

Paul's Letter to the
Church at

COLOSSAE

A Sermon Series Study Guide for the
Book of Colossians

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INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

Paul penned this letter to the believers in Colossae around 60 AD during the time of his Roman house arrest and confinement (cf., Acts 28:30). This was also the time when he wrote letters to the believers in Ephesus and to his personal friend, Philemon.

The city of Colossae was located on the Lycus River in the biblical region of Phrygia (today, Turkey in southeast Asia Minor), 15 miles from Laodicea and about 100 miles directly east of Ephesus. The city thrived in Paul's day due to its location on a major trade route that ran between Ephesus and the Euphrates River in Arabia (Syria and Iraq). The population of Colossae was a mix of Phrygian and Greek settlers as well as Jews from Mesopotamia and Babylon. This made Colossae a cosmopolitan city where many cultural and religious traditions mingled together, including nature worship, astrology, and eastern mystery cults.

The Church in Colossae was the fruit born of Paul's exceptional, three-year ministry at Ephesus. This ministry was so powerful and far-reaching that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). Although he never had the opportunity to personally visit the believers in Colossae, he was constantly kept informed of its activities through Epaphras, a leader among the Colossian believers.

That young congregation came under immediate attack from several fronts: heretical Jews, false evangelists, and Gnostic teachers/philosophers. These people brought with them a corruption (and even a pure hatred) of the gospel which prompted Paul's urgent letter of caution and instruction.

Although Paul doesn't come right out and list the false teachings being seeded among the believers, the nature of the problems can be determined from his statements and cautions. His letter reveals the following heresies:

- A return to spiritual captivity through excessive ceremonialism and legalism in their life and worship (2:11; 2:16-17; 3:11)
- Embracing a sense of asceticism and the hatred of material things (2:21)
- The error of angel worship (2:18)
- Devaluing the full glory of Christ (1:15-20; 2:2-3,9)
- A reliance on secret (or mystery) knowledge as the true means of grace (2:2-3; 2:18)
- A reliance on human philosophies (2:4,8)

It was this mixture (i.e., 'syncretism' or the blending several beliefs into one) of Greek philosophy, eastern mysticism, and Jewish legal ceremonialism that urged Paul to (1) reestablish the supremacy and centrality of Christ in all things, and (2) to explain the true nature of authentic Christian life, including its expectations on the believer. This produced a neat, two-fold division in his letter to the Colossian believers:

- PART ONE: Godly doctrine (1:13-2:23) "*Orthodoxy*"
- PART TWO: Godly life (3:1-4:6) "*Orthopraxy*"

Paul clearly wanted to demonstrate that the heresies being taught were absolutely inadequate, hollow and deceptive, and lacking any ability to restrain or heal the old sinful nature. He countered these teachings by declaring the complete adequacy, sufficiency, and supremacy of Christ as God's true answer for the 'emptiness' found in every other system of belief. As a result, today's Church is now blessed to possess one of the earliest Christian "apologies" (or defensive statements of faith) we have against its rivals and competitors.

COMPARITIVE OUTLINES

One of the best ways to understand the meaning of a book is to see its outline (or table of contents). An outline gives the reader an idea of how a teaching or argument unfolds. Since the original biblical writers never gave us their outlines, any outline we see today is the attempt of scholars to ‘deconstruct’ a book into its principal parts. In a way, then, outlines become the simplest forms of biblical interpretation. And like any other kind of scholarship, there is never total agreement. The following outlines—while they agree on the major points of Colossians—not only show how rich the writing of Paul is, but how even a short letter can be interpreted in many different ways.

New Testament Survey (Baker Book House)

Introduction (1:1-8)

- I. The Preeminence of Christ (1:9-29)
 - A. The prayer of Paul (1:9-14)
 - B. The person of Christ (1:15-20)
 - C. The work of Christ (1:21-29)
- II. The Warning Against Heresy (2:1-23)
 - A. The concern of Paul (2:1-5)
 - B. The safeguard against heresy (2:6-15)
 - C. The description of the heresy (2:16-23)
- III. The Practice of True Christian Living (3:1-4:6)
 - A. Its foundation (3:1-4)
 - B. Its Principles (3:5-17)
 - C. Its applications (3:18-4:6)
 1. Wives (3:18)
 2. Husbands (3:19)
 3. Children (3:20)
 4. Parents (3:21)
 5. Servants (3:22-25)
 6. Masters (4:1)
 7. Church members (4:2-6)

Conclusion (4:7-18)

New International Biblical Commentary, Vol. 10 (Hendrickson)

Paul's Greetings (1:1-2)
Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
Paul's Prayer of Intercession (1:9-14)
The Hymn to Christ (1:15-20)
The Application of the Hymn to the Colossians (1:21-23)
Paul's Personal Suffering (1:24)
Paul's Proclamation of the Mystery (1:25-29)
Paul's Concern for the Churches (2:1-5)
A Summons to Steadfastness (2:6-7)
Christian Verses Human Tradition (2:8-10)
The True Circumcision and Its Effects (2:11-15)
A Manifesto of Christian Liberty (2:16-23)
The Heavenly Life (3:1-4)
The Vices of the Old Life (3:5-9)
The Virtues of the New Life (3:10-15)
The Expressions of True Worship (3:16-17)
Wife-Husband Relationships (3:18-19)
Child-Parent Relationships (3:20-21)
Slave-Master Relationships (3:22-4:1)
Exhortations to Pray and Witness (4:2-6)
Final Greetings and Instructions (4:7-18)

An Outline of New Testament Survey (Moody Press)

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. The Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
- III. The Prayer of Intercession (1:9-14)
- IV. The Supremacy of Christ (1:15-23)
- V. Paul's Desire for the Saints (1:24-2:7)
- VI. Paul's Exhortations to the Saints (2:8-4:6)
 - a. To guard against false philosophy (2:8-15)
 - b. To guard against false worship (2:16-19)
 - c. To guard against false asceticism (2:20-3:4)
 - d. To attain Christian maturity (3:5-17)
 - e. To follow right conduct (3:18-4:1)
 - f. To practice continual prayer (4:2-6)
- VII. Paul's Representatives to Colossae (4:10-17)
- VIII. Greetings (4:10-17)
- IX. Conclusion (4:18)

NIV/KJV Full Life Study Bible (Zondervan)

Introduction (1:1-12)

- A. Christian Greetings (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving for Their Faith, Love and Hope (1:3-8)
 - C. Prayer for Their Spiritual Advancement (1:9-12)
 - I. **Powerful Doctrine—The Believer's Redemption (1:13-2:23)**
 - A. **The Absolute Preeminence of Christ (1:13-23)**
 - 1. A Vicarious Redeemer (1:13-14; cf. 1:20,22)
 - 2. As Lord of Creation (1:15-17)
 - 3. As Head of the Church (1:18)
 - 4. As Reconciler of All Things (1:19-20)
 - 5. As Reconciler of the Colossians to God (1:21-23)
 - B. **Paul's Ministry of God's Mystery in Christ (1:24-2:7)**
 - 1. Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ (1:24-25)
 - 2. Perfecting Believers in Christ (1:26-2:7)
 - C. **Warnings Against Erroneous Teaching (2:8-23)**
 - 1. **Problem: Teaching Not According to Christ (2:8)**
Solution: Made Complete in Christ (2:9-15)
 - 2. **Problem: Religious Practices Not According to Christ (2:16-23)**
Solution: Crucified with Christ (2:20)
 - II **Practical Instructions—The Believer's Life (3:1-4:6)**
 - A. **The Believer's Personal Conduct (3:1-17)**
 - 1. When Christ Is Our Life (3:1-4)
 - 2. Laying Aside the Old Life of Sin (3:5-9)
 - 3. Putting on the New Self in Christ (3:10-17)
 - B. **The Believer's Domestic Relationships (3:18-4:1)**
 - 1. Wives and Husbands (3:18-19)
 - 2. Children and Parents (3:20-21)
 - 3. Slaves and Masters (3:22-4:1)
 - C. **The Believer's Spiritual Influence (4:2-6)**
 - 1. A Life Devoted to Prayer (4:2-4)
 - 2. Wise Conduct Toward Outsiders (4:5)
 - 3. Speech Seasoned with Grace (4:6)
- Conclusion (4:7-18)**

New Testament Survey; Eerdmans

- I Salutation (1:1-2)
- II Christ Pre-eminent in Personal Relationships (1:3-2:7)
 - In Personal Contacts (1:3-8)
 - In Personal Presentation (1:9-23)
 - In Personal Purpose (1:24-2:7)
- III Christ Pre-eminent in Doctrine (2:8-3:4)
 - False Philosophy versus Christ (2:8-15)
 - False Worship versus Christ (2:16-19)
 - False Asceticism versus Christ (2:20-3:4)
- IV Christ Pre-eminent in Ethics (3:5-4:6)
 - Negatively: "Put off..." (3:5-11)
 - Positively: "Put on..." (3:12-17)
 - In Family Relationships (3:18-4:1)
 - General (4:2-6)
- V Concluding Personal Greetings (4:7-18)

NIV/NASB/KJV Study Bible (Zondervan)

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - A. Greetings (1:1-2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - C. Prayer (1:9-14)
- II. The Supremacy of Christ (1:15-23)
- III. Paul's Labor for the Church (1:24-29)
 - A. Ministry for the Sake of the Church (1:24-29)
 - B. Concern for the Spiritual Welfare of His Readers (2:1-7)
- IV. Freedom from Human Regulations through New Life with
 - A. Christ (2:8-15)
 - B. Warning to Guard Against the False Teachers (2:8-15)
 - C. Pleas to Reject the False Teachers (2:16-19)
 - D. An Analysis of the Heresy (2:20-23)
- V. Rules for Holy Living (3:1-4:6)
 - A. The Old Self and the New Self (3:1-17)
 - B. Rules for Christian Households (3:18-4:1)
 - C. Further Instructions (4:2-6)
- VI. Final Greetings (4:7-18)

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 11 (Zondervan)

- I. Introduction (1:1-14)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-8)
 - C. Prayer of Petition (1:9-14)
- II. The Supremacy of Christ (1:15-23)
 - A. The Scope of Christ's Supremacy (1:15-18)
 - B. The Basis for Christ's Supremacy (1:19-23)
- III. The Ministry of Paul (1:24-2:7)
 - A. A Ministry of Suffering (1:24)
 - B. A Ministry of Preaching (1:25-29)
 - C. A Ministry of Intercession (2:1-5)
 - D. A Ministry of Exhortation (2:6-7)
- IV. Warning Against Error (2:8-23)
 - A. The Error of False Philosophy (2:8-15)
 - B. The Error of Legalism (2:16-17)
 - C. The Error of Angel Worship (2:18-19)
 - D. The Error of Asceticism (2:20-23)
- V. Appeal for Christian Living (3:1-4:6)
 - A. The Root Principle of the Christian Life (3:1-4)
 - B. Guidelines for the Christian Life (3:5-4:6)
 - i. Sins of old life to be abandoned (3:5-11)
 - ii. Virtues of new life to be cultivated (3:12-17)
 - iii. Relationships to be strengthened (3:18-4:1)
 - iv. Religious Duties to be performed (4:2-6)
- VI. Conclusion (4:7-18)
 - A. Commendations (4:7-9)
 - B. Greetings (4:10-15)
 - C. Instructions (4:16-17)
 - D. Benediction (4:18)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Eerdmans)

- A. Salutation (1:1-2)
- B. The Person and Work of Christ (1:3-2:7)
- C. False Teaching and Its Antidote (2:8-3:4)
- D. The Christian Life (3:5-4:6)
- E. Personal Notes and Final Greetings (4:7-18)

Unger's Bible Handbook (Moody Press)

Paul's Interest in the Colossians (1:1-14)
The Glory of Christ's Person and Work (1:15-29)
Christ, the Answer to Doctrinal Errors (2:1-23)
Union with Christ the Basis of Christian Living (3:1-4:18)

The IVP New Testament Commentary, Vol. 12 (InterVarsity Press)

1:1-2 Paul's Greeting
1:3-12 Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving
1:13-23 The Foundation of Faith: God's Grace in Christ
 1:13-14 The New Exodus
 1:15-20 The New Creation
 1:21-23 The New Age
1:23-2:3 Paul's Defense of His Ministry
2:4-15 PAUL'S ARGUMENT AGAINST CHRISTLESS THEOLOGY
 2:4-8 The Error of Sophistry
 2:9-15 Paul's Response to the "Philosopher"
 2:9-10 Christ is God Within History
 2:10-15 Christ is Lord over History
2:16-4:1 PAUL'S POLEMIC AGAINST CHRISTLESS ETHICS
 2:16-23 The Error of Ascetic Piety
 2:16-17 Accusation Without Foundation
 2:18-19 Righteousness Without Relationship
 2:20-23 Religion Without Results
3:1-4:1 Paul's Response to the "Spiritual Umpire"
 3:1-4 The Foundation of Pauline Ethics
 3:5-11 The Community's Conversion from Vice
 3:12-17 The Community's Conversion to Virtue
 3:18-4:1 Virtue Illustrated by the Christian Family
4:2-18 Benediction
 4:2-6 Paul's Evangelistic Concern for Outsiders
 4:7-17 Paul's Apostolic Concern for Insiders
 4:18 Final Farewell

Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 11 (Zondervan)

- I ADDRESS AND SALUTATION (1:1-2)
- II PART FIRST:
Mention of the Ground of Christian Fellowship and Warning Against Apostasy (1:3-2:28)
 - 1. Thanks to God for the faith and love of his readers from the beginning (1:3-8)
 - 2. Earnest supplication for the progress of the church in true knowledge, especially of the Being and Work of Christ (1:9-23)
 - 3. Joy of the Apostle in his sufferings and labors (1:24-29)
 - 4. Anxiety of the Apostle lest they be led away through false wisdom (2:1-15)
 - 5. Two special warnings (2:16-23)
- III PART SECOND:
Exhortation to True Vital Sanctification (3:1-4:6)
 - 1. The foundation and prospect of a genuine Christian sentiment and walk (3:1-4)
 - 2. General exhortations (3:5-17)
 - 3. Special exhortations (3:18-4:1)
 - a. to wives (v. 18) and husbands (v. 19)
 - b. to children (v. 20) and fathers (v. 21)
 - c. to servants (vs. 22-25) and masters (4:1)
 - 4. Concluding exhortations (4:2-6)
- IV CONCLUSION (4:7-18)
 - 1. Personal intelligence (4:7-9)
 - 2. Salutations and messages (4:16-17)
 - 3. Closing words (4:18)

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colossians 1:1-2

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy
our brother,*

To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Paul's blessings from God of **grace** and **peace** are directed to **holy** and **faithful** believers **IN** Christ. When God speaks to His creation, He only has two words:

- (1) words of blessing and instruction that reflect His heart of joy (to those that are His)
- (2) words of warning, repentance, and even judgment that reflect His heart of brokenness (to those who refuse to be His)

What words do we want to hear? **Is our faith characterized by holiness and faithfulness in unity with Christ** so that our lives will be blessed with grace and peace? If not, are we aware of the tug of the Holy Spirit to humble ourselves before the Mercy Seat of heaven?

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:3-4

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--

This is a pastor's greatest pleasure: to praise the Christ-like qualities of his people...and then to give God thanks for the privilege of pastoring them.

Some ministers agonize over their people and pray, "Lord, they'll be the death of me!" Other ministers rejoice and pray, "Lord, I'm so blessed!"

The key to this text rests on the **two qualities** that Christian leaders so anxiously desire for the members of their church or for the people under their care: **tempered faith** and **active love**.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:5

the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel [that has come to you].

The **hope** that is stored up in heaven is often referred to as the **Blessed Hope of the Church**.

A congregation's **faith** and **love** flow from their unswerving knowledge that Christ will come back for them in the rapture and that He will take them back to heaven for their eternal reward.

Yes, a place is prepared and waiting for us. This is the hope that Jesus promises to us in John 14:1-6; words that inspire all believers to lives of faith and love (cf., 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:6-8

[that has come to you.] All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

The reception of the Gospel (i.e., the gift of salvation) in a person's life **is not a static, one time event**; sticking out like a coat peg upon which to hang Christian faith—a coat peg that never moves from its place on the wall.

While there is a specific point in time when the Gospel does its life-changing work through salvation, God's Good News is not content to stay locked up inside of us on that day. It must **continue to bear fruit** (i.e., produce other Christians through witness and do the works of the kingdom) and **grow in maturity**. (cf., I Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14)

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:9-10a

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way:

God's will is not intended to be a mystery; we can be privy to it. However, once it becomes known to us, **God's will is not to go unheeded.**

Paul desires that the Colossians come to know God's will for them **in order** that they may please Him. We please God by both **knowing AND doing** His will.

It must be noted, however, that God's will is only **spiritually discerned.** Because of this, a non-believer will always be frustrated in knowing what God wants. For them, God's primary concern is their salvation.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:10b-12a

bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father,

We please God by following His will for us in **four major areas of life**; areas that apply categorically to all believers:

- (1) bearing **fruit** in good works
- (2) growing in **knowledge** of God
- (3) demonstrating **endurance/patience**
- (4) responding with **thanksgiving**

Once we accept that this is what God wants for our lives and our minds are fixed on doing these things, God will show us how to accomplish them individually as believers and corporately as the Church.

[It's crucial to note that these admonitions are rarely written to individuals. The "you" is always plural rather than singular. The view of the Early Church was that Christianity was the function of the believing community; never "me and Jesus" solo faith. Why? Because the 'outflow' of an isolated Christian was seen as corrupt or suspect if he chose to live separate from the larger group of faith, especially if the division was based on his pride, anger, sin, etc. Anything that divided the Body of Christ was understood to hurt the Body of Christ. It's hard in today's churches to realize how important this is because contemporary Christianity is heavily influenced by society's emphasis on individualism.]

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:12b-14

who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Qualified is the key word here. It comes from the Greek word *ικανωω* (HI-KANO-OE). It's used in the New Testament as both an adjective and a verb. It means **sufficient, competent, fit, able, and qualified.**

However, this isn't a qualification as we normally understand it. Usually, a qualification is something we must achieve or attain (e.g., we 'qualify' to be on a team). **But God is the qualifier in this case.** He qualifies us to share in the glories of heaven when He rescues us from Satan. Since this is a divine act of God, it does away with all notions that we must somehow get better or get right before God will work in us.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:15-17

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

When we speak of Jesus we should not use the term **firstborn** as if He had a beginning point in time. Jesus was never created or 'generated' like the angels. Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The term, instead, should be understood as a **position of family honor** in that the firstborn inherits the creation from the Father.

Additionally, Jesus was **integral** to the creation. Compare these words with those found in John 1:1-3 and Proverbs 8:22-31 where the Greek '**WORD**' and the Hebrew '**WISDOM**' (synonyms to each other) are Old and New Testament expressions of the pre-incarnate Christ. The same thing can also be found in the Old Testament apocryphal text, Ecclesiasticus (or, Sirach) 24:1-12.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Just as Christ reigns over the world and will make it God's footstool, He also reigns over the Church.

Head comes from the Greek word κεφαλη (KEPHALAY) and has two primary meanings:

- (1) **head of a physical body** (providing guidance, direction, or control)
- (2) **head of a river** (source, supply, nurture)

While these definitions of Christ's role are most strongly noted in Ephesians 1:22, 4:15, 5:23, and Colossians 2:19, His supremacy is over far more than just the living. As the crucified, risen, and glorified Lord, He is also the **first fruits** (eldest son) of those who have died in the faith.

As the **pioneer** or **trailblazer** of our faith, His resurrection is the **guarantee** that everyone who has died in faithful service will also rise with Him (and like Him) in glory.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:19-20

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

All that is God equally resides in Jesus. The sacrifice of Jesus, therefore, is fully **sufficient** to subdue the **enmity** of all creation under His blood; changing our status from enemy to friend under terms of **peace**.

We need to be aware, however, that **sufficiency** is different from **efficiency**. While the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to bring peace to everything in all of creation, it is applied (or made efficient) only to those who accept it in faith and belief. Consequently, those who will not benefit from the cross are the rebellious angels and unbelieving mankind. Otherwise, through Jesus, even creation itself looks forward to **adoption/repatriation** with the Father. (cf. Romans 8:18-25)

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:21-23

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

All of us from birth stand apart from God as His enemies; our sin nature cancels any relationship with the Father. But **the death of Jesus on the cross becomes the door** by which we pass from death to life. And although we still carry around bodies of clay, **God looks at us through the blood of His Son** and sees us as creatures of purity and holiness.

According to Paul, holiness can be explained as having two parts:

- (1) **INTERNAL HOLINESS: without blemish** (the stains of sin)
- (2) **EXTERNAL HOLINESS: free from accusation** (Satan's charges against us)

Most surprising, though, is that **this assurance of spiritual victory is followed by the conditional particle "IF"**. In other words, it seems that the surety of our holiness is **directly proportional** to the consistency of our faith; the same faith back in verse 5 that hopes toward the day when we can see God and Jesus face to face; no longer as enemies but as beloved children.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:24-26

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

Paul demonstrates a commitment and integrity to faith in Christ that often far exceeds our own. **Suffering and affliction** for the sake of Christ and spread of the Gospel seems to be a **normative expectation** for someone in the service of heaven. Hardship was never a reason for Paul or the other early Christians to shirk their high calling as witnesses of the Good News.

Question: Are we willing to demonstrate similar dedication to Jesus today?

Question: Is there a point where our personal comfort dictates a halt in our faithful service to Christ?

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 1:27-29

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

This is a wonderful synopsis of the Church's work. Every laborer for Christ should be uniquely bound to this basic **two-part strategy** of missions for advancing the Kingdom of God as the Holy Spirit provides them opportunities within their surroundings, circumstances, friends and acquaintances, etc.:

- (1) **Evangelism** ("...proclaim him,...")
- (2) **Discipleship** ("...admonishing and teaching...")

These come together in order to fulfill the missionary goal of the Kingdom, "...so that we may **present everyone** perfect in Christ."

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:1

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.

Paul reminds us of something very important in these words; that the local church **is not isolated or insular**.

Every local church is part of the universal **Body of Christ**; a body that extends around the world, through all nations, to all races, in all languages, and across the ages. Our differences should be nothing compared to the one thing that binds us together: the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Knowing that we are part of a much larger Church should direct our **prayers**, our **giving**, our **concerns**, and our **acceptance** of other believers from differing denominations. The church across town may have a different sign than ours, but they're still our brothers and sisters in Christ.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:2-3

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul's thoughts stack up in this text like **building blocks**, revealing a deep concern for the Church; a concern that we must examine.

Reading between the lines, we discover that our **human understanding** becomes **faulty** when we fail to display the essential qualities of **love and unity** in our **faith**. This can only result in our inability to fully know Christ. The only thing we're left with, then, is **spiritual infancy**; something Paul strongly cautions against (cf., Ephesians 4:13-14; Hebrews 5:11-6:2).

Put another way,

- (1) **unity and love provide the foundation for understanding,**
- (2) **understanding opens the door for the full knowledge of Jesus Christ, and**
- (3) **full knowledge of Christ leads to spiritual maturity.**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:4-5

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Our spiritual battle is fought against Satan. The only way Satan gets a foothold into our lives is through **deception, i.e., the corruption of God's Word and will and turning it into a believable lie.**

When our lives are full of Jesus there's no room for deceptive enemy inroads. In fact, the fullness of Christ in us works to establish two key trademarks that are characteristic of a mature body of believers:

- (1) **Orderliness among the saints.**
- (2) **Firm and unshakeable faith.**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:6-7

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

A genuine life in Christ is **progressive**, never static or punctiliar (i.e., locked at a specific point in time in the past).

Paul makes a keen distinction here between **initial salvation** and **ongoing faith**. He demonstrates the nature of living faith through parallels and contrasts:

received.....continue to live
rooted.....built up
strengthened.....overflowing

These verbs in the Greek have a lot to tell us. With the exception of our initial salvation indicated by the word **received**, the other elements of faith—**rooted**, **built up**, and **strengthened**—are not ‘past tense’ verbs at all. In the Greek they are actually **verbs with ongoing duration and quality**. This means that the activity of our faith should not only be **in progress** but must **continue in progress**.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:8-10

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Those who are solidly founded on Christ are **freed from Satan's captivity** and **freed from the world**. With that freedom comes the Christian's **greatest privilege**: that we are able to behold the Father through the Son.

Jesus tells us that **when we look upon Him we also see God** (cf., John 14:7; 14:9). In similar manner, Paul tells us here that just as Jesus is the embodiment of the godhead, so **are we the embodiment of Christ**. This becomes the **source of our daily spiritual victory**.

The '**fullness**' mentioned in our English bibles is actually a Greek verb written in the **perfect** tense. This means that we **HAVE BEEN** filled with Christ...are **STILL** filled with Christ...and **WILL CONTINUE** to be filled with Christ. It's a condition that doesn't change.

When we realize that He is always with us—and that He is the **head over every power and authority**—then we have the confidence that none of Satan's attacks can destroy us.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:11-12

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

The circumcision spoken of here is basically a **spiritual ‘branding’ achieved through a physical action**. It’s also a perfect example of a ‘sacrament’ (i.e., tangible participation in an invisible grace).

Old Testament circumcision was a physical mark of ownership by God and was very similar to the pierced ear that demonstrated a bond-slave’s ownership by his master (Deuteronomy 15:16-17). Circumcision was the sign of one’s membership in God’s community and was performed externally by the priests. However, it did nothing to change the attitude of the heart.

The New Testament community, however, is a spiritual one; entrance into this community is **performed internally by Christ** as he cuts away the callousness of our hearts. We see God’s hunger for our spiritual circumcision as early as Deuteronomy 10:16; *“Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer”* (cf., Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29).

According to Paul, the effect of this circumcision is applied to us through the mystery of Christian **baptism** which joins us to Christ’s death and resurrection; the tangible demonstration that **our sins have been spiritually cut away**, thus making us members of the heavenly community (cf., Romans 6:3-7).

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:13-15

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Here we see the awesome work of salvation. **Prior to receiving Christ, every person is spiritually dead**; it's a universal condition. Two things keep us in that state:

- (1) Commission of sins/trespasses—the externals of "Adam"
- (2) Unyielding spiritual callousness—the internals of "Adam"

But God provides the escape. "**Alive**" actually comes from a Greek word meaning "**co-quicken**" or "**concurrently made alive.**" In other words, when Jesus was raised from the dead in triumph over our sins, we, too, experience that same victory and triumph through Him.

Essentially, with the evidence against us destroyed (i.e., the Law) **there remains no more case** and the charges are summarily dropped.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The Colossians faced heretics who wanted to continue imposing **legalistic requirements** on their faith; requirements that had been **shattered/fulfilled** by Christ. He came to satisfy the requirements of the Law for us.

Jesus is now the only one to whom we owe allegiance. If we acknowledge a continuing accountability to religious legalism in our lives, **it sets up laws in the place of God**. Jesus sets us free from such tyranny.

At one time such rules may have been **sign posts** or **types** of those heavenly things yet to come, but our fulfillment now comes entirely through Christ.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:18-19

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

The focus of our faith is crucial to the destination of our faith. Unfortunately, it's easy for many to turn their faith toward false humility (which itself is pride) and the worship of 'lesser' beings (which become substitute relationships for God).

Paul cautions us:

- (1) Those things we delight in here are only rewarded here (cf., Matthew 6:5,16).
- (2) Angels do not hold the book of life.

Consequently, these **substitutes detract us from Jesus** who IS the Head of the Church (see comments on 1:18 and 2:10). And like a severed limb, those who are cut off will wither and die. Our continued growth comes only as our faith **remains fully connected to Christ**.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 2:20-23

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Paul asks the question, "**Just how supreme is the Christ who dwells within us?**" Did Jesus set us free or not? Is He all-sufficient or not? Did our Lord satisfy the requirements of the Law or not? Paul's point: we **cannot generate our own holiness through law-keeping; only Christ makes us holy**. Self-generated holiness turns into self-generated righteousness.

We cannot make ourselves holy because we are not capable of killing the sin nature within us. Only God can do that through Jesus Christ. God wants to do the work of **saving and refining** us. As soon as we try to get into the process it shows we are either unwilling to totally yield our lives into the Potter's hands or that we think we can do a better job than the Lord. And even as we mature in faith and begin to take on our mandate to "mortify the deeds of the flesh" (Romans 8:13), we accomplish it while being **yoked to Jesus and the Holy Spirit**, but never, never, never alone!

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:1-10 is an extended text that neatly divides itself into a three-part strategy for the Christian's life:

- (1) **"The Challenge"** (3:1-2)
This is what we are to do.
"Since you have been raised...set your hearts...minds..."
- (2) **"The Motivation"** (3:3-4)
This is why we do it.
"...you also will appear with him in glory."
- (3) **"The Plan"** (3:5-10)
This is how we do it.
"Put to death...rid yourselves of all such as these:..."

We will look at each one individually in the following pages.

Colossians 3:1-2

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.

Based on everything that's been said up to this point, Paul now makes a transition ("Since, then,...") to **life application**. The application begins with the **battlefield of the mind**.

Our confidence in a personal resurrection is made clear in Paul's past tense use of "have been raised." **It is a certainty already guaranteed in Christ**. Because of this, we are to set both hearts and minds on the things of heaven. As Matthew 6:19-21 says, "...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

This anchoring of the heart and mind on things above is not a one time 'thank you' for salvation. The Greek is rendered in the present active voice, calling us into **continual and habitual action**; a life **constantly/consistently** devoted to Jesus.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:3-4

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

This shows us how **absolutely and eternally contingent** we are on Jesus. Our Lord tells us in John 6:53-54, "...*you have no life in you. [But] Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,...*"

Our refuge in Christ until His return provides the hope of our:

- (1) protection and safety
- (2) identification with the risen Lord

However, what's hidden will **soon be revealed**. At the second coming of the Lord all believers will be **resurrected, lifted up, and glorified**, to stand with Him as brothers and sisters in glory (cf., 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:5-10

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Whereas 2:20-23 shows how sin is continually fed with self-righteousness, these verses show us how to **put to death our old nature** by ceasing to sustain it or feed it.

However, like a dirty coat, we can always pick up our sinful nature again, put it on, animate it and giving it life, thus **soiling the blood washed clothes** given to us through Jesus.

On the other hand, the more we nurture the new self, the more we become **incorporated into and infused with the image of God in Christ**. What a contrasting chasm exists between the old and the new!

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:11

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Paul is so encouraged by the guarantee that the saints of God will **reside in heaven** that he speaks about heaven as if it were already a present reality.

"**HERE** [i.e., the place where we've been instructed to set our hearts in 3:1] there is no Greek or Jew,..." What a fantastic proclamation! Something transforms us from the rebellious crowd at the Tower of Babel who sought to gain heaven on their own (Genesis 11:1-9) into a body of believers where the only distinctive feature is that we've **obtained heaven solely on the merits of Jesus Christ!**

Our encouragement is that we've **already been renewed through Him**. It's our all-embracing identity. And on account of Him, the divisions that once plagued us come crashing down. Perhaps Paul's encouragement is that we begin to **practice our unity in the Church before we get to heaven.**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

The previous eleven verses are now drawn together into a spiritual and practical application.

The Church has been blessed as the new spiritual Israel; God's chosen people. As such, our lifestyles should be **characteristically distinct from everyone else**. In essence, we are given a **spiritual dress code of faith** as a fitting response to God's love. This can be seen as a secondary list of **spiritual fruits**, half of which already appear in Galatians 5:22-23.

It's interesting to note that the final item in the original Greek is actually translated as **sacrificial love**. Perhaps this is to help **distinguish the Christian's love** from those who are merely virtuous (e.g., philanthropists: doers of good deeds). God can clearly distinguish His children from those who perform their kindnesses for reasons other than dedicated service to Christ.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:15

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

The peace of Christ has the power to still all storms (cf., Mark 4:39, "Quiet! Be still!"), **even the storms that rage in our lives.**

In the original Greek the wording says, "**And the peace of Christ rules in your hearts.**" The difference here is that our English makes it sound like Paul is asking us to allow peace to rule. In the Greek text, peace already rules in our hearts as a **judge and umpire.** It's not an invitation to allow peace in our lives; **it's already in operation.** Our personal response is to either honor or ignore its judgments.

Paul's encouragement is that we give honor to Christ's peace. For until we finally arrive in heaven, it's only His peace that allows us to harmoniously function as the Body of Christ on earth. Paul appends this admonition toward peace with the words, "And be thankful." Our thanks is evident in chapter three for the following:

- (1) The assurance of **resurrection** from a life of sin (3:1)
- (2) The promise of a **home in glory** (3:4)
- (3) The "**new self**" cast in the likeness of God (3:10)
- (4) The **image of Christ** that makes us one (3:11)
- (5) The rule of **peace** (1:15)

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:16-17

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul now empowers the Body of Christ for **service and ministry**, provided that it's **accomplished through Jesus** instead of popular convention, human wisdom, or carnality. This is expressed through a three-part plan:

- (1) **teach**...with wisdom
- (2) **admonish**...with wisdom
- (3) **praise**...with gratitude

These activities shall receive the fullest blessings of Jesus Christ when **performed as a labor of love unto Him.**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:18-22

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

This portion is a condensed repeat of Paul's fuller treatment on relationships found in Ephesians 5:22-6:9. We must pay close attention to the action words found in these verses. **They are appropriate for every servant of Christ** and in every social context:

- (1) **Submit**
- (2) **Love**
- (3) **Obey**
- (4) **Do not embitter**

Even more important than the action is the motivation. We are not to labor/ behave as Christians only when others have their eyes upon us, but all the time. Why? Because it's an omniscient and omnipresent God whom we **must eventually stand before and it's Him we must please. He watches us ALL the time!**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 3:23-25

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

Paul made many statements throughout his letters about the Christian's labor. The following are examples:

"...you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain"
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

"The worker deserves his wages"
(1 Timothy 5:18)

In short, **God's blessings are rich upon His servants**. As we work in service unto Christ we are promised a reward: a heavenly inheritance. When we trace God's promise of an inheritance through Scripture, the original promise is found in Genesis 15 and 17 as a part of the Abrahamic covenant.

Although **God Himself is the believer's final reward (15:1)**, Abraham was blessed with the following promises:

- (1) **a name** (Genesis 17:5)
- (2) **a family** (Genesis 17:6)
- (3) **a homeland** (Genesis 17:8)

As Abraham's spiritual descendents, we also inherit:

- (1) **a new name** (Revelation 2:17)
- (2) **a heavenly family** (Revelation 7:9)
- (3) **a spiritual/eternal home** (Revelation 22:14)

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:1

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

We are all masters over someone; whether it be our children, employees, younger siblings, or within any structural chain of command. We all, at one time or another, **exercise a leadership role.**

Like the ancient, eastern culture of owning bondservants, **being a "master" requires particular care, perspective, and sensitivity.** If the Lord places us in situations where we must function as a 'master' we must avoid the temptation to be an "overlord". Rather, we should contribute to these relationships with only what is **RIGHT and FAIR**; never looking for selfish opportunities.

Why? Jesus says, "*...with the measure you use, it will be measured to you*" (Matthew 7:2b). Paul adds a simple truth to our Lord's statement, "...you also have a Master in heaven." **Don't we only hope for what is right and fair from God?** That's how we should also bless those who are placed in subservient positions to us.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Christians should carry about themselves the unmistakable **fragrance of prayer**. It is our greatest, most fearsome weapon.

Devotion, in this sense, carries with it the idea of **earnestness, perseverance, consistency, diligence, adherence, and continuation**. Just as 1:10-12a gave us our occupation as believers, 4:2 now gives us our spiritual devotion.

This is very much like the rebuilding of the wall in Nehemiah 4:17-18. Even though the workers labored on the reconstruction of Jerusalem's wall (the occupation), each individual also had a sword in their hand (the commitment and devotion to defend God's purpose).

The watchfulness of prayer draws us toward the completion of God's plan, which, for the believer, is the Day of the Lord's appearing. Jesus strongly declares this need for watchful prayer:

- (1) *"Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come"* (Matthew 24:42; cf., 25:13).
- (2) *"Be on guard! Be alert!...Therefore **keep watch**..."* (Mark 13:33,35).
- (3) *"Be always **on the watch, and pray**..."* (Luke 21:36).

Such watchfulness also employs thankfulness because the Day of His appearing is also our **crowning day**.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:3-4

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

We are given a particular prayer mission in this brief text. Using Paul as an example of specific need, we should be in **constant prayer** for those who are **called by Jesus to missions and new church planting**.

As the Lord's Day approaches, we must continually bathe in prayer all the laborers of the field who faithfully spread the Gospel.

The prayer should be of at least two distinct parts:

- (1) **that mission opportunities are continually manifested**
("...that God may open a door...")
- (2) **that the message/messenger be understood and relevant**
("...that I may proclaim it clearly,...")

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:5-6

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

The **Church** comes from a Greek word that literally translates as the "**called out ones**;" we who have been separated from the world and at the same time separated apart "for Christ." It's a tremendous relationship in which we can place all of our hope and faith. On the other hand, those who are not believers in Christ find themselves as the **true outsiders**; outside of the kingdom of light.

Is it any wonder, then, that our testimony and lifestyle is so important for drawing those outside of the kingdom into the presence of the Lord? Believers must exercise **Spirit-directed wisdom** in sharing the Gospel because it's only the Spirit who knows the intents and purposes of the hearts to whom we witness. He'll guide us into **proper words and actions**. He'll also help us to **make the most of every opportunity** as we shine for Jesus in an unbelieving world.

Most important, Paul encourages us to never be 'isolationists;' that is, never to cloister ourselves away behind the safety of church doors. **We are the only Bibles that some people may ever read!**

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:7-14

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

Paul's final greetings to the church provides us with an excellent recipe for **true Christian friendship**. Here we see the **qualities, actions, and outcomes** (or products) of godly friendship.

(1) **Qualities:**

- a. dear brother
- b. faithful minister
- c. fellow prisoner
- d. servant of Christ

(2) **Actions:**

- a. encourage your heart
- b. sends greetings
- c. personal comfort
- d. wrestles in prayer on your behalf

(3) **Outcome/Product:**

- a. stand firm in God's will
- b. stand mature in the faith
- c. stand assured of calling and reward

When you choose a Christian friend, **choose one who builds you up** in these things. we must likewise be willing to **do the same for them**.

PERSONAL NOTES:

Colossians 4:16-18

After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

As a closing we are reminded that **we don't hold the corner on denominational truth**. Much can be learned from other churches. What is God's special purpose at work through them? What is God's special purpose at work through us? Whatever it is, we are not permitted to be lax in the task.

We must continually be about the mission for which God raised us up. And as we do, we should take heart and give God thanks that our task is not as difficult as it is for others in the Body of Faith. Some churches carry out God's will under **extreme hardships and persecutions**; we should be in prayer for them. But to all of us who are faithful to the Lord's will, **His grace marches with us!**

PERSONAL NOTES:

