvelous thing, this. He’s the first one of a new race of people.

My, what a wonderful thing. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God and the first one among many brethren. No wonder we can sing, “Hallelujah, what a Savior.” Rejoice in Him today, won’t you, that His name might be magnified among men.

Now in verses 16 and 17, we have His relationship to creation. He is the head over all creation.

1:16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

1:17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist (are held together).

You notice that He is the creator of all things. You remember in John 1:3, “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” In Hebrews 1:2, we read there, speaking of Jesus Christ the Son, who was the “heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (all things that were made and held together).”

Paul insists not only that He’s the creator, but that He was there before creation. I want you to mark this. He is before all things; He’s God—the eternal God.

Well, what did He create? He created everything—all things in heaven, all things on earth whether visible or invisible, all intelligences in heaven and earth and hell whether celestial or terrestrial—whatever they were. He created all things. Revelation 4:11 says this, “Thou art worthy . . . for thou hast created all things.” He’s the One who made all things by the Word of His power.

It’s what the Apostle Paul said, when he stood on Mars Hill and preached to the Athenian philosophers. He didn’t start with redemption. He started with Christ as the Creator. And then, you remember, he went on from there to the resurrection of Christ as a guarantee that He was going to judge all men.

Did you ever stop to think that our Savior, yours and mine, is the One who upholds everything in creation? Men are trying to dethrone the Son of God. They’re not only dethroning their Redeemer, but their Creator. And

where would we be if He didn't uphold all things? Spend some time and study God's universe. Take the size of it; take the speed of it. For example, light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. And some of these great worlds out in space are light years away.

You take the number of seconds in a year and multiply 186,000 and you get how far these planets and these worlds are away from the earth. Why, bless your heart, this old earth upon which we walk is a mere speck in God's universe. Here we are on a little globe that's 8,000 miles in diameter—a little wee speck. Jupiter, I believe is 180,000 miles in diameter. We're just the size of a baseball in comparison. And yet your Savior and my Savior not only created but upholds all things by the word of His power.

I tell you very bluntly, my friend, if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, were to let go of the universe, where would we be? We just wouldn't be, that's all. The earth and all the rest of the universe would be in turmoil and chaos and ruin.

I'm so glad I've got One who's not only a Savior and a Creator, but He's the upholder of all things. The great mysteries of time and the great mysteries of space are not mysteries to Him. He's the center. He binds the seen and the unseen together. Everything depends upon Him.

Listen, Christian friend, this being true, don't you think that you and I ought to put our lives in His hands? If He is sovereign and has all authority in heaven and in earth, as He said in Matthew 28:18, "All power (authority) is mine in heaven and in earth," don't you think it would be a wonderful thing—a wise thing, the only thing—for those of us who profess Him to be our Savior and Lord that we should put our lives and all that we have and all that we are in His hands?

We talk about time. It's nothing to Him. You look at your watch and you say it's so many minutes, so many seconds past a certain hour on a certain day. Where do we get the time? From His handiwork. As the worlds and spheres dash through space at unlimited speeds beyond the speed of light, they're always there on the split second where they ought to be. So much so that you and I can set our watches by the constellations in the heavens. That's where we get the correct time, by the way.

Who does all this? Your Savior, my Savior. Do you know, when I think of the distorted, limited vision that most of us Christians have of the Savior, we ought to hang our heads in shame. Your Savior and my Savior upholds all things by the word of His power. He creates and upholds. And

yet, may I say very kindly, the greatest demonstration of the power of God was not in creation. It was not in upholding the whole universe in its orbit. The greatest demonstration of the power of God was when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. And this power—this power that He demonstrated in resurrection and exaltation—is for you and me who believe. You find this in Ephesians 1:19.

What I'm trying to get to your heart and mind is, let us not minimize our Savior. He's not only sovereign but He's also preeminent. He's far above all principalities and powers. Every created intelligence in God's universe is under His feet. The day is going to come when the whole universe is going to bow before Him and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father. Did you ever stop to think of it? Even every knee in hell is going to bow and declare that Jesus is Lord and Master.

Don't you be ashamed of Him. Don't you be full of fear of men. Your Lord has all authority in heaven and in earth. I'm so glad that my Savior and your Savior not only created the universe, but He also upholds the whole thing by the word of His power. He was there before He made the universe. He's eternal; He has all authority; He has all power.

May this be a day of reveling in the presence of our Savior who has all authority in heaven and in earth. He is creator and upholder and bless His name—He's our Savior. Worship Him and thank Him today for His name's sake.

1:18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

1:19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

This is the key of the whole book: the preeminence of the Son of God, the preeminence of Jesus of Nazareth—this One who is the image of the invisible God, this One who is the firstborn of a new race of people, this One who created all things and who upholds all things by the word of His power. By Him all things are held together. And now when we come to verses 18 and 19, we have the next thing concerning this One.

We had who He is in verse 15—the eternal Son of God. We had Him in relation to creation in verses 16 and 17; and now we have His relationship to the church, the body of Christ in 18 and 19. We had this in Ephesians 1, the last two verses, where He was exalted above all principalities and powers and made to be the head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

And I find that our Savior is not only supreme in nature, in creation, but also in the church that He purchased for Himself. He's the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the first one from the dead, so that in everything in the church He might have the preeminence. For in Him it was pleasing to the Godhead that all fullness would dwell. He's the head of the body.

Now what do we mean by that? He's the very life of the body itself; He's the very life of the church. He's the source of its activity; He's the center of its unity. He inspires it; He rules it; He guides it; He empowers it; He sustains it. I tell you, how glad I am for this. I'm living in a generation today—and it's true all over the world—where the world is going farther and farther away from God. And you remember the Apostle Paul could say in 2 Timothy 3:13, speaking of the last days, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." They will be ignorant of the truth; they will rebel against the truth; they will give themselves over to the doctrines of demons. All hell is arrayed against the professing church of Christ.

Men are saying today that Christianity has had its day. It's through. It's not relevant to present day society. It can't meet the needs of men and women. Christianity has had its opportunity, and it has failed. It's gone. We've got to have something new. So today we see lawlessness and chaos on every hand.

My friend, did God ever expect us to be anything else but to be witnesses of the wonderful grace of God? I'm reminded very clearly of that verse in Corinthians, "The world by wisdom knew not God. It pleased God by the foolishness of the thing preached to save them that believe." I'm so glad that Jesus Christ, who is the creator and upholder of all things, this One who has all authority in heaven and in earth is also head over all things to the church. And all that you and I need as believers in Christ is Christ Himself. He can satisfy.

Why do we run to the world to be satisfied? Why do we run to the things of the flesh? Why do we run to men, to organizations and man's ideas, men's theories and men's philosophies? Can't Christ satisfy your heart, my friend? This One who framed the ages by the word of His mouth, this One who upholds all things by the word of His power, do you not know He's the head of the church? He's the preeminent One? He's the Lord? He's its power? He's its life?

Do you realize that, when you and I accepted the Savior, we were brought into a union with God Himself through His Son Jesus Christ? And that this One who defeated death and the grave, this One who defeated all hell is the head of the church and is responsible for the church. When you and I put our trust in Him, we become members of the church of Christ. That means we're united to Him in a union that's eternal, that's perfect and complete.

I don't care what the world does. The world is moving on to judgment. I don't care what men think. Chances are they're wrong in their thinking. Why not take the word of the eternal Son of God, the One who created all things and the One who died to redeem men. He's the head over all things to the church; He's its very life. Christianity is the life; and, my friend, if you're not enjoying the life of Christ, you're not enjoying Christianity. He's the very source of its activity.

When you come to the end of the chapter, for example, Paul says, "I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Christ is not only the center of the church's activity, but He's the source of the activity. He's the center of its unity. He inspires us; He rules us, as the head of the church. He guides us.

That's why He sent the Spirit of God to lead and to guide us into all truth. He empowers us in the midst of a world that hates Him and sustains us in the midst of all opposition. This is the Savior, Jesus Christ, who's the head over all things to the church which is His body, the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in everything He will have the preeminence.

The book of Hebrews says He's going to bring everything under His feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Remember this, that Jesus Christ has guaranteed absolute, perfect victory. We may have some skirmishes; we may become bruised and wounded; but, my friend, the end is sure—complete, absolute, eternal victory. He's the One who gets the victory, and we enjoy the spoil.

So I read here,

1:18. He is . . . the firstborn from the dead; that in everything He might have the preeminence.

Again may I quote from Philippians 2 that every knee in heaven, every knee on earth, every knee in hell is going to bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. Even though they don't trust Him, even though

they don't believe in Him, even though they don't love Him, the time is coming when every knee in every part of God's universe is going to bow and acknowledge that Jesus our Savior is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I tell you, it was pleasing to God in Him all fullness to dwell. When we come to the second chapter, we read: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And you are filled full in Him. This is the Savior. He's all that you and I need.

You know, it's so wonderful that God has looked down upon us in mercy and grace and has made such marvelous provision whereby men and women might be redeemed; might be fitted for God's presence.

I've oftentimes said that if God is going to save anybody, He has the right to say what that way is. If God wants to give eternal life as a present to people, He's got the right to say how you can receive it. If God is going to fit a people for eternal glory, He's got the right to say how they can be fitted, what the method may be, what the ground for it may be.

We hear so much about love and mercy and tenderness and longsuffering, and rightly so. We don't get enough of it. But how often do we hear of the character of God, the God with whom we have to do, a righteous God, a holy God, an eternal God, One who cannot look on sin and permit it to go by unpunished, unjudged.

And when I come to this passage in Colossians, I wish that the Lord, the Spirit, would make very clear to you and to me the depths and the wonders of what our Savior did for us. He is this One who is the image of the eternal invisible God, this One who created and upholds all things by the word of His power, this One who is the head over all things to the church which is His body, this One in whom was pleased to dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Think of all these amazing things, the revelation of Himself, of His person, of His power, of His authority. Oh, that we men and women—creatures of the dust, members of a human family that's in rebellion—might fall prostrate before Him and acknowledge His position, acknowledge His person, rejoice in the provision He has made for us to accept Him. And He has made a way whereby we can be fitted for the presence of God. Jesus said, "I am that way. I am the truth. I am the life." Jesus was the One who said, "No one can come unto the Father but by me."

My friend, you have no argument with me. The argument is with God. This is the way God has put it. In fact, I'll say this: If God had not

made the way of redemption possible through Jesus Christ His Son, there would never be anybody saved. There wouldn't be anybody fitted for the presence of God. We would all be fit for hell. We've fallen far short of the glory of God. The thoughts and imaginations of the heart of man are evil continually. Oh, the grace and mercy and wonder of God. He looked upon us in compassion and sent His Son. He removed the barrier of sin and makes it possible for you and for me, whoever we may be, to come into God's presence through Jesus Christ His Son.

Now we've been dealing with the fact of who He is in verses 15-19. Allow me to repeat it: We have His person, the supremacy of the Son. Who is He? He's the image of the invisible God. What did He do? He created the universe, and He upholds the whole thing by the word of His power. And then we found what He was in His relationship to the church—He's the head over all things to the church which is His body.

Now we come to verses 20-29, and we're going to be dealing with His work. We have His work for us in verses 20-23. And then from verses 24 to 29, we have His work in us. First of all, His work for us—I'm reading verses 20-23:

1:20. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

1:21. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

1:22. In the body of his flesh through death—

What for? "To present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight."

Now here is the work of Christ for us. And I would use this word here, "reconciliation." This is what God has done for man. Now let me just make one or two blunt statements; and yet, I trust they will be very clear to you.

At the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ did nothing in man; but He did something for man. Our standing before God is dependent upon what Christ did for us. Our experience on earth, the work of Christ in me, brings me joy and peace and usefulness and blessing; but, here in verse 22 it's the work of Christ for us.

In John 19, when Jesus said, “It is finished,” He had finished the work the Father gave Him to do; and that work includes the revelation of the Father to men and the work of redemption at the cross. So when our Savior said, “It is finished,” He did a tremendous work for us. Now here we have in this verse the ground of reconciliation.

It might be well for me again to remind you what reconciliation is. It’s to bring peace between two opposing parties. It is very evident that man cannot do anything about this. Man is unrighteous; man is unholy; man is a sinner. If anything is going to be done, God has to do it. And, thank God, at the cross He did something for us. I read in verse 20: “He made peace through the blood of His cross.”

You remember our studies in Ephesians 2:14, 15, 17 that He is our peace, that He made peace and that He preached peace. In Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is, we are no longer enemies. In the 10th verse of that chapter we read: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

You see, peace has been made. Now the ground for this reconciliation is the blood of Christ—not your prayers, not your repentance, not your vows, not what you do. You’re helpless—but on the ground of the work of Christ, an act once for all. He did something for man that lasts forever.

I want to remind you of this. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

See, this is the ground. We sing sometimes, “I need no other argument; I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.” No flesh is going to glory in the presence of God. You know that.

It’s not Christ plus you, my friend. He made peace for us. It’s an act once for all. It’s not a continued act.

If I were being exact, in the Greek, it’s in the aorist tense—it’s an act once for all—completed. He died once for our sins, the just for the unjust. He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He made peace through the blood of His cross to reconcile all things unto Himself.

So the ground for our reconciliation is not prayers, but it is the precious blood of Christ. The ground whereby you can stand before God must be the ground of redemption. We used to sing that hymn, "Redemption ground, redemption ground; we stand upon redemption ground. The ground of peace; redemption ground." Or you sing it in that old song: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Or "On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." He is the One and the only One who can put away sin.

Now I want you to rejoice in that today. The work is finished. It's for us to receive it, to thank God for it and to revel in it today. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, bless His name.

You remember that great passage in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And we found that the ground of reconciliation is the blood of Christ.

Now Paul begins to amplify the "all things" of verse 20

1:20. By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.

So may I take a moment to deal with the scope of reconciliation? First of all, he mentions "whether they be things in earth"—the very earth itself is going to be reconciled. You remember in Genesis 3 that the ground was cursed for man's sake. And down through the centuries the earth has been cursed. You try to start a garden, and you'll soon find out. The ground is cursed for man's sake.

Is there any hope for the ground? Yes, see Romans 8:19-23. There's hope for creation, and there's hope for the creature; there's no question about that. You find it in Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 65.

The time's going to come when the earth and the desert are going to blossom like a rose. This is the time when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, when the bear shall lie down with the kid, when a child shall play with a viper. There shall be nothing to hurt or to mar when the earth shall give forth its increase.

And, of course, the primary object, when God made the world, was that man should never want for anything. But man sinned and rebelled against God; and judgment fell not only on the human race but also upon the whole earth itself.

The animal creation is going to be delivered from its bondage, and the very earth is going to be delivered from its curse on the ground of what Christ did at the cross.

And then, also, we read, "... and things in heaven."

You mean to tell me that the heavens have got to be reconciled?

Yes. In Hebrews 9:23, the heavens are going to be cleansed by a better sacrifice than that of bulls and of goats. The heavens have been defiled by Satanic forces. When Satan was cast out of heaven, he rebelled against God; and he drew one-third of the heavens with him. There's been rebellion in the heavens, and God's going to take care of that and reconcile it on the ground of the blood of Christ. And then the world of men at the present time will be reconciled.

Why doesn't the judgment of God fall upon men today? My friend, because of the cross. Here in our city men curse God; they blaspheme His name; they revile against Him; they ridicule His people. And God doesn't seem to take any notice of it, but He does.

Don't you forget it, my friend. God sees everything. He counts the hairs of your head. He numbers your steps, and He bottles your tears. He knows all about you. He sees you when you're courteous, and He also notices when you're not courteous. If you don't believe that, you read Luke 7. Our Savior saw the discourtesy of the Pharisee, and He saw the courtesy of the sinful woman. Little details that you and I hardly notice, He notices.

The 139th Psalm says He knows your thoughts afar off. I tell you it's a wonderful thing that God has determined that the world is to be reconciled to Him. And then Jew and Gentile are reconciled in Christ. In fact, it's the only place you'll ever find Jew and Gentile sitting together in real joy and peace and fellowship. You remember, we had that in Ephesians 2:16. God has joined the Jew and Gentile together in Christ.

The Jew himself, the nation Israel, has been a sore spot among the nations for centuries. You just read your Old Testament and see what Babylon and Assyria and Egypt had to say about Israel even down to the present time.

Then Paul adds in verse 21, “And you.” We Christians who were sometimes alienated and enemies in our minds by our wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. This is a present thing. We’ve been reconciled. Before this, we were sinners; we were enemies; we were wicked; we were rebels; we were afar off, but we’ve been reconciled. When were we reconciled? At the cross. In Romans 5:10, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” That is His present life in heaven.

Now the result of the reconciliation is found in verse 22. We were reconciled on the ground of His death. What for? To present believers “holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.” Now here is the result of reconciliation: We’re going to stand before God, holy.

Now that word “holy” means “saintly” or as saints, sanctified, set apart for God. In the book of Jude 25, we read, “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

This is the fruitage. It is not of the work of Christ in you, but the work of Christ for you. We are holy. You remember in Romans 1 we are the “beloved of God called saints.” The trouble is that we Christians who are saints by calling, are not often very saintly in our walk and conversation.

May God grant that we bring our manner of life up to our calling. If the Lord calls us saints, then I take His word for it—we’re saints, saints not by character but by calling. But our walk—God grant it may be saintly. “Walk as becometh saints,” as the apostle said. Not only are we to be holy, but we are to be unblameable. That is without blemish, without defects.

“Do you mean to tell me, sir, that every Christian—real Christian—is going to stand before God without a blemish? Without any defects?”

That’s correct. In Ephesians 5:27 we have, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

My, what a wonderful thing. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we have, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

And may I give you a verse that many, many years ago became precious to me? It’s 1 John 4:17, where John says, “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”

I could hardly believe that. I wouldn't have if I hadn't seen it in the Bible. We have boldness as we stand before God. Why? Because as Jesus is, so are we. When? In this world.

My, what joy, what assurance it brought to my heart. He's going to present us holy, without blemish, without defect and unreprouable. What do I mean by that? There will be no ground of accusation. This marvelous doctrine of reconciliation is on the ground of the blood of Christ. It's so wonderful. God is going to reconcile the heavens and the earth and the world of men and Jews and Gentiles, all the believers, and He's going to present us holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight. Again I say, what a Savior we have!

Now we come to verses 22 and 23, and this deals with the result of reconciliation.

1:22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

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

Having accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, what do we find is guaranteed to us? In verse 22, it is what He accomplished, He's going to present you and me who trust the Savior, holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight. He will present us as holy, as those who are sanctified, as those who are saints.

You remember in Jude 24, He's going to present us without fault before the throne of His glory. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." And I'm so glad for that verse in Ephesians 5:27, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

He's going to present the church to Himself, a holy church, having neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing. Just think of it. You and I on the ground of what Christ has accomplished for us are going to stand in the presence of God without any blemishes, without any defects. That's why I love that verse in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." As 1 John 4:17 says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we

may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”

And the third word He uses here is not only to be holy and unblameable, but unreprouvable in His sight. Now what do you mean by that? It means there's going to be no ground for accusation. You see, our Savior is no longer our judge; He's our Savior. And you remember in Psalm 103:12, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” And Jeremiah 31:34 tells it—“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Our sin question has been settled. It's a marvelous thing that when Christ died on the cross, He perfectly, completely, eternally settled the sin question for those who put their trust in Him. That's why we rejoice in the fact that we're going to stand in His presence unreprouvable with no ground for accusations. In fact, when we come to the second chapter of this wonderful book of Colossians, if I might mention it, in verse 14 we read:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

Did you ever stop, my Christian friend, to note that, when you and I stand in the presence of God, there will not be anyone able to produce any evidence that we ever were sinners? It's an amazing thing that most Christians don't begin to realize the marvel of this, that you and I are going to stand before God without the possibility of anyone accusing us before Him. Our Savior has so perfectly, so completely done the work of redemption; He has so reconciled us to Himself that He's going to present us holy and unblameable and unreprouvable with no blemishes, no defects, no ground for accusation. My, what a Savior we have!

Now someone is going to say, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, just a minute. What about us Christians when we sin today?”

Well, He has taken care of that. You remember in 1 John 1. Our daily failures have to do with the question of our fellowship with the Father and with each other. He's not talking now in 1 John 1 with respect to how to be saved. It is how to stand before God. The issue there is fellowship, communion with God. And there's no question that our daily failures and

sins break our fellowship with God. But we don't go back to the cross to be saved all over again. He did that once for all forever.

I want to impress upon your heart that it's the work of Christ for us that fits us for the presence of God. This is the wonderful, wonderful grace of God. It is unmerited favor, love in action toward those who don't deserve anything. It's not Christ plus anything you and I do. He has completed the work; and He has guaranteed to present us to the throne of His glory holy, unblameable, unprovable in His sight.

Now with the question of fellowship, our daily walk before God is dependent upon our confession when we sin. As 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins..." And let's be real about that. This is not just mouthing words before God. Confession carries with it that our heart is melted before Him over failure. We confess our sins, and He's faithful and He's just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's why, in the very next chapter of 1 John, chapter two, verse one, He says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Here He is not Jesus Christ, the loving and the merciful and the gracious. He is "Jesus Christ the righteous." He's dealing with sin. Righteousness is involved, hence it's on the ground of what our Savior is before the Father and the work He accomplished at the cross that the believer is restored to fellowship.

And may I say very thankfully that there is no such thing as forgiveness for the believer in his daily walk with respect to fellowship apart from confession. Don't you forget for one moment that sin is an awful thing; and, if you boast about being a child of God, remember you're the child of One who is righteous as well as One who is loving. And, thank God, He has made provision for our salvation and provision for our eternal welfare.

But He's also made provision for daily fellowship. The work of Christ for me makes me safe; the work of Christ in me makes me happy. But that joy can be taken away, and it is taken away when we fail God. We don't rejoice in our failures—we confess our failures. And having grieved the Spirit of God, it's for us then to confess with reality because we're dealing with a loving Father who is also righteous and holy.

And by the way, when you read the epistle of John, note that the very first revelation of God in the epistle is "God is light." God is absolute in holiness. This is the One with whom we have to do, with whom we have

fellowship; and there can be no fellowship between a Christian and his Father apart from confession.

We've got to be cleansed. But the matter of eternal destiny depends upon the work of Christ for us at the cross. And this is what He's dealing with here—the work of Christ for us. And on the ground of that He's going to present every believer holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.

“Just a minute,” you say. “Mr. Mitchell, the very next verse, verse 23, is a conditional sentence.”

No, it isn't. I know the King James version says, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled.” Suppose I change that wording as it should be, “Seeing ye continue in the faith.” The proof of our reconciliation is that we continue in the faith, and we're not moved away from the hope of the gospel which we have heard.

You see, we're not saved nor reconciled by continuing in the faith, but our present faith is the proof of the fact that we belong to the living God. Reconciled, redeemed, we belong to Him. You see, that's what I'm talking about; that's what Paul is talking about. It's not the idea of putting doubt in our minds, but rather the opposite. He wants to give us assurance, seeing we continue in the faith, rooted and grounded. We belong to Him because of the work of Christ for us.

Rejoice with me in the reconciliation we have with God. What a wonderful thing that you and I are going to stand in the presence of God, holy, without blemish, with no ground of accusation on the ground of what He is and what He has done for us.

May I remind you that we have a responsibility. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we read: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

The wonderful thing is that you and I can be God's living representatives, pleading with men to accept the reconciliation which Christ has accomplished for us at the cross. Remember this, will you, please.

The moment I declare that I love the Savior, that I have experienced reconciliation with God, there is given to me a tremendous responsibility. I go back to that passage in 2 Corinthians 5:18, “He has given (committed) to us the ministry of reconciliation.” He has given to us the word of reconciliation; and we ought to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled, to accept what Christ has accomplished for them.

You see, the tragedy today is that people do not see their need of reconciliation; they do not see their need of a Savior. The provision has been made, and what God wants is for people to accept the salvation that He has accomplished at the cross. You remember in John 20:21, where our Savior said after the resurrection to His disciples: "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Where? Into the world. We had that in John 17, where Jesus said in verses 18 and 19: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

For what purpose? That we might beseech men to be reconciled to God. Luke 24:48 says: "Ye are witnesses of these things"—how that Christ died and was buried and was raised again the third day according to the Scriptures, how that He has made provision for men to be forgiven and cleansed from sin and that men can be transformed from the children of wrath into the children of God.

We have been dealing in chapter one with the work of Christ for us from verse 20 down to verse 23. Now Paul speaks of this and he goes on to speak not only of the work of Christ for us, but the work of Christ in us.

Again may I make it clear to you, we are not saved by the work of Christ in me; we are saved by the work of Christ for me. It's not His work in us but for us that fits us for the presence of God. You see, there is so much confusion; and people, for some reason or other, have never seen the difference. The work of Christ for us at the cross makes us safe. The work of Christ in us is our daily experience. This is the work the Spirit of God accomplishes in us continually, day by day, hour by hour. Our salvation was settled once for all and guaranteed to us by the resurrection from the dead.

Now then let us read from verse 24 to the end of the chapter something about the work of Christ in us. This has to do with our daily experience. And please do not judge Christ's work for us with respect to Christ's work in us. The Lord does not accept us because of our experience, for example. He accepts us because we're in His Son, and we have become members of the body of Christ. We were in Christ the moment we accepted Him as our Savior. That's what Paul means in Romans 8:1 when he says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

And about 36 times in the New Testament we read about this question of our being in Christ and Christ in us. This has to do with union;

this has to do with life; and now we're dealing with experience, starting in at verse 24. And Paul speaks of the fact—

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

Now here you have Paul suffering for the gospel, suffering for the church's sake. In fact, Paul here speaks about "filling up" the suffering for the church's sake that which was left behind by the Savior. In other words, our Savior suffered for and with the church just as you have Paul rejoicing in his sufferings and in his chains. You remember in Ephesians 3:1, he talks about "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." And in 2 Timothy 2:10, he says, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

And he goes on to speak of suffering, "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." You take, for example, in Acts 9:4, 5, where the Apostle Paul, at that time Saul of Tarsus, was on the road to Damascus from Jerusalem to put the Christians in prison. Paul was filled with a great passion to persecute the Christians—the people of The Way. And you remember his experience of meeting the Savior on the road to Damascus where there came "a voice out of heaven saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Here you have our Savior not only suffering for us at the cross, but He joins in the suffering of His people.

He said to Saul of Tarsus, "When you persecute My people, you're persecuting Me." And here you see, Christ is the head of the church; and the Apostle Paul has suffered for the Gentiles.

One cannot read the book of Acts without realizing that it was because of his great desire that the Gentile world might know about his Savior that Paul suffered. He was appointed by God to suffer for the church of which Christ is the head. You take, for example, Romans 9:1-3, where Paul says: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continued sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

What for? That my Jewish brethren might be saved. This was real suffering. You take Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Paul knew something about suffering. He could say in Philippians 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

You and I share with Christ in His suffering when we stand for the gospel and are persecuted by men. This is what Paul's talking about. He suffered for the church. He was so in love with the Savior that the same love that caused Christ to go the cross and die for us is the same love in Paul and in his people. And because of our love for Christ we may suffer. This is part of God's purpose and program. It was the purpose of God that Paul should suffer because of his love for the Savior.

And may I say this? If I were to follow through in 1 and 2 Peter, it's the common lot of God's people that the closer we walk with the Savior, the more we love Him; and the more we love His people, then the more we will suffer from the world for our relationship to Jesus Christ. Remember that the world has no place for Christ. I think Paul had that in mind in Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

In other words, when you and I walk before God in this world, you can expect opposition; you can expect some suffering. My friend, we're partners with Christ. Because Christ loved us, He suffered. He went to the cross; He was despised and rejected of men. His face was marred more than any man's. He gave His back to the smiters; He was scourged; He was beaten; He was spit upon; He was crucified. Why? Because He loved you and me.

Now you and I are living in the same world; and, when you and I love the Savior enough to stand for Him and to witness for Him, then don't be surprised if we have opposition and possibly some suffering. This is the common lot of God's people. And Paul could here say that he was filling up the cup for that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for the church's sake, that the church might be completed, that people might be brought to the Savior.

That's why he said we're ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ stead, be ye reconciled to God. And when you take that stand and bear testimony for the Savior, don't be surprised if you experience some opposition and some suffering. But remember, you're one with Christ in this. You're fellowshiping with Christ in His suffering. As Paul could say, "I have continual sorrow, unceasing pain

in my heart. I could verily wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren's sake that they might be saved."

When you and I yield ourselves to God so He can live out His life in us (this is what he's talking about), we'll experience, possibly, some suffering, some opposition from the world. It was the world that crucified the Lord of glory; it was the world, the religious world, that persecuted Him and eventually martyred the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. And my friend, the same religious world will persecute you and me if we stand for the work of Christ for men.

If we stand for the wonderful grace of God, that Christ is the only Savior, that there's only one way of redemption and that must be through relationship to Jesus Christ who died for us, you're bound to be ostracized or criticized or persecuted in one way or another when you take a stand for Christ in this world.

Remember the world is a system, a religious system. It was the religious world that crucified the Lord of Glory. It's the religious world that martyred the early saints. It's the religious world that's going to oppose and persecute you when you stand for the Savior. As Paul could say to the Galatian church, "If I yet preach circumcision (supposing I add one little rite to the work of Christ at the cross), why then do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased."

The moment I add something to the work of Christ, I spoil the gospel of Christ.

Now the work of Christ in us is wonderful. And Paul here first of all in verse 24, speaks of his suffering. Then in 24b, 25 and 26 he brings up another thing that's amazing. He's talking about the church, the body of Christ.

1:24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

1:25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.

1:26. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.

What is this special revelation which God gave to the Apostle Paul? Why, of course, it was none other than the revelation of the church, the body of Christ. It was a special ministry that God had given to the Apostle Paul.

We had this in Ephesians 3, the first 9 or 10 verses (in fact, I would go down to verse 12), where Paul was the recipient of the revelation from God, the revelation that all believers, Jews and Gentiles, were made one in Christ.

Now there was no mystery that the Gentiles were going to be saved. One cannot read the Old Testament prophets without realizing that they prophesied of a time when the Gentile world would know the living God, when the Gentile nations would be saved. This, of course, brings us down to the kingdom period—the revelation of the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth.

But that Gentiles today, individually, would be saved and redeemed and would be on par with the Christian Jew was something that was unknown before. Ephesians 3 said it was a mystery hidden in God from past generations that the Gentile and the Jew by faith in Christ would have the same life, the same position, the same relationship, the same inheritance.

This is something new; this was a new race of people, a new company called the church, which started on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the first message by the Spirit of God to the people of his generation after the resurrection of Christ.

And you remember the great theme there was that this Jesus, whom men put on a cross, God put on a throne. This One whom men crucified and cast out, heaven took in. This Jesus of Nazareth was now Lord and Christ, exalted to be a prince and a Savior; and that whosoever, Jew or Gentile, believed in Him would become a member of the church of Christ, would be redeemed and saved and granted eternal life, joined to God. Wonderful, wonderful truth!

Now to the Apostle Paul was given this marvelous revelation of the church, the body of Christ. This is a special ministry. That's what the word "dispensation" means. (And I believe in dispensations, by the way.) But a dispensation is not necessarily a period of time. Now it is true that we are living in the age of grace; the revelation of the grace of God. We are living in that day, but every person today on the face of the earth is not under the dispensation of grace. Dispensation is a stewardship, a responsibility; it is a purpose. In other words, God gave to the Apostle Paul a special revelation of the church, the body of Christ. And he was responsible to make that revelation known to others.

This is a dispensation. He could say in 1 Corinthians 9:17, "a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." In other words, a

responsibility of the gospel was committed to Paul. You have it in 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

A stewardship is a responsibility, and every Christian today is responsible to pass on the good news of the gospel of the grace of God to others. In that sense we use the word "dispensation." That's what Paul means in Ephesians 3, a dispensation of the mystery of God was committed unto him.

Every person who's ever heard the gospel is responsible to believe it. This is called the dispensation of grace. Now an age is a period of time.

For example, from Moses to Christ was called the age of law. We are now living in the age of grace, and the dispensation of grace is the responsibility of everyone. Having heard the gospel, people are responsible before God to accept the revelation concerning Jesus Christ, who He is and what He has accomplished for us.

I'm just taking the time here to explain what this word "dispensation" is. Now we talk about different periods of time. If you take your Scofield Bible, for example, he speaks of the fact that there are certain dispensations or periods of time wherein God gives men a special responsibility. The responsibility is the dispensation; the period of time is an age.

For example, Adam and Eve were in the garden before sin came in. They were living in a different age from you and me, and hence they were also under a different dispensation. Their responsibility was to glorify God and not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed God and the result was that sin came in. That's what sin is; sin is rebellion. And when sin came in, there came a judgment. Having failed in their responsibility, they came under the judgment of God and were cast out of the garden of Eden.

Now you take before the flood. You and I are certainly living in a different age from those who lived before the flood. They were under a special dispensation. We call it the time of human government when God gave men the responsibility to govern themselves. They didn't have any law of Moses. They didn't have the gospel of the grace of God; it was unknown to them. But they were responsible to do the right and hate the evil. And you remember, "the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart of men were evil

continually.” This is the dispensation of conscience and of human government. And they failed that.

Now you're not under that, my friend. You've heard about Jesus Christ; you've heard of the grace of God. You're responsible before God to do something about Jesus Christ, His Son, who came to die for you. Now that's your dispensation; that's your responsibility. Everybody today in the world is living in the age of grace, but all are not under the dispensation of grace because they've never heard. God must be righteous, and certainly He's not going to judge anybody who's never heard of the Savior. They've got a responsibility. The trouble is men don't accept that responsibility. They prefer the evil to the good. They prefer self to Christ, you see.

What about you? God has made you responsible to do something about His Son. That's what Paul here is talking about. The dispensation is given to Paul to fill up the Word of God; and that responsibility was concerning the church, the body of Christ. It's a special revelation given to Paul. It passes on to you and to me that we might pass on to others the wonderful truth of the grace of God.

Paul goes on to speak of that fact.

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

Brother, this is life—Christ in you. Not only to have salvation, to have forgiveness, to have life, but to have Christ. And because we're joined to the Savior we're bound to have His life. That's what Colossians 3:4 says: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Paul writing to the Galatian church in chapter 2:20 says: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Gave Himself for me. And the Apostle John reinforces this in 1 John 5:11, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

In John 3:36 we read: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

You see, not to have Christ means endless death. To have Christ means eternal life. And sometimes I wonder that we fail to realize this. You

remember in the book of Acts we read that the believers in the Savior were first called “Christians” at Antioch. A Christian is one in whom Christ dwells: Christ in you. This means life. Again I would like to emphasize—you can be religious; you can belong to a church; you may have gone through certain ceremonies, but unless you are joined to Jesus Christ, unless He is in you and you are in Him you have no life. Our Lord spoke of this in John 14:20. In verse 19 He had said, “... because I live, ye shall live also. Just as my Father lives in Me, I am in you, and you are in Me.” There must be this union with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, before you can have real life—spiritual life.

We talk so much about a spiritual life. People talk about a victorious life, and they talk about a Spirit-filled life. We use all kinds of statements concerning what a real Christian life is. But my friend, when you boil it all right down, when your heart is occupied with the person of Christ, then you’ll be obedient to His Word. You’ll enjoy His spiritual life. You’ll enjoy divine life. You’ll enjoy Him. Oh, that we might know this. This is life.

But it’s not only life. He’s also our hope; He’s the hope of glory. In 1 Timothy 1:1 we read of Christ our hope. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.”

Having been a pastor of a church for many, many years, I think I’ve conducted, I would say, hundreds of funeral services. Some were for the saved (I thank God) and some for those who were not saved; and believe me, there’s a difference. The difference is Christ. With one you have hope, and with the other you have no hope.

Paul spends time in the book of Romans 8:18-24 on the redemption of the body when he said we’re all saved by hope. And as he could say to Timothy, “Christ Jesus, our hope.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 we read: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

The hope of the individual believer is to be with the Lord, for “absent from the body is present with the Lord.” And death, which is man’s worst enemy and last enemy, is a defeated foe; so that the moment a person who trusts the Savior leaves this scene, he goes right into the presence of the Lord.

And the hope of the church is the coming of the Savior; for we read, “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel with the trump of God. The dead in Christ shall be raised

and then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air to be forever with the Lord.”

I tell you, my friend, it's a wonderful thing. The future prospect is just as wonderful as the eternal Son of God Himself. Our hope is just as sure as the enthroned Savior at the right hand of God. He's our life; He's our hope. When we have Christ, we have life and we have hope.

And now we come to verses 28 and 29:

1:28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

1:29. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

And here we have the very fact that we know these things. Paul says: “Whom we preach.” It's an amazing thing how this man Paul, whenever he talks about the Savior, he has to bring out this question of preaching, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom...” What for? “That we may present every man perfect (mature, full-grown) in Christ Jesus.”

Now just you think of this for a moment. “Whom we preach...” You know, I was struck with that statement. The message of the early church was the message concerning the person—Christ who is the very center, the very theme of all their messages. It's not a dogma, not a creed, not ceremonies, not organizations, not works of the law, not speculations, not philosophies of men, but a Person.

How far has the Christian church in the 20th century moved itself away from the message of the early church? “Whom we preach...”

May I be allowed to quote from Romans 1, when the Apostle Paul, you remember, starts that marvelous epistle by saying: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

The gospel of God is concerning a person, Jesus Christ, a real man of the seed of David. He was marked out from everybody else by the resurrection from the dead. That's why we can go to the different parts of the world preaching the gospel of Christ.

And when they ask us the question, as they did of me in Taiwan one day, “Why should we leave our culture? Why should we leave what our forefathers believed? Why should we leave the gods which our forefathers worshiped, and we’ve been for centuries worshiping these gods and living this way—why should we change for a Jew who lived 1900 years ago in a little obscure country in the near east? A man who was crucified; one who was despised and rejected of men? He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was one who eventually was scourged and crucified and cast out by his own people. Why should we put our trust in him?”

And, for nearly 2000 years the church of Christ has gone out to declare the wonderful story of redeeming grace concerning the Person. As Paul here says, “Whom we preach.”

He said to the Corinthian church in chapter two, you remember (1 Corinthians 2:1-2), “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

When the Apostle Paul went down to the Athenians in Acts 17, what do you think he preached to these philosophers? To the intelligentsia of that day? They said, “Let’s see what this babbler has to say. He brings strange things to our ears.” And they took Paul to Mars Hill.

He talked about the God of creation who did not leave himself without a witness; and he ended his message by declaring that Jesus had been raised from the dead as the guarantee of judgment, for we read in the 31st verse of Acts 17, “God . . . hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.”

Whether he goes to philosophical Athens or whether he goes to dissolute Corinth or whether he comes to my city or yours or wherever you are, God’s messenger has one message: “Whom we preach” concerning a Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

My friends, the message has to do with a Person; and this is what distinguishes those who are God’s servants from everybody else. And if we are a servant of the living God, our message will be concerning a Person, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin—what did he preach? “This Jesus, God has exalted to be a Prince and a

Savior.” When he stood before Israel in Acts 2, he said: “This Jesus whom you crucified, God raised up and exalted to be Lord and Christ.”

To the Sanhedrin he could say, “No other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

When he went down to the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, what did he preach? This Jesus that God raised from the dead. By faith in this man you have the remission of sins. And when Paul went out to Antioch, or whether he went to Rome or to Ephesus or to Galatia or to Athens, wherever he went, he had one message, “Whom we preach.”

And even when he wrote to the crowd at Rome he could say, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It’s the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.” One message, one person.

And this very message carries a warning: We warn every man. In John 3:18 we read: “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Jesus could say to the Jews of His day in John 8:24, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” And verse 51 says: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”

There’s a warning attached to this. Christ is the Savior of those who will accept Him, put their trust in Him. But I also warn you that Christ is the judge of those who reject Him, who refuse to have Him as their Savior. And the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of it. In John 5:22, Jesus said, “The Father judgeth no man, but He hath committed all judgment unto the Son,” because He is the Son of Man. And three times in that chapter, John 5, our Savior speaks of the fact that He’s the judge. Isn’t it an amazing thing that, as I talk to you, Christ is either your Savior or He’s your Judge. And the central message of the Christian church is Christ Jesus in His person, is the Son of God. In His work He died to save us.

Now the purpose of Paul's preaching in Colossians is to teach believers, that is, to edify and build up believers in Christ, “teaching every man in all wisdom” (1:28). What for? That he may present every man perfect, mature, complete in Christ Jesus. That’s why he said, “I labor, striving according to His working, who worketh in me mightily” (1:29). To build up believers in Christ seemed to be the great desire of the servants of the Lord in the early church.

You remember, in writing to Titus (2:11-12), the Apostle Paul could say, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” This is what Paul means in I Corinthians 2:9, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

That’s why the Spirit of God is here to teach us through the Word of God the wonderful purpose of God for each individual believer. You remember in this same book of Colossians, by the way, in 4:12 where Paul speaks of Epaphras: “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

In 1 Peter 5, Peter speaks of the same thing when he said in verse 10, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

In other words, the great yearning of the Spirit of God for God’s people is that we might be made perfect, that is, complete, mature. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 4, where God gave to the church certain gifted men. What for? For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, that he might present every man perfect, complete in Christ—mature.

The book of Hebrews speaks of this. It’s not a question of sinless perfection. He’s not talking about that. He’s talking about “to present us perfect in Christ Jesus.” To make us complete. You see, every Christian stands before God in righteousness. A babe in Christ stands before God in all the perfection of Christ; but he hasn’t come to that place of maturity, spiritual maturity. This is what Paul is after. After having warned, he says, “I not only minister to give a warning to those who are out of Christ, but I want to teach you Christians in all wisdom that you may be perfect, full-grown, mature in Christ Jesus.”

You know, there are a great many Christians who are not mature. I’m sure you agree with me. In fact, there are some Christians who’ve been on the road for 40 and 50 years, and they’re still babes in Christ. They haven’t grown; they just haven’t grown.

Have you grown in Christ, in the knowledge of Christ? If not, may I remind you what Peter says in 1 Peter 2:2, “As newborn babes” we ought to

desire (crave) the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. Maturity is a question of growth. And the purpose of God is that we might minister the Word of God. Fitness is in Christ.

I think this is what John had in mind in 1 John 2 when he talks about the fathers and the young men and the babies. He's talking about the family of God, that we're fathers and young men and babies. This is a question of growth, of maturity.

If you read that passage from verse 12 of chapter 2 to the end of the chapter, you'll notice that he says nothing to the fathers in the faith, except "I write to you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." And to the fathers there's no need to be taught doctrine nor do they need to be told how to walk as Christians. They're mature; they know that.

But too many believing Christians today know very little about maturity, I'm sorry to say, because we neglect the Word of God. We neglect the means of grace that God has given to us for our growth in Christ. Above all, I would urge upon you to be, shall I say, occupied with Christ.

Now just one more thing. In the last verse this is why Paul could say, Because I want to teach you in all wisdom, and I want to present you perfect in Christ, this is why I labor,

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

The Spirit of God was working in Paul mightily. And here we come to the power of the ministry.

You remember the prophet Zechariah could say in 4:6, "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

It's not because you have a gift or because you're educated. It has to be by the power of God. You see, truth can only be imparted by the Spirit of God. Truth is never imparted by argument. We give the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, for He is the One who lives in us and He is the One who can work in us mightily. And Paul says He does that.

And as you and I yield ourselves to the Lord, then the Spirit of God in us walks and works through us mightily.

I think this was in Paul's mind when in Ephesians 1 he prayed that we might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand. The very power of a risen, glorified Christ is for every believer. Now it may be that you feel your life is nothing else but a life of defeat. And it just seems you never pass out of it. You claim your life is a failure as a Christian.

Now don't get occupied with your failures. You get alone with the Lord and get occupied with Christ. Confess your failures, of course, to Him but get occupied with Him. Yield yourself to Him. As Paul could say in Romans 6:13, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." And He has the power; He has the ability; He has the wisdom; He has all you need.

The trouble with us folk is we run to every Tom, Dick and Harry. I know I've said this before, but I want to say it again. We run to this, that and the other thing. We trust organizations and methods and what have you. And I'm not opposed to methods and organizations, don't misunderstand me. But the reason we're where we are is because we don't occupy ourselves with Christ. We don't let Him do the job. We think we're sufficient to do it. We've got gifts; we're intellectual; we've had so much education. Why, we can do it.

No. Spiritual work isn't done that way. If there is to be any spiritual work done, it must be the Son of God using the Word of God through the child of God. What He wants is a vessel to be used. Paul here says,

1:29. Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

My, don't you wish you could say that? Don't you wish all of us could say that, that God was working in us mightily? You think the Lord's playing favorites? Not a bit of it. The same Son of God who indwelt Paul indwells you and me. The same power that he had is your power. You have the right to the same resources he had. He was a sinner saved by grace, indwelt by the Spirit of God. He yielded himself to God so that the Lord could work through and in him mightily.

And I maintain, my friend, that the same Spirit of God that was upon our Savior without measure, the same Spirit that indwelt the Apostle Paul is the same Spirit that indwells you and me if we've trusted the Savior. The

trouble is that we try to serve in our own energy and our own strength. The more we strive and the more we struggle the more trouble we get into.

Why not turn your life over to Him and let the Lord do a little of the running of it? No. Let Him do the whole business. This is joy; this is peace; this is a life of usefulness. May He do a mighty work in us and then through us in a mighty way.

Colossians Two

Now we're coming to the second chapter of the book of Colossians, a chapter on warnings. Paul is warning these dear Christians at Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis about the dangers of listening to the philosophies of men who would seek to blind their hearts to the perfection and beauty of Christ.

In fact, I can say very bluntly to you today that you and I are living here in a country where Christ has been dethroned and where the reasonings and philosophies of men have taken the place of the Word of God. This has affected not only the liberal church, but it has also affected evangelicals. In our great desire to be scholastic and brilliant, we miss the simplicity that is in Christ. As Paul could say to the Corinthian church, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." I think Paul has the same heart here as he writes to the Colossian church.

Now Paul is going to warn them about the false philosophies and reasonings and vain glorying of men. But, before he does this, he wants them to know that they are greatly upon his heart; and I want you to think of that as we read these first three verses:

2:1. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2:2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

2:3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

My, what a passage of scripture. Paul is talking about his great desire for them. In fact, he goes on to say:

2:4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Notice in the first verse he's having a great conflict "for those who are in Laodicea and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love." He's had a great conflict.

Now I take it that this conflict was in prayer for the believers at Laodicea and Colosse and Hierapolis, these three towns. You remember, Paul was in jail. As far as I know, he never went to Laodicea or Colosse or Hierapolis. He's heard from Epaphras about the problems they're having in those churches, so he's having a great conflict. And I have an idea that Paul was having long times of intercession, that he was really burdened for these Christians at Laodicea and Colosse—really burdened for them—for those that “have not even seen my face in the flesh. I'm burdened for them that they might be comforted and that they might be knitted together in love.”

I wonder, my Christian friend, and I stop here to ask myself and ask you the question—how much time do we give to prayer, to intercession in behalf of Christians whom we have never seen?

You know, when I think of what Christians are going through in Red China; when I think of those Christians, for example, in Hong Kong and Japan; when I think of the Christian church in Saigon and Laos and Cambodia; when I think of the Christians in Russia, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, in Moldova; when I think of the Christians in indifferent, cold, icy Europe—I'm not speaking of weather, by the way, when I speak of that; when I think of the Christians in Great Britain where there's such a total indifference to the things of Christ; when I think of the Christians in the war-tossed and unsettled lands in Africa and Central and South America—what time do we give in prayer for them?

I was discussing this with one of our missionaries the other day, and he spoke of the fact of how hard it is for Christians who come out of paganism to continue in a constant walk for Christ with drunkenness and immorality all around them. We Christians here in America who may not be troubled about these things or tested by these things ought to pray for those who have come out of idolatry and paganism and immorality and corruption into the glorious light of the gospel of Christ. They need to be taught the Word of God. So may we, as the Apostle Paul here said, have great conflict in our heart for these people.

How do we pray for our missionaries who have gone out to other lands? Sometimes they are living in places where disease is rampant and in the midst of idolatry and demon possession. Are we burdened for them? What time do we give before God in behalf of them? I think you and I ought to hang our heads in shame.

2:2a. That our hearts might be knit together in love.

Here is a man in jail in Rome, having great conflict of soul. He's burdened for these Christians at Laodicea and Colosse and Hierapolis. What's he burdened for—these Christians he's never met? "That their hearts might be comforted." The object of his great desire is to bring believers into the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus—that their hearts might be comforted and strengthened in the midst of an evil world.

I think of that verse in Nehemiah 8:10, where the prophet writes, "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Oh, how Christians need to be strengthened.

How can you be comforted? By being knitted together in love, the love that comes from knowing the truth, the love that comes from being joined together in the Savior. But sometimes, when we're knitted together in doctrine, love seems to go out the window.

Another Christian may love the Lord just as much as you do, but perhaps you don't agree a little bit on doctrine. They belong to one group and you belong to another, so you have no fellowship with them. My, how we've robbed ourselves of Christian fellowship and Christian love. We've allowed organizations and doctrines to come in and separate God's people.

And here Paul is so disturbed, so burdened in prayer for these Christians at Laodicea. The world has come into Laodicea, and they are lukewarm. They're occupied with their worldly treasures in the midst of the glory of Christ. They have missed devotion to the person of Christ, and they're not knitted together in love.

I wonder, my friend, are you knitted together with others of God's people in love? Or are you just knitted together in doctrine if you cross your t's and dot your i's the way I do? Then I have fellowship with you; but if you don't, why I don't.

In fact, I have been told, "Well, Dr. Mitchell, you know we agree—we fellows agree in doctrine. But, you know, you don't belong to us." There's a barrier. There's no bond of love and being knitted together in Christ, but rather the opposite. "We can't take you in because you just don't belong." Sad thing.

And here Paul is in prison. He's heard about the trouble with these Christians at Laodicea, and now he's burdened before God. He has the opposition of hell against him. There's a great conflict of soul because of

them. But he prays for them. He yearns over them that they might be comforted and knitted together in love.

By the way, it might be a good exercise for you and for me to go through these epistles of Paul, starting with Romans and through Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians and Philipians and Colossians and Thessalonians, noticing how often Paul talks about this question of believers loving each other, of being knitted together in love.

How we need to love the people of God. They may not belong to the same organization you belong to; they may not even have exactly the same doctrine you have, but they love the Savior and you love the Savior. Then your hearts ought to be knitted together in love.

Now why don't you and I start loving somebody today not of our own group, but some other group. Be knitted together in love. This is the burden of Paul's heart. May it be the burden of your heart and my heart.

2:2b. Being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.

And then Paul speaks of the fact that they might come into all the riches of the full assurance of understanding. You know, love never compromises the truth. You remember the book of Galatians where the Apostle Paul speaks of those who came to the Galatian church and they were perverting the gospel. They were not denying that Christ died for them; they were not denying that the only way of salvation was faith in Christ; they weren't denying these simple things of the gospel, but they were perverting them. They were adding to what Christ had accomplished. They were denying the sufficiency of Christ for His people.

Now Paul in writing to the Colossian church is praying that they might be filled "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." I tell you, it's an amazing thing how much people try to take the truth and distort it. Mix a little bit of truth with a great deal of error, and people come to the place where they don't even know what to believe. One fellow says this and another fellow says that, and you wonder where in the world to turn.

Most Christians are untaught. I say that very, very sadly. I'm talking from the experience of many years in the pastorate, meeting with people. They really do not know what they believe. And so many Christians have been tossed about by every wind of doctrine. They need to come to "the full assurance of understanding."

You see, it's a precious thing, if I might say this. We read in Hebrews 10:22, for example, of the full assurance of faith. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." That is the full assurance that one is saved.

And then in Colossians 2:2 we have the full assurance of understanding—that is, to know how one is saved, how one is kept saved and to know something of the purpose of God for your life. And then in Hebrews 6:11, we have the full assurance of hope. "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."

And this, of course, is the confidence in the completion of our salvation which will be at the coming of the Lord. Someone has well said, "If you take these three wonderful things, you really have an experience of heaven here on earth."

Allow me to repeat them: the full assurance of faith in Hebrews 10:22, and that means the assurance of our salvation in Christ. The faith that God has given to you will be perfected; and you will stand one of these days in the presence of God, conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The salvation we have starts with God, is continued by God and will be completed by God.

And then the full assurance of understanding in Colossians 2:2, where we understand the truth with respect to our Savior and His sufficiency to present every man perfect in Christ.

And then the full assurance of hope, which is found in Hebrews 6:11; and here is the confidence of the completion of our salvation, that "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ," as Philippians 1:6 declares.

You know, it's a wonderful thing, this, to know that God has given to us in the scripture the revelation of His purpose for every individual believer in Christ, the weak ones and the strong ones, the babes in Christ and the mature ones. It's a wonderful thing that the salvation we have gives to each one of us the same standing before God, standing in Christ in all His righteousness, in all His beauty, in all His perfection. Even the Apostle John speaks of this, you remember in 1 John 4:17: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world."

This is behind Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 1:12, when he said: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

And like the dear Thessalonians who had turned to God from their idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. We could continue this, the full assurance of faith, the full assurance of understanding, and the full assurance of hope. I tell you it's a wonderful thing to have assurance.

I've met so many Christians who do not know whether they're saved or lost. They feel they're saved in the morning and by evening they don't know where they are. Now what kind of a life is that? That's no Christian life. The more you see your wonderful position in Christ and the more you see the perfection of His purpose for His people, then the more you love Him and the more you want to serve Him. In fact, I might say this that your own personal desires go out of the door. All you want is to glorify and to magnify your Savior.

There are some people who tell me that, if you believe this wonderful teaching of the grace of God, you become loose in your life. My friend, it has just the opposite effect—just the opposite effect. The more you know your Savior, the more you know what He has accomplished for you, what He has purposed to do for you and the hope He has given to you, my friend, the more you will fall in love with Him and the more you will seek to please Him. As Paul could say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ and be found in Him" (Philippians 3:8-9a).

Ah, I tell you, my friend, when you accepted the Savior, God started a work in you and God will perfect that work. Do you for one moment think that God is going to start a work and not finish it? Now man does that. Man starts to build a house and sometimes he doesn't even finish it. Or he starts a job or a project and doesn't finish it. That's not so with God! When God purposes and God starts and God works something, you can be assured, my friend, He's going to finish what He has started. And when you accepted the Savior, He put His hand on you and made you eternal.

Here Paul is praying for these Colossians, that they might come to the full assurance of understanding of the wonderful truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

My friend, may God make this very real to you today and may your own heart be filled with His joy and His blessing. Revel in Christ today and may the Lord grant to you that complete joy that is found in Him for His name's sake.

Now we've been dealing in these first two or three verses with the Apostle Paul in his great desire for these Colossian Christians. Oh, the conflict he has in his own heart on their behalf; and his great desire is to bring these Christians into the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ. And this, I think, is the desire of all of us who teach the Word of God. We sometimes are appalled (and I say this very frankly) at the ignorance of the truth among God's people who have become so sidetracked by the glitter of the world and the desire for worldly, carnal things that they've missed something of the riches of the glory of Christ. And it delights our hearts whenever we find someone who has a real hunger for the Savior.

Has it ever gripped your heart that, when you received the Savior, you received His life and that God has a distinct, special purpose for you, not only in saving you but in leaving you here on earth to bring glory to His name through your walk, through your conversation, through the way you live, through your testimony?

It's an astounding thing, this, when you think of it, that God should in wonderful grace pick up men and women who are sinners, who have rebelled against Him, who have lived for self and selfish things, and that He should give His Son to redeem us, to bring us to Himself, to remove the barrier between Him and us so that we can come into His presence acceptable. And there is more than that because salvation means more than forgiveness; salvation means more than being justified, being pronounced righteous. It means more than just getting to heaven. My friend, this salvation we have in Christ means the impartation of divine life to us and brings us into a relationship that's beyond the understanding of men.

I wish in some way (and I'm opening my heart to you on this), I would like you to know something of the reality of life in Christ, that there's nothing this old world can offer you that even begins to compare with the life you can have in the Savior. This is a real thing. I'm not talking about a theory or doctrine or theology. I'm talking, my friend, about a personal, wonderful relationship that we can have with the Savior. This is why He redeemed men; this is why He went to the cross and rose again from the dead, having defeated death and brought life and immortality to light

through the gospel—that you and I might not only be brought into a relationship, but we may revel in divine life.

We hear so much today about a “spirit-filled life” or a “crisis experience” or what have you—whatever term you may use—“victorious life.” What is spiritual life but the enjoyment of Christ? What is a Spirit-filled life but a life that’s occupied with enjoying Christ for Himself? This goes beyond the question of doctrine or organizations. It is a life hid with Christ in God. This is full joy; this is full usefulness; this gives you that wonderful, wonderful anticipation of one of these days seeing Him face to face and living in unbroken fellowship with Him. This is the purpose of God in redeeming you and me. God is going to have a people in heaven. God’s going to have a people in glory. He’s going to have a people with whom He can have eternal, unbroken fellowship. This ought to grip our hearts.

I was just reading a little incident the other day, a little squib in a magazine about a man I met many, many years ago, Dr. Savage of Pontiac, Michigan. When he was told that he would not get any better, that he was going to die, he said, “Well, I think you better just change my address from where I live to my new address on Glory Street in heaven.”

What an anticipation. What an assurance. What certainty. This is the full assurance of understanding and the full assurance of faith and the full assurance of hope as we have been discussing.

Now let’s get back to Colossians 2.

2:2. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

2:3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2:4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Paul says in verse 2 that they might know the mystery of God, even Christ. This is what it is, the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ.

Now I take it to be Christ Himself as the mystery of God, that God should be made manifest in the flesh, the incarnate Word of God. You remember, in 1 Timothy 3:16 he speaks of it: “Great is the mystery of godliness”—God manifest in the flesh. We would never have known God apart from Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 1:3, we read that He’s the express image of God. He’s the forth-shining of the very character of God. And as John 1:18 says: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

And now notice in verse 3 that in this Christ, in this Son, God has hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Somebody has well said that Jesus Christ is God's treasure box. You know, it's an amazing thing that this is where God has hidden you. You find this in Colossians 3:3: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In chapter two, God has hidden all His treasures in Christ. In chapter 3:3 God has hidden you in the safest place in the universe. Where's that? Where God has hidden His treasures—in Christ.

You know, it's an amazing thing how this man Paul loved to just gaze at Christ, and how he longs for you and me to gaze upon the Son of God. And you know it says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Is it not a wonderful thing that in Christ God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. Do you ever think about it? You want wisdom? Do you want strength? Do you want knowledge? What do you need? You find them in Christ.

I'm living in a day and you are living in a day when we boast a great deal about our intellectual knowledge and our scientific knowledge. My, how far man has gone in the last few years; how far man has gone in the sphere of technology, in the sphere of electronics, in the sphere of every science. And yet the astounding thing is, though man has gone so far in knowledge in his scientific research, he knows so little about God. We spent billions of dollars to send three fellows to the moon. Wonderful, wonderful thing. To think that you and I could sit down at our television set and hear these fellows thousands upon thousands of miles away going around the moon and talking back to us, just as if they were in the next room. How far man has gone in delving into these scientific things of the earth and of the world and of the heavens, and yet with all our scientific research we seem to be getting farther and farther away from our knowledge of God.

You know Job could say, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" No, God is not known by research. God is not known through some invention. God is only known one way and that's by revelation. Jesus Christ Himself said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and Thou hast revealed them unto babes."

The Apostle Paul could write to the Corinthian Christians who boasted of their knowledge that the world by wisdom knew not God, but it pleased

God by the foolishness of the things preached to save them that believe. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. The Greeks seek after wisdom and the Jews seek after signs, "but we preach Christ crucified." It's a stumbling block to the Jews, but to us who are saved it is "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:21-24).

My friend, what do you know about God? What do you know about Christ? The only thing you'll ever find about God, you'll find Him in Christ. And the more you know Christ, the more you'll know of God. God has hidden in Christ all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

I plead with your heart to get back into that Bible and get to know your Savior.

It's a wonderful thing that we can use men's inventions for the glory of God. It seems that as man invents and proceeds and delves into the various mysteries of the powers of God, that God just allows him to go so far. Those very things that man unearths will be for the glory of God.

I tell you, my Christian friend, it's going to take all of eternity for you and me to appreciate the wonders of our Savior. We haven't even begun to scratch the surface of what God has revealed concerning His Son. And I am sure of one thing, that if your eyes were open (and my friend, they can be opened by the Spirit of God if you'll only give Him the opportunity and the time to do it), He would reveal His Son in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

We talk so much about our boasted knowledge, but we really know so very little about God. You remember, Daniel (11:32) could say, "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." When I think of this and the day in which we live, I ask God to raise up men and women who will really know their God. I'm talking about a personal thing, a personal relationship, a personal experience with the living God. I'm really concerned that we who profess the name of Christ might know something of the reality of life in Christ. Instead we play on the edge of the ocean of His love, just right on the very edge when we can swim out into the very depths of the things of Christ. For in Him God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

Think of it, my friend. Christ is God's treasure box. God has hidden you where He has hidden His treasures. Where does God see you? In Christ, covered with all the merit and beauty and righteousness and wonders of the

Son of God. So much so that He not only imparts to you His life, but He imparts to you His love because the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit given unto us. You and I have become the objects of the love of an infinite God, and we've been joined to His Son. I pray that the Holy Spirit of God in some way will make these things precious to you and precious to me.

Here is a man in chains in jail under the authority of jailers, and yet he could rejoice in the Lord. Why? He looked beyond his circumstances to a Savior in whom dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily. And to this Savior he was joined. Christ was his life, all that he was, all he expected to be. So that the circumstances of his life, whether they were in jail or out of jail, rough or smooth, to his liking or not to his liking or whether even death came along—none of these mattered.

As Paul could say, “None of these things move me.” Having caught a glimpse of his Savior and of the life he had in Christ, and that he was in Christ where God had hidden all His treasures, why should he worry about the Roman emperor or the Roman soldiers or the circumstances under which he lived? All he cared about was glorifying and magnifying the Savior and bringing people to know Him. Shouldn't that be your desire and my desire? I'm sure this is God's purpose for you and me. And God grant we'll take the time, just simply take the time to know something about Him.

Now supposing we go down to verses 5-7 of Colossians 2. I'm leaving verse 4 out purposely because I'm going to take that up later regarding the warnings Paul has given to us.

2:5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

2:7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Now here is their walk in Christ. He was rejoicing because of their orderly array. This is what he means here. Notice this, will you please? He was rejoicing in their “orderly array” or, if I might put it a different way, he was rejoicing because they were under discipline to the Word of God.

You know, that's a word we don't like—“discipline.” Who wants to be disciplined? And yet you know, when a young man or even a young woman goes into the armed forces of our country, we talk about their going to boot

camp. What is a boot camp for? It's a place to learn discipline. That's one of the first lessons. You have to be a disciplined person to take orders and to give orders, to do what you're told to do—discipline.

The trouble with too many of us Christians is that we're undisciplined. I mean by that that we do not discipline ourselves in our lives to the Word of God. We want our own way; we want our own plans; we want to do what we want to do, and the question of discipline goes out the door. And, if things in the Word of God do not agree with what you or I want to do, then instead of our throwing our own desires out we throw the Word of God out. And Paul was rejoicing because these Colossian Christians were under discipline to the Word of God and rejoicing, as I said a moment ago, in their orderly array. They were Christians who were walking orderly.

When I see the disorder and the criticisms of these days, I wonder what Paul would have written to us. He would have written to us concerning our disorder in spiritual things. Will you please mark what he says? "I'm rejoicing as I see your order, your discipline, your orderly array." And then he rejoiced, too, because of their steadfastness of faith in Christ. That is, they held a solid, united front for the Word of God. Here you have order and faith coupled together. This is a sign of spiritual health. Their faith in Christ, their orderly walk is spiritual health, not spiritual sickness.

2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

I'm afraid that today it's so easy to become puny and weak and sickly in our spiritual lives. We do not eat correctly. I'm speaking of spiritual food. We neglect the Word of God. We do not feed on the scriptures. We're not occupied with the person of Christ, and the result is our life is a disordered life. It's not a blessed life; it's not a useful life. Why? Because we're not walking orderly. Why don't we? Because we're not feeding on the Word of God. These two things go together. Paul was filled with joy as he beheld their orderly array and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.

This gave them a solid, united front before the world. They were rejoicing in their Savior, and they were walking correctly. I am concerned that your local church might be walking orderly and that you might be manifesting spiritual health, made strong to glorify Christ among men.

Oh, how we evangelicals need to have a united front before the enemy of our souls! When I think of the great movements of the earth today that would shatter our trust in the Savior, that are determined to throw Christ

out of our society, that are determined to defame the Son of God and to throw out the Word of God, I want to say that we who love the Savior need to be united in our faith. And, when we are united in our faith and walking orderly with a disciplined life before God, that way we bring praise and honor and glory to His name.

There are strong movements today that go by the name of Christian but have dethroned Christ, that say that the Word of God is untenable, that declare not only are we in a post-Christian era but also that Christianity cannot meet the needs of our present society. These who have a distorted idea of Christ, who rebel against the Word of Christ and the Word of God, would seek to cast out of our generation those who stand for the precious Word of God.

I have been told myself, personally, that I've been a detriment to civilization because I believe that there's in Christ only one way of salvation, that the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all sin and that no one can stand in the presence of God apart from Jesus Christ. And I suppose I'll be told that again in no uncertain terms. Sometimes you're told to get out of town.

Oh, the tremendous need that those of us who stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ, those of us who claim to be evangelicals, that we stand with a united front for the inerrancy of the Word of God, for the deity of our Savior, for the redemptive work which He accomplished, for His physical resurrection and glorification and the wonderful joy and hope that we have in the coming of our Savior to take us from this scene and present us before His Father with exceeding great joy. These wonderful truths concern Christ in whom God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this. Paul rejoices because these Colossian Christians were steadfast in their faith. They were walking in an orderly fashion before God and before men. They had a consistent front before men. They were rejoicing in a Savior whom they loved with the result that people were brought to the saving knowledge of Christ and the name of the Lord was honored among men.

May I say again, what a need there is for primitive Christianity, a Christianity that's real, a life that is joined to the Savior, a life where we become the channel for the Spirit of God to exalt our Savior before men. Then our lives will be a benediction to others; then love will reign supreme because we manifest to people just how much we love the Savior. What I am to God in my experience will be betrayed and evident by my actions in my

life toward others. My friends, God grant that we may live in an orderly, wonderful way before God and before men and be steadfast in our faith, holding a solid, united front before men.

And now we come to this instructive verse again:

2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

May I just stop here for a moment. What did you receive? You received a Person. When you accepted the Savior, you not only received a truth that is in Christ but you received Him.

Listen, my Christian friend, a Christian is one in whom Christ dwells. Now people can go to church and Sunday School from the time they're babies and join the church and go through ceremonies and yet not have Christ. They have mentally assented to some Christian doctrine, but that doesn't make them a Christian. You remember in Colossians 1:28 Paul says, "Whom we preach," a Person. In Romans 1, the gospel of God is concerning Jesus Christ His Son, a Person who was raised from the dead. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in—Him."

I say, it's not receiving a doctrine or even receiving an experience—an emotional experience. One can have all that and not have Christ. John put it very simply in the first chapter of his gospel, verse 12, when he said: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." You remember that amazing verse in Matthew 11:28 where Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We come to a Person; and, until we accept Him as our Savior—a real Person—we have no life. Now He says:

2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

2:7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

As I have thought about these wonderful truths about walking in Him, my mind has gone back to some passages in the Old Testament on how God's people walked with Him in past days. I am sure you have seen, as you have read the Old Testament, how in every age God has had men who walked with Him. In fact, God always has individuals in spite of what men do. He's always had individuals who walked with Him—who knew God, who reveled in the presence of God and pleased God.

You remember, it was said of Enoch in Hebrews 11:5, he had this testimony that he pleased God. And it's possible for you and for me to please God in our daily walk and conversation and to have a life that will glorify Him, that will please Him.

Allow me to just, for example, give you four ways in the Bible in which we can walk as Christians. For example, in the book of Genesis 17:1, we have where God speaks to Abraham. In fact, the Lord rebukes Abraham for what he has been doing. In the 16th chapter of Genesis, this man Abraham had brought into the world Ishmael, the child of the flesh. And, if you notice that passage, you'll notice that Abraham was 13 years out of fellowship with God, 13 years without a revelation from God. For 13 years Abraham was occupied with Abraham and Ishmael.

And then when he was 99 years of age, I read that God appeared unto him and said, "I am the Almighty (*El Shaddai*). Walk before me and be thou perfect." When Abraham was 99 years of age, there was no hope of his having any more children and Sarah was barren. Then God gave to him that wonderful—what we call the Abrahamic promise—in chapter 17, where He promised that out of Sarah and him would come nations and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. When he was 99 years of age—"walk before me," the Almighty God, the El Shaddai, and "be thou perfect."

We walk before Him as children in simple trust. That speaks of security; that speaks of trust. And then, second, in the book of Deuteronomy 13:4, Israel is exhorted to walk after God as servants. And this has to do with service. We walk after Him as servants in simple obedience to His Word. And then, third, in Genesis 5:24, I read that "Enoch walked with God and he was not; for God took him." Enoch walked with God as a friend in blessed fellowship. And now we have the fourth one here in verse 6:

2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

That is, He becomes our very life; He becomes our path. This speaks of our union with Him.

I'd like to repeat those just very simply so you get the fuller picture of what He has before us. We walk **before** God as children in simple trust. We walk **after** Him as servants in simple obedience. We walk **with** Him as friends in blessed fellowship and we walk **in** Him as the One who is our very life, the One who becomes our path.

As I say, it speaks of union with Him. We not only walk in the truth, but we walk in Him. All that we are, all that we have is His. We recognize that the life we have, as Paul could say in Galatians 2:20, is one where “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

In other words, the Apostle Paul is trying to teach us that, as we receive Christ by faith, we become joined to Him in an indissoluble union. This is where we walk—in Him. He becomes our path; He becomes our very life; He’s all that we need. Remember in verse 3: “In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” And all that I need for complete joy and usefulness is found in Christ. The trouble with most of us Christians is that we trust some thing or some gadget or some movement, whatever it may be. We trust anything and everybody except the Savior.

I wish I could put it in simple words that a Christian life is a life lived in fellowship as well as relationship with the Savior—as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord.

“How did you receive Him?” some will ask.

In simple faith.

“How then shall I walk?”

The same way—in simple faith, with Him as the object of my faith; for you remember that the main thing is not our faith, but the object of our faith.

And by the way, when I say that, I am reminded that the whole 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews has to do with this life of faith. You remember, Hebrews 10:37 says, “He that shall come will come.” But what shall I do while He tarries? He goes on to say in the very next verse, “Now the just shall live by faith.”

In other words, while we wait for the coming of our Savior; while we wait to see Him face to face, we are to live the life of faith.

“Well, what is the life of faith?”

A life of faith is nothing more nor less than the life lived in blessed fellowship with God. We walk before Him as children in simple trust; that’s faith. We walk after Him as servants in simple obedience; that takes faith. We walk with Him as friends in blessed fellowship; that’s faith. And we are to walk in Him. He becomes our path, and that means faith.

You see, the Christian life is a life of faith. It doesn't necessarily mean a life of getting things from God. I'm sorry to say that in too much of our praying, too much of our living we want things. We're continually asking God for things or something that we would like to have or we want God to do something for us. Sometimes I wonder if we look upon God as our servant instead of our Lord. There are a great many people who claim to be the servants of the Lord, but they want their own way.

Now let's look at it very clearly and simply and honestly. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."

Now someone is going to say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, where I live under my circumstances, I can't live that way."

Now just a minute. Allow me to go back to the Old Testament again and remind you that all these men who walked with God were not living in beautiful circumstances. Enoch walked with God in the midst of an ungodly world. As far as I know, there wasn't anybody else who walked with God at that time. Noah walked with God in the midst of a violent world. Abraham walked with God in the midst of a pagan world.

Moses walked with God in the midst of an apostate world. And you and I can walk with God whatever the world is. That makes no difference here or there. It isn't a question of circumstances; it's a question of your own heart. What is the great motive of your heart? What's the great purpose of your life? Is it not to magnify Him? To walk with Him?

So I repeat the word of Paul here when he said, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." How? "Rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Oh, what a need there is for those of us who claim to love the Savior to walk in Him. Let Him be your path, not only your life but your path. I repeat, it's a life of simple fellowship with the Lord, a heart occupation with the person of Christ.

And I want to say that when you and I live with our hearts and minds and our affections stayed upon Him, our feet will track right. We'll do the right thing and say the thing He wants us to say.

This is all that the Lord asked of Peter in John 21 when He said, "Peter, do you really love me?"

Today, that's all I ask, "Peter, do you really love me?" Put your name there, my friend. Do you really love Him? Then you won't do anything that will displease Him or dishonor Him or disgrace Him. Enjoy Him today, won't you? Enjoy Him for Himself.

And now we come to a different aspect of truth in our study of the second chapter of this amazing epistle. The apostle goes on now to give us some warnings. In fact, there are six warnings in this second chapter. He warns in verse 4 against enticing words of man's wisdom. In verse 8, he warns us against philosophy and vain deceit. In verse 8, he also warns us against the traditions of men. In verses 16 and 17, he warns us against legalism. In verses 18 and 19 he warns us against false mysticism and in verses 20-23, he warns us against false asceticism.

Now I'm not going to take these all in order, but I would like to remind you of the fact that, when the Apostle Paul lived in his day, this primitive Christianity was beset by all kinds of foes. Not only were Christians persecuted, but they suffered and many were martyred. In fact, for 200 years, they became the objects of the hatred and the venom of a pagan world. But beside that, there were a great many heresies—intellectual and philosophical, built on traditions and enticing words.

So the Apostle Paul writes to the Colossians concerning this. At Colosse there was a very strong heresy, known as Gnosticism. These Gnostics professed fuller knowledge and loved to talk about spiritual things, but they were anti-Christian. They denied the deity of Christ.

You know, every false system promises to make you something; and I would suggest this word of caution: Be careful of any sect or any doctrine that does not make Christ supreme. And never put human philosophy ahead of divine revelation. Remember Colossians 2:3,

2:3. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

It's so easy to be sidetracked by the apparent scholarship and intellectual knowledge of men. We are living in a day when scholarship has been enthroned. We are living in a day of scientific research, and people are confused because of the increase in knowledge.

I don't care what realm you go into; you'll find that men have taken tremendous strides in the last ten years, even in my brief space of years on earth. When I think of years ago as a young man and how we lived and what we had and what we knew and compare it to today, why, it's beyond all

human comprehension. One would never have dreamed that men would have gone so far in their scientific research, in their knowledge of things. But the astounding thing is how many really know God? What do you know of God?

And so the apostle is writing to the Colossian Christians who are beset by the heresies of the day. And those heresies are with us today, possibly under a different gown or a different name; but they're with us. Human knowledge has gone on and increased, and the result is that men have been sidetracked from knowing the Savior. And many Christians have come to the place where they're confused. They hardly know what to believe.

Now Paul writes to the Colossians to correct this and to guard them. He thanks the Lord and rejoices because of the way they have walked and how they have held to the faith. But now he warns them. The first one is in verse 4:

2:4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

My, how we need to watch this because error and heresy are coined in the likeness of truth. My friend, do not be deluded by the persuasive speech of those who teach false doctrine. The test is, what place do they give the person of Christ? Be careful of all their subtle reasonings. I know what I'm talking about. They'll even use the language of scripture to turn you from Christ. Words that have always for centuries had a distinct meaning have lost that meaning. So that a person can use religious terms from the scriptures—wonderful words like “redemption,” “salvation,” “resurrection,” “reconciliation,” “justification”—these basic truths of the gospel; and they'll take those same words and twist them to mean something else.

They will come along with enticing words and will spiritualize everything until the truth which the Spirit of God is trying to give to us in the New Testament is sidetracked and pushed out as untenable.

I remember having a discussion for three or four hours with the leader of a certain sect, and it took me nearly four hours to get this man to the place where he admitted what he really believed about the deity of our Savior. But he squirmed, and oh! the enticing words he used. In fact, you would think he was in love with Christ when I knew he wasn't. I knew by his doctrine that he was denying the person of our Savior.

But he used the same language and I had to face him, “What do you mean by these terms?”

Then eventually he came out and said very bluntly that he did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, manifest in the flesh. He did not believe in the incarnate Word of God. He believed that Jesus Christ was just a man. Just like these Gnostics. They believed that Jesus Christ was a created being, that He was superior to all angels, but that He was still a created being. He was not God manifest in the flesh.

And you remember, the Apostle John could say in 1 John 4:1 that we are to test the spirits to see if they are of God. In other words, test the doctrine to see if it's of God. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist." So Paul here says to them in verse 4 that if God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge in Christ, then the test will be Christ and what place they give Christ. Ask them that. Was He God? And if I may say very simply, in spite of all the enticing words and subtle words that are used by these men and women who deny the Person of Christ, you will find that in all these cults Jesus Christ of Nazareth is not God manifest in the flesh.

Secondly, when He was raised from the dead, ask them if He was raised with the body that was nailed to the cross? Was His resurrection physical? Or was it spiritual? Now this is the test of the early church.

Read the book of Acts, for example, where you have the history of the early churchmen. They conformed and taught very clearly and dogmatically that this Jesus of Nazareth, a man "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourself also know," Him hath God raised from the dead and exalted to be Lord and Christ (2:22). And nearly 30 times in the book of Acts you read of the resurrection of our Savior. This was the foundation; this was the very center of their message that their Savior lived. He was no longer in a tomb, dead. He lived. And because He lived, we live.

I would plead with your heart today to be careful of the enticing words of man's wisdom. This is what he talks about in verse 4:

2:4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

I say this, my friends, because I have seen so many precious people sidetracked and pushed off to one side until they do not know whether they were saved or lost. They do not know what to believe. They're absolutely confused. There should be no confusion.

Let me say once more that if God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge in Christ, as the third verse says, then, my friend, the great test is what place do these cultists give Christ? Is He really God manifest in the flesh? Is He a real Savior from sin? And is He at the right hand of God making intercession for men?

“What think ye of Christ?” That’s the question I ask. “What place do you give Christ?” And their answer, my friend, will reveal to you whether they’re real believers or whether they are false prophets.

May the Lord cause you and me to spend more time in the Word of God where we have His revelation to us and may we walk in Christ who is our Savior and Lord.

Remember, Christian friend, we’re living in an enemy world. The world has no place for Christ. The world has no place for His Word; and the world puts human knowledge beyond and above divine revelation. God has given to us His revelation in the scriptures; but man doesn’t want the scriptures, with the result that he depends upon human knowledge. And human knowledge apart from the Word of God will lead him astray.

So the first warning (there are six of them in the chapter) is against enticing words. And, if in Christ Jesus God has hidden all His treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, I repeat it: The great test is “what think ye of Christ?”

Now the second warning is in verse 8:

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

Let me just stop here. May I suggest this—and I repeat the word, “Beware.” Be on the alert; guard yourself lest anyone spoil you, ruin you through philosophy and vain deceit. You see, when a person puts his reasonings against God’s revealed will, you’re going to get into trouble. Now there’s nothing wrong with knowledge. But the wisdom of the world leaves the revelation of God out. There’s no need for perplexity if you stay in the Word of Christ. God has given to us His divine revelation in the scriptures: His Son has come.

You remember Hebrews 1:2, 3: God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,

when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

And may I say this, and I say it very bluntly that apart from divine revelation, man today knows no more of God or the divine purpose than the philosophers of Rome and Greece.

“Do you mean to say, sir, that we know nothing more of God and His purposes than they did 2,000 years ago?”

That’s right. That is, apart from divine revelation. When the Apostle Paul went down to Athens, the seat of culture, the seat of the Greek philosophers, the city of the academies—you remember—he met a great many philosophers who took him to Mars Hill and said, “Let’s see what this babbler has to say, this picker-up of scraps. He brings certain strange things to our ears”—because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

Now the Apostle Paul in Athens didn’t come along with a lot of philosophies—that is, the philosophies of men. He came with divine revelation. He brought to these men that which they could not find by research; and the simple message was that God had revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and that through Him they could have redemption, the forgiveness of sins to fit them for the presence of God.

Do you remember in Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” And when Solomon, the wise man, made that statement (and I believe under the Spirit of God), he knew something of the wisdom of man. The legalistic heart of man wants to be saved any way but through Christ. That’s what men tell me today.

They say, “Why, do you mean to tell me, Mr. Mitchell, that there’s only one way of salvation, only one way of redemption, only one Savior?”

In fact, in the last week I had a man say this to me, “Do you think there’s only one way of redemption?”

I said, “Yes, just one way.”

“That’s very, very narrow. Is everybody wrong but the scriptures?”

I said, “That’s correct when it comes to divine revelation.”

Now don’t be afraid of being called narrow. Jesus said, “Wide is the way that leadeth to destruction, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life.” And He said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man

cometh unto the Father, but by me.” The Spirit of God said through Peter (Acts 4:12), “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” And I would much rather take the scriptures, the revelation of God to men, than all the philosophies and the knowledge of men.

Jesus also said in John 10:9, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Jesus Himself said that He was the only way to the Father because He was the only one who died for our sins and satisfied divine righteousness on our behalf.

Be careful not only of enticing words but of the philosophies and vain deceit of men. Men boast of their knowledge. And I’m reminded of those verses in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

And I repeat it again: There is nothing wrong with knowledge. There is nothing wrong with knowing all kinds of things. But the danger is to accept the wisdom of the world and to reject the revelation of God. And I want to make that statement again: Apart from divine revelation, man today with all his boasted knowledge knows no more of God and His purposes than the philosophers of ancient Greece.

I know what you’re going to say: “You mean to tell me that we don’t know any more than they did 2,000 years ago?”

Yes, you know a lot about many things. We’ve explored. We’ve even explored the universe. We’ve gone a tremendous way in the quest for knowledge, scientific knowledge, philosophical knowledge. But my friend, when it comes to the revelation of God and His purposes and redemption, we’re shut up to the revelation He has given to us in the scriptures.

Either the Bible is the Word of God or it isn’t. And if it’s not the Word of God, if it’s not divine revelation, then I declare very bluntly, my friend, we don’t even know God.

How can we know God? How can we find God? We can’t find God by research. Even Job (11:7), way back yonder, said, “Canst thou by searching

find out God?” No, God is known by revelation. Jesus said to Peter (Matthew 16:17), “Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, Peter, but my Father which is in heaven.” Blessed is the man and the woman who will sit down with an open heart and an open mind and take the scriptures and believe what God says. And if you are a child of God, if you’ve accepted Christ as your own personal Savior, my friend, you can’t afford—you just simply can’t afford—to live a day out of the Word of God. You must spend time each day. Get to know the Bible. He has revealed Himself through His Son, and this revelation is given to us in the scripture.

We are now in verse 8 of chapter 2, where Paul writes:

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

Now we were discussing this question of warning God’s people concerning these enticing words, these philosophies of men, the reasonings of men that would detract you from the person of Christ. And I am very well acquainted with the fact, especially among our young people who go to university and college—that they go with a faith in Christ. But when they’re faced with the philosophies and the reasonings and the enticing words of men of wisdom, they become greatly confused. They’re confused because they fail to realize that the world by wisdom knows not God and that the revelation of God, of His person, of His purpose, of His redemption, of what He wants to do for men can only come by revelation.

These men who are in high places (and I say this very kindly), these men who are professors in universities and colleges, if they do not know the Savior, if they have never accepted the Word of God, they know nothing of spiritual life in Christ or in God. They have no knowledge, no personal knowledge, of a loving God. And so they come with their human philosophies and reasonings and their smooth words and confuse young people who are not established in the things of Christ.

I know that of which I speak because I’ve met with young people— young men and young women—who love the Savior. But after two or three years in college, they’ve come home confused because of what their teachers have been teaching them. And I want to impress upon your hearts that human philosophy and human reasoning and human knowledge apart from the scriptures will not give to men a revelation of God or His purposes or His counsels.

I wish in some way I could make that very clear to you. Never put human philosophies ahead of divine revelation and be careful of any doctrine that does not make Christ supreme. Now I say, and I say it again very frankly, there is nothing wrong with knowledge. Don't misunderstand me. I don't think God expects us to be ignoramuses; I think God expects us to use the brains He has given us—the faculties He has put into us.

Gifts are given to be used. He's given us all brains. He's given some of us more gifts than others, but all of us have gifts. We can think; we can remember; we can see through things; we can analyze, some more than others. Nevertheless, we can gather up knowledge and all these other things; but knowledge of God comes by revelation.

I wonder if I could take a moment and suggest this: There are only three grounds of authority. May I give this to you again? The first is the ground of tradition. There's a great religious movement in the world and it's all based on tradition—that's their ground of authority. This is what that church believes; this is what that church has said throughout the centuries.

And then there is the ground of liberalism or of reason: If it doesn't appeal to my reason, I won't accept it. And yet we live every day—in fact, we couldn't live a day without doing something apart from our reason. We eat three meals a day and don't think about reasoning it out, otherwise we might not eat our meal. But here's a ground of authority: reason. This is where your liberalism comes in. The message of salvation is not reasonable—this is what they say.

And then there is the ground of the scriptures, the authority of the scriptures. You either take tradition as your authority or your reason as your authority or the Word of God as your authority.

Now human reason and tradition dethrone Christ. And I want to say very frankly and very bluntly that you cannot know God in His person, in His purposes, in His counsels apart from Jesus Christ and the revealed will of God in the scriptures. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18).

And in Christ God has hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I've been spending time on this, possibly more than I should; but I'm concerned because so many, especially of our young people, have been led astray because of the brilliance of men, because of the acquired knowledge of men, because of the philosophies and vain reasonings of men.

What place do they give Jesus Christ? Chances are they give Him no place, and the trouble is that we get away from Christ.

Now in verse 8 you have the third warning.

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

The third warning is against the traditions of man, the traditions and rudiments of the world and not after Christ. In other words, often men will turn to the fables and traditions of the ancients down to the present time and leave out the person of Christ. And we're warned against that. It isn't what does the church of the 18th century say or the church of the 15th century or what history says or what tradition says.

The thing is, what does the Bible say? Do not be led astray by great shows of wisdom because they are after the traditions of men and the philosophy of men and human reason. You listen now—human reason always follows the rudiments of this world, the elements of this world. Now what is the antidote to this? This is what I want to know. So in the next two verses, 9 and 10, Paul gives us the antidote for the false philosophies of men when he says:

2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2:10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Completeness in Christ, that's all we need. He has all authority. This is God's antidote against enticing words and false philosophies and vain deceit and traditions.

Here is no empty speculation, but the incarnate Word of God. He is the answer to all human philosophies and traditions and Jewish legalism. In fact, I again repeat it, my friend, divine revelation is far superior to any human philosophy. So why turn, then, from the scriptures, from divine revelation to human reasonings. The old prophet used to say so clearly and so dogmatically, "Thus saith the Lord." This is what God has to say. If this is what God said, what can man say? Wouldn't you prefer the Word of God to the word of man? Wouldn't you rather put your trust in the Son of God in whom dwelleth all godly treasures than put your trust in some human philosophy or some human reasoning of men?

I know I'm talking very bluntly, and maybe I am repeating myself; but I want you to so clearly understand, my friend, where I stand on this question of the Word of God and the person of our Savior. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And I repeat what I've said so often that if God is going to save anybody, if He's going to give eternal life to anybody, He certainly has the right to say how that way will be. And Jesus said, "I am the way." Christ is the antidote to all human philosophies and reasonings. And thank God we can have real rest and real peace in the One God has sent.

I'd like to repeat these two verses again.

2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily.

2:10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Or if I may give you a different reading on that, "And you are filled full in Him." That is, every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is complete in Him. And may I add, my friend, that whoever desires to add to Christ, desires more than God. You know, it's a very subtle thing for the human heart to add things to what Christ is and to what Christ has accomplished. This is ever the action of human reason and philosophy. We're not satisfied with the person of Christ. We're not satisfied with the work that He accomplished on the cross. And even though the Lord Jesus said to His Father (John 17:4), "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" and on the cross He could cry out (John 19:30), "It is finished," yet, though we know these things, the human heart wants to add to what Christ has done.

And if I were teaching the book of Galatians in chapter two especially, I'd point out that even Peter, the apostle, turned away from the sufficiency that is in Christ to legalism; and you remember how the Apostle Paul rebuked Peter concerning this matter. Christ is all we need.

You remember in Ephesians 1:3 we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And if He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ, then certainly Christ is sufficient for every spiritual need we may have. The trouble is, people turn from Christ. They follow the reasonings of men; they follow the religions of men; they follow the ceremonialism of men. For some reason or other they are just not satisfied with Christ. Now listen again to what Paul says:

2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2:10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

He is the head “of all principality and power.” He has all authority. And the one who believes in Christ is joined to the Savior and is complete in Him. All that I need to stand before God is found in Christ.

And may I add this? God sees every Christian complete in Christ, the strong ones and the weak ones, the ones who are being used of the Lord and the ones who are failing.

Do you remember Romans 8:1? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And 1 John 4:17? “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.” And Colossians 3:4? “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

And as we were saying in the gospel through John (*Let's Revel in John's Gospel*), I think 36 times, the New Testament speaks of our union with the Savior, that He is in us and we are in Him. Because of this, we stand before God in all the merit and righteousness and beauty of the Son of God. You are filled full in Him; and hence, if I am filled and if you are filled with His righteousness, His merit, His inheritance, then my friend, God grant we may grow in appreciation of what He is to us and what we are to Him.

I wish that I could find words to express what I believe the Spirit of God is trying to teach us. Maybe I'm talking to some of you who are shut-ins; some of you are going through afflictions and sorrows and tests and trials, and you wonder where in the world you are. You're confused and you're hurt and you're dissatisfied and you're discouraged. Listen, friend, look at Christ. If you have taken Him as your own personal Savior, as far as God is concerned you are complete in His Son. In fact, I make the statement again, God will never be satisfied with you and me until we stand in His presence, conformed to the image of His dear Son.

Only God can do such a thing. And He's promised to do this to everyone who puts his trust in His Son. My friend, remember, God is sovereign. God is all-powerful. In fact, our Savior in verse 10 is the head of all principality and power. Do you ever stop to think of it? Hence we have no need. If our Savior to whom we are joined is head over all principalities and powers, then we have no need of any other advocate. We do not need

angels or saints or anybody else. He's above all; He's over all, and we are in Him. Can you say "Amen" to that?

You remember in Ephesians 1:19-23, the Apostle Paul makes about the same statement when he says that we ought to know "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness (complement) of him that filleth all in all."

Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and then in Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Oh, Christian friend, I trust that you will revel today in the wonderful fact of your union with the Son of God and with all that He is before the Father—that's where you stand. God never sees you apart from Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. This is wonderful that you and I are the children of One who is God, having the same standing (and I say this very reverently), the same righteousness that the Son of God Himself has before the Father. And you are filled full in the One who has all authority and all power in heaven and in earth.

And then starting in from verses 11-15, as we follow along in our study, He takes up the reason for this—or should I say, the ground for this union. When we see this union with Christ, then we see something of the fallacy and the emptiness of all human philosophy and tradition and reasoning. There's no need for rites or ceremonies when one has Christ. I repeat it, my friend, Christ is sufficient; and you cannot add anything to what He is and what He has done.

Paul could say in Galatians 2:21: "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." In other words, the death of Christ avails nothing if it's possible for a man to stand before God acceptable in righteousness by his own works, by his own ceremonies, by his own will and power. There would be no need, absolutely no need for Christ to come and die.

I've been toiling with you on this for quite some time, for in some way I'd like to get into your heart on this matter. All you need to stand before God is found in Christ. Please, Christian friend, never by action or by motive or by thought deny the complete sufficiency of the work of Christ because you stand before God in all the merit of the omnipotent Son of God.

I tell you, let's glorify Him and let's worship Him today; and may His love flood your heart—just today—and then tomorrow, and then every day.

As we read this second chapter of Colossians, let us realize that what God says is true. Please do not believe what God says is true because you feel it. Feelings go with the wind. You may have a wonderful experience today and not one tomorrow. Does that change your position in Christ before God? Not a bit of it. And when I think of the uncertainty and the lack of assurance of so many Christians, I would strongly urge that you take your Bible and read what God says.

What is the Spirit of God trying to teach us? In this second chapter of Colossians he has been warning us concerning the traditions and philosophies of man's wisdom. He wants us to realize that we are in Christ Jesus and we cannot add to Him. And, when you and I accepted the Savior, we were joined to the eternal Son of God.

I'm going to read again from verse 9:

2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2:10. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

I repeat that Christ is the antidote. I don't know what the desire or the yearning of your heart is; but, my friend, if you're yearning for reality of life, if you're yearning for spiritual realities, spiritual power, spiritual joy, you only find it in one place—that's in Christ Jesus, God's beloved Son. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete or filled full in Him, which is the head of all principality and power. My, what a passage of scripture.

But how can we come into the good of this? In verses 11-15 the Spirit of God uses Paul to pick up this question of how we are in vital union with Him. We have seen already the fallacy of human philosophy and tradition and no need for works or ceremonies to justify us in the presence of God. That is because Christ Himself in His work is absolutely sufficient in the sight of God.

Now in verses 11, 12, we find that we've been separated from all that was in the old by the death and resurrection of Christ.

2:11. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

2:12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Now this is the real thing that we have been put off, separated. Or may I change the wording: The relationship to all that we were in Adam's race, the relationship to the flesh, has been severed through the death of the Son of God. In other words, all that we were in the old was crucified with Christ. You remember, we had that in Romans 6:10, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." In 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, you remember, Paul says: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Paul speaks of this in Galatians 2:19, 20, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

That is, the relationship to the law has been severed. The law has nothing more to say to the man in Christ. The law has had nothing to say since the cross. We have the same thing in Galatians 5:24, 25, where we read: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." One could multiply the passages. Suffice it to say that through the operation of God you and I have been severed from all that belongs to the old, and we're now new men and new women in Christ. This is what he means in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Someone is going to ask the question, "Well now, that 12th verse in Ephesians 2, does that mean that I have to be baptized to be joined to Him?"

No, no. Water baptism may typify this truth, but certainly no ceremony of any kind can join you to the Savior. This is a work of God. I repeat this: No ceremony of any kind can put away your sins. No ceremony

of any kind can deliver you from what you were in the old Adam and in the flesh. This is an operation of God. He joined you to Christ. As Paul could say, "I was crucified with Christ. I no longer live." This took place at the cross. Now I may typify that by water baptism—and I'm not arguing the question on this, except to say that it's an operation of God that puts us in Christ. This is what you have in verses 12 and 13. We have a new life.

2:12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

2:13. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

You remember that passage in Ephesians 2:4, 5, 8 where the Apostle speaks of the fact that "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ. . . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." We are made alive with the One who is on the throne. We are joined to the Savior who has been given all authority. And, friend, this is done by God. This is no attainment of man. This is the very first thing He does.

And some of you dear people who have been Christians for many years for some reason or other have never been brought into the wonderful knowledge of your union with Jesus Christ, God's Son. This is the foundation of all spiritual life. If this were not true, we would have nothing. If this were not true, we could not stand in the presence of God. If this were not true, you'd never get to glory, to heaven. If this were not true, you wouldn't live forever.

I'm talking about one of the most basic things in the gospel of Jesus Christ that, when you and I accepted Him, we were not only justified but we received His life. We became a child of the living God. We were partakers of the divine nature; and we were joined eternally, completely, perfectly to God's blessed Son.

I repeat it, no ceremony or work that you or I could do will ever do a thing like this. This is an operation of God. The One who raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, far above all principality and power, is the One who picks up all sinners, whoever they are, wherever they are, whatever kind of folk they are. If they put their trust in the Savior, this is exactly what God does.

This is an operation of God. And I want you to know it. I want you to revel in it. I want you to rejoice in it. My friend, just go and look in the looking glass—I don't care how you look, go on and just say to yourself, "Thank God, I'm a child of One who is God. I've been eternally joined to His Son, and one of these days I'm going to see Him in all His glory. And when I see Him, I'm going to be transformed to be just like Him."

Somebody aptly says, "Well, until then, what are you going to do?"

Then I'm going to live unto God, of course. That's what Paul says. In order to live unto God, we've been separated by the death of Christ from all that belongs to the old. We are new men, new women in Christ. Now you revel in that today, won't you?

Please remember, your acceptance with God is never on the ground of water baptism when you were an infant or younger person or walking down an aisle or what you have done or hope to do, not even on your godliness. You stand there upon all the merit and beauty of the Son of God.

Now I've had friends tell me that that's a dangerous doctrine. Then tell me, why is it in the Bible? And why does the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans spend so much time on it? And in Galatians and in Corinthians and now in Colossians? Because of the fact that when you and I accepted the Savior, God did a perfect job. And, as far as God is concerned, He never sees a Christian apart from His Son. And how was it accomplished? We were joined to Christ in His death.

When He died and met the demands of the law for us, we died too. Death severed our relationship to the law. Death severed our relationship to sin as a master. Death severed our relationship to the world and all that belongs to it. We belong to glory. I want you to believe it. God wants you to believe it.

If I know I'm a child of God, then I want to live as a child of God. If I say I'm just the son of Adam and that's all I am, then I'm going to live like a son of Adam and that would be in sin. You know that. We're children of God. And don't tell me that someone said such a doctrine is dangerous, that it leads the people of God to sin.

My friend, listen. He tells us this to keep us from sinning. Listen to this word of Paul's in Galatians 2:19: "I through the law am dead to the law." Death has severed the relationship. What for? "That I might live unto God." In the book of Hebrews, we have been delivered from dead works. What for? To serve the living and true God. And you can't serve the living and true

God if you're occupied with dead works. You can't serve the living and true God if you're occupied with the law.

The only way you can serve God, my friend, is to take your position as being joined to the living Son of God—united to Him and His life and His power. By His Spirit, we live pleasing to God. I'm speaking as a man who has had some experience with people. After being pastor of a church for a great many years and having dealt with hundreds upon hundreds of families and people, my friend, I want to tell you today as far as I know the scripture, that this is the ground upon which we must start if we're going to live godly in Christ Jesus with a life that is steady, where the pattern of our life will be on a high plane—living for God, living for the glory of God, living for the glory of His Son.

But we must take our place in Him, so that He can live out His life through us. Remember, no man can imitate Christ. Christ's life defies imitation, but that life of His can be reproduced by the Spirit of God who lives in us. As Paul could say again in Galatians 2:20 that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Will you remember that?

Now then, let's get back to our lesson. We've been dealing with our union with Him, a new life, a new standard, all done by God. Now we have added to that (in case some are worrying about their trespasses) what the Apostle Paul says in verse 13:

2:13. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

He forgave you every trespass. My, what a joy! We ought to kick the skies for joy. Every trespass, every sin has been forgiven. You see, sin and rebellion have been done away through our Savior's work at the cross and our having been joined to Him; now it's an individual matter. He has forgiven us every trespass. We had that in Colossians 1:14. We have through Him the forgiveness of sins.

Look at these verses: In Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye;" in Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" in Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

And he goes on to speak of putting away certain things and then he ends up by saying: “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32); in 1 John 2:12, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake;” in the 103rd Psalm and the third verse: “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;” and verse 12 of the same Psalm: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

And listen, He not only forgave us our trespasses, but He destroyed all the evidence of those things that were against us, in verse 14.

2:14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

You see, the law of God said you must die; the law condemned; the law cursed; the law had no mercy. But in Christ’s death He destroyed all the evidence that we ever were sinners. Everything that was against us has been taken out of the way. You see, if you and I were to stand before God today, before the court of God, nobody—no angel, no man, no demon—can produce any evidence that Christians were ever sinners. I’m asking for proof. They can’t find any proof because Jesus Christ has destroyed the evidence. He took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. I repeat it. Everything that was against us, which was contrary to us, He took out of the way and nailed it to His cross. My, how thoroughly and eternally has He dealt with the sin question.

I wish in some way I could make this clear. You know, if you and I were to go down to a court and somebody were to accuse you of something you not only had never done, but never dreamed of doing, you could stand before the judge and demand, “Produce evidence that I’ve done this thing.” And if there’s no evidence, then there can’t be any judgment. Isn’t this wonderful? When a Christian, when a child of God, stands in the presence of God, a righteous God, a just and holy God, no created intelligence in God’s universe can produce any evidence that we ever were a sinner.

Brother, that gives assurance; that’s joy—joy in the Holy Spirit. That makes one want to worship and magnify the Son of God for what He accomplished. This is what Jesus did. He not only put away our sins and made it possible for you and me to find forgiveness, but everything, everything that was against us, He took out of the way, nailing it to His cross. The evidence has been destroyed. No wonder we can sing, “Hallelujah, what a Savior.” Do you ever sing it?

“All hail the power of Jesus name, let angels prostrate fall; bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.” Why should we do that? Because He’s the only Savior; He’s a perfect Savior; He’s the eternal Savior. How lovely to be able to say, “He’s my Savior!”

Now you revel in this today, will you? Just get down and thank God, saying, “Father, I’m so glad the Lord Jesus did a perfect job. He not only put away my sins, but no evidence can be produced before Thee that I ever was a sinner.” Hallelujah, what a Savior. Enjoy Christ for Himself and praise Him forever. Not only did He forgive us our sins and join us to Himself and destroy the evidence, but in verse 15, at the cross He triumphed over all the forces of hell. Did you ever think of this? Let us read the verse:

2:15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

You know, a verse comes to me from John 12. You remember the Lord here is giving one of His final words and I read these words: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:31-33). The prince of this world? He is talking about Satan, the devil, the adversary. Do you ever stop to realize that at the cross Jesus Christ not only put away your sin, He not only bore your judgment; He not only made it possible for sinners to be reconciled to God, He not only made it possible for believers to be declared righteous before God and have life eternal; but He also, on the ground of that work, destroyed thoroughly and completely and eternally the forces of hell. He triumphed over them all. Hence the powers of darkness have no more power over Christ. And may I add, not over us either.

“Upon this rock I will build my church.” That’s the revelation of His purpose: He’s going to build a church. In Hebrews 2:14, 15, I read that our Savior became a man “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” You see, Satan has been shorn of his power over God’s people. Read again in Ephesians 6:10-18, where the Apostle Paul speaks about the enemy that we have and the armor where each piece speaks of Christ.

May I just go back for a moment? Remember that Satan (and if you want to examine his character and what he was, you can find that in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28), Lucifer, was the highest form of creation. Apparently he

had a throne and a kingdom. In fact, the Lord Jesus called him the prince of this world three times. The Apostle Paul called him the god of this age. Now Satan is the one who ruined paradise by causing Adam and Eve to sin. And then before the flood, he defiled the whole human race; and Noah was the only perfect man in his generation.

At the tower of Babel you see Satan working in the human race when they built a tower to reach the throne of God. They were going to pull God from His throne. They were going to reach the very heavens to defy God. And down through the centuries Satan has opposed the people of God. You can't, for example, read the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians (2:18) without realizing that one of the great adversaries—the greatest adversary we have—is the devil. He has opposed all that Christ did, but at the cross Satan was defeated. At the cross he was shorn of his power. Christ stripped him of the spoils and released the captives.

You remember in Matthew 16, we have the first time in the New Testament where our Savior begins to reveal to us His purpose and His program. If I may quote for a moment from that passage: (Matthew 16:16: “And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”). Here you have the revelation of the person of Christ. Our Lord's answer was: “Upon this rock I will build my church.” That's the revelation of His purpose: He's going to build a church. In Hebrews 2:14, 15, I read that our Savior became a man “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” You see, Satan has been shorn of his power over God's people. Read again in Ephesians 6:10-18, where the Apostle Paul speaks about the enemy that we have and the armor where each piece speaks of Christ.

There comes following that the revelation of His program, and for the first time in the New Testament we read that He's going to suffer at the hands of men. He's going to die and be buried and be raised again from the dead. When He made this statement, Peter said, “This be far from thee, Lord.”

Now mark the answer of the Savior to Peter when He said (Matthew 16:23: “But he turned, and said unto Peter, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.’”). Now Peter was not Satan, but Satan was using Peter to try to thwart the purpose of God in His Son.

You remember in the 4th chapter of Matthew, our Savior withstood the devil, the adversary, in the wilderness and overcame him by using the

Word of God. You remember His answer was, "It is written." Our Savior was tested as a man. He was tested as the Messiah. He was tested as God. And each time He just referred back to the scriptures—His own Word.

You remember Revelation 1:18, where it speaks of our Savior who has the keys, the authority, of death and of hell. Who had them before? I take it from the scriptures that Satan had them before. May I go back to that verse in Hebrews 2:14? Our Savior became a man "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And at the cross Jesus Christ defeated Satan, triumphing over all His enemies. In fact, the Apostle Paul puts it so wonderfully in Colossians 2:15: "He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

I wonder when Paul wrote that if he didn't have in mind the Roman generals when they came back from the wars. You remember, when they returned from their victorious wars, having conquered certain nations, they brought back the kings and the princes of those nations. Then there would be a general holiday, and the chariots would go down the streets with the Roman generals who had come home victorious. There were, chained to their chariot wheels, the kings and princes of the countries they had defeated. They led them forth in triumph. And it's just as if our Savior chained the forces of hell and led them forth in triumph.

Now, my Christian friend, you and I can be sure of an eternal liberation from sin and its power, from death and its fear, and from Satan, his power and darkness. Oh, what a Savior we have. And if we go back over the verses in this chapter from verse nine right down to verse 15, you can see this whole setup that "in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are filled full in Him." But how can we be filled full in Christ when we were under the forces, under the authority of Satan and death and hell?

That's what He goes on to say. That through the cross, through His work at Calvary, He put away our sin and defeated Satan and his authorities and his powers. He also overcame the world, so that you and I can now stand in the presence of a victorious Savior, forgiven every trespass, joined to the victorious One, having life and eternal satisfaction in Him. So we know, my Christian friend, when we come into the presence of God, no one can produce any evidence that we ever were a sinner. Satan and all his forces have been defeated. And now death and hell are under the authority of our Savior.

My, what a comfort, what a joy, what a peace that Jesus Christ carries on His girdle the authority, the keys of death and of hell. And with our being joined, united to the Savior, these forces will not have any place in the life of any of us believers.

Now let's start on another aspect of truth in this chapter, continuing the warnings which the Apostle Paul started in verse 4. Now in verse 16 he begins to warn us against legalism, and it's a very practical thing. Allow me to read verses 16 and 17.

Because of our union with Christ, because we belong to the eternal God, because our Savior has all authority in heaven and earth, because the revelation of God is far superior to all that man is and all that man does, hence . . .

2:16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days:

2:17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Will you notice, please, the warning against legalism. Because we are in Christ, let nobody bring you into bondage such as you have in verse 16 with respect to what you eat and what you drink, with respect to holy days or new moons or the shadow of Sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come. The body is of Christ. Why bother with the shadows when the real has come?

Now in the Old Testament the Jews took the shadows as foretelling what would come, and the trouble today is that people are still occupied with the shadows instead of Christ. They're still occupied with the law instead of grace. This is an amazing thing. You take, for example, the question of meats and drinks and what you eat and what you wear. People bring themselves into such bondage. In fact, sometimes they make themselves appear so holy that you're beneath them. This is not the grace of God; this is not the salvation of Christ; this is not Christianity.

I remember when I became a Christian, I was up on the prairies of Canada. When I accepted the Lord and went out preaching the gospel, a man told me that I couldn't be a good preacher of the Word of God and I couldn't walk before God in holiness if I wore neckties, and so forth and so on. As if what I wore had anything to do with the preaching of the gospel. Now I do think we should use our heads. I think we should be very conservative on some things when it comes to dress. I don't think we should dress in order to

attract people's attention to ourselves or to detract from the person of Christ. This is not the issue. Don't deal with the shadows when the real has come.

My friend, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, anything that you need to stand in the presence of God, perfect and complete is all found in Christ. The wonderful grace of God has made this provision. Sin, death, and hell, what have you, are all behind us. We're new men, new women in Christ. Therefore let no man judge you. Beware of legalism.

Now when I say this, I think I must also say that it's possible for some people who have been delivered from legality to go to the other extreme and judge everybody else who does this or doesn't do that. Some things we don't do, some places we don't go, not because it's going to hurt our salvation or our position in Christ. We do it because we love the Savior; and these things, we believe, do not glorify Him.

It's not a question of legality; it's a question of our having love for the Savior and of our not becoming a stumbling block to other Christians, to other believers. If you want to follow that through, you should take the 14th and 15th chapters of the book of Romans and the book of I Corinthians where the Apostle Paul deals with it.

Now I'm just suggesting it here, because he warns against legality and against adding anything—ceremonies or works or anything—to what Christ has accomplished for us. You can't add or take from anything that we have in Christ Jesus. It is settled once for all, forever. And because Christ is sufficient and because Christ can satisfy my heart and life and because Christ is with me every day of the week and because I'm united to the Savior, therefore, says Paul, let no man judge you with respect to what you eat or what you drink or in respect to holy days or new moons or Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come.

What is the Sabbath day? The Sabbath day is a sign of a covenant, a legal covenant between God and the people of Israel. This is a national sign, as found in Exodus 31. And again I might remind you, we Christians are not Israel. We don't belong to Israel. We belong to the church of Christ. And the Lord never gave the church of Christ the ordinance of the Sabbath day. This belongs to the Mosaic economy. It was a sign, an evidence, of a covenant between God and Israel. And Paul says that Christ's having come, having finished and satisfied every demand of the law, then no one should judge us with respect to Sabbaths.

“Well, Mr. Mitchell, don’t you keep the Sabbath?”

No. Not in the sense in which you are asking me the question. There’s no question about the fact that the Sabbath day starts on Friday evening at sundown and goes to Saturday evening at sundown. What most Christians keep today is what we call Sunday, the first day of the week, remembering that we have a risen Christ. But there are no laws of the Sabbath for the church. The church is joined to Christ and is complete. The Apostle is talking about our coming into a place of legalism. Or, as I might say and as he says here, don’t be occupied with the shadows when the real has come.

Now the Sabbath day is a day of rest; that’s true. There’s no mention made of the Sabbath day, by the way, from the second chapter of Genesis when God created the heavens and the earth and finished with man until you come to the book of Exodus where you have mention of the Sabbath in chapter 16. For the Sabbath day was given as a day of rest for the people of Israel. There was no punishment, no penalty attached. It was given as a gift.

When some of the Jews broke that day, they disobeyed God. They went out to gather manna on the Sabbath day. But God did not judge them because it was not yet a law. When you come down to Exodus 19 when the law was given, then you have the law of the Sabbath. A man is gathering sticks on the Sabbath day—take him out and stone him. I repeat it, there’s no mention made of the Sabbath from the second chapter of Genesis until you come right through to the 16th chapter of Exodus where it’s given as a gift. Then in chapter 19 and 20, it’s given as a law. Right on through your Old Testament it’s a law, the Sabbath.

When you come to Christianity and the resurrection of our Savior, you have the end of the Sabbath; it becomes a mere shadow. When you come to Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4, the writer says: “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God,” and we have ceased from our own works as God did from His (4:9-10).

So let us not be occupied with shadows when the real has come. Now let us be occupied with the Savior. And may I say this, my friend, when you’re occupied with the Savior, if your heart’s affection is upon Him, I’m not going to worry about how your feet track because, if you’re occupied with the Savior, you’ll live a life that will be pleasing to God. You’re not going to be worried about shadows. What you’ll be concerned about is how you can please your Savior in whom you dwell and to whom you have been joined. This is the fourth warning in the chapter against legalism.

Now in verses 18 and 19, he warns against false mysticism. If the warning against legalism is a practical lesson, the warning against false mysticism is doctrinal. And again we come to this question of our union with the Savior and the wonders of the sufficiency of the work of Christ, irrespective of what the world thinks or what the world does.

Now in verses 18, 19, he writes:

2:18. Let no man beguile (rob) you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen (and doesn't know), vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

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

Here Paul is warning us against false mysticism, delving into things that you can't know and can't see. He says it produces a false humility, and he warns us against this false humility. As some people say, "You know, I'm too sinful to come to Christ. So I must come through angels; I must come through saints."

Now this is a manifestation of pride—a false humility. It's a manifestation, indeed, of self-righteousness.

You say, "I'm so sinful, I'm so weak, I'm so frail. I can't come into the presence of God. I can't come to Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who has all authority over heaven and earth; so I must come through angels, holy angels. I must come through saints who are now in the presence of God."

Now I say this is not humility. This is pride; this is self-righteousness. In fact, we have those who worship angels; and such a thing, my friend, dethrones Christ. We even have them worshipping saints, worshipping Mary, the mother of our Lord. This dethrones the Savior. Indeed, to worship angelic beings and Mary is to deny our union with Christ. He is our head. Christ is the One who is our life, and every believer is a member in particular of the body of Christ.

You know, Jesus said in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me..." Who? "All ye that labor (are weary) and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In John 6:37, Jesus said: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You don't have to go to angels or saints. You come directly to the Savior. In Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." In 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one

God, and one mediator between God and men (not angels, not Mary, not saints), the man Christ Jesus.”

You see, my friends, we've been joined to Christ. Christ is the Savior; and if I were teaching Hebrews, I would point out that the whole book is dealing with this question of our being able to come into the presence of God because we have Jesus Christ as our representative. As Hebrews 9:26 says: “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 7:25 says: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

You see, we have a Savior who's our rock; He's our fortress; He's our forerunner; He's our High Priest; He's our Advocate. And this idea that people say you can't come to God except through angels or saints—I say, this is a false humility. It's a denial of the headship of Christ. Notice what verse 19 says:

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

May I point you again to Ephesians 4:11-13, and then to verses 15 and 16 where God has given to the church certain men. First of all, you have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. What for? For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry until they all come to the stature of the perfect man. This is an experimental thing. In 15 and 16: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

In other words, if I may put it this way, quoting from Romans chapter 12 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12, which deal with this fact that every Christian is a particular member in the body of Christ. May I again present to you these facts, my Christian friend, you who put your trust in the Savior, that you have a place in the body of Christ which nobody else can take. You are a particular, precious member of the body of Christ. Christ is your head. He's your life. He is your righteousness. All that you need is found in Christ. Even your daily need is found in Christ. You dethrone Christ; you put Christ

out of His rightful place if you turn to angels or saints or somebody else. Christ is the Head; we are joined to Him. He's your life, and whatever you need is found in Christ.

And I say again, you have a particular place in the body of Christ. You are a spiritual entity in Christ. I can't take your place; you cannot take my place. You are an entirely different personality from me. You have a particular place in the body of Christ, in the church of Christ. So do I. So does every other Christian, and nobody can take our place. And what God wants you to do is to function in the place He has given to you; and the only way you can function in the body of Christ for its increase and for its edification is for you to walk in fellowship with your Head, Christ Jesus.

Just as my arms and my legs are controlled by my head, so every member in the body of Christ comes under the Savior. He's the Head of the church, the body of Christ. And you are members in particular. And when you and I do not hold Christ as the Head, as the object of our affection and devotion, then we turn from Him to things or to saints or to angels or to some other thing. In other words, by that action we are denying the very indwelling Spirit of God—the One who comes to make our bodies His sanctuary.

You see, I'm dealing with a very serious thing; and let me repeat it just one more time. On the surface it looks very holy for one to come and say, "I'm so sinful, I'm so weak. I can't come to Christ, I'm just too weak and sinful to come to Christ, so I must come through an angel or I must come through Mary or I must come through some saints or some other person." This is a denial of relationship to Christ. This is a denial of union with Christ. In fact, it signifies one is not occupied with Christ but occupied with one's self. It's a false humility. It's a false thing. And by our not holding Christ as our Head, as the One with whom we have fellowship, the One who is our very life, then we turn to the things of the flesh or we turn to some other anything and everything but Christ. We dethrone Christ; we dishonor Christ.

And Paul is pleading for this, that you and I shall not dishonor Christ by a false humility, but that we be occupied with Christ as our Savior and as our Head. Let Him live out His life in you. There will be no false humility.

"Well, aren't you proud when you say you're righteous in Christ?"

No, I'm just willing to believe God, that's all. I believe that Christ did a perfect work, that He's sufficient for us; and all that I need and all that you

need to stand before God is in Christ. So don't run off after angels or the saints who have gone before us.

Remember, you have the same standing of Paul and Peter and the rest of them. You are in the same Savior and the same Lord and the same church and the same body. You may have a different function, a different responsibility to them; but certainly they have no greater standing before God than you have. Walk with Him today. Revel in Him today. Enjoy the life of Christ today, my friend. Only thus can your joy be filled full.

Now we come to the last warning in the chapter. And may I read again from verse 20 down to verse 23 of Colossians 2:

2:20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

2:21. (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

2:22. Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

2:23. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

And here we have a practical thing again. I call this false asceticism, the folly of seeking holiness through giving up things. May I tell you, my friend, you can't improve the flesh in God's sight. We find all our holiness and our need for holiness in the Savior. The flesh profits nothing.

You remember Romans 8:7, 8: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." In Romans 7:18, Paul says: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." In Philippians 3, the first few verses, God has no confidence in the flesh. Often those who have accepted the Savior but have never been taught our wonderful union in Christ try to seek holiness by giving up things as if I give this desire up, if I give this fleshly thing up, I'll become more holy.

No, my friend, you're never holy by giving up things.

"Do you mean to say, sir, that I'm not any more holy when I don't go here and don't go there and don't do this and don't do that?"

That's correct. You're living in religious flesh. Now I'm not holding any brief that you should go here and you should go there, and you should do this and you should do that; that's between you and God. But if you're doing that to merit favor with God, if you're doing that to try and make

yourself holy, it's a false thing; it's a false asceticism. Not only so, but you have no pleasure. It doesn't satisfy you. You want to do certain things, but you don't do them because you're scared of the result or you're fearful of what somebody else will think about you.

Now I'm not dealing with the fact that Christians should guard themselves in where they go and what they do because of not being a stumbling block to other Christians. The Apostle is not talking about that. He's talking about something here where people are doing things to try to be holy. They're occupied with themselves. As we had it before, they're occupied with their own self-righteousness. They're subject to ordinances.

Let me say it again: If the death of Christ has separated me from the old, from the world, from the flesh, from sin as a master, from death because of Adam's race—if the death of Christ has severed these relationships—then I'm now a new man in the risen, glorified Christ.

If Christ is my Head, if Christ is my life, if Christ is my sanctification, if Christ is my redemption, if Christ is all I need, then why should I take the time and the effort to try and doll myself up to make myself believe and make others believe I am what I'm not? It is trying to make myself appear holy when I know I'm not, and I get no enjoyment out of it.

And I know what I'm talking about because I know people. You'd think their last day had come. They sit down with such a holy, sanctified look on their faces. They never smile; everybody is wrong but themselves. They're so holy they won't contaminate themselves, even with other Christians. They're so holy; they're satisfied just with themselves.

My friend, this is Pharisaical. This is what the Pharisees did. You remember the Pharisee who said in Luke 18:12, "I give tithes of all that I possess. I fast so many times a week. I do this and I do that." But Luke suggests he went away from the presence of God unjustified. He went away just the way he came. When the other man came before God and beat upon his breast, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," he took his place and depended upon God. He went home justified.

And I find so many Christians today who, in their desire to please God and in their desire to be holy, turn to some manmade doctrine on holiness and do not do what the Bible says—to be occupied with Christ. When a Christian is living in daily occupation with the Savior, he needn't worry where he is going to go nor what he will do or even what he will say because

the Spirit of God will be free to live through his life the very character of Christ.

This is Christianity—not what we do, but what Christ does in and through us. As Paul could say in Romans 6, that, as before we were saved, we yielded our members instruments of unrighteousness to sin, now, because we've been joined to Christ, we yield our lives, our members, our tongues, our minds, our arms, our legs, all that we are, yield our bodies unto God as those who are alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. But He's got to do it—not you, not me.

You see, what I'm pleading for is that I want your life to be full of joy. I want you to be available to the Spirit of God to do something in your life; and the Spirit of God can't do anything in your life if you're occupied with will worship, doing what you want to do, even to the neglecting of your body as they did in the early days, you remember, when monks would go off by themselves and live in caves.

Were they holy men? I want to tell you that if I can read church history correctly, when they went into these places and lived in caves, they took themselves with them; they took their sinful desires with them. And, my friend, listen. Going off alone away from this world and away from society is not going to make you more holy. You take your body with you, you take your desires with you, you take your will with you; and first thing you know, you're living a kind of life that is sinful. Christ is not the Head.

Now I believe in getting alone with the Lord. We don't do enough of that. We're in the world, but not of the world; and when you and I accepted the Savior, our bodies became the sanctuaries of God. First Corinthians 6:19 says, "Don't you know that your body is the sanctuary, the temple, of the Holy Spirit which you have of God." The Spirit of God is living in us. Now how can He live through us? I make myself or you make yourself available to God the Spirit. And, as you yield your body to Him, then He lives through you. Your own heart's affection is not occupied with yourself, but your heart is occupied with your Savior who is the Head. He's your life; He's all that you need.

What I want you to do, my friend, is to fall in love with Christ. I want you to take your position and believe what God says. You belong to Him; and Christianity, practical Christianity, is Christ living in and through His people. This is what Paul means in Philippians 2:12 when he says: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." What for? "Because it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure."

Now may you today, just for today, live this life pleasing to Him. Just stop your deadly doing and trust Jesus to do the job.

Now you say, "This is going to take a lot of faith."

Well, yes, it's a life of faith. That's true. This is what the life of faith is. The life of faith is a life living in fellowship with Christ. And I want you to have that joy and that blessing. I want you to be available to the Spirit of God to work in and through you to His good pleasure.

Colossians Three

Now we come to the third chapter of Colossians and I'm going to read the first four verses.

3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

3:2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

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

3:4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Now these four verses go together. I think they are the climax of chapters 1 and 2. We've been dealing with this question in chapter 2 about identification with Christ. His death has freed us from the past; and no ordinances, however important they may be, can add to the efficacy of the work of Christ.

Secondly, we found we have a new life in this risen Christ and we need nothing else. Christ can satisfy the longings of your heart. And be careful of anybody who says to you, "God has more for you." No, my friend, you find everything you need in Christ. And then the third matter we were taking up is that we do not belong to the world with all its philosophies. Please don't deny your true citizenship which is in heaven. To submit to the philosophies of the world, whether they be religious or otherwise, is a mere show of wisdom. The philosophies of men cannot eradicate evil nor put out evil passions. They are only in reality a show of pride, not humility. I mention this as we go into chapter 3, for here Paul comes right back to this question of our union with Christ.

Now in chapter 2:3 we had: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In verse 9 we had: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

In verse 19, we had that He is the Head of the church; and now, when we come to chapter 3, Paul takes up these things again—these verses which are so fundamental to spirituality and our union with Christ. In fact, in these three or four verses there are given to us perfect substitution and perfect identification. Just for example:

3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

3:2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3:3. Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Look at chapter 2:20a: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world . . ." In 2:12 we had: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

I want you to see that death has come in. We had this in Romans 6. We had it in 2 Corinthians 5. We had it in Galatians 2 and 5. These are verses we have used in past lessons with respect to the fact that when Christ died, we died in Christ. When He died on the cross, He was taking your place and mine. You see, He not only died for our sins, but He died for us.

Take this third verse: "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Now you do not crucify yourself. Crucifixion has already taken place. Paul could say in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ." In other words, when Christ died, we died. When Christ took your place, He had to die because you were a sinner and I was a sinner.

Now in chapter 3 not only is Paul dealing with perfect substitution, but he is dealing with new perfect identification. "If ye then be risen with Christ..." You see, to die with Christ involves also being raised with Christ. These are inseparable. A risen Christ is all that we need. And again I come back to it that we are eternally joined to this risen Christ. He's all I ever shall need for time and eternity. And you cannot add one thing to it. Will you believe me when I say that? Look at verse 4:

3:4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

When does Christ become our life? The moment we accept the Savior. Now you may not have experienced much of this new life. You may not have had the thrill of the knowledge that the life you have is the life of Christ. It may never have gotten hold of you that you are really alive in Christ. You are no longer dead in sins; you are alive in Christ. You have a new life. The past has been blotted out. Your sins and your iniquities will be remembered no more forever. No one can produce any evidence that you ever were a sinner. The past is gone. You are a new man; you are a new woman in Christ.

Oh, listen, friend, I know I've mentioned this—will you bear with me? I must repeat it because I know that the great majority of you folk for some reason or other have never gotten hold of the fact that you are really alive in Christ, that you belong to the glory, that your citizenship is in heaven and all that you need for time and eternity is found in Christ—even your daily needs. And when you turn from Christ to some man-made doctrine or some man-made holiness or some false humility or some ceremonial cleansing, remember you're turning from your Savior to what man builds up. You dethrone Christ. You dishonor Christ.

Oh, that you and I could see it day by day in practical life. That's what Paul says, "If you then be risen with Christ..." And you know, there's only one kind of folk who are raised and that's dead people. And if you tell me you have been raised with Christ in the purpose and plan of God, as God sees you risen, then you are joined to a risen Christ and the past is gone. Sin is no longer your master. The law has no more place in your life; the law with its curse is gone. The world with all its attraction has lost its power over you. You're a new man or you're a new woman in Christ. You've been raised with Christ; and, having been raised with Christ,

3:2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Set your affection upon One who is your life? That's what I'm trying to get to your heart.

Now we come to the practical side of it. I've been dealing with your position in Christ—joined to Him. But that brings a practical responsibility. Set your affection upon things above. Seek the heavenly things; seek the things of Christ. This is Christianity in practical living where Christ becomes the center of your affection and devotion. And it's a life of joy, it's a life of peace and it's a life of usefulness.

However frail you may be, won't you today just be occupied with the person of your wonderful Savior?

I remember somebody saying to a Bible teacher, "You're always looking up to heaven; you'd think you were in heaven. You're always talking about looking up, looking up."

"Yes," he said, "that's right. I'm one of those up there looking down. I've been joined to a risen Christ, the One who is on the right hand of God; and I'm just down here on business for Him to get you to look up."

I tell you it's a wonderful feeling, a wonderful thing to know that death and sin and hell have all lost their authority and power over the believer in Jesus Christ, over the one who has been joined to Christ.

That's why in Colossians 3:4 Paul says:

3:4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

We died with Him; we were raised with Him; and Ephesians 2 says that we're seated with Him. We live in Him and we're going to appear with Him when He comes in glory. My, what a salvation is this. It's all of God with not a thing for us to do except to accept Him and be joined to Him. What shall I do now that I've been joined to Christ, now that I belong to Him. What shall I do? So you have the answer in verses 1 and 2. It's a practical answer. Mark what he says:

3:1. Seek those things which are above. . . .

We're to seek the heavenly things where our life is. And by the way, this calls for action. That doesn't mean you sit down and twiddle your thumbs. That doesn't mean you sit down and say, "Well, God will take care of everything."

Now that I'm a child of God He asks for cooperation. Now that I belong to His family, now that I'm a son of God and an heir of God, now that Christ is my life and I belong to Him—that puts me in a position and puts you in a position of responsibility. We're to live on earth as a child of God.

How can we do that? Paul says we are to seek the above things, the heavenly things—where your life is. Now this is going to call for some action. Life always calls for action. If I say I'm alive in Christ, if I say I have eternal life, if I say I'm joined to the risen Christ, then that should be evident in some way or other. If your child lay on a table with no sign of life, what should you do? Why you'd immediately call the doctor in. You'd be alarmed. Why? Because there's no sign of life. When you and I accepted the Savior, my friend, we were joined to the eternal God and made partakers of the divine nature. His life has become our life. Christ Jesus our Savior is now our life. And when He shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory.

Now what? I'm to seek the things that are above. I'm to set my affection on things above, on eternal things, on heavenly things. I say this

calls for the will; this calls for some action; this calls for some diligence; this calls for some faith to set our hearts and our affections, not on things down here—passing things—but on Him.

Remember what 1 John 2:17 says: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Or in 2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we look not at the things which are seen,” the things that are temporal. They’re passing. They pass with the using. But we are eternal children of God. Then we ought to be dealing with eternal verities and seek the above things. Set your affection on things above. Get your heart occupied with Christ. This is what He wants you to do, not to look in at yourself all the time.

My friend, self-examination has its place; but self-occupation has no place—that’s dangerous. When a person is continually occupied with himself (and I say this kindly), he is on dangerous ground. For those of us who are Christians, we ought to be occupied with the Savior. I find Christians doing things they shouldn’t do. I find some Christians—and I’m not questioning the fact of their relationship to the Lord—are dishonoring Him. Their affections are not on Christ. They’re not seeking Christ; they’re not occupied with Christ. They’re occupied with themselves and the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world.

How in the world can a person be spiritual if he is going to be continually occupied with the carnal? You see, we’re children of God. Christ is our life. Now how is anybody else going to know that beside you and God? Do your neighbors know it? Do your friends know it? Does your family know that you belong to the Savior? How are you going to manifest it?

Cooperate with God. Seek. Set your affection. All Christ asked of Peter was, “Do you love me?” And, when I love Him, I’ll be obedient to His Word. If I set my affection on the living, glorified, exalted Savior, then my life will be transformed by the Spirit of God who lives in me.

So I plead with you today; set your affection on the things of God. Seek the heavenly things. Seek the above things. Enjoy your life in Christ today. And the Lord wonderfully bless you.

I see all around me people who are occupied with passing, transient things. My, they run, morning, noon and night, after them. Now it’s nice to have things. I know that. But what is the object of your life? Where are your affections? Have things become your idol? Things that are passing—are they

things that are taking up all your affection and devotion? Or does the Lord Jesus have a real place in your life?

Now I'm talking to those of you who have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior; and I ask you, very frankly, what place does He have in your life? Do you give Him any place at all in your affections? Do you have any time for Him?

May the Lord speak to your heart and my heart that we may be a heavenly people although living on earth where sin and corruption abound. And the more we see corruption abounding all around us, the more we should live godly in Christ Jesus. I recognize the frailty of the flesh. I recognize that circumstances affect people differently. I recognize so many are untaught Christians. A great majority of Christians are just babes in Christ. And may I again remind you what Peter says: "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby."

And again may I remind you of the illustration of a baby lying on its back with its feet up in the air; its hands are desperately trying to get to that bottle—it's just famishing for the milk. It wants to be fed. Its whole being cries out for it, and this is what Peter wants. For Peter says, "By the Spirit of God desire—desire. Be famishing for the Word of God. Get into it; feed your heart and feed your mind and feed your soul upon Christ Jesus, our precious Savior."

Now Paul comes to a practical exhortation. I'm going to read these verses. I'm in Colossians 3:5-10:

3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

3:6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

3:7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

3:8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

3:9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

3:10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

Here we come to an exhortation. We've been dealing thus far in the book of Colossians with some wonderful truths of redemption, of reconciliation, of our position in Christ, of our union with Christ, of the fact

that His life is our life. Now—what shall I do? So Paul gets very practical. “Hold onto the sentence of death in your members which are upon the earth.” We are to cut clear of evil, sinful, corrupt things. All these things belong to the old man, the old life.

He’s just said in verse 3, we have died and our lives are hid with Christ in God. Now this is an action of faith. That’s true. And because we are the children of God, let’s cut clear of “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”

Now may I suggest this to you? There are certain sins which God seems to have some real wrath about—these sins right here. We read of them in Mark 7; you read of them in Galatians 5; you read of them in Romans 1.

Today I’m living in a generation when these sins are just taken for granted. In fact, there are those even among preachers who declare that these sins are common and they’re natural. And that’s true—they are. But they’re sinful and they’re corrupt, and they shouldn’t even be in the lives or the thoughts of God’s people. Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, moral perversion, evil speaking, evil concupiscence, covetousness which is idolatry—we had this in Ephesians 5 where we read that the wrath of God is upon the children of disobedience because of these things.

Did you ever stop to think what caused the wrath of God to come upon the antediluvians way back before the flood? Look in the book of Genesis from chapter 4 down through chapters 6 and 7. Why did God send the flood upon the people? Because the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart of man were evil continually. How was it manifested? By moral corruption. And God blotted the human race out because of their corruption. There comes a time when the cup of iniquity is filled full and the wrath of God is evident.

You take, for example, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. You find them, you remember, in the book of Genesis. You read it in chapter 14 and you read it again in chapter 19. Here’s an amazing thing. Sodom and Gomorrah are given to us in Old Testament history as examples of how far sin can take people before the wrath of God falls upon them. The same sins that pertained to the antediluvians were evident in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And may I say, my friend, when you come through to chapter 15 of Genesis and you come to the question of the Amorites, we read there that Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were going to be strangers in a strange

land for more than 400 years until the cup of the Amorites was filled full. And when the cup of the Amorites was filled full, the judgment of God fell upon them.

May I bring it down to the present day? In our society and even in our colleges and universities and, I'm sorry to say, in some preachers that we have this question of looseness—convenient morals. Everything is not sin; these things are not sin if you love somebody. My friend, listen—this is not love. This is vice; this is sin; this is immorality; this is corruption. And I want to repeat again, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience because of these things. Now then, the wrath is because of their sins. Their destination is determined by their relationship to Christ. If you go to Revelation, chapters 16 and 20, you find the wrath of God upon men because of what they're doing. Their destination is clear.

May I quote from Revelation 20:12-15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Destination is determined by relationship to Christ, but the wrath of God is displayed because of the moral corruption among men. And you take, for example, in Romans 1 the pagan world was occupied with this very thing. What brought ruin on the ancient world? Moral corruption. What brought ruin on Egypt? What brought ruin on Assyria? What brought ruin on Babylon? What brought ruin on the Amorites? What brought ruin on the Roman Empire? The same thing that is pertaining today among men.

My friend, we as Christians are not to set our affections upon things down here. We are to set our affections upon things above. And when my heart and your heart are occupied with the person of Christ, then we will hold under the sentence of death these things that bring the wrath of God. Remember, the purpose of the wrath of God is vengeance because of justice. His character demands justice. And the result is everlasting punishment from the presence of the Lord—eternal darkness. Read the 49th Psalm.

There is no question about the justice of the wrath of God. All heaven is waiting to see the wrath of God poured out. You read the book of

Revelation and find out. And in 2 Thessalonians we have the reason why the wrath of God comes upon men—because they know not God, because they obey not the gospel, because they do not believe the truth, because they love not the truth. They have despised, neglected the provision of salvation which God has offered them. The character of this is everlasting.

I tell you, my friend, it's a terrible thing. As Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Do you ever think of it? Just think of it with eternity ahead of us.

What if I spurn Him? What if I neglect Him? Well, I read here the wrath of God is going to come upon the children of disobedience because of these sins, these terrible sins. And again I remind you, he talks about special sins here that force God in His very holiness and righteousness to come in vengeance upon men. I tell you again, it's a terrible thing.

I mentioned the 49th Psalm which speaks of the world and the man of the world. He calls his lands after his own name. He thinks and hopes he's going to live forever. But no, he's like the beast that perishes; he'll never see light. Did you ever think of the awfulness of living for eternity in impenetrable darkness? You see, God is light; and if I spurn Him who is light, if I reject the Son of God as my Savior, there's nothing left but eternal darkness. What a terrible thing!

That's why I read here in Colossians 3, after mentioning these terrible sins, He makes the statement:

3:6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.

And I'd like again to repeat the statement: The wrath of God comes upon men because of their sins, but their destination is determined by their rejection of Jesus Christ. Revelation 20:12 declares: "And another book was opened, which is the book of life." And every one whose name was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

The person you are witnessing to might tell you, "Well, I don't believe that a loving God would do that."

No, my friend, He doesn't need to do that. The unsaved, those who have spurned the Savior, will be glad to get out of the presence of God. How can you and I stand in the presence of a holy, righteous God in His blazing glory? Oh, the impossibility of it! Ask your friend, "How are you going to

stand?" Tell him, "That's why Christ came. This is the good news from God to you, my friend. Christ came for the express purpose of putting away your sins. He removed the barriers that were between you and God and made it possible through His sacrifice at the cross and His resurrection for a man and a woman to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior."

Tell him you are talking about a definite transaction. "I'm not asking you for an intellectual persuasion that the gospel is true. The gospel brings you into a responsibility. What will you do with Him of whom the gospel speaks? When you accept Him as your own personal Savior, then, my friend, you pass from death to life and will not come into judgment. God has made the provision. How could man save himself? How could man make any provision? Man is dead in sins; he is corrupt. What can he do? God must do it. And thank God, He has done it. This is a faithful saying and worthy of your accepting that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

What you must try to get across, my friend, is that God is righteous. He's not only loving, but He's righteous and holy. And when He looks down upon men in their terrible, moral corruption, the very character of God demands judgment, For which things' sake the wrath of God comes upon men because of their sins, just as in Sodom and Gomorrah, just like the old world before the flood. But their destination is determined by their relationship to Jesus Christ. This is why He came. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." I'm quoting John 3:36.

Now you notice in verse 7 of this chapter of Colossians 3, where Paul says that one time you were just like that:

3:7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

There was a time when you Colossians were in paganism, in moral corruption. You were vile; you were living in adultery, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, idolatry. That's where you lived one time, but now you're in Christ. You received a Savior. You're no longer in that position. Well, what shall I do now? We are to set our affection on things above. We are to seek the above things.

But in verse 8 he tells some practical things:

3:8. But now (being the children of God; now that Christ is your life; now that you're bound for eternal glory), ye also put off all these.

And he mentions these various things: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy talking. Don't lie any more, seeing you've put off the old man with his deeds. At one time we were children of disobedience like the rest, but there are things that belong to the old that we should get rid of—these six things: anger—don't get angry; wrath—don't get mad; malice—don't be filled with bitterness; blasphemy, lying and filthy talk. These are common sins to a lot of people. And as Christians we shouldn't live this way.

Somebody is going to say, “Well, I don't do those things. This is not my life. I don't get angry; I've got self-control. I have malice for no man, and I never blaspheme. And lying—I wouldn't even do that. Doesn't that make me a good Christian?” Of course not. Certainly not. A man can live a very moral life and still be wrong. These are the sins that characterize the flesh, the old man.

Remember the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3? He could say that he was well-born and that he didn't do any of these things. As touching the righteousness in the law, he was blameless. He was a zealot for God, but he was wrong. It's a sad thing when Christians lose their tempers and have malice in their hearts toward others. Maybe I'm talking to some of you church people today and you have a bitterness, a malice in your heart, toward other Christians. And you're not backward in telling a slightly dirty story. You deceive and you lie. These things belong to the world; they belong to the old creation.

Now put these off. They don't belong to you. These are the sins that characterized the old. What am I to do then?

3:10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

3:11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

3:12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

3:13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

3:14. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

3:15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

.You remember Ephesians 4:24: “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” And because of that, let us manifest it in our daily walk and conversation.

What should characterize the new man? In verse 8 we threw off six things, you remember. Now what shall I put on? Take off your rags of the old man and put on the brand new ones. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God...” as those chosen of God, “holy and beloved.” Put on compassion or as it says here, “bowels of mercies.” “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...”

Let me just stop here. What should characterize your life and my life as Christians? We’re not saved by giving up things—remember this. Nor are we saved by doing things. But these should be manifest in our life. God has made known that every believer in Christ is the elect of God, and you’re holy and you’re beloved. Did you ever stop to think of it? Mark the contrast: In verse 7 we walked in these terrible sins, but now in verse 12 we are to put on different things. What makes the difference between 7 and 12? We’ve accepted the Savior and now, because we belong to Him, because Christ is the center, we are His beloved.

Do you ever think about that? You remember in Romans 1:7 Paul says we are the beloved of God? Isn’t it wonderful that the holy, living, eternal, sovereign God who made the universe and upholds it by the Word of His power just delights in calling you and me His beloved? It’s beyond our reckoning. It’s beyond our comprehension that a holy, sovereign God—the eternal God—should look upon you and me who have lived lives of rebellion and sin. Now He’s redeemed us, and He says we’re His beloved.

I don’t know of any place where He calls angels that, angels who excel in strength, angels who always do His bidding. I don’t know of any place where He calls them His beloved. Wonderful thing, isn’t it? My friend, just say to yourself, “God Almighty loves to call me His beloved.” Revel in that for a moment, will you? You’re God’s beloved, called saints—holy—that’s saintly. Christ is the center and because we’re joined to Christ, because we’re in Christ, He calls us His beloved.

Now I’m not surprised then when I come to John 13:1 and read that John wrote of Jesus that having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them clean through to the end. Isn’t that wonderful? In I John 3:1, we read, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” We’re His beloved.

You know, I just feel like pausing there. Why don't you and I, wherever we are, whoever we are, just keep this in our minds today—I'm God's beloved. Because I'm in His Son and joined to His Son, I'm His beloved. Christ is my life; He put away my sins. I'm no longer a child of wrath, but I'm the son of One who is God.

You know in human life we love to sacrifice for those who are our beloved ones. You love your wife, you love your children, and you go out of your way to sacrifice and even lay down your life for them. Do you ever stop to think of it? You're so beloved of God that He laid down His life for you and for me, and as the beloved of God He asks us to do just a few things. It isn't hard, you know, when you love somebody—it isn't hard to do things for them, is it? It isn't hard to sacrifice for the one you love. You don't boast about these sacrifices for the one you love. You think about the one you love, not your sacrifices.

And sometimes I hear Christians boasting about their sacrifices for God. Why boast about the things you do for Him? Why, it's a delight, it's a joy, it's an honor. I just want you to know the Savior, and I want you to love Him; I want you to walk before Him. You're in Him. God loves to call you, to call me, His beloved.

We want to live unto God, but who can live unto God except those who are under the grace of God? You remember the Apostle Paul could say in Galatians 2:19, "I through the law am dead to the law..." For what purpose? "That I might live unto God." I've been separated from the law of Moses for the purpose of living unto God. Legalism makes you occupied with yourself or it makes you occupied with others. But the grace of God causes you to be occupied with the Savior. In the book of Hebrews He has delivered us, saved us, redeemed us from dead works. What for? That we "might live unto God."

The more I see what we are in Christ, the more I want to live for Him. For example, take this thought which we've just been discussing: As the elect, the beloved of God, if God wants to call me His beloved—and He's made you and me the object of His love and affection—how does that affect you? When people say they love you, does that mean you've got to go out and do something bad to them and to others? Of course not. And when it becomes a mutual thing, there's no such thing as sacrifice. We do it because we love. We have a law inside of us; we don't need a club on the outside to make us do something. There's a law of love inside the life that is in Christ.

We have a new principle of operation. Instead of being clubbed by the law of do and don't, we have a law inside of us.

Just like a mother, for example, if a policeman were to come to the door of a woman who has a little baby and tell that woman, that mother, did she know there was a law that she had to take care of her baby. She would say, "I don't care about knowing or not knowing the law. I don't have to have a law, nor do I have to have a policeman to tell me how to take care of my baby. There is that in me, there's that love within me for my baby which causes me to take care of him."

Now as Christians, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This is in Romans 5:5. And now we have a new motive for living, a new motive for serving God, a new motive for doing things for people. Why? The new motive is love. So I read here in these verses, verse 12:

3:12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies (compassion), kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

You know, we need a lot of that today—compassion, kindness. It doesn't cost you to be kind, does it? Oh, it's a wonderful thing to meet people who are really kind. It's a quality that you love to see in somebody else. Well, have it in yourself, too. Be kind and have humbleness of mind, not being puffed up, not being proud. And connected with that is meekness. You remember the place to learn meekness is at the feet of Jesus, for He said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." Be long-suffering. You remember that 1 Corinthians 13 says, "Love suffereth long and is kind." It doesn't blow up; it doesn't remember.

"Forbearing one another." Don't say, "Well, I'll put up with you. Being a Christian, I guess I have to put up with you." That isn't love—that isn't love. You're covering yourself on that. Forbear one another. Having been a pastor for many years, I've seen how cruel some of God's people can be. Did you know that? You'd be amazed how cruel some Christians can be to other Christians. And most of the time they do not understand the background, the problems, the circumstances, the things under which those other Christians may have to live. We sit in judgment like judges and we can be cruel, not kind, not meek. We don't have humbleness of heart. We're not longsuffering—we're shortsuffering. We don't bear with each other's infirmities.

Remember this. The Apostle says, "Bear with each other's infirmities and thus fulfill the law of Christ," which is, of course, the law of love. Put on therefore all these things: compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. And then notice:

3:13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

"How often shall I forgive my brother," said Peter. "Seven times?"

And the Jesus said, "Seventy times seven." That's 490 times. And what shall I do then?

Well, brother, when you have forgiven your brother 490 times, you come and ask me and I'll tell you what to do next. And I'll just quote you this verse: "Even as Christ forgave you." How often do you expect Christ to forgive you? Every time? And thank God He does it every time. Every time you come and confess your sin He always forgives you. He never gets tired of your coming to Him, and He just loves to restore you to fellowship. He loves to put His arms around you and love you.

You know, just like mom. You remember when mom licked you? She chastened you? She disciplined you? You didn't run to dad. He'd have given you another licking. You run to mother. Why? Because you knew mother's love for you was beyond all comprehension. You snuggled your face in mother's bosom and she took you in her arms and she loved you. You cried and you sobbed. But she was the one who licked you; she was the one who chastened you. Yes, but you knew she loved you and you ran to mom.

Did you ever think about the Lord? The prophet says, "A mother may forget her child, but I will not forget thee." I tell you, it's a wonderful thing to have such a Savior. And how shall I forgive you; how shall you forgive me? How shall I forgive my brother? Seventy times seven? Yes, and beyond that: "Even as God in Christ forgave you."

You remember, we had that in Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In other words, tie the whole thing up with love. It's as if you would put on a garment, your robe, as they would in that day; and then you would tie it with a cord to keep your clothes around you. All right. You put on all these things: compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness,

longsuffering, forbearing, forgiving one another—and then put on love. Tie the whole thing together with love.

Oh, I tell you, my friend, it's a wonderful thing to be with a group of Christians where they love each other. As they said in the early days, "See how they love one another." My, what a wonderful thing it is to be in a family of God's people where they're not fighting and backbiting and devouring one another, criticizing one another, scandalizing each other. No, no, but forbearing one another, forgiving one another, trying to understand one another, and having that love that delights the heart of God.

Oh, listen, you are the beloved of God. How then shall I live? How shall I act toward my fellow Christian? Here it is—manifesting that love. And then he goes on in the next verse to say that the peace of God should rule in your hearts.

In going through this book of Colossians it may be that some of you have thought, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, you're asking the impossible of me. For example, in verse 8 of Colossians 3 we were to put off six things:

3:8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

3:9. Lie not one to another.

And now you tell me to put on eight things as the beloved of God. Yes. As the beloved of God I'm to put on:

3:12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

3:13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

3:14. And above all these things, put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness.

You say, "Why, this is supernatural." That's right. I wouldn't deny that for the world. It is supernatural. But, my friend, the Christian life is a supernatural life. I've oftentimes said that the life of Jesus defies imitation. That's true. But it can be reproduced by the Son of God who lives in you. And because you and I are joined to Christ, because His life has become our life, because God never sees us in any other place but in Christ, because we are the children of One who is God, and because we are His beloved, then it's not asking too much that these eight things in these verses, verses 12 and 13, should be ours. And then we tie the whole thing together with love.

Now the unsaved are dominated by the flesh, by sinful things, by corrupt things. But we have the Son of God indwelling us, and He should dominate our life. And now Paul adds, after having said all these things:

3:15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Be willing to put to one side your desires for the purpose of a unanimity of spirit in the assembly. How else can the Holy Spirit work in our midst if love doesn't arbitrate? Why isn't God moving in our midst like He wants to move? Because God's people are at odds with one another. May I change the wording here? Let the peace of God arbitrate in your hearts. You see, the moment you and I accept the Savior, we have peace with God. But now the peace of God is something that we experience day by day.

We had that in the book of Philippians 4:7, where the Apostle says: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Let the peace of God arbitrate; let the peace of God act like an umpire. You see, we're members of the same body. We belong to the same Savior. Every believer is an object of the affection and love of God. We are all His beloved. The Son of God has come to live in us; we've been joined together. Now let His love arbitrate, act like an umpire.

Am I talking to some of you Christians today, and you belong to a Christian assembly of some kind (I don't care what label you call it), but you're having a little bit of trouble? I have the privilege of going out, holding Bible conferences in different places, and every once in a while I'm asked to arbitrate. I'm asked to sit in on a board meeting and listen to them discuss certain things. And sometimes the spirit of the meeting is not very good because somebody has rights; he declares he has rights and he's going to stand upon his rights. But there's no love. It's a hard thing. Let love arbitrate. And you know what? Love is willing to sacrifice. Don't break up the unanimity of spirit in an assembly because of what you want or somebody else wants. Let love arbitrate between you.

Are you at logger-heads with some Christian? Two Christians? You don't get along? Maybe in your own family? Maybe you belong to a Christian family; maybe Dad, Mom, you and the kids, you're all in love with the Savior, but for some reason you don't get along. Why don't you let love arbitrate? It's a practical thing. It may be that everybody is wanting his own way, being selfish and self-willed. Let love arbitrate.

If you're the beloved of God, and the whole body of Christ is the beloved of God, why doesn't love arbitrate? Why doesn't love come in as an umpire? Be willing to put to one side your desires for the purpose of a unanimity of spirit in the assembly. How else can the Holy Spirit work in our midst if love doesn't arbitrate? May I change the wording here? Let the peace of God arbitrate in your hearts. You see, the moment you and I accept the Savior, we have peace with God. But now the peace of God is something that we experience day by day.

Now here he says, "Let love, let the peace of God arbitrate in your hearts, to the which you are also called." And remember, love never compromises the truth. And where love is, you have peace. He's the God of peace who always is with you, says Philippians 4:7. And as He arbitrates that love is evident. Oh, what a wonderful joy it is to come to a Christian assembly where there is love, where nobody is trying to get ahead of the other. There's that family relationship, that wonderful union in Christ. Ah, my friend, let's take these two verses, shall we, verses 14 and 15 of Colossians 3. He's been talking about forgiving one another, about longsuffering, kindness and forbearance, and now—let love tie you all together and "let the peace of God rule (arbitrate) in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body (you belong to the same body, the same group); and be thankful."

Do you ever stop to think how thankless most of God's people are? Somebody says, "Well, what have I got to be thankful for?" Friend, a great deal. If you've loved the Savior, you've taken Christ as your Savior, you've got much to thank the Lord for. Do you remember Romans 1 where we have the declension of the human race? Do you know what the first step down was? They became unthankful. First of all, they knew God; but they glorified Him not as God and became unthankful. They became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. And professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The first step down—became thankless. Do you thank the Lord for everything?

"Well, Mr. Mitchell, you don't mean that I should thank the Lord in a restaurant?"

Yes, why not? Don't you thank Him for your food? Don't you thank Him for the shelter you have and the raiment you wear and the job you have and the family you have and the church to which you belong, the truth you've received? Oh, one could go on. God deliver us from being unthankful. Be thankful!

So as I just finish this whole section—let us not as Christians be guilty of these five things manifested in verse 8. Let's put them off like an old shoe; put them off like an old coat, and put on a new man because we're all one in Christ, we Christians. We love the Savior. And put on these 8 things, and then put on love—tie the whole thing together with love.

Which leads me now to verses 16 and 17:

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

3:17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Now allow me to change the punctuation. Most of you, I take it, are reading the King James version of the Bible. It's a good translation. Let me read these two verses and punctuate them as I think they ought to be punctuated. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another..." You don't teach with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. You teach in all wisdom. Now those marks we have in the King James version are not there in the original text of the Greek. That's why I'm taking the liberty of changing the punctuation. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another. In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." This is an amazing scripture.

Let's compare Colossians 3:16, 17 with Ephesians 5:18-21. In Ephesians 5 we have evidence of the Spirit-filled life. In Colossians 3:16-17, we have: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly..." And then there's a little change. But mark the parallel between being filled with the Spirit and letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

In other words, let the Word of God abide in you—let it take up its abode—let it live in you. Or if I may change the wording, may the truth we profess to believe be part of us; may it live in us. And may I say very kindly, it is only as the Word of God dwells and abides in us that we are a Spirit-filled people. I don't agree with the statement that when a person is Spirit-filled he's going to do something spectacular, unless it be a spectacular life for God.

You know, the gospel through Luke chapter 1 says that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit of God from his mother's womb. John could say in John 3:30 that Christ must increase. "He must increase and I

must get out of the way—I must decrease.” And yet though this man was filled with the Spirit of God and was the forerunner and was the greatest man born of woman, and I quote the Lord’s words on that, yet I read this term, this statement: “John did no miracle.” John didn’t do anything spectacular as men call things spectacular.

I want to tell you, my Christian friend, there’s a danger in looking for the spectacular. Indeed, I’ll be very blunt and say that God is not interested in the spectacular as such.

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

Is the word of Christ dwelling in you richly? Does the Word of Christ abide in you? You remember one day Jesus said in John 8:31-32 to the Jews who followed Him: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The word “continue” here means “abiding,” the Word of God living in you. May I make this statement also: You and I can only impart the truth that lives in us. We can feed the mentality of people, the intellect of people with truth; but we can’t impart truth to be a living reality unless it’s living in us first. And Paul here pleads with these Colossians: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

In chapter 2, we had a warning against the enticing words of man’s wisdom, the philosophy and vain reasonings of men, of the tradition of men, the legality, false mysticism, false asceticism, these things that men and women are occupied with. And I said then and I repeat—Christ is the antidote for that whole business. Now may I put it this way: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Are you rich in the Word of God? Does it dwell in you? Does it have the right of way in you?

I’m very much tempted to go to the prayer of Paul’s in Ephesians 3, where Paul prays that Christ may dwell down in your hearts by faith that you might be filled unto all the fullness of God. And how can this take place unless the Word of Christ dwells in you richly? This—and I’m putting my finger, I believe, on the greatest need of the church of Christ in our country—the need of every one of us Christians is that the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. That can never be unless I spend time in the Word of God as I read it and reread it. Oh, how I pray (I know I’m asking the impossible), how I long and yearn that everyone would read these epistles over and over

again. The more you read them, the more you get out of them. The less you read them, the less you get out of them. You can sit morning after morning and listen to someone expound the book of Colossians and yet much of it may go right over your head because you have not read the Word of God for yourself. The more you read it, the more you get out of it.

Now may I ask you to do something? I ask you to take Ephesians 5:18 because there's a parallel here. And the difference that lies between the two passages is this little statement in Colossians 3:16, "In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another." Now why is that phrase not put into Ephesians 5? For this reason: In Ephesians 5 a babe in Christ can be filled with the Spirit, but a babe in Christ can't teach and admonish anybody else. May I repeat that? It's only those in whom the Word of Christ is dwelling richly that are able in all wisdom to teach and admonish others. A babe in Christ, I repeat, can be filled with the Spirit of God and be filled with joy, filled with singing, filled with thanksgiving; but he can't teach and admonish others. The Word of Christ needs to dwell in our hearts richly.

Why aren't you teaching somebody else the Word of God? I would exhort you Christians to get a class of some kind. Offer your services to your Sunday School.

You say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I don't know very much."

It's about time you did. And I know of nothing that will get you into the Bible more than wanting to give it to somebody else. And the more you give it out (it's a principle), the more you give out the more you get, and the less you give out, the less you have. The more I personally give away the Word of God that I know, the more I get and the more enriched I am in my own heart and mind. The more I teach, the more I study. The more I study, the more I teach and the more joy I have.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly today and then have the joy of teaching others the precious Word of God. Start in today to read your Bible. Start in and read the whole New Testament through. Just read it like a book—read it through. And especially read Colossians, will you, please? And the Lord bless you.

Now what happens to a Christian when he is feasting on the Word of God, and the Word of God dwells in him, when the truth lives in him? Well, that's what Paul really means. You not only have your mental gifts exercised by knowing the truth, but you have your heart and life revolutionized by the truth. That's what it does when it lives in us, when it lives in us richly. It

takes up its abode in us. And it's only as the Word of God dwells—abides—in us that we can live a consistent, spiritual, Christian life.

My friend, I didn't lay down the rules. It's what God declares. Jesus said, "You're clean through the Word." Paul says,

3:16. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another.

So the fruitage of the Word of God living in us is that we're able to instruct others in the things of God. And the more I stay in the Word of God, the more I will give it out. The more it lives in me, the more I am able to impart.

To me the astounding thing is that so many Christians are unacquainted with the simple truths living in them. The reality of life in Christ, for example, is a rare thing. I have had people tell me when they came to assurance, when the Word of God began to get a hold of their hearts and minds, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, I've really been saved."

No, I believe they were saved before, but the truth now has become a reality to them. They're experiencing life in Christ, and this is what transforms their life. This is what satisfies their heart. This is what makes them a useable vessel for God. Anything apart from that is of the flesh. Now their testimony not only inspires me to keep on teaching the Word of God, but when the Word of Christ dwells in me richly, I'm also filled with worship and praise. This is what Paul says: "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

You know, I came across some people in Taiwan and their village was called "The Singing Village." They had been transformed out of paganism into Christianity. They changed the name of their village now to "the Singing Village." When they worked in the fields with their rice, they sang. As the blacksmith hammered on his anvil, he sang. As the children went to school, they sang. It was a singing village.

I'm sure you'll agree with me that when you come to a meeting and you feel like singing, and everybody feels like singing, praising the Lord—my, what a thrill it gives your heart. There's something about it that nothing can take its place. You're to sing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Even if you can't keep a tune. You know, some people say, "Well, it's no use me singing, because I can't keep a tune." All right, suppose you don't. The Lord hears it. Sing with grace in your heart to the Lord.

Maybe you've all heard the story of the old monk and the lady singer. This is a story put out of the archives of the Middle Ages, but the old monk would come out of his cell and come up into the cloister for the evensong. He tried to sing. He had an old cracked voice. But he really loved the Lord and he sang with grace in his heart, even if he was out of tune.

And one day there came to the village a lady who had a beautiful voice, and, of course, the monk was asked if he wouldn't love to have her sing at the evensong. He said he would be delighted. So this lady stood up in the chancel and sang with a beautiful voice, and the old monk didn't sing at all that night. He just kept still because he felt his old cracked voice wouldn't fit into this lovely picture.

The story goes that when he went back to his cell that night an angel visited him and said, "Why didn't you sing tonight? There was no song tonight."

"Oh," said the dear old monk, "didn't you hear that beautiful voice of the lady who sang?"

"No, it never came up to us. But we missed your song tonight."

You know, I never forgot that. I was told that when I was a boy. Amazing thing. Sing with grace in your heart to the Lord. Now it's nice to keep in tune. But you know, I had a classmate one time in seminary and he couldn't keep a tune. And I'd sit alongside him and I would try to get him on tune. I think he sang about three notes, with all the flats and sharps and double flats and double sharps in between, in fact, he was never on the key.

One day I was teasing him about this, and he said, "Well, look here—in fact, Mitchell, there's one thing for sure, that when I get to heaven I'll be singing in tune."

Yes—but I sometimes wonder if all our beautiful singing ever reaches the heavens, if it ever reaches the throne of God. And I'm sure that some of those dear souls who can't sing for a nickel with a cracked voice as they go along off key, have hearts that are in love with the Savior. They are ministering to Christ in praise and worship and song. Oh, listen, friend, even if you can't keep a tune, go ahead and sing unto the Lord. Let your heart be filled with praise and thanksgiving unto Him. He hears, He understands, and He accepts.

You know, I was reading the gospel of Luke the other day, and I was amazed at the fact that Jesus noticed the very little wee things, the courteous

things of life. Did you know that? Jesus knows the courtesy of the people. He knows the discourtesy of others. You read that 7th chapter of Luke. He marked the discourtesy of Simon the Pharisee, and He noticed the sweet courtesy of the sinful woman. My, I'm glad for that. And yet, sometimes I wonder if I am glad when I make my failures. But you know, let us sing, let us worship the Lord and let us praise Him; let us minister unto the Lord. This is what it is—ministering unto the Lord. And when one has the Word of Christ dwelling in him richly, whether you have a cracked voice or not, whether you have a good voice or not, you can and should minister unto the Lord in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And then he adds:

3:17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

So you see, when the Word of Christ dwells in you richly, you'll be able to instruct others in the things of Christ. You'll be filled with thanksgiving, doing everything in His name, recognizing His Lordship, having a life of praise and thanksgiving. And whatever you do, do it with thanksgiving and praise to the Lord.

You know, this is a wonderful thing. These are the evidences of fellowship with Christ. You know, you couldn't sing a gospel song, my friend, without a fellowship with Christ. You couldn't sing very long, could you?

I remember a high school boy telling me one time—I said, “What do you do when you're tempted by the other kids in high school?”

“Oh,” he said, “I just start to sing or hum a little old gospel chorus and I forget all about their—the things they say and the things they want me to do. That puts me in touch with my Jesus,” he said. “And I go right along singing and they can't understand why I don't get mad at them.”

Now that was a very sweet way to put it. Very simple. When you're washing your dishes, why don't you minister to the Lord? When you're washing your clothes, keeping your house, or working at the bench or machine—whatever you're doing—why not sing praises to the Lord? Oh, they might throw something at you. We all experience that.

I've had nuts and bolts thrown at me when I worked at the machine shop. When I became a Christian and began to sing the praises of the Lord, they would throw things at me; but it was all in good fun. They wouldn't

hurt me for the world, but I kept on singing. My friend, what a wonderful thing. When you're Spirit filled, you're filled with worship, with praise and thanksgiving. And when the Word of Christ dwells in you richly, this is what will happen, with the addition that you not only worship and praise and are thankful, but you'll also be able to teach somebody else the wonderful things of Christ.

I pray today that the Word of Christ will dwell in you richly and that in all wisdom you'll teach somebody else and be a worshiper of our Lord.

Now starting in at Colossians 3:18 and running down to 4:1, we have the teaching concerning family relationships. Here is where we can manifest real Christianity. In the home, with the family, in the office, in the shop, wherever you may be, God wants us to manifest real Christianity. You remember that a Christian is one in whom Christ dwells. A Christian is not necessarily a so-called highly religious person. A Christian is one who has come into right relationship with the Savior. The Lord by the Spirit has come to live in us and He wants to live through us. We manifest real Christianity in the home, in the office, in the shop, wherever we may be.

In Ephesians 5:22-23 there is given to us quite a lengthy passage of the relationship between husbands and wives. Now here in the book of Colossians we read:

3:18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

3:19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

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

3:21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Here we have a question of the family—the father, the husband and the wife, and the children. And by the way, if you can't live as a real Christian in your own family, how are you going to live in the outside world? I am sorry to say that in so many so-called Christian families there is very little evidence of a hunger for the Lord and a walk with the Lord and a manifestation of real Christianity.

Now we come down to this question, first of all, between husbands and wives. And we read here that the wife is to be in subjection to her husband "as it is fit in the Lord." Likewise the husband is to love his wife "and be not bitter" against her.

Now I'm going to repeat one or two things that I said when we were in Ephesians and I'm quoting from the fifth chapter, verses 22-33. Let me just give you the digest of this whole thing, as well as I Peter 3, the first 8 or 9 verses. From these you get more or less what the Word of God has to say regarding the relationship between a husband and a wife.

First of all, may I speak concerning husbands. The husband is to love the wife even as he loves himself. And the exhortation is, in the book of Ephesians, that we are to love our wives even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

Now you will find, first of all, that love is evident by sacrifice. Love is to control all. The husband is not the boss; he's not to command; he's not to rail, but he's to love and to honor his wife just as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it.

Now you might say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, as the husband I'm the head of my house."

That's true. But what do you mean by that? Why, of course, it means the place of responsibility. Indeed, I would suggest to you that the husband has the place of responsibility and the wife has the place of honor. You find this in I Peter 3. And I'm not trying to step on your toes when I say this, but I want you to notice that. Real, genuine love will be evidenced by sacrifice for the one who is the object of your love. Love isn't supposed to be selfish. Love expresses itself in sacrifice.

If I may use, first of all, our Savior as the example: His love for His Father was evident by obedience. You remember the last verse of John 14, "that the world may know that I love the Father." How? Because I keep His Word, meaning I obey Him. And then His love for His people, for you and me, is evident by His sacrifice. "For Jesus loved the church, and gave Himself for the church." This is sacrifice. His love is demonstrated to His Father by obedience, and His love is demonstrated to you and me by His sacrifice.

Now when you come to your Bibles, you'll find this is also true for Christians. In John 14:21-23, our love for God is evident by obedience to His Word. He said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." When it comes to each other, we are to demonstrate our love by sacrifice. Love manifests itself by sacrifice.

When you come to the relationship between a husband and a wife—in family relationships—the husband has the place of responsibility and the

woman has the place of honor, seeing that she is the weaker vessel. When it comes to the wife, she is to be in subjection to her husband. That means she has to acknowledge his rightful place, that he is the one whom God holds responsible for the family. Now in our relationship to God we are unequal; but the man and the woman are equal before God and there must be this subjection, the one to the other.

You take, for example, our Savior as He walked among men. Now if I were teaching the deity of our Savior, I would point out from Zechariah 13:7 that Jesus Christ was God's fellow, that is, God's equal. And yet, when our Lord came as a man in the midst of men, He made himself subservient to His Father for the purpose of the glorification of God. He said, "I do always the things that please Him. I do not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." He showed His love for His Father by obedience. Do you love your wife? You husbands, do you love your wives? Then you will evidence that by sacrifice. And you wives—do you love your husband? You will manifest that by being submissive to him, and he will love you and give you the place of honor.

Now I know you're going to—both of you, husband and wife—are going to excuse the things you do, because you say, "Well, if she loved me" or "if he loved me"—so on and so on—and so you find an excuse for your rebellion, one way or the other. I say to you men that if you loved your wives as you love yourself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, says Paul in Ephesians 5, and if you love her just the way that Christ loved the church, you'll have no difficulty in your wife being in subjection to you and "reverencing her husband," as Ephesians 5 the last verse says. In fact, Paul closes up that argument saying that "the husband should love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Now this is the question of relationship between husband and wife.

And may I say today, and I say very bluntly, there is a tremendous need in our country for Christian homes, where the man takes his place of responsibility, loving his wife as himself, sacrificing for himself and his family. Likewise, the place for the woman is to be in subjection. Now that's not to be menial or to be a slave. There are no bosses or slaves in this. If she loves her husband who loves her, she'll be glad to do things for him, to be in subjection, to reverence, to give him his rightful place as the head of the family, as the head of the house.

And when you both take your place, husband, loving your wife as yourself, and the wife reverencing her husband or acknowledging his

rightful place of responsibility, then you can have a little foretaste of heaven on earth. Your love for each other will grow; your children will know that you love each other and, not only so, you'll be living real Christianity.

I urge upon you to read the fifth chapter of Ephesians from verses 22 to 33, and then take 1 Peter 3, where you have the illustration of Sarah and Abraham, showing how we are to manifest our love for our wife by giving to her the place of honor. And we men are to take the place of responsibility.

And may I say to you men that God holds you responsible for the family. It's a tremendous responsibility, but this is what God wants you to do. He can give you the strength and the wisdom and the discernment and the understanding and that sacrificial love for your wife and for your family that will glorify Him and fill you with joy and blessing. God wants you to be happy; He wants you to be full of joy. And I'm sure that if He has laid this down for us, as husbands and wives, He must know what He's talking about. He must want us to be full of joy.

Now when it comes to verses 20 and 21 of Colossians 3, we come to the question of the children.

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

3:21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Again I suggest you read the book of Ephesians 6, where it takes up this matter of the parents and children. You remember that there Paul says: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." And then you fathers: "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Now you've got a responsibility here between the children and the parents, especially the father.

I say again, the father because he's responsible for the family. And the children are asked to obey their parents in all things. This calls for obedience in the family. And this is well pleasing to the Lord. This is the first commandment that is given with a promise, as you find in Ephesians 6:2. And when the children in the family obey their parents, this is pleasing to the Lord.

Now it may be that the children do not understand everything. It may be they do not discern what is the mind of dad or mother; but, if they are obedient to their parents, it's pleasing to the Lord.

You know, I've been amazed at this. If you read your four gospels, you'll notice how the Savior is very observant when it comes to the question of little things. I was thinking again of that passage in Luke 7 (and forgive me for repeating this), where you remember one day a man called Simeon invited the Lord into his home. I don't think he was in love with the Savior at all. I think he was more or less critical. And, while the Lord was eating dinner, a woman came in who was a sinner.

And you remember how the Lord rebuked Simon when he said, "You know, Simon, when I came into your house, you didn't wash my feet. You weren't even courteous. You didn't give me a kiss. You didn't welcome me. You didn't put oil on my head. You didn't do the regular courteous things of the day. But this woman—this woman from the other side of the tracks, this sinful woman whom you are looking down upon—she has done what you didn't do. She's anointed my feet with ointment. She's washed them with her tears. She's wiped them with the hairs of her head. She's kissed my feet.

I was amazed when I thought of this. The Lord Jesus noticed the discourtesy of Simon, and he noticed the kindness and courtesy of the woman. You know, we Christians need to realize that God sees everything we do and hears everything we say. You remember, it says "He never leaves us nor forsakes us." Did you ever stop to think of it that, when you treat your wife just right, He notices it? And when you don't, He notices it. And vice versa with you wives with your husbands.

Now the children—when the children are disobedient to their parents, the Lord notices that, too. So the children are to be obedient to the parents in the Lord for this is right. And I read here, "It is well pleasing to the Lord." But please don't teach them this if you're not fulfilling your own responsibility. It's very easy for us to tell the other person what he ought to do, but we don't want to be told what we should do. Now if the father and the mother are really loving each other before the Lord with a genuine affection of one for the other and if the father is taking his place of responsibility—willing to sacrifice for his family—and if his wife reverences her husband and recognizes his place of responsibility, the reaction on your children will be wonderful. They will be very happy to do what we want them to do because they know that you have their welfare at heart, that you love them.

You know, to me it's a sad thing. We have a Bible camp called Trout Creek Bible Camp, and we have hundreds upon hundreds of youngsters who come to camp every summer. And it's a heart-rending thing to me when a little fellow or a little girl comes along and says, "I don't want to go home," after the week at camp. Now they've had a wonderful time, but "Why don't you want to go home? Mother's waiting for you."

"Mother doesn't care whether I come home or not."

"What about your daddy?"

"I don't know who my daddy is" or "My daddy whips me too much" or "Daddy is cruel with me." And the children don't even want to go home. They've had more love in that one week than they've had in months at home.

That's tragic, isn't it? I trust this is not true of you. I trust that you will love your husband and your husband will love the wife, and it will be reacting on your children. Your children will obey you. Now I'm not saying they're always going to be obedient. I'm sure I wasn't when I was a boy; and I'm sure your boy and girl are sometimes willful, selfish and disobedient. This is true—true to nature. But they can be taught to be obedient; and, if you teach them, this is pleasing to the Lord.

I remember one time saying to a little girl—I had taught her Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," and she was being very willful and disobedient. Her mother had been calling for her, but she was playing with her dolls and was seemingly indifferent to the call of her mother. Her mother was getting a little angry with her. I just mentioned her by name and I said, "Remember what Ephesians 6:1 says?" And she immediately ran into the kitchen to help her mother. I just mentioned Ephesians 6:1, and away she went to the kitchen.

It's a wonderful thing to take your children and teach them the Word of God. It's pleasing to the Lord. And then in verse 21, we have dad's responsibility with the children:

3:21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Or you get them all stirred up. Don't be unduly severe. Now I believe in discipline; I believe in chastening. I think this is a truth: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." And by the way, not to chasten your children when they are doing wrong, you're doing the children wrong by not chastening them. You manifest your love by your care for them, and that

care includes discipline and chastening. And He goes on to say in Hebrews 12, if the Lord doesn't chasten you, it's because you're not His child. And I have thanked the Lord many times for the whippings I got from my mother. Dad wasn't home very much, but mother raised us children on the end of her slipper. And she did a good job, but she was never brutal. It was always done in love.

Don't be brutal with your children and don't lose your temper with them because, if you lose your temper, the chances are you'll overdo it and turn the child against you. That's what He's talking about. Don't stir them up so that they rebel against you on everything. Manifest that Christian love for each other and for your children.

And then it says in verse 22 right on down through verse 25 and the first verse of chapter 4, that we have the relationship in the outside world between masters and servants.

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

3:23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

3:24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

3:25. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

4:1. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Now we've just been dealing with the family situation. But what about the outside world?

"I work for a man," you say. "I get so much per hour and I don't like my job too well. But it's a job, and I have to support my family. What shall I do?"

If you're a Christian, these verses tell you. Now I think the 25th verse really brings it down into the question of the relationship of masters and those who work for them. Now I'm well aware of the fact that, when the Apostle Paul wrote this, there were slaves who were Christians. How shall a man or a woman who is a slave treat ungodly masters? "Obey your masters in all things; not with eye service, as menpleasers but in singleness of heart, fearing God." Do it as unto the Lord; and, whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men.

Now I know this is a kind of a tricky thing. But what Paul is really saying here is to look beyond your master to your Lord. And even in the very job you do, you can do it as unto the Lord. And the Lord will see that you get your reward. Do it heartily, not lazily or slothfully. It's the Lord you serve. Do it for the Lord; and the Lord, I say, will reward you.

I want this very clearly understood that Paul wants us to live as real children of God wherever we are. Whether it be in the home, in the factory, in the store, God wants you to please Him. Live to glorify Him, and He gives you the power; He gives you the blessing; He gives you all that you need to do this, as we shall see when we come to chapter four.

Quite often Christians will say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, if I were living in the first century. . . ."

Well, brother, you're not. You're living in the 21st century here. I know your circumstances are different; but may I remind you that, when the Apostle Paul wrote these epistles, there were tens of thousands of slaves in the Roman empire, many of whom became Christians. In fact, when Paul wrote this letter, he was in jail, chained because he loved the Savior. None of us has experienced that. And if Paul could write these things then under worse conditions than we have today, I am sure that we have no excuse.

In fact, I would say in any age there is no excuse for us not to live the life that God wants us to live. You go way back to Abel in the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis and follow it right through your Bible. Then read the 11th chapter of Hebrews where the just always lived by faith. That is the life of fellowship with God. There are those who believe that a life of faith is doing great things and getting great things from God. Not necessarily so. It's to live the life that pleases God. This is the life of faith. You can do it in your kitchen. It's the relationship in the family between husbands and wives and fathers and children. That's where you can live real, genuine Christianity.

And may I remind you, when Paul wrote this, the chances are a great many of those who read this portion of Scripture were slaves. They weren't free; they were slaves. The relationship between a slave and his master sometimes was very bad. Sometimes it was very good. Just like today where you have a job. You work for a company or you might be a foreman or you might be a boss or you might be the one who owns the business. You have a responsibility, the one to the other, for the man who works for you. You have a responsibility to him, and he has a responsibility to you. Now we're talking about Christians. And I'm sure there's a tremendous need and room today

for Christian men and Christian women to live practical Christianity on the job.

Now let me read it again:

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

3:23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

3:24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

3:25. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

As servants, we are to look beyond the master whom we serve to the Lord; and we are not to be lazy; we're not to be slothful. It's the Lord we serve. It's true you're working for a boss, for a foreman or for a company; but do it heartily as to the Lord. And, even in the job that you have, you can serve the Lord right where you are.

“Well, what if we're not paid enough?”

Even if you're not paid enough the Lord will reward you because you're serving Him; you're doing it as unto the Lord. You can work in an office, you can work in a factory, you can work behind a machine, you can work in your kitchen—I don't care where it is—you can do your job. You can do it as unto the Lord.

You wives, you take care of your house and do it as unto the Lord. The Lord sees all these things, every little detail of our lives. He knows our very attitude. He knows our purpose. He knows what we do. He hears what we say. Remember that.

I'm talking to Christians. And I think there's a tremendous need today in our land for Christians to live practical Christianity. It's folly for us to talk about truth if the truth doesn't live in us. And there's a need for this genuine life before God and before men.

I remember a woman one time saying, “If I have a job, if I'm working for somebody, I'm going to be the best servant they ever had. If I'm going to be working in a home, I'll be the best girl, the best maid, they ever had. If I work in an office, I'm going to be the best they ever had. If I'm going to work behind a machine, I'm going to be the best that they've ever had.”

As Christians we have a standard, and God grant that whatever job you have, whether you like the job or not, that's neither here nor there. If you're not satisfied with your job, if you're not satisfied with your wages, don't grumble. Don't be lazy. Quit if you don't like your job; but as long as you work for a person, you do it.

I know what I'm talking about. I have worked in machine shops as a tool and dye maker, as a machinist. I hired myself out for so much per hour. Now if I'm not satisfied with the wages, I shouldn't have taken the job. But, having taken the job, I want to be a good man whether I'm working at a lathe or a milling machine or grinder or whatever I'm doing. I want to do it heartily as unto the Lord. I'm serving the Lord even in the job that I do.

Now you see, that lifts you above the hum-drum of things. Whatever you do, Paul says, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that the Lord is the one who is going to reward you. He'll take care of it one way or another. You can sure bank on this that the Lord is not going to be in your debt. When you take your place and serve Him, the Lord will bless you.

Now what about those of you who hire people? You're bosses.

3:25. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

4:1. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Will you remember that? There's no respect of persons with God. I'm talking to Christian men now—Christian foremen, Christian bosses, Christian employers. If you're a Christian, you do the right thing for those who work under you. You pay them right, justly; pay them what they're worth. And remember that you have a Master in heaven and there's no respect of persons with Him; and He will take care of you—don't worry about that.

Do you think that the Lord is going to be in your debt? It would be a wonderful thing if Christian men who are working for a firm or for some company would live as real Christians, never being lazy, never being indifferent, but doing the thing heartily with glory to the Lord. Why, He'll give you joy in the midst of the most hum-drum thing; you're serving the Lord.

But you say, "Well, Mr. Mitchell, I just can't do this. You don't know where I work. You don't know what kind of a boss I have. You don't know

what kind of men work for me. I have an awful time with them.” Yes—well verse 2 of chapter 4 gives you your resources for all of you—for the husband, for the wife, for the children, for the masters, for the servants.

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

Here are your resources, the power to do this.

A husband says, “Well, you don’t know my wife.”

No, but the Lord does. He knows your wife.

And you wives, you say, “Well, my husband—he’s brutal; he’s this, that and the other thing—he’s careless, indifferent to us. He wants his own way all the time and it’s hard to live with him.”

Yes, but you’ve got resources in prayer. You can take up the matter with the Lord; and, believe me—let me tell you something—the Lord can work on the wife, the husband, the children. What I’m pleading for is practical Christianity in the home and in the shop and in the office. If your job is hard and you have a tough boss, why don’t you talk to the Lord about it? He can give you the strength; He can give you the wisdom—the understanding.

And by the way, I’m not talking theory, I’m talking about a practical life. I know what I’m talking about. I spent half my life in shops, in factories, machine shops, shipyards, railroad shops. I know what I’m talking about. And I’ll tell you, when it comes to the question of living for the Lord, the Lord can take you and give you joy in the very most menial job you’re doing. You’d rather throw the thing out and get another job, but don’t run away until you’re sure the Lord wants you out of there. Maybe He has you there for a purpose—to live so that people can see real Christianity, not a shallow thing, not a hypocritical thing, but the real thing. And you can’t fool men. They know the real when they see it.

I had an old boilermaker tell me how he expected me to live when I became a Christian, when I gave my testimony in the shops. I remember this old boilermaker what he told me, what he expected of me. Believe me, it drove me to my knees lest I do something that would drive him, of course, into ridicule and laughter at Christianity.

I tell you, it’s a wonderful thing to have the Savior. And whatever responsibility you may have, in the office, the shop, the home, wherever it is, you have resources as it says here: “Continue in prayer, and watch (be alert),

watch in the same with thanksgiving.” This is a military term, like a sentry on duty. Because chances are, you’ll fall asleep when you try to pray. And I know something about that, too, don’t you? I tell you, it’s a wonderful thing. The Lord understands you and the Lord understands me. But what He wants to do is to live through you so that His Name will be magnified among men.

And may today be a day when you’ll experience something of the power of God in your life in answer to prayer.

Chapter Four

We have been dealing with this matter of relationship of husbands and wives and fathers and children, masters and servants. Now we come to verses 2 and 3, and with your permission I would like to read 2 through 4, and then down to verses 12 and 13, because of what he's talking about:

4:2. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

4:3. Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4:4. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

And that mystery, of course, is the mystery of the church, the body of Christ. And then in verses 12 and 13:

4:12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

4:13. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

Now I read these verses for a purpose. Paul has been talking here in verse 2 about continuing in prayer, watching in the same with thanksgiving and praying that he might have an open door for the Word of God. Then he took up Epaphras, who agonized in prayer for the people at Colosse. Now it might be well for me just very briefly to suggest this: Who are the ones who pray? You remember in 1 Timothy 2:8, the apostle says: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." "Men"—now the word there is "*andros*" and not women, just men.

You know, it's a tough job to pray sometimes, isn't it? To really get down to business with God in prayer is very painstaking. It's a man's job. You say, well, let the women do it. Well, I'm glad to say the women are doing it. I wish more men would do it. It's not a woman's job; this is a man's job. Now if you take that second chapter of 1 Timothy, Paul has something to say about the women and what they should do. But to the men he said, "I beseech that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands."

Now Luke 18:1 includes both men and women: "Men ought always to pray; and not to faint." There's a different word there that includes men and

women. In other words, believers are to pray and not to faint. And so it is here in Colossians, “Continue in prayer.” He’s talking about fathers and wives and children and servants and masters. Stay in prayer, continue in prayer, and “watch in the same with thanksgiving.” You see, it’s so easy to fall asleep in prayer. But who ought to pray? Every believer.

Now for what are we to pray? This is the second thing I want to say. Paul here in verse 3 says:

4:3. Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4:4. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Through verse four Paul was praying for utterance for the Word of God. Although he was in prison, he was looking for open doors for the Word of God. You remember, the Corinthian people said that Paul’s speech was contemptible; his bodily presence was weak. And here he is asking these Colossian Christians to pray for him that he might have real utterance in the ministry of the Word of God. Do you know, I would like to have you do that for me and for all those who are servants of the Lord, ministering the Word of God. Do you ever pray for your pastor? Do you pray for your Sunday School teacher? Do you pray for your missionaries? Do you?

I received a letter from a missionary of ours in Vietnam; and this dear woman said, “Dr. Mitchell, please have the people there pray for me. If they don’t pray for me, I don’t know who will.” You know, this about knocked me over. I wonder how many of us are praying for our missionaries overseas and for the utterance of the Word of God. They’re fighting the forces of hell; they’re surrounded by forces of darkness, idolatry, immorality, corruption of all kinds, and here they are—lights in a dark place with all the forces of hell arrayed against them.

And sometimes they have to be brought home, crushed. And you look down upon them and say, “Well! They couldn’t take it.” It may be because you missed the boat; you didn’t pray for them. Paul here is pleading, when he’s in jail, that the Colossian saints should pray for him for the utterance of the Word of God.

Now the second thing for which we should pray is in verse 12. “Epaphras, who is one of you.” I take it from verse 12 that Epaphras was the pastor of the church at Colosse. He was praying that the saints might stand perfect and complete in the will of God. And by the way, may I suggest that

most of the exhortations on prayer in the New Testament are to pray for the saints of God.

You know, I have met some Christians who are burdened in prayer for the unsaved; and I'm glad they are. Very few pray—in fact, too few pray for the unsaved. But I've also noticed that sometimes they don't even care about the saved. They're saved, and that's it. No, if ever you pray for God's people, it should be today. We're living in difficult days. We're living in days of compromise. We're living days of imitation. In some parts of the world—violence. My, how we need to pray, one for another. And we're to pray that the saints of God will be perfected in the will of God. Do you pray for them?

Take that verse in Matthew 9:38, the end of the chapter where Jesus exhorted His disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into the harvest field. And missionaries tell me the greatest thing they want is for God's people to pray. What if we don't all hold up their hands? What if Moses' hands hadn't been held up by Aaron and Hur? Israel would have lost the battle, and they would have gone down in defeat. They won the battle against Amalek because of the intercession of Moses on the mountain top and the sword of Joshua in the valley.

You and I are to uphold the hands of those who minister the Word of God in the different parts of the world, wherever they are. From your own church clean on through—all believers. And my, what a need today. Indeed, I'm going to make this statement: If the real believers in our country were to get down and pray for our country and pray for the church in our country, we'd have a tremendous revival of the Spirit of God in our midst. But we don't pray. We all know a lot about praying. We preach about praying. We've heard lots of sermons on praying. But we don't pray. Epaphras agonized in prayer that the saints might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

What Paul here is saying in verse three is “And don't forget to pray for me that God might give me an open door for the Word.”

Now how to pray is something I want to present to you today. I wish in some way we Christians were more well versed on this matter of praying. I'd like to give you three or four things about this where Paul says “Continue in prayer” and “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Stay at it. Ephesians 6:18 says: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.”

Most of us are very spasmodic in our praying. This is where we fail; and Paul here is urging us to continue, to stay right at it. Now that doesn't mean that you've always got to be on your knees praying. This is a question of a heart communication with God, a daily thing. While you're working at the bench or in the office or home, wherever you are, whoever you are, if you love the Savior, you can come right into the presence of God and to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Stay right at it; continue in prayer. I say again, we're all more or less spasmodic in this.

We'll read a few verses of Scripture and we'll have three or four minutes of prayer, and that will last us for the rest of the day until the next morning—for most of us. When you're driving your car, if you have an opportunity of sitting down for a few moments, lift up your heart to the Lord in prayer. It doesn't mean you're always making requests. Far be it. But have a heart for fellowship with God, continuing in prayer. The more we do that, then the more the Spirit of God really uses us in prayer.

You remember, our Lord spoke of this in the 11th chapter of Luke, verses 5-12, where He spoke about a man who in his journey came to a friend of his. When he got there, the friend had no bread. So the friend went down the street to a neighbor and said, "Lend me three loaves."

And the man said, "Go on back home. My wife's in bed. My kiddies are in bed. I'm not going to get up and give you any bread."

But this other fellow said, "I want that bread." In other words, he said, "The sooner you give me the bread, the sooner you go back to bed. I'm just going to stay here until I get that bread."

Now the Lord Jesus said that the man received because of his importunity. In other words, he meant business in his prayer. I believe that's what Paul is talking about here—meaning business—not just mouthing a few words and getting off your knees or your seat or wherever you may be, but—as a habit—meaning business with God. Be very frank in your openness in talking to the Lord about the things of your life or the things about your church, whatever it may be. And the more you do that, the more you'll walk with God and the more He will reveal to you His will and His mind.

And then it says in this verse that we are to watch unto prayer. This is like sentry duty—a man on duty in an army. In 1 Peter 4:7 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:6 he used the same word, "Watch." Be alert. You see, sometimes when you and I get down to praying, our minds run away with us.

Sometimes we fall asleep. Sometimes even the pleasures of sin fill our minds and our thoughts. Isn't that true? Isn't that your experience? You get down to wait upon God and unless you speak audibly to the Lord, why, anything and everything can come into your head, into your thoughts. In fact, sometimes you're amazed at what comes into your thoughts.

I remember reading some years ago about one of the old, old saints in the first and second century, speaking of this very thing, of—I think it was Augustine—the evil thoughts that came into his mind when he was trying to pray. Paul says, “Watch unto prayer.” Be on the alert; don't let your mind run away with you; don't fall asleep, and don't let the pleasure of sin fill your mind—what you would like to do and what you hope you might do. Watch unto prayer.

Then you'll notice something else. You are to do the same with thanksgiving. And by the way, there's a great need here. If you don't know how to pray, if you don't know for what to pray, then go ahead and praise Him. The psalmist said, “He that offereth praise, glorifieth God.” In Hebrews 13:15 we are to offer the sacrifice of the praise of our lips, which is well-pleasing to God. But what if I don't feel like praising the Lord, if I don't feel like thanking the Lord? Well, why shouldn't I thank Him?

Listen, my friend, there's plenty to thank the Lord for and much to praise Him for even when you don't feel like it. Paul says it's a sacrifice well-pleasing to the Lord. You can please the Lord when you are full of joy and full of blessing. It's when things go wrong and you're having a tough time, when the battle's hard and you're misunderstood, when everything seems to crowd in on you as you try to pray and you can't pray. You try to read your Bible, and you get nothing out of it. Did you ever try praising the Lord then?

You say, “Well, that's hypocrisy.” Not necessarily. He that offereth praise glorifieth God. And here we find we are to watch in our prayers with thanksgiving. And I'm sure if you took the time to think about it, there's much you can thank the Lord for. We here in our country are so blessed of God in every way. In fact, we're spoiled. We've had everything we ever needed, everything we've wanted. Oftentimes we don't even say “thank you” to the Lord. I think we're all guilty, more or less, of this fact that we somehow or other, along the line, have failed to thank the Lord for even the daily things of life. And some Christians don't even thank the Lord for the meals they eat. They take it for granted that it's coming to them.

Why don't we thank the Lord for everything He's given to us—even the tests of life. When you know that He's working something out in your life, then you know that He's working something for your good and for His glory. So thank Him. Praise Him. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I'm quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:18. So one could go on. We are to stay at it; continue in prayer. We are to watch in prayer, and we are to be full of thanksgiving.

And then Paul goes on to say in verse 3:

4:3. Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.

And may I make a plea again that you will pray for your pastor, for your Sunday School teacher, for your missionaries.

Some people say to me, "Why, Mr. Mitchell, when I start to pray, I can say all that I want to say in two or three minutes. What do you do?"

It would be wonderful to get a list of your missionaries from your church. Put down your pastor at the top of the page; put down your Sunday School teachers and officers, and put down your missionaries. And put down the leader of our land in our own country. Here are our soldier boys in countries all over the world. We're policing the world. It's high time we Christians got down and pled with God for our country, for wisdom for those who are in authority that we might live in sobriety and quietness and peacefulness.

I plead with you Christians. For some reason we've missed the boat on this question of praying. And don't say, "Well, I can say all I can say in two or three minutes. Make yourself a list and start praying. I tell you, I thank the Lord for one dear old man who was over 80 years of age. He had a list on a piece of brown shopping paper, a list of names; and every morning—sometimes he'd fall asleep over his list—but he never closed the day without praying for everybody on that list. And I was so thankful to the Lord that my name was on there, too.

One day he said to me, "Why doesn't the Lord take me home, Brother Mitchell? I'm old, I can't work, I'm deaf. Why doesn't the Lord take me home?"

Well, I said, "How many hours a day do you spend in the presence of the Lord in prayer for others?"

And his wife chimed in and said, “Well, Mr. Mitchell, he spends all the way from four to six hours a day.”

Now you can't spend that much time, possibly, praying that long; but he never went through the day without going through this whole list. And when a person says to me, “I haven't the time,” my friend, make the time. It'll do a tremendous thing for your own heart and your own life and your own family, as well as for your own church. Pray. Watch. Stay on it, and be full of thanksgiving. Try it today, will you?

Now just one more thing about this matter of praying:

4:12. Epaphras, who is one of you,, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Now we are to pray “fervently.” This word “fervently” is a wonderful word. Here is wrestling in prayer.

Somebody said, “Why don't we ever become desperate in our praying?”

Desperate—wrestling with God in prayer. Do you remember in Genesis 32:28 that Jacob wrestled with God, and God changed his name from Jacob to Israel because “as a prince you have had power with men and with God.”

I wonder how much power you and I have? Are we desperate enough to pray? Now it's a wonderful thing that the Lord is praying for us. He never gets tired of praying for us. How about our praying for others? I'm thinking of those verses in Romans 9:2, 3, where Paul says (by the way, he called on God to be his witness), “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh.” That's touching the heart of God, isn't it? That's really touching the heart of God. Paul was willing to become an accursed thing, following in the steps of his Savior who did become an accursed thing that you and I might be saved.

Remember that wonderful burden of heart that Jeremiah had in chapter 9 when he said: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” Do you know why? Because they were not valiant for the truth; they proceeded from evil to evil and they knew not me, saith the Lord.

Did you ever get burdened for God's people? Here is this man Epaphras, laboring fervently, agonizing, wrestling in prayer that these dear saints of God at Colosse might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. He prayed that they might be in the place where all the will of God would be perfected in them and where they would be made so available to God that the Spirit of God would work out God's purpose and God's will in their lives.

Are you in that place? And if you are living and walking in the will of God, then you will take time to pray for other Christians who have been sidetracked. The world has pulled on them and the flesh has pulled on them, and the trouble is they haven't been going on with God. Why not pray for them? It's easy to run to the telephone and criticize them or tell somebody else about them. "Haven't you heard the latest about so and so?"

Don't do that. Get on your knees. Be like Epaphras. Agonize before God. Wrestle with God in prayer that these Colossian Christians might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. In other words, do you mean business?

I read about a chaplain in the prisoner of war camp in the past war in south Korea. The prisoners were North Koreans. There were literally thousands of them. And this man went in there and preached the gospel. He with the Navigators, the New Testament League and others—God's people—went in there and witnessed to these North Koreans. And from what I gather, more than 24,000 of them professed salvation. And they were praying that the Lord would, by a miracle, release them. And do you know that 27,000 were released? It was a miracle. God wonderfully answered their prayers.

But when I found out what they were doing, I'm not surprised. Every morning at daybreak there were six prayer meetings among the new believers of North Korean prisoners. There were 1500 in each prayer group, and they were praying that God would set them free in some unusual way. And this is what God did. When they least expected it, they were set free, 27,000 of them.

Do you know, it's an amazing thing to me that here in our country we don't do that. Over in Taiwan I was at a conference of national pastors, Chinese and Taiwanese pastors—between five and six hundred of them. Do you know that they met at 5:30 every morning for prayer before they ever had breakfast? At 5:30, five to six hundred men were on their faces, praying. Even before they had a bite to eat, they were praying.

They tell me that over in Korea before the war the Lord used the Presbyterian missionaries there in a very mighty way for many, many years—a wonderful, large, Korean Christian church—and of how that at 5 o'clock in the morning thousands throughout the country would be on their faces before God praying—praying. Their churches would be full of people at 5 o'clock in the morning, praying.

My friend, what do we know about that? What does the Christian church in our country know about praying fervently, wrestling with God? I'm not surprised that people were saved, that God moved in a mighty way. God moved in power. And here we are living in a world—in a country—where the humanistic and materialistic philosophies have just simply enveloped our generation. My, how we Christians need to pray.

I'm pleading with you. Won't you take some time to pray for our country today and for the church in our country that it might be delivered from its coldness, from its indifference? Pray it might be delivered from this present day agnosticism and infidelity that has swept through our churches when so-called Christian leaders have denied even the very person of God as well as the Word of God and the person of Christ. They are no longer Christian.

Those of us who have been born again of the Spirit of God, we who have been brought into a right relationship with the Savior, can't we spend some time today before God to pray for our nation's leaders, for our soldier boys overseas, and to pray especially for the church of Christ, and for believers who are out of touch with God and have become cold and indifferent?

Now I would like to read verses 5-7:

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

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

4:7. All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord.

Now let me just stop there for a brief moment. I'm doing this because I would like you to see something of the yearning of Paul's heart. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." May our life, our deportment before the people of the world, be such that it will be in wisdom. You remember, we had in Ephesians 5 where the apostle says we are to walk in wisdom; and we had a number of verses concerning that, from verses 15 to 21, when he said:

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

It's a sad thing when a Christian will criticize another Christian before the world. Please don't do that. If you're going to do anything for the Christian who is failing God, you pray for him. You know, it's so easy to criticize. Anybody can criticize. But get down and pray for him and ask the Lord to put in your heart a real love for him and help him. As Paul could say to the Galatian church (6:1), “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Restore him; don't knock him down with a club. Don't criticize him. Don't condemn him. Pray for him; encourage him in the Lord. That's what he's talking about.

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

There's not much time left to us to display the character of God to men. We're living in the last days—no question about this. If you believe the Bible, you'll agree with me on that. In fact, I'm looking for the coming of the Lord any time. No reason why He can't come except in the purpose of God. And He'll be always on time. He's always on time in everything He does. And He's going to come on time. He came in the fullness of time; He died at the right time; He's going to come at the right time. Are you watching? Are you waiting? May my life before the outside world be such it will not bring dishonor on the name of Christ.

You know, I was dealing with a man just this week who said, “Mr. Mitchell, I don't want to be a Christian.”

He was raised in the church, in Sunday school, and for a while was active. He said, “I don't want that. I don't want that kind of Christianity. I don't want to be a Christian.

“But,” I said, “how are you going to stand before God?”

So I dealt with the dear fellow and had the joy of seeing him see the truth as it is in Christ. It's so common. You talk to people and the first thing

they throw up is some Christians they know who are not living godly in Christ.

Please, Paul says:

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

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

Some people read that verse this way: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with pepper.” The speech of some Christians is very peppery; it bites. But Paul says, don’t be that way. “May it be seasoned with salt,” that the healing virtue of salt might be manifested in your language, so that when you talk to people, instead of getting them on edge, instead of making them mad, instead of making them discouraged or have them dishonor the Lord whom you serve and love, you will know how to answer every man.

You come to people and they’ve been rubbed the wrong way, and they’re sore and they’re touchy. Now don’t rub that sore. You talk in order that they might be enjoying some peace. Let your speech have that healing virtue that will come into the heart and life of the one who is troubled. Be kind; be courteous; may your life show forth the fragrance of Christ.

And now we come to two or three things and I’m through with the book of Colossians. I want you to mark Paul’s great love for his people, especially for these men who are with him. You take the 16th chapter of Romans. You have a whole list of them there—men and women. I call them the new Testament worthies. Just as David had his mighty men, you find Paul has his mighty co-laborers in Romans 16. Now listen to this:

4:7. All my state (all my experience and how I’m getting along in jail) shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

4:8. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.

My, can’t you hear Paul saying that? If I had been there, I wish Paul could have said that about me. Whatever your name is, are you a beloved brother, a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord? Look at verse 9:

4:9. With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

Onesimus is a slave. You find that in the book of Philemon, a bond slave, sold into slavery. And his master was Philemon. And now Paul calls Onesimus the slave a faithful and beloved brother, a faithful brother. Look at the next verse:

4:10. Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him).

You know who Mark was? He was the one who left Barnabas and Paul when they went on their first missionary journey. In fact, it became a point of dissension between Paul and Barnabas as they planned their second journey, because Barnabas wanted Mark to go along with them and Paul said nothing doing. "He went the first time and left us. I'm not going to take him again."

Now here Paul talks about him. Paul's in jail and who is with him? Believe it or not, Mark is with him. And in verse 11, here's another one:

4:11. And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

A beloved brother, a faithful servant, fellow workers in the Lord. Look at verse 14: "

4:14. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you.

And then you have him saluting others. And you come on down to verse 17:

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

"You fill up your ministry. God has called you, Archippus, to a job, and you fulfill your ministry. Don't be sidetracked by anything else, but you fulfill your ministry.

Now you notice that I didn't say anything at all about this man Demas. I want to speak to you about this man Demas; one of Paul's fellow workers in a moment. When Paul is back in jail again, in 2 Timothy 4:10, he speaks of the fact that Demas has forsaken him, having loved this present evil world.

But I want you to mark the great love that this man Paul had for his fellow servants. There's no jealousy; there's no envy but only real, genuine love. "Tychicus, a beloved brother, a faithful minister, a fellow servant in the Lord; Onesimus, a slave who is a faithful and beloved brother; Archippus, a fellow prisoner, and Mark is even with me. And these are the Jews. They are fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, and they've been a real comfort to me. And not to say anything about dear Luke, the beloved physician, who has traveled with me all these years; and here he is in jail with me. He wants to be remembered to you."

And then you have one final word: You say to Archippus that he fulfill the ministry which God has given to him. God has put him in the ministry; he's received it from the Lord. You tell him to fulfill it, to be faithful to the job God's given him to do.

My friend, are you faithful to the job God's given you to do?

"Why, Mr. Mitchell, I'm not a preacher. I'm not a teacher."

No, but you're a Christian, aren't you? Then He's got a job for you. You belong to the body of Christ. Are you going to fulfill your ministry? It might be a ministry of prayer, a testimony to your neighbors and friends; it might be teaching a little class in your home or a Sunday school class—I don't know what the place God might have for you. It may be just with your own children. He's given you those children; this is your responsibility. Fulfill the ministry God's given to you with them and with your family and with your friends.

God grant to you and me we might be today faithful servants of the Lord, beloved of the Lord. And may we fulfill our ministry which He has given to us.

Now we come to the final section in Colossians which has to do with a man who was a fellow-laborer of Paul's, and I speak of this man Demas. You'll notice that there is practically nothing said about Demas in this passage:

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

We've been talking about Tychicus, and Onesimus, Aristarchus, and Justus, Archippus and Luke, the beloved physician, and Epaphras, but what about this man Demas? "Demas greets you." Now in the book of Philemon, right on down through to the 23rd and 24th verses we read there that Demas

was a fellow-laborer who traveled with the Apostle Paul. Here he's with him in prison because of Paul's testimony for the Lord.

Now when you come to 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul is finishing his ministry. As he has just said in verse 6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Hurry up and come to me, he said to Timothy, "for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica."

May I just say two or three things about this man Demas because it's so typical of so many men. I'm sorry to have to say this, but here is a man who is a fellow-laborer and a fellow servant with the Apostle Paul in the ministry of the gospel. He's mentioned three times in Paul's epistles—in Colossians 4 and Philemon and in 2 Timothy 4—but he's been tricked by the world. Having spoken so much of these others, now here comes this man Demas, a man who's in fellowship with the great leaders of God's people. He was recognized by the great apostle.

But just notice, there was nothing said about him. In fellowship with Paul, but Paul doesn't call him beloved or faithful or a fellow minister; he's just with Paul. Now he's called in Philemon, verse 24, one of Paul's co-laborers. He's mentioned with the others. This man Demas was in good company. And he must have known the truth because he was with the Apostle Paul. He was known and recognized as one of God's men of that generation. He could not have been with Paul and not have suffered some for the truth's sake. He must have known the truth; he must have known the power of God—he knew all about this.

But now you come to his failure—"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." This is a sad picture. Now I don't say he's not a Christian. He's a Christian—I'm sure he loved the Lord—but he got trapped by the world. You know, you can work and company with a man like Paul and it doesn't guarantee that you won't be a failure. I don't care how long you've been a Christian; I don't care how much you've served the Lord or how much you've been blessed of the Lord. That's no guarantee that you won't fail. Now you mark what I'm saying.

For example, you go to Genesis. Here's a man, Lot, the nephew of Abraham. "Abraham, the friend of God." You couldn't live in the encampment of Abraham and not know his God. Every day he offered his sacrifice. He was a real man of God. In fact, Isaiah quoted where God says, "Abraham, my friend." In fact, three times in the Bible he's called the friend of God. And yet here's a man called Lot who has been raised with Abraham,

but I find him locking down into Sodom. I find him going down and living among the Sodomites. And even when Abraham delivered him from captivity after he was taken prisoner, he went right back to Sodom. All that he had learned in the house of Abraham didn't prevent him from failure. You remember this, will you? Even Abraham himself, when he was an old man and had a real love for God, failed God and was thirteen years out of fellowship with Him.

Now here's this man Demas, and let me end with this. You may belong to a good church; you may have a wonderful pastor; you may know all about truth; in fact, it may be you're preaching it. It's no guarantee that you won't fail God. I believe this man had suffered for the gospel's sake; but even suffering for Christ was no guarantee against failure, against worldliness. You know you can walk and work with the best of God's servants and be sidetracked and affected by the world.

I wish you might pray for God's servants. May I plead with you again on this question of praying for them. They're beset by more subtleties and more opposition and more trickery than you can even realize. I know what I'm saying. To run a machine shop is very simple compared to being a pastor of a congregation of God's people. You've got the opposition of the world and the flesh and the devil. You become the special object of Satanic attacks, and you need the prayers of God's people. This man Demas, even though he was with the Apostle Paul, was sidetracked by the world.

I remember A. B. Simpson, possibly the outstanding man in the Christian Missionary Alliance, who one time spoke about a man who, in his younger days, was a fellow-worker with Dr. Simpson. He became an apostate, became a liberal, denied the deity of our Savior and all the wonderful truths of the gospel. He was sidetracked.

Notice in 2 Timothy 4:10, why did Demas forsake Paul? Because he loved this present world. What was the matter? Well, Paul, the mighty apostle of God, was in jail. In the first chapter we read that Timothy was full of fear, even though Paul has warned him not to be afraid of the testimony of the Word of God. And in chapter 1 you read that all in Asia had forsaken Paul. "Nevertheless, the Lord stood by me."

Now you come to the supreme test: Paul has been sentenced to death. All in Asia have forsaken him, and here is a man called Demas who has suffered with Paul but can't take it anymore. "Demas has left me." Why? Because of his love for this present world.

Do you know, we're living in a world that is opposed to God. You remember in Galatians 1:4, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." In John 17, our Savior 19 times spoke of the "world" in His prayer to His Father. And he said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one."

Now here is a man called Demas who has loved this present evil world. And to love the world, my friend, is to deny the Father. In 1 John 2:15-17 we have, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

This man was caught in a trap. He chose the glitter of the world to the reality. He chose ease to suffering. He chose passing things to eternal things. Now it does not necessarily mean that he went into sin or lived a very bad life or even a worldly life; but he was afraid to stand for the gospel because it might mean martyrdom. So he went back to the world. He left Paul, left his workers. And where did he go? He went back to Thessalonica. He went back to the place from which he came.

Paul went to glory, and Demas went to town. Do you ever think of it? The contrast between Demas and Paul? Demas was scared, was afraid of suffering and martyrdom. He left the Apostle Paul and went back to Thessalonica—he went back to the world. Paul left this world—he left Rome, but he went on to glory. It's true, he was martyred; he was beheaded, but he went back to glory.

I'm sorry to say this, but there are a great many people who love the Savior but have been trapped by the world. There are more than you and I realize. The world has a tremendous pull upon them. It pulls upon our young people. It pulls upon even older Christians. It's an amazing thing, the subtlety of the world. And it creeps in slyly, slowly. We're afraid of what the world might say about us. We're afraid of what one of our friends might say. We're afraid of the scorn and scoffing of the world.

Demas was afraid of martyrdom. He went back to his hometown. How many of us today, in this day, are afraid of what the world might say about us? We cater to the world; we cater to our friends; we slacken up in

our testimony for Christ because we're afraid it might offend our friends. We're more desirous of pleasing our friends than we are of pleasing God.

I'm saying this—I just plead with your hearts as we come to the close of the book of Colossians. Let us not be like Demas who left Paul in prison, “having loved this present world.”

May God grant to you and to me today the joy of living as open vessels for God to use in the display of His character and His love to men.