

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**COLOSSIANS**

**SHARON CRAVENS**

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

**Col. 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.**

“Paul, an apostle...” - Paul starts out six books in similar fashion (2Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1&2 Timothy)—with a statement to the fact that he is an apostle according to the will or commandment of God. This is an emphasis to the fact that his Damascus Road experience was the turning point in his life. Until that time he was a member of Israel’s ruling elite and out to destroy the spread of the gospel of Christ. I think this is a wonderful example of God’s supernatural intervention in a man’s life to accomplish His will. Paul could have rejected the whole experience, but he chose to embrace the truth when it was revealed to him so powerfully. There is nothing in the narrative (Acts 9) indicating that he was forced against his will. In fact, as soon as Jesus identified Himself to Paul as the One he was persecuting, Paul became immediately submissive. He immediately recognized the truth and wanted to serve God in truth. This is also a statement of Paul’s authority as established by God to declare His truth.

As indicated by most of Paul’s writings, Timothy was a faithful companion to and fellowservant with Paul. Looking ahead to chapter 4, we know that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. This letter is addressed to the body of believers at Colosse. According to Easton’s Bible Dictionary, it was located in what is today known as Turkey “about 12 miles above Laodicea, and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates.”

“grace...and peace...” – This blessing from Paul is used in every one of his epistles. I know I have noted several times throughout my journals that you can’t experience the peace of God without first experiencing His grace. It is by His grace that we are saved (Ephesians 2:8), and it is only in Christ that we can find peace. Peace is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22), and we don’t benefit from the presence of the Spirit in our lives until we are “in Christ.”

Eph. 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

**Col. 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,**

Paul encourages the believers at Colosse by letting them know that he gives thanks to God in his continual prayers for them. By identifying God as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he was affirming the truth as stated by Jesus during His ministry on earth.

John 8:54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

It was this claim that had motivated the Pharisees (with whom Paul was identified) to seek to have Jesus put to death. It was probably this claim that most motivated *Saul* to seek to destroy the sect of the Nazarenes, those that followed Jesus. This was such an eye-opening truth for Paul that he repeated it clearly many times throughout his epistles.

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

Paul and Timothy's prayers for the body of believers at Colosse began after hearing testimony of the witness of their faith and their love for the whole body of believers. Again, love is the fruit of the Spirit's presence in one's life--an affirmation of their profession of faith. This testimony had come through the witness of Epaphras according to verses 7-8 below.

**Col. 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;**

I had to go back to the beginning and read again to get the flow. Paul is giving thanks not only for the active faith of this body of believers, but "for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." The Greek for *hope* is a reference to anticipating with pleasure and confidence. Because of their faith, they could now look forward to eternity in the presence of God. The Greek for *heaven* makes reference to the abode of God and is affirmed in scripture.

Heb. 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

1Pet. 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1Pet. 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Paul knew that the believers at Colosse had been well taught this truth in connection with the whole truth of the gospel.

**Col. 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:**

"Which" – referencing the gospel

It's better to ignore the inserted words. Just as the gospel had brought forth fruit in the lives of the believers at Colosse, so it would in all the world where it was preached. Once people hear the gospel and respond to its truth through the grace of God, there will be evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in their lives by the fruits that are produced.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

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

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

It would seem that Epaphras was the one who had declared the gospel and its associated truths to the believers at Colosse. Paul identifies him as a “dear fellowservant,” a beloved co-laborer. In the letter to Philemon we learn that Epaphras was once a fellowprisoner with Paul.

Philem. 23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; When I looked at the Greek for *Epaphras*, it indicated that it was a short form of Epaphroditus. I remembered that Epaphroditus figured into the epistle to the Philippians and decided to see if I could find support for them to be one and the same. Most research concluded they were different people. In researching the dates of writing for the different books, I found that Philemon was probably written first; therefore, the imprisonment of Paul and Epaphras, and the probable circumstances of their close relationship, preceded the letters to Philippi and Colosse. Dating for the other two epistles was inconclusive, so this will have to stay in the category of “unknown.”

Paul could call Epaphras a faithful minister in Christ because he had witnessed his commitment and faithfulness in the tough times. As noted above, Epaphras was the one who shared the news about the Colossian church with Paul. It is not surprising to me that he would go to visit Paul knowing he was in prison and knowing from personal experience how encouraging that would be to Paul.

**Col. 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;**

Paul was a man who rejoiced at the effective spread of the gospel and was a faithful prayer warrior for the Gentile churches in particular. My understanding of his prayer:

- That the believers be filled with the knowledge of His will. – This is the ability to discern or recognize God’s purpose(s) (from the Greek). Webster defines *knowledge* as clear perception of the truth. I interpret this to mean that Paul is praying for them to become totally familiar with the Word of God—His message of truth to us.
- That their knowledge be put to use with wisdom. – Wisdom is the ability to make good use of knowledge or truth.
- That their wisdom be based on spiritual understanding. – Spiritual understanding would be wisdom as based on the meaning and intent of the Word of God. This is an area in which the Pharisees were woefully lacking.

As a former Pharisee, Paul knew firsthand what it was to possess knowledge and earthly wisdom without spiritual understanding. It was his desire that these believers not fall into that trap.

**Col. 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;**

There are times I have appropriated the prayers of the Apostle Paul in praying for my children. This verse I have paraphrased in different ways on their behalf repeatedly. I want them to “walk worthy of the Lord.” The Greek root for the

word *worthy* states “comparable” --in other words, as Jesus exemplified in His life. To model one’s life after Jesus would be “all pleasing,” but to whom? To the Father in heaven—not necessarily to men. Paul is praying that they not just be fruitful, but fruitful in “every good work.” That’s a pretty broad expectation.

Godly wisdom and spiritual understanding come through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. To increase in knowledge, one has to seek teaching or put forth the effort to learn on your own. Either way, it’s a reflection of desire and commitment to grow in your relationship to the Lord.

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

Next Paul prays for God to strengthen the Colossian believers with ability and power so abundant that their works will be a source of praise and worship to God (from the Greek for *might* and *glorious power*). It is only through God’s enablement that any believer can possibly walk worthy of the Lord and be fruitful in every good work. Through God’s empowerment, the believer can live with patience (cheerful endurance, constancy) and longsuffering (not easily provoked) while having a joyful spirit in spite of trouble or trying circumstances. *Joy* is synonymous with the hope of the Christian; it’s an expectation of good to come.

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

Paul now transitions into a time of praise to God. It is through the Father’s provision that believers have part in an inheritance specifically designated for the pure and morally blameless (from Greek for *saints*). It is only “in Christ” that we meet those qualifications. When we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are “imputed His righteousness.”

2Cor. 5:21 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.

Rom. 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; **but was strong in faith**, giving glory to God...

Rom. 4:22 And therefore **it was imputed to him for righteousness.**

Rom. 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Rom. 4:24 But for us also, **to whom it shall be imputed**, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Paul notes that this inheritance is “in light.” This would be a reference to the presence of God. I am reminded of the words of John.

1John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light**, and in him is no darkness at all.

And of the prophet Isaiah—

Is. 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: **but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light**, and thy God thy glory.

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

Paul contrasts our inheritance "in light" to our deliverance from "the power of darkness." The Greek for *power* includes "force...mastery (concretely, magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence." I believe this is a reference to Satan, the ruler of the "rulers of the darkness of this world."

Eph. 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

Acts 26:18 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.

We have been rescued from one kingdom (Satan's) and carried away to the safety of another (Christ's, the dear Son of God).

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

"in whom" = "His dear Son" = Christ

The Greek defines *redemption* as salvation through an act of ransom. The only acceptable ransom or payment to secure our redemption is the blood of Jesus. Jesus declared this truth to His disciples at His last supper with them when He established the practice of communion.

Matt. 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Paul stated this truth very clearly in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

Rom. 3:25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation **through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins** that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Rom. 3:26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

This was the importance of the sacrificial system that was established in Old Testament times and looked forward to the obedient, willing sacrifice of the Son of God. The writer of Hebrews explains it.

Heb. 9:11 **But Christ** being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Heb. 9:12 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.**

Heb. 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Heb. 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Our redemption has provided us forgiveness of our sins; we have been granted a full pardon and declared righteous. The writer of Hebrews again makes it clear.

Heb. 10:10-17 By the which will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But **this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering **he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified**. *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And **their sins and iniquities will I remember no more**.

I love the way the Psalmist expressed it.

Psa. 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, *so far* hath he removed our transgressions from us.

That is a distance that can never be measured. When traveling north to south, you always reach a point at which you begin going the other direction—not so from east to west.

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

“Who” = still “His dear Son” = Christ Jesus

God declares Himself invisible to man, but He sent Jesus as the physical representation of Himself to man. Man was created in the image or likeness of God, but Christ came as the “express image” of God. Jesus Christ came as the exact representation of the Father (a spirit being) in flesh.

John 4:24 **God is a Spirit:** and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Heb. 1:1-3 **God**, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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...**

Scripture teaches that one day men of faith will see God. Job knew it, and Jesus declared it.

Job 19:26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

Matt. 5:8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

As I looked at the verse in Matthew, I was comforted as never before. I know my heart, and I certainly can't declare it to be pure; scripture tells me it is deceitful and wicked.

Jer. 17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

One of the reasons I so look forward to coming of the Lord is because I know I will then possess a pure heart with pure motives. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus is teaching regarding righteous living and righteous motives. My desire is to live up to the standards He established, but in the flesh I fall far short. My hope is in Christ. In Him I am declared righteous, and in my

resurrected body I will no longer be influenced or tempted by sin. I will be pure in heart, and I will see God. Thankfully, it's all about what He has done; without Him—I am nothing and I have nothing to look forward to.

Thinking—We will “see” the invisible God when we enter His dimension. To see Him in our flesh as declared by Job will be to see Him in our resurrected, sinless, immortal state of being.

“the firstborn of every creature” – The Greek for *firstborn* is a reference to first in time, place, order and importance. Obviously, Jesus came to earth as the “only begotten” Son of God.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father,**) full of grace and truth.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave **his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He is God in flesh; in that regard, He is unique and preeminent among the children of God. (cf verse 18 below)

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, **God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

1Tim. 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that **we are the children of God:**

Rom. 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

John is clear that Jesus existed as the Word before creation.

John 1:1-3 **In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and **without him was not any thing made that was made.**

As the Word, Jesus existed before time; He is declared the Creator of all things—including time. Through Him we were created—not just us, but every creature and every other part of the creation (from the Greek for creature). This pretty much covers the whole of the Greek definition; Jesus is first—

- In time – He preexisted creation.
- In place – He preexisted creation.
- In order – He preexisted creation. He was the first begotten Son of God who made it possible for us to be children of God.

- In importance – He is the Creator. He is the heir of all things. He is the captain of our salvation and the Chief cornerstone.

Heb. 1:2 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;

Heb. 2:9 But **we see Jesus**, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make **the captain of their salvation** perfect through sufferings.

“captain” = chief leader, prince

1Pet. 2:5 **Ye also, as lively stones**, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1Pet. 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a **chief corner stone**, elect, precious: and **he that believeth on him** shall not be confounded.

Eph. 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Eph. 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**;

**Col. 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:**

Jesus is identified as the creating force of God. He created everything.

- Things in heaven – *Heaven* is a reference to the sky and the abode of God. This would include the angels, the heavenly temple, galaxies, the stars, the planets, clouds, etc.
- Things in earth – The Greek for *earth* references the solid part of the globe. This would include the oceans, the land, animals, insects, tree and plant life, etc.
- Visible things – This is a reference to things that can be seen by our eyes—stars, planets, mountains, rivers, plants, animals, colors, volcanoes, tornadoes, each other, etc.
- Invisible things – This is a reference to those things that we can’t see with the naked eye—atoms, germs, gravity, the wind, heat, etc. In today’s day and age we can see many things that were once impossible, but are invisible without special technology. Even the inner workings of our body are “invisible” without the use of special technology. So some of the invisible things could technically fit in both categories.
- Thrones = seat of power, a potentate
- Dominions = mastery, rulers, government

- Principalities = chief in the commencement or beginnings of power and rule
  - Powers = privilege, i.e. (subjectively) force, capacity...mastery (concretely, magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence
- “Things in heaven” and “things in earth” are the major categories. “Visible things” and “invisible things” are subcategories. Paul makes it clear in his letter to the Ephesians that these thrones, dominions, principalities and powers are a reference to supernatural forces—both good and bad.

Eph. 3:9 And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Eph. 3:10 To the intent that now unto the **principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Many of these supernatural forces are evil and are a continual source of harassment for mankind, especially believers.

Eph. 6:12 For we wrestle **not against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

The interesting truth is that these forces were created *by* Him and *for* Him. God’s creation was good, but angels and men are by His sovereignty allowed to make the choice to serve Him or not. God knew their choice before He created each one, but He did not limit His creation only to those who would choose to love and serve Him. Love cannot be understood without hate. Good cannot be understood without evil. Mercy cannot be experienced apart from sin. Faithfulness cannot be understood apart from faithlessness. That’s as far as my brain will go.

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

I like the NLT for this verse.

He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.

I heard a wonderful audio presentation of the truth of this verse by Dr. Mark Eastman on Chuck Missler’s [www.khouse.org](http://www.khouse.org) website. The excerpts from this article (shown below) by Lambert Dolphin (found at the same website) is similar to the type of information that I heard and explains in a way I never could a bit more about what this verse means.

What Holds the Universe Together?

The nucleus of the atom contains positively charged and neutral particles—to use a simplistic model. Mutual electrostatic repulsion between the like-positive protons would drive the nucleus apart if it were not for the “strong force” which binds the nucleus together....Similarly, accelerated electrons circling the nucleus should quickly radiate all their energy away and fall into the nucleus unless there exists an invisible energy source to counteract this.

The third New Testament creation-related passage which talks about atomic structure and physics is found in the Apostle Peter’s Second

Epistle: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise [rhoizedon, a rushing roar] and the elements [stoicheion, atoms] will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10) The Greek word translated "elements" in the above mentioned passage from Colossians (and in 2 Peter also) is stoicheion, which can mean "the building blocks of the universe," or "the ordered arrangement of things." It can also mean the "atomic elements." The word translated "dissolved" in 2 Peter 3:10 is literally (in Greek) luo, meaning "unloosed." This language suggests that there will come a time in the future when God lets go of the nuclear forces which hold the atom together. This passage, like the one in Colossians, strongly suggests that the active power of God is behind the mysterious strong force that holds every atomic nucleus together. If this is so, all the other fundamental forces of nature are likewise forces that originate with Christ and His sustaining direction of the old creation.

If God "sustains the universe by His mighty word of power," moment by moment, were He to merely relax His grasp on the universe, every atom would come apart "by fire" (that is, by nuclear fire). It is inescapable that the Bible claims that God dynamically sustains the universe, including the very atoms themselves. Atoms, it would seem, are "stable" only because force and energy are being supplied into their physical nuclear binding fields from "outside" the system.

**Col. 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.

This is one of several passages (Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, Ephesians 3-5) in which Paul compares the church, those who trust Christ as Savior and Lord, to a body with Christ as the head. As stated previously, He is the cornerstone upon which the church was built. He was the first man to be resurrected from death and the grave in a glorified body of flesh; this established Him as the firstborn among His brethren, the body of believers. This is the crucial truth upon which the hope of the Christian rests. Paul stated it so well

1Cor. 15:14, 19-23 And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain....If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. **But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.** For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ shall all be made alive.** But every man in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

*Preeminence* is another word that references first in rank or influence. Christ has been established as preeminent in everything associated with His creation.

**Col. 1:19** For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

I like the way the CJB expresses this verse.

For it pleased God to have his full being live in his Son...

In other words, Jesus was completely man and completely God. He chose to lay aside some of His attributes during His 33 years on earth, but He never quit being God. An excerpt from my journal on Philippians applies here:

Phil. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Phil. 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Phil. 2:7 But **made himself of no reputation**, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

The Greek for *reputation* emphasizes the truth that He *emptied* Himself; He lived in the flesh as a man; He lived in dependence upon the Spirit—just as we are supposed to. He didn't cease being God; He just **chose** to live with the limitations of a man, albeit a sinless man indwelt by the Spirit—just as Adam was created and intended to live.

Although Christ chose to empty Himself, He never quit being God. He humbled Himself in obedience, but He always remained the Son of God, inseparable part of the triune God. I don't know how to say it any more clearly.....and I don't really know how to understand it. My little granddaughter made the statement one day shortly before she was four, "Jesus is God, and God is God; and that is hard to understand." Such an amazing truth from a child!

**Col. 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.**

"Made peace" is a reference to establishing harmony. Jesus made possible a restoration in harmony in the relationship between God and man; a harmony that had been destroyed when man chose to sin. This peace came at a high price—Jesus' death on the cross. I thought it was interesting that the Greek for both *blood* and *cross* referenced the atoning blood of Christ and that the Greek for *cross* referenced self-denial. It was Christ's denial of self in obedience to the cross that makes it possible for us to be "at one" with God again, harmonious in spirit.

Through the shed blood of Christ, God was essentially reconciling creation to Himself—things in heaven and on earth. Again, *reconciling* is a reference to making peace/harmony. Jesus was very clear in teaching that He and the Father were one.

John 10:30 **I and *my* Father are one.**

John 14:8-10 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that **I am in the Father, and the Father in me**? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

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

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

Again, I like the CJB:

In other words, you, who at one time were separated from God and had a hostile attitude towards him because of your wicked deeds, he has now reconciled in the Son's physical body through his death; in order to present you holy and without defect or reproach before himself — "alienated" = to estrange away, i.e. (passively and figuratively) to be non-participant:

The truth is that we were all once estranged from God and not participating in the joy of His provision for us. Jesus taught that you are either on His side or you aren't.

Matt. 12:30 He that is not with me is against me...

If you are a friend of the world, you declare yourself an enemy of God.

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

"Wicked works" are evidence of friendship with the world.

Eph. 2:2 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:**

1John 2:15 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.**

1John 2:16 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.

Jesus, in an unbelievable act of love for His enemies, sacrificed Himself on the cross to provide reconciliation for man. He gave Himself up to physical death as the perfect sacrifice for sin in order to reestablish a way for us to have fellowship with Him in peace and harmony. And He took it to the nth degree. His sacrifice provided for the Father to look at us and see us as:

- Holy – pure, morally blameless
- Unblameable – unblemished, without fault, undeserving of censure
- Unreprouvable – unaccused, having no foundation for blame

He clothes us in His righteousness and presents us to the Father as though we had never sinned. Hallelujah—but I'll never understand it!

**Col. 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;

"If ye continue..." – This is a continuation of the thought in the previous verses; you have been reconciled and will be presented righteous "if..." This type of verse causes some to think that they can lose their salvation. No scripture should be isolated from the context of the whole of scripture regarding doctrine. This verse is an admonition from Paul to examine oneself regarding the sincerity of

your profession of faith. True faith will be evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit in the life of the believer (as discussed earlier). We all know that believers can and probably will experience times of disobedience; scripture is full of examples—beginning with Eve and continuing with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Jonah, Peter, etc. The important truth is that true men/women of faith always come to a point of repentance. The Apostle John states the truth clearly.

1John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: **but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**

Continuance in the faith is evidence of a sincere profession of faith. People can be amazing actors and deceivers for a variety of motivations—all self-serving. Again, James makes it clear that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The Apostle John *amens* that truth.

1John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

God never contradicts Himself. Those who have put their faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord have received the Holy Spirit as a seal (stamp for security or preservation) and as the earnest (security deposit) of their inheritance to come.

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,**

Eph. 1:14 Which is **the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Salvation is the work of God in us, and He always finishes what He starts. He never fails.

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

Yes, this is a sensitive area to me. I think the enemy has been so successful in deceiving people to connect their work to their salvation—to think that God needs their help—to think that His word can't be trusted and His provision isn't sufficient.

“grounded and settled” – *Grounded* is reference to a foundation and *settled* is a reference to being immovable. A believer is a person who has chosen to live his/her life on the foundation of the Word of God. He has made a choice to follow God in faith and obedience despite the circumstances and the attack of the enemy. Again, he/she may stumble or fall along the way; but he/she will always seek God in repentance; and He will always forgive and restore by picking them up and giving them a new start.

1John 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.

1John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“and be not moved away...” – This is the same truth that John stated as referenced above in 1John 2:19. It gives emphasis to the word *settled*.

“the hope of the gospel” – This is a reference to the confident expectation the believer has of eternity in the presence of the Savior.

“which ye have heard...” – Paul is addressing those to whom he knew had been clearly and correctly taught the gospel. God is clear in scripture, however, that He has revealed Himself through the creation and men are without excuse. The gospel is the good news of God’s love. Man has no reasonable basis for doubting His written word or the provision of His Son. The creation declares Him as Almighty God of righteousness and truth; One to be feared and believed.

Psa. 19:1-4 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. ***There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth,*** and their words to the end of the world.

Rom. 1:19 Because **that which may be known of God is manifest in them;** for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that **they are without excuse:**

Paul proudly declares himself to be a minister (servant, teacher) of that gospel.

**Col. 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:**

Although none of the nine translations I use give me clear support, I don’t believe Paul is making a statement that he is suffering for or because of the Colossian believers. He is stating that he is rejoicing in their testimony in spite of his current suffering (in prison). I think it would be true to say that just as their testimony encouraged Paul, he could expect his testimony in the midst of his suffering to be an encouragement to them.

The wording of the rest of the verse is hard for me to reconcile with the rest of the truth presented in scripture. It reads as though there was something lacking in the afflictions of Christ, and I know that is not true. As usual, I am going to look up all the words for keys in understanding.

“fill up” = to supplement, from roots that state, “Often used in composition to **denote contrast**, requital, substitution, correspondence, etc.” and “**to complete**; by implication, to occupy, supply; figuratively, to accomplish (by coincidence to obedience).”

“behind” = a deficit; specially, poverty, from a root that means “**to be later**, i.e. (by implication) **to be inferior**.”

“afflictions” = pressure (literally or figuratively):—afflicted(-tion), anguish, burdened, **persecution**, tribulation, trouble.

Christ was afflicted in His physical body for His spiritual body, the church. It is God's purpose to use men to spread the truth of the gospel and enable the church to grow.

Matt. 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Matt. 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Paul is not only fulfilling the great commission, he is being obedient to a special calling from God that puts him in the spotlight so to speak. Paul is coming after Christ as His inferior, yet committed as His servant to help finish the work on earth that He started—establishing the church. Jesus warned that His followers could expect no better treatment from the world than He had received.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that **it hated me before it hated you.**

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. **If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;** if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

In that regard, Paul's suffering was on behalf of the whole church, since he was in prison for His service to the Lord in spreading the gospel and strengthening the body of believers through his teaching. He was singled out for persecution because he had been so successful in his mission; he was a public figure. He was so successful in his ministry because he was obedient and ministered in the power of the Spirit. Paul is suffering in the flesh for the good of the church just as Christ suffered in the flesh to lay the foundation for the church. Paul is not declaring His suffering to be equal to what Christ suffered; he is just stating the fact that they both suffered to the benefit of the church.

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

"Whereof" – Refers back to "the church."

Paul declares himself a minister (servant, teacher) of the church according to the "dispensation" of God. This is a reference to oversight and stewardship. Paul has been put in authority by God to serve and teach the body of believers, especially the Gentile believers. His message is in fulfillment of the word of God.

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

Paul identifies his message as a *mystery* that has been hidden throughout history until this time—a mystery that has now been revealed to the saints.

**Col. 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:**

It is to those who follow Him in faith and obedience that God chooses to reveal His secrets. Paul teaches this same truth in his letter to the Ephesians a little more clearly:

Eph. 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Eph. 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

Eph. 3:6 That **the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise** in Christ by the gospel:

The Old Testament scriptures clearly teach that the Jews were to be a blessing to the whole world and that God's salvation was intended to include the Gentiles.

Is. 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles**, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The Old Testament also taught of a new covenant that God would make with His people in which He would put His Holy Spirit in them.

Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah... Jer. 31:33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezekiel makes it even clearer.

Ezek. 36:22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD...

Ezek. 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezek. 36:27 And **I will put my spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

The mystery that had been hidden was that Gentiles would also be included in the new covenant and be blessed with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Colossian believers are part of this group of Gentiles being referenced, the group Paul identifies as the body of Christ. Christ, the Messiah, would indwell each believer through His Spirit. It is the indwelling Spirit that is our guarantee of our future with Christ—the hope of glory. This is a mystery that is priceless--riches far beyond what we could ever imagine.

**Col. 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:**

"Whom" = Christ

Paul is declaring that the whole of the message they proclaim is Christ—Savior, Lord, Son of God, Creator, Eternal, Self-Existent. The Greek for *warning* is a reference to admonishment or gentle reproof; Webster adds the idea of exhortation. In other words, they weren't beating people over the head with this truth or trying to scare them with hellfire and brimstone preaching. They were teaching with wisdom. (cf verse 9 comments) Paul and his co-laborers desired that every person they taught they would proudly be able to present to God as *perfect* (complete in mental and moral character) in Christ Jesus. In other words, they wanted God to be honored through their efforts. It is important to note that only those who are "in Christ Jesus" can aspire to be perfect.

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

Paul is quick to note that though he is laboring, he is laboring through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—God working in him. If we labor in the flesh, we can accomplish nothing of eternal value. Jesus was very clear in His teaching about this.

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.... John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

John 15:5 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.**

Paul is very clear in his letter to the Romans that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ.

Rom. 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that **the Spirit of God dwell in you.** Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his.

Rom. 8:10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

Rom. 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.