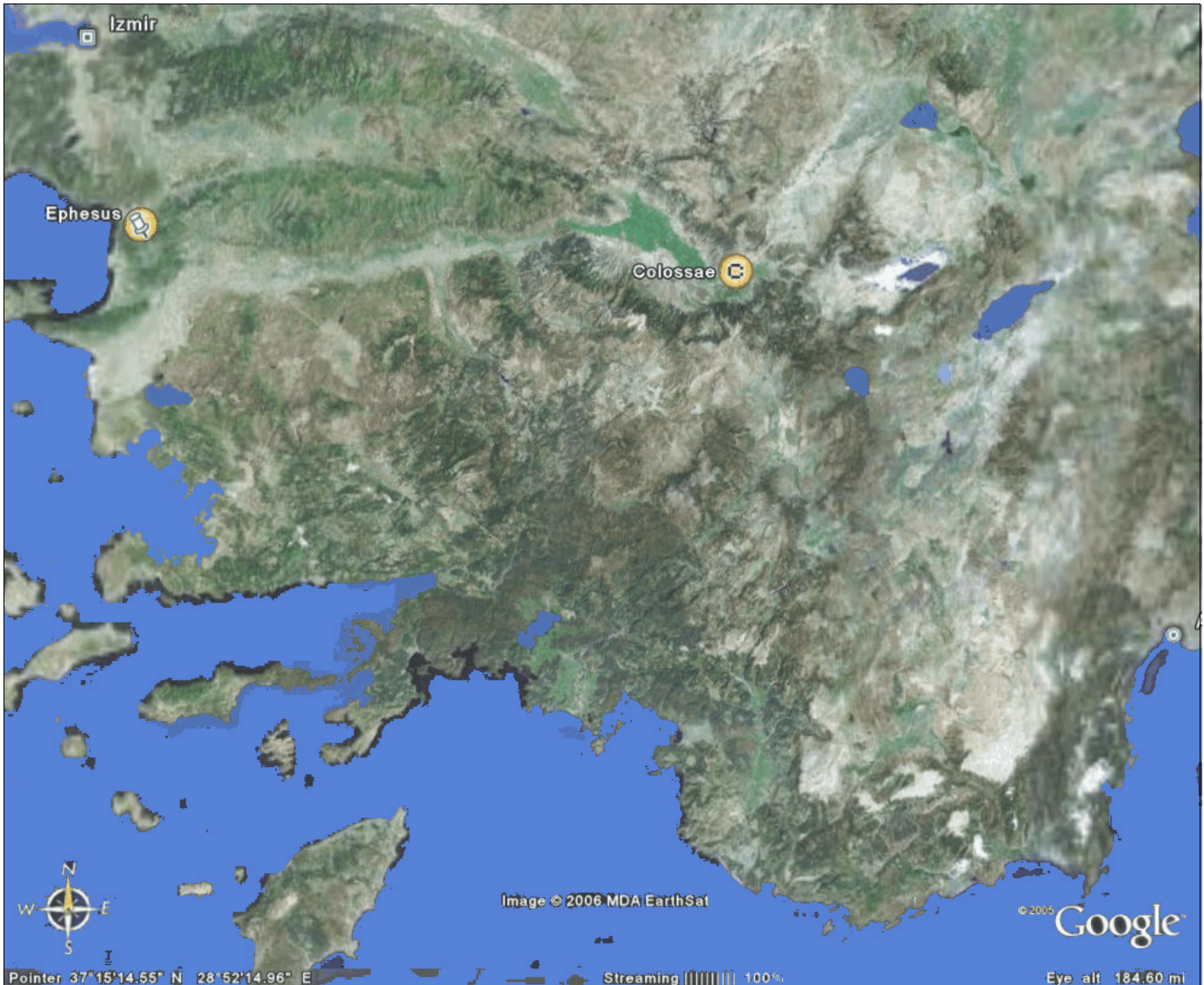


Introduction to Colossae and the Colossian Church

by Charles Dailey



1. About the town.

- a. This is a Google Satellite map showing the relationship of Colossae to Ephesus. The former town is now just a mound or *tel*, but the map is within a mile or two of identifying the correct location. We located the village of Honaz and then selected the area about 2 miles north. The photo is at a simulated altitude of 184 miles above the earth.

- b. The fertile Lycus River Valley is to the west of the town and can be easily seen on the satellite photo. Ephesus is about 100 miles to the west. Colossae is about 1,000 miles from Rome by the route that the ships had to follow.
- c. The once-prosperous town was in decline in Paul's time and was destroyed by an earthquake shortly after receiving the letter from Paul. It, along with neighboring Laodicea and Hierapolis, was rebuilt after the earthquake.
- d. The date of the earthquake is set as A.D. 61. Since Paul did not refer to the quake, his letter to the Colossians was written before he heard about it. The area is still known for severe earthquakes.
- e. The town was very insignificant compared to the other church communities that received letters from Paul. One might have guessed that Paul would have written to nearby Hierapolis, the rest and recreation center for the area. Churches existed in both Laodicea and Hierapolis. Colossians 4:13. We see that God is concerned about smaller groups as well as large ones.
- f. The region near Colossae is very mountainous except for the Lycus Valley. (See the map.) The town commanded the road to the mountain pass over the Cadmus Range (8,000 feet). This writer passed through this area after dark. The mountain pass was very disturbing.
- g. There is discussion of excavating the mound in the photo and we can expect this to take place in the next few years.
- h. Because of immigration, almost every known pagan religion was present in the area.
- i. Judaism was well represented in this vicinity. Wilbur Fields writes:



The tell of Colossae

The Syrian king, Antiochus the Great, imported 2000 Jewish families into Phrygia

about 170 B.C. These Jews multiplied until it is estimated (by the amount of money they sent annually to the Jerusalem temple as taxes) that there were 50,000 Jews in the area in New Testament times. Paul encountered much Jewish opposition in this general area during his missionary trips.

The presence of so many Jews in the area may explain why the Colossian heresy included some Jewish ideas, and also why the nearby Galatian Christians were affected by Judaism.

2. About the Church.

- a. Some residents of Colossae may have been present at Pentecost. This area was called Phrygia and Phrygians were in Jerusalem when the church began. Acts 2:10.
- b. It seems that Paul had not visited this church. 1:4, 2:1.
- c. The main source of their Christian development was Epaphras, a co-worker with Paul. Colossians 1:7. He may have brought the gospel to the community after hearing it from Paul in Ephesus. Acts 19:10.
- d. Epaphras had worked for the Lord in Hierapolis and Laodicea, as well as in Colossae. Colossians 4:13
- e. It is reasonable to think that the church met in the home of Philemon. Colossians 4:9 indicates that the newly converted slave Onesimus, a member of Philemon's household, was now part of the Colossian Church.
- f. The church consisted predominantly of Gentiles. Colossians 1:12, 21, 24, 27; 3:5-7. There are very few allusions to the Old Testament and the sins that were distinctively Gentile are mentioned in 3:5 - 7.
- g. The church had been disturbed by false teachings. It is likely that Paul learned of this from Epaphras who visited Rome. This was Paul's primary reason for writing and sending the letter.

3. About the Book

- a. The book focuses on Christ. Wilbur Fields writes:

Colossians is the most Christ-centered epistle in the New Testament, Colossians enables us to see clearly what it means to be in Christ. No other book is so concerned with the exaltation of Christ. With its emphasis upon the supremacy of Christ, Colossians contains the very heart of the Christian message.

The nature of Christ is set forth powerfully in Colossians:

- i. God is the father of Christ. 1:3
 - ii. Christ is God's beloved Son. 1:13
 - iii. Christ is the image of the invisible God. 1:15
 - iv. Christ is the firstborn of all creation. 1:15
 - v. Christ is before all things. 1:17
 - vi. In him all things consist. 1:17
 - vii. He is the beginning. 1:18
 - viii. He is the firstborn from the dead. 1:18
 - ix. He has preeminence in all things. 1:18
 - x. In him all of the fulness dwells. 1:19
 - xi. In him are all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 2:3
 - xii. All of the fulness of the Godhead dwell in him. 2:9
 - xiii. He is head over all principalities and powers. 2:10
 - xiv. He is the body – rituals were shadows of it. 2:16 - 17
 - xv. He is at the right hand of God. 3:1
 - xvi. He is all and in all. 3:11
- b. The structure of the letter:
- i. The first two chapters discuss the great truths of the Faith.
 - ii. The last two chapter discuss the application of the great truths to living.
- c. The author was Paul:
- i. The writer claims that he was Paul (1:23) working with Timothy on the letter in 1:1.

- ii. The writer conveys the story of his circumstances by means of a dispatched messenger. 4:8. This is Paul’s pattern in other letters.
 - iii. As in other letters of Paul, he adds his signature. 4:18. Identity theft is not a new phenomena!
 - iv. Writers have attacked the authorship of Paul by noting that the vocabulary is different than his other writings. While this is true, it must be noted that the subject is also different, requiring a different vocabulary to deal with it.
 - v. Another objection is based on the fact that Gnosticism did not rise fully until the next century, so this letter belonged to that era. The objectors themselves label the local heresy as Gnosticism. While it contained some of the elements that were later incorporated into Gnosticism, this is not evidence that the letter was written after Gnosticism flourished.
- d. Delivery of the letter. The book was delivered to the church by Tychichus (Col. 4:7) on the same trip that he delivered the Ephesian letter (Eph. 6:21). Also on the delivery trip was Onesimus, the recently converted runaway slave. 4:9. He was carrying a letter back to his master, the book of Philemon.
- e. In Ephesians, the emphasis is on the **oneness** of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. In Colossians, the emphasis is on **completeness** in Christ.
- f. There are many statements in Colossians that have a parallel in Ephesian.

Eph. 1:7	Redemption is through Christ.	1:14 Col.
1:10	Both speak of reconciliation in heaven and earth.	1:20
2:5 -6	We are raised up in baptism as God raised Christ.	2:12 - 13
3:2	Both speak of stewardship to preach God’s Word.	1:25
4:2 - 4	The importance of unity is stressed.	3:12 - 15
4:16	The church and the physical body are compared.	2:19
4:22 - 24	Lay aside the old self and put on the new self.	3:9 - 10
4:32	Forgive one another as God forgives us.	3:13

5:8	We have been rescued from darkness.	1:13
5:15 - 16	Be good administrators of time.	4:5
5:19	Speaking and teaching in spiritual songs.	3:16
5:22	Wives are to be subject to their own husbands.	3:18
5:25	Husbands are to love their wives.	3:19
6:1	Children are to obey their parents.	3:20
6:4	Fathers are not to provoke their children.	3:21
6:5 - 8	Slaves are to obey their masters like the Lord.	3:22 - 23
6:9	Masters must be just and fair. They have a heavenly Master.	4:1
6:19 - 20	Paul requests prayer so he can speak boldly.	4:3 - 4
6:21 - 22	Paul sends Tychichus for encouragement.	4:7 - 8

- g. The letter responds to a serious false teaching or teachings. While we do not have a name and description for this heresy (or maybe there was more than one heresy), we can identify some of its doctrines by Paul's responses to them. The primary issue was the adequacy and supremacy of Christ so Paul details his nature, glory and work.

The false teachings include:

- (1) Denying Christ's part in creating the material world.
- (2) Denying that Christ had a physical body.
- (3) Stressing Jewish views on circumcision, feast days and other items.
- (4) There was an element of self-denial just for the sake of self-denial. It was necessary to abstain from certain foods.
- (5) There was angel worship.

We will look at all of the false teachings in depth as we discuss the individual verses.

- h. Paul deals directly and definitely with the heresy that he had heard about. While not naming any person or movement, he is explicit about the errors and in no way minimizes them. Neither is he conciliatory with the false teachers.

- i. This book is specially relevant in contrast with the New Age Movement. A precise definition of New Age is nearly impossible. Wikipedia has identified 20 characteristics. Point number 10 of the 20 reads:

The Bible is considered by some, but not all, to be a wise and holy book. Many important truths are found in the Bible, or are referred to only very obliquely. Some say that Jesus was an Essene, or that he traveled to India in his youth to study Eastern religions. Others say that Jesus was a later avatar (graphical image) of Buddha.

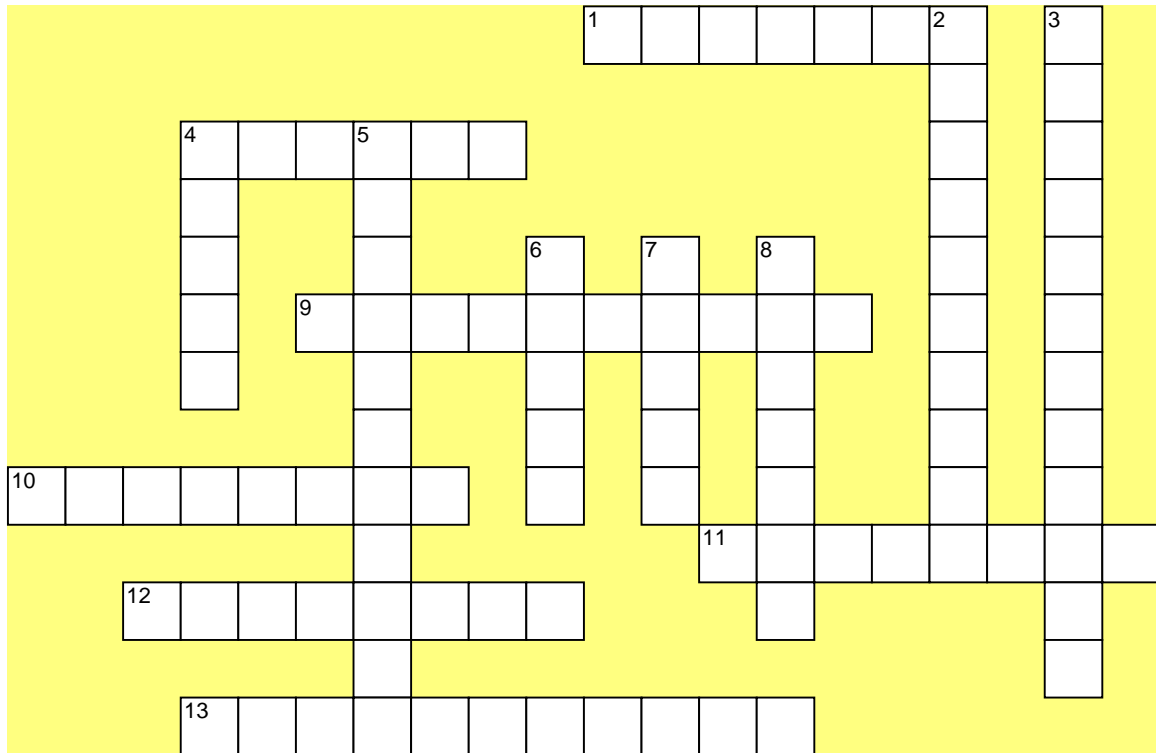
J. Hampton Keathley III declares:

This new movement claims we stand at the brink of an entirely new age of human achievement and potential, one that will unify the world and bring an end to war and an end to hunger through a redistribution of the world's resources and population control. It will lead to the conservation of the earth's environment, result in genuine equality among all races and religions and between men and women, and provide a global ethic that will unite the human family. But at the center of this movement is a religious syncretism that rejects the biblical revelation of God as revealed in Christ. According to this movement, Christ is only one of many religious leaders or influences that man may turn to because there are other ways that are equally valid.

- j. The heresy had its own vocabulary and Paul borrowed some of these in order to set the record straight. Words included mystery, fullness, knowledge, wisdom, rudiments, and worship of angels.
- k. On the other hand, the heresy had redefined some words from the Christian vocabulary and Paul restored their rightful meanings. This is precisely the tactic of groups like Jehovah's Witnesses where nearly every significant Christian word has been redefined. Words such as spirit, resurrection, and even peace have been changed by these cultists.
- l. Christian must beware of mixing their faith and practice with such alluring things as yoga and Transcendental Meditation.

Introduction to Colossians

By Charles Dailey 2006



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 1 The town was in one.
- 4 The last chapters discuss it.
- 9 Neighboring town.
- 10 Source of Christian development.
- 11 He lived in the community.
- 12 Predominant in church.
- 13 The region near town.

DOWN

- 2 A.D. 61.
- 3 Not with false teachers.
- 4 Valley to the west.
- 5 Why there were so many pagan religions.
- 6 The first two chapters discuss the _____.
- 7 Present day village near Colossae.
- 8 Also worked on the letter.

Introduction:

1. The Book of Ephesians stressed the importance of the church while Colossians puts the main focus on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Usually Paul wrote to churches that he founded. In this case, he is writing to one that was founded by his disciple Epaphras.

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

- A. As in most of his letters, **Paul** identifies himself in the opening sentence. These books were originally scrolls and the reader did not need to unroll it to learn who wrote the letter.
- B. He was more than an **apostle**, which means *a person who was sent or a messenger*. He was **an apostle of Christ Jesus**. **Paul** was a man with a mission. Little else in life was important to him.
- C. In turn, all of this was an expression of the **will of God**. God had selected him from birth. Galatians 1:15 - 16.
- D. Because Paul had not established this church and was not known personally by the members, he established his authority to write to them based on his **apostleship**.
- E. It would be hard to imagine a stronger claim to inspiration — to being a spokesman for **God**.
- F. He was assisted by **Timothy** who was probably the writer, secretary or amanuensis. Christian leaders should have men in training rather than doing everything themselves. Having done things both ways, this writer can affirm that it is easier to do things yourself, but the Lord did not ask us to do things the easiest way, but the most effective for the long-term.

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ (that are) at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- A. Christians are all **saints**. This is not a personal attainment but a state we have been called into by God.
- B. The assumption is that the church is like a family. We are **brethren**.

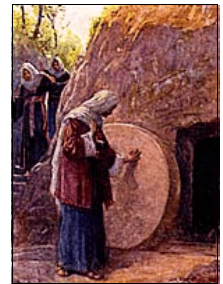
- C. **In Christ** has its familiar meaning. It is by baptism that we enter Christ. Colossians 2:12 - 13. **In Christ** is used about 73 times in the New Testament literature.
- D. This is the familiar Gentile / Jewish greeting. The Gentiles commonly used **grace** while the Jews in Israel still use **peace** as a greeting.
- E. **Grace** pictures God stooping down to sinful, lost humanity in loving and tender compassion. **Peace** summarizes all that results in the life of a person when he accepts **God's grace** as a free gift. Note the word order first **grace**, then **peace**.

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

- A. Nearly every letter from Paul has a comment about **thanks** or thanksgiving near the opening.
- B. **Thanksgiving** is an anchor in Christian development. Failing to develop it will leave us without the joy and understanding expected in Christian living. Our joy will be deeper each day if we ponder things to be **thankful** for.
- C. Paul's **thanksgiving** was not passively held within himself and occasionally mentioned to others. It was a part of his **prayers to God**.
- D. The relationship of the **Father** and Son is clearly laid out. Jesus was not a minor deity among other deities.
- E. The fullest designation is used. He is **Lord** to the Gentiles, **Jesus** to his friends and **Christ** to the Jews. It is reassuring to remember that Saul of Tarsus had earlier considered **Jesus** to be an imposter.
- F. Even though these Colossians were not Paul's direct converts, yet he **prayed** for them regularly. This is an example that is hard to match.

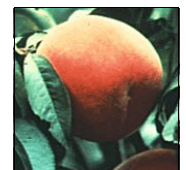
4 having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

- A. The kind of news (**having heard**) that Paul listened to was usually positive and upbeat. So much commercial news today stresses what is wrong.
- B. It is remarkable that they had **love toward all the saints**. Certainly this church had some difficult, unsociable or even cantankerous people. There is a lesson here. Also, it appears that the Jews and Gentiles had integrated nicely.
- C. **Laid up** means to put something away for safekeeping, to store away in a place for preservation (secular usage referred to money laid up or hidden).
- D. This church was focused correctly on the three great virtues as we see in the following points:
1. Their **faith** looked back to Jesus and his resurrection.
 2. Their **love** looked outward toward all of their brethren in the present time.
 3. Their **hope** looked forward to heaven.
- E. While the **gospel** message includes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, it also includes **faith, hope and love**.



6 which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

- A. The **truth** of the gospel had penetrated their community just as it had others. It is amazing the way the gospel was moving around the **world** that they knew – mainly the Roman Empire. Much of this **fruit** was during the time that Paul, one of the Lord's most able men, had been in jails, both in Palestine and in Rome.



- B. It is important to remember that the gospel is not a stagnant system of ethics but is living, dynamic and growing truth. The living gospel is the power that transforms lives. As it does so, the witness of those transformed lives produces fruit, including new converts.
- C. The message of Jesus should never be received passively. He intended for believers to bear **fruit**. John 15:16. Note the change of metaphor from that of a person to that of a tree **bearing fruit**.
- D. It is the same message in every town. It is not culturally adapted for each community.
- E. This salvation that we enjoy proceeds from the **grace of God**. We didn't earn it and we don't deserve it.
- F. **In truth** is a hint that guesses and uncertainties about God were being promulgated at Colossae.
- G. When Paul says **truth**, he speaks without fear of contradiction. There must have been those who considered him arrogant and elitist.
- H. Wherever the **truth** of the message penetrates, lives are changed.

7 even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

- A. **Epaphras** is a shortened form of *Epaphroditus*. However, that does not mean he is the same person as the messenger from Philippi. Paul may have been faced with two men with identical names, so he assigned the full name to one man and the shortened form to the other, just as we would *Frederick* and *Fred*.
- B. **Fellow-servant. Epaphras** has worked with Paul over time.
- C. **Faithful minister on your behalf** may be the correct wording. There is a manuscript problem here with the evidence about 50/50. It makes better sense to make it *on your behalf*.
- D. It is thought that **Epaphras** may have been imprisoned, too, based on Philemon 23. There is no information as to why he might have been imprisoned.

- E. The church honored **Epaphras** with a plaque, but his work did not survive the ravages of time and false teaching. Consider this sad statement:

When he traveled to Turkey Dr. Spiros Zodhiates visited Colossae (modern day Honaz) and found that no one had ever heard it had once been called Colossae, a good indication that little truth had been passed down. The only sign of Christianity was a **little plaque** buried under a Muslim mosque, which has a statement to the **appreciation of Epaphras**, the man who may have led the Colossians to the Lord. After 1900 years the church at Colossae is not even a dim memory in the people of Honaz and Dr. Zodhiates was unable to find even one Christian! They had never heard of the apostle Paul or of the NT!

— From the Internet at: http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_word_study.htm

- F. Paul's credentials (apostle) were set forth in verse 1.. This verse sets forth *their* credential: **love in the Spirit**. Wilbur Fields writes:

Doubtless it refers to the love which they had in their hearts and displayed in their lives because the Holy Spirit was in them, and they were in the Spirit, yielded to his control, assistance, and guidance. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. Gal. 5:22.

- G. This is the only reference to the Holy **Spirit** in Colossians.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

- A. While in verse 3 above, Paul gave thanks for them, here he reveals some **requests** that had accompanied that thanksgiving.
- B. **Since the day we heard of *it* . . .** The *it* is in italics and was supplied by the translators. Probably **since the day he heard** of the Colossian church, as in *The Message* paraphrase.
- C. **Not ceasing** means not stopping the regular practice of **praying** for them. It does not mean *praying continuously*.
- D. The **prayer** was that they might be **filled with the knowledge of God's will** and the **wisdom** to use it properly. Gathering **knowledge** of God's **will** and **the wisdom** to use it is a process, not an event. Each reader of this commentary is in the process of gaining **knowledge** and the **wisdom** to apply it in the daily affairs of life.

- E. Among the false influences at Colossae were the Gnostics (probably pre-Gnostics) and their premise is that they had all **knowledge**.

Kenneth Wuest adds that epignosis (translated **knowledge**):

. . . is a knowledge which grasps and penetrates into an object. It was a favorite word of the Gnostics who used it to designate the superior knowledge which they claimed as their exclusive possession. Paul prays that all the saints might become possessors of this knowledge, indicating that it was open for all to appropriate, not a secret mystery into which only a favored few could be initiated. If the Gnostics had their superior knowledge, so did the Christian Church. The former was speculative and false, the latter, positive and true. Paul prays that they not only might have it but that they might be filled with it.

- F. **Wisdom** is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on **knowledge** and **understanding**.
- G. One great source of God's **wisdom** was and is to grasp the Book of Proverbs. Proverbs 1:2. The church certainly had access to Proverbs. Paul may have had this wonderful resource in mind here.

10 to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- A. The purpose of this added knowledge and wisdom is so the Colossians would live **(walk) worthily of the Lord**. A Christian's conduct is a very important part of his relationship with **the Lord**.

- B. J. Vernon McGee adds the practical comment that

. . . walking is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience and you take off like a rocket going out into space. That's not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it is in your home, in your office, in the schoolroom, on the street.

- C. Doing things that are **pleasing to the Lord** is a principal guideline of Christian conduct. It serves far better than rules and regulations.

- D. For the **pleasing** guideline to work, we need to learn as much as we can about what **God** is like. That way we can make better decisions.

- E. See our extensive notes on Ephesians 5:10.

11 strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy;

- A. **☉ Strengthened with all power** sounds like Ephesians 3:16 where believers are strengthened by the *Spirit* in the inward person. So God is at work in our lives.
- B. **Patience**; μακροθυμίαν; Patience with people.- Barclay.
- C. **Longsuffering**; ὑπομονήν; *hupomone* -- the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings - Thayer.
- D. **Joy** is the pure and simple delight in being alive. Joy is our elated response to feelings of happiness, experiences of pleasure, and awareness of abundance. It is also the deep satisfaction we know when we are able to serve others and be glad for their good fortune.
- E. We often use the words **joy** and happiness interchangeably, but a distinction should be made. Happiness often depends on what happens! If circumstances are good and people are nice to us then, we are happy. On the other hand, **joy** is a fruit borne in a believer's heart by the Holy Spirit and thus it's expression is independent of both circumstances and people.
- F. In a number of languages, **joy** is expressed figuratively as "with a happy heart" or "with dancing in one's heart" or "with a heart that sings."

12 giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

- A. The sense is that the Colossians would be **☉ giving thanks unto the Father**. It is a great objective of the faith that the **Father** would receive **thanks** from his new creation.
- B. **Made us meet** is a left over from King James days. *Qualified us* is used by several translations. Believers have been *qualified* for the eternal **inheritance**. Jewish Christians would understand this promise.
- C. **Inheritance** always looks to the future and final reward. We do not receive it now. That generation that left Egypt looked forward to inheriting the promised land. Leviticus 20:24. See NKJV.

- D. **Light** has always contrasted with darkness (next verse) in the moral realm.

13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love;

- A. The text is speaking of the Father **who has delivered us**. God has won a battle with the **power of darkness**. The language is reminiscent of Israel leaving Egypt. See Exodus 18:9 - 10.
- B. “God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons.” – The Message
- C. This is *Operation Rescue* for every believer.
- D. Furthermore, believers have been **translated into the kingdom** of Christ. In ancient times conquering generals oftentimes resettled conquered peoples from their homelands to other areas. Similarly God, having defeated Satan in our lives, has transferred us to a new realm.
- E. Presently, we are in the **kingdom**, although not its final consummation which is always spoken of as *inheriting the kingdom*. This idea of being in the **kingdom** now harmonizes with Matthew 16:18 - 19 where the *kingdom of heaven* and the *church* are used interchangeably.
- F. Indeed, Jesus is the **Son of his love**. Not only does the Father **love** the **Son**, but the **Son** is also an expression of the Father’s **love**.

14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

- A. In the Son, **we have our redemption**. A Roman or Grecian slave could be freed with the payment of money, but no amount of money can set an enslaved sinner free. Like helpless slaves in the market place, we have been purchased from the power of darkness by God’s gift of grace.
- B. The exact outcome of that **redemption** is that **our sins are forgiven**. **Redemption** and **forgiveness** here are equals.
- C. Wilbur Fields states the issue clearly:

God’s **holiness** cannot tolerate our sin. His **justice** and **law** requires that a life be given for a life forfeited by sin. His **love** caused him to send his only begotten son into the world to suffer the penalty due to sinners, that whosoever **believes** on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Before we continue, a word about Gnostics or pre-Gnostics. They –

. . . held the basic doctrine that matter (physical or created) was evil and that only the spirit was good. They reasoned that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect he could not touch matter which was intrinsically evil. Therefore, the world came into being through a complicated process as God put forth thousands of emanations (or lesser gods), each of which was a little more distant from him, so that finally there was an emanation (a little god) so distant from God that it could touch matter and create the world. Of course, this lesser god of creation was so far removed from the ultimate God that it was evil. – Adapted

It is with this in mind that Paul next presents the superiority of Jesus.

Song: **Jesus Paid It All**. Words: Elvina M. Hall, 1865. Music: John T. Grape
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/j/p/jpaidall.htm>

Song: **Nor Silver Nor Gold**. Words: James M. Gray, 1900. Music: Daniel B. Towner
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/n/s/nsilverg.htm>

Song: **My Redeemer**. Words: Philip P. Bliss, 1876.
This song is one of the first ever recorded on a phonograph. George Stebbins made the recording during a demonstration of Thomas Edison's new invention in New York City. Music: James McGranahan, 1877
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/m/y/myredeemr.htm>

15 who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;

- A. What is the Son who redeemed us like? He is the visible **image** of the **invisible God**. The Greek word is related to our computer word *icon*. The Son is an icon of the Father as a child is an icon of his parents.
- B. This allows we earth-bound mortals to have a material view of the **invisible God** — through understanding Christ.
- C. Paul says that Jesus Christ is not a created being but that Christ is the essence of **God** made visible in the flesh. Christ is essentially and absolutely the perfect expression and representation of **God** the Father.
- D. Some have read the second phrase and demoted the Son, saying that He was the first creature of God's creation. Not so. The term **firstborn** also means *the one who is preeminent*.

E. W. E. Vine says:

FIRST-BEGOTTEN, FIRSTBORN: prototokos “firstborn” (from protos, “first,” and tikto, “to beget”), is used of Christ as born of the Virgin Mary, Luke 2:7; further, in His relationship to the Father, expressing His priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the “first” to be born. It is used occasionally of superiority of position in the OT, see Ex 4:22; Deut 21:16,17, the prohibition being against the evil of assigning the privileged position of the “firstborn” to one born subsequently to the “first” child.

(from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Copyright ©1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

F. That Jesus is not part of creation is seen in the way **firstborn** is used in Hebrews 1:6. Consider Psalm 89:27.

16 for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him;

A. Jehovah's Witnesses *New World Translation* has this subtle translation:

“By means of him all (other) things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities”

They add “other” to make Christ a created being and one of the “things” He is spoken of as having created. The ancient heretic Arius denied that Jesus was God. His heresy is known as Arianism and is a core teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

B. Jesus is the **creator**. He made everything. If we can see it or touch it, he **created** it. John 1:3 “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” NASU

Psalm 105:22-27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9.

C. Hebrews 1:2 “. . . in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” NASU

17 and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

A. This phrase seals the definition of the *firstborn*. Jesus was not the *first of all things* but *before all things* and the *creator of all things*.

- B. Paul speaks of the eternal, uncreated nature of Jesus was he says that **he is before all things**, not was before all things.
- C. The Creator is all powerful:
- The Creation is *for* Him. Hebrews 2:10.
He was *prior* to creation. Isaiah 44:6.
He *maintains* the creation. John 5:17-18; Hebrews 1:3.
- D. It is informative to check back beginning with verse 15 and count the number of time **all** and **all thing** and **things** are used. Paul is using the strongest language possible to affirm that Jesus Christ is supreme over **all**. If Jesus created **all things**, then He could Himself hardly be a created being as some local cult was saying.

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.

- A. Jesus **is the head**, showing that He is now active in that role.
- B. Paul uses three words in this one sentence to show the **preeminence** of Jesus: **head, beginning, firstborn**.
- C. In addition to being the **head** of all creation (vs. 16), He is **head of the church**, the called-out body of believers. The Colossian brethren were a part of that. Jesus, not philosophers, were to **head the church**.
- D. **Firstborn from the dead** (speaking of his **preeminence**) implies that others will rise, too. John 5:28 - 29.

19 For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;

- A. He is not something like God. He is God. John 1:16; Ephesians 1:23.
- B. The **Father** took **pleasure** in this truth.
- C. The Gnostics taught that Jesus was a step to the **Father**, a link in the chain with other, better, links on ahead. Paul says “no,” the complete embodiment of God dwells permanently in Christ.

20 and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

- A. He is the **reconciler**. 2 Corinthians 5:18.
- B. He paid for the **reconciliation** with his **blood**. Similar to Ephesians 2:13-17.
- C. His death **reconciled** man to God.
- D. His death **reconciled** Jews and Gentiles.

Song: **Nothing But the Blood of Jesus** Words & Music: Robert Lowry, in Gospel Music, by William Doane and Robert Lowry (New York: Biglow & Main, 1876)
<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/n/b/nbtblood.htm>

21 And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works,

- A. Language used of the Gentiles in Ephesians 2:12. There must have been a strong Gentile component in the church.
- B. They had been cut off from the Father and were his **enemies**.

22 yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unproveable before him:

- A. To **reconcile** is to take someone who is hostile towards someone else and change that into a friendly relationship. Unsaved, ungodly man is an **enemy** of God and is hostile toward Him. God takes the initiative in this estranged relationship and sent Jesus to be our Mediator. He, by our faith in His sacrificial death and resurrection, brings us into a friendly relationship with God. Ephesians 2:16
- B. **Fleshly body**. It was not an apparition. It left footprints. Gnostics taught that matter was evil so could not be deity.
- C. God is **holy** and the death of Jesus, taking away our sins, enables us to be **presented** to him as **holy** people.
- D. The language **without blemish** has a ring of Old Testament sacrifice to it.

- E. **Unreproveable.** New American Standard: *beyond reproach*. Vincent notes that the root word *egkaleo* means to accuse publicly and in (this) context before the throne of God, something that can no longer happen to a saint because we are in Christ. This is an amazing truth that when a sinner submits themselves to God, His grace makes our lives nothing less than a sacrifice fit to offer to Him!

23 if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.

- A. **Steadfastness** is required. (Hedraios is from hedra = seat, chair) and means settled, steady, steadfast painting the picture of one firmly seated in a chair, settled in mind and purpose.
- B. The idea of once-saved-always-saved is not present. Paul said that he himself must remain steadfast. 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 13:5.
- C. There was some force trying to **move them away** from the **hope of the gospel**.

Song: **My Hope is Built** Words: Edward Mote, circa 1834; first appeared in Mote's Hymns of Praise, 1836.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/m/y/myhopeis.htm>

- D. The message had already been preached universally. Matthew 24:14. Acts 2:5. That is not to say that every village had been reached.
- E. In Paul's day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people. He was commissioned by the ruler to make his announcements in a loud, clear voice so everyone could hear. He was not an ambassador with the privilege of negotiating; he was a messenger with a proclamation to be heard and heeded.
- F. The view of this Colossian church matched the universal message.
- G. The Lord made **Paul** the special messenger that he was. Acts 9:15 - 16.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;

- A. **Rejoice** is present tense, active voice (this voice calling for a volitional choice of one's will) indicating that Paul continually made the choice to **rejoice** in the midst of his **suffering** for Christ. This word is used to describe a little lamb skipping around for joy. It describes a physical change in our countenance. It is a physical expression of joy and something that radiates to people around us. We can walk around and say that we are **rejoicing** but if it's not seen, then we are not **rejoicing**.
- B. Paul had **suffered** for the Gentiles, including the Colossian church. It was for them that he had been jailed. Ephesians 3:1,13; Acts 22:21.
- C. There is an extension of the suffering of **Christ**. It is now Paul's turn at the bat. **Christ** had His turn, the grandest of all and **suffered** for us all in a sense not true of any one else. And yet **Christ** did not cause **suffering** to cease. As we allow Christ to live out His life through us we will also experience **suffering**. 2 Corinthians 1:5-8; 4:8-12; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 4:6.

25 whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God,

- A. Compare verse 1. This message is directly from **God**. Romans 15:15-19.
- B. **Minister** - *diakonos* - is a servant. Ministry is not the activity of a spiritual aristocracy or the work of a professional class but is the lifestyle, responsibility, and privilege of every believer. It conveys the basic meaning of the performance of menial and mundane activities, such as waiting on tables or caring for household needs, activities without apparent dignity. Since such service necessarily involves dependence, submission, and constraints of time and freedom, the Greeks regarded a *diakonos* as a degrading and dishonorable position.
- C. **Dispensation** here is translated *stewardship* by others. In the ancient world the steward had oversight of the other servants and handled the business and financial affairs of the household.
- D. **To fulfil the word.** "So that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, . . ." - NASB

26 even the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints,

- A. The (former) **mystery** has now been **manifested** or revealed. *Musterion* has its roots in the Old Testament and is found frequently in the second chapter of Daniel in the Greek translation (Septuagint). Gnostic teachers talked much of *mysteria* so Paul takes their special word and presents his special message regarding the Gentiles.
- B. Now God has revealed his **mystery**, not through some secret order, but through his **saints**.

27 to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

- A. The phrase **to whom God was pleased to make known** clearly indicates that these mysteries are not discovered by the genius of man, but are revealed by the will and act of **God**. It is **God's** purpose that His people know this truth. The mystery religions had a different agenda.
- B. **Christ in you.** Here Paul revealed a “sacred secret”, previously unknown “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Paul wanted the Gentiles to know that they, too, could have Christ in them. This is true through the *Spirit* that dwells within us. Ephesians 3:16 - 17.
- C. Christians who have discovered the truth of **Christ in you**, not merely in an intellectual sense, but in a practical sense that affects their living day by day are seldom bored. To them, everything is exciting. Even difficulties and trials are regarded as adventures and they look forward to how the Lord will work them out. They may feel a sense of risk, perhaps even danger, but they also have a sense of excitement and anticipation as they look for God to act. (Paraphrased from a statement by Dr. Ray Stedman.)

Song: **Whispering Hope.** Words & Music: Septimus Winner, 1868 Hymnals often list the author as Alice Hawthorne, one of Winner's several pseudonyms.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/w/h/i/whisperh.htm>

28 whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ;

- A. In **admonishment** there is a moral emphasis, in **teaching** a doctrinal emphasis.

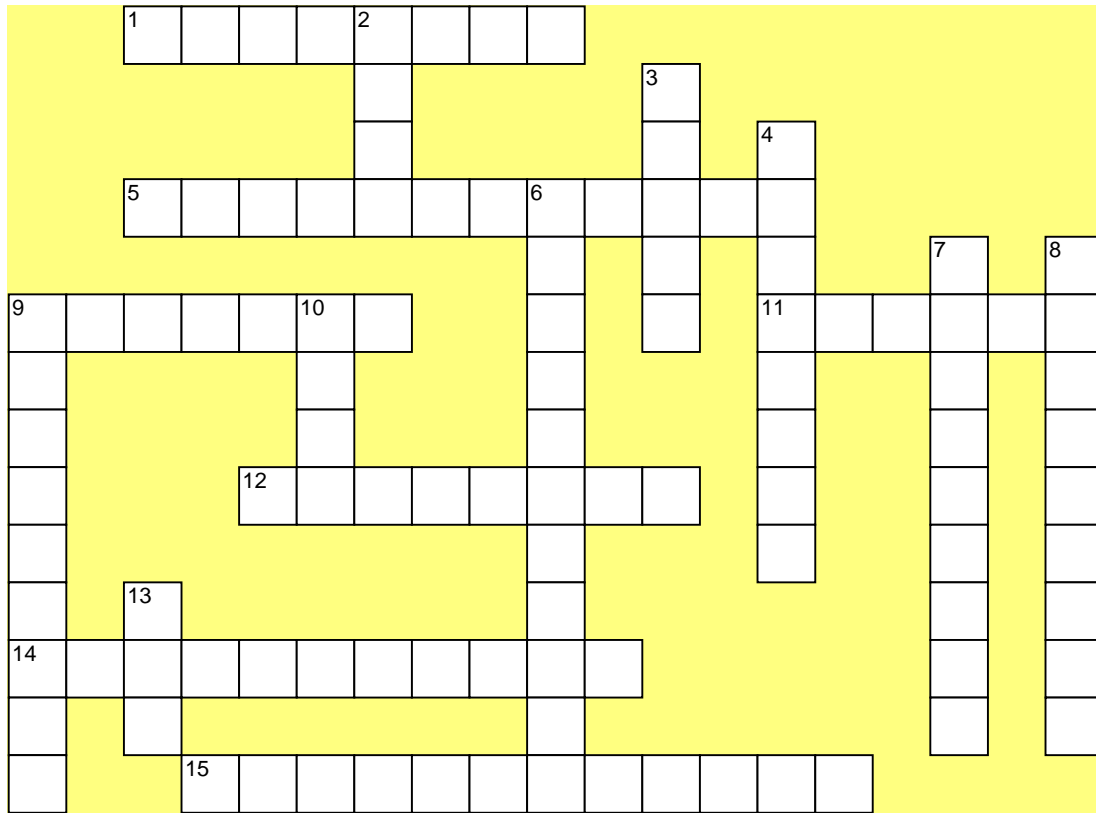
- B. **Admonishing** confronts and has a warning element. The Greek word *Noutheteo* literally means to place in the mind and so to warn or give notice to beforehand especially of danger or evil. The idea is to lay it on the mind or heart of the person, with the stress being on influencing not only the intellect, but also the will, emotions and disposition. The idea is to counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct.
- C. Christianity is a **teaching** religion. Compare the size of its meeting places with those of other religions. **Teaching** needs to be planned and not haphazard.
- D. **Present.** *Paristemi* was used as a technical term (especially in the Greek Septuagint) for a priest's placing an offering on the altar. Thus it was as if Paul pictures himself as a priest offering up "sacrifices" to God, although here not dead sacrifices, but living saints. Further he does not want to offer up "blemished sacrifices" but he wants them to be **perfect** sacrifices, mature, full-grown, adult Christians.
- E. While there is a legal sense that we are **perfected** by being **in Christ**, in another sense, we must learn and grow towards **perfection**.

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

- A. **Labor.** "For this I labor unto weariness" (Amplified Translation.) *Kopiaio* speaks of intense toil, even sweating and straining to the point of exhaustion, if necessary.
- B. **Strive.** The Weymouth Translation words it beautifully "To this end, like an earnest wrestler, I exert all my strength in reliance upon the power of Him who is mightily at work within me."

Colossians Chapter 1

By Charles Dailey 2006



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 1 Honored by a plaque.
- 5 Better translated stewardship.
- 9 Original books.
- 11 Like an earnest wrestler.
- 12 Required in Christianity.
- 14 Paul's authority to write.
- 15 An anchor in Christian development.

DOWN

- 2 Looks forward to heaven..
- 3 Looks back to the resurrection.
- 4 Thought they knew everything.
- 6 Has a warning element.
- 7 Preeminent.
- 8 Change enemy into friend.
- 9 Firmly seated in a chair.
- 10 Looks toward the brethren.
- 13 Delight in being alive.

Introduction:

1. Paul has just stated that God worked in him mightily.
2. One way this happens is mentioned next. Remember, the chapter and verse divisions are artificial.

2:1 For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

- A. In a populace that contained gnostic pitchmen, **knowing** was a very important selling point. These Christians needed to **know** an important truth about Paul.
- B. **Strive**, ἀγῶνα, *agon-* (*agony*). *Agon* pictured the struggle of the Greek athletes in the Olympiad agonizing to win at boxing, running, and wrestling. The idea is that of an athletic contest which is strenuous and demanding. The **striving** was in prayer for them.
- C. **Laodicea** was about 12 miles away. Both communities were in the Lycus Valley and the churches faced similar problems. Paul had written to **Laodicea** also. Colossians 4:16. The Spirit did not see fit to preserve this letter for us. We wonder if it covered much of the same ground as our Colossian letter.
- D. Paul may have met some saints from the Lycus Valley because he refers to those who **have not seen his face**, implying that some had met him.

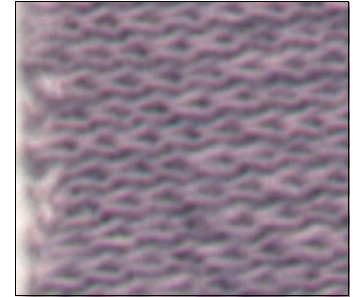
2 that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ,

- A. **Comforted.** (strengthened, braced, invigorated, cheered, enlivened) is *parakaleo* (*from para = beside + kaleo = call*) which means literally to call alongside always with the idea of enabling or aiding a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence.
- B. Barclay gives an example which accurately reflects the meaning of *parakaleo* here:

There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart and was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to it to such purpose that courage was re-

born and a body of dispirited men became fit again for heroic action. That is what parakaleo means here. It is Paul's prayer that the Church may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation.

C. **Knit**, συμβιβασθέντες; from *sumbibazo*- "to cause a person to unite with one in a conclusion." - Thayer. We bond or **knit**, through **love** of Christ and our brethren.



A magnified view of a knit fabric.

D. Unity produced by Christ's **love** is the basis of the strength of the church.

E. Correctness without **love** is sterile, and **love** apart from truth becomes a soggy mass and is of no value.

F. Full **understanding** has a **rich** outcome: **full assurance**.

G. The **full assurance** includes **understanding**, συνέσεως, from *sunesis* - "a running together, a flowing together with" - Thayer.

H. **Mystery** in classic Greek use conveyed the idea of silence in rites of the so-called "mystery" religions, which confided their "religious secrets" only to the select few who were initiated into the cult. This is a pattern followed by some lodges today such as the Masons.

I. **God** has revealed His **mystery** of the ages, and that is the person of **Christ**.

3 in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.

A. Jewish teachers promised **Wisdom**, such as the personified **wisdom** of Proverbs 2:1 - 8.

B. The false teachers offered to reveal **hidden knowledge**, usually for a fee.

C. Generally, **knowledge** speaks of the facts, **wisdom** is the application of the facts.

D. To search other sources for spiritual truth apart from Christ is an empty enterprise. The **treasures** are in Jesus.



- E. The Good News paraphrase translates this verse “He is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge.”

4 This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech.

- A. **Delude.** *Paralogizomai* was used in secular Greek writings of a keeper of a state library who had shown a willingness to “make a wrong use of” certain documents. Paul uses it to point to drawing an erroneous conclusion from the reasoning submitted. So the false teachers come alongside with their very logical sounding reasoning and they cheat their hearers by the use of this false reasoning.
- B. **Persuasiveness of speech.** Arguments were brought against their faith. Barclay says that *pithanologia* “was a word of the law-courts; it was the word used for the persuasive power of a lawyer’s arguments, which could enable the criminal to escape his just punishment. The true Church should have such a grip on the truth that it is unmoved by seductive arguments.”

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

- A. Paul says he *closely identifies* with the Lycus Valley churches even though he is not able to be present **with** them.
- B. Their godly qualities brought him great **joy**. This is an unpurchasable reward for a church leader.
- C. **Order.** A word in Greek (*taxis*) describing the orderly array of soldiers with the line being unbroken and intact. A few stragglers may have been swayed by the persuasive arguments, but there was no panic, no breach in the line.
- D. More than well **ordered**, they were **steadfast** in their faith, very stable people.

6 As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,

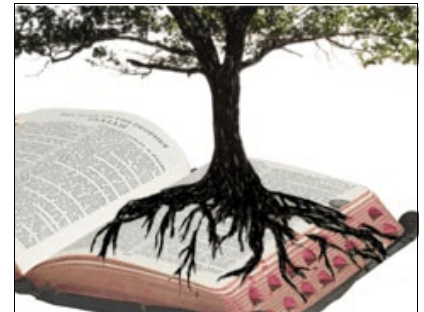
- A. The *way* they **received Christ** is clear from verse 12. Current attacks on the plan of pardon come from those using the expression “**receive**

Christ.” They define it as “receiving Christ into your heart.” The *correct* definition comes in this context itself.

B. **Walk:** Lifestyle, conduct, is the issue. Following **Christ** means a whole new way of living. Paul is saying “You received Christ by the initial exercise of faith; now continue your Christian life by trusting in Him.

7 rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

A. They were **rooted** like a tree. Some trees put down a deep root. The superior root system of the Black Walnut tree is why English Walnut trees are grafted to the Black Walnut base.



B. Now they are being **built** like a house. **Building** is an ongoing process, but we are **in** Christ all of the while.

C. Wright says they were “well rooted like a tree, solidly built like a house, confirmed and settled like a legal document, and overflowing like a jug full of wine.”

D. **Thanksgiving.** They were a thankful church. Gratitude is a leading characteristic of believers.

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

A. **Make spoil.** The NASB reads:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

B. *Sulagogeo (spoil or captive)* could be used of a slave-dealer carrying away the people of a conquered nation into slavery. To Paul it was a tragic thought that the Colossians who had been liberated would contemplate submitting themselves to a new and disastrous slavery.

- C. The false teachers did not go out and win the lost, no more than the cultists do today. They “kidnaped” converts from churches! If we don’t stand for the Truth, we’re vulnerable to fall for any lie!
- D. **Philosophy** was being added to the gospel. While the word merely means a *love of wisdom*, yet it probably described the world-view of opponents of the gospel message. False **philosophy** is like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn’t there.
- E. Worse, some attacks were plain **deceit**. This was not the **tradition** of the Apostles.
- F. The *idea* of **tradition** is not being condemned. The point is that a **tradition** was coming from men as the source rather than God’s appointed apostles. Matthew 15:2 - 9; Galatians 1:14. Paul was well-versed in the **traditions** of the Rabbinic school of thought.
- G. There is legitimate **tradition**. 1 Corinthians 11:2.
- H. **Rudiments.** *stoicheia* The NIV says “basic principles.” Paul is speaking of earth, air, water and fire and each of these had their own deities.
- I. Barclay writes that *stoicheia* means -

literally things which are set out in a row. . . . We still speak of learning the A B C of a subject, when we mean taking the first steps in it.

Stoicheia has a second meaning. It means the elemental spirits of the world, and especially the spirits of the stars and planets. There are still people today who take astrology seriously. They wear signs of the zodiac charms and read newspaper columns which tell what is forecast for them in the stars. But it is almost impossible for us to realize how dominated the ancient world was by the idea of the influence of the elemental spirits and the stars. Astrology was then, as someone has said, the queen of the sciences. Even men so great as Julius Caesar and Augustus, so cynical as Tiberius, so level-headed as Vespasian would take no step without consulting the stars. Alexander the Great believed implicitly in the influence of the stars. Men and women believed that their whole lives were fixed by them. If a man was born under a fortunate star all was well; if he was born under an unlucky star, he could not look for happiness; if any undertaking was to have a chance of success, the stars must be observed. Men were the slaves of the stars. There was one

possibility of escape. If men knew the right pass-words and the right formulae, they might escape from this fatalistic influence of the stars; and a great part of the secret teaching of Gnosticism and of kindred faiths and philosophies was knowledge which claimed to give the devotee escape from the power of the stars; and in all probability that was what the false teachers of Colossae were offering. They were saying, "Jesus Christ is all very well, he can do much for you; but he cannot enable you to escape from your subjection to the stars. We alone have the secret knowledge which can enable you to do that."

Paul, sufficiently the child of his age to believe in these elemental spirits, answers: "You need nothing but Christ to overcome any power in the universe; for in him is nothing less than the fullness of God and he is the head of every power and authority, for he created them.?"

9 for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,

- A. Jesus is **God** in human flesh. Pure Spirit and flesh have merged. The Greek Docetics could not accept this merging of God and man.
- B. J. Vernon McGee says that Paul's teaching in this verse "is a clear-cut statement of the deity of Christ. It could not be stated any stronger than it is here. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead—not just 99.44 percent but 100 percent."

10 and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

- A. "In union with Christ, you have everything." Because of our union with Christ every spiritual need is **fully** met. Possessing Him, we possess all we need for life and godliness. The Colossians needed to understand their position and their possessions in Christ so that they would be able to resist the persuasive arguments of empty philosophy, Mosaic ritual, and worship of angels. The Colossians needed to rest in the truth that all they needed was found in Jesus Christ.
- B. Only Jesus has all **power**, authority. MacDonald adds that "The Gnostics were greatly taken up with the subject of angels...But Christ is head over all the angelic beings, and it would be ridiculous to be occupied with angels when we can have the Creator of angels as the object of our affections and enjoy communion with Him."

11 in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;

- A. These brethren had experienced a figurative **circumcision** in becoming believers.
- B. There is a figurative sense of **circumcision** in the Old Testament. Leviticus 26:41. Deuteronomy 30:6.
- C. **Not made with hands** is a phrase used several times in the New Testament and often stands in contrast with the humans efforts of times past. Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11, 24.
- D. The **circumcision of Christ** is a new kind that is explained immediately. Philippians 3:3.

12 having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

- A. We identify with Christ's **burial in baptism**. It is for instructed adults. His death is counted as our death.
- B. **Baptism** is a **burial**. That description eliminates sprinkling and pouring. The mode of **baptism** is perfectly clear.
- C. We identify **with** Christ's resurrection. Romans 6:4; Ephesians 2:5-6.
- D. Conscious **faith** in **God's workings** is required. This raises a serious question for those who were immersed without reference to the correct purpose.
- E. The power to **raise** Jesus came from the Father. Acts 2:24.
- F. Circumcision in the Old Testament is not directly equivalent to immersion into Christ. The Old Testament rite was a requirement for being among the covenant people called Israel. Salvation was not an issue. See the story in Genesis 34:22.
- G. To compare baptism to circumcision raises these problems:

1. Gentiles could not have been saved, but we know there were numerous God-fearing gentiles like Melchizedek.
 2. Women in Israel could not have been saved.
- H. We have included comments from Dr. Jack Cottrell found in his *Baptism, a Biblical Study*, published by College Press in 1989:

IV. BAPTISM AND CIRCUMCISION

A final point that draws our attention in Colossians 2:11-13 is the relation between baptism and circumcision. For various reasons many Christians believe that baptism is the New Testament replacement for Old Testament circumcision. For some this is an incidental belief, but for others it is the determining factor in their whole doctrine of baptism. It is used not only to prove the validity of infant baptism, but also to define the very meaning of baptism. That is, if baptism simply replaces circumcision, then it must have the same meaning for us today as circumcision had for Old Testament believers. Since circumcision is usually interpreted as a sign of membership in the covenant people, this is the meaning assigned to baptism, too. By virtually ignoring everything the New Testament actually says about baptism as God's work of salvation, and by assuming this relationship with circumcision, many Protestants interpret baptism simply as the outward sign that marks one as a member of the church.

It is impossible to overestimate the impact that this equating of circumcision and baptism has had on the doctrine of baptism in modern times.

One of the most striking points in connection with this problem is the fact that outside of Colossians 2:11-13, *no* Biblical passages connect baptism and circumcision *in any way*. With this one exception, the alleged equation of the two is completely inferential. But what about the Colossians passage itself? Isn't one passage enough to establish a doctrinal truth? It would be, if that one passage did indeed teach that truth. And indeed, this is the way Colossians 2:11-13 is often cited, namely, as affirming a continuity in meaning between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism. But does it actually teach this? I believe that it does *not*, and that this can be easily shown as follows.

There are two distinct categories of Old Testament references to circumcision. On the one hand there are many references to physical circumcision as the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:10ff) and as the

continuing mark of covenant membership under the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:3). On the other hand there are a number of passages which refer to circumcision in figurative senses that have no intrinsic connection to physical circumcision at all. For instance, Moses complains that he is “uncircumcised of lips” (Ex. 6:12,30), meaning that he is an incompetent and unpersuasive speaker. The fruit of certain trees is called “uncircumcised” (Lev. 19:23), meaning forbidden or off-limits like any Gentile.

The most significant figurative sense in this second category is the prophetic use of circumcision and uncircumcision to represent certain spiritual states or conditions of the heart. Jeremiah speaks of uncircumcised ears, meaning ears that would not hear the word of God (Jer. 6:10). Others speak of the more basic condition of an uncircumcised heart, meaning a heart filled with sin and rebellious against God, whether Jewish (Lev. 26:41; Jer. 9:26) or Gentile (Ezek. 44:7,9). The Lord exhorted the sinners among Israel to circumcise their hearts: “Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more” (Deut. 10:16). “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart” (Jer. 4:4). In what I take to be a Messianic promise God says, “Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.” (Deut. 30:6)

Now, the important point to notice is this: *there is no intrinsic connection between physical circumcision and the state of spiritual circumcision of which the prophets speak.* The former was not given to represent the latter, and the latter was not necessarily present in everyone who had the former. In fact, the relationship between them is casual and incidental. Physical circumcision as the covenant sign was a fact of life within Israel, and as such it served as a convenient and ever-present illustration or analogy for the point the prophets wanted to make about the spiritual state of the heart. Except for this relationship of an incidental analogy, the two kinds of circumcision are independent and unconnected.

How does this relate to baptism and to Paul’s teaching in Colossians 2:11-13? In this way: the only Old Testament circumcision to which baptism has *any* relation is the *spiritual* circumcision of which the prophets spoke. Colossians 2:11 speaks of such a circumcision, a change in the inner spiritual condition. In Old Testament times this kind of change was limited to what the individual could bring about for himself; thus the Israelites were exhorted to circumcise their own hearts. But according to the prophecy (Deut. 30:6) there would come a time when God Himself would circumcise the hearts of penitent believers. This I believe refers to the new-age gift of the Holy Spirit, who Himself works true regeneration upon the sinner’s heart.

This is the “circumcision made without hands” of which Colossians 2:11 speaks.

The important point is *that there is no reference to physical circumcision at all in Colossians 2:11-13*. It is present only in the same sense as it was in the prophetic references, namely, as a background analogy. Paul is making no affirmation whatsoever about any relation between baptism and the Abrahamic covenant sign of circumcision. His only reference is to the inner, spiritual circumcision of the heart.

How is this spiritual circumcision related to baptism? Paul says that this marvelous “working of God,” this regenerating and life-giving “circumcision of Christ” *takes place in baptism*. It is ironic that a passage which so clearly and forcefully teaches such a strong view of baptism should be used so often in an effort to establish an opposite view. Perhaps it is a matter of un-circumcised ears (Jer. 6:10)

Thus we conclude that the attempt to equate baptism and circumcision based on Colossians 2:11-13 is a misuse of the passage. The alleged equation is without foundation.

V. SUMMARY

In this chapter we have seen that Colossians 2:11-13 makes these points. **First**, baptism is the time when we are buried with Christ into His death to bring about the death of our sinful nature, an event called spiritual circumcision, thus preparing the way for our resurrection to new life. **Second**, baptism is the time when this resurrection to new life occurs. This resurrection has two senses: we are raised up after we have died *to sin*, and we are raised up out of the state of death *in sin*. **Third**, though it occurs in baptism, this burial and resurrection with Christ take place *through faith*, thus ruling out baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. **Finally**, the only circumcision connected with baptism is the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which occurs at the time of baptism. There is no intrinsic relationship between physical circumcision and baptism at all.

13 And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses;

A. Two causes of spiritual **death** are cited for the Colossians. One is their **trespasses** and the other is their **uncircumcision**. This later point is that

they were not covenant people like the Jews. In every sense, they were outside of God's will.

B. But they were resurrected and **made alive together with** Christ as per verse 12.

14 having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross;

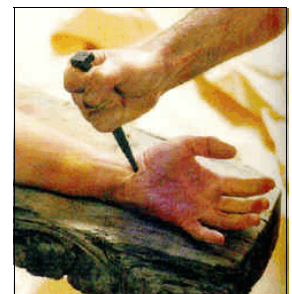
A. **Blotted.** To understand the word *exaleipho* is to understand the amazing mercy and lovingkindness of God. The material on which ancient documents were written was either papyrus, a kind of paper made of the pith of the bulrush, or vellum, a substance made of the skins of animals. Both were fairly expensive and certainly could not be wasted. Sometimes a scribe, to save paper, used papyrus or vellum that had already been written upon. When he did that, he took a sponge and **blotted** out the writing. Because it was only on the surface of the paper, the ink could be wiped out as if it had never been! God, in his amazing mercy, banished the record of our sins so completely that it was as if it had never been; not a trace remained.

B. **Bond.** "Certificate of debt" (handwritten record of debts, certificate of indebtedness) (*cheirographon*) from *cheir* = hand + *grapho* = write) is literally handwriting and then a written record of a debt. The word means primarily a bond written by a person pledging himself to make certain payments. The idea is that of list of our crimes or moral debt before God, a debt no person can pay. But it can be **taken out of the way**, by payment from a perfect man, Jesus Christ.

Here Paul describes the "certificate of debt" that was filed against us in the "courtroom of heaven". Because of our sin and rebellion, the laws of God had become a "deadly witness" **against us** and we were in such deep debt to God that there was no way out.

C. The NASB reads: ". . . having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

D. What were the decrees or **ordinances** that were against us? Some see this as the responsibility for keeping Law



of Moses being **nailed to the cross**. It shut up the Jews under sin and shut out the Gentiles who ignored it altogether.

God nailed the Mosaic Law with all its decrees to the Cross. The law with its decrees was abolished in Christ's death, as if crucified with Him. It was no longer in the foreground, as a debtor's obligation is perpetually before him, embarrassing his whole life.

- E. The sign **nailed** to the cross at Pilate's command said that he was King of the Jews. Paul figuratively sees that piece of paper as the Law of Moses.
- F. **Nails**. Some artists have suggested that Jesus was tied to the cross, but this speaks of nails.

15 having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

- A. The terms in this verse are all military and the idea is that Christ has achieved complete victory and has subdued our enemies by His death, so that all creation is now in subjection to Christ. Satan and the demons no longer have authority over a believer who is walking in the light.
- B. **Despoiled**, or better, stripped (*apekdyomai*) is a compound not essentially different from another Pauline expression, *ekdyo*. The latter, as used in the LXX (and classical Greek) of the defeating or "stripping" of enemies in war, provides a clue to the meaning here.

In O.T. times captives were stripped of most or all clothing. This action came to symbolize defeat, and for the prophets it signified the judgment of God (cf. Ezek 16:39; 23:26).

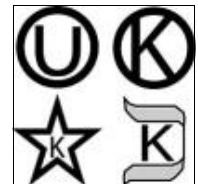
The present verse, picturing Christ as "stripping" **principalities and powers** through his death and resurrection, probably refers, on one hand, to angelic **powers** (through whom the handwriting of ordinances had been given, Gal 3:19) who control human rulers, and on the other hand, to such personified evils as death.

- C. **Made a show**. "Having triumphed over" (*thriambeuo* from *thriambos* = triumph) means to lead prisoners of war (and spoils) in a victory procession demonstrating one's successful conquest of the opposition. The general who had won a notable victory, would march his victorious armies through the streets of Rome in a long procession preceded by the city magistrates and followed by trumpeters. The

captives and spoils of war would precede him, and the general following in a chariot, a slave holding a jeweled crown over his head. Behind the general came the vanquished kings, the leaders and defeated peoples who were openly branded as his spoils. Paul pictures Jesus as our Conqueror enjoying a kind of cosmic triumph, and in his triumphal procession are the powers of evil, beaten forever, for every one to see.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: 17 which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.

A. Practices of the Jewish law were being added to the gospel. Certain foods were Kosher, others were not. The dietary rules isolated Jewish people from others. We might hear the question asked, “Does he take a stand against bacon?”



Kosher Symbols

B. Wilbur Fields writes:

Nothing is more plainly taught in the New Testament than that all dietary restrictions are abolished by Christ. Mark 7:19; Romans 14:2-3, 17; I Cor. 6:13; 8:8; I Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 9:10. Of course, however, our liberty to eat does not do away with instructions against gluttony, intemperance, waste, or causing others to stumble.

With regard to drink this verse teaches that we are to let no one judge us. All things are lawful for us to use (I Cor. 6:12). Nonetheless we must beware lest we be brought under the power of anything, and we must beware lest our liberty be a stumbling-block to others (I Cor. 6:12; 8:9). Strong drink is particularly likely to get us under its power, and its use is particularly liable to cause others to stumble into drunkenness. Drunkenness will keep us out of the kingdom of God. (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21). It would surely be right and wise for us to apply Paul's words about eating meats to strong drink also: “If food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.” (I Cor. 8:13; RSV).

C. Further, they were being condemned for not keeping special days like the **Sabbath** or **feast days**. These had been part of the Law of Moses. Leviticus 23:1-44; Passover prefigured the sacrifice of the Lamb; Pentecost the Ingathering of the Church; the **Sabbath** prefigured heaven. Hebrews 4:9.

D. **Shadow:** Hebrews 8:5; 10:1. All of these shadows led to the reality of **Christ** and his church.

E. The whole Old Testament ritual system was a divinely inspired “multi-media” presentation which communicated pictures of:

1. God’s desire to dwell in his people (*tabernacle*),
2. our sinfulness which prevented this (*barriers & veil*),
3. and his future provision of forgiveness through Christ’s death which would make it possible for him to dwell in us (*priest & sacrifice*).

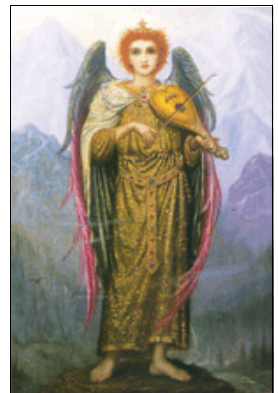
Through His death, Jesus has provided complete forgiveness and adoption into God’s family so we can be indwelt by his Spirit and know him as “Abba.”

18 Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

A. As a judge disqualifies those who turn the wrong way in a race, so believers who turn from faithfully following Christ will be **robbed** of their rewards from Him. The heretics, if their persuasive, empty doctrines were accepted, would rob the Colossians of their spiritual blessings.

B. When one delights in **humility** it ceases to be genuine humility and becomes pride which God hates.

C. The **worship of angels** was being added to the gospel. **Angels** do not have an agenda for mankind as God does and so to worship them is without any personal requirements. But God only is to be **worshiped**.



D. **Things which he hath seen.** The false teachers proudly claimed visions. Such visions are a product of the **fleshly mind**. They isolate people because only one person had the vision.

19 and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increasing with the increase of God.

- A. The NASB reads: “and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.”
- B. Obeying visions bypasses the **Head** of the Church. The church is to adhere to Christ and his words, not the words of the local heretics.
- C. Is there an **increase** that is not from God? Growth does not come from denying foods, keeping days, sighting 100 foot high angels, but true spiritual growth of a body of believers comes from God.

20 If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances,

- A. The believer’s **death** was revealed back in verse 12. This death includes the elementary things of the world.
- B. *The Message* reads: “So, then, if with Christ you’ve put all that pretentious and infantile religion behind you, why do you let yourselves be bullied by it?”
- C. The false teachers had made some progress with them. Paul asks **why?**
- D. Perhaps the question will arise in some minds: “If a Christian is dead to **ordinances**, why does he still retain baptism and the Lord’s Supper?” The most obvious answer is that these two ordinances of the Church are taught in the New Testament. However, they are not “means of grace,” making us more fit for heaven or helping us to gain merit before God. Rather, they are simple acts of obedience to the Lord, indicating respectively, identification with Christ and remembrance of Him in His death. They are not so much laws to be kept as privileges to be enjoyed, motivated by our love and respect for God.

21 Handle not, nor taste, nor touch

- A. We cannot gain merit with God by refusing to **handle, taste** or even **touch** certain items. Self-denial for its own sake does not contribute to holiness.
- B. The apostle declares these things are of no value in restraining the indulgence of the flesh. People may outwardly appear dedicated and disciplined, but inwardly sin rages unchecked. Inside they are angry, resentful, filled with vitriol and a spirit of vengeance.

- C. These verses point out the futility of asceticism, which is the attempt to achieve holiness by rigorous self-neglect (v 23), self-denial (v 21), and even self-infliction.

22 all which things are to perish with the using, after the precepts and doctrines of men?

- A. Since asceticism focuses on temporal **things which perish with the using**, it is powerless to restrain the old nature.
- B. The teachings of asceticism (deliberate self denial of bodily pleasures, usually food and sex) are the **doctrines of men**.
- C. The commands in the preceding verse are “counterfeit commands”. The “genuine” commands begin in chapter 3 and can now be carried out because we are new creatures in Christ indwelt by the Spirit and thus possessors of new motivation and a new power source.

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

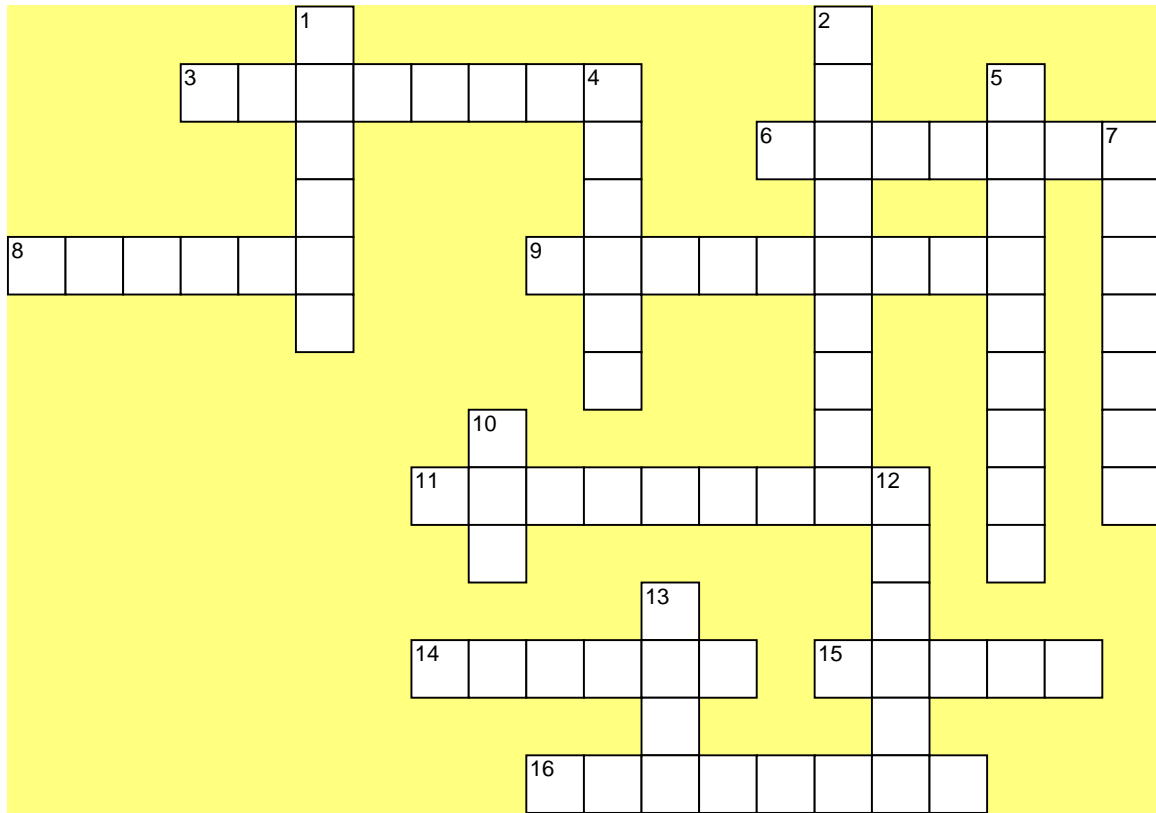
- A. Barclay says:

These things have a reputation for wisdom, with their self-imposed devotion and their flaunting humility and their stern treatment of the body, but they have no kind of value in remedying the indulgence of sinful human nature.

- B. Genuine holiness is not accomplished by ascetic treatment of the body. Rather it comes through our union with Christ.

Colossians Chapter 2

By Charles Dailey 2006



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 3 About 12 miles away.
- 6 The material on which ancient documents were written.
- 8 Pictured the struggle of the athletes.
- 9 Stripped.
- 11 To call along side.
- 14 A current day lodge.
- 15 Because of Christ, every spiritual need is _____ met.
- 16 The populace contained gnostic _____.

DOWN

- 1 Certain foods were _____.
- 2 Leading characteristic of believers.
- 4 Do not have an agenda.
- 5 The idea of _____ is not being condemned.
- 7 Prefigured heaven.
- 10 An unpurchasable reward.
- 12 To make a wrong use of documents.
- 13 To cause one to unite with another in a conclusion.

Introduction:

1. After showing the believer's new life in Christ in chapter 2:13, Paul then contrasts one or more unnamed religions that were based on rule-making systems.
2. N. T. Wright believes that just Judaism is being described, but others suggest some of the mystery religions.
3. Either way, Paul then shows his readers that they are far above those man-made systems and demonstrates the true and workable basis for leading a holy life.

3:1 If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.

A. **If** (since) **then** refers to something previously said and that is in 2:12 where being **raised together with Christ** in baptism was in view. It goes without further comment that proper baptism is essential for the process.

B. Barnes explains it this way:

The argument is, that there was such an union between Christ and His people, that in virtue of his death they become dead to sin; that in virtue of His resurrection they rise to spiritual life, and that, therefore, as Christ now lives in heaven, they should live for heaven, and fix their affections there.

C. There is no *personal struggle* required to attain that status. Believers have it automatically following their initial acceptance of Jesus as Lord.

D. Jesus is uniformly pictured as seated at **the right hand of God**. This is His place of rule over his willing subjects. This alludes to Psalm 110:1. The Old Testament high priest could never *sit* in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies because there was no chair. His work was never done because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).

2 Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.

A. **Setting our minds**, *phroneite*, shows the choices are ours. Love heavenly **things**. As Lightfoot says: "You must not only seek heaven, you must think heaven." The social forces around us want to do the mind setting for us.

Each have their own agenda. Schools, the entertainment industry, and government are examples.

B. The **things above** are contrasted sharply with the **things on the earth**. Many of them cannot coexist in one mind.



C. Note that Paul begins this section on holy living by emphasizing the believer's relationship with Christ. He does not begin immediately with a list of commands and prohibitions but with a command to maintain a heavenly Christ-centered mind set. Then we will be motivated and empowered to live a life which means death to our passions and our desires. Paul calls us first to focus on what Christ has done for believers. Then live out this great heritage in the power of His Spirit.

3 For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

A. **Died:** at baptism. Romans 6:2.

B. Barclay says the Greeks spoke of burial as "hidden in the earth." As baptized believers, we are hidden with Christ. The false teachers liked *hidden wisdom*. Compare 2:3.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

A. **Christ** is more than *important*, he is **our life** itself. The point, the purpose, the goals of **life** are **in** Him.

B. Barclay says,

Sometimes we say of a man, "Music is his life - Sport is his life - He lives for his work." Such a man finds life and all that it means in music, in sport, in work, as the case may be. For the Christian, Christ is his life. And here we come back to where this passage started – that is precisely why the Christian sets his mind and heart on the things which are above and not on the things of this world.

C. **Christ** will return for his saints. This is a visible return because Paul uses **manifested** to describe it. His coming is a common thread in the Gospels and the letters.

D. **In glory:** Jesus asked for this. John 17:24; Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:17; Philippians 3:21.

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

A. To live this new life in Christ, Paul begins with 11 sins that need to **be put to death** (Colossians 3:5-11) and follows with ten positive virtues to be **put on** (Colossians 3:12-15).

B. **Put to death.** One writer says:

The verb *nekroo* is aorist tense which means do it, do it effectively producing a definite result, active voice meaning you are to make a choice of your will to do it and imperative mood meaning you are to do it without hesitation because this is not a suggestion but an urgent order from a commanding general regarding the destruction of a sinister enemy within the camp that will destroy the power of the forces if given opportunity. The verb *nekroo* is placed first in the Greek construction for emphasis. You can almost hear Paul shouting out "KILL SIN!" Paul is saying that this is so important that it calls for immediate attention and urgent action! Slay the evil desires in your body.

C. **Therefore** shows that the following lists are based on what a person believes. He must believe that he is *in Christ*, that *He reigns* and that He is *coming again*. Unless these are believed, the lists merely become burdensome rules.

D. **Your members.** Paul speaks of their **earthly** body because the erring people influencing church members had adopted a Greek view in which one's soul was heavenly and eternal but one's body **earthly**, perishable and unimportant. But it *does* matter what one does with one's body.

E. **Upon the earth.** Again, the reference is not to location as much as to the truth that our bodies and attendant emotions are carnal and need to be dealt with.

F. The list may be presented in reverse order with the outcome listed first and the causes itemized following it.

G. Paul addresses a serious problem in their society. William Barclay writes:

Chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity brought into the world. In the ancient world sexual relationships before marriage and outside marriage were the normal and accepted practice. The sexual appetite was regarded as a thing to be gratified, not to be controlled. That is an attitude which is not unfamiliar today, although often it is supported by specious arguments. The Christian ethic insists on chastity, regarding the physical relationship

between the sexes as something so precious that indiscriminate use of it in the end spoils it.”

- H. **Fornication:** Sexual immorality. It was not considered a sin in Gentile society. Visiting prostitutes, both religious and otherwise, was common.

Thayer includes homosexuality, lesbianism and bestiality in the definition. Compare Ephesians 5:3. For homosexuality as part of the definition, note Jude 7.

Veiled prostitution is on the rise in the U.S. The newspaper reports that offers of free housing are available on the widely used Craigs List in exchange for sex twice each week and light housekeeping.

Polygamy is being normalized (2006) by the TV program *Big Love* and will probably be positioned so lawmakers will be pressured to legalize it soon. Polygamists maintain an extensive web site at: www.polygamy.com

Following the legalization of polygamy, the sex-with-children and sex-with-animals groups each have their own agendas for legalization.

- I. While some people restrain themselves from **fornication**, they relish the **uncleanness** that leads eventually to it. This may include **unclean** humor and sexual involvement that stops shorts of **fornication** as developed in the next paragraphs.
- J. Both Romans 1:26 and 1 Thessalonians 4:5 show the negative use of **passion**. Believers are not to be driven by their **passions**. When sexual **passions** take over, the mind and its values are put on hold. This is illustrated by the wild promise of King Herod in Mark 6:21-23. The dancing girl turned off his judgment. Dancing girls still turn off male judgment.

Sexual **passion** is a wonderful component of marriage, but is forbidden to the unmarried. Illicit playing with **passion** is on the rise as seen in the mounting statistics for oral sex as popularized by ex-President Clinton. The indulgers are able to experience passion without the more extensive implications of sexual intercourse.

Outside of marriage, sex is ugly, destructive, and like fire. In a fireplace, it's warm and delightful. Outside the hearth, it's destructive and uncontrollable.

- K. **Evil desire:** from *epithumia*- “desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust”- Thayer. If the theme of the sentence is sexual, then porno-

graphy would fit here very well. It becomes a destroyer of males in our society. An excellent system for removing the porn temptation is at www.covenanteyes.com/ This site reports all of the client's web activities to his responsibility partner. The service can even be purchased for the entire staff at church.

- L. Ancient societies had a limited kind of porn in their art. The art contributes to sexual craving or **evil desire**.

Magazines, videos and the Internet are major suppliers of porn to our society. A U.S. center of porn manufacturing is Northridge, California. The town was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1994. Many saw this as the judgment of God on the fabrication of perversion.

- M. **Covetousness:** Barclay defines as "The desire to have more money, honor, prestige." It is taking, the opposite of giving. The word can have sexual connotations as well as seen in the Decalogue:

Ex 20:17 - *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.*

- N. **Idolatry** is closely linked with **fornication**. Idolatry was the introduction for men into a world that accepted promiscuity as normal. In our nation, the drama entertainers are treated as **idols**. In fact, they are called **idols** and goddesses. Job connects morals and money in Job 31:24-28.

6 for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:

- A. Someone has written that immorality is like a cat's paw. When lightly stroked, it is quite soft and pleasurable, but increased pressure brings out the claws of sin that will shred your very life. It also angers **God**.
- B. **Wrath:** *orge*- "anger exhibited in punishment, hence used for punishment itself; used of punishments inflicted by magistrates." - Thayer Matches Ephesians 5:6.
- C. **Sons of disobedience:** **Sons** is a metaphor for disciples. God is angry with the wicked every day. Romans 1:18.
- D. Without the **wrath** of God mercy loses its meaning.

7 wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things;

- A. **Once walked:** Indicating their Gentile background. Ephesians 2:2.
- B. The following group of items appear to be centered around anger:

8 but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

- A. Those baptized changed to white garments. The figure repeats in 10,12,14.
Put away certain garments:
- B. **Anger:** *Orge* Strong speaks here of violent passion. Anger is most often the quick flare up that leads to other results. Provocations do not create his anger, but merely reveal that he is an angry person and give him a target for his fury.
- C. **Wrath:** *thumos*. Longer term anger. This is God's privilege, not ours. He is the judge and will get that judgment right. Anger and wrath overlap in definitions.
- D. **Malice:** "Desire to injure." - Thayer Lightfoot defines it as "the vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others."
- E. **Railing:** (*blasphemia*) or slander is the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame, belittle or damage another's reputation and cause them to fall into disrepute or to receive a bad reputation. To try to tear down another individual. Wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, evil speaking.
- F. **Shameful speaking out of your mouth:** *aischrologia*- foul speaking, low and obscene speech. - Thayer. Barclay says: Obscene language. Lightfoot calls it "foul mouthed abuse!" The word was used for both abusive and filthy talk. Such language should never come out of the mouth of a Christian since Christ is now his very life.
- G. Harry Ironside related that...

Once I heard someone begin a story with the remark, "As there are no ladies here, I want to tell you something I heard the other day." Another gentleman in the group checked him with a wise answer: "Brother, though there are no ladies present, the Holy Ghost is here. Is your story fit for Him?" The first man blushed in confusion and accepted the rebuke. We did not hear the story.

- H. **Shameful speech** is sometimes masked as *being honest*. N. T. Wright comments of the health of free expression:

It is not “healthy”, as is sometimes supposed, to allow such thoughts to find expression. It is certainly healthy to recognize and face up to one’s own anger or frustration, and to search for proper and creative ways of dealing with it. But words do not merely convey information or let off steam. They change situations and relationships, often irrevocably. They can wound as well as heal. Like wild plants blown by the wind, hateful; words can scatter their seeds far and wide, giving birth to more anger wherever they land.

9 lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings,

- A. **Put off lying**, too. Any successful society is based on honesty. The definition of **lying** must be clarified. It is not simply telling something that does not match the facts, but doing so with the intention to deceive. Enemies throw the term around to describe their adversaries, but it may not apply. Getting the facts wrong is relatively easy. *Intentionally misrepresenting* the facts is **lying**.
- B. N. T. Wright says that truth is often inconvenient, untidy or embarrassing and we are constantly tempted to bend it into a less awkward shape. We must learn diplomacy that allows us to be candid without being hurtful.

10 and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him:

- A. **Put on the new man** as a garment. Wear the garment every day every place we go.
- B. **Being renewed:** Not a one-time event but a process.
- C. The *Message* paraphrase is colorful here:

Now you’re dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete.

11 where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.

- A. Barclay: The ancient world was full of barriers. **Christ** breaks down many distinctions of birth and upbringing.
- B. **Greeks** looked down on all others as less cultured. Greeks hailed from Greece, Egypt, Turkey and other populous areas following the armies of Alexander the Great.
- C. **Jews** viewed all others as religiously uninformed. They despised Greeks as polytheistic and pagan.
- D. **Circumcision** was thought to be a mark of acceptance with God among male Jews. This set them aside from other people and enabled them to feel superior.
- E. **Barbarians** were considered just short of beasts. Greeks used the term to denote those who could not speak Greek.
- F. **Scythians** were more barbarian than the barbarians. They came from the northern reaches of the empire.
- G. **Slaves** were not considered human and had no rights.
- H. There is oneness among all from these groups that are **in Christ**. He is resident (probably through the Spirit) in people of every heritage and national background.

12 Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering;

- A. **God's elect: God's** chosen. **Elect, holy and beloved** are terms that had been applied to Israel of the Old Testament.
- B. **Holy** means to be separate and distinct. Christians are to live differently than the world. We do not run after the crowd and follow its fashions and value systems. We are expected to be different because we are different. Our goal is to emulate the **holiness of God**.
- C. **Put on . . . a heart of** - attitudes can be consciously changed. Pilots, soldiers, and athletes must dress the part, and so, too, must believer.

- D. **Compassion:** We must learn to feel with others. When they hurt, we hurt. Those with little compassion will say, “Get used to it.” “Toughen up.” “I had the same thing and got over it. You will, too.”
- E. **Kindness:** has to do with one’s approach to other people. Ray Stedman says that kindness is action that reveals compassion, action that arises out of a sense of sympathy. It can take many different forms – a smile, a kind word, a pat on the shoulder, an invitation to lunch, an offer of help.
- F. **Lowliness:** *tapeinophrosune*- “the having a humble opinion of oneself”- Thayer. The pagan world of Paul’s day did not admire humility. Instead, they admired pride and domination.
- G. **Meekness:** *prautes*- “mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit.” One writer called it a wild horse that had been tamed.
- H. **Longsuffering:** The spirit which never loses its patience with its fellow-men. - Barclay It reflects an emotional calm in face of provocation or misfortune. *Makrothumia* is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate. It is the ability to hold one’s feeling in restraint or bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating.

13 forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

- A. **Forbearing:** “Putting up with each other.” - Charles’ paraphrase.
- B. *Anechomai* means to endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, injury, indifference, or complaints and not retaliate.
- C. “The forgiven man must always be **forgiving.**” - Barclay The word could be used of **forgiving** a money debt.
- D. Some of these Colossians may have had feuds from the days before becoming believers. **Forgiveness** is the requirement.
- E. There will always be **complaints** and grounds for grudges.
- F. The model here is the **Lord’s forgiveness** of us. It can’t get any better than His example.

14 and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.

- A. **Put on love.** This garment is the key to **bonding** the church. It holds all other garments (virtues) in place.
- B. The *Message* paraphrase continues the garment figure:

And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.

- A. **The peace** of Christ is to rule in the church **body**.
- B. *Message:* Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.
- C. **Rule:** Arbitrate - Thayer. Barclay says the word is used in the athletic arena as an umpire who settles things with his decisions. Let Jesus umpire!
- D. N. T. Wright suggests that the *pax Christiana* rule in the church as the *pax Romana* did in the empire. Rome was at peace internally. This allowed the citizens of the empire to pursue their lives without fear of war.
- E. The **oneness of the body** is important and is to be maintained. Ephesians 2:16-17.
- F. **Thankfulness** is the antidote for criticism, a frequent malady of the church world where we develop definite views on how to live. Those views will move us toward constant criticism of others unless we counter it with **thankfulness**. It is also a cure for being highly subjective.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.

- A. Memorize and internalize the Word (logos). Psalm 119:11. N. T. Wright comments on **richly** by saying the church is to be stocked with good teaching as a palace is with treasure.

- B. **Teaching** is to be done **wisely** because **Christ** is **Wisdom** personified. The teachers of the church will be **wise** in their presentations. They will be prepared to use presentation time **wisely**. They will present so the audience understands.
- C. In **singing** we **teach** one another. Christian music needs to have this **teaching** component in it.
- D. **Admonishing** is a step toward maturity. Romans 15:14. *Noutheteo* means to warn, give notice to beforehand, especially of danger or evil.
- E. **Psalm:** *psalmos*- a striking, a twanging; used of the striking of the chords of a musical instrument. See W.E. Vine under *Hymn*.
- F. **Hymn:** Used in contexts that would not have allowed instruments. Acts 16:25. It is primarily a praise to God.
- G. **Spiritual song:** The general song, whether accompanied or unaccompanied.
- H. **Singing** is for more than entertainment. Psalm 119:54 1 Corinthians 14:15.
- I. This instrumental music issue is covered in depth at my website CharlesDailey.net/27-music.html The book *Documents on Instrumental Music* by Tom Burgess is available there for free download at this writing.

17 And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- A. **Whatever you do.** The broad scope of the believer's life, both his **words** and actions, were to be under the control of the **Lord Jesus**.
- B. **Name:** To do something in one's **name** is to do it in their authority. Every act of life is to be measured by the Master's example.
- C. **Thanks.** This new conduct is not to be a burden, but a source of **thanksgiving** because we are learning how to live and be victorious as we learn of **Christ**.
- D. This Christ-centered life begins right at home as seen in the following sentence:

18 Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

- A. It is basic to God's life pattern that believers be married if they live together. **Wives** implies marriage.
- B. **Subjection**, rather than obedience. "A Greek military term meaning 'to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader.' In non-military use, it was 'a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden'". - Thayer
- C. She is not to use domestic blackmail to rule her **husband**.
- D. Your (own) **husbands**. Genesis 3:16; Esther 1:20; Ephesians 5:22-24. She is not to be subject to other men.
- E. This is **fitting in the Lord** because it sets up a chain of authority and responsibility.

19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

- A. There is a problem with **husbands loving wives**. They are easy to take for granted. With some men, their **wives** are a threat to their centrality and they do not want their **wives** to succeed in public areas of achievement.
- B. **Bitterness** is possible after the honeymoon is over and she loses her "angelic" status. Prov 5:18; Eccl. 9:9; 1Cor. 7:33.

20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.

- A. **Children** are to **obey** their **parents**. Proverbs 6:20-22. This command is built on the just-mentioned relationship between husbands and wives. Parents must get along well to expect obedience from their children.
- B. **All things**. Notice the same phrase in vs. 22. Because of their experience, parents are wiser than children. Their first-hand knowledge enables their children to avoid many pitfalls that the children cannot foresee.
- C. The goal of adults and **children** alike is to **please** Him. Ephesians 5:10.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.

- A. Provoking is easy to do. **Fathers**, more than mothers, tend to be perfectionists that cannot tolerate flaws. This disheartens children.
- B. **Children** are to be developed and encouraged. Demonstrations and recitals can be a part of this. **Children** do not often rise higher than the confidence their parents show in them.

22 Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord:

- A. Like the children (vs. 20), **servants** are to **obey**.
- B. The then-current order of society included **masters** and slaves. **Servants** were to conduct themselves within that framework.
- C. **Eye-service** (while the master is watching) is hypocritical and omits **heart** obedience.
- D. Service must be with **singleness of heart**. The focus needs to be on the task at hand and not on how to do as little as possible and not get into trouble. A Christian **servant** owed complete obedience to his master as a ministry to the Lord. His work was done **heartily**, not grudgingly, and as to the **Lord** and not to **men**.
- E. **Fearing the Lord:** Since we work for the **Lord**, we should attack our work with zeal instead of lingering over it and figuring out how little we can do and still get by – which is theft. We should cultivate being prompt and hard-working, whether the boss is watching or not. We must pursue quality in our workmanship.

23 whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; 24 knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ.

- A. The **Lord** is the real Master.
- B. The servant may have been treated as a soulless animal by his master, but to the **Lord** he was just as important as anyone else. He would be rewarded by the **Lord**.

- C. **Inheritance.** Bible writers consistently use this to describe the eternal kingdom. The slaves will become property owners in heaven.
- D. While it seems like the earthly master is in charge, the real Master is the **Lord.**

25 For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

- A. The Lord will correct injustices.
- B. *The Message:* The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being Christian doesn't cover up bad work.
- C. N. T. Wright says:

The task may appear unimportant or trivial, but the person doing it is never that, and he or she has the opportunity to turn the job into an act of worship. This attitude cannot be motivated by earthly reward, and so cannot be distracted if such prospects seem remote: *since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.* One should properly read 'the inheritance'; the reference is clearly to the life of the age to come. This is ironic, since in earthly terms slaves could not inherit property. Here, then, is the third point: the 'master' in heaven will reward you. The fourth one is perhaps not to be taken (with NIV) as a statement (*It is the Lord Christ that you are serving*) but, as is equally possible in the Greek, as a command: 'Serve the Lord Christ!' The force of this unusual phrase (Paul nowhere else allows the titles 'Lord' and 'Christ' to stand together without the name 'Jesus' as well) could be brought out by a paraphrase: 'so work for the true Master – Christ!'

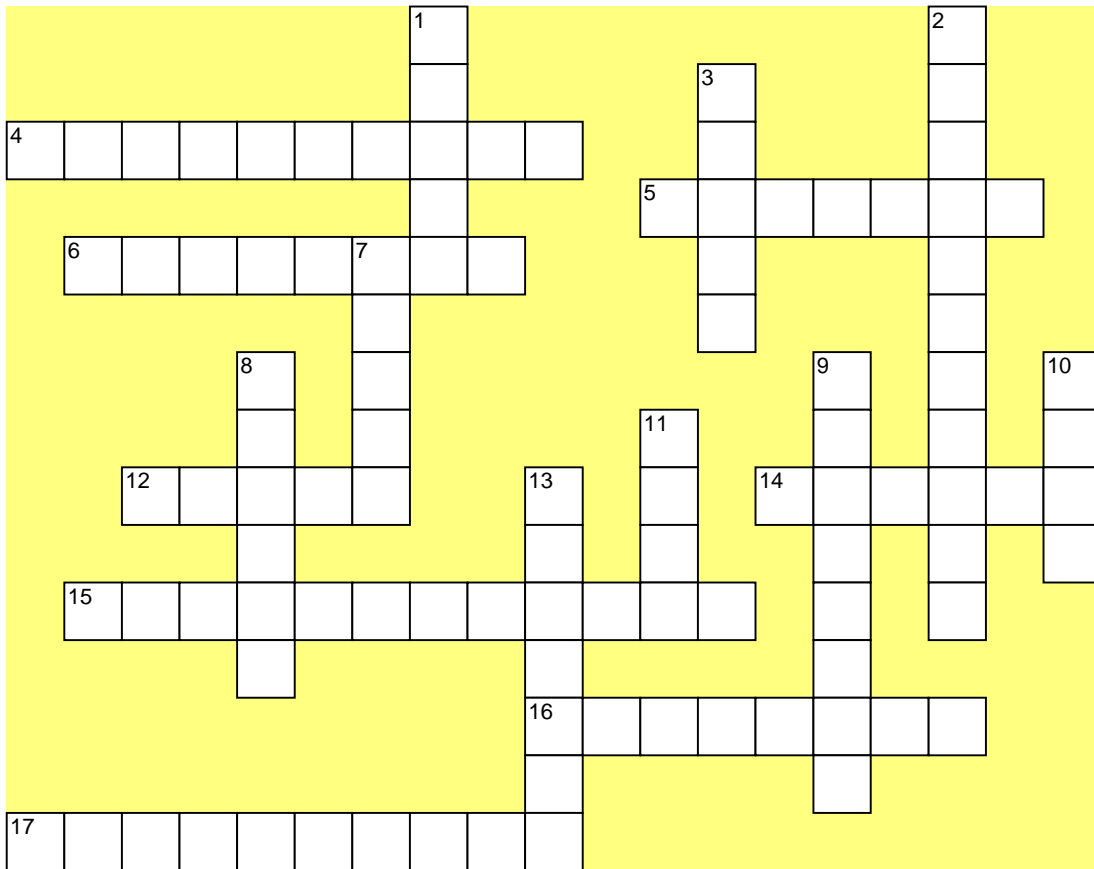
- D. We need to quote Wright one last time in this chapter.

If one is serving Christ, one need not fear, as with earthly masters, that those who cover up shoddy work by putting on a good show in the boss's presence will get away with it, or that the master's own favorites will be rewarded however hard others may work.

No: anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. This last idea, repeated by Paul in other contexts (e.g. Rom. 2:11), is a commonplace of Jewish and Christian views of God's justice. The slave has thus both encouragement and warning: he need not imagine that being a Christian will excuse poor or half-hearted work.

Colossians Chapter 3

By Charles Dailey 2006



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 4 Just short of beasts.
- 5 The utterance of false charges.
- 6 Now being normalized.
- 12 None in the Holy Place.
- 14 The desire to injure.
- 15 The desire to have more money.
- 16 Closely linked with fornication.
- 17 Putting up with each other.

DOWN

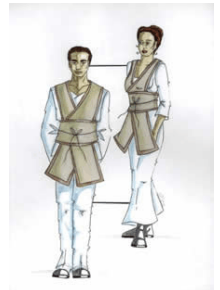
- 1 A striking, a twanging.
- 2 Homosexuality is included.
- 3 Anger exhibited in punishment.
- 7 Most often the quick flareup.
- 8 Not considered human.
- 9 A completely new virtue.
- 10 Hidden in the earth.
- 11 A metaphor for disciples.
- 13 ____ girls still turn off male judgment.

Introduction:

Based on subject matter, verse one could be attached to the previous chapter.

4:1 Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

- A. **Masters** are themselves also **servants** under the Great **Master**. Ephesians 6:9
- B. *Doulos* was the most abject, servile term of the six Greek words for slave or **servant**.
- C. A Christian **master** must treat his servants with **justice and equality**. These would be strange sounding words to the average master of the times. The general view was that **servants** were subhuman and merely items owned like as the family animals.
- D. Women slaves were sex objects and could not object to intercourse or even abuse. This ended when **masters** became Christians.
- E. “Justice and equity required that they should have proper food, proper raiment, due rest, and no more than moderate work.” — Adam Clarke's Commentary
- F. **Just and equal** treatment may have led to paying wages to slaves and their eventual freedom. While Christianity did not immediately destroy slavery, its message attacked the unjust treatment of slaves.
- G. All Christian business is ultimately a stewardship from God. Those who employ others must consider their welfare, whether bond or free. In today's world, fair compensation and safe working conditions are a part of the employer's responsibility.

**2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving;**

- A. This sentence begins a new subject, evidence that verse one belongs to the previous chapter.

- B. **Prayer** is not just for formal and church occasions. Believers are to be **steadfast** in it. (*Stedfast* is an older spelling.)
- C. Perhaps the **watching** element has to do with **watching** for the answer to the **prayer**. Our prayers need to be specific so we can identify answers when they are “yes.” Praying such prayers as “God bless all for whom it is our duty to pray” have no way of being traced for results. This, in turn, leads to formality and faithlessness in prayer.
- D. **Prayer** and **thanksgiving** are interwoven and interdependent. If prayer has the overtones of *asking*, then **thanksgiving** has the overtones of *appreciating the answers* when they come. We must remember that not all **prayer** answers are what we were wanting but what God sees as best. Accepting this is faith in God’s oversight and wisdom.

3 withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds;

- A. In prescribing **prayer**, Paul inserted his name on the **prayer** list. Paul was not concerned about his physical needs but about having opportunities for telling the story of **Christ**.
- B. Wilbur Fields writes:
- Paul did not ask for release from prison, for successful outcome of his trial, for rest and peace, but only for an open door.
- C. It is **God** that supplies the opportunities for personal and public testimony. We must recognize his role and respond to his open doors.
- D. Paul’s interest is that God would **open a door** for the preaching of the **Word**, primarily the **mystery of Christ** that Gentiles are included in God’s plan of the ages.
- E. It was this message – that Gentiles were included – that had him jailed (**in bonds**) in Rome.

4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

- A. Paul prayed that he might **speak** skillfully. He was fully aware that the human element requires **speaking** skill. Compare the case of Apollos in Acts 18:24-28.

B. Many in the role of **speaking** for the Lord put little or no effort into learning how to do this with skill. We must study the art of speaking. There are classes in colleges and other institutions. *Toastmasters* clubs are an effective and low budget approach to gaining speaking skills.



C. Public **speakers** for the Lord should put careful preparation into their presentations and not rely on a natural aptitude with words to substitute for informed preparation. There is little excuse for stammering, repeating, mispronouncing and vocal stalls.

D. Making the gospel plain to one segment of society does not make it plain to every segment. We need to study our target audience and adjust our presentation to fit in a matrix they can relate to.

E. If the expert Paul needed prayer for clarity, how much more do presenters today need the prayers of other Christians for opportunity and clarity. We must pray for our presenters.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

A. Believers are not at liberty to run rough shod over the views and lifestyles of the unconverted. We are to use **wisdom** in dealing with them.

B. Some Christian leaders are rude and insolent and drive people away unnecessarily while cloaking the shabby outcome as a result of their *firm stand* for the Lord.

C. Using the term **without** shows that Paul and the church had a clear view as to who was in the church and who was not. Some churches cannot define their membership, always hoping that so-and-so “is with us.” Churches need to have clearly defined membership roles for legal standing and so decisions can be made.

D. **Time** is among the most important dimensions of life. Believers must buy up the opportunities opened for us by the Lord. Paul says to go to the open market and buy up those opportunities by using them rightly.

E. Life is like a house with many windows. The windows will each open, some briefly and others for a longer **time**. When they close, they probably will never open again.

- F. Remember that interruptions can be opportunities to serve. Rather than identifying all projects and planning for them, some come to us in the form of interruptions via phone, doorbell or casual encounters. We need visions that sees open windows.

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.

- A. Another phase of using wisdom toward unbelievers is in our **speech**. Our words are to be **gracious** and kindly.

And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" - Luke 4:22

- B. Some preachers like to describe “stinking, rotten, ungodly sinners.” There’s not much **grace** and absolutely no **salt** here.

- C. **Seasoned with salt**, according to N. T. Wright, carries the idea of concise and crisp answers. He says, “Paul knows that a tedious monologue is worse than useless in evangelism.” One author, writing a book for salesmen, entitled a chapter “Don’t Write, Telegraph.”



- D. One writer said:

No Christian should have a dull, tiresome, know-it-all monologue of his faith. Instead, Christians, who have the most exciting news in the world to share, should be able to share that message with excitement, ability to invoke interest, an understanding of the basics, a willingness to listen and discuss, and a desire to answer everyone’s questions graciously. The way words are spoken is as important as the words themselves. When we tell others about Christ, we should always be gracious in what we say. No matter how much sense the message makes, we lose our effectiveness if we are not courteous. Just as we like to be respected, we must respect others if we want them to listen to what we have to say. – B. B. Barton and P. W. Comfort in *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Life Application Bible Commentary*: Page 229. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

- E. **Answer** implies that people are inquiring about the believer’s faith and lifestyle. We should live so others will see a difference and inquire about our faith.

- F. Perhaps not all people should be **answered** in just the same way. Some require detailed **answers** that would be unintelligible for other inquirers. Children need different levels of **answers** than teens. High school graduates may need different **answers** than college graduates. People in other cultures need to have things explained much differently.
- G. Each generation is better equipped to reach its own generation than the ones before it or after it. Communicating across three generations in our fast-moving society is quite difficult because words change connotation and even meaning. So what does cool mean? Tell me your age before we begin.

7 All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

- A. There were matters of living that Paul did not want to include in the letter. They were better communicated by word of mouth. Sometimes spoken is better than written because it has more dimensions, especially emotions.
- B. Perhaps God led Paul to know that his book would spread around and that personal **affairs** were not appropriate.
- C. **Tychicus** is mentioned in Acts 20:4 as a native of Asia accompanying Paul on his journey to Jerusalem. His name appears also in 2 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 3:12.
- D. Here Paul gives **Tychicus** high recommendations as the bearer of this letter and the dispenser of private information about Paul's conditions.

8 whom I have sent you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts;

- A. Communication between Christian centers is important in the growth of the church worldwide. Here Paul was dispatching Tychicus to be a **comfort** to the Colossian Church.
- B. **Comfort** is an important function of church leaders. It is not always necessary to set everyone straight. There must be times for **comfort** as well.
- C. We need to devise ways to keep in touch with other congregations and leaders of congregations. Perhaps this points to a wider use of the printed

page for news of other places. Attending the programs of other congregations also leads to improved communication.

- D. Now it is possible for a congregation to record part or all of their meetings and to stream them over the Internet in either audio or audio and video. This is an excellent way to keep in touch with other churches.

9 together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done here*.

- A. **Onesimus** had been a slave of Philemon and had escaped to Paul in Rome. Paul had taught him the Way of Christ and now he was returning home to once again serve Philemon who evidently lived at Colosse.
- B. This is the subject of the epistle to Philemon. See notes on that book.
- C. Saying that **Onesimus is a faithful and beloved brother** makes his conversion very clear.
- D. Notice the respect and responsibility that Paul gives this runaway slave.

10 Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him),

- A. It appears that **Aristarchus** was also in prison in Rome. We do not know why. N. T. Wright suggests that statement may be metaphorical, but finally settles on the literal meaning.
- B. **Aristarchus** had a heart tuned to the churches and wanted to be remembered to the church at Colosse. It is only in this passage that we learn that **Aristarchus** is Jewish, based on the statement of verse 11. It is reported that **Aristarchus** is a Roman name.
- C. John **Mark** may have had an unsatisfactory reputation among the churches that Paul dealt with. Paul wanted to assure the church on how to handle his case if he shows up among them. Sometimes churches can continue a controversy that the original disputants have long ago cleared up.
- D. Fences had been mended with **Mark** over the issue of Acts 13:13 and 15:39. While Paul had, in a sense, been wronged by **Mark's** departure

from the evangelistic team at a critical moment, yet Paul forgave any wrong connected with the event.

- E. **Mark** is almost universally accepted as the writer of the Gospel of **Mark** and a companion of Peter. Both men had similar episodes in their walk with the Lord. Peter had denied Christ at a crucial time and **Mark** had refused to go to the work of preaching at a crucial time.
- F. The consensus among the translators is that **Mark** was a **cousin of Barnabas**.

11 and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.

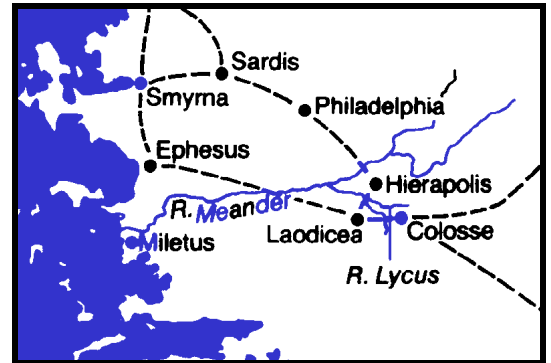
- A. The alternate name of **Justus** distinguishes this Jewish man from the Lord.
- B. The **kingdom** was present. Most translators say **for the kingdom** rather than **unto the kingdom**. In 1:13, Paul made it plain that the **kingdom** is the church.
- C. Encouragement and **comfort** are needed for even the most self-contained. We might think that Paul would be surrounded by well-wishers and supporters, but that was not the case.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

- A. **Epaphras** had originally preached the message among them. Colossians 1:7-8.
- B. While **Epaphras** had other responsibilities at this moment and was not coming with this letter, yet he **prayed** for them in a dedicated way, asking the Lord for their continued development.
- C. A favorite Greek sport was wrestling and that is the word Paul uses. It is translated **striving** in this translation. A large amount of Greek art of the time, including pottery, depicts wrestling.

13 For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.

- A. This may refer to Epaphras laboring in prayer or it may simply say that he was a great zeal for them.
- B. His interest extended to **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis** as well. They were neighboring churches in neighboring communities.



14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.

- A. Since verse 11 specifies the Jewish men, it follows that **Luke** is not included and is therefore a Gentile. This is the commonly held view.
- B. It is clear that **Luke** is a **physician**, both from his choice of words and general sensitivity to humans. See the book by W. E. Hobart entitled *The Medical Language of Luke*. Mr. Hobart makes a good case for **Luke** being a **physician**, as Paul here states.
- C. **Luke** was the first medical missionary. God used him as a **physician** for Paul.
- D. It is widely accepted that **Luke** is the author of both the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Book of Acts*. He was a traveling companion of Paul beginning in Acts 16 and continuing to the end of *Acts*. Indeed, he was **loved** by Paul. This is a valuable comment in the light of their many weeks of traveling together over land and sea.
- E. Some have thought that **Luke** was once a ship's doctor because of his familiarity with seafaring in Acts 27 and 28. If we exclude the book of Hebrews, **Luke** penned more words of the New Testament literature than Paul.
- F. Demas is mentioned here in a positive way. Later, he "went back to the world." 2 Timothy 4:10. The Lord has an excellent security system for his saints, but we have to stay on God's property.



15 Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house.

- A. A house church is identified. Ladies owned property and provided hospitality. Romans 16:5; Philemon 2.
- B. Experts disagree on whether **Nymphas** is male or female. Fortunately, it is not an important point.
- C. What is clear is that a **church** met in a **house**. The **church** did not have the same limitation as the synagogue where 10 men had to be available before an organization could be set up. Jesus has said that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you.” Matthew 18:20.
- D. There is no record to indicate that any of the churches of the time had their own buildings. Some religious groups have pressed this incidental as part of the New Testament model, but without success. The so-called *Two by Twos* is a case in point.

16 And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea.

- A. The letter was to be publicly **read**. This enables even the illiterate in the church to hear the written Word. This practice should be restored in the church meetings of today, as well as at bedsides and other appropriate places. While nearly everyone in the United States can read words, some are practical illiterates. They cannot make sense of the text.
- B. It is beyond question that Paul considered his letter to be authoritative. This is another claim for inspiration.
- C. While it is not stated, yet the text makes room for copying the **epistle** rather than sending the original onward. This would be the beginning of multiple manuscripts of the sacred text. Such a practice would ensure the integrity of the original. A lone original could be tampered with, but the multiplication of copies assures that this will not happen.



- D. Unlike the Old Testament that was copied only by dedicated professionals, the New Testament books were copied by anyone who could do it.
- E. There has been much debate over the **epistle from Laodicea**, some arguing that it was one written *by* them. However, now it is widely accepted that Paul had written *to Laodicea*. The question is what was in the letter?
- F. Lightfoot argues that it was really the circular letter that we call *Ephesians*. It may not have had a greeting originally and does not name any individuals such as in the verses we are reading here. N.T. Wright accepts this argument.
- G. There was a fraudulent Epistle to Laodicea circulating at an early time. There is a detailed discussion on the Internet at:
<http://reluctant-messenger.com/epistle-laodiceans.htm> See also:
<http://www.studylight.org/dic/ebd/view.cgi?number=T2239>

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

- A. **Archippus** needed some exhortation. He had taken on some task that was languishing.
- B. He has lots of counterparts in the modern church who have let their **ministries** lapse.

18 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

- A. This is evidence that the epistle is genuine. Paul takes the pen from the secretary and writes two sentences. It is similar to us signing a letter that has been typewritten. It adds a bit of both authenticity and humanity.
- B. Paul did not want to be out-of-sight-out-of-mind to them. After all, he is in **bonds**, chains, on behalf of all Gentile believers.
- C. The letter has opened with **grace** as a greeting in verse two and closes with the same reminder of God's matchless **grace**.



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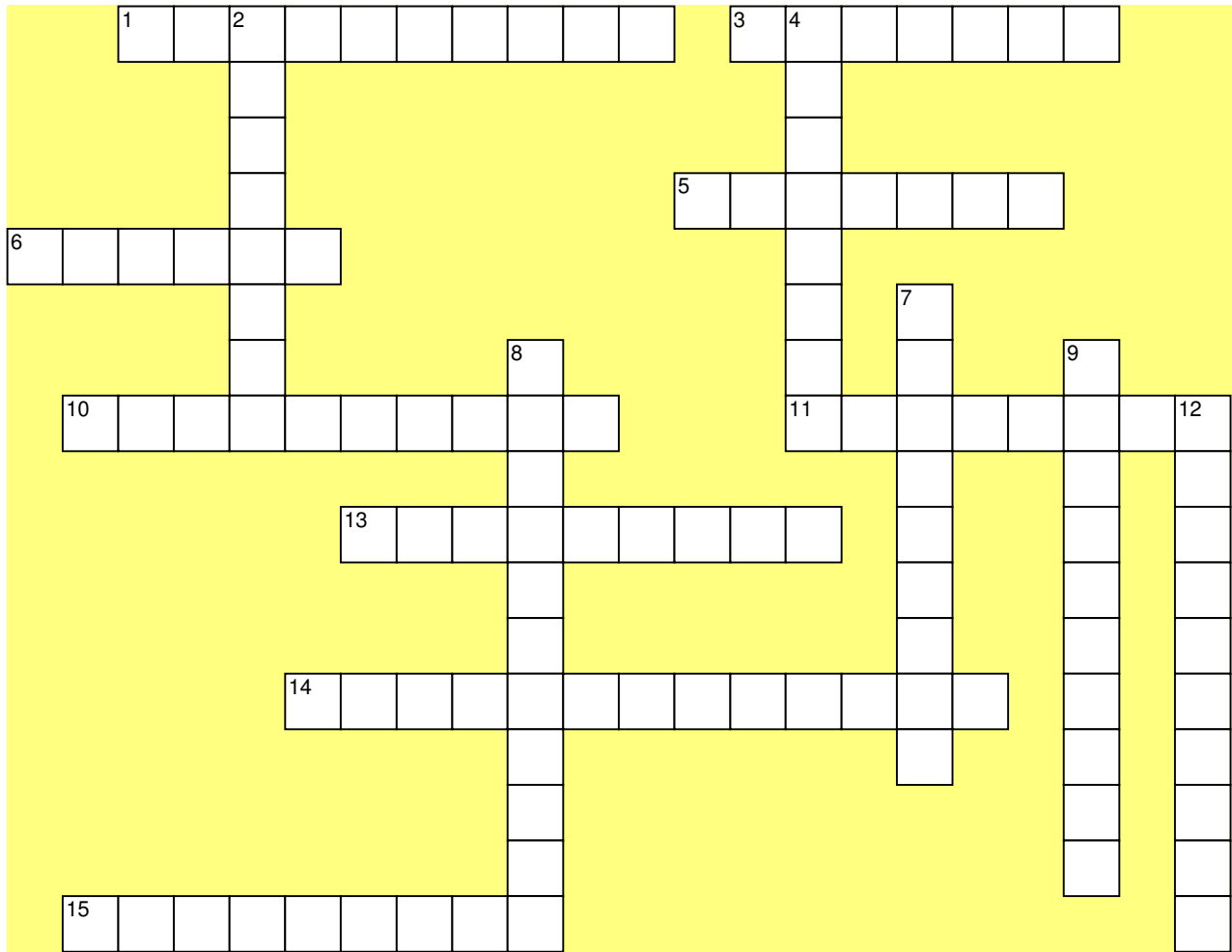
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Colossians Chapter 4

By Charles Dailey 2006



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 1 Prayer and thanksgiving are ____.
- 3 Important function of church leaders.
- 5 Also servants.
- 6 Relation of Mark to Barnabas.
- 10 We must pray for them.
- 11 Must make careful preparation.
- 13 Luke's profession.
- 14 Can be opportunities.
- 15 Needed exhortation.

DOWN

- 2 Had high recommendations from Paul.
- 4 Slave of Philemon.
- 7 Favorite Greek sport.
- 8 Had a heart tuned to the churches.
- 9 Some churches cannot define it.
- 12 Paul prayed that he might speak _____.