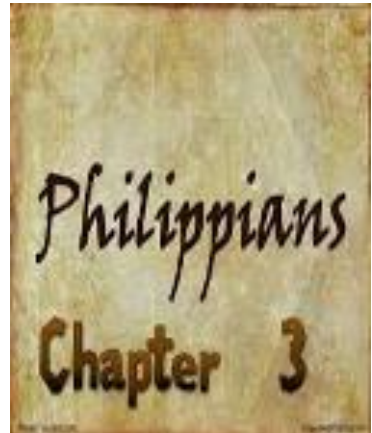


In the Cause of Christ (Phil 1:13)



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Ephesians

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Philippians

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Ephesians

Mystery Revealed

Paul begins Ephesians by telling them he was "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (Eph 1:1). He told the Colossians "of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God" (Col 1:25). According to the Greek word diakonos for minister Paul was a servant. To be preaching meant that he was proclaiming the gospel. Jesus told Ananias, "'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel'" (Ac 9:15). Christ also "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Php 2:8) and became "a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers" (Ro 15:8). However, Jesus was also prophetically "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Eccl 1:1). "The Preacher also taught the people knowledge" (12:9). Jesus was "called Rabbi by men" (Mt 23:7) "which translated means Teacher" (Jn 1:38).

Paul said "I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2Ti 1:11). It was in accordance with "the hope of the gospel . . . of which I, Paul, was made a minister" (Col 1:23) and according to the "promise of Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister" (Eph 3:6-7). However it was by "the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" (:7) in that "this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles" (:8). He told the Galatians that

God "had set me apart even from my mother's womb [and] called me through His grace, [and] was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:15-16). Then he continues saying, "the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man . . . nor was [I] taught it, but received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (:11-12). This is when he "went away to Arabia" (:18) ["Mount Sinai [is] in Arabia" (4:25)] and after staying in "Damascus . . . three years later I went up to Jerusalem" (:17-18). The original twelve apostles had also been with Jesus for three years.

Paul reminded the Ephesians that "you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (Eph 3:2). It is a mystery because it had never been revealed. "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages through our glory" (1Co 2:7). But when you read Paul's doctrine it isn't necessarily easy to understand because even Peter said "in all his letters, speaking in them of these things . . . [there] are some things hard to understand" (2Pe 3:16). Its as if you need a revelation to understand the revelation. Doctrine can be just words, plus "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually appraised (1Co 2:14). Fortunately "we have received . . . the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (:12). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18). Furthermore, he prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (:17). He also

provides hope citing "by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (3:4). It comes by "Him who is able to establish you . . . according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past" (Ro 16:25). We are "attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:2-3).

Revelation by Grace

Salvation comes from God founded in "being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Eph 2:4). "God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:7). "The Law came . . . but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (:20). "Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). God operates through mercy, love and grace. Grace is supernatural enablement beyond the capacity of man. It is a divine plan "according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him" (1:9). It was "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (2:7). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (1:7). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (2:8). "It is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). It is by "His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6). "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7). "Of His

fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16).

There is "the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ" (Eph 3:11). "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (1:11). There are "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (:18) composed of "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (:19). This takes the form of "the power that works within us" (3:20) according to "the working of the strength of His might" (1:19). With Paul it was the "grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" (3:7). Consequently "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (1:5). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2Pe 1:3). "He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:20) and has now "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (2:6). He "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3).

Called and Chosen

God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). I was told by a member of another religion that this was possible because "those whom He foreknew" (Ro 8:29) existed as spirit babies when God created everything in the beginning. Can you build an entire doctrine based on presumption regarding detail that isn't even spelled out in scripture? The meaning of

scripture must not be ambiguous, and relevant scriptures must reinforce each other and not be just selectively applied. To "foreknow" is the Greek word *proginosko* meaning to know beforehand ahead of time or to foreordain. A sense of time is involved which means the rules aren't changed just because God lives in eternity and can define things any way he wants. "He chose us in Him" (Eph 1:4). To choose is the Greek word *eklegomai* meaning to choose, pick or select designating that there is a definite choice made. In the Old Testament God said it was "Israel, whom I have chosen" (Isa 44:1). Being chosen is described by the Hebrew word *bahar* meaning to choose or select based upon a certain desire or preference to appoint to a position. He chose Jacob over Esau "so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand" (Ro 9:11). That choice is described by the Greek word *ekloge* meaning that a selection or election has taken place. It is predicated on "God's purpose" (:11). God "knows all things" (1Jn 3:20) and "His understanding is infinite" (Ps 147:5). He points out, "I am the first and I am the last" (Isa 44:6) and "I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning" (46:9-10). God chose Israel when "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gal 3:6). Consequently the selection of Jacob was "not because of works but because of Him who calls" (Ro 9:11). Calling is expressed by the Greek word *kaleo* meaning to call, invite or summon. God did not rig the process to accept only those who he knew would agree to his plan. "These whom He predestined, He also called" (8:30) which is an invitation whereby "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). It was based upon "the grace

of God [that] He might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). This is accomplished "In Him" (Eph 1:13).

You respond to the call "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (:13). "He predestined, He also called" (Ro 8:30). To predestine is expressed by the Greek word *proorizo* meaning to decide beforehand.. That predestination occurs before the calling which demonstrates it is "in Him" (Eph 1:13). The key is that "having also believed you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (:13). We are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled by His blood" (1Pe 1:1-2). "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works out all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). "He predestinated us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (:5). "He also predestinated to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29). "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Ac 13:48). To appoint is the Greek word *tasso* which is to determine, establish or assign. Peter therefore warns, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (1Pe 1:10-11).

Inheritance

Paul's letter to the Romans is recognized as foundational theology. Ephesians has a similar status undoubtedly due to "the surpassing greatness of the

revelations" (2Co 12:7). They are matched by the "surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph 1:19). The revelations according to the Greek word hyperbole are superior or beyond measure which means that to some people might sound excessively religious or impractical. But to those who "having also believed" (:13) and have "faith in the Lord Jesus" (:15) the doctrine is valuable to "know what is the hope of His calling" (:18). "We have obtained an inheritance having been predestined . . . to the end that we . . . would be to the praise of His glory" (:11-12). It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). Then the Holy Spirit "is given as a pledge (NASB), deposit guaranteeing (NIV), earnest (KJV), guarantee (RSV) of our inheritance" (:14). "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (:7). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (1Co 7:23). We "were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13) "with a view to the redemption . . . to the praise of His glory" (:14). "For the Lord will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance" (Ps 94:14). An inheritance happens after "the death of the one who made" (Heb 9:16) the covenant. We are to know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:18) who are "God's own possession" (:14). You are redeemed at salvation so "the redemption of the purchased possession" (:14) occurs in the future kingdom. We are "awaiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Ro 8:23). "The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (:19).

"When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son . . . so that He might redeem those who were under

the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). Redemption pertains to purchasing slaves or prisoners to set them free as when we "were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world" (:3). In the ancient world adoption was a legal process where a person was brought into a family and placed as a son with the same privileges as a biological child. "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (:7). An heir is "owner of everything" (:1). "You have received a spirit of adoption as sons" (Ro 8:15) and "because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father!'" (Gal 4:6) whereby we know "we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). We are also "fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (:17). "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (:18). "The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (:21).

Body of Christ

Paul uses the metaphor of "the whole [human] body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part" (Eph 4:16). Holistically "the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body" (1Co 12:12). There is "no division in the body" (:25). The body is a unit but "God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (:18). It is a figure of speech because "we are members of His body" (Eph

5:30) since "you are Christ's body" (1Co 12:27). "We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Ro 12:5) so "that the members may have the same care for one another" (1Co 12:25). "Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Eph 5:23) "which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (1:23). He is the "head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). God "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22). "The church is subject to Christ" (5:24). "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all" (1Co 15:28).

It was to "reconcile them both in one body through the cross" (Eph 1:16) whereby "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks . . . we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1Co 12:13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (Eph 4:15). We must hold "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" (Col 2:19). "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1Co 11:3). "The equipping of the saints [is] for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12) so "the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21) "into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (:22).

It is in context of "a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times" (1:10) "not only in this age but also in the one to come" (:21). It is in terms of "the

summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (:10). "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). He is seated "in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph 1:21). "He put all things . . . under His feet" (:22) and has authority "over all things to the church" (:22). It is "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (:23).

Fullness of Christ

God reconciled us "as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Christ "loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (5:25). Therefore "through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (2:18). We are now "fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (:19). As a result "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Php 2:9). It is so that Christ "will come to have first place in everything" (Col 1:8) and "for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (:19). "All things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (:16-17). Christ "ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). There is "one Spirit . . . one Lord . . . one God and Father of all who is over all and through all in all" (:4-6).

Hoping in Christ is "to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12) and through suffering "we may also be glorified with Him" (Ro 8:17) which "is to be revealed in us" (:18). It is grace "which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6) "to make you stand in the presence of His glory" (Jude 24). He "called us by His own glory"

(2Pe 1:3) and "of His fullness we have all received" (Jn 1:16). It comes through "the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3) and Paul prayed that "the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and a revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17). Then "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:11).

God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2Pe 1:3). Consequently Paul asked them "to walk in a manner worthy of [your] calling" (Eph 4:1) also stating "you were called in one hope of your calling" (:4). Furthermore, be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (:3) "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man" (:13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even "Christ" (:15) to "the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (:13). We "also are being built together into a dwelling of God" (2:22) which is "the building up of the body of Christ" (4:12) by "being fitted together" (2:21). "To each one of us grace was given" (4:7) "until we all attain to the unity of the faith" (:13).

Unity of Spirit

Paul instructed to "put on the new self who is being renewed" (Col 3:10). Also, "put on a [new] heart" (:12) and "put on love" (:14). To put something on applies figuratively to clothes which are basically a covering. The new self entails "a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (:11) in terms of "the likeness of God [which] has been created in the

righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:24). The new self walks "in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called" (:1) with the goal of preserving "the unity of the Spirit" (:3). This is accomplished "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love" (:2). Also, "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other" (Col 3:12-13). Paul instructs "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). In addition, "put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col 3:14). The bond of unity and peace is in and of the Spirit which is why you must put on the grace (divine enablement via unmerited favor) to make it possible.

Love is the "perfect" (Col 3:14) way to "preserve" (Eph 4:3) unity. It comes from "a heart of compassion [and] kindness" (Col 3:12). You have compassion when you sympathize with another person's misfortunes and are disposed to help and be merciful and gracious. It is in the context of "when you encounter various trials" (Ja 1:2) which requires "patience" (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12). Then this "testing of your faith produces endurance" (Ja 1:3) which has "its perfect result" (:4). Endurance is based upon having patience which is the ability to persevere through trouble without complaining or losing control. Patience is centered on an internal attitude that is a spiritual matter. You may have to submit to circumstances for a while and tolerate problems while calmly waiting for the situation to resolve itself. It is important to show "tolerance for one another in love" (Eph 4:2). Others have beliefs and ways of doing things. To put up with them without getting provoked is

forebearance. You can recognize and respect these differences without having to compromise your own standards. To achieve unity you will also need humility (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12). Spiritually it is dependent on acknowledging God's grace as opposed to being prideful and self-assertive. Human shortcomings must be confronted which hopefully would lead a person to being more modest and unassuming and less pretentious and obtrusive. Gentleness (Eph 4:2, Col 3:12) and kindness (:12) are also required. To be gentle is to be mild-mannered such that you don't easily lose your temper. It is to be soft-hearted and not given to offensive communication. Kindness is being in the habit of being friendly, generous and affectionate. "Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (:13).

Equipping of Saints

God only gave "some" (Eph 4:11) five-fold gifts. How does a person know he has one of those gifts? Jesus told Ananias that Paul was "a chosen instrument of Mine" (Ac 9:15). I was taking some Bible courses on-line from a school, and the instruction in one course was that their denomination wouldn't recognize anyone being in the ministry until they had earned a degree, which assumes that they had followed through to get their credentials. According to this denomination in Paul's case it wouldn't matter if "the stewardship of God's grace . . . was given me" (Eph 3:2), or "the stewardship from God [was] bestowed on me" (Col 1:25), or "I was appointed a preacher" (2Ti 1:11) and "this grace was given to preach" (Eph 3:8), since his statement that he "was made a minister" (:7) on its own wouldn't have been recognized

by the denomination.

God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Eph 4:12). Some say the first two have fulfilled their purpose in founding the church and these people are called cessationists. Nonetheless, anyone in these five categories would have the qualification to train the saints. But does that mean that you couldn't understand anything yourself by studying the Bible on your own? I've heard some pastors say to their congregations that it was their exclusive responsibility to provide Bible instruction. In one church I attended it was made clear that only the pastor could officially counsel the flock. One day I saw an attendee downtown and bought him a cup of coffee and piece of pie and shot a game of pool with him. He was mentally challenged and should have made an appointment with the pastor. One day he saw me driving down the street and almost ran in front of the car. Unfortunately a month or so later he jumped off a bridge downtown into a waterfall and killed himself. Its like the veterans who died while waiting for their VA hospital appointments. In one sermon that church's pastor quoted a scripture saying that anyone who didn't cooperate with his recommendations would be disobedient. I operated the bookstore and checked out a great number of tapes on that sermon and soon almost half the church left. Much later I told the pastor what those people had concluded and he replied he hadn't said anything wrong. Then he died and the next pastor was requiring potential members to sign a document promising to follow his leadership. Many church splits are caused by so-called leaders trying to control the "laypeople." Once I visited churches in a

nearby town and their overseers had created a document for potential members to sign promising to seek counseling before jumping to another church.

The "work of service, [is] to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13). "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him" (:15) as a body that "grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19). It is for "building up" (Eph 4:12) so that "the whole building, [is] being fitted together [and] is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (2:21) "into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (:22).

The New Self

Who would want to be "excluded from the life of God" (Eph 4:18) and "having no hope and without God in the world" (2:12)? However, there are those who "knew God" (Ro 1:21) "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (:19) but "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (:21). There is the person who thinks he knows better "taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (Col 2:18). However, "they became futile in their speculations" (Ro 1:21). Peter told the Jews of "your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and Paul said the Gentiles walked "in the futility of their mind" (Eph 4:17). As a result of this futility "their foolish heart was darkened" (Ro 1:21) and they became "darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:18). "Having become callous" (:19) they became "excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart"

(:18). It is a conscious decision. Their speculations can be composed of deceptive "doctrine, by the trickery of men" (:14) which is why Peter warned "prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit" (1Pe 1:13). "Let no one deceive you with empty words" (Eph 4:19). They "have given themselves to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (:19). By "speaking out words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality" (2Pe 2:18). "In all this they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you" (1Pe 4:4). "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (Eph 5:11).

When they chose the wrong path they lost touch with God "because of the ignorance that is in them" (Eph 4:18) due to the "hardness of their heart" (:18). The NKJV calls it the "blindness" of their heart. However, hardness seems to imply that they have set up a barrier to truthfulness having "given themselves over" (:19). Blindness seems to be a side effect of "craftiness in deceitful scheming" (:14) "by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1Ti 4:2). The "hardness of their heart" (Eph 4:18) results in "being darkened in their understanding" (:18) producing "ignorance" (:18) which indicates they are "misguided" (Heb 5:2) because they don't "believe and know the truth" (1Ti 4:3) since they "did not receive the love of the truth" (2Th 2:10). They are "separate from Christ" (Eph 2:12) and walk "according to the course of this world . . . [via] the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). "Do not

be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance" (1Pe 1:14). "Lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit" (Eph 4:22). "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (:23). "Laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbor" (:25). "You were formerly in darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord" (5:8) consisting "of all goodness and righteousness and truth" (:9). "The Spirit is truth" (1Jn 5:6) and "truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21). "The new self . . . has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (:24).

Philippians

Blameless

Paul writes again that "it is a safeguard for you" (Php 3:1). He reiterates that as a practicing Jew "as to the righteousness which is in the Law, [he was] found blameless" (:6). Nowadays most would consider that faultless. After all "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; [and he] walked with God" (Ge 6:9). Also, Job "was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1). However, Paul said "I count all [these] things to be loss . . . and count them as rubbish" (Php 3:8). He regarded his accomplishments as forfeited or written off in an accounting sense since a loss is looked at as a debt and a gain as a credit. He said that "those things I have counted as loss" (:7) since, when taking an inventory, you count the occurrences which "things were gain to me" (:7). The gain was "righteousness which was in the Law" (:6) and "of my own derived from the Law" (:9) which, in accounting

language, is a positive value. However, if "counted as loss" (:7) it has no value.

In a fiduciary sense it is like capital gains and losses. Paul uses it in banking vernacular saying "if he . . . owes you anything, charge that to my account" (Phm 1:18} even though he probably didn't have a savings account anywhere. Furthermore they "sent a gift more than once (Php 4:16) and Paul sought "the profit which increases to your account" (:17). When you place a deposit in an account you determine the proper amount setting the balance to increase by that amount imputing it as a gain. It is a "profit" (:17) which connotes money. "The kings came and fought . . . they took no plunder [gain] in silver" (Ju 5:19). However, a man "finds wisdom and . . . gains understanding [and] . . . her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold" (Pr 3:13-14).

Reckoned

"Is there any . . . profit [gain] if you make your ways perfect?" (Job 22:3). Nowadays you are to "prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach" (Php 2:15). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2Co 5:19). "This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Ro 3:25). "He has now reconciled you . . . in order to present you before Him holy and blameless" (Col 1:22). It is "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Co 5:21). "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account" (Ro

4:8). "The Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning" (Isa 2:12). "The day that is coming will set them ablaze' says the Lord of hosts" (Mal 4:1). "They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1Pe 4:5). It is as certain as paying your income tax. You will be accepted "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col 1:23).

What is it to be accountable? Darius appointed "120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge" (Da 6:1) and "over them three commissioners . . . [that they] might be accountable to them" (:2). Accountable means responsible for what they were put in charge of. In the church "they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account" (Heb 13:17). "Let them do this . . . [or else it] would be unprofitable for you" (:18). Paul said "I count" (Php 3:8), he "counted" (:7), and cited God's "not counting" (2Co 5:19). In the concordance you see that the root word is logos which has many applications. It is a statement of a certain truth in the form of a message, speech, documenting, or testimony which establishes authenticity.

Credited

The NASB translates it "considered worthy" (Lk 20:35) whereas the KJV says "accounted as." Romans 8:36 is translated by the NASB as "considered" whereas the KJV presents "accounted as." The concordance cites the Greek word logizomai based on logos as the process of considering or taking something into account. It can entail thinking about, reasoning, or numbering. There can be an aspect of considering, supposing or proposing.

The result is to conclude, acknowledge, impute, or credit with. Paul counts his loss "for the sake of Christ" (Php 3:7). He also counts it "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ" (:8). It is based on "faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (:9). "Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness" (Ro 4:9). "In it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (1:17). It is for "the man whom God credits righteousness apart from works" (4:6). The NASB translates it as "credited" whereas the KJV as "reckoned." However they are both the same Greek word for "counted" as *logizomai*. But the Romans quote from Genesis says "then he believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (15:6). The NASB changes the word to "reckoned." That is the Hebrew word *chashab* which the concordance says means to account, think, calculate, determine or regard. God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness and credited it to his account.

Knowing God

Paul gave up "all things" (:8) "for the sake of Christ" (:7). For something's sake is to ultimately pursue a certain purpose. Paul's end result is "Christ" (:7) He counts as "loss" (:7,8) "for the sake of" (:7) and "in view of" (:8) specific reasons and explains he wants to elaborate by saying "more than that" (:8). Verses 8-11 are one sentence in the Greek composed of a construction which logically, carefully fits many pieces together. The goal is "knowing Christ" (:8) that he could "know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings: (:10). The purpose is "being

conformed to His death in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (:10-11).

When Paul treats his previous endeavors as a loss he is not belittling them. But he is juxtaposing the truth with its opposite for emphasis. "I delight in . . . the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). Also he is renouncing what is false and "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (Php 3:13). He highlights the better way as "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (:8). It is personal knowledge of Christ and what he represents. It is "resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself" (Col 2:2). How do you know this? In a worldly way you could vicariously share someone else's experience using sympathy and your imagination. In an existential way you could exercise your freedom to decide how to respond not really understanding it all. But "if anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God he is known by Him" (1Co 8:2-3). Knowing God is a mutual relationship. Knowing is "all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). You are "enlightened . . . and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 6:4) and "have tasted . . . the powers of the age to come" (:5). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3). Paul sought to be "found in Him having the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Php 3:9). "They will not teach again . . . saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me" (Jer 31:34).

Christ in You

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-unless you indeed fail the test?" (2Co 13:5). The preposition "in" denotes a location or place with certain defined boundaries. It could also mean you agree with some proposed truth and take it further by identifying with it. Therefore if "Christ is in you" (:5) you are of "those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). It is not designating a physical place per se. But it depends on "if you are in the faith" (1Co 13:5). When a person "believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Ro 4:5). Paul concludes "I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test" (2Co 13:6).

How do you conduct this self-test? You must know what it means to be "in the faith" (:5). When you believed "you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:13-14). You are now "in Him" (:13) which is your position. "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Co 3:16). "If Christ is in you" (Ro 8:10) you are "in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (:9). Therefore "God abides in him" (1Jn 4:15). To abide means to stay or remain in a permanent relationship. "We know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit" (4:13). It is "this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).

It is "He who raised Jesus from the dead . . . who indwells you" (Ro 8:11). Christ "was declared the Son of

God with power by the resurrection of the dead" (1:4). "After listening to the message of truth" (Eph 1:13) "you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus" (4:21). "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning . . . [and] you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1Jn 2:24). But unless the "Spirit of God dwells in you . . . [for] if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Ro 8:9). "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15).

Abide in Him

Your "spirit is alive because of righteousness" (:10). You receive "life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit" (:11). It is the "free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23). "Because of His great love with which He loved us . . . [he] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Eph 1:4-5). "He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Col 1:13). "'He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life'" (Jn 3:36). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free" (Ro 8:2). We now "do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (:4). Walking is a step-by-step process and we are being "led by the Spirit of God" (:14). One person explains this as being "practically actuated" and another says it is "progressive sanctification." "The Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should" (:26). Also, "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (:16). The process proceeds as "if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live"

(:13). "The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (:6). You are "raised up with Christ" (Col 3:1) and "your life is hidden with Christ in God" (:3). Therefore "keep seeking the things above" (:1) and "'seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you'" (Mt 6:33). Furthermore, "when Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). "We eagerly wait for a Savior . . . who will transform the body of our humble state into the body of His glory" (Php 3:20-21). "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be . . . [for] when He appears, we shall be like Him" (1Jn 3:2).

"You know Him who has been from the beginning . . . [because] the word of God abides in you" (:14). We "abide in the teaching of Christ" (2Jn 1:9). Jesus expressed that "'My words abide in you'" (Jn 15:7) and that you "'abide in Me, and I in you'" (:4). "Just as it has taught you, you abide in Him" (1Jn 2:27). He has "given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true" (5:20). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you . . . [and] His anointing teaches you about all things" (1Jn 2:27). "His seed abides in him . . . because he is born of God" (3:9). "In Him we live and move and exist" (Ac 17:28). "In Him you have been made complete" (Col 2:10). The anointing is from the "'Spirit of truth . . . [and] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you'" (Jn 14:17). It is "for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever" (2Jn 11:2). "The one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (1:9). They had "no need for anyone to teach you" (1Jn 2:27).

Suffering

Paul wanted to know "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Php 3:10). This was initiated when Christ told Ananias that Saul was "a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name . . . [and] I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Ac 9:15-16). Paul later said, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Col 1:24). He saw it as "death working in us, but life in you" (2Co 4:12). "We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (:11). "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation . . . which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer" (2Co 1:6). "Why are we also in danger every hour?" (1Co 15:30). "I affirm . . . I die daily" (:31). It is more than a lifestyle or mindset. It is an existence "being conformed to His death" (Php 3:10).

The "afflictions of Christ" (Col 1:24) happened when "Christ suffered for us in the flesh" (1Pe 4:1) "for sins" (3:18). "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb 5:8). It was appropriate "in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (2:10). "As you are partakers of the sufferings" (2Co 1:7) then "when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1Pe 4:13). We are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him" (Ro 8:17). "The same sufferings are experienced by your brethren

in the world" (2Pe 5:9) so "after you have suffered a while . . . [Christ] will strengthen and settle you" (:10).

Power of Resurrection

One of the things Paul wanted to know was "the power of His resurrection" (Php 3:10). He didn't say he wanted to know just about the resurrection itself but was interested in the "power" of it. It was "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Ro 8:11). "God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power" (1Co 6:14). Also, the power of the resurrection has ramifications. According to the concordance, the Greek word for it is *dunamis*, meaning a violent, strong force or mighty work. It is derived from *dunamai* meaning the ability or possibility of exerting it is available. In terms of the resurrection the "dead are raised up" (Mt 11:5). The concordance cites it with the Greek word *egeiro* saying it is as one who is in a sitting or lying position being woken from sleep, disease or death. It is to lift, raise, or stand up from obscurity or non-existence. "The Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you'" (Ro 9:17).

"By a man also came resurrection from the dead" (1Co 15:21). "Then comes the end . . . when He has abolished all authority and power" (:24). These two words must be distinguished. "He who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will . . . has decided this in his own heart" (1Co 7:37 NASB). Another translation instead says he "has power" (:37 KJV). Power is the actual strength or force. The concordance defines authority with the Greek word

exousia meaning the privilege, capacity, or jurisdiction to do something. "There is no authority except from God" (Ro 13:1). "Does not the potter have a right over the clay" (Ro 9:21 NASB). The KJV says rather that he has "the power" (:21). Paul had authority to carry out his responsibilities. "If others share the right over you, do we not more?" (1Co 9:12). There is what "Christ has accomplished through [Paul] in the power of signs and wonders" (Ro 15:18). "Others share the right" (1Co 9:12) to make a "living from the gospel" (:14). But Paul said "we did not use this right" (:12) because he did "offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel" (:18).

Raised in Power

"All is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory . . . [and] raised in power" (1Co 15:42). The "power is . . . strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph 1:19,20). Christ acknowledged he had "accomplished the work" (Jn 17:4) and now "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3). "Christ is the power of God" (1Co 1:24). The "kingdom of God does not consist of words but in power" (4:20)). Christ "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph 3:20). His primary purpose was to redeem and reconcile mankind to himself. "To us who are being saved [the cross] is the power of God" (1Co 1:18) and the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). Plus we are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation" (1Pe 1:5). Paul said it was a "gift of God's grace which was given to me according

to the working of His power" (Eph 3:7). Furthermore "our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction" (1Th 1:5).

There is a long term aspect of the "working of His power" (Eph 3:7) "that works within us" (:20). God "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Php 3:21). It involves "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pe 1:5) having "made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:16). Without salvation a person would be "away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2Th 1:9). We are to "be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" (Php 1:10). Paul's desire was to "confirm you to the end" (1Co 1:8) and he was "convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2Ti 1:12).

Strengthened with Power

At the macro level Christ "upholds all things" (Heb 1:3). But what about the micro level in an individual's life? He is "able to establish you" (Ro 16:25). "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (2Co 4:7). We are "weak in Him, yet we live with Him because of the power of God" (13:4). Paul said he would "rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (12:9). It is "in accordance with the working of the strength of His might" (Eph 1:19).

How is the power manifested in a person's everyday life? "God will . . . fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power" (2Th 1:11). It is "by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:5). It is so "faith would rest on the power of God" (1Co 2:5) and to "everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16). "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him" (2Pe 1:3). Paul prayed that "the God of Hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Ro 15:13). "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (1Ti 1:7). He desired for them to be "strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience" (Col 1:11). Therefore "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God" (Eph 6:10-11).

Achieve the Goal

Paul wished to "attain to the resurrection of the dead" (Php 3:11). Some students believe that there are two resurrections. However Paul said he had not "already attained it" (:12) but he did "press on toward the goal" (:14). The context is the key to keep from getting off track. He mentions attaining "it" (:12) and equates it with to "become perfect" (:12). The resurrection and perfection are equivalent but different. His intention was to "press on" (:12) that he could reach the goal, but realized he had not "laid hold of it yet" (:13). Resurrection (:11) and perfection (:12) were cited as goals. In addition, there is that "I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (:12).

Jesus told Ananias that Paul was chosen "to bear My name before the Gentiles" (Ac 9:15). But Paul expressed he did "not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet" (:13). That context seems to encompass more than just his assignment to the Gentiles. His desire was to be "reaching forward to what lies ahead" (:13). You can't reach for something you don't see. He wanted to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (:14). It was necessary to "press on" (:12) because "as many as are perfect, have this attitude" (:15). He had not "already become perfect" (:12) but was with "as many as are perfect" (:15). To walk uprightly is to "keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" (:16). If you stray "God will reveal that also to you" (:15). The big picture is that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior" (:20). The "prize" (:14) is the "resurrection" (:11) when God "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (:21). "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day" (1Ti 4:8). "In a race all run . . . [so] run in such a way that you may win" (1Co 9:24).

Colossians

Colossian Quandary

Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians while imprisoned in Rome. He had traveled through the area on his third missionary journey on the way to Ephesus. Colossae was on the Lycus River on a busy east-west trade route, but the nearby towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis were more commercially successful. It was in

western Asia Minor when in 670-546 BC it was known as the Kingdom of Lydia. Phrygia occupied the eastern part of the region. In 223-187 BC thousands of Jews were transported there from Mesopotamia and Babylon. On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem some of the participants were from "Phrygia and Pamphylia" (Ac 2:10). Paul heard about the church from Epaphras who is said to have planted the churches in that area after he had studied the gospel under Paul in Ephesus. In his epistle to Philemon Paul writes "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you" (Phm 32). He cites that they had learned the gospel "from Epaphras, our fellow bond servant" (Col 1:7). You don't just travel from Colossae to Rome on a long weekend visit. Epaphras was an official co-minister with Paul who said he was "a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf" (:7). It seems that Epaphras needed Paul's advice in an important matter and shared having "informed us of your love in the Spirit" (:8). Consequently Paul replied, "since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (:9). His epistle deals with the region of Phrygia because he instructed "when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans" (4:16). The church was not a large physical edifice of those "who are in Laodicea . . . [but rather like] Nympha and the church that is in her house" (:15). It was a significant presence because, in Ephesus, Paul taught daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years "so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Ac 19:10). In Thessalonica they complained, "'These men who have upset the world have come here also'" (17:6).

Paul told the Colossians that the gospel had come to them "just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing" (Col 1:6).

Incipient Deception

The Phrygians were skilled and sophisticated. There was a Hellenistic culture due to Greek occupation and the Greek language was commonly used. Naturally Greek thought, ideas and philosophy would be understood with its metaphysical tendencies. The church there was composed primarily of Gentiles but there was a sizable Jewish community. There were other so-called religions and the Romans were known to tolerate just about every one and incorporate them into their culture. There was idolatry from pagan practices cultivated from their original sources in Babylon. Greeks, in particular, encouraged pursuing knowledge as Paul discovered that "Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness" (1Co 1:22-23). In a down-to-earth way they believed in the worship of nature because, to them, it was the source of life. However, they were also dualistic because they believed that matter and spirit were co-eternal. In the spiritual sense they had their gods who they believed controlled the universe. On the metaphysical level they believed that spirit (represented by God) was good, but that matter, having been only created, was evil. At least they had a suspicion that they were spiritual beings. But since humanity had been in rebellion against God, their spiritual sensitivities could have been just as much from the imaginations of their mind. Ecstatic reveries were practiced to precipitate spiritual experience. They held ceremonies to placate the

gods and Paul said "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons" (1Co 10:20). "For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false" (2Th 2:11).

Some church people may have gotten the idea that it would be more effective to mix the gospel with what the pagan Gentiles already believed so that Christianity would appear more palatable. When Paul was in Athens "some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him" (Ac 17:18). They observed, "'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities'-because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (:18) and said, "'You are bringing strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean'" (:20). They "used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new" (:21). But apparently Epaphras believed that merging Greek thought with Christianity was a threat to the church. That's why he went all the way to Rome to get answers from Paul. A warning came that "wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (1Ti 4:3). Peter said, "There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies" (2Pe 2:1). Paul expressed this concern when he replied in his epistle to the Colossians that "no one may delude you with persuasive argument" (Col 2:4 NASB) "lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (:4 NKJV). Furthermore, "see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men" (:8 NASB) "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (:8 NKJV). But combining ideas from different beliefs would become

syncretistic. That is why this threat has been dubbed heretical teaching from within that church. It may have "the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion" (Col 2:23) but they are only the "commandments and teachings of men" (:22) resulting in being "inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" (:18).

Heretical Doctrine

To some, Paul's purpose for the Colossian letter was to confront the false teachers and refute the heresy. They see it as a diabolical plan to undermine the church starting with Gnosticism combined with Judaism. Paul lists a number of faults as though they are FAQs but there is no systematic description of the doctrinal errors. Paul seems to answer problems the church had which had been brought up by Epaphras, but their cause is not clear and an explanation must come from clues in the statements Paul made. This must come from studying the content and context of verses 2:8-3:4. Most religions attempt to address the heavenly or eternal. But they can't prove what their senses can't detect so they implement "the elementary principles of the world" (Col 2:8,20) in their schemes. However, Paul is saying the Colossian heretics are shortsighted in their approach by ignoring that it is "according to Christ" (:8). We have "died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world" (:20). If the heresies were circulating in the church they were either ignorant of the church's teaching, or didn't understand it, or felt they would supplement the basics by their own self-effort. Man has a propensity to do things his own way. But "when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death" (Jas 1:15).

Zechariah prophesied, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zec 4:6).

Paul cites the pride, earthiness, and ineffectiveness of this asceticism. What value is "self-abasement and severe treatment of the body" (Col 2:23) or to "submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'" (:20-21). These have their roots in Jewish legalism. Paul warns "let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement" (:18). Were Judaizers active in the church? Paul advised "let on one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival" (:16). Jewish society developed their own traditions by interpreting the Old Testament in a certain way which led to an attitude of separatism and intellectual exclusiveness being "inflated without cause: (:18). However, Paul stated "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all" (3:11) and "the substance belongs to Christ" (2:17). We "have died to the basic principles of the world" (:20) and are to "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2), practice the law of love (Jas 2:8), and follow "the law of liberty" (:12). Anything less would be just "the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion" (:23).

Colossian Heresy

"The nations were separated on the earth after the flood" (Ge 10:32). Then they said to one another, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name" (11:4). A similar thing happened in Colossae where some would get involved "in the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen . . . [with] his fleshly mind" (Col 2:18). By taking a stand a

person tried to make a name for himself. The Colossians could have been exposed to rudimentary gnostic philosophy. Just like they built the Tower of Babel they began constructing a philosophy based on presumption. Some religions do this too by choosing scripture verses out of context and piecing their own puzzle together using "brick for stone, and . . . tar for mortar" (Ge 11:3). The correct method comes by Christ who is the head of the church which "grows with a growth which is from God" (Col 2:19).

Paul wouldn't have mentioned that there were those who were "delighting in . . . the worship of angels" (:18) just for a couple of people. "Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head" (:18-19 NIV). They believed that there were hierarchies of angelic levels (eons) you would traverse towards God and that secret knowledge (gnosis) was necessary for passage. How could anyone even believe that since we know that it is "Christ Himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (:2-3). But there are New Age beliefs that there are spirit guides that lead you through your journey. The main problem with the gnostic's mystical and esoteric beliefs was that they explained Jesus as an emanation (eon) like YHWH who was at a lower level because, to them, YHWH created the kosmos which was composed of matter and not spirit. Even though their thinking would affirm Jesus' deity it denied that Jesus was fully man who is "the one mediator also between God and men" (1Ti 2:5) because "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (Jn 1:14).

There is a modern religion that believes that man is just like God because "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). God confirmed to Moses that he "'has appeared to you'" (Ex 4:5) even though Moses "was afraid to look at God" (3:6). Later God told him "'no man can see Me and live!'" (33:20) but then said "'I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen'" (:23). Their religion is based on their interpretation citing Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is unseen" (Heb 11:27). They disregard that God is "the invisible God" (Col 1:15), that "no one has beheld God at any time" (1Jn 4:12) and that God "dwells in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen or can see" (1Ti 6:16). It would take deception to engage in "the worship of the angels" (Col 2:18) even though "'you shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only'" (Mt 4:10). They even have their own customized version of salvation.

Supremacy of Christ

The false teachings may have been more than just one person promulgating the doctrine and it may have spread to a group of churches. Everyone has heard of church splits where doctrine divides. Paul warned, "I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument" (Col 2:4). He continues saying, "See to it [beware] that no one takes you captive [kidnaps, seduces, enslaves]" (:8). The new ideas are speculative and hypothetical and have the "appearance of wisdom" (:23) but are only "empty deception" (:8). Paul warned Timothy to "guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing argument of what is falsely called 'knowledge'-which

some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (1Ti 6:20-21). "Let no one deceive you through empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph 5:6). If someone "takes you captive" (Col 2:8) it is "with all the deception of wickedness" (2Th 2:10) with "a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged" (:11-12). "It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14).

The false teachers were mixing philosophy with Christianity. However, Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ac 4:8) told them "'there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved'" (:12). Those teachers were misled when they combined human ideas with scripture creating a universalism or syncretism and diluted the supremacy of Christ. Paul set them straight because he "was made a minister . . . [for] preaching the word of God" since he had "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). You could say that those false teachers were confused because it had been "the mystery which has been hidden from past ages" (Col 1:26) and therefore the opportunity had been presented to "speak forth the mystery of Christ" (4:3) to enlighten them. The mystery is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27) and by their understanding this it would result "in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself" (2:2).

Who God Is

The gnostics explained existence as beginning at the lowest, evil level of matter and proceeding upward

through emanations towards God who is spirit and good and inhabits the highest, heavenly sphere. If you followed these teachers it would undermine what the Bible says about God. At creation God said, "Let Us make man in Our image" (Ge 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). The name is Elohim which represents the triune God. Firstly, "the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (1:2), and furthermore, Paul uses the greeting in his letters of, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3; Gal 1:3). The gnostics said that YHWH created the universe which is composed of matter so he would have to be a lower emanation because he identified with matter. However, YHWH is composed of the four consonants which make up the divine name (i.e. the Hebrew language doesn't include vowels so the readers supply them when they read). Then they decided to be extra-careful not to misuse God's name because, "'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain" (Ex 20:7). To protect against mistakes the scribes put the vowels from "Adonai" (Lord) beside the consonants to remind them to say Lord instead. Then a Latinized form pronounced Jehovah was created from it which was actually not a real word at all. The real pronunciation of YHWH was lost over time but scholars believe it was probably pronounced Yahweh. Moses asked God who he should say sent him and God replied, "'I am who I am"' (Ex 3:14). Also, God said to say to Israel that he was "'The Lord, the God of your fathers"' (:15). "'This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations"' (:15). "Even the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord is His name" (Hos 12:5).

The gnostics had differing interpretations of who Jesus was. Some said he was equal with God so others then pointed out that he couldn't therefore have appeared in a human body. Then others countered that he just seemed human but was really spirit. However, if he was not incarnate then his sacrifice would have been in vain. Also, if he was not completely divine then he wouldn't have qualified as being sinless. "Although He existed in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant . . . [and] humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Php 2:6-8). After he was resurrected he identified himself to John as "the Alpha and Omega . . . who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8) and again as "the first and the last, who was dead and has come to life" (2:8). In addition, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1:3). "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). Jesus told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). "From now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (:17).

Image of God

Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians in prison where Epaphras had told him about the church which Paul had never visited. He writes them of the "faith and love [they have] that spring up from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven" (Col 1:5). He cites that they had heard the gospel "and understood God's grace in all its truth" (:6). They had heard it in "all" its truth and were not verging on backsliding. He prayed that they would

receive "all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (:9). Commentators say that a letter contains certain ideas or themes that possess a flow of thought filling the content contextually so as to present an argument in a logical way. Some might say that his only purpose was to counter the false teaching that was threatening the church. But he was not just addressing questions as with the Corinthians saying, "Now about food sacrificed to idols" (1Co 8:1). Creation and redemption are the two main themes of the Bible and Paul focused on them to build up the Colossians. It would be important to be "strengthened with all power . . . for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience" (Col 1:11). He knew they would accept and approve what was presented and therefore receive any instruction regarding their situation. He proceeds saying, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). Some would say Paul is applying certain less-used words such as "firstborn" and "fullness" which the Gnostics also utilized that would refute their doctrine by defining them in the correct way.

Paul begins by changing direction somewhat from explaining the kingdom of Christ to a poetic description of the nature of the kingdom in Colossians 1:15-20. Many see this as a lyrical and linguistic change from incorporating a church hymn which Christians would have been familiar with. It also seems likely to some that Paul would have inserted his own theology into the hymn at certain points. One of the main arguments of this epistle is the deity of Christ. Paul says, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) which focuses on his relationship with the Father. The word "image" in Greek is 'eikon', and at first glance, it means that he reflects

God as a representative and exactly symbolizes him. The same word is used in that "God created man in his own image" (Ge 1:27). The gospel is "the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2Co 4:4). On a deeper level, being an image means that Christ manifests the actual presence of the Father. Hebrews uses the Greek term 'charakter' as "the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1:3). This must be comprehended at the spiritual level, and because he is "the invisible God" (Col 1:15), it requires Jesus who "made him known" (Jn 1:18). It is possible because he is "God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side" (:18). Jesus asked Philip, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9) even though "no one has ever seen God" (1:18). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Ro 1:20). We know that Jesus "existed in the form of God" (Php 2:6) but then took human form "being made in the likeness of men" (:7). He prayed, "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (Jn 17:5). In our case we are to "put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Col 3:10). This is at the spiritual level. "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1Sa 16:7). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18). We are to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29) and

"transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (1Co 3:18).

Firstborn before Creation

Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). An average person would probably parse the word into "first" and "born." In the past it referred primarily to the first offspring of a man or animal. The word itself was used mostly in Biblical writing and occurs 130 times in the Old Testament. Births in a family in succession would be seen in the context of time. Some interested in the Bible have taken this to mean that Jesus was God's first creation. The Gnostics took it a step further teaching that created beings were emanations of God and Jesus was in the next-to-highest aeon under God. Arius promulgated this long ago in Egypt, and even today, certain sectarian groups adhere to this idea. But that is not what Paul means by this scripture. Jewish society had a concept of the birthright where the first son had an honored position in the family. He had certain rights and privileges. Psalm 89:27 says, "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth." With the birthright he was the heir and also had the responsibility of managing the family's affairs. Jesus was "appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). "He has inherited a more excellent name than they" (:4). "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" (Php 2:9). The term developed beyond the use as primogeniture (physical birth) into the concept of priority and sovereignty. It became a metaphor, as with, he is "the firstborn over all creation" (Col 1:15) which distinguishes him from creation itself and gives him a preeminent position as

opposed to a subsidiary role. He is the first begotten Son closely united with God, antecedent to the whole, collective creation. There is an inferential reference to rank in dignity temporally, but Christ conditions the creation and is independent of it. The main point is the Son's permanent relationship with the Father which denotes deity and lays the groundwork for creation itself. "In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son . . . through whom also He made the world" (Heb 1:2).

Before all Things

Paul begins the section saying that Jesus is the image of God and the firstborn of creation (Col 1:15). Is he deliberately confronting the false teachers? Perhaps he thought it was just a good time to share the "stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you" (Eph 3:2). After all, it had been "revealed to His holy apostles" (:5) and he stated "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery" (:2). He had received "the surpassing greatness of the revelations" (2Co 12:7). He therefore continued saying, "For by Him all things are created" (Col 1:16). "For" denotes a conclusion as if he had said "because." "All things" are specified which designates supremacy which counters the Gnostic's arguments that hierarchies have restrictions of authority. "All things" is repeated seven times to reinforce importance. These revelations had to be to the "prophets in the Spirit" (Eph 2:5) because no man could personally figure this out on his own. "The world was made through Him" (Jn 1:10) and "all things came into being through Him" (:3). The Gnostics might have been able to rationalize this somehow. However, Paul's revelation is all-encompassing explaining "there is but one God, the

Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him" (1Co 8:6). Also, there is "Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him" (:6). Maybe determining when this happened is the key. Paul points out that "He is before all things" (Col 1:17) which speaks of his preexistence. "He was in the beginning with God" (Jn 1:2) and had "equality with God" (Php 2:6). He prayed, "'Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was'" (Jn 17:5). "'You loved Me before the foundation of the world'" (:24).

Here Paul focuses on Jesus as evidenced by the pronouns "He", "Him" and "Himself" occurring fifteen times in six verses. Paul concludes that the purpose is "so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything" (Col 1:18). He sums it up saying "for Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Ro 11:36). This parallels the verse "by Him all things were created . . . [and] all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Col 1:16). It is obvious that Jesus is not just an aeon as the Gnostics hypothesized. One interpreter explains "by Him" as literally "in Him" which connotes systematically planning the endeavor. "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (:19). The phrase "through Him" appears three times in verses 16 and 20. It means that he is the agent of creation because he has the power and ability to carry it out as it is he "through whom are all things" (Heb 2:10). Finally, everything has been created "for Him" (Col 1:16), or literally, "unto Him." It is he "for whom are all things" (Heb 2:10). It was God's purpose "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). It was

prophesied, "Behold I come" (Ps 40:7) because "I delight to do Thy will, O my God" (:8). Then "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11). It was prophesied, "Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps 8:6). Finally, "the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all" (1Co 15:28).

All Subjected to Him

"All things were created" (Col 1:16) "by Him" (:16) and "through Him" (:16). "He is before all things" (:17). "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn 1:1). "Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (:3). This preexistence gives Christ a supremacy or priority and a prominent position in creation. Creation is conditional upon and rests in him. The context of "all things" does not limit creation to only certain areas because it encompasses everything "both in the heavens and on the earth" (Col 1:16). Since they "have been created" (:16) they remain so. "In Him all things hold together" (:17). It was not just based upon a "first cause" and everything evolved afterwards but that Christ sustains creation and directs development on a permanent basis. Paul described creation "both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible" (:15). Here he uses a literary style called a chiasm which juxtaposes twofold categories to define a relationship. The outside members receive emphasis, so heaven/invisible is highest, followed by earth/visible. Heaven is defined as a place above the earth and where spirits reside (and Christians by way of appropriation). In the immediate context, heaven and earth are set apart

but combined for purposes of affinity. Paul elaborates saying that "thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities" (:16) have been created. It seems that the reference is to classes of angelic beings since Colossians 2:8-3:4 discusses the subject. It could be that he is answering the hypothesis regarding eons by the Gnostics.

Many scriptures mention together the words rulers, authorities, and power. "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). "Against" is mentioned five times. However, God "raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph 1:20-21). "He is the head over all rule and authority" (Col 2:10). "He had disarmed the rulers and authorities" (:15) and "is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" (1Pe 3:22). "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22). Paul was "convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities . . . nor any created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Ro 8:38-39). "The manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). Then the end comes "when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power" (1Co 15:24).

Firstborn

Paul's hymn in Colossians 1:15-20 has two parts. The first pertains to who Christ is saying, "He is the image of the invisible God" (:15). The second deals with his purpose saying, "He is also head of the body, the church" (:18). The two halves are tied together with his being "the firstborn of all creation" (:15) and "the firstborn from the dead" (:18). We have seen that "firstborn" doesn't have a time connotation per se but rather means that Christ has prominent position and primacy in authority "so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (:18). He is "the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5). He is "the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4). However, there is a time orientation because "He is before all things" (:17) and "He is the beginning" (:18). At a point in time he "made peace through the blood of His cross" (:20). The Greek text places the thoughts "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (:18) side by side in an appositional relationship so that the second restates or interprets the first. Paul stated that "we have testified of God that He raised up Christ" (1Co 15:15) and that "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits" (:20). In Israel's grain harvest some grains ripened first before the main harvest and they could be gathered representing the firstfruits. The Father "brings the firstborn into the world" (Heb 1:6) so that there would be those "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He could be the firstborn among many brethren" (Ro 8:29). They would become the "church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven . . . [who are] the spirits of the righteous made perfect"

(Heb 12:23). He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

Jesus initiated an age of redemption by his sacrifice at the cross and, as such, "He is the beginning" (Col 1:18). It required a new direction "from the dead" (:18) because the status quo was that through Adam "came death" (1Co 15:21) and "in Adam all die" (:22). But fortunately we are "buried with Him through baptism into death" (Ro 6:4) and by Christ "came the resurrection of the dead" (1Co 15:21). "When we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). Because the Holy Spirit "dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies" (Ro 8:11). Everyone who "believes in Him may have everlasting life" (Jn 6:40) and we "should walk in newness of life" (Ro 6:4). There is "neither Greek nor Jew" (Col 3:11), "slave nor free . . . [or] male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28) and "Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11). "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits" (1Co 15:20) and "by Man also came the resurrection of the dead" (:21) so that "all shall be made alive" (:22). But is anything postponed? It says it happens "afterward [to] those who are Christ's at His coming" (:23). Jesus said, "I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:40) and "in a moment . . . at the last trumpet . . . the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1Co 15:52). Some of these dead are those who had been killed (Rev 20:4) and "the rest of the dead did not live again" (:4) for a while. It is the "first resurrection" (:5). There are also those "who are alive until the coming of the Lord" (1Th 4:15) who "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" (:17). In

this context Christ's resurrection is a promise of a new life and a sign of things to come.

His Body the Church

Colossians 1:15-17 establishes that Christ is infinite (beginning and end) and sovereign (absolute rule over all). You might say that verse 18 makes a transition from the natural to the spiritual by saying "He is also the head of the body, the church." The body is Paul's metaphor saying that as the brain directs and controls the functions of the body so Christ has authority over the operation of his church. The Greek word "ekklesia" defines the church as his called out ones. "You have come to Mount Zion . . . to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven . . . and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (Heb 12:22-23). Paul explained to the Ephesians that they were initially "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise" (Eph 2:12). God had originally chosen Israel saying, "You are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Dt 7:6). But Israel decided not to follow God. However, "as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Ro 11:28-29). Consequently, Christ turned to the Gentiles and "is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal life" (Heb 9:15). Peter cites that the Gentiles therefore became "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1Pe 2:9). Paul explained that "in Him also we have obtained an

inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). You are "called according to His purpose" (Ro 8:28). He "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace" (2Ti 1:9).

"He is also head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18), "He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Eph 5:23). He has the supremacy because its members owe allegiance since he has redeemed them. "The church is subject to Christ" (:24). God "put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church" (:22). This is reflected in the wording of Colossians 1:15-20 and Ephesians 1:21-23: "all things"(6); "He is"(4); "through Him"(3); "in Him"(2); "all the fullness"(2); "all creation", "all rule", "His", "He Himself", "by Him", "for Him" (1). "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1Co 11:3). The church is the precursor of Christ's ultimate kingdom. It is "that in Himself He might make the two into one new man" (Eph 2:15) to "reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross" (:16). We become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (:19) "in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord" (:21).

God "calls you into His kingdom and glory" (1Th 2:12) and it is he "through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son" (1Co 1:9). Paul told them that God has "called you by the grace of Christ" (Gal 1:6) and had "set me apart from birth and called me through His grace" (:15). "Whom He predestined, these He also

called" (Ro 8:30) and "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). You are "those who have been chosen of God" (Col 3:12). "There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope whom you were called" (Eph 4:1). "From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit" (2Th 2:13). He chose you "through belief in the truth" (:13) and "called you to this through our gospel" (:14). There are actually two terms here of "calling" and "choosing" as Peter advises to "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). "From the standpoint of the gospel [calling] they are enemies . . . but from the standpoint of God's choice [choosing] they are beloved" (Ro 11:28). "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). Paul said, "I entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling" (Eph 4:1) of God "who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling" (2Ti 1:9). "As long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (2Pe 1:10) if you "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body" (Col 3:15). "In this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (2Pe 1:11).