



ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
LESSONS
STANDARD EDITION

Philippians & Colossians

His Mind in You



JUL AUG SEP 1994

The day He didn't come

Millennial Fever

by George Knight

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Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



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Introduction

Philippians and Colossians

This quarter's lessons are based on Paul's letters to the churches at Philippi and Colossae, which were written during his first imprisonment in Rome (about A.D. 61-63). Although the Epistle to the Colossians was probably written before the Epistle to the Philippians, we will study the books in the order in which they appear in the New Testament.

While at Troas on his second missionary journey, Paul received the divine commission to take the gospel to Macedonia (Acts 16:8-19). The first Macedonian city he visited was Philippi (Acts 16:11, 12). On the Sabbath day, meeting by the riverside, Paul and his companions led Lydia and her household to Christ. Thus the Philippian church was launched. (See Acts 16:13-15.) In the same city, the Lord used Paul as the instrument to deliver a slave girl from demon possession. Accused by her Philippian employers, Paul and Silas were thrust into prison. A midnight earthquake gave them the opportunity to witness to the jailer, who was baptized along with his family. Although Paul and Silas were forced to leave the city, the foundation had been laid for a flourishing Philippian church. (See Acts 16:16-40.)

More than 10 years later, during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus, one of their leaders, to supply Paul's needs with gifts and ministry (Phil. 2:25; 4:18). The Philippian Christians sent messages of concern to Rome because they had heard of Epaphroditus' illness. When he had recovered, Paul sent him home to Philippi with a letter of encouragement and instruction for the church.

Paul expresses gratitude for the faithfulness of the Philippian Christians, but wishes them to exalt Christ as supreme in their lives so that they will grow constantly toward true humility, love, unity, purity, and spiritual blamelessness. Just as his witness in Rome was being blessed with success, so would be theirs.

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

- I. Introduction (Phil. 1:1-11).
 - A. Salutation and thanksgivings (Phil. 1:1-8).
 - B. Prayer for their spiritual growth (Phil. 1:9-11).
- II. Paul's circumstances and feelings (Phil. 1:12-26).
 - A. His evangelistic success in prison (Phil. 1:12-17).
 - B. He rejoices in life with Christ (Phil. 1:18-26).

- III. Christ is the model for the individual and the church (Phil. 1:27-2:16).
- IV. Paul's plans for the future (Phil. 2:17-30).
- V. Warnings and counsel—glory in Christ (Phil. 3:1-4:9).
- VII. Christ, our strength, supplies all our needs (Phil. 4:10-20).
- VI. Conclusion (Phil. 4:21-23).

Evidently the Colossian church was raised up by Epaphras (Col. 1:7), not by Paul. Some questions remain regarding whether Paul ever visited Colossae. (See Col. 2:1.) But, undoubtedly, because of his evangelistic endeavors in the Roman province of Asia, he was the real spiritual father of the Colossian Christians. For three years, Ephesus was the home base of Paul's preaching ministry (Acts 20:31). During this time "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10, RSV). If Paul did not visit Colossae in this period, the gospel was taken there by those who heard his preaching in Ephesus. Epaphras might well have been one of these. (See Col. 4:12, 13.)

While visiting Rome, Epaphras gave Paul information regarding the spiritual needs of the Colossian Christians (Col. 1:8; compare Philemon 23). Despite their strong faith, they were exposed to Jewish and pagan legalism that threatened to retard their spiritual growth. Paul exalts Christ as the source of forgiveness and the means of growth toward spiritual maturity. The epistles to Colossae, Ephesus, and Philemon were delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus, who had been in Rome with Paul. (See Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21, 22; Philemon 10-12.)

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

- I. Introduction (Col. 1:1-14).
 - A. Salutation and thanksgiving (Col. 1:1-8).
 - B. Apostolic prayer (Col. 1:9-14).
- II. Christian doctrine (Col. 1:15-2:23).
 - A. The person and work of Christ (Col. 1:15-23).
 - B. The ministry of Paul (Col. 1:24-29).
 - C. Paul's concern for the believers (Col. 2:1-6).
 - D. The sufficiency of Christ (Col. 2:8-15).
 - E. Legalistic ritual condemned (Col. 2:16-23).
- III. The Christian life (Col. 3:1-4:6).
 - A. The true focus of the Christian life (Col. 3:1-4).
 - B. The transformed life (Col. 3:5-17).
 - C. The Christian family (Col. 3:18-4:1).
 - D. Prayer (Col. 4:2-4).
 - E. Conduct (Col. 4:5, 6).
- IV. Conclusion (Col. 4:7-18).

How Will Christ Finish What He Began?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 1:1-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

KEY THOUGHT: Paul introduces his letter to the Philippians by rejoicing in their faith and love and focusing on the spiritual goals that Christ upholds to Christians. Christ supplies the power to reach these goals.

PAUL'S HOPES WERE CENTERED ON CHRIST. Languishing in a Roman prison, Paul could have been discouraged about the future of the infant church. Imperial Rome was making the life of Christians desperately difficult. Smooth-talking, highly persuasive critics of Paul's teaching were confusing congregations throughout the Mediterranean basin regarding faith and works and the purpose of the gospel.

But Paul took heart. The best evidence that he had preached the genuine gospel rested in the changed lives of converts in places like Philippi and Colossae and their clear understanding regarding the purpose of the gospel.

Though his earthly future was always uncertain, Paul knew beyond all reasonable doubt that the gospel seed Christ had planted in the Philippians' hearts would bear fruit that would stand the test of time and eternity.

SAINTS HAVE GRACE AND PEACE (Phil. 1:1, 2, 7).

How does Paul identify himself and Timothy? Phil. 1:1.

The Greek word translated "servants" means "slaves." In antiquity people became slaves: (1) by birth; (2) by being made prisoners of war; (3) because of debt. In similar ways human beings become slaves to sin. We were born with fallen natures (Ps. 51:5; 58:3); Satan makes us prisoners of war when we try to fight him in our own strength (Rom. 7:18); we are also enslaved by the debt of our sins (Rom. 6:23). Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, releases us from the slavery of sin when we become His willing slaves. (See Acts 4:12; John 8:36.) Paul and Timothy had discovered that slavery to Christ is genuine freedom!

Paul specifically identifies his target audience in Philippi: saints, bishops (or presbyters, ministers; see Titus 1:5-7), and deacons. In Scripture, saints are believers in Christ (Acts 9:32; Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13). The Greek word means "holy ones." They are holy because, by faith, they receive the gift of Christ's holiness. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, "to those who have been sanctified [made holy] in Christ Jesus, called saints [holy ones]" (1 Cor. 1:2, literal translation). Because of their divisions, the Corinthians were losing the experience that the Philippians were continuing to enjoy.

What do the following passages teach regarding the source and meaning of grace and peace? Phil. 1:2, 7; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8; Rom. 5:1.

The Bible uses the word *grace* to mean God's favor to those who do not merit it. God's grace is His loving concern manifest by His active intervention in human hearts, enabling spiritual victory and service for others. For the Corinthians, Paul thanked God "because of the *grace* of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge . . . so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift" (1 Cor. 1:4-7, RSV).

Christ's exalted spiritual goals for us are always accompanied by the promise of power (grace). Those who by faith receive Christ's grace have incomparable peace of mind. Their sins are forgiven, and they have the power to live for Christ. (See John 14:27; Rom. 8:6; Phil. 4:7.)

"IT'S NOT OVER TILL IT'S OVER" (Phil. 1:3-6).

An Olympic swimmer encouraged his teammate, who was not doing well in the qualifying rounds, by saying, "It's not over till it's over." The teammate improved her performance and went on to win a medal. As they view their poor performance, Christians sometimes despair of winning the incorruptible crown of which Paul wrote (1 Cor. 9:25). But Paul reminds us that there is hope. Every day we can be winners in Christ. He "always causeth us to triumph" because He triumphed (2 Cor. 2:14).

Why was Paul especially thankful for the Philippian Christians? Phil. 1:3-5; 4:14-18.

What may we be assured that Christ will continually do for us? Phil. 1:6.

Not only does Christ launch spiritual athletes on a career of spiritual achievement, He also continually provides the necessary motivation and power for them to grow in godliness. (See 2 Peter 1:3, 4; 3:18.) Philippians 1:6 may be translated: "Because I have been convinced (and therefore I am now certain) of this very fact—that the One who began in you a good work will go on pushing it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." —Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (Gretna, La.: Pelican, 1983), vol. 14, p. 391.

"Perform" (Phil. 1:6, KJV) may be better translated "perfect," "fulfill its purpose," or "bring to completion" (RSV). Paul refers elsewhere to this same work promised by Jesus for those who have confidence in Him. (See 2 Cor. 7:1.)

The good work that will be perfected or completed (Phil. 1:6), the holiness made perfect (2 Cor. 7:1), is possible, not because of the Christian's willpower, but because God "is able" (2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24) to perform what He has promised (2 Cor. 6:16-18). Even though we must continually *choose* fellowship with Christ, our confidence rests in God's promises to pardon and perform, not in our own merit or self-discipline.

"God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 76.

GROWTH PRECEDES VICTORY (Phil. 1:8, 9).

What example of loving concern for others did Paul provide us? Phil. 1:8.

The New International Version translates the text: "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." How many of us can honestly claim that our longing for the salvation of others is a genuine reflection of the love of Christ?

"How little do we enter into sympathy with Christ on that which should be the strongest bond of union between us and Him—compassion for depraved, guilty, suffering souls, dead in trespasses and sins! The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin. Many think that they are representing the justice of God, while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 163.

How did Paul outline the course and goal of growth in holiness? Phil. 1:9.

The Greek word used here for "love" signifies more than family or friendship love, or love between the sexes. Paul is urging the development of that love which Jesus alone has revealed, love that is unselfish and not necessarily directed to those deserving appreciation or those who will reciprocate. Such love is truly a principle and not merely an emotion; it desires the other's good and offers service for another though it may be refused. Such love requires personal sacrifice. (See John 15:13.)

"Knowledge" refers to knowledge that is learned through personal experience; thus it is more than theoretical knowledge. Many know about Jesus; fewer know Him as a personal Saviour and a daily companion. Only a truly loving person is growing in the practical knowledge of Christian experience.

"Judgment" (Phil. 1:9, KJV) or "discernment" (RSV) emphasizes that truly loving persons, growing in their friendship with Christ, will develop skill in perceiving truth and duty even as eyeglasses are needed to restore clear eyesight to the visually impaired. (See John 7:17.) The purpose of redemption is to restore what sin has marred, to turn self-centered rebels into loving, grateful sons and daughters of God. Their eyes are open more and more to the truth, and they see sin for what it is. (See 1 Thess. 3:12-4:3.)

THE GOAL IS ATTAINABLE (Phil. 1:10).

How does Paul describe the end product of spiritual growth?
Phil. 1:10.

"So that you may be able to discern what is best" (NIV). Paul's point is that Christians are to use their knowledge and insight (judgment, verse 9), imparted by the Holy Spirit, to make intelligent, informed, and morally right choices.

"Sincere" (KJV) is from a Greek word that describes something that has passed the test of sunlight. The same Greek word may be translated "pure" (2 Peter 3:1). Inward purity results in blameless behavior. In ancient times a potter could mend a cracked piece of pottery with wax and paint over it to conceal the flaw. The unsuspecting buyer might leave the pot in the sun and the wax would melt, revealing the fault. To be sincere means to be "tested by the sun" and found to be without wax.

"And may be pure and *blameless* until the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10, NIV). The Greek word translated "without offence" (KJV) means "undamaged," "blameless." The word is used only three times in the New Testament. In his trial before Felix, Paul testified: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience *void of offence* toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). Paul instructed the Corinthians: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no *offense* to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, 32, RSV). Paul's desire for the Philippians was that they would grow spiritually to the point at which they would have habitual victory over sin, that they would be blameless in relation to both God and humanity.

What counsel given elsewhere in the New Testament relates to Paul's instruction to the Philippians? Eph. 4:13; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; Rev. 14:5.

Satan "is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' 2 Corinthians 12:9."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

THE REWARD FOR SEEKERS (Phil. 1:11).

What does Paul mean when he says that the goal of the Christian is to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11)? Compare the following passages that mention righteousness or its fruits.

Matt. 5:6 _____

2 Cor. 5:21 _____

Gal. 5:22, 23 _____

Col. 1:10 _____

To be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11, NIV) we must be filled with righteousness itself. Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). His presence in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is righteousness within. (See John 14:18.) Those who seek for the presence of Christ in their lives, who thus "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), will be filled with the Holy Spirit, who will produce in the life the fruit of righteousness: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV). Because their thoughts, words, and deeds are directed by those attitudes, they bear "fruit in every good work" (Col. 1:10, NIV).

How did Jesus expect His followers to "bear much fruit"? John 15:1-8. How does this counsel explain Paul's emphasis that the Christian's goal is to be unsullied and blameless and thus filled with the "fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11)?

"The object of the husbandman in the sowing of the seed and the culture of the growing plant is the production of grain [Mark 4:26-29]. . . . So the divine Husbandman looks for a harvest as the reward of His labor and sacrifice. Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

FURTHER STUDY: Read the comments on Matthew 5:6 in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 18-21. Study the effectiveness of God's grace in the heart: Rom. 5:17; 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14; Heb. 13:9; 2 Peter 3:18.

"The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God. Sinful men can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him. Then true godliness will elevate the thoughts and ennoble the life. Then the external forms of religion accord with the Christian's internal purity. . . .

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. . . .

"The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 310, 311.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What regular steps must we take to ensure that Christ's sanctifying work will go forward in our lives?
2. A young man once commented that the goal of complete spiritual blamelessness (Phil. 1:10) is not possible in this life. He said that we can never arrive at that exalted standard, even though we are to keep moving toward it. Was he right or wrong? Why do you think as you do? (See *Early Writings*, p. 71.)
3. In what ways can each of us employ the "fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11, RSV) this week in our efforts to lead others to Christ?

SUMMARY: In writing to the Philippians, Paul upheld the grace or power of Christ as the source of peace of mind and of the ability to live a blameless Christian life. We may experience the divine goal of victory over sin by constant fellowship with Jesus. The work that Jesus began in us when we first believed will go forward until His second advent and will continue throughout eternity.



Global Mission in Wales

P. R. Clee

How does a church evangelize a country where few people speak the national language, secularism and materialism pervade society, and unemployment is rampant?

Wales is a picturesque country on the western corner of the main island of Great Britain. The Welsh people are proud of their cultural heritage and nation. They want their own identity, their own national language, although most people cannot read or understand it. Children now must learn Welsh in schools, and some school districts teach all subjects in Welsh.

Strong anti-British sentiment has made evangelism difficult. Often people will not read tracts or books printed in England. And as many as three-quarters of the people have difficulty understanding the tracts printed in Welsh. Bilingual materials (English in one half, Welsh in the other) seem to have had better reception, but translation work has been frustratingly slow, since only three of 472 Welsh church members speak the language well enough to help in translation.

Church membership in Wales is concentrated on the south coast and along the English border to the east. The vast central area of Wales remains virtually untouched. In one area in central Wales, two new converts recently joined three elderly persons working to evangelize their area. They personally purchased Voice of Prophecy cards and gave them out to every home in town in preparation for evangelistic meetings. Evangelist Dalbert Elias held a short Bible Lands series there that attracted at least 22 non-Adventists nightly. Hope is high for a good baptism.

Enthusiasm for Global Mission has prompted some congregations to establish branch Sabbath Schools and "daughter" congregations—even when the parent congregation numbers only 25 to 30 members! Five new groups were established last year, three of them in previously unentered areas.



Work is slow in Wales, in part because of nationalism and materialism. Now secularism, long the bane of England, is making inroads into this formerly religious country. Pray for more workers, especially more literature evangelists to help prepare the nation for Christ's soon coming.

P. R. Clee is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Welsh Mission.

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Jesus, Our Friend



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 1:12-30.

MEMORY TEXT: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ will be exalted in the lives and work of His faithful servants, despite the opposition they are obliged to face and the persecution that, at times, they are called to endure.

LIFE WITH JESUS IS LIFE AT ITS BEST. Our lesson this week reveals more about Christ's character reflected through the apostle Paul, who could sing triumphantly while all earthly support seemed to be slipping away.

Paul was not one of a kind. He was simply a man who had discovered the greatest open secret of the universe: With Jesus as his friend, nothing distressing would last forever, and God's beautiful gifts could never be lost.

Jeremiah had learned this when all earthly support, even that of his fellow priests, not only failed but turned against him. Daniel, Joseph, Esther, and others could face their tough times with a song. Such believers had absorbed the principle of our memory text long years before Paul wrote it. And Paul lived it for years before he wrote it.

Even times of great distress may be occasions of great Christian witnessing. We can only guess how many Roman legionnaires and palace civil servants will be in the kingdom because of Paul's dedicated life.

BONDS FOR CHRIST (Phil. 1:12-14).

How did Paul relate to troubles that would have been devastating to most people? Phil. 1:12, 13.

“Palace” (verse 13, KJV) is better rendered “the praetorium,” that is, the imperial guard. Paul was no common prisoner, as the Romans soon discovered. During his imprisonment Paul enjoyed the luxury of having friends visit and the privilege of witnessing for his faith. (See Acts 28:30, 31.) Guarded by members of Nero’s own lifeguard regiment, as if he were an enormous threat to the emperor, Paul had a constantly changing audience. Evidently many came to know the courage, joy, and graciousness of this prisoner who spoke with such charm about the crucified Galilean.

Paul was a true leader. He counted the risk of leadership before he accepted the honor. When others might be bemoaning, “Poor Paul,” or “What do we do now?” or “It’s all over—we will never make it,” the signal shot out from Rome: “What has happened is serving to advance the gospel. This is the time for courage. How else would we ever have gained the attention of so many people, even Caesar’s household?”

Something extraordinary happened in that Roman prison, and it gave those tough legionnaires and thousands “in all other places,” and millions of Christians ever since, an important lesson in reality perception. In effect Paul said, “Everything that has happened must be seen for its true significance. I am in bonds because Jesus wants me where I can do the most good in telling His story.”

What effect can our patience in the midst of trial have upon others who are trying to serve Christ? Phil. 1:14.

“Paul’s patience and cheerfulness during his long and unjust imprisonment, his courage and faith, were a continual sermon. His spirit, so unlike the spirit of the world, bore witness that a power higher than that of earth was abiding with him. And by his example, Christians were impelled to greater energy as advocates of the cause from the public labors of which Paul had been withdrawn.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 464.

CHRIST, REGARDLESS (Phil. 1:15-18).

Describe the two kinds of minister to whom the churches at Rome were listening. Phil. 1:15-17.

Nothing suggests that Paul was referring to Judaizers like those who plagued him in other places. (See Gal. 1:6, 7.) Apparently those who spoke "the word without fear" (Phil. 1:14) and those who preached "Christ even of envy and strife" (verse 15) were not preaching false doctrine. But Paul divided them on the basis of motive: goodwill motivated by love on one hand, and envy and rivalry motivated by selfish ambition on the other.

Probably Paul was seen as a threat to the ministers who served the church at Rome before he arrived. How can anyone explain jealousy? Everyone knows the feeling: a relative gets recognition, a younger worker impresses the boss, a colleague gets recognition that you have been working for.

The words are appropriate. No fault can be found. But the spirit, the motive, belies the public pretense. As a Christian, how should you relate to those who work by your side, "not sincerely," only adding "affliction" to your "bonds"? Take a lesson from Paul!

When one is motivated by Christlike love wherein the chief desire is to please others and to work for their best interests, there is joy in the success of colleagues.

Rather than contend for his own rights, what was Paul's chief concern regarding his Lord? Phil. 1:18.

"Pretense" refers to those who sail under a false flag; their words may be correct, but their motives are not pure—they merely pretend.

Paul was not blind. But he was profoundly optimistic. He was so deeply committed to Christ that fellow preachers who suavely preached Christ while hurting Paul got only his support in return! No matter how they used Paul's circumstances to belittle him, Paul's only concern was Christ, regardless.

How can I test my own motives when others "add affliction to my bonds," even when they "preach Christ"? How can Paul's attitude toward false members become mine?

CHRIST MAGNIFIED (Phil. 1:19, 20).

To what evidence of Christ's intervention in his life could Paul point as reason for his confidence in the positive result of the Philippians' prayers (Phil. 1:19)? Acts 16:11-34.

Paul's early experiences in Philippi had demonstrated beyond doubt that the Holy Spirit was working through him and guarding him from demonic attacks. He had discovered through experience that because of the "Spirit of Jesus" within, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, RSV). Paul knew that the "Spirit of Jesus" would give him courage, a holy boldness, to herald the glad tidings winsomely, regardless of consequences.

How did Paul express the highest priority in his life? Phil. 1:20.

Has anyone ever stated his or her philosophy of life in clearer, more unselfish terms? Our Lord's longing desire is that every believer breathe these words until every thought and act spontaneously reflects this commitment.

"When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

Earnest expectation (Phil. 1:20, KJV) translates a Greek word found elsewhere only in Romans 8:19. This word colorfully depicts a person waiting with eager longing for that chief object of his desire to come over the horizon.

"Magnified" (KJV), more literally, "may be made great," "honored," or "glorified." After Paul and the other apostles had preached Christ, this world would never lightly dismiss the Man from Galilee. When a conceited, opinionated, proud rabbi became a fearless, humble, magnanimous Paul, the apostle of this crucified Nazarene, the whole world saw Jesus in a new light. Truly Paul made Jesus great in the minds of others.

In my daily life, how am I making Jesus great in the minds of those who know me?

"TO LIVE IS CHRIST" (Phil. 1:21-26).

In what simple terms does Paul describe the secret of genuine Christianity? How would you explain his meaning? Phil. 1:21 (compare Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20).

What was Paul's attitude to death? Did he have a death wish, even though continuing life had important challenges and advantages? Phil. 1:22-26.

Paul was torn between life and death, not because death was to be preferred, but because, after the sleep of death, his first conscious awareness would be that he was in Christ's presence.

"Those who assume that the Bible teaches a conscious state in death use Philippians 1:23 as evidence that the Christian enters into the presence of the Lord at the moment of death. However, the New Testament uses the metaphor of sleep to teach what happens at the moment of death."—George E. Rice, *A Living Hope* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1992), p. 92. (See Matt. 27:52; 28:13; Luke 22:45; John 11:11, 12; Acts 7:60; 12:6; 13:36; 1 Cor. 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 15; 2 Pet. 3:4.)

Nine of the above references to death as sleep are in the writings of Paul. The Greek verb *to depart* literally means "to loose or undo again." It means preparation for departure, not the act of departing itself. Classical Greek uses the word to refer to hoisting an anchor or breaking camp. Paul uses it to refer to death. Philippians 1:23 does not mention the lapse of time between preparation for departure (death) and the actual departure at the coming of the Lord. Nine other references in Paul teach that a period of sleep separates the two experiences.

Other events separated by time are spoken of in Scripture as if they occurred simultaneously. It could be assumed on the basis of Luke 24 that Jesus ascended to heaven on the same day He rose from the dead. But Acts 1:3 tells us that He ascended 40 days after the resurrection. Also, John 5:29 speaks of two resurrections—of life and damnation. But the text does not mention that the two resurrections will be separated by 1,000 years. (See Rev. 20.) Likewise, Paul knew that his departure in death (sleep) would be separated by time from his actually being made alive in the presence of his Lord. He was unafraid of the unconscious sleep of death because it will end by resurrection to immortality at the coming of Jesus.

LOYALTY TO CHRIST (Phil. 1:27-30).

What information would be the highest form of compensation for the weary Christian warrior in the Roman prison? Phil. 1:27.

"Conversation," KJV ("manner of life," RSV) may be translated literally as "behave as a citizen." Just as we should be worthy citizens of whatever government we are under, Paul is saying, so we should, above all else, behave as citizens of the kingdom over which Jesus is Lord.

Christianity is more than a matter of believing certain information about Jesus; genuine Christians "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7) and reflect the spirit and behavior of their Lord.

"It is God's purpose to manifest through His people the principles of His kingdom. That in life and character they may reveal these principles, He desires to separate them from the customs, habits, and practices of the world. . . . By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God revealed in His church, the world is to have a representation of His character. And when the law of God is thus exemplified in the life, even the world will recognize the superiority of those who love and fear and serve God above every other people in the world. . . . It is His purpose that by exemplifying the truth in their lives, they shall be a praise in the earth. The grace of Christ is sufficient to bring this about."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 321, 322.

Why should Christians not shrink from the suffering involved in making Christ known to others? Phil. 1:28-30.

Paul has just expressed the hope that the Philippians will "stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, RSV). This passage contains one of the clearest expressions of the Lord's desire for His church to stand collectively and unitedly in witness. They were not to wilt because of opposition (verse 28). In fact, the opposition "is a clear omen . . . of your salvation" (RSV). Suffering for Christ's sake is a special privilege (verse 29).

"Of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 225.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Psalm 69; "Caesar's Household" and the last part of "Written From Rome" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 461-468, 479-484.

Christian witness, evangelical urgency, and missionary effectiveness are vital ingredients in the great commission given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Paul's words "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27, RSV) are as pertinent today as they were 1,900 years ago.

"The world today is in crying need of a revelation of Christ Jesus in the person of His saints. God desires that His people shall stand before the world a holy people. Why?—because there is a world to be saved by the light of gospel truth; and as the message of truth that is to call men out of darkness into God's marvelous light is given by the church, the lives of its members, sanctified by the Spirit of truth, are to bear witness to the verity of the messages proclaimed."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 458.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Ask yourself: Does my manner of life have anything to do with the progress of the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14?
2. You dearly wish to witness for Christ by using your own special talents, but you are timid because you feel overshadowed by others in the church. As you pray about the problem, what possibilities come to mind?
3. You are a successful Sabbath School teacher, and you are conscious that another teacher is jealous of your influence. How does Paul's message in this week's lesson help you relate to the problem?
4. A sick, aged member of your church, who is a faithful believer, confides in you that she wishes she could die. How would you minister to her need? How do Paul's words to the Philippians help you know what to say?

SUMMARY: Paul rejoiced at the progress of the gospel in Rome, despite his imprisonment and despite the jealousy of other evangelists. He viewed life with Christ as the only life worth living. Although he saw advantages in death, he wished to live so that he could visit Philippi again and minister to the believers. He encouraged them and us to live exemplary lives and to continue witnessing for Christ.



Hungary: Changed Land, Changed Lives

by Pastor Laslo Csatami

Hungary is a land that has seen changes that no earthly power can reverse. About three years ago God gave us an amazing opportunity to preach the gospel in this formerly Communist land.

Evangelists and local pastors are working together to reach as many hungry souls as possible.

Szeged, a college town, lies near the border of Yugoslavia. About 60,000 of the town's 200,000 residents are university students. We have a small church there with 28 members. They helped distribute 1,000 posters and 45,000 invitations to the meetings. We advertised the meetings in the local newspaper.

Lectures were held in the former Communist party building. We planned two meetings a day, but more than 2,000 came, and we had seats for only 700, so we decided to hold three meetings. Some offered to pay to attend; mothers begged us to provide child care so they could listen.

One elderly lady had decided to attend with friends when she found the invitation in her mailbox. She was amazed at the warm welcome and astonishing Bible messages. She was among the first to be baptized. A schoolteacher, aware of her lack of understanding of the Bible, had begun to study the Bible with members of another faith. When she received the invitation to the meetings, she felt compelled to attend. "The lectures touched problems in my life. My family life is unhappy. I didn't have any joy in my life." Following the meetings she said, "I used to say that everything happens by chance. But now I can say that God directed the events this way. I am grateful to Him. My children grew up without hearing about God. Now I would like to speak about Him before it is too late. . . . The things I have seen and heard have strengthened me. What the Bible says is true." This teacher has since been baptized.

The door of faith is open in Hungary. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (see Matthew 9:37) in this land. We are grateful to God for inspiring our brothers and sisters in faraway lands to help evangelize in Hungary.

"Countries hitherto closed to the gospel are opening their doors, and are pleading for the word of God to be explained to them. Kings and princes are opening their long-closed gates, inviting the heralds of the cross to enter. The harvest is truly great."
—*Gospel Workers*, p. 27.

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Jesus, Our Example



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 2:1-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

KEY THOUGHT. When we honor Jesus as Lord and Saviour, copying His example of love and humility, we will enjoy unity of heart and mind with fellow believers and will be credible witnesses to gospel truth.

HAVING CHRIST'S MIND BRINGS UNITY. This week's lesson is closely connected to last week's. The Philippians apparently faced the same danger met by Christian congregations throughout history, the danger of spiritual rivalries and doctrinal divisions (Phil. 2:2, 3).

Paul knew that such strife was not born of the Spirit and could destroy the credibility of Christianity. Thus he lifted his readers in a soaring fourfold appeal (Phil. 2:1, 2) to unity, humility, helpfulness, and Christlikeness.

But he did not leave his appeal to mere exhortation. He turned to the example of Jesus as the description and goal of the Christians' behavior toward one another and toward nonchurch members. The intensity of Philippians 2, its mind-stretching, heart-tugging focus on the incredible cascade of eternal love poured out in Jesus' becoming man, is unsurpassed in religious literature.

The well-being of the universe has been jeopardized by those who from the beginning have thought that independent judgment was more important than unity and deferment to others.

UNITY OF MIND AND SPIRIT (Phil. 2:1, 2).

How may a church member know that he or she is truly experiencing a personal relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit? Phil. 2:1, 2.

Phillips paraphrases Philippians 2:1, 2: "Now if you have known anything of Christ's encouragement and of his reassuring love; if you have known something of the fellowship of his Spirit, and of compassion and deep sympathy, do make my joy complete—live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you." (Compare Phil. 1:27.)

Paul desires more than doctrinal unity. Perhaps he perceives that their missionary zeal may outrun their graciousness and selflessness as they relate to one another. Paul lifts his readers to Pisgah heights with his appeal illustrated by the life of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8).

How should church members relate to those who differ either in concepts or strategy? Compare Luke 12:51; John 7:12, 43 with 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11.

"This does not teach that we should sacrifice our principles of truth in order to be charitable; but that we should not be unkind, uncourteous, harsh, and rough to those that are around us. We should not push any away from us, but we should bind them to our hearts with the tenderest words of love. Have we not allowed serious faults to mar our characters?"—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 28, 1888.

True unity of spirit and mind grows out of genuine humility—an unselfish spirit, a cooperative, helpful disposition. Only the Holy Spirit can produce such people.

How do these principles apply when Christians relate to nonchurch members? John 17:21, 23; 1 Peter 3:15-17.

"We need to be on guard continually lest we manifest the spirit of overbearing, criticism, and condemnation. We should seek to avoid the very appearance of evil, and not reveal anything like the attributes of Satan that will dishearten and discourage those with whom we come in contact. We are to work as did Christ—to draw, to build up, not to tear down."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 222, 223.

VAINGLORY VERSUS HUMILITY (Phil. 2:3, 4).

In 1847 an Edinburgh physician, Dr. James Simpson, discovered that chloroform could be used to anesthetize people during surgery. The discovery made him famous. Years later one of his students at the University of Edinburgh asked him, "What do you consider to be the most valuable discovery of your lifetime?" Instead of referring to chloroform, Dr. Simpson replied, "My most valuable discovery was when I discovered myself a sinner and that Jesus Christ is my Saviour."

How does Paul describe the behavior of a humble person? Phil. 2:3, 4.

"Strife" may be better translated "selfish ambition," and "vainglory" as "vanity, conceit." Any group *may appear* unified. Such groups may even pass resolutions that give every indication of unity. But unity is more than public consensus. If a church, or any group, is "in full accord and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2, RSV), its members will not be prompted by selfish ambition or individually strive to be "number one." Selfish ambition and conceit secrete the acid that eventually destroys the public fabric of unity.

Humility is often interpreted as weakness or cowardice. But Christian humility does not make one less energetic, less aspiring, or less efficient in his responsibilities. Because his mind is not on *selfish* ambition, the humble person will devote more thought and energy to the Lord's work.

In what way does the humble person consider others "better" than himself (Phil. 2:3)? Is a highly educated person better than a less educated person? An experienced worker better than a novice?

Although Paul does not ask us to be blind and believe the unbelievable, he does ask us to be honest with ourselves and compassionate with others. Honesty compels us to recognize our failures and mixed motives, freeing us to recognize the rights and capabilities of others.

Experience teaches us that truly humble people don't seem to be aware of their humility. They are positive, constructive, and joyful, not fawning, negative, or passive. (See *Gospel Workers*, pp. 446, 447.)

THE MIND OF CHRIST (Phil. 2:5-7).

How may the mind of Christ become ours (Phil. 2:5)? 1 Cor. 2:9-16. Is it possible for us truly to emulate Jesus' victory over sin? 1 Peter 2:21; Rev. 3:21.

For several verses Paul has emphasized the need for unity, humility, and self-denial. Now he provides his readers with their Example and thus the reason to believe that such unity and humble self-denial is possible (Phil. 2:5). Paul does not present our Lord's example as something that God could do but human beings could not: "Let this mind be in you."

"We need not place the obedience of Christ by itself as something for which He was particularly adapted, by His particular divine nature. . . . Bear in mind that Christ's overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give, to His human nature, a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. . . . He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's Holy Law, and in this way He is our example."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 17, 1976 (Ms. 1, 1892).

In the area of character formation, New Testament writers speak with one voice—Jesus is our example. (See Matt. 11:29; John 13:12-17, 34; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 John 2:6.)

What did Christ's gracious mind-set lead Him to do? Phil. 2:6, 7.

The Revised Standard Version translates verse 6: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." During the incarnation, Christ retained His full deity, His equality with the Father (John 5:18; 8:58; 14:9). But, in the battle with sin, He was willing to lay aside the exercise of His divine powers so that He could be our example. Even so, He used His divine powers to forgive sin (Matt. 9:2), heal the sick (Matt. 9:6), and raise the dead (John 11:25, 42-44).

Though He was God, Jesus took on the disadvantages and weaknesses of humanity to demonstrate that dependent human beings may reflect the mind of God.

THE WILLING SERVANT (Phil. 2:7, 8).

Christ made "himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7, KJV). He "emptied himself" (RSV). According to Phil. 2:7, in what sense did Christ empty Himself?

The Greek translates literally, "But He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave." In becoming man, God limited Himself, emptied Himself of certain prerogatives, and placed Himself at great risk. Truly we stand before a great mystery that will occupy our thoughts and gratitude for eternity.

"As one with us, a sharer in our needs and weaknesses, He was wholly dependent upon God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

"The apostle is saying that Christ emptied Himself and took on the essential attributes of a slave. As a slave's outstanding characteristic is that of rendering unquestioning obedience, so as a man the Son undertook to render obedience to the Father (. . . Heb. 5:8)."

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh. . . . We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244.

What is the significance of Christ's self-denial and obedience? Phil. 2:8.

In verse 3 Paul appealed to the Philippians to have "lowliness of mind"—a humility that counted others better than oneself. In verse 8 Paul reverently pointed to Jesus as their example of Christian humility. Many will be obedient and persevering, up to a point. But Jesus has shown us that obedience is nothing if it does not follow through, even "unto death."

But Christ's obedience unto death was more than an example. His death was my death and yours—a death befitting those who have loved darkness rather than light. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

JESUS EXALTED AND WORSHIPED (Phil. 2:9-11).

What connection is there between Christ's example of self-denial and the fact that He is Lord of all, saints and sinners alike? Phil. 2:9-11.

At Christ's ascension "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9, NIV). What a magnificent triumph for the Son of God! The Creator of the universe, equal with the Father in authority and power, with infinite love and humility prostrated Himself before the inhabitants of heaven and earth. Human sin demanded a divine-human sacrifice. God's love and justice demanded, not only His complete restoration, but, in view of His unique condescension, unprecedented exaltation.

How delightfully appropriate! The Father had proclaimed through the prophet Isaiah: "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12, NIV).

Why is it especially fitting for all God's created beings to offer adoring worship of Jesus Christ? Phil. 2:7, 8, 10; Heb. 1:3-13.

It was entirely fitting that, in the presence of his risen Lord, Thomas should exclaim, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). It was fitting that Stephen, bruised and bleeding, should cry out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). It is equally proper that, when we bow to pray, we address Jesus directly and express our adoration and gratitude. "It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly—by abiding in Him—that we are to grow in grace."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

In Philippians 2:9-11 Paul gives us an insight into the closing scenes of the great controversy: "As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. . . . They witness the outburst of wonder, rapture, and adoration from the saved; . . . all with one voice exclaim, 'Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints,' (Revelation 15:3) and, falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 668-671.

FURTHER STUDY: Study the Bible theme of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus. (1) He stepped down from glory and became man: Matt. 1:1; Gal. 4:4; 1 John 4:2. (2) He was exalted again to His former position of glory and honor. Because of the cross, He is given even greater praise than before: John 17:5; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Eph. 1:20; Rev. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:16. Read "God With Us" and "Who Is the Greatest?" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19-26; 432-439, and "In Humility and Faith" in *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 270-276.

"In consideration of this [Christ's sacrifice], can men have one particle of exaltation? As they trace down the life and sufferings and humiliation of Christ, can they lift their proud heads as though they were to bear no trials, no shame, no humiliation? I say to the followers of Christ, Look to Calvary, and blush for shame at your self-important ideas. All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. . . . All this was for you who are striving for the supremacy—striving for human praise, for human exaltation; you who are afraid you will not receive all that deference, that respect from human minds, that you think is your due. Is this Christlike? . . . He died to make an atonement, and to become a pattern for every one who would be His disciple."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you apply Paul's counsel to "count others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3, RSV) when someone is given a church position you would like to have?
2. What did Paul mean when he wrote: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4, RSV)? (Compare Isa. 58:7; Acts 20:35; Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:2; Heb. 13:3.)
3. If your next-door neighbors are not Christian believers, how can you demonstrate to them the superiority of Christ's character?

SUMMARY: Paul instructs the Philippians and us to practice unity, love, humility, and benevolence. Christ's willingness to step down from the courts of glory, becoming a man, bearing our sin, and paying the price for our redemption, is the greatest example of the principles that Paul wishes us to grasp.



Global Mission Targets the Affluent

Victor Marley

I was apprehensive as I left the tranquil campus of Newbold College and drove the 50 miles south to the affluent Royal Tunbridge Wells in the heart of the English countryside. It hardly seemed like a Global Mission field, but this home to 3/4 million people had no Adventist presence.

My task as a theology graduate was to assist with the planting of a church in the Tunbridge Wells area. This would be a daunting assignment anywhere, but affluent people often do not *want* to see the relevance of God in their lives, and one could wonder whether the months of work that stretched ahead would be of any use at all.

I began my work by making door-to-door contacts and studying with those who wished to know more of God. Two Daniel seminars and a stress seminar increased interest in my work. Through these avenues of witness, a house church was started with up to nine people attending weekly.

The work was difficult. However, I found that my growing relationship with God helped me overcome discouragement, and I was grateful for my Christian faith and the instruction I had received in college.

During the nine months I was in Tunbridge Wells, I learned that people wanted to know not only what I believed, but why. Sometimes I could not answer immediately, but I was grateful for the professors who challenged me to examine my faith and to think through these issues for myself and come to conclusions based on God's Word.

Throughout my involvement in this Global Mission project, friends encouraged me and prayed for my success. This has been a tremendous experience. The house group that began there is continuing, and I am confident that, through the grace of God, this will grow into a much larger ministry in the future.



Victor Marley graduated with a B.A. in theology. He returned from Tunbridge Wells to do postgraduate study at Newbold College. He hopes to be able to enter full-time ministry.

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Jesus, the Source of Righteousness



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 2:12-3:11.

MEMORY TEXT: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

KEY THOUGHT: Because we depend on Christ's righteousness and His work in our hearts, rather than on our own efforts to save ourselves, we have the assurance of progressive spiritual growth toward the goal the Lord has set for us.

GOD WORKS IN US TOWARD A SPECIFIC GOAL. His "good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13) is to replace sin in our lives by His righteous presence. When God created the universe, the circle of love was His "good pleasure," and when it was broken by Satan's selfish rebellion, the peace and security of the universe were in jeopardy.

But God devised the plan of salvation, in which He would take the initiative in meeting sin and its originator head-on. Jesus thus is called the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His name is Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

God's purpose in the plan of salvation is to destroy sin by drawing sinners to Himself. He speaks gracious words and offers pardon and probation, over and over again. He offers His power and holiness through the inward action of the Holy Spirit. Whatever is needed to combat the presence and power of sin and enable us to grow more like Christ, God offers to all.

GOD WORKS (Phil. 2:12, 13).

What is the Christian's responsibility in the salvation process? Phil. 2:12.

Paul's "wherefore" indicates that Christ's life of obedience and self-denial (Phil. 2:5-11) is the Christian's pattern and example. Paul's thought in verse 12 is linked with his thought in verse 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He hopes that Christ's example will motivate us to be joyfully obedient and to cooperate with His work for others.

When Paul says, "Work out your own salvation," he is not promoting salvation by works. Salvation is by grace, through faith (Rom. 3:20-24, 28; Eph. 2:8, 9). But grace is both the motivation and the power for good works (Eph. 2:10; Rom. 6:11-16). God approves righteous works that are the outworking of His grace in the heart (1 Cor. 1:4-7; Rom. 6:18; 2 Cor. 6:1).

Effort to obey Christ is an evidence of faith. (See Heb. 12:4.) Victory is God's gift of grace, but wills are involved in constantly choosing His will. Many are willing to accept salvation as long as there are no conditions. But the Bible is clear: *by faith* we must "strive to enter in" (Luke 13:24); "put off the old man" (Col. 3:9); "lay aside every weight," "run with patience" (Heb. 12:1); "resist the devil" (James 4:7); "endure unto the end" (Matt. 24:13).

How does God become the source of the Christian's salvation? Phil. 2:13.

"**Worketh**" emphasizes the fact that God is the source of our salvation and our power to obey. God puts forth power in the believer's life and in the Christian community, so that His people are able to do His "good pleasure." (See Jude 24.)

"**Both to will and to do.**" God's will to save leads Him to bring conviction to our hearts. When we accept His salvation, He wills to work in us to bring our lives into accord with His divine purpose. Thus, He enables us "to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6).

Jesus taught the same truth (John 15:1-10). "The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

SHINE AS LIGHTS (Phil. 2:14-30).

How does Paul describe the Christian witness of those who permit God to work out His will in them? Phil. 2:14-16.

God makes Christians "blameless and pure, children of God without fault" (Phil. 2:15, NIV) when they trust Him. This process is known as sanctification. Instead of grudging and grumbling obedience (verse 14), sanctification includes "the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 360.

Note the meanings and other uses of the words by which Paul describes what Christ does for the totally committed Christian (Phil. 2:15):

Blameless (faultless): Luke 1:6; 1 Thess. 3:13.

Harmless (pure, innocent): Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19.

Without rebuke (unblemished, blameless): Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 1 Peter 1:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5.

Christ's standard for His people throughout history is identical to His standard at the end of time. The blameless spiritual condition of those who receive the end-time seal of God (Rev. 14:5) is the condition to which Christians in every era were to strive—not in their own strength, but by total reliance upon and submission to Christ. Paul describes the goal for all Christians, a goal that may be reached by the indwelling grace of God. From the standpoint of external behavior, the Christian should be blameless; from the standpoint of God's all-seeing eye, the Christian's motives should be unmixed with evil.

"**Lights in the world**" (Phil. 2:15; see also Matt. 5:14). In the transformation of His people, God sets forth to the world and universe the spirit of His kingdom. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.)

What examples of total commitment to Christ did Paul give the Philippians? Phil. 2:17, 19-22, 25-30.

Paul and his fellow workers shone as "lights in the world." They were willing to risk their lives to make Christ known. Their devotion to Christ revealed itself in love for the lost—an example for the Philippian church.

CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH (Phil. 3:1-6).

Why do you think Paul repeatedly referred to his own rejoicing and urged his fellow Christians to rejoice? See Phil. 3:1 (compare 1:18; 2:16-18, 28; 3:3; 4:4).

What kind of people did Paul urge the Philippians to watch out for? Why? Phil. 3:2, 3.

"Those who mutilate the flesh" (Phil. 3:2 RSV) were the Judaizers who taught that, to be saved, Gentile Christians should be circumcised. The epistles to the Romans and the Galatians provided an effective answer to this class. Paul explained that, even though obedience to the Ten Commandments is an essential evidence of salvation by grace (Rom. 3:31; 8:3, 4), we are not made right with God by attempting to obey any law (Gal. 2:16). Moreover, now that Christ has come, ceremonial observances pointing forward to Christ are no longer binding. (See Eph. 2:13-16.)

Where had Paul placed his confidence for salvation before he became a Christian? Phil. 3:4-6.

Paul was the right person to answer the Judaizers. He not only had made Jesus Christ his Saviour and Lord, he also could boast (if he wanted to) that he had done everything that the Judaizers said was necessary to salvation.

Paul simply made clear to the Judaizers that they had missed the point of circumcision: salvation rests on one's personal relationship with God, which leads to real freedom—freedom from the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19), freedom from the "yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1) under which Paul had felt "blameless." "In Christ," however, salvation is not achieved by externalizing any law, ritual or moral.

Legalism in essence is any religious practice or way of thinking that attempts to gain or maintain God's favor and salvation through our behavior. Religious ritualism or any theory of redemption that rejects Christ's atonement on the cross and the injunction to "be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15, RSV) tries to storm the gate of heaven without letting Jesus truly save His people (Matt. 1:21). We must allow Christ to reign in our hearts and allow the law to point us to Him.

TWO METHODS IN CONTRAST (Phil. 3:7-9).

Why was it necessary for Paul to suffer "the loss of all things" (Phil. 3:7, 8)? Compare Matt. 19:16-22.

Comparing and contrasting Paul before his conversion and the rich young ruler is an interesting exercise. Both thought that their outward observance of the law was the means of their salvation. Jesus asked the ruler to give up all his wealth and become one of His disciples. Jesus asked Paul to give up fame, honor, and fortune to become the apostle to the Gentiles. The ruler refused; Paul obeyed. The ruler rejected salvation by grace; Paul accepted it. Christ asks us to renounce only those relationships and advantages that stand in the way of our salvation and threaten to hamper the work He has for us.

How does Paul contrast two methods by which men and women have sought salvation? Phil. 3:9 (compare Rom. 9:30-10:4).

"By 'righteousness' we shall see that Paul means both 'justification' and 'sanctification.'"—A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), vol. 4, p. 327.

Perhaps no one ever sought righteousness more vigorously than Saul the Pharisee, or Paul the man "in Christ." But Paul discovered that sincerity is not enough.

"A righteousness of my own, based on law" (Phil. 3:9, RSV) refers to Paul's attempt to *earn* righteousness from God by obedience to His law. Paul's failure in this quest paralleled the failure of his countrymen. "Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law" (Rom. 9:31, RSV). The Gentile Christians found righteousness because they sought it by faith in Christ (verse 30). The righteousness of Christ was credited to them (Rom. 4:5) and bestowed upon them by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-17).

"He [God] did not leave us to retain our defects and deformities of character, or to serve Him as best we could in the corruption of our sinful nature. He has made provision that we may be complete in His Son, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 18, 1902.

LIFE'S HIGHEST PRIORITIES (Phil. 3:10, 11).

What were Paul's highest priorities? Phil. 3:10 (first part).

Paul knew much *about* God before he became a Christian, but that was largely intellectual knowledge, a theological understanding. When he experienced faith, he came to know God through Jesus in a personal way. If a person is gracious, honest, and loving, the one who discovers these qualities never seems to feel that he or she knows enough about that person. When that Person is your Creator and Saviour, the desire to know Him better knows no limits. This insatiable desire to know Jesus better is the result of a genuine experience of righteousness by faith. (See verse 9.) Knowing Christ means allowing Him to live out His life through us (Gal. 2:20).

"Power of his resurrection. Paul was not merely wanting to get acquainted with the power that effected Christ's resurrection; he longed for that power to operate in him also. For this wish to be fulfilled Paul knew he would have to live a life like Christ's. Hence he is virtually expressing the desire to have the same sin-conquering power in his life that Christ had in His. . . . The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is needed to resurrect a sinner dead in his sins, and to re-create him in the divine image."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 168.

Why did Paul wish to share Christ's sufferings? Phil. 3:10 (last part), 11.

As genuine Christians through the centuries have discovered, a deep friendship with Jesus gives us power to overcome sinful tendencies. That friendship also makes us aware that commitment leads to suffering for Christ's sake. "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12, RSV). Jesus showed us the cost of truth—from childhood to Calvary. Paul also had learned the joy that arises in self-denial and the special peace that compensates for suffering for righteousness' sake. (See Matt. 5:10.)

Has someone discriminated against you because of your religious faith? How did you react? How would you recommend that we deal with such discrimination?

FURTHER STUDY: On the importance of "the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. 3:9, RSV), study the following passages: Rom. 3:20-31; Gal. 2:16-3:3, 14.

Read portions of "Growing Up Into Christ" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 69-75; "Working for the Intemperate" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 174-177; "Two Worshipers" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 150-163.

"We have transgressed the law of God, and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. The best efforts that man in his own strength can make, are valueless to meet the holy and just law that he has transgressed; but through faith in Christ he may claim the righteousness of the Son of God as all-sufficient. Christ satisfied the demands of the law in His human nature. He bore the curse of the law for the sinner, made an atonement for him, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 363, 364.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When is the effort to be "blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish" (Phil. 2:15, RSV), not an attempt to earn righteousness by works? Under what circumstances would such an effort be legalism?
2. Why is true Sabbath observance not an example of "righteousness under the law" (Phil. 3:6, RSV)? What is the relationship between Sabbath observance and righteousness by faith?
3. A friend feels that becoming a Christian would involve giving up too much. He is unable to join Paul, who "suffered the loss of all things" (Phil. 3:8). How would you answer him?

SUMMARY: Because God works in us, we are able to live blameless lives and to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). By turning away from legalistic methods of achieving righteousness and by trusting fully in "the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil. 3:9, RSV), Christ empowers us to press on toward the goal of complete victory by union with Him.



Here We Are; Send Us!

James and Carol Bahr*

Part 1

Not all mission-story miracles involve raising up a church or even the first baptisms. Often just becoming a missionary is a miracle in itself.

James Bahr* was a young man with a promising career in international banking. But he wanted more; he wanted his life to make a difference for eternity. While attending the General Conference session in Indianapolis in 1990, James was challenged by the newly established Global Mission program to "adopt" through prayer a specific people group who had never heard of Jesus. His "adopted" people were the Rupam* of Central India. From that moment on, India and the needs of the people of Rupam burned in his heart.

James began reading about India: its history, culture, and religions. He prayed that God would send laborers to tell the people of Rupam of His love, and he gave offerings to hasten evangelization of "his" people.

James began working with the van ministries program in New York City as accountant and van worker. There he met Carol, another volunteer worker, who had spent part of her life in the mission field. Together they prayed for India and Rupam. As they shared their love for India, they discovered their love for each other, and were married. Their prayers that God would send a missionary became prayers that if it was God's will, He would open the door for them to go.

In faith the young couple decided to go to India to "spy out the land." They made their airline reservations and prayed that God would lead them. Shortly before they left, word came that riots had broken out and had spread across India. Was it wise to go now? They prayed far into the night for a sign. God showed James two verses in Esther—1:1 and 8:9. There was his answer! The only two times in the entire Bible that India was named, and God had shown them to him. They were going!

In India, with a population of more than 900 million, fewer than one in 5,000 are Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

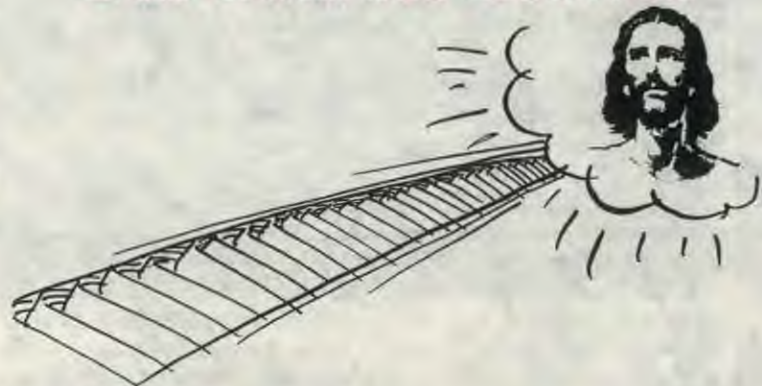
*** James and Carol Bahr are fictional names for real people. The name of the specific city has been changed, as well, to protect the Bahrs and the work they are seeking to establish there, since the area in which they serve is anti-Christian.**

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Our Goal for Growth



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 3:12-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Christians who have the assurance of present salvation in Christ press on toward the goal of complete spiritual victory, with the ultimate hope of immortality at the second coming of Jesus.

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH. Last week we heard Paul tell the world that Jesus Christ had become the answer to all his "striving" to be right with God. Pardon, power, spiritual victory, all come through a personal relationship with Jesus. This relationship is called faith.

This week we find Paul saying that he has not learned all there is to know about Jesus, nor has he attained all the Christian growth into which Jesus wants to lead him. One of his great concerns is that he and fellow believers should maintain the fellowship with Christ they have already enjoyed. There is more to the Christian life than starting well.

Paul held up a high standard for himself, as well as for others. On one hand he believed that the inward power of God could keep men and women from sinning. On the other, he knew that there is no top limit to believers' growth in grace and knowledge as they are led to reflect God's glory.

A GOAL NOT YET ACHIEVED (Phil. 3:12).

What was it that Paul had not yet obtained to which he was earnestly pressing forward? Phil. 3:12.

Verse 12 refers to verses 10 and 11. Paul did not yet "know him, and the power of his resurrection" perfectly. Paul anticipated "becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10, RSV) and rising from the dead as Jesus did. He had not yet attained all this, nor had he been ultimately perfected spiritually (verse 12). He was being progressively sanctified, hoping to seize the prize—ultimate eternal salvation.

If Paul was not yet perfect (Phil. 3:12), how could he write, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (verse 15)? Compare 1 John 2:5; 4:12; Col. 2:10.

Philippians 3:12 uses the Greek verb meaning "to perfect, bring to an end, finish, accomplish." Verse 15 uses the related adjective meaning "perfect, having attained the end or purpose, complete, full-grown, mature, fully developed." Because, by faith, the thief on the cross had received Christ's perfection, he was complete, perfect in Christ—qualified for heaven in the sense intended in Philippians 3:15. If he had gone on living and believing, he would have developed progressively toward the spiritual perfection to which Paul refers in Philippians 3:12.

Study the following texts that translate either the Greek verb *to perfect* or the adjective *perfect*. Note that they teach:

1. Present completeness in Christ: 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; 2 Cor. 12:9; Col. 4:12; Heb. 5:14; 10:14; 12:23.

2. Victory over sin as the believer's goal: Matt. 5:48; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28; James 1:4; 3:2.

Present perfection in Christ, being "complete in him" (Col. 2:10) at this moment, does not rule out the importance of constant spiritual growth. Even though in Christ we have victory over sin at this moment (1 John 5:4), we are constantly moving toward the experience of the uninterrupted victory that Jesus knew (Rev. 3:21; Phil. 1:6; 3:21).

ONE THING I DO (Phil. 3:13).

Because we have received Christ's saving grace, how should we relate to our past sins and mistakes? Phil. 3:13.

Paul had much to forget—the guilt of former days. When Jesus forgives our sins (1 John 1:9), lifts our guilt from us, and, because of the cross, destroys it completely (Micah 7:19), we must rejoice with Paul, “forgetting what lies behind” (Phil. 3:13, RSV). Then, with abandon, we can “spring toward the tape for the prize of the heavenly calling from God in Christ Jesus” (verse 14, Yeager, *Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 14, p. 481).

“The language of the soul should be that of joy and gratitude. If we have dark chapters in our experience, let us not keep their memory fresh by repetition. Forgetting the things that are behind, let us press forward to the things that are before. Cultivate only those thoughts and feelings which produce gratitude and praise. If you have been wronged, forget it, and think only of the great mercy, the loving-kindness, the inexpressible love of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, September 27, 1883.

How strenuous should be our efforts to reach the goal Christ has set for us? Phil. 3:13.

“Straining forward” (Phil. 3:13, RSV) translates a Greek word that describes the athlete in rigorous pursuit of his goal. “Man is to cooperate with God, employing every power according to his God-given ability. He is not to be ignorant as to what are right practices in eating and drinking, and in all the habits of life. The Lord designs that His human agents shall act as rational, accountable beings in every respect. . . . Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming: for God does nothing for man without his cooperation.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 380, 381.

Professed Christians are miserable when part of their life is governed by biblical principles and part by worldly principles. If God does not have all of our life, the question remains as to whether He really has any of it. “If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.” When we are not totally consecrated to the will of God in all aspects of life on which we have light, the malignancy of selfishness will make darkness appear to be light.

OUR HIGHEST CALLING (Phil. 3:14).

What was Paul's greatest incentive to keep pressing on even though adversities were many? Phil. 3:14.

Salvation is a gift from beginning to end, and those who accept it "strain forward" and "press on," joyfully trusting in Jesus for pardon and power.

From the Damascus Road to the Roman dungeon and the executioner's ax, Paul "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). The "goal" was always Jesus Christ and His service. At the end of life he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7), all the while using every opportunity "that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

"Goal" (Phil. 3:14, RSV) emphasizes the object of Paul's striving through the power of the Holy Spirit to become more like Christ; "prize" focuses on the reward, the spiritual compensation, the continuing gifts to the faithful who keep their eye single to God.

How does the Epistle to the Hebrews expand the thought expressed by Paul to the Philippians? Heb. 12:1, 2.

"Let us run . . . with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the source and the goal of our faith" (verses 1, 2, Phillips).

Jesus was to Paul "the fulness of God" (Col. 1:19, RSV), the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2, RSV). Christ is the revelation of what God is like and what real humanity may be like when fully dependent upon God for strength. Paul saw that only Jesus gave sense and purpose to life.

"In Him was found the perfect ideal. To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven."
—*Education*, pp. 73, 74.

Is fixing our eyes on Jesus and doing His bidding legalism? Why, or why not?

PATTERNS TO LIVE BY (Phil. 3:17-19).

How seriously did Paul regard personal influence? Phil. 3:17.

Paul did not bask in contrived humility. He was too honest to join those who sought admiration from others in declaring their great wretchedness. He knew the peace and strength that come from walking with Jesus. His hearers understood well the source of his fortitude and love. To the Corinthians he declared, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1, RSV). To the Thessalonians he wrote, "You became imitators of us . . . so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia" (1 Thess. 1:6, 7, RSV).

The influence of the gospel is greatly increased when the believer's personal life witnesses to its power and hope. When a message of cheer, hope, and love is accompanied by a winsome, courageous life of loving witness, unbelievers are attracted to Christ. To fulfill the gospel commission, Christians must walk what they talk.

"Paul carried with him the atmosphere of heaven. All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ. The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed, gave convincing power to his preaching. Here lies the power of the truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 59.

What reduced Paul to tears? Phil. 3:18, 19.

What a striking contrast these verses depict with what has gone before. Instead of glorying in the cross, these enemies of Christ gloried in their shameful way of life. Instead of exalting Christ as the source of their only hope, they deified their appetites. Instead of focusing their minds on the heavenly goal, they groveled in the mire of earth. No wonder Paul wept!

Do we weep and pray for our loved ones who are outside of Christ? How can we develop a genuine burden for souls?

What can we do for friends and family who do not know Christ?

WE AWAIT A SAVIOUR (Phil. 3:20, 21).

What great event cast a bright light upon all that Paul thought or did? Phil. 3:20, 21.

Christians respond to Jesus reaching out to them. With Paul, they are constantly aware that Jesus is the goal of life, the only prize worth considering as they face the future!

What happens to Christians when Jesus returns? He will transform their bodies so that they will have a body like His! An incredible promise, beyond adequate words to describe! Christians can look forward to having incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-49) such as Jesus has had since His resurrection. They will have the ability to travel through space, never again to feel the deterioration of age or sickness.

What will be the spiritual state of those who welcome Jesus at His second advent? Compare Rev. 7:1-3 with 14:1, 5.

There is one thing that the Lord cannot do for us *when He comes*; He cannot at that time give us holy characters. If changed at all, our characters will be transformed before death or, for the last generation, before the Lord comes. To wait for a change of character *after* one dies or is translated is one of the subtle and deadly insinuations of the master deceiver.

"When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. . . . But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is *now* that this work is to be accomplished for us."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 355.

If you were writing the appeal at the conclusion of Paul's sermon in Philippians 3, what would you say?

FURTHER STUDY: Philippians 3:12-15 emphasizes Paul's determination to press on toward Christian perfection. Compare other passages of Scripture that present the same goal: Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13; 1 Kings 8:61; Ps. 119:1.

Read "Talents" and "To Meet the Bridegroom" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 329-333; 411-419; "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 664-671.

In discussing the Bible doctrine of perfection, it is important to emphasize the distinction between imperfection and sin. All sin is imperfection, but not all imperfection is sin. God did not regard the imperfect works that the Jews were committing as sin until Jesus had given them greater light. (See John 15:22, 24.) "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23, RSV). *The Bible means by perfection a life lived in such close fellowship with Christ that the believer is not committing sin.* But because the same believer retains an imperfect mind and body, his or her deeds are always imperfect—until "this corruptible" puts on "incorruption," and "this mortal" puts on "immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

Those who raise the fear of "perfectionism" in this life are guarding against the error of "holy flesh"—the age-old heresy wherein the believer supposedly is no longer tempted to evil—even from within—and thus can no longer sin. This rejection of "perfectionism" is a Christian's duty.

On the other hand, those who guard the truth of biblical perfection do not teach that God expects a believer to reach a state of no human imperfection and no need for growth in this life. They define perfection in moral terms only (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330), with love and pure intent being its simplest description (Rom. 13:10; Matt. 22:37-40). Through Christ, sin may be overcome, though temptations to sin and the need to grow do indeed remain.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Your friend is a new believer, recently baptized. But she is inclined to repudiate her faith and return to the life she once knew. How would you present this week's passage of Scripture (Philippians 3:12-21) to inspire her to continue in the Christian walk?

SUMMARY: Although Paul speaks of believers as enjoying present perfection in Christ, he states his firm determination to press on toward the goal of ultimate spiritual perfection. The reward for believers who emulate Jesus is glorification at the coming of Jesus.



Here We Are, Send Us!

James and Carol Bahr*

Part 2

James and Carol Bahr were determined to serve God. They had prayed for guidance, and God had directed them. Now they were on their way to the land of their prayers: Rupam, India.*

With Carol's parents, they held health-evangelism seminars in Madras. The crowd grew from 40 the first evening to more than 500 on Sabbath. They rejoiced as several Hindu people accepted Jesus as their Saviour.

Soon they were on the train to Rupam. For three years James had prayed for this city, and now they were here! On the railway platform the couple prayed that God would lead them to the people He wanted them to meet.

They found a city of 250,000 Hindus and Muslims. They watched a family making carpets. Even the children helped, tying one single thread at a time onto the loom. James asked why the children were not in school, and learned that even the public schools cost money, and many families could not afford tuition. At one local school 700 children sat on dirt floors in several small classrooms, learning to read and write.

The couple discovered a Christian church in an ideal location in the center of town. But a padlock on the door, broken windows, thick dust, and peeling plaster told them that no one had worshiped there recently. They went to the city chairman (mayor) to inquire about the vacant building.

"The chairman's wife was excited when we asked about the abandoned church. She spoke freely of her faith and her knowledge of God and the Bible," said Carol. "The chairman and his wife made the church available to us free, to renovate and use for literacy and health programs. Our prayers were being answered!"

Of the 1.6 million people in the district surrounding Rupam, fewer than 100 are Christians, and the area is openly anti-Christian. For the chairman and his wife to be Christians is a miracle! "Later, when we were in Delhi," said James, "we learned that a colporteur had sold her books and literature and been giving her Bible studies for five or six years! God had prepared the way for our work in Rupam long before we even knew we would go! How can we doubt that He will be with us as we begin our work there?"

* The identity of James and Carol Bahr and the city in which they work have been changed to protect the work in the area of India where they serve.

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Jesus, Supplier of All Our Needs



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Phil. 4:1-23.

MEMORY TEXT: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: As we depend on Christ for strength to do His will, allowing our minds to dwell only on that which is pure and beautiful, we will have cause for constant rejoicing and will experience unity and mutual benevolence with our brothers and sisters in the church.

JESUS EMPOWERS US THROUGH HIS SPIRIT. Jesus is more than able to keep us from falling (Jude 24); we "can do all things" through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

This is not to say that committed Christians have not sinned or had failures and moments of doubt. Doubt, anxiety, anger, impatience, self-serving maneuvers, impurity, laziness—all such happen when believers forget that their strength is in the Lord and not in themselves. Understanding the role of the Holy Spirit brings realism to the claim that "I can do all things."

"It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church."
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

STAND FIRM IN THE LORD (Phil. 4:1-3).

By what means is it possible for us to “stand firm . . . in the Lord” (Phil. 4:1, RSV)? Isa. 41:10; Eph. 3:16, 17.

Paul’s concluding remarks to the Philippians begin with a pastor’s expression of love and concern. “Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil. 4:1, RSV). Paul’s longing for his brethren and sisters was an unselfish concern for their eternal well-being. In the presence of the Lord, they are his victory wreath. Paul wrote in the same vein to the Thessalonians: “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19, 20, RSV).

Paul’s great burden is that, by continually leaning on the mighty arm of the Lord, his children in the faith will receive power to be true to the gospel principles he has taught them. Thus, for them, the promises of Philippians 3:20, 21 will be fulfilled.

How is it possible for Christian believers “to agree with each other” (Phil. 4:2, NIV)? Eph. 4:3; John 17:21-23 (compare 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Peter 3:8).

We are not told what was dividing Euodia and Syntyche. Paul seemed to be confident that, with help (verse 3), they could agree (verse 2). He hoped that their dedication to the Lord would lead them to rise above their differences.

“The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 259.

Under what circumstances are our names placed in the book of life? Heb. 12:23 (compare Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3). Under what circumstances will names be removed from the book of life? Ex. 32:33; Rev. 3:5 (compare Dan. 7:10; 12:1). How can we avoid having our names removed from the book of life? Rev. 19:7, 8 (compare 1 John 2:29).

HAVE NO ANXIETY (Phil. 4:4-7).

What two expressions seem to reflect best Paul's spirit and disposition as he faced life's uncertainties? Phil. 4:4, 6.

Joy in the Lord permeates the Philippian letter. But we must remember that Paul wrote these words from prison. What a ministry! What a Lord! Is it possible that joy is more than an emotion that comes easily only to naturally happy people? Can it be that joy flows naturally from genuinely committed Christian life?

For many people, gritting one's teeth seems the best response to hard times. Besides, rejoicing *always* (at all times) seems unreasonable. But Paul tells us that circumstances need not depress our mental attitudes or drown our joy.

"Circumstances have but little to do with the experiences of the soul. It is the spirit cherished which gives coloring to all our actions. A man at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmising will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart in harmony with God is lifted above the annoyances and trials of this life. But a heart where the peace of Christ is not, is unhappy, full of discontent; the person sees defects in everything, and he would bring discord into the most heavenly music."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 488.

We can have peace in the most traumatic circumstances by placing our anxieties at the feet of Jesus. The anxious heart is soothed by trust in Jesus. (See Matt. 11:28; 1 Peter 5:7.)

By what spirit should Christians be known? Phil. 4:5.

"Forbearance" (RSV) is a better rendering than "moderation" (KJV). Perhaps Paul is thinking about a current problem in the young churches, that of contention and rivalry for "honors" in doing Christian work. But what is more pleasing than a humble, tolerant, approachable person, whether in the home, in an everyday work situation, or church activity?

Are you a person who does not mind yielding when no principle is involved? Do you adopt a gentle spirit toward others, even when principle is involved?

WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED, DO (Phil. 4:8, 9).

In Paul's summation of the Christian life pattern that will eliminate personal and church tensions, list the six "whatsoevers" and the two "ifs." Phil. 4:8.

"True." If a person is not "square" with the universe, if something or someone is valued that conflicts with God's plumb line, spiritual growth in Christ is jeopardized.

"Honest." Better, "honorable" (RSV). Motives are vital, and influence is beyond measurement. The believer always should be an honorable representative of his Lord.

"Just" or "righteous." Christians will not hesitate to ask in all situations whether their decisions are in harmony with the will and law of God.

"Pure." Not only sexual purity but also pure motives, cleansed from unholy ambition and greed, are included.

"Lovely." Here is the only time that this Greek word is used in the New Testament, but how fitting—to seek that which is pleasing and lovable.

"Of good report" or "praiseworthy," "of good reputation." To the Thessalonians Paul said, "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22, RSV). A high obligation rests on Christians to make a good impression for the truth.

"Any virtue." The emphasis is moral excellence, and the six characteristics of the joyful Christian become meaningful only if they are honestly pursued.

"Any praise." Look for the best in people and offer them sincere positive reinforcement.

"Think." "There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1145.

How does Paul connect theology and daily habits? Phil. 4:9.

Christianity was never meant to be just one more world religion with an interesting theology, yet leaving its followers as self-indulgent, greedy, and spiteful as anyone else. For Christians, meditation and theological information have a purpose—to translate the teaching of Christ into a life that reflects Him. True Christians hear and then do.

ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST (Phil. 4:10-13).

Faithful, grateful dependence upon Christ is the secret of radiant Christian life and witness. When Robert Morrison, the first Christian missionary to China, disembarked from his ship in a Chinese port, the captain said with a sneer, "So you think you are going to make an impression upon China." Morrison quietly replied, "No, sir, but I believe God will."

What was Paul's attitude toward good times and bad? Phil. 4:11, 12.

Paul's companionship with Jesus had given him a self-sufficiency that transcended all earthly circumstances. Humble in prosperity, strong in tough times, these circumstances did not deprive him of peace and godly contentment. Jesus had become Paul's great enabler (1 Tim. 1:12).

What was Paul's open secret that explained his joy, courage, and Christian confidence? Phil. 4:13.

This text has always been a strong pillar for growing Christians. But for many it remains an untouched promise; they have never discovered that God means exactly what He prompted Paul to write. Above all else, God desires His children to turn from sin and engage in joyful obedience to His will—all made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was writing these words, not from a Mediterranean resort, but as a prisoner of the Roman Empire. By worldly standards, he had everything to be discouraged about.

"The heavenly intelligences will work with the human agent who seeks with determined faith that perfection of character which will reach out to perfection in action. To everyone engaged in this work Christ says, I am at your right hand to help you.

"As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command, may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 332, 333.

Because we can do all things through the power of Christ, why are there some educational, professional, and financial goals that we cannot reach?

GOD WILL SUPPLY EVERY NEED (Phil. 4:14-23).

What was the primary reason that Paul was grateful for the generosity of the Philippians? Phil. 4:14-18.

Paul was thankful for the financial support the Philippians had consistently provided for the work of the gospel and for his personal needs. But there was a deeper reason for his gratitude. "The gift was really *an investment entered as a credit on the account of the Philippians, an investment which is increasingly paying them rich dividends. These dividends or fruits in the lives of his friends are the object of Paul's concern. . . . Right giving always enriches the giver. 'The liberal soul will be made fat' (Prov. 11:25). 'He who pities the poor lends to the Lord' (Prov. 19:17). 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy' (Matt. 5:7). 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9:7).*"—William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1962), p. 208.

How did Paul share with his Philippian friends the basic truth that helped him to live above changing circumstances and remain cheerful and faithful? Phil. 4:19.

Paul had learned for himself that God is everything that the Old Testament said He would be. (See Ps. 18:35; 31:19; Isa. 40:11; Mal. 3:10.) Jesus was for Paul a personal Saviour from sin and fear and want.

"If men love and obey God, and do their part, God will provide for all their wants. Although your living may have to be obtained by the sweat of your brow, you are not to distrust God; for in the great plan of His providence, He will supply your need from day to day."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, September 18, 1888.

Christians who long to bring cheer and hope to the erring or unbelievers can have confidence that even the words they should speak will be given at the proper time. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 149.)

In view of our Lord's promises, how much responsibility rests upon Christians to work toward satisfying the needs of their families, their own personal needs, and the needs of their neighbors?

FURTHER STUDY: On God's abundant supply of our spiritual needs read: Ps. 36:7-9; John 10:10; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:20.

Read "Rejoicing in the Lord in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 115-126; "Mind Cure" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 246-257.

"Even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 125.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In your experience, what have been the physical and psychological effects of rejoicing and praising God? By contrast, what have been the effects of worry and depression?
2. How can we cooperate with God in keeping our minds focused on pure and beautiful things?
3. Can you testify to the blessings involved in giving generously for God's work? Have you relieved the needs of someone who was struggling financially? How did your generosity result in blessing to you?

SUMMARY: Paul reminds the Philippians and us of the joy associated with claiming Christ's strength to stand firm in the faith, maintaining spiritual unity, and focusing our minds and hearts on praise to God. By thinking positive, pure thoughts, ever trusting in His enabling power, we can retain Christ's presence and peace. By generosity to others we can be reminded of God's infinite love and kindness toward us.



State of Emergency

Adrian Taylor

She stood before me, her head buried in her hands, sobbing over and over, "Why?" Her question hit me like a bullet.

I was her English teacher in Thailand. I stood listening to 17-year-old Pam, who expected me to know the answer to her questions. She poured out her heart.

"My friend went to the riots last month, and she didn't come home. Why?" she sobbed.

Living in a country during a state of emergency brings with it a feeling of impending destruction and insecurity. In a few bloody nights in 1992, during violent demonstrations and clashes with police, more than 1,000 people failed to go home. A few were undeniably dead; the rest were classed as "missing persons." Over the next few months, rumors spread of military trucks secretly taking piles of bodies and dumping them into mass graves.

"Why her? She's my best friend. I almost went with her that night. Now she is gone, and I am here." The pain in Pam's voice punctuated her words. I felt helpless as I watched Pam, one of my best students, crying out for want of any hope. I knew that the society in which she lived and the religion that was a part of her life could never give Pam, or thousands of people like her, an answer to her question. Nothing I had learned in college or during my travels had prepared me for this. So I waited, hoping for some flash of inspiration that would help me.

Suddenly, amid sobs, Pam asked, "Who is Jesus?"

"Oh, Lord, opportunities like this only happen in mission stories." Prayerfully I began to explain who Jesus is. For more than three hours, we talked and prayed. As she was leaving, she paused at the door, and in a gentle, reverent tone said, "Your Jesus IS real, isn't He?" Then she disappeared out of the door, swallowed up by the mass of humanity that swarmed along the Bangkok street.



I returned to college to continue my studies, but the experiences in Thailand had forever changed my life. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can remain the same after someone comes to ask, "Why," and leaves exclaiming, "Your Jesus is real!"

Adrian Taylor is an assistant accountant for the Trans-European Division.

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Jesus, Reconciler of the Universe



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 1:1-20.

MEMORY TEXT: "For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the "fulness of God," is our Creator and Redeemer, who holds the universe together and, because of His sacrifice, reconciles believing sinners to Himself for eternity.

WHY DID PAUL WRITE TO THE COLOSSIANS? "The first and second chapters of Colossians have been presented to me as an expression of what our churches in every part of the world should be."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 906.

Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians for four main reasons:

1. To direct their attention to Christ as the very image of the invisible God, the Creator, Redeemer, Reconciler, and Head of the church. (Col. 1:13-18.)

2. To warn them against falling back into their old sinful way of life and to warn against the teachings of those who were depreciating Christ as the only solution for the sin problem. (Col. 1:21, 23; 2:8; 3:5-7.)

3. To emphasize the importance of forgiveness and kindness. (Col. 3:12-14.)

4. To enhance their respect for their former pastor, Epaphras, and for the gospel he taught them. (Col. 1:7; 4:12, 13.)

THE HOPE LAID UP FOR YOU (Col. 1:1-8).

What inspired the Colossian Christians with love for one another? Col. 1:1-6.

Consider the ingredients of Paul's salutation and thanksgiving. He writes "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae" (Col. 1:2, RSV). They are saints or holy ones because Christ has set them apart for His holy purpose by counting His merits for them and by giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Compare 1 Peter 1:2.) Their faith in Christ (Col. 1:4), their hope of eternal life, and their loyalty to the "word of the truth" (verse 5) inspired them with love for one another and earnest involvement in the spread of the gospel, which "in the whole world . . . is bearing fruit and growing" (verse 6, RSV).

What had Epaphras done for the Colossian Christians? Col. 1:7, 8; 4:12, 13.

Whether or not Paul had ever visited the Colossians, they had learned the gospel from Epaphras. Now that Epaphras was in Rome with Paul, his deep concern for his church members in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis was unflagging. He pleaded with God that they would "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12).

"It was this gospel of the true grace of God that the Colossians had *learned* . . . from the lips of Epaphras. The implication seems to be that this *fellow servant* of Paul's had been a conscientious and thorough teacher of the gospel message. His mission had been no hit-and-run affair with minimal instruction. The truth had been fully explained and applied, and Paul, characteristically, gives due praise to his friend and envoy. Incidentally, this is further evidence that Paul had a great capacity for drawing others to share his concerns, and making them feel partners in the work, and the apostle was exemplary in supporting his junior partners when occasion demanded." —R. C. Lucas, *The Message of Colossians and Philemon* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 33.

Does your church measure up to the spiritual standard experienced by the Colossian church? If not, what steps would you recommend to inspire the believers to greater heights?

A LIFE FULLY PLEASING TO GOD (Col. 1:9-12).

With what kind of wisdom and knowledge does God wish to fill us? Col. 1:9.

The kind of wisdom and knowledge Paul is speaking about is not worldly or academic; it is the wisdom and knowledge imparted by the Holy Spirit. "We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification." This is wisdom that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard," but which "God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:7, 9, 10, RSV). "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (verses 12, 13, NIV).

What is God's purpose in filling us "with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9, RSV)? Col. 1:10-12.

The New International Version translates verse 10: "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

The Holy Spirit's primary concern is to strengthen the believer and the Christian community so that all that had been perverted by sin is restored.

"The affections, perverted by sin, become degenerated and depraved; but through a connection with Christ they are brought into a higher, holier channel; and, aided by the divine grace, man may be an overcomer. The faculties, warped in a wrong direction through the influence of sin, need no longer be . . . wasted on accomplishing selfish purposes. . . . When the soul has been convicted of sin, has accepted of Christ, the character becomes transformed, and there is an elevation and purification of all the powers of the being. They are no longer debased by selfish aims and unholy actions. What may not man become through the grace given him by God! . . . He may show forth an example of righteousness, of true holiness."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, October 6, 1890.

CHRIST THE PREEMINENT ONE (Col. 1:13-16).

According to Colossians 1:13, 14, what is involved in "the forgiveness of sins"?

Paul also relates forgiveness to redemption in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7, RSV). Forgiveness is deliverance from Satan's kingdom and transference into Christ's.

"To be pardoned in the way that Christ pardons, is not only to be forgiven, but to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Lord says, 'A new heart will I give unto thee.' The image of Christ is to be stamped upon the very mind, heart, and soul. The apostle says, 'And we have the mind of Christ.' Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the original propensities to sin are left in the heart in all their strength, to forge new chains, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by human power. But men can never enter heaven with their old tastes, inclinations, idols, ideas, and theories."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890.

How did Paul express the preeminence (superiority, or primacy) of Jesus? Col. 1:15, 16.

How could Christ be "the image of the invisible God" and the Creator of "all things" if He were the first *creature* to have been created? The Scriptures identify Christ as God, who has an eternity of preexistence. (See John 1:1-3; 5:18; 8:58; 14:9; Micah 5:2.)

The Greek word translated "firstborn" is applied to Christ seven times in the New Testament: Luke 2:7; Matt. 1:25; Rom. 8:28, 29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5. In the Greek Old Testament the word is sometimes used in a figurative sense meaning the strongest of its kind. (See Job 18:12, 13; Isa. 14:30.) Sometimes the word means status of dignity, or preeminence, given to a person who is not the first son to be born into a family. David is called God's firstborn (Ps. 89:27). Jacob was the firstborn in God's sight (Ex. 4:22), and so was Ephraim (Jer. 31:9).

Christ is the firstborn in the sense of the preeminent One over all creation and over all the creatures of His hand.

CHRIST THE HEAD OVER ALL (Col. 1:17, 18).

What responsibilities did the Creator accept after He created the universe? Col. 1:17.

“Consist. . . . literally, ‘to stand together,’ ‘to hold together,’ or ‘to cohere.’ The form of the verb in Greek stresses an original organization and a continued maintenance of the organization. The power that holds the far-flung orbs of the universe on their appointed courses with mathematical accuracy, the power that holds the particles of the atom in their predetermined orbits, is the same. By the power of Christ all things cohere.”
—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 192.

Study the following passages, which discuss Christ as the Head of the church: Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 1:22; 4:15.

In Colossians 1:15-17 Paul established our Lord’s preeminence in Creation; he now establishes His preeminence in redemption. Paul’s earlier comments regarding Jesus and the church as “body” (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-31) emphasized that the church was more of an organism than an organization. Each member has something important to contribute to the well-being of the body; as the eye or foot relates to the physical body, so the deacon or accountant or teacher should relate to the church body.

But in Colossians 1:18 Paul goes even farther. Here Jesus is the Head of the church, serving a function similar to a person’s head attached to a physical body. What does a head do? It regulates and organizes growth, gives guidance, provides personality to an otherwise purely nonpersonal, nonemotive, physical-chemical operation.

The strength of the church is not in the wisdom or energy of its members, devoted as they may be. The head makes possible whatever the body needs for life and growth.

“God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ’s body—is left in darkness. . . . Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 163, 164.

CHRIST THE RECONCILER (Col. 1:19, 20).

What distinguished Jesus from all other men and women ever to live on this planet and from all other created beings anywhere in the universe? Col. 1:19; 2:9.

Fulness means "the sum total," "the superabundance." In the New Testament it generally means completeness. (See Mark 8:20; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10, 23.) Christ is the sum total of the Deity. Mysteriously the three Personalities of the Deity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are one God. Each of the three Persons is the "fulfulness" of the Godhead. (See *Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615.)

Neither was this "fulfulness" a temporary arrangement. Jesus was not merely "a very good man who was fully committed to God." He was not merely "fully" and completely conformed to God's purpose. Jesus *was* fully God, completely, eternally. Whatever Jesus did or said reflected what God does or says. (See John 14:9.)

What was the great, incomparable result of Christ's life and death? Col. 1:20.

In reconciling "all things" unto Himself, God's delight or pleasure is on full display. Salvation is God's idea, not man's. The eternal gift, the permanent condescension of God the Son, was considered worth the price—and it was an unspeakable price. No created being will ever be able to compute it or to understand it. (See John 3:16.)

Where once there was hostility, reconciliation brings a new relationship. God did not have to be reconciled. Jesus did not die to change God's mind or feelings regarding man. Fallen humankind was the alienated party, not God. (See Col. 1:21, 22; 2 Cor. 5:19.)

"Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. . . . It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 57.

What responsibility do I have in accepting this costly, but freely given, hand of reconciliation?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the following texts that speak of Christ's work of reconciliation: 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 2:17. Read parts of the chapters "God With Us," "Gethsemane," "Calvary," and "It is Finished" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 20-24; 690-693; 755-757; 761-764.

"Christ came to the world to counteract Satan's falsehood that God had made a law which men could not keep. Taking humanity upon Himself, He came to this earth, and by a life of obedience showed that God has not made a law that man cannot keep. He showed that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law. Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, becoming partakers of His divine nature, are enabled to follow His example, living in obedience to every precept of the law. Through the merits of Christ, man is to show by his obedience that he could be trusted in heaven, that he would not rebel."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 114.

"His death had answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 70.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What relationship do you see between Paul's counsel that our lives should be "fully pleasing" to God (Col. 1:10, RSV) and his teaching that Christ is "the fullness" of God (Col. 1:19, RSV)? (See Eph. 1:23; 3:19.)
2. From your experiences in life, what examples can you give of reconciliation between two people after they have found Christ as their personal Saviour?
3. Christ is the head of the church. How then do you explain the imperfections you see in the church? In the light of the fact that Christ is in charge, how should we go about helping to correct these imperfections?

SUMMARY: Paul praises the Colossians for their faithfulness to the gospel they have been taught. He pleads with them to allow God to fill them with His love and power so that their lives will fully reflect His character. This is possible because Christ, the fullness of Deity, who has forgiven our sins and reconciled us to God, will progressively strengthen us for patient endurance of life's challenges.



Breakthrough in Rahimyar Khan

Emmanuel Bashir

The city of Rahimyar Khan, Pakistan, has a population of more than two million, 200,000 of which are Christians, but none are Adventist. Two years ago Pakistan Union Section President S. A. Ditta and Southern Section President Emmanuel Bashir proposed to evangelize Rahimyar Khan, situated on the border between the provinces of Sind and Punjab.

A team went to Rahimyar Khan to survey residents and to plan an evangelistic series. The team visited many in the Christian community, including pastors of other denominations. Some Christians welcomed Adventists, but some were unhappy we were planning to hold meetings in their area.

In December 1992, the effort began. Three hundred to four hundred came every night; many from distant parts of the city. During the day pastors visited interests and gave Bible studies to those who requested them.

Opposition to the meetings grew, and people were told that Adventists do not believe the whole Bible, follow women, and are not Christians. As a result, some stopped attending the meetings. Others attempted to disrupt our efforts. We went to our hotel room and prayed. "Lord, it is Your work. We cannot do it with our own power and wisdom."

We felt impressed to visit the pastor who had opposed us most strongly. We met with all the Christian pastors to answer questions in their minds. As a result the pastor who opposed us the most began attending the meetings and offered to bring his church choir to sing for us. He and his family even offered to sing special songs in the meetings.

No more organized opposition plagued the remaining meetings, and at the close of the series many indicated their desire to continue attending.

We hope to send a pastor to Rahimyar Khan to continue to follow up interests and lead them to a full surrender to Jesus Christ. As funds become available we want to build a church building, church school, health clinic, and pastor's home in Rahimyar Khan. We trust God to work out the details in His time. He will see that the work He blessed in its beginning will bear fruit at harvesttime.



Emmanuel Bashir is president of the Pakistan Southern Section.

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Jesus, Our Hope of Glory



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 1:21-2:7.

MEMORY TEXT: "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: The revealed mystery, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), is the means by which God reconciles to Himself those who accept Christ.

CHRIST'S LIFE IS TO BE REPRODUCED IN US. Writing of Jerry McAuley's Bowery mission, S. H. Hadley told the story of a tramp who responded to the invitation for everyone who wanted to become a Christian to come forward and kneel at the altar. The preacher knelt beside the tramp and listened as he prayed the same sentence over and over again, "Dear Lord, make me like Joe."

The preacher interrupted the tramp to say, "Ask God to make you like Jesus."

The tramp opened his eyes and looked at the preacher in astonishment. He asked, "Was Jesus any better than Joe?" Everybody in the community loved Joe. He had been converted two years before and had led many people to Christ. Joe had been buried that afternoon—and the street people of the Bowery wept.

Christ wants to make us like Himself. The mystery that solves the sin problem is "Christ in you." The Holy Spirit living in our hearts is Christ within. Because of His presence, we reflect His love, compassion, and purity. (See Rom. 8:4-10; Eph. 3:16, 17.)

THE AIM OF REDEMPTION (Col. 1:21-23).

What was the purpose of Christ's death? Col. 1:21, 22.

In living and dying, Jesus made clear throughout the universe, especially to our lost planet, that God is the sinner's friend. Jesus also came to give alienated sinners hope of reconciliation with God. What is the result?

"To present." Paul emphasized God's grand design. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us . . . to be his sons . . . to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:4-6, RSV).

"Holy." "To be holy is to reflect the divine image, for God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The purpose of the plan of salvation is to restore the divine image in man."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 998.

"Unblameable." The same word is rendered "without fault" in Revelation 14:5. The grace of God is greater far than the hosts of evil and the deepest sinful habits. (Note how the same Greek word is used in Eph. 5:27; Jude 24.)

"Unreproveable." The Greek word means "blameless," or "irreproachable." (Note its use in 1 Cor. 1:8.)

"When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 32.

On what condition could Jesus present His followers "holy and unblameable and unreproveable"? Col. 1:22, 23.

Christ's sacrificial death (verse 20) provided the basis for humankind's salvation, but faith is the condition of salvation. Paul's *if* is a basic biblical concept. Christian assurance is not static, as it is in mistaken theories of predestination. On the contrary, the believer's assurance is grounded on the promises of God and in the life rooted, engrafted through faith, in Christ.

"If we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). One act of faith is not enough. The believer who is acceptable to God *continues* to believe; he makes a habit of trusting and obeying. (See John 1:12; Rom. 10:9, 10.)

THE OPEN SECRET (Col. 1:24-27).

Why did Paul rejoice in his sufferings? Col. 1:24, 25.

"The concept is not that the suffering of Paul is needed to supplement the sufferings of Christ in order to secure reconciliation, as though the sufferings of Christ were insufficient. [See 1 John 2:2.] It is rather that, since Christ suffered for us, the members of His body, we, the fellow members of the body should suffer for each other in order that each can live the victorious life in Christ to the full. Paul wanted to finish enduring the sufferings which were assigned to him, out of gratitude to Christ."—Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 15, p. 34.

What is the revealed mystery that lies at the heart of the gospel? Col. 1:26, 27.

Paul refers to truths that men and women would not know unless God revealed them. What Paul refers to as a "mystery" was partially understood in Old Testament times—that all nations would be blessed by Christ. (See Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Isa. 60:1-3). But the "mystery" became actual fact after Pentecost. Jesus had "broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14, RSV).

The witness of Christ within, as validated by the Holy Spirit's witness, is the consistent theme of the New Testament. (See 1 John 3:24, RSV.)

But what does "Christ in you" through the Holy Spirit mean? As Christ's representative, the "impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805. (See also Eph. 3:16, 17; Rom. 8:9-11.)

How important is the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the living and dying of Jesus?

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. . . . It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

THE GOAL OF GOSPEL PREACHING (Col. 1:28-2:5).

At the age of 16 George Mueller, of Bristol, England, was imprisoned for theft. Later as a university student he lived a wild, profligate life. When, at the age of 20, he experienced the new birth, his life was transformed. He became a great man of faith, relying on God to supply the needs of his orphanages. At his death, his personal possessions were valued at less than \$1,000. Like Paul, he had striven with all the energy with which Christ had inspired him, so he might present others to Him.

How does Paul describe the goal of gospel preaching? Col. 1:28, 29; 2:1.

Christ of the cross was also Christ of the indwelling Spirit—and Paul held these two open mysteries before his hearers without diminishing one for the other. The *subject* of Paul's preaching was Jesus Christ; the *result* was transformed men and women who joined His kingdom of love and loyalty.

Paul sees the purpose of his preaching to be identical with that of the grand design for the plan of salvation (see verse 22): to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). "Perfect" in this context refers to Christian maturity, to those who are fulfilling the purpose that God intends for His followers. In this life and in eternity, absolute perfection of spiritual, mental, physical, and social faculties will never be attained, because growth is always possible. But perfection, in the sense of victory over sin, is available to all through Christ. "Moral perfection is required of all."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330.

The true preacher's goal is to lead people to accept "Christ in you" (verse 27) so that progressively, selfishness, greed, unholy ambition, hate, and whatever else that is contrary to the spirit of Jesus is removed from their lives. Insofar as Christ dwells in their hearts, they enjoy present salvation in Christ (Col. 2:10).

What experience may become ours as we daily respond to Christ? Col. 2:2-5.

In this passage look for: (1) unity; (2) assurance; (3) spiritual understanding; (4) ability to detect error; (5) orderliness; (6) unwavering faith in Christ.

RECEIVING AND WALKING (Col. 2:6).

In what way did Paul keep simple the great teachings of justification and sanctification? Col. 2:6.

Christians receive Christ through faith, and they walk with Jesus by faith. (See 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16.) The faith that realizes man's helplessness and trusts God completely for pardon is the same faith that realizes man's powerlessness and trusts God completely for the ability to do His will. The faith of justification is no different from the faith of sanctification.

"The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere intellectual assent to the truth. He who waits for entire knowledge before he will exercise faith cannot receive blessing from God. It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

What conditions and responsibilities are explicit in Colossians 2:6?

Although God gives us the ability to believe and trust, He does not do our believing for us—no more than He does our breathing for us, though He gives us the gift of breathing. Neither does God transform our characters if we do not will to choose His way for us. God leads us to repent, but He will not repent for us. Without growing weary, God bids us to walk in the light that is ever advancing (Prov. 4:18), but He will not force us to walk, nor will He record that we have complied if we have not.

"By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to give all—your heart, your will, your service—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper—to give you power to obey."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH (Col. 2:7).

What clear counsel did Paul give regarding the "how" of Christian growth? Col. 2:7.

The Colossians were already well established in the faith. They did not need new roots. But the process of building and establishing the Christian's relationship with God is a continuous program, a progressive work, an unending call. We never love so well that there can be no improvement in expressing love; our appreciation for others can always be improved as we become wiser in discernment.

How important to an individual's salvation is his growth, the building of his life in accordance with the master plan? Compare Col. 2:7 with Matt. 7:24; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Heb. 6:1.

"Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, 'Without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man's efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. . . . But though Christ is everything, we are to inspire every man to unwearied diligence. We are to strive, wrestle, agonize, watch, pray, lest we shall be overcome by the wily foe. For the power and grace with which we can do this comes from God, and all the while we are to trust in Him, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him."
—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 381.

"Abounding in thanksgiving" (Col. 2:7, RSV). Gratitude reveals the Christian's sincerity, adds joy to the process of being "built up in him," and makes the Christian's walk win- some to the observer.

Can you describe for other Sabbath School members how Christ's power has made it possible for you to grow spiritually?

FURTHER STUDY: On the importance of continuing to walk by faith, study Hebrews 10:38, 39; 1 Peter 1:9. Read "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 671-680; "The Scriptures a Safeguard" and "The Time of Trouble" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 598-601; 622, 623; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 609; and "Rejoicing in the Lord" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 115-126.

"Even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 125.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does this week's Scripture passage correct the misconception that, because Christ does everything for us, there is nothing for us to do except believe? How does the passage correct the misconception that we can make ourselves holy?
2. What is the difference between Paul's concept of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" and pantheism, the idea that God exists in everything?
3. How could this week's Scripture passage help you to explain Christ's *standard* for us in relation to the *power* He provides to reach the standard?
4. How would you make clear to your next-door neighbor that we live for Christ in the same way that we receive Him initially?

SUMMARY: Because of Christ's death, we can be reconciled to God if we accept Christ by faith. We can grow spiritually toward moral perfection in Christ, if we live by faith. The exalted scriptural standard of spiritual blamelessness, victory over sinful behavior (Col. 1:22), is achievable only as we rely upon the power provided by "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).



Be a Missionary? No Way!

Ray Allen

"You want me to be a student missionary? Work with Adventist World Radio? No way!" I argued. "I'm no broadcaster. Never planned to be one. Never will. I'm not that kind of material."

A member of the student-missionary committee had asked me to consider the challenge of being a student missionary to work with Adventist World Radio in Portugal. My answer was No. I was a theology major at Newbold at the time and felt that working with broadcasting was not in my plan. But he was kindly persistent, and finally I decided to give it a try. That decision changed my life.

After spending a year in Portugal with Adventist World Radio, I returned to college to get a degree—in religious communication. I've worked in a number of countries and taught broadcasting at Newbold College for six years, along with pastoral duties. Now I am again working with Adventist World Radio as assistant program director. This time I knew better than to tell God No.

Rapid expansion of the Adventist World Radio network necessitated a central resource office to assist AWR producers to broadcast the good news more efficiently and meaningfully around the world. This office, on the campus of Newbold College, collects, commissions, and disseminates program ideas and materials to nearly 40 production centers around the world.

It has been 12 years since I almost said No to a life-changing challenge as a student missionary. Through that service God opened to me a hidden talent and showed me ways to use it to benefit others. Now I can encourage and assist students to make the most of the opportunities God has in store for them through the missionary outreach of Adventist World Radio.

Adventist World Radio broadcasts 157 hours of radio programs in 43 languages each day from six locations in Guam, Gabon, Costa Rica, Sicily, and Russia.



Ray Allen is assistant program director for Adventist World Radio in England.

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Jesus, Our Standard of Truth and Life



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Col. 2:8-15.

MEMORY TEXT: "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10).

KEY THOUGHT: Because Jesus Christ is the "fulness of deity" (Col. 2:9, RSV), who paid the penalty for our sins, we can be forgiven (verses 13, 14), and "come to fulness of life in him" (verse 10).

WE ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST. Few passages in the Bible focus the reader's mind on Jesus more intensely than Colossians 2:8-15, our study for this week. It is difficult to find words more beautiful to hear than "ye are complete in him" (Col. 2:10, KJV), or "you have come to fulness of life in him" (RSV). Say these words out loud. Say them again. If we have unreservedly committed our lives to Christ and maintain that commitment, then these words are true theologically and experientially.

Everywhere men and women are disillusioned with many concepts, beliefs, and cultural habits that were once taken for granted. They are disenchanted with government, financial planners, and technology. Even age-old social expectations and moral codes that have held families and communities together have been cast away by many.

But Jesus, the center, still holds, no matter what else disintegrates. And that is what Jesus has been saying for a long time: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

AUTHORITY FOR TRUTH (Col. 2:8).

What contrast does Paul draw between true and false philosophy? Col. 2:8.

The philosophy that Paul opposes is human tradition based on elemental teachings about the world and the universe. The issue is between philosophy that is based on revealed truth and philosophy generated by human speculation. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 211.)

On the basis of Paul's statements in the epistle, the false philosophy troubling the Colossians is identified: (1) the idea that Christ is an inferior deity (Col. 2:9); (2) the worship of angels as intermediaries between God and man (Col. 2:18); (3) Jewish and pagan legalism (Col. 2:16-23); (4) asceticism—based on the idea that matter (flesh) is evil (Col. 2:20-23). All this suggests an early form of gnosticism that taught that salvation is available to those who enjoy this kind of philosophical knowledge.

What kind of false religious knowledge will be especially influential in the last days? 1 Tim. 4:1 (compare 2 Thess. 2:9, 10; Rev. 16:13, 14).

"I was directed to this scripture as especially applying to modern spiritualism: Colossians 2:8. . . . The teachers of spiritualism come in a pleasing, bewitching manner to deceive you, and if you listen to their fables you are beguiled by the enemy of righteousness and will surely lose your reward. When once the fascinating influence of the archdeceiver overcomes you, you are poisoned, and its deadly influence adulterates and destroys your faith in Christ's being the Son of God, and you cease to rely on the merits of His blood. Those deceived by this philosophy are beguiled of their reward through the deceptions of Satan. They rely upon their own merits, exercise voluntary humility, are even willing to make sacrifices, and debase themselves, and yield their minds to the belief of supreme nonsense, receiving the most absurd ideas through those whom they believe to be their dead friends. Satan has so blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment that they perceive not the evil; and they follow out the instructions purporting to be from their dead friends now angels in a higher sphere."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 297, 298. (Note how this applies to the teachings of the "New Age.")

FULNESS OF TRUTH (Col. 2:9).

What is our basis for calling Jesus "Lord"? Col. 2:9.

"Fulness. . . . The encompassing stretch of this term is without limit in time and space and power. Everything that God is, every quality of Deity—dignity, authority, excellency, power in creating and fitting the world, energy in upholding and guiding the universe, love in redeeming mankind, forethought in supplying everything needful for each of His creatures—rests in Christ."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 202.

We are faced here with a mind-stretching thought. A baby born in Bethlehem, a young carpenter from Nazareth, an itinerant teacher crucified at 33 years of age, was also the One who spun the worlds into their orbits and spelled out the moral framework of the universe. All this is very difficult for anyone to believe, if one chooses to accept only that which can be proved from human experience. But for those who listen to Him and submit to His invitations, Jesus is more than a great teacher, more than the flowering of the human race. He is God, who chose to become man so that humanity could get a true picture of God and be redeemed to join His family.

Note what the following passages teach regarding the character of the God-man, Jesus Christ:

Isa. 53:9 _____

John 8:46 _____

Heb. 4:15 _____

1 Peter 2:22 _____

One of the primary purposes of Christ's incarnation was to reveal what true humanity should and could be like, as well as what God is really like. "To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven."—*Education*, pp. 73, 74.

FULNESS OF LIFE (Col. 2:10).

How only may we find the answer to all of life's questions and to all of its demands? Col. 2:10.

The Greek may be translated: "And you have been made complete [full, perfect] in Him." The verb used here means "to make full, fill, fulfill, make complete, bring to an end." It is translated "perfect" in both the KJV and the RSV of Revelation 3:2.

Because Christ is the "fulness of the Deity," if filled with His presence we are spiritually complete, full, perfect in Him. Promising the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "I will come to you" (John 14:18). His presence and power qualified the dying thief, and qualifies us, for heaven.

The purposes in God's program to secure the universe forever are (1) to atone for human sin, (2) to reveal Himself as One who can be trusted, and (3) to empower believers to overcome sin. Sin destroys, divides, deceives. Sin divides the mind and thus mingles motives, joining good and bad habits.

Christ, the Truth, puts all the pieces together. He enables the believer to be consistent, to see the whole picture, even though at times the picture may be hazy, dim, even blurred. Only by listening to Him can men and women experience the fullness of life.

What does constantly receiving Christ's spiritual fullness do for our characters? Col. 1:9, 10, 28 (compare Phil. 3:12-14).

"The mighty power of the Holy Spirit works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus. When a man is filled with the Spirit, the more severely he is tested and tried, the more clearly he proves that he is a representative of Christ. . . . Are we striving with all our power to attain to the stature of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever pressing toward the mark set before us—the perfection of His character? When the Lord's people reach this mark, they will be sealed in their foreheads. Filled with the Spirit, they will be complete in Christ, and the recording angel will declare, 'It is finished.'"—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1117, 1118.

TRUE CIRCUMCISION (Col. 2:11, 12).

In what way does Paul make clear that human performance is pure legalism unless the heart is changed? Col. 2:11.

"Made without hands. Although the rite of circumcision was performed by hand, its significance and value lay in the fact of its inner meaning. It was designed to be an outward sign of an inward state of faith and grace. [See Deut. 10:16; 30:6.] Through it Abraham indicated his belief that it was not he, but God, who had life and could give life to others. This peculiar sign was to distinguish all men of ancient Israel. It pointed to Israel's complete devotion to Jehovah and obedience to all His requirements. . . . The circumcision that the Colossian Christians had received was not external in the flesh. It was an inward change in heart and life typified by their baptism."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 202, 203.

Why does Paul lift up baptism as especially important to the Christian while disapproving of any spiritual significance to circumcision? Col. 2:12.

Along with other ceremonial observances that pointed forward to the work of Christ, circumcision as a religious rite ceased at the cross. (See Rom. 2:28, 29; Acts 15:1, 28, 29; Gal. 2:3; 5:6.) Baptism has taken the place of circumcision and in many respects is a far superior witness to faith and commitment. The child knows nothing of the experience or purpose of circumcision; the believer understands that his baptism is the outward sign of an inward experience.

Paul's discussion is concerned with the spiritual and moral aspects of circumcision only, not with its physical value. If there is any spiritual value in any human act, it must be a work of faith (Rom. 14:23). The symbolism of being buried under water graphically symbolizes the believer's abrupt and complete change of life and master. Even as Christ's resurrection could be accomplished only by divine power, so the Christian can be transformed into "the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29) only by the same divine power. (See Rom. 6:3-5.)

What part is ours in preventing our religious observances from becoming legalistic?

FORGIVENESS AND REGENERATION (Col. 2:13-15).

Paul describes the former spiritual condition of the Colossian believers. When they were outside of Christ, they were insensitive to spiritual things, wedded to their sinful practices. (Compare Rom. 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-5.) When they became believers, they were "made alive together with" Christ (Col. 2:13, RSV). Their old sinful ways were rejected, and Christ was accepted as the source of their newness of heart and lifestyle. (Compare Rom. 6:18, 22; 8:14-16.)

How does Paul join what is so often kept separate—the relationship between pardon and regeneration? Col. 2:13.

"God made [us] alive together with him [Christ], having forgiven us all our trespasses" (Col. 2:13, RSV). In other words, God made us alive with Christ *by* forgiving all our trespasses. Forgiveness in Scripture *includes* regeneration. When we forgive others, we can overlook the past, but we cannot change their hearts. But when God forgives us, He transforms our hearts.

"God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' Psalm 51:10." —*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

What did God nail to the cross? Col. 2:14.

The law was not nailed to the cross, because the New Testament teaches that it remains God's standard of righteousness. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7; 8:1-4; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4, 5; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.) "The handwriting of ordinances that was against us" (Col. 2:14) refers to the huge debt of human guilt for which animal sacrifices could not atone. This guilt was nailed to the cross because Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV). Thus, when we accept Him, He is able to destroy our guilt, making us free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Our spiritual enemies were disarmed at the cross (Col. 2:15).

FURTHER STUDY: For what did Christ suffer? 1 John 2:2; 4:10; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4. When is our personal guilt destroyed? 1 John 1:9; Acts 5:31; 13:38, 39; Matt. 6:14.

Read "Written From Rome" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 475-477, and "Confession" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 37-41.

"Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. . . .

"True repentance will lead a man to bear his guilt himself and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy. Like the poor publican, not lifting up so much as his eyes unto heaven, he will cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and those who do acknowledge their guilt will be justified, for Jesus will plead His blood in behalf of the repentant soul."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 37-41.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What connection do you see between our guilt's being borne by Christ and the end to the ceremonial observances of the Israelite temple? (See Heb. 9:11-14.)
2. Your friend confides in you that he still feels guilty after asking Christ to forgive his sins. How would you use this week's lesson to help him overcome that feeling of guilt?
3. If the "bond which stood against us with its legal demands" (Col. 2:14, RSV) was nailed to the cross, why are we not forgiven for our sins until we confess them (1 John 1:9)?
4. What does it mean to you to know that, as a believer, you are "complete in Christ" at this moment?

SUMMARY: Because Christ is the fullness of the Deity, He was able to bear our guilt on the cross. By virtue of that infinite sacrifice, He now forgives the sins of those who confess and repent, and gives them fullness of life in Him. On the cross He triumphed over the powers of darkness, and again He triumphs by displaying to the universe our transformed lives. (See Isa. 53:11.)



Thirteenth Sabbath Offering Update: Reykjavik, Iceland

Part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering from third quarter, 1989, helped to establish a church school and evangelistic center in Reykjavik, Iceland. What has happened to that offering?

More than half of Iceland's 260,000 residents live in or near Reykjavik, the largest city in Iceland, this windswept island nation of approximately 103,000 square kilometers (40,000 square miles) in the North Atlantic. The offering that benefited Iceland was designated for a school and evangelistic center, which has been established within a 15-20 minute drive of most residents in Reykjavik. The Adventist church here has approximately 560 members in 7 churches.

The formal opening of the school took place in September 1990, with classes for grades 1-8, but has since been expanded to serve grades 1-10. During the 1992-1993 school year, the school served 61 students. The headmaster and a staff of four full-time teachers, as well as several part-time teachers, serves the institution.

Evangelistic center activity has grown more slowly, hampered at first by lack of an auditorium for meetings. But now vegetarian-cooking seminars, Revelation seminars, and other programs are bringing results.

Interest in religious matters traditionally has taken low priority in Iceland, where people are steeped in traditions and superstition, especially spiritualism. It has been difficult to attract people to evangelistic meetings. A few years back a major evangelist came to Reykjavik to hold lectures. A large hall was rented, and a large number of people responded to the advertisement of archaeological lectures. But after two meetings, attendance dropped dramatically. They were not interested in the Bible, just archaeology and a slide show.

However, today we face a different audience. When we advertise a Bible-prophecy seminar, the halls are filled to capacity with students eager to study God's Word.

In May 1993, we celebrated a baptism of nine new members as a result of our evangelistic outreach. For this, we praise the Lord.

Eric Gudmundsson, president, Iceland Conference.



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Jesus, the Answer to Legalism



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 2:16–3:4.

MEMORY TEXT: "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: The essence of legalism is to depend upon self rather than completely upon Jesus for pardon and power. Man-made religions and ceremonies encourage legalism. Only in union with Christ is salvation possible.

LEGALISM AND SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE TWIN BROTHERS. Teaching a class of juniors, a Sabbath School teacher explained how deplorable it was for the Pharisee to pray, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are" (Luke 18:11). In a brief season of prayer at the end of the class, one of the boys prayed, "We thank Thee, God, that we are not like that Pharisee!"

We smile, but it is no more reasonable for a church member who is selfish in his treatment of his wife to attempt to erase his guilt by faithful attendance at church services, or for a freewheeling businessperson to seek acclaim by making a large donation to the church.

Paul's emphasis in this next section of Colossians is as valid today as it was in his day. Legalism seems never to die. New forms are forever developing. It is as delusive and deceiving now as it has ever been.

Even God-appointed means to awaken faith and promote spiritual growth can degenerate into legalism when the purpose for the service is forgotten.

THE SOLID REALITY (Col. 2:16, 17).

After Jesus died on the cross, why was it legalism to continue the celebration of the sanctuary services that God had instituted in Moses' day? Col. 2:16, 17.

Paul has warned against human traditions and man-made philosophies (Col. 2:8). The faithful God-man, Jesus Christ, died for our sins, making a way to abolish our legal debt (verses 13, 14). Continuing the ceremonial services that pointed forward to His death is a virtual denial that He has "canceled the bond which stood against us" (verse 14, RSV). "If Christ be not raised . . . ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). Ignoring the reality by perpetuating the shadow substitutes a human method of salvation for God's method. And that is legalism!

"A Shadow of Things to Come"

The phrase "a festival [feast] or a new moon or a sabbath" (Col. 2:16, RSV) is an idiomatic or stylized reference to the ceremonial sacrifices offered in the ancient Israelite sanctuary or temple. The Old Testament background is Numbers 28 and 29, in which the burnt offerings daily, weekly, monthly and yearly are listed. There were five yearly feasts, involving seven ceremonial sabbaths. Seven Old Testament passages use some form of the phrase "feasts, new moons, sabbaths" (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12, 13; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Eze. 45:17; Hosea 2:11). Each passage refers to the burnt offerings to be offered weekly, monthly, and yearly. Usually the feasts specify only the three pilgrimage feasts (Unleavened Bread, Weeks or Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The sabbaths must, therefore, include the ceremonial sabbaths—otherwise Solomon, for example, would have failed to offer burnt offerings on the days of Trumpets and Atonement (2 Chron. 8:12, 13). The word *sabbaths* in the phrase "feasts, new moons, sabbaths" specifies the burnt offerings for weekly and annual (ceremonial) sabbaths. In Colossians 2:16, 17, Paul taught that *the sacrifices offered* weekly (sabbath), monthly, or yearly were a "shadow" pointing forward to Christ (see Heb. 8:5; 10:1), which lost their significance at the cross. But the weekly Sabbath remains as a perpetual memorial of Creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Matt. 24:20; Heb. 4:9) and a sign of sanctification (Ex. 31:13). The "food and drink" (Col. 2:16, RSV) refer to the meal and drink offerings that were presented to God along with the burnt offerings. (See Num 28:2, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, etc.)

FALSE HUMILITY VERSUS DEPENDENCE (Col. 2:18, 19).

How does Paul warn against those who attempt to impress others with their religious rituals? Col. 2:18.

The practice of worshiping angels suggests gnostic influence. The gnostics taught that angels were inferior deities emanating from the supreme Deity.

In Paul's day, as well as our own, some have suggested activities that will "prove" their "humility," and thus the genuineness of their devotion. Whatever the demonstration, the end is the same—human works. The message of Christianity is simple: because nothing in man can accomplish what the law requires, salvation is solely an act of God, both in forgiving and in empowering. Christ is our righteousness. Our efforts in cooperation with Him are an act of faith, not the means of victory or salvation.

Genuine humility recognizes the helplessness of even the strongest-willed people in dealing with selfishness. The humble individual is grateful for the joy in Christ that comes with complete dependence upon Him. Only those who say with Jesus, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30), and with Paul, "I can do all things in him [Christ] who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, RSV), are humble.

What vital mistake do those make who test doctrine and practice by their own reason or feelings? Col. 2:18, 19.

We are to be part of Christ's body, attached to the Head. (Compare John 15:1-8.) We may be His hands and feet, but He is the head (Eph. 4:15). Our hands do not decide what they should do; our head does.

Paul's analogy of the body and the head, the joints and ligaments, is clear: if any order is desired, if any purpose is to be fulfilled, each person should be listening in genuine humility to Him who is our head, to Him who alone knows what is truth and best. Surely it is "vain conceit" and satanic philosophy for people to attempt to figure out their own plan of salvation, adjusting the simple biblical plan to what seems best to them.

Can you identify religious practices today that are legalistic? How can even our legitimate religious services become legalistic?

DEAD WITH CHRIST (Col. 2:20-22).

How does Paul expose the paradox of professing to be dead to legalism while performing the rituals of legalism? Col. 2:20-22.

Any form of legalism is high-sounding vanity, no matter how many biblical texts are used, no matter how sanctimonious the objectives are. Legalism seems to exist in all religious groups, pagan or Christian.

The ritual performances of the Pharisee, the ascetic self-mortifications of the medieval monk, the rule-keeping, modern Christian without the faith of Jesus, or the "only believe" proponent who thinks that obedience is imputed to the Christian—all end up trying to please God by devices of thought or behavior that bypass the saving grace of Christ and His power to give victory over sin. In the end Paul's counsel to such persons is a foreign experience; they have not died with Christ to sin.

No matter how many "don'ts" a person can add up, no matter how many years of exemplary "self-denials," all these negatives do not necessarily add up to positive growth in grace. Overcoming sin, becoming like Jesus (Rev. 3:21; 1 John 3:3), is much more than living a life of avoiding that which can be physically tasted or handled.

What does it mean for us to "die with Christ"? Compare Col. 2:20; 3:3 with Rom. 6:2, 6, 11; Eph. 4:22.

The death of the "old man" (Rom. 6:6) is deliverance for the repentant believer from the "the former manner of life" (Eph. 4:22, RSV). Self is replaced by Christ as the center of existence. Even though we remain fallen human beings with tendencies to sin (1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 5:17, 18), we may enjoy habitual victory and spiritual growth because Christ reigns in our hearts.

"The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1075.

APPEARANCES OF RELIGION (Col. 2:23).

How does Paul summarize all legalisms, especially in regard to the ability to aid a person in overcoming sin? Col. 2:23.

Paul now sums up chapter 2: Jesus is the answer to all legalism. Buried with Him in death to self, the Christian knows the power of Deity within him, even to experiencing "fulness of life" (Col. 2:10, RSV). The first-century Christian no longer needed circumcision or ceremonial feast days and cleansings to point to Christ. He needed faith in the meaning of Christ's life and death, a faith that is a response of repentance, trust, and submissive obedience. The present-day Christian has the same desperate need.

The only circumcision that now matters (in fact, the only circumcision that ever mattered) is that of the heart. Nothing can be added to Christ's pardon offered freely to the penitent; nothing can be added to the power of the Holy Spirit that will join with the believer's will in a divine-human union to destroy the clutches of both inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 330, 331.)

Paul is stating the truth as clearly as words permit: One thing only matters—are we "checking the indulgence of the flesh"? Whatever religious duties, attainments, and rituals for which one may be known, nothing matters if all this effort does not lead to overcoming sin and to growth in grace. (See Colossians 3:5-10.)

By what means can we daily "check" all selfish desires and indulgences? Rev. 3:18-20.

"The churches may yet obtain the gold of truth, faith, and love. . . . The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ that may be wrought into the character. Purity of heart, purity of motive, will characterize every one who is washing his robe, and making it white in the blood of the Lamb. . . . [You may say that you believe in Jesus] when you have an intelligent, understanding faith that His death makes it possible for you to cease from sin, and to perfect a righteous character through the grace of God, bestowed upon you as the purchase of Christ's blood."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1888.

CHRIST IS OUR LIFE (Col. 3:1-4).

How does Paul characterize the believer who has truly understood his responsibility for his salvation? Col. 3:1, 2.

"If." Paul means, in view of the fact that we know we have been born anew by looking to Jesus, let us not turn to any method to stay right with God other than to keep looking to Jesus.

"Seek." Christians should make a habit of seeking. Such seeking is done not only at the beginning of the Christian walk; seeking "those things which are above" must be a daily practice or we lose what we once gained.

"The right hand of God" is a phrase that occurs a number of times in the New Testament. (See Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22.) It denotes the authority that Jesus and the Father share.

"Things above." Those "things that are above" (Col 3:2, RSV) will never pass away. One of the most important objects of our heavenly gaze is our Lord's high priestly ministry in the Most Holy Place today. We are told: "Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The archdeceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful Mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 488.

What reasons does Paul give that Christians should think and live differently from unbelievers? Col. 3:3, 4.

"You must experience a death to self, and must live unto God. . . . [Quote Col. 3:1.] Self is not to be consulted. Pride, self-love, selfishness, avarice, covetousness, love of the world, hatred, suspicion, jealousy, evil surmisings, must all be subdued and sacrificed forever. When Christ shall appear, it will not be to correct these evils and then give a moral fitness for His coming. This preparation must all be made before He comes. It should be a subject of thought, of study, and earnest inquiry, What shall we do to be saved? What shall be our conduct that we may show ourselves approved unto God?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 705.

FURTHER STUDY: Study the teaching of Ephesians 4:22-32 on the death of the "old man" and the life of the "new man." Ask yourself:

1. Who is the "old man"?
2. Who is the "new man"?
3. What habits and practices do we put away when the "old man" dies?
4. What habits and practices do we take on when the "new man" comes to life?

Read "Like Unto Leaven" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 99, 100; "Facing Life's Record" ("The Investigative Judgment") in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 488, 489; "Christian Temperance" in *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 354-356.

Now is the time to prepare. "We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 355.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God require weekly Sabbath observance since the cross, even though celebration of the ceremonial sabbaths has been done away?
2. Paul instructs, "Set your minds on things that are above" (Col. 3:2, RSV). What do you do if your thoughts keep getting out of control? How can you successfully follow the Bible counsel?
3. Your friend is religiously careful in caring for his health but seems selfish and thoughtless in the way he treats his wife and family. Without interfering in matters that are none of your business, how would you try to help your friend change?

SUMMARY: Because Christ died for our sins, the ceremonial services of the ancient Israelite sanctuary or temple that pointed forward to Him no longer need to be observed. Legalism is any religious practice that is used to earn favor with God. By constant fellowship with Christ, we remain dead to sin and alive for God. Thanks be to God! Jesus is the answer to all our needs!



A Huge School District

Andrew Cox

The day of reckoning dawned—graduation day at Newbold College. As I marched up the steps to receive my degree, a voice kept nagging, "Where now? Where now?"

I had decided earlier to study French for a year, for I knew it would help me in my career, but it soon became apparent that God wanted me to learn the language for reasons other than my business degree. Halfway through my year in France I received a call from Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) asking whether I would be willing to work on a United Nations/ADRA joint project. After praying and considering the call carefully, I accepted.

The UN-ADRA project, called Frontline Education, tries to meet the educational needs of refugees who have fled Liberia in the wake of the Liberian civil war. Thousands of Liberian civilians have died, and tens of thousands have fled to the borders of Ivory Coast, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. More than 250,000 of these refugees live in Ivory Coast alone. ADRA runs the educational program, and the UN High Commission on Refugees provides the funding. Almost two years after the program began, Frontline Education serves 37,000 registered primary-school students in 135 schools and employs a staff of 800. ADRA has begun a secondary-school program that will increase student population by another 10,000.

My task is to look after the finances and share in the overall administration of this multimillion-dollar project. I enjoy my work. There is always a crisis to be solved, people to meet, field work to do. And the cultural aspect of the job makes it even more fascinating.

Refugees who have been uprooted from their cultures are often more open to Christianity. Some refugees will return to their homeland, a nation closed to most Christian work. If we can reach them for Christ in the refugee camps, they will take their new faith with them and spread the gospel where we cannot go.

I know I probably would not be here in Ivory Coast if I had not gone to Newbold College. The excellent academics and the culturally diverse student body helped equip me for this unique assignment.



Andrew Cox graduated from Newbold College with a BBA (management) and is working in West Africa.

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Jesus, Our Image of the New Creation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 3:5-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:9, 10, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Because our old life of habitual sin has died and we are "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3), we are to put away every behavior that is characteristic of that old way of life. By allowing Christ constantly to renew our spiritual life, we are being progressively remade in His divine image.

CHRIST MAKES POSSIBLE OUR CONSTANT SPIRITUAL GROWTH. The seed of the globe turnip is about one-twentieth of an inch (1 1/4 mm) in diameter. When planted it grows to many times its original size. Research has demonstrated that, under good conditions, the plant can increase its own weight 15 times in one minute. Planted in peat ground, these turnips will grow to many times the weight of their seeds in one day.

Growth is one of the laws of life. This week's lesson demonstrates that Christians whose "life is hid with Christ in God" can experience constant spiritual growth. They can have victory over the sinful behaviors that were habitual to them before they accepted Christ, and they can become in character more and more like Jesus.

PUT TO DEATH THE EARTHLY (Col. 3:5).

What change does Paul expect in Christian believers? Col. 3:5 (compare Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:24).

"Mortify" (KJV) means "put to death" (RSV). The tense of the verb does not mean "put to death gradually," but "put to death now." What are we to put to death? Paul has just said that, as believers, we have died with Christ (Col. 2:20; 3:3) and "have been raised" with Him (Col. 3:1, RSV). This is what Jesus meant by the new birth produced by the Holy Spirit (John 3). If we have had this experience, what else is there to put to death?

Paul says, "Mortify . . . [put to death] your members." Then he identifies "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Our members are our bodily parts. Are these so naturally evil that we must put them to death?

The basic problem is not the "members," but "your passions that are at war in your members" (James 4:1, RSV).

What did Paul teach the Roman Christians about the body in relation to sin? Rom. 6:13, 19; 7:5, 23.

When our bodies and minds are controlled by evil passions, we do the things we know are wrong—because, as Paul explains, "the law of sin . . . dwells in my members" (Rom. 7:23, RSV). Then we are "carnal, sold under sin" (verse 14). But when "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set . . . [us] free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2, RSV), our members become "instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13). Therefore, Paul counsels: "Just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification" (Rom. 6:19, RSV). The problem is that born-again believers are still fallen human beings with biases, tendencies, desires, or propensities toward sin (1 Cor. 9:27). When we give in to those tendencies, we use our members as "instruments of wickedness" (Rom. 6:13, RSV) by committing the sins that Paul lists in Colossians 3:5.

The point is that *by relying upon Christ*, we can put to death evil desires *now* (whenever they arise) and enjoy spiritual victory.

THE WRATH OF GOD (Col. 3:6, 7).

How does Paul spell out the sure consequences awaiting those who do not permit the Holy Spirit to empower them to overcome particular sins? Col. 3:6, 7.

Those who do not seek the Holy Spirit to empower them to "put to death" their sinful thoughts and practices are surrendering to the spirit of the rebel. They are in basic disagreement with God's way of removing sin from the universe, regardless of religious profession. Upon those who either trivialize sin or excuse it as a problem too deep for the Holy Spirit to eradicate, judgment has been spoken—"the wrath of God is coming" (Col. 3:6, RSV).

Does God actually administer punishment to those who disobey Him? What does Scripture teach? Rev. 20:9, 10 (compare Gen. 7:4; 19:24, 25; Lev. 10:1, 2; Num 16:29-35).

Two emphases are important regarding God's punishment:

1. Throughout time, the Lord often withdraws His protection from the rebellious, allowing Satan and wicked humans to destroy them. The law of natural consequences applies. Discussing the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), Ellen White writes: "God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 36.

2. In the final destruction of the wicked, the law of natural consequences will still apply, but then God will do cosmically what He did in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and of the antediluvian world—He will actively destroy sin and sinners. "God's judgments will be visited upon those who are seeking to oppress and destroy His people. . . . By terrible things in righteousness He will vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. The severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor may be judged by the Lord's reluctance to execute justice. The nation with which He bears long, and which He will not smite until it has filled up the measure of its iniquity in God's account, will finally drink the cup of wrath unmixed with mercy."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 627. (See Rev. 14:10.)

PUT THEM ALL AWAY (Col. 3:8).

To what extent does God expect us to put away sin? How? Col. 3:8 (compare Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:34; 1 Peter 2:11).

"Put them all away" (RSV). Literally, "lay aside, once and for all, like old clothes." God would have us give up all sin now—the attitudes that lead to sins of both the flesh and the spirit. The "all" of Colossians 3:8 refers both to the sins listed there and those of verse 5.

The availability of Christ's power to overcome any temptation at any time in no way denies the reality of our spiritual growth as we abide in Christ (John 15:1-8). We do not step from the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder to the uppermost rung. (See 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 3:18.) Being made more like Christ means: (1) experiencing more frequent victory over sin because we are more consistent in allowing the Spirit to reign in our lives and (2) becoming more like Jesus in positive virtues. The goal of this sanctifying process is to be an overcomer as Jesus was. (See Rev. 3:21; compare 1 John 3:1-9; 5:18.)

Does God really expect us to get the victory over these sins of the spirit before death, before He comes? Rev. 14:5 (compare Eph. 4:13; 5:27).

The Lord bestows spiritual gifts to bring us "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). If we die as true believers before arriving at that exalted standard, we are not lost. Like the thief on the cross, the believer enjoys presently the free gift of Christ's perfect righteousness. (See Col. 2:10; Rom. 8:9, 10.) If he falls into sin, Christ's forgiveness is readily available. (See 1 John 1:9; 2:1.) Nevertheless, the goal of complete victory is achievable through Christ's power.

"None need fail of attaining, in his sphere, to perfection of Christian character. By the sacrifice of Christ, provision has been made for the believer to receive all things that pertain to life and godliness. God calls upon us to reach the standard of perfection and places before us the example of Christ's character. In His humanity, perfected by a life of constant resistance of evil, the Saviour showed that through cooperation with Divinity, human beings may in this life attain to perfection of character. This is God's assurance to us that we, too, may obtain complete victory."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

THE OLD AND NEW NATURES (Col. 3:9, 10).

How does Paul emphasize the distinctive difference between a Christian and a nonbeliever? Col. 3:9.

We "put off the old man" (KJV) when we accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord. The "old man," the old life of habitual sinning (Eph. 4:22), is dead, but we remain fallen human beings with tendencies toward sin. (Gal. 5:17, 18.) By Christ's power we are now to overcome all behavior that is characteristic of that old sinful lifestyle. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that, because the "old nature which belongs to your former manner of life" has been discarded, "therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:22-25, RSV).

"Lie not." "All liars are to have their part in the lake of fire, and yet there are more falsehoods told and acted than many suppose. All deception and overstatements are falsehoods. A truthful man, a man of integrity, will not designedly produce impressions by language or signs that are not strictly true. He will not allow any to receive from him that which he knows to be incorrect. A falsehood consists in an intention to deceive. A look of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, will tell a falsehood as effectually as words. Hints and insinuations which leave an exaggerated impression on minds are falsehoods. Says the apostle, 'Lie not one to another.'"—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1880.

What is the result of putting on the "new man" (Col. 3:10, KJV)? Compare Eph. 4:24.

"Only by the grace of God, united with your own persistent efforts, can you become conqueror over your will. Through the merits of Christ you may part with that which scars and deforms the soul, and which develops a misshapen character. You must put away the old man with his errors and take the new man, Christ Jesus. Adopt His life as your guide[;] then your talents and intellect will be devoted to God's service."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 92.

Have you found Christ as the source of your spiritual life? Do you daily turn to Him to be "renewed in knowledge" after the image of your Creator?

ALL EQUAL IN CHRIST (Col. 3:11).

In what sense did Jesus become the norm, the standard for all humanity? Col. 3:11 (compare Gal. 3:28, 29).

A more profound, enormously meaningful statement with immense social implications cannot be found in all literature. Paul here exposes the senseless distinctions that men and women have created: racial—"neither Greek nor Jew"; religious—"circumcision nor uncircumcision"; cultural—"Barbarian, Scythian"; social—"bond nor free."

It would be impossible to list all the attitudes and practices that have separated men and women, families, nations, and ethnic groups since sin entered the world. In other places Paul mentions the philosophies that too often separate church members. He emphasizes that the wisdom of this world does not create "the new man." (See Col. 2:4, 8, 18; 1 Cor. 1:21.) At the foot of the cross men and women are equal in need and in their access to the solution.

How does the cross destroy the religious and cultural barriers that separate nations, races, and religious groups? Eph. 2:11-21.

Cultural differences that do not contradict any Christian principle do not divide believers when Christ is Lord of their lives. National and cultural distinctions do not veil the fact of each group's basic need for salvation, for moral help.

"Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Saviour has a boundless love for every human being. In each one He sees capacity for improvement. With divine energy and hope He greets those for whom He has given His life. In His strength they can live a life rich in good works, filled with the power of the Spirit."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 225.

What are the benefits enjoyed by the Adventist Church because its members believe in the spiritual unity of all Christ's followers, whatever their national or ethnic background?

FURTHER STUDY: Note the similarities between the teaching of Romans 6 and that of this week's passage. Read portions of "It Is Finished" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 763, 764, and "Consecration" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 43-48.

"The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. When men who claim to be Christians retain all their natural defects of character and disposition, in what does their position differ from that of the worldling? They do not appreciate the truth as a sanctifier, a refiner. They have not been born again."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1101.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Paul wrote, "Do not lie to one another" (Col. 3:9, RSV). How do you explain the way God blessed Rahab despite her lie about the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:3-7)?
2. Is it deception to leave a light on in your house when you are away so that prospective thieves will think there is someone at home?
3. A woman friend of yours is struggling with moral impurity and is convinced that her sins are so serious that God cannot forgive her. How would this week's lesson help you minister to her need?

SUMMARY: Having accepted Christ's transforming grace in the new-birth experience, we are instructed to put away all sin that is characteristic of our old nature and manner of life. As we learn to depend more fully on Christ, allowing His Spirit to reign in our hearts, we grow spiritually more like Him. Present temptation can be resisted and overcome by relying fully on Christ's power.



Norwegian Conquers Russian City for Christ

Oivind Gjertsen

In December 1944, Norwegian military officers traveled north from Scotland, through Murmansk, on the Kola Peninsula in far northwestern Russia, site of the vast Russian Atlantic Naval base, to establish a Norwegian military presence in the northernmost part of Norway. The officers were treated well by the Russians. Soon the great World War was over, and Norway was again a free country.

In January 1993, another Norwegian freedom fighter traveled to Murmansk, an isolated city inside the Arctic Circle. However, he was on his way to a different kind of assignment. Pastor Tor Therandsen, a young Adventist minister from northern Norway, traveled to Murmansk to preach the Adventist message to the people there and to strengthen the Adventist presence in that great city. And the 90 Seventh-day Adventists in Murmansk welcomed him.

Throughout this public campaign, an audience of approximately 1,100 persons attended the weekend meetings, and 700 to 800 persons came on weekdays. We expect a large baptism as a result of these evangelistic meetings and look forward to a growing Adventist presence in northwestern Russia.

We rejoice to see that the power of the cross is permeating a country where atheism dominated for decades. Today, freedom comes to people ripe for the kingdom of God. In March and April 1993, Magne Krekling conducted a campaign in the city of Apartixy, 200 kilometers (125 miles) south of Murmansk.

To you, our faithful Sabbath School members throughout the world, we are grateful for making Global Mission possible through your prayers and financial support of mission work around the world.



Oivind Gjertsen is Sabbath School director, Norwegian Union Conference.

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Serving Jesus



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 3:12-4:1.

MEMORY TEXT: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Last week's lesson emphasized what Christians turn *from* when they "put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9). Now we turn to what Christians "put on" when they let God rule in their hearts.

CHRIST'S ABIDING PRESENCE DIRECTS OUR BEHAVIOR. Dr. A. J. Gordon, pastor of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston from 1869 to 1895, once dreamed that a dignified stranger walked into his church and listened attentively as he preached. In the dream, Gordon asked a deacon after the sermon, "Do you know him?" "Why, yes," said the deacon, "He is Jesus Christ."

Gordon lamented, "Oh, how I wish I could have talked with Him." "It's all right, pastor," assured the deacon, "He'll be back next week."

Gordon's ministry was transformed as he realized that every time he preached, Jesus was there and heard every word.

Christians are to live out in practice what Christ's presence has introduced into their hearts and what they have declared in principle and profession. In the new life with Christ, our primary focus is on Jesus.

"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin. . . . It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 419, 420.

VALIDATING OUR PROFESSION (Col. 3:12, 13).

After describing what the Christian must "put off," what does Paul say about those characteristics that distinguish genuine Christians? Col. 3:12, 13.

Here Paul parallels verse 8: the change of life that the Christian experiences is akin to changing clothing. The rags of the unbeliever, seen as "immorality [fornication], impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness" (verse 5, RSV) and as "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk" (verse 8, RSV), through Christ's power should be discarded once and for all. Anger, impatience, covetousness, and lying are no more acceptable to God than murder, adultery, or intoxicating beverages.

God has designed the "new man" (verse 10), the new garment of character, as an ever deepening reflection of "the image of its creator" (verse 10). Christ in believers' hearts makes them in character like Himself—pure, compassionate, kind, humble, patient, and forgiving.

God will not put this new character garment on a professing Christian without his consent and cooperation. He simply says, through Paul, that if we are willing to work with Him, willing to cherish the desire to be what He wishes us to be, He will convert the desire into a fact. As we look to Jesus, He becomes, by means of indwelling grace, the beautiful example of what true humanity may be like. He shows us how to "put on" those characteristics that mark us as His sons and daughters.

How can the parent, the supervisor, or the spouse "forbear" (see Col. 3:13) when discipline must be administered or principle upheld? Compare Deut. 8:5; Prov. 19:18; Titus 3:10, 11.

Jesus has helped us to understand that meekness does not necessarily mean mildness in a case when children are abused or when scolding is draining the self-confidence out of others. The "loving thing to do" requires a clear sense of what Jesus would do under the same circumstances. Our first loyalty is to His principles, not to our concept of how love should be expressed in order to please others for the moment. In the "doing of one's duty" let there be the softness of heart, the tear in the eye, such as Jesus displayed when He spoke the truth plainly.

THE PERFECT BOND (Col. 3:14).

Why is love the supreme virtue? What does it do for us?
Col. 3:14.

Unfortunately for modern users of the English language, "charity" no longer has the meaning it once had. The Greek word *agape* is best translated "love," although even "love" has been diluted into trivial meanings in modern times.

Love (agape) is a word beyond human depth and breadth because it describes the character and motivation of God, whom we best know through Jesus Christ. In fact, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). His highest concern is the well-being of others. Even God, the Creator of the universe, would sacrifice, lay aside, give away, certain prerogatives if it meant the salvation of any of His created beings. (See John 3:16; Rom. 5:8.)

What does love have to do with our thoughts and emotions? Phil. 4:6-8.

Love does not only help the Christian to keep the law; love *is* the keeping of the law. (See Rom. 13:8-10.) This seems hard for some to grasp. For this reason love (*agape*) is described as a principle and not merely a feeling. Love is the way that a Christ-reflecting Christian relates to God and man. Nothing more could possibly be required of a Christian than to love as Jesus loved. Love, then, is what Bible writers call perfection; it beautifully summarizes "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, RSV). Bible perfection involves the absence of selfishness and the presence of complete commitment to whatever God has said to be truth. Thus, love is righteousness, or perfection (in the biblical sense).

"Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and 'God is love.' 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for 'all thy commandments are righteousness' (Psalm 119:172), and 'love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

Can you describe to your Sabbath School class what divine and human love have done for you?

PEACE RULES (Col. 3:15).

In what way did Paul relate peace and gratitude? Col. 3:15.

This "peace of God" (or, of Christ, as many ancient manuscripts read) is not merely the peace of a quiet lagoon. Rather, the peace that Christ imparts is the same peace He enjoyed when He faced up to unpleasant verbal assaults and terrible loneliness. Christians find peace in situations beyond their control, by looking to Jesus. Jesus promised: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27, RSV).

Peace is not only a personal matter, helping the believer to cope with life. Peace is also a powerful force that makes home a place more desired than any other; peace changes a contentious church into a refreshing, supportive fellowship.

"Rule." Literally, "to umpire." When differences of opinion arise in a home or a church, "the peace of God" can serve as the umpire who arbitrates the differences and thus resolves the tension. "While self is alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 16.

In what way does gratitude promote peace? Compare 1 Cor. 1:4 with verses 10, 11.

Paul did not rebuke the Corinthians for their disunity before praising God for His blessings to them and for the spiritual progress they had made. Such gratitude to God on their behalf would convince the Corinthians of Paul's genuine concern for them and put them in the right frame of mind to receive his counsel.

When we express sincere gratitude for what God is doing for us and for those who are opposing us, jealousy and envy are less likely to arise. Grateful persons feel that they receive more than they deserve. When a person is grateful for sins forgiven, for power to overcome, for eternal life, no human situation can become so big or so bad that the light of God's love is shut out.

THE WORD OF CHRIST (Col. 3:16).

What may be the result when "the word" is permitted to dwell in the Christian's life? Col. 3:16.

Unfortunately, throughout the history of the Christian church, "the word of Christ" has often been only something to learn, to agree to, to accept as one would accept the words of a physicist regarding the makeup of the atom. But one of Jesus' primary emphases is that His "words" must become to us as food and drink (John 6:53-63). His words, when properly understood and obeyed, affect the spiritual life even as vegetables and fruits affect the physical life. Furthermore, the believer must believe "the word of Christ" personally and hear his or her own name on each promise, on each command.

The searing debate over law and gospel that has sapped the energy of the Christian church for centuries would be eliminated if all were to appreciate the purpose of Holy Scripture. The command of the law and the promise of the gospel are *not* in conflict; they are two sides of one pane of glass. Accepting the "word" as God's will for the Christian will release creative energy that transforms the serious believer. In this way only can we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

How may one know that he truly has "heart religion," which is the goal of righteousness by faith? Rom. 10:8-10.

Creative power is in "the word of Christ." This is not generally understood. If Satan can fix our eyes on the historical Jesus without understanding the work He truly came to do, namely, to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21), then we will be no better off than those 2,000 years ago who accepted Him as a great teacher but not as their personal Lord.

"The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God."—*Education*, p. 126.

Can you describe how the power of the Word has kept you close to Christ and given you strength to be an over-comer?

LOVING RELATIONSHIPS—WHATEVER OUR ROLE (Col. 3:17–4:1).

In what way does Paul emphasize our responsibility as children of God? Col. 3:17.

Paul here summarizes this remarkable paragraph, which began with “put on therefore” (verse 12). To declare oneself to be a Christian is different from declaring oneself to be a member of the local garden society. Paul makes clear that a genuine Christian experiences a fundamental lifestyle change in both word and deed. The Christian has no vacation from being a child of God. He does not separate his actions from his thoughts and desires. He does not pretend and thus attempt to deceive his fellow members of the body of Christ.

“The world needs evidences of sincere Christianity. Professed Christianity may be seen everywhere; but when the power of God’s grace is seen in our churches, the members will work the works of Christ. Natural and hereditary traits of character will be transformed. The indwelling of His Spirit will enable them to reveal Christ’s likeness, and in proportion to the purity of their piety will be the success of their work.”
—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 416.

What principles are to govern relationships within families and work situations? Col. 3:18–4:1.

A wife is instructed to fulfill her husband’s wishes that do not contradict her ethical ideals based on verse 17. A wife or husband cannot “in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (RSV) by pandering to the demands of a dictatorial husband or a self-pitying wife.

“To say that a Christian wife must do everything that her husband demands is to contradict verse 17. She is in vital association with Christ. . . . Whatever she does for her husband involves Christ, Whom she must never compromise, even though, to avoid doing so involves disobedience to her husband.”
—Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, vol. 15, pp. 107, 108.

When a husband or wife accepts the spouse’s and children’s prior loyalty to Christ, then he or she expects of them nothing that Christ does not expect. The same principle applies to employers’ expectations of their employees. Family members and employees can then render their services as unto Christ.

FURTHER STUDY: What relationship do you see between the following passages? Luke 1:77, 78; Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 4:2; 5:4, 20; Phil. 1:8-10; 2:3; Col. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:18. Read portions of "Who Is My Neighbor?" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 384-389; "Rejoicing in the Lord" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 120-126; and "The Crisis in Galilee" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 388-394.

"Those who are connected with the service of God must be purified from every thread of selfishness. All is to be done in accordance with the injunction, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all' (Col. 3:17) 'to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10:31). God's laws of justice and equity must be strictly obeyed in the transactions between neighbor and neighbor, brother and brother. We are to seek for perfect order and perfect righteousness, after God's own similitude. On these grounds alone will our works bear the test of the judgment."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 114.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A husband and father confesses to you that there is a division in his family. He believes that, because of the opposition of his wife and children, he is not able to "put on . . . compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience," forbearance and forgiveness (Col. 3:12, 13, RSV). What counsel would you give him?
2. How can the "peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Col. 3:15, RSV) when your society or your country is being torn apart by social and political divisions, and possibly by military conflict?
3. How is it possible for parents to "provoke" their children (Col. 3:21)? When children are provoked, is it always the fault of the parents? How should parents apply this counsel in day-to-day relationships with their children?

SUMMARY: Having come to Christ and put off the old nature with its habitual sinning, we are now to practice the positive virtues that characterized the life of Jesus. This is possible only as we allow Him and His word to rule in our hearts. Then our contribution to all our relationships will be according to His will.



A Dream, a Fountain, New Faith

Jonathan Catolico

Work in the predominantly Islamic province of Mindanao in the Philippines is slow. It is difficult to get a foothold among the Muslim adherents there. But recently God brought the first fruits of our labors there—an entire congregation of former Muslims!

Aljari Misuari, pastor of the congregation that numbered 57 members, visited relatives on a nearby island. While there he learned that some of his relatives had become Adventists; his curiosity was aroused. He went to see them and to learn more about their new faith.

There Pastor Misuari learned of an Adventist minister who lived on nearby Bongao Island. He decided to visit the Adventist pastor, Consorcio Racoma, and to ask him questions on doctrine. However, Pastor Racoma was away and wouldn't return for three days. Not to be dissuaded, Pastor Misuari waited until Pastor Racoma returned. After their visit, Pastor Misuari begged for the Adventist pastor to visit his island and study with his people. Pastor Racoma promised to come in three days.

However, Pastor Racoma was delayed and could not get to the island on the day promised. Pastor Misuari's elderly mother admonished them to wait, and they did. That night the pastor's mother dreamed of a fountain where she and fellow church members drank, bathed, and refreshed themselves. The water was shallow and muddy. Then she saw another fountain containing clear, cool, abundant waters. When she moved closer, she saw a man waiting there. She told her dream to church members. "If I see that man, I will know him. His face is very clear to me."

The next day a boat landed at their island. And off stepped the man the woman had dreamed about. It was Pastor Racoma! He received a warm welcome on the island and began a series of Bible studies with the entire congregation. At the end of the studies 57 precious souls were baptized into the Adventist faith.

Now the island of Simonol in the Philippines has an Adventist witness. Other islands in this province beckon for laborers to share the gospel, for the harvest is great. Pastor Misuari wants his congregation of new believers to take responsibility for part of this work. With God's help, we are finishing the work!

Jonathan Catolico is the director of education for the South Philippine Union Mission.

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Witnessing for Jesus



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Col. 4:2-18.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one" (Colossians 4:6, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Paul's admonition regarding prayer and witnessing is reflected in the faithfulness of his fellow workers. In our witnessing programs, our conduct and speech must always represent the love and purity of our Lord.

WE MUST GO TO THEM. Gary was a member of a Sabbath School class that decided to place bookracks filled with Adventist literature in laundromats and grocery stores. The owner of one laundromat read every book in the rack and joined the Adventist Church. Chuck read a book out of the rack in the store where his wife worked. Then he filled out and mailed the Bible-study request card that Gary had placed in the book. Gary subsequently delivered two Bible-study guides to Chuck's home every week. Chuck studied them, filled in the answers, and was baptized at the end of the series. Chuck's wife, Mary, studied with Gary's wife and also was baptized.

The Lord wants Sabbath School members to be involved in witnessing for Him. In this week's lesson, Paul gives valuable counsel for prospective soul winners, and he illustrates it by referring to his own loyal co-workers.

A DOOR FOR THE WORD (Col. 4:2-4).

How do our prayers change circumstances? Col. 4:2-4.

We should find it natural to ask fellow Christians to pray for us, to pray that we may have daily opportunities to share the gospel, to expect God to change circumstances, and to give us increased ability to communicate more effectively.

Daniel (Dan. 2:17, 18) and Esther (Esther 4:15-17), like Paul, also felt the need to fellowship in prayer. Church members who pray for one another have found one more secret of personal, as well as group, strength. (See also Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:25.)

But what is the object of our prayers? Personal comforts? Material advantage? Paul's chief concern, whenever he asked fellow Christians to pray for him, was for new opportunities, new doors to open, so that more people could hear the wonderful story of salvation. He was not praying to be released from prison, although that would have been pleasant. He wanted fresh opportunities, new doors to walk through, "for the word" (Col. 4:3, RSV).

Does God change circumstances? Let there be no question about it. "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 525.

What special gift does the Lord wish to bestow on His last-day people? Under what conditions can we receive this gift? Joel 2:28, 29; Zech. 10:1; Acts 1:8.

"Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children [Luke 11:13]. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121.

Do you have prayer groups in your church seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? If so, what blessings have you received? If not, can you encourage your fellow church members to begin?

WISE CONDUCT (Col. 4:5).

What counsel does Paul give regarding the manner of presenting the gospel to others? Col. 4:5. What reasons do you think he had in mind?

"Them that are without" refers to non-Christians, to those outside of Christ. Jesus died for them, as well as for committed Christians. But how can those who do not know Christ come to know Him? What would cause them to pause and want to listen to an "insider"? The success of Christianity depends to a considerable extent on the impression that "outsiders" have of "insiders." As Paul said, "You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men" (2 Cor. 3:2, RSV).

"How careful should we be in every word and act to follow closely the Pattern, that our example may lead men to Christ. With what care should we seek so to present the truth that others by beholding its beauty and simplicity may be led to receive it. If our characters testify of its sanctifying power, we shall be a continual light to others—living epistles, known and read of all men."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 236.

"Outsiders" often misunderstand "insiders" simply because they lack information. Early Christians were sometimes seriously misunderstood by their fellow citizens. Walking in "wisdom toward them that are without" means that Christians will consciously do what they can to avoid misunderstanding.

In what ways do you think that you can improve understanding between you and your neighbors? Would it be more than merely setting forth a consistent Christian life? Study Jesus' method (John 4:4-30).

"Redeeming the time" may be more literally translated "making the most of the opportunity." In other words, do not wait for opportunities to fall in your lap. Pray for opportunities (Col. 4:3) and seek them as you would material treasures. Those who seek in wisdom will find "outsiders" who will listen. The biblical emphasis is always to "seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), and nothing is more important than people.

SEASONED SPEECH (Col. 4:6).

What responsibility did Paul place on the Christian himself in the work of proclaiming the gospel? Col. 4:6.

In days when refrigeration was unknown (except for a cool brook or a cave), salt was very important for its preservative qualities. Salt prevented deterioration or corruption.

Similar to Colossians 3:17, Paul here focuses on the part that the Christian should consciously contribute to the work of proclaiming the gospel. *What* one says, is important, but *how* one says it is equally important. Witnessing for Jesus is more than dumping information upon an unbeliever and then dusting off one's feet as if one's duty has been done.

"The manner in which the truth is presented often has much to do in determining whether it will be accepted or rejected."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 404.

How did Paul counsel the Ephesians regarding the kind of speech that should characterize Christians? Eph. 4:29.

Only the grace of the Holy Spirit as the source of the Christian's preserving quality can avoid the deterioration, even corruption, that invades so many well-intentioned conversations. Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives, will make us gracious.

"Be sure to maintain the dignity of the work by a well-ordered life and godly conversation. Never be afraid of raising the standard too high. The families who engage in the missionary work should come close to hearts. The spirit of Jesus should pervade the soul of the worker; it is the pleasant, sympathetic words, the manifestation of disinterested love for their souls, that will break down the barriers of pride and selfishness, and show to unbelievers that we have the love of Christ; and then the truth will find its way to the heart. . . . All coarseness and roughness must be put away from us. Courtesy, refinement, Christian politeness, must be cherished. Guard against being abrupt and blunt. Do not regard such peculiarities as virtues; for God does not so regard them."—*Evangelism*, pp. 636, 637.

In what ways must I become more gracious this week?

LOYAL CO-WORKERS (Col. 4:7-18).

Who were Tychicus and Onesimus? What were their special characteristics? Col. 4:7-9 (compare Philem. 10, 15, 16).

Paul was not a loner. Nor was he a prototype of bishops to come, who felt that it was their duty to impose their will on every committee meeting or to control the lives of others. Notice how Paul considers his fellow workers.

"Tychicus . . . beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant" (Col. 4:7, RSV). Compare Paul's similar regard for Epaphras (Col. 1:7). Paul was so confident of Tychicus' loyalty, not only to him as a person but also to his theological understanding, that he could safely recommend him as one who would faithfully relate the state of affairs in Rome to all concerned. Some things can be better said than written, and Paul knew that Tychicus could be implicitly trusted.

"Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother" (Col. 4:9, RSV). Read again Paul's magnificent letter to Philemon and note how Paul offers himself as collateral in Onesimus' behalf. Now in this letter to the Colossians (which was no doubt circulated throughout the scattered Christian churches), Paul is recommending Onesimus, Philemon's former slave, as a trusted co-worker. Paul is setting forth Onesimus, returning with Tychicus, as one who could faithfully report the real state of affairs, a wonderful example of a transformed Christian, and thus an encouragement to all.

What can we learn of the gospel's effectiveness from the backgrounds and characteristics of Paul's fellow laborers? Col. 4:10-18.

The next six co-workers were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, an interesting statement in itself. The gospel for which Paul was giving his life truly worked. (See Col. 3:11.) Former enemies, separated by race, culture, and misunderstandings of all kinds, had become trusted co-laborers, willing to identify with an imprisoned preacher. What hath God wrought!

THE AIM OF IT ALL (Col. 4:12).

How did Paul summarize the aim of all Christian admonition? Col. 4:12.

"Labouring fervently." Literally, "always wrestling." No wonder Paul found Epaphras to be such a trusted co-worker (Col. 1:7). Such prayer life and personal activity are the ingredients of all successful soul winning.

"Perfect." The Greek adjective means "having reached its end, finished, mature, complete, perfect." (The same word is used in Col. 1:28; Matt. 5:48.) Just as the aim of seed is to bear fruit after its kind, so the aim of the gospel seed is to bear fruit that resembles the truth implanted by the Holy Spirit. "The divine Husbandman looks for a harvest as the reward of His labor and sacrifice. Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

How can we have the assurance of present salvation in Christ? Col. 4:12 (compare Rom. 8:16; 1 John 3:24; 4:13).

"Complete." Literally, "having been fully assured." What a promise! We are given not only the aim of the Christian walk but also the assurance along the way that God is performing what He promised. Jesus is our surety; He has proved that what He asks of us can be done by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit within witnesses to the peace, order, purity, and love that matures in a believer's life.

"Let this point be fully settled in every mind: If we accept Christ as a Redeemer, we must accept Him as a Ruler. We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King and are obedient to His commandments. Thus we evidence our allegiance to God. We have then the genuine ring in our faith, for it is a working faith."—*Faith and Works*, p. 16.

How many people are on your prayer list? How often do you mention "names" in your prayers? How do you work with God in answering your prayers for them?

FURTHER STUDY: Compare the following passages with Paul's emphasis in this week's lesson: Rom. 12:11, 12; Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:17-22. Read also "The Privilege of Prayer" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 100-104; "First the Blade, Then the Ear" and "Talents" (on speech, influence, and time) in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 62-69, 335-346.

"The power of speech is a talent that should be diligently cultivated. Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this. With the voice we convince and persuade, with it we offer prayer and praise to God, and with it we tell others of the Redeemer's love. How important, then, that it be so trained as to be most effective for good."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 335.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. You are studying with a friend who is having a problem with smoking and caffeine. He asks you whether you had struggles with sinful habits in becoming a Christian. What would you share with him?
2. Mary is your next-door neighbor, a divorcée with two children. She has no time for religion. How would you seek to lead her to believe in the Word of God?
3. You are studying with a group of charismatic Christians. They ask you what evidence you have that the Holy Spirit is dwelling within you. How would you answer them?
4. Hakeem is your friend. When you try to witness to him about Jesus Christ, he asks, "How can you prove that this Jesus was resurrected from the dead and still lives?" How would you answer him?

SUMMARY: Paul concludes his letter to the Colossians with counsel regarding earnest prayer, gracious speech, and discreet witnessing. He refers to a number of his co-laborers whose lives illustrate the principles that he has been teaching. Our major goals in life are to be like Jesus, witnessing for Him, passing on the assurance of present salvation by fellowship with Him.



First Afghan Family Baptized

Dan Pak

One evening a young man arrived at our home wanting to find a safe house in which to stay. He and his family of six had fled Afghanistan and needed protection. I learned that the family were former Muslims and were being hunted by a militant group intent on killing them, for they had declared their allegiance to Christ and had left home, lands, and wealth in Kabul.

Upon further inquiry, we learned the family needed shelter for that night; the Muslim man who had befriended them had given them a clear indication that they were no longer welcome in his home. So together we searched for a house. Eventually we found a place that the owner said could be made available in 48 hours. They still needed shelter for two nights, so I invited the six of them to our home. They arrived that night at 11:30 and shared our home. For two nights we visited and talked on various topics of the Bible. They became convinced that if the Sabbath was in God's commandments, they had to keep it. Pastor Haapasalo, our ministerial director, was then invited to conduct Bible studies for them and prepare them for baptism. Since all of them were refugees and had practically nothing, we provided them with clothes and food for three weeks. Even with that, they do not have enough money for their living expenses and need help.

They have faithfully attended church and Sabbath School, youth meetings and prayer meetings. They were baptized in a secret service by Pastor Haapasalo, who wanted to avoid publicity in order to protect this young family. They are now active members of our church.

Already the family is working to reach other Afghans for Jesus. They are preparing radio programs, translating Bible stories, and writing spiritual messages in their Farsi dialect of Dari to broadcast into Afghanistan.

Pray that we will be able to nurture them successfully into the Adventist lifestyle. Many of our members are slow to accept Muslim converts into the fold, because of prejudices. This is the first family of Afghans to be added to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dan Pak is a pastor in Pakistan.

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Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1994

The quarterly for fourth quarter of 1994 is entitled, "Last Call for Heaven." This is a study of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

FIRST LESSON: "Angels With a Global Mission"

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:1-12; Luke 2:13, 14.

MEMORY TEXT: Heb. 1:14.

KEY THOUGHT: Because the three angels' messages are for the whole world, God will provide us the resources to share them.

OUTLINE:

Sunday: A Stricken World (Matt. 24:3-14).

Monday: Heaven's Help (Ps. 91:10-12).

Tuesday: The Ministry of Angels (Heb. 1:7, 14).

Wednesday: Messengers of Love (Rev. 14:6).

Thursday: God's Universal Love (Eph. 2:11-22).

SECOND LESSON: "The Everlasting Gospel"

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:6, 7; Rom. 1:16, 17; 5:1, 2; Col. 1:20-23.

MEMORY TEXT: Rev. 14:6.

KEY THOUGHT: The gospel is the good news that Jesus saves us from sin and restores us to fellowship with God. The cross of Jesus is the focal point of that good news.

OUTLINE:

Sunday: The Gospel Defined (Rom. 1:16, 17).

Monday: The Everlasting Gospel (Ex. 34:5-7; Rom. 8:33-39).

Tuesday: Calvary, the Keystone of The Gospel (John 12:32).

Wednesday: The Gospel and Christ's Sacrifice (1 Cor. 1:18).

Thursday: The Gospel Proclaimed (Col. 1:25-29).

Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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but a World apart

Newbold has many things in common with Oxford University. Both are in England. You can get high quality degrees from either. Both attract students the wide world over.

But there is a difference! Newbold is small, Oxford huge. Newbold offers a distinctively Adventist education. At Oxford, well . . . ?!

Oxford's campus has a dozen glorious old churches - but they are mostly empty on Sundays. Newbold doesn't even have a college church. Services are held in an assembly hall and it is too small. It can't hold all those who want to worship there.

Oxford gets lots of money from government and wealthy alumni. Newbold doesn't.

Newbold doesn't want to build a glorious cathedral, but we do need your help to build a college church - a place where the whole college community can worship together.

**Please give generously
this 13th Sabbath so that
Newbold can build a church.**

We don't need a dozen churches like Oxford,
but just one to call our own would be nice.

