

Colossians Sermon Illustrations 1

COLOSSIANS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS, DEVOTIONALS AND COMMENTARY

- Colossians 1 Sermon Illustrations - Our Daily Bread
- Colossians 2 Sermon Illustrations - Our Daily Bread
- Colossians 3 Sermon Illustrations - Our Daily Bread
- Colossians 4 Sermon Illustrations - Our Daily Bread
- Additional Sermon Illustrations on Colossians from Our Daily Bread
- Colossians 1 Devotionals - Today in the Word
- Colossians 2 Devotionals - Today in the Word
- Colossians 3 Devotionals - Today in the Word
- Colossians 4 Devotionals - Today in the Word
- Colossians 1 Commentary
- Colossians 2 Commentary
- Colossians 3 Commentary
- Colossians 4 Commentary
- Additional Resources on Colossians - Multiple Sermons, Commentaries

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COLOSSIANS 1

COLOSSIANS 1:3-8

MY COMPLIMENTS

February 2, 2005

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints. —Colossians 1:3, 4-note

When I receive a compliment, it gives me a warm, inner glow. At times I have felt guilty for enjoying a commendation. After all, isn't that a form of pride? But I have concluded that it is not wrong to feel good when we receive a sincere compliment because of something we have done.

By finding pleasure in being commended, we allow others to exercise their gift of encouragement. Their words can lift our spirits.

We also show that pride hasn't gained the upper hand in our lives when we praise others. A proud person is so preoccupied with himself that he doesn't notice what others do and has no desire to compliment them.

Paul freely commended his friends in Colosse because he knew it would encourage them. And we should do likewise.

Give people a pat on the back when they deserve it. Compliment the child who does something well. Commend the single mother who regularly brings her children to church. Encourage the man who keeps helping others even though he receives little appreciation from them. Keep trying to please God and the people around you.

No need to feel guilty about feeling good when someone compliments you. —Herbert Vander Lugt

For Further Thought

How do I respond when someone commends me?

Why is it sometimes hard to accept a compliment?

Do I freely praise others for their accomplishments?

Praise loudly, blame softly.

COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

AMONG the safety rules mountain climbers must remember as they scale rocky cliffs is this: Keep three points on the rock. In other words, before you move a foot, make sure the other foot and both hands are firmly positioned on solid rock. And if you are going to move a hand, make sure your other hand and both feet are securely placed.

That's a good safety tip for our spiritual lives as well. To keep from falling, we need to keep a grip on three rock-solid truths: grace, mercy, and peace, the words the apostle Paul often used to begin or conclude his letters.

The first message I heard Dr. M. R. DeHaan preach was part of a series of lessons called "Three Sisters of Salvation," which were about these three words. I made up my mind then that I would make these three qualities part of my life.

We are given our salvation as a gift of God's grace. His wrath is withheld from us because of His abundant mercy. And His peace enables us to stand in quiet confidence when the howling gales of adversity swirl around us. They will give us security during our spiritual mountain climbing experience.

We can appropriate these gifts through prayer and obedience. In the storms of temptation we will not fall if we always keep three points on the Rock. —D C Egnor

Colossians 1:1-12; 4:12 The Little Tent

By David C. McCasland

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell. —Colossians 1:19

During evangelist Billy Graham's historic 1949 Los Angeles campaign, the big tent that held over 6,000 people was filled to overflowing every night for 8 weeks. Close by was a smaller tent set aside for counseling and prayer. Cliff Barrows, longtime music director and close friend and associate of Graham, has often said that the real work of the gospel took place in "the little tent," where people gathered on their knees to pray before and during every evangelistic service. A local Los Angeles woman, Pearl Goode, was the heart of those prayer meetings and many that followed.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the followers of Christ in Colosse, he assured them that he and his colleagues were praying always for them (Col. 1:3,9). In closing he mentioned Epaphras, a founder of the Colossian church, who is "always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (4:12).

Some people are given the high visibility task of preaching the gospel in "the big tent." But God has extended to us all, just as He did to Epaphras and Pearl Goode, the great privilege of kneeling in "the little tent" and bringing others before the throne of God.

They labor well who intercede

For others with a pressing need;

It's on their knees they often work

And from its rigor will not shirk. —D. DeHaan

Prayer is not preparation for the work, it is the work. —Oswald Chambers

Colossians 1:3-8 Chums

By Dennis Fisher

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

In 19th-century England, debtors' prison housed those unfortunate souls who couldn't pay their bills. New prisoners were escorted to the "chumage," a prison dormitory. Since the people were not there for violent crimes, a spirit of trust and camaraderie soon developed. They played games together and had plenty to eat. Some were even allowed private rooms.

In time, the prisoners began to refer to each other as "chums." Later, the word caught on outside the prison walls and took on the meaning of "a cordial friend."

Deep bonds of friendship also take place in Christian ministry. Those who worked alongside Paul were not strangers to persecution and imprisonment. But a common mission created a deep sense of connectedness. In his letter to the believers in Colosse, Paul called Epaphras a “fellow servant” (1:7). The term can be paraphrased as “together slave” or “one who serves the same master with another.”

When believers live under the lordship of Christ, they can see their lives intertwined in service. By serving as slaves to Christ, a spiritual camaraderie results that transcends being “chums.” And that special relationship will continue on into eternity!

Working together with others,

Serving the Lord day or night,

Telling the story of Jesus

Promises endless delight. —Hess

Christians stand strong when they stand together.

Colossians 1:3-14 Kingdom Living

By Joe Stowell

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. —Colossians 1:13

I have a lot of friends who work in bad neighborhoods. One of these city warriors transplanted his family to the inner city. One day as he was walking down the hallway in his apartment building, he noticed two guys smoking crack cocaine. Not wanting his kids to see what they were doing, he asked the two to stop. The next thing he knew, one of their fists had found its way to his jaw. With a bleeding nose and mouth, he responded, “If Jesus shed His blood for me, I can shed my blood for you.”

Shocked by the man’s response, the two men fled. A few days later one of them returned, knocked on my friend’s door, and said, “I have not forgotten your words. If your God is that real to you, then I want to know Him.” That day, he was “delivered ... from the power of darkness,” and brought “into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13).

Those of us who have been rescued from the domain of darkness can bring a little bit of heaven to earth when we are willing to demonstrate the power of God’s unique approach to life. Even in our moments of weakness and vulnerability, we are given opportunities to demonstrate the power and strength of God’s forgiveness by showing His love for our enemies.

Help us, Lord, to be a lifeline

To a dying world today,

Bringing hope to hopeless people,

Telling them that Christ’s the way. —Sper

A world in darkness needs the light of the gospel.

Colossians 1:3-12

International Friendship

By Mart De Haan

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

In 1947, Nadia from Bulgaria and Millicent from the United States became pen pals. For years they swapped photos, school experiences, and dreams. Then their letters stopped when government policy banned personal contact with the West.

After many years of political upheaval and change, Millicent, on a whim, sent a letter to the last address she had for Nadia. To their delight, the letter got through. Before long, they discovered that both had married doctors and both collected seashells. Forty-eight years after their first letter, the two friends finally met at Miami International Airport, where Millicent exclaimed, “Nadia! I would know you anywhere!”

The letters of the apostle Paul overflow with affection and gratitude for his friends. In his letter to the Colossians, he wrote: “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you” (1:3). His letters also encouraged their walk with Christ (v.10).

Any friendship can be a gift from God. But nothing runs deeper than the relationships of those who share a bond in Christ. In fact, Jesus commanded His disciples: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). In Him, friendships are treasures that will last forever.

Of all the many blessings

That our gracious Father sends,

I thank Him most of all today

For loyal-hearted friends. —Halse

A true friend is a gift from God.

COLOSSIANS 1:9

PRAYING LIKE PAUL

December 18, 1996

Read: Colossians 1:1-14

It's dark. It's cold. You've been thrown into prison, and you don't know when you'll get out or when you'll eat your next meal. You bow your head to pray. What will you pray for? Safety? Deliverance? A decent meal?

If you are the apostle Paul, you pray for something far different. You talk to God about a group of people you have never seen.

Colossians 1 gives us a brief record of Paul's prison prayer for the people at the church in Colosse. His words help us see how important intercessory prayer should be—even when we have our own troubles.

In Paul's case, he prayed for what he thought this young church needed. He asked God to give them several things, including spiritual understanding (Col 1:9-note), fruitful lives (Col 1:10-note), and strength, patience, and joy (Col 1:11-note).

Paul gave thanks and prayed for his fellow believers "always" (Col 1:3-note). Not just when he felt good. Not just when he was warm and well-fed. Always.

How often is our prayer-life interrupted by circumstances that we turn into excuses? Our friends, our family members—even people we don't know—need our intercession. No matter what our difficulty, let's pray for others. --J D Branon

We give to others what they need;
We show no greater care
Than when we give them to the Lord,
Surrounding them with prayer. --D J De Haan

The best way to influence people for God is to intercede with God for people.

Colossians 1:9-14 What God Owes Us

By Cindy Hess Kasper

Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him. —Colossians 1:10

A story is told about a vendor who sold bagels for 50 cents each at a street corner food stand. A jogger ran past and threw a couple of quarters into the bucket but didn't take a bagel. He did the same thing every day for months. One day, as the jogger was passing by, the vendor stopped him. The jogger asked, "You probably want to know why I always put money in but never take a bagel, don't you?" "No," said the vendor. "I just wanted to tell you that the bagels have gone up to 60 cents."

Too often, as believers, we treat God with that same kind of attitude. Not only are we ungrateful for what He's given us—but we want more. Somehow we feel that God owes us good health, a comfortable life, material blessings. Of course, God doesn't owe us anything, yet He gives us everything.

G. K. Chesterton wrote, "Here dies another day, during which I have had eyes, ears, hands, and the great world round me. And with tomorrow begins another. Why am I allowed two?" The psalmist said, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

Each day, whether good or bad, is one more gift from our God. Our grateful response should be to live to please Him.

Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me. —Chisholm

Life is a gift from God to be lived for God.

COLOSSIANS 1:10

For nearly 5 years my trusty, rusty 1978 Mustang took me back and forth to work. It looked like a refugee from a junkyard, but it ran. I shared the road with some drivers who were "getting there" a bit more fashionably. They rode in brand-new showroom beauties with all the options. They were getting there in style. I was just getting there.

When it comes to how we live on the way to heaven, we all have an opportunity to travel "in style." When we realize all that God has given us in Christ, we shouldn't be content to bump along life's highway like drivers of beat-up old jalopies.

Paul prayed that the believers in Colossae would be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9-note). He wanted them to realize how spiritually rich they were (Col 1:12, 13, 14-note). God doesn't want us just to get to heaven. He wants us to enjoy the journey and get there in style. J D Branon

KEEP ETERNITY'S GOAL IN SIGHT BY WALKING DAILY IN THE LIGHT.

COLOSSIANS 1:10

SUPREME MOTIVE

April 15, 2006

2 Timothy 2:1-13-note

Walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work. —Colossians 1:10-note

A first-grader beamed with satisfaction as he handed me a spelling test on which his teacher had written a large "100%—Good work!" The boy said, "I showed this to Mom and Dad because I knew it would please them." I could just see him riding home on the bus, hardly able to wait for the moment when his parents would express their excitement with how well he had done. His desire to make Mom and Dad happy was obviously a very important motivating factor in his life.

In 2 Timothy 2:3-note, Paul used the image of a soldier who serves with single-minded devotion to please his commanding officer. He wanted Timothy to know the supreme reason for serving God, even when the going gets tough. Wholehearted devotion, marked by hard work and careful attention to God's rules, brings the greatest glory to the Lord when it comes from a yielded and loving heart.

In His humanity, our Savior desired that the prospect of a cruel death and of becoming the sin-offering for mankind would pass from Him. Nevertheless He prayed, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' supreme motive was a desire to please His Father. That should be our incentive too. —Herbert Vander Lugt

In all I think and say and do,
I long, O God, to honor You;
But may my highest motive be
To love the Christ who died for me. —D. De Haan

Others see what we do, but God sees why we do it.

COLOSSIANS 1:10

MEDAL OF HONOR

They meet every year, a group of ordinary and unassuming veterans who have one thing in common - their nation's highest military award for bravery.

Almost all of them agree that the Congressional Medal of Honor has transformed and redefined their lives. For many, it has thrust them into the public eye. One recipient, assessing its effect on his thought and behavior, said, "You're representing everybody and everything the medal represents."

As Christians, we share a distinguishing mark more defining than any medal - the name of Christ. We profess to be followers of Jesus, servants of the Lord. For that reason, the apostle Paul prayed for his fellow believers to "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him" (Col 1:10-note). He urged Christians to be "fruitful" in good works and to be characterized by such qualities as patience, joy, and thankfulness (Col 1:12-note).

Our conduct should not be guided by expectations that come from ourselves or the people around us. They must come from the Lord, who has redeemed us, called us, and given us His name. Rather than feeling trapped by a set of external standards, we can celebrate the honor of bearing Christ's name and the freedom of pleasing only Him. -David C. McCasland

Lord, may I live that all may see
The love of Christ revealed in me;
And help me flee all sin and shame,
Lest others scoff at Your dear name. -D J De Haan

**YOU HONOR GOD'S NAME
WHEN YOU CALL HIM YOUR FATHER
AND LIVE LIKE HIS SON**

COLOSSIANS 1:12

A BOUQUET FOR YOU!

A card beside an empty vase in my hotel room offered this invitation: "For you we have a floral garden with numerous flowers, including zinnias, daisies, meadow sage, and snapdragons. Enjoy the view and feel free to pick some flowers to put in your room. Call the front desk for further details and floral clippers." A glance out the window confirmed the presence of a beautiful garden, and the invitation gave me a choice. I could simply look and appreciate all the work of planting and tending the flowers. Or I could become more than an admiring spectator by picking a bouquet, taking it to my room, and letting it become part of my life. To me, that wonderfully pictures God's gift of salvation. The Father planted His garden of reconciliation and redemption, and He invites us to take His Son into our hearts to find forgiveness and eternal life in Him. In Christ Jesus, He "has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:12-note). And God's gift continues each day as He makes known to us "the riches of the glory of this mystery ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27-note). God has a beautiful gift for each of us in His garden of love, a bouquet that we can enjoy every day. – D C McCasland

Observing God's love from afar
Is only a passing delight;
But when we experience Christ's presence,
Our darkness is turned into light. – Hess

Salvation is a gift to be enjoyed—today and forever.

COLOSSIANS 1:13

October 9, 2003

TENANT OF THE TUNNEL

Colossians 1:1-14

For 16 years, John Kovacs was a "tenant of the tunnel." Along with a few others, John lived underground in an abandoned railroad tunnel in New York City. When Amtrak bought the tunnel and prepared to reopen it, John was forced to look for a place to live above ground.

According to The New York Times, Mr. Kovacs became the first person chosen for a new program designed to "transform the homeless into homesteaders." After spending a third of his life in a railroad tunnel, he left his underground existence to become an organic farmer in upstate New York. He was quoted as saying, "The air will be better up there. I'm not going to miss anything. I'm not coming back."

If we could see ourselves as our Lord does, we would realize that every child of God has had a similar experience. We too have been chosen to leave a dark, filthy existence for the dignity of a new life and work. If only we could see our former life as clearly as John Kovacs saw his, we too would know that there is nothing worthwhile in the dark, and no reason to go back.

Lord, help us to remember how needy we were when You found us. Forgive us for sometimes wanting to go back to the tunnel. —
Mart De Haan

I wandered in the shades of night
Till Jesus came to me
And with the sunlight of His love
Bid all my darkness flee. —Van De Venter

Children of the light will not be comfortable in the dark.

COLOSSIANS 1:9

MAGAZINE CHRISTIANITY

Are we “Time-magazine Christians”? Pastor Stan Henderson used this phrase to describe how some believers divide their lives into departments, with the religious section given a half-page somewhere near the back. Little if any attempt is made to relate matters of faith to the everyday issues of life. Some think that the spiritual part of their lives can be taken care of by church attendance or doing some good. Then they are free to run their own businesses, choose their entertainment, or relate to people in whatever way pleases them. But Christianity can't be confined to just one area of our lives. When Paul prayed for the believers in Colosse, he asked God to fill them with “the knowledge of His will” (Col 1:9-note). He asked that they would know His will in every aspect of their experience—what they thought and what they did—so that they would live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way (Col 1:10-note). Our relationship with Christ must affect all areas of life. There is no way we can live a life that is pleasing to God if we keep our faith limited to the religious section. Walking with Christ is a total-life experience. Invite Jesus into all of your life. Then you won't be a Time-magazine Christian. – D C Egner

For Further Thought - Is there a part of your life that you're keeping under your own control—finances, recreation, work, home, goals, habits, relationships? Yield it to Christ's control.

Give Christ the key to every room in your life.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

November 24, 2005

A LOST ART

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, ... and be thankful. —Colossians 3:15-note

The apostle Paul had never been to the church in Colosse, but he had heard all about it from Epaphras. He knew it was a church under attack by false teachers, so he prayed fervently for this congregation (Col 1:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14-note; Col 2:4, 5, 6,7-note).

Among his requests, Paul asked that they would give joyful thanks to the Father because He had rescued them, moving them from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His Son (1:12-13). We too need to be thankful for what Christ has done for us.

Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Warren Wiersbe illustrated this problem in his commentary on Colossians. He told about a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, who was part of a life-saving squad. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and Edward Spencer waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him.

Let's take time often to recall how God has rescued us from eternal death and has given us eternal life through His Son. Let's make certain that we never allow thanking the Father to become a lost art. —David C. Egner

Give me a spirit of thankfulness, Lord,
For numberless blessings given;
Blessings that daily come to me
Like dewdrops falling from heaven. —Dawe

With practice, anyone can master the art of thankfulness.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

THE POWER OF LIGHT

"You shine as lights in the world." – Philippians 2:15-note

Some of us may not especially enjoy poetry. But often a few lines of verse will grip our imagination, as do the following by Francis Thompson: "The innocent moon that nothing does but shine, moves all the laboring surges of the world." The moon is nearly 240,000 miles from Earth and is only 1/400th the size of the sun. With no light or heat of its own, it reflects the radiance of that greater heavenly body. It appears to be relatively insignificant. Yet, the moon quietly and almost imperceptibly moves the oceans of the world by its gravitational pull. Most of us may not seem all that influential or well-known. We don't have the giftedness, the wealth, or the position to make much of an impact on our society. Our names don't appear in the newspaper, nor are they mentioned on television. We may think that all we can do is practice our faith in the humdrum routines of everyday life. But perhaps, unnoticed by us, we are having an influence on the people around us by our Christlike attitudes and actions. Let's not be concerned, then, about our seeming lack of influence. Instead, do what Jesus commanded: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16-note). – V C Grounds

Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness we must shine—
You in your small corner, and I in mine. —Warner

Even the smallest light can make a difference in the darkest night.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-20

A UNIQUE OFFER

July 20, 1996

Several years ago a group of Christian missionaries met in Delhi, India, with representatives of other religions to discuss their beliefs. In the course of their talks, a member of a major non-Christian religion said to a missionary, "Tell me one thing your religion can offer the Indians that mine can't." The missionary thought for a moment and replied, "Forgiveness! Forgiveness!" Unlike the followers of all other world religions, those who put their hope in Christ have full assurance that their sins are forgiven. British Bible teacher and lecturer David Pawson says, "I have talked to the most devout Muslims who pray five times a day, have journeyed to Mecca, have fasted during Ramadan, and are more devout than many Christians. But when I ask, 'Do you know if your sins are forgiven?' they've said, 'We don't. We just have to hope for the best.'" In Colossians 1, Paul gave us the basis on which forgiveness rests—the redemption Christ secured through His death on the cross. But Christ is not merely the founder of a major religion. He is the "image of the invisible God" by whom all things were created (Col 1:15, 16-note). The forgiveness He offers, therefore, is an offer from God Himself. – D J De Haan

THINKING IT OVER - Have you accepted the gift of forgiveness? (Romans 6:23-note). What family member, neighbor, or co-worker needs to hear from you about God's offer of forgiveness?

The search for forgiveness ends when you find Christ.

COLOSSIANS 1:9-23

THE CROSS

April 13, 2001

"God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." – Galatians 6:14-note

Centuries before Jesus was born, the cross had been used as an instrument of torture and death. In 519 BC, for example, King Darius I of Persia crucified 3,000 political enemies in Babylon. This method of execution was later adopted by the Romans for noncitizens and slaves. When Jesus Christ bore our sins at Calvary (1Peter 2:24-note), the cross took on a new significance. There the Savior, "through the blood of His cross," made it possible for us to escape judgment and be reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20, 21-note). The apostle Paul understood the significance of the cross. He had done many things in which he might have found personal satisfaction and pride (2Cor 11:16, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 12:13). But in his letter to the Galatians he wrote, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14-note). As we understand what Jesus did for us on the cross, we too will be humbled. Our feeble efforts are nothing; His work is everything! The resurrected Savior invites all men and women to come humbly in faith to Him. By believing that He died in our place on the cross, we receive full forgiveness. No wonder the hymn writer Horatius Bonar exclaimed, "Hallelujah for the cross!" – H G Bosch

So round the cross we sing
Of Christ our offering,
Of Christ our living King,
Hallelujah for the cross! — Bonar

The cross of Christ is the bridge between God and man.

Colossians 1:3-18

Rescued

In the aftermath of Haiti's devastating earthquake in January 2010, the scenes of destruction and death were often punctuated by someone being pulled alive from the rubble, even after all hope seemed gone. Relief and tears of joy were followed by deep gratitude toward those who worked around the clock, often risking their own lives to give someone else another chance to live.

How would you feel if it happened to you? Have you ever been rescued?

In Colossians 1, Paul wrote to people who had come to know Jesus Christ and whose lives showed evidence of their faith. After assuring them of his prayers for them to know God's will and to please Him, Paul used a powerful word picture to describe what God had done for them all: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (vv.13-14).

In Christ, we have been rescued! He has taken us from danger to safety; from one power and destiny to another; from death to life.

It's worth pondering all that being rescued means to us, as we thank God for His grace and power.— by David C. McCasland

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost but now am found; Was blind, but now I see. —Newton

Those who've been rescued from sin are best able to help in the rescue of others.

Colossians 1:3

Celebrate The Fruit

It's easy to develop a critical spirit toward people who are not growing spiritually according to our expectations. We can easily spot areas of concern that need correction, but we also need to take note of what's right. In his letters, Paul often needed to correct churches, but he also celebrated what was good.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, for example, he mentioned that the gospel had taken root and was producing fruit in the lives of the believers there (1:6). He celebrated them by directing his thanksgiving toward God for their spiritual growth. They had come to know Jesus and now were struggling against the false teachers (2:6-8). He thanked the Lord for their deep and abiding love for all the saints and for expressing tangible and sacrificial concern for them (1:4). Paul also thanked God because the Colossians' faith and love grew out of their hope—the reality and assurance that this world is not the end (1:5).

Today may present us with opportunities to observe fellow believers. We can be critical or celebrate their spiritual progress. Let's take the time to thank the Lord for the way the gospel of Jesus Christ has taken root and is producing fruit in their lives.— by Marvin Williams

Help me, Lord, to reassure and strengthen

Others by the words I speak today;

I would always try to be affirming,

As our pathways cross along life's way. —Hess

Correction does much, but encouragement does more.

Colossians 1:3-14

We Need Hope

Adam and Eve didn't need hope because they didn't lack anything they needed. And they had every reason to think that life would go on as pleasantly as it started—with every good thing that God had given them to enjoy. But they put it all at risk for the one thing the serpent said that God had withheld: the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:5). So when the serpent came with his offer, Eve was quick to indulge, and Adam quick to follow (3:6). They got what they wanted: knowledge. But they lost what they had: innocence. With the loss of innocence came the need for hope—hope that their guilt and shame could be removed and goodness restored.

Christmas is the season of hope. Children hope for the latest popular toy or game. Families hope that everyone can make it home for the holidays. But the hope that Christmas commemorates is much bigger than our holiday desires. Jesus, the "Desire of All Nations" (Hag. 2:7), has come! He has "delivered us from the power of darkness," bought our redemption, and forgiven our sins (Col. 1:13-14). He even made it possible for us to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil (Rom. 16:19). Christ in us gives us the hope of glory.

Praise God for the hope of Christmas!— by Julie Ackerman Link

What are the prospects for this earth?

What hope is there for man?

A world restored through Jesus Christ

In whom we see God's plan. —D. DeHaan

Hope for the Christian is a certainty— because its basis is Christ.

Colossians 1:3-14

Location, Location, Location

Buying and selling real estate in the US is tricky business these days. Housing prices have dropped significantly, and if you're trying to unload commercial property it's even more difficult. So, in the game of real estate, it remains important to keep this old adage in mind: "The three most important things to know about buying and selling property are location, location, location!"

The same is true of living for Jesus. Knowing our location spiritually is critical if we are to succeed in navigating through the greatly devalued territory of our world. Paul reminds us that we have a new location in Christ, having been delivered "from the power of darkness and conveyed ... into the kingdom of the Son" (Col. 1:13). Knowing that we have been relocated by His amazing grace into the kingdom of Jesus makes a difference. Jesus now reigns as King in our hearts and minds, and we are His grateful subjects. His will is our will and His ways become patterns for all of life and behavior. And when we are forced to make a choice, our allegiance is to Him.

So, when the temptations and the seductions of the darkness from which you have been removed threaten His reign in your heart, remember your new postal code: Colossians 1:13!— by Joe Stowell

Where Jesus reigns there is no fear,

No restless doubt, no hopeless tear,

No raging sea nor tempest dread,

But quietness and calm instead. —Anon.

The subjects of the kingdom should display the manners of the court.

COLOSSIANS 1:14

BEGINNING AGAIN

It was New Year's Day 1929. The University of California at Berkeley was playing Georgia Tech in college football's Rose Bowl. Roy Riegels, a California defender, recovered a Georgia Tech fumble, then turned and scampered 65 yards in the wrong direction! One of Riegels' own teammates tackled him just before he reached the wrong goal line. On the next play, Georgia Tech scored and went on to win.

From that day on, Riegels was saddled with the nickname "Wrong-way Riegels." For years afterward, whenever he was introduced, people would exclaim, "I know who you are! You're the guy who ran the wrong way in the Rose Bowl!"

Our failures may not be as conspicuous, but we've all gone the wrong way, and we have memories that haunt us. Recollections of sin and failure rise up to taunt us at 3:00 in the morning. If only we could forget! If only we could begin again!

We can. When we confess our sins and repent before God, He forgives our past and puts it away. In Christ, "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"—all our sins (Colossians 1:14-note; Col 2:13-note).

It's never too late to begin again. —David H. Roper

THINKING IT OVER - What past sins are you carrying today? To learn more about the forgiveness that only God can offer, read The Forgiveness Of God.

God's forgiveness is the door to a new beginning.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

December 6, 2003

IT'S ALL FOR HIM

READ: Colossians 1:13-20

It's a little phrase of just two words at the end of Colossians 1:16-note—"for Him." Yet that little phrase gives God's own interpretation of history. In those two words He affirms that Jesus is the final and complete explanation of everything.

All that has happened and ever will happen is moving through time toward that climactic hour when every tongue will confess the lordship of Jesus Christ. Every knee, whether in grateful adoration or under compulsion, will then bow to Him (Philippians 2:10, 11-note).

British historian H.A.L. Fisher apparently did not share that view. He sadly confessed, "Men wiser and more learned than I have discovered in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave ... nothing but the play of the contingent and the unforeseeable."

What about you? Are you overwhelmed by what seems to be the aimless sequence of events? If so, look once more at Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and promised return. Your troubled heart will be filled with hope and confidence as you realize that there's meaning and purpose for everything in the world—when you live "for Him." —Vernon C Grounds

One life to live for Christ my Lord,
One life to do my part,
One life in which to give my all
With fervency of heart. —Brandt

**Christ showed His love by dying for us;
we show our love by living for Him.**

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

"I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you" (Isaiah 41:10).

When faced with adversity and temptation, wise Christians acknowledge two important facts: their own weakness and God's power to keep them from falling. If we dwell on our inadequacy, we cannot cope with the future. But if we draw our strength from a source other than ourselves, we'll be able to resist Satan's opposition and the world's pressure. That's why we need both the outer and inner support that comes only from God.

On my desk is a closed penknife, rounded and smooth on both ends. When I try to stand it on end, it topples over. If I were to explain to you how difficult it is to get the knife to stand, you probably would say, "No, it's impossible! You can't make that knife stand on end. You might as well give up and not waste your time." "But look, the penknife is standing!" I reply. "Sure," you say, "but you are holding it."

The standing penknife illustrates God's outer support. He strengthens us through the help of others. But we also need inner strength—the upholding power of the Holy Spirit.

Recently I watched a flour mill in operation. In the corner of the room lay empty sacks. If I had tried to make one stand by itself, it would have crumpled to the floor. But when the miller filled it with flour, it stood solid and unmoving, held up by the weight of the flour it contained. Likewise, the believer, filled with the indwelling Spirit, is able to stand.

Although we are weak, we are "kept by the power of God"—both from without and from within (1Peter 1:5-note). —P R Van Gorder.

God's resources equal our requirements.

COLOSSIANS 1:15

NO DISTRACTIONS

In Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting of The Last Supper, our Lord's hands are empty. And therein lies an inspiring story.

Da Vinci dedicated three years to this painting, determined that it would be his crowning work. Before the unveiling, he decided to show it to a friend for whose opinion he had the utmost respect.

The friend's praise was unbounded. "The cup in Jesus' hand," he said, "is especially beautiful." Disappointed at once Da Vinci began to paint out the cup. Astonished, the distinguished friend asked for an explanation. "Nothing," Da Vinci explained, "must distract from the figure of Christ."

Da Vinci focused attention solely on Christ by removing the distraction of the cup. Having removed the cup, he had to do something with the hand. The left hand was already outstretched just above the table, lifting, as if to bless and command. Now the right hand, also empty, was also outstretched invitingly. --Source unknown

COLOSSIANS 1:9-18

February 24, 2004

A MYSTERIOUS EQUATION

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. —Romans 5:8-note

Professor John Nash of Princeton University is a math genius who has spent his life in the abstract world of numbers, equations—and delusions. Nash suffers from schizophrenia, a mental illness that can result in bizarre behavior and broken relationships. With medical help and the love of his wife, he learned to live with his illness and later won the Nobel Prize.

In the movie version of his life, Nash said: "I've always believed in numbers and the equations and logics that lead to reason... My quest has taken me through the physical, the metaphysical, the delusional, and back. And I've made the most important discovery of my life. It's only in the mysterious equations of love that any logical reasons can be framed."

In Colossians 1, we read of "the mysterious equation of love" at its deepest level—God's love for us in Christ. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, and out of love He has created us and sustains us (Col 1:16, 17-note). He has also provided deliverance from the powers of darkness (Col 1:13-note) and the forgiveness of our sins (Col 1:14-note). No wonder Paul said that such love "passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19-note). It takes us beyond logic into the very heart of who God is (1John 4:16).

We are to live and show that love—always.—Dennis J. De Haan

FOR FURTHER STUDY - How do we experience the love of Christ? (John 15:10). What is the evidence of God's love in our lives? (1John 4:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21). How can you show God's love today?

God's love cannot be explained—

it can only be experienced

COLOSSIANS 1:10

INTENTIONS

A strong desire to please God is the highest incentive for doing His will and shows a true understanding of godly fear. We may have other worthy motives, such as the inner satisfaction of doing what's right or the anticipation of heavenly rewards. But we bring the greatest glory to God when we obey and serve Him because we long to do what brings Him delight.

Craig, a first-grader, beamed with satisfaction as he handed me a spelling test on which his teacher had written a large "100—Good work!" Craig said, "I showed this to Dad and Mother because I knew it would please them." I could just see him riding home on the bus, hardly able to wait for the moment when his parents would express their excitement with how well he had done. His desire to make Dad and Mom happy obviously was a strong motivating factor in his life.

When Paul used the simile of a soldier serving with single-minded devotion to please his commanding officer (2Ti 2:3, 4-note), he

wanted Timothy to know the supreme reason for serving God, even when the going gets tough. Wholehearted devotion, marked by hard work and careful attention to God's rules, brings the greatest glory to the Lord when it comes from a yielded, loving heart. Our Savior, who in His humanity shrank from the prospect of being made the sin-offering for mankind, nevertheless prayed, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42) Our motive, like His, should be the desire to please the Father. —H. V. Lugt

Man weighs the deeds; God weighs the intentions.

COLOSSIANS 1:13

DYNAMITED INTO CHANGE

When a newspaper editor learned that a man named Alfred Nobel had died, he assumed that the deceased must be the same man who had invented dynamite. So he published an obituary calling Nobel the merchant of death.

When Nobel read the account of his own death, he reacted like a blind man suddenly gaining sight. From that day on, Nobel devoted himself to philanthropic causes—especially peace.

Saul of Tarsus experienced a transformation far more dramatic than Nobel's. While on the road to Damascus to take captive those who followed Jesus, Saul met the Lord Himself. Temporarily blinded by his encounter, Saul devoted the rest of his life to serving the One he had formerly persecuted. The enemy of Jesus became His dedicated apostle (Acts 9:15-16).

Our own experience will not likely be so earthshaking. Yet we must ask ourselves if we have had an encounter with the Savior—one that has changed the direction of our lives.

If that is not your experience, turn to John 3 and read what Jesus said about being born again. Then, with a simple prayer of repentance, you may open your heart to Him. An honest commitment to the Lord will put you into a new relationship with Him—one that will last for eternity. —Vernon C Grounds

He touched me, oh, He touched me,
And oh, the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened and now I know
He touched me and made me whole.
—Gaither © 1963 by William J. Gaither

**Salvation is more than breaking bad habits,
it's creating good character.**

COLOSSIANS 1:14

Having trusted Christ as our Savior, we should never cease to glory in His sacrifice for us on the cross. The reality of being identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection should fill us with gratitude in the morning, give us refuge throughout the day, and be a pillow at night upon which to rest.

A small detachment of British troops, surprised by an overwhelming enemy force, fell back under heavy fire. Their wounded lay in a perilous position, facing certain death. They all realized they had to come immediately under the protection of a Red Cross flag if they wanted to survive. All they had was a piece of white cloth, but no red paint. So they used the blood from their wounds to make a large cross on that white cloth. Their attackers respected that grim flag as it was held aloft, and the British wounded were brought to safety (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*).

Our enemy not only must respect the blood of Christ shed on Calvary's cross, he also is helpless against it. Christ's blood represents the sacrifice of One whose death removed the guilt and condemnation of our sin and broke its hold over us. It is absolute protection against the accusation of Satan, the defeating remembrances of past sins, and the downpull of our Adamic nature. No wonder we glory in the cross.—D. J. De Haan

Calvary stands for Satan's fall.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-19

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15).

A little boy looked into the sky and asked his mother, "Is God up there?" When she assured him that He was, the youngster replied, "Wouldn't it be nice if He would put His head out and let us see Him?"

What the boy didn't understand was that God has let us see Him—in the person of His Son. We don't have to guess what God is

like. Nor do we have to wonder if He's alive. By sending Christ to earth as a man, the heavenly Father fully revealed Himself. Jesus was God "manifested in the flesh" (1Ti 3:16).

Christ made this point clear when He said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). This is the good news we celebrate, especially at Christmas. God has shown us what He is like in the person of His Son. He left heaven's glory and came to earth to be born of a virgin. The baby that Mary cradled in a Bethlehem manger was the "image of the invisible God." All the attributes of the infinite God resided in Him. In fact, He was the One by whom "all things were created" and in whom "all things consist" (Col 1:16, 17-note).

Looking into the face of our Savior, we can see displayed the holiness, the grace, and the love of our eternal, heavenly Father. This realization should make us rejoice, for we are gazing at God, who stepped out of heaven and came to this earth. Jesus Christ is Immanuel, God with us! —P. R. Van Gorder.

Bethlehem's manger was the first step in God's love-journey to Calvary's cross.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

December 25, 2005

FIRST BREATH

All things were created through Him and for Him. —Colossians 1:16

Russell Nagy's moving choral anthem "The Promise" contains these words:

Silently by night,
in mortal flesh enshrouded,
He who framed the mountains
draws first breath.
Far from human sight,
the Promise ne'er forgotten
Is in love begotten
to conquer death.
© 1993 by High Street Music

The marvel of Christmas is that the Maker of the mountains took His first breath as a baby. The One who framed the universe assumed human flesh so He could save us. The incarnation is the astounding combination of who descended from heaven to earth, how He arrived, and why He came. "For by Him all things were created ... And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist... For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, ... having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:16, 17, 18, 19, 20-note).

When Jesus took His first breath on earth, a loving promise of God the Father was fulfilled. The Christ-child whom the angels announced and the shepherds proclaimed had come to die.

The baby in the manger was "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (v.15), "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (v.14). O come, let us adore Him! —David C. McCasland

The tiny Baby in the manger is the mighty Creator of the universe.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

WHY ARE WE HERE?

All things were created by Him and for Him. -Colossians 1:16

Why are we here? Listen to the opinion of Stephen Jay Gould, a Harvard paleontologist who is regarded as an eminent authority on how life began. Gould says, "We [exist] because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a "higher" answer - but none exists."

Contrast that godless guesswork with the majestic affirmation of the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Ge 1:1).

Yes, that's the higher answer! We're here because the Lord Almighty has brought everything into existence by His will and power

(Col. 1:16-note). We're here because a wise, loving Creator wanted us and fashioned us as beings who are able to obey Him, serve Him, trust Him, and love Him.

Which answer do you accept? The answer that we're here because of a series of mindless accidents - the answer that leads to despair? Or do you accept the biblical answer that brings the hope of everlasting love and life? - Vernon C. Grounds

I sing the mighty power of God
That made the mountains rise;
That spread the flowing seas abroad
And built the lofty skies. -Watts

THE DESIGN OF CREATION POINTS TO THE MASTER DESIGNER.

COLOSSIANS 1:17

November 13, 2001

FOUND: THE MISSING PIECE

Read: Hebrews 1

The caption in USA Today read, "Physicists find the missing piece in a universal puzzle." The "tau neutrino," an incredibly tiny particle, was the last-theorized member of the family of particles that make up the universe. It has now been proven to exist.

Phillip Schewe of the American Institute of Physics said, "It's like finding the Z in the alphabet of fundamental particles ... [This study] doesn't save lives or fill stomachs, but it does investigate the most fundamental structures ... out of which everything, including ourselves, is made."

Imagine finding the smallest known piece of the universe! It's even more amazing to know the Designer of the universe—the Creator of those tiny bits of matter—and the reason they hold together. In Colossians 1:17-note we read that Jesus "is before all things, and in Him all things consist." One Bible scholar defines the word consist as the "principle of cohesion," adding that Jesus makes the universe "a cosmos instead of a chaos."

Jesus Christ is more vital to our existence than the "tau neutrino." He feeds us spiritually, as well as physically. He saves us from our sins, as well as protects us from evil. He brings order to our inner chaos. May we ever worship the One who holds everything together. —D J De Haan

My times are in His hand,
A hand so safe and strong,
A hand which holds the sea
And guides the stars along. —Anon.

**When your world seems to be falling apart,
look to Jesus who holds everything together.**

COLOSSIANS 1:18

December 10, 1997

SINGLE FOCUS

Read: 1Timothy 6:3-16

Pam Sneddon was taking a class in photography. For one assignment, she chose her 6-year-old daughter as her subject and asked her to sit on a serene hillside. Close by was an apple tree in full bloom. Pam just couldn't resist. She gave the tree a prominent place in the picture.

Pam was surprised when her instructor pointed out a problem with the photo. The apple tree distracted from her primary focus, the little girl.

"See how it catches the eye," the instructor said. "It competes with your subject. You need to choose one subject and leave the other out."

This observation applies to more than good photography skills. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must center our attention only on

Him. Like amateur photographers, we are often attracted to the "apple trees in full bloom." We pay more attention to our hobbies, friends, family, or work.

Christ commands our attention because He is "the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality" (1Ti 6:15, 16). That may mean relegating something we deem to be important to the background--or cropping it out of the picture altogether.

Whatever distracts us from Jesus has to go. As the preeminent One, He must be the single focus of our lives. --D C Egner

In Christ alone the earth shall find its answer,
A refuge from its doubts, its fears, its strife;
This God-revealed-in-flesh, this precious Savior,
Forever is the Way, the Truth, the Life! --Calenberg

**If Christ is the center of your life,
you'll always be focused on Him.**

COLOSSIANS 1:13-18

NO GOD, NO POTATOES

In Him we live and move and have our being. —Acts 17:28

It's been said that in the former Soviet Union the peasant farmers often enjoyed telling a humorous story to lighten their dreary lives.

It seems that one day a government official came to a farmer and inquired about the year's potato crop. "Oh, it was wonderful," the farmer replied slyly. "It was so big it reached up to the very foot of God."

The commissar's countenance quickly changed. With a scowl, he said, "But comrade, this is a communist state and we are atheists. You must not forget, there is no God!"

"Ah, that's my point," the farmer replied. "No God—no potatoes!"

Yes, whether we believe it or not, God is the source of all things (Psalm 136:25). The apostle Paul told a pagan audience, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). And in Colossians 1:16-18, he focused on the great creating and sustaining work of God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Without Him, we couldn't draw a single breath, and our bodies could not function.

Do we who confess faith in a personal God, to whom we owe our very existence, respond with thanksgiving, worship, and praise? If not, we differ little from that commissar who saw no connection between God and potatoes. —D J De Haan

Part of God's name divinely stands
On every work impressed;
Each is the labor of His hands,
By each His power confessed. —Anon.

God is the first link in our life's chain of events

COLOSSIANS 1:15-19

ABOVE ALL

Read: John 3:22-36, Colossians 1:15, 16, 17, 18, 19

He who comes from heaven is above all. --John 3:31

In the mid-1800s, Ralph Waldo Emerson became a leader in a philosophical movement known as "transcendentalism," which says that truth comes from personal insight. Emerson wrote, "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men--that is genius."

Sadly, Emerson's faulty thinking took root, and personal thoughts about God replaced God's thoughts and words about Himself. The Lord said in Isaiah, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Is 55:9).

One of ancient Israel's songwriters expressed God's greatness this way: "I know that the Lord is great, and our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places" (Psalm 135:5, 6).

Jesus, the image of the invisible God, is the source of all truth (Colossians 1:15, 16, 17, 18, 19). John the Baptist said of Him: "He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31).

Only God, the creator of all things, deserves to be called transcendent--that is, above and beyond all things. Contrary to what Emerson concluded, truth comes from above, not from within. --Julie Ackerman Link

No matter how we think and try
To understand the Lord above,
Our thoughts can only amplify
Our need to know His truth and love. --Hess

He is no genius who ignores his Creator.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-19

WHO'S YOUR CREATOR?

Read: Psalm 96, Colossians 1:15-19

All the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. —Psalm 96:5

Does the design of the universe point to an intelligent Designer? Even though many scientists resist that idea and propose naturalistic explanations for the origin of the cosmos, they sometimes use words that point to a Creator.

Fred Heeren talks about this in his book *Show Me God*. He quotes English theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking as using the words "finely adjusted" in explaining the development of life. Hawking also uses the phrase "very carefully chosen" in relation to the initial configuration of the universe.

In addition, Heeren shows that the late Carl Sagan often referred to "some kind of force or power" by which the universe created itself. Sagan declared that the cosmos is all that exists, but he also said, "Our ancestors worshiped the sun, and they were far from foolish. It makes good sense to revere the sun and the stars because we are their children." He was repeating the mistake of those who worship "the creature rather than the Creator" (Ro 1:25-note).

In contrast, the Bible points us to the infinite, intelligent, and personal Creator who has made us and revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ (Psalm 96:5; Col 1:15, 16, 17, 18, 19-note).

Let's make worshiping the Lord God and serving Him our greatest delight. —H V Lugt

The greatness of our God is seen
In sky and sea and forest green;
And living creatures great and small
Reveal the God who made them all. —D. De Haan

The design in creation points to the master Designer.

COLOSSIANS 1:16

LIVE ACCORDINGLY

READ: Colossians 1:15-18

By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. —Colossians 1:16

I heard about an ethics professor who serves as a consultant in major ethical dilemmas and legal cases all over the world. Again and again he provides deep insights into complex moral questions, and his opinions have influenced corporate decisions of global significance. But the professor himself is not ethical. He cheats on his wife, and he embarrasses the university by his public behavior.

Now, this man knows the law. He has deep insights into right and wrong. But his knowledge doesn't affect the way he lives. He's like a pianist who has all the notes in front of him but doesn't play the music. He's like the builder who has all the plans and materials but doesn't build the building properly. He's like so many who live without Christ—the One who created them and has a design for their lives. Everything that exists has been created "through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16), and we would be wise to follow His plan.

Like good musicians and expert builders, when we live according to God's design, we will be successful in carrying out His plan for our lives. As the apostle Paul prayed, may we be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9). And then, may we live accordingly. —David C. Egener

Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady,
Still to follow every word. —Havergal

To know life's purpose, you must know life's Creator

COLOSSIANS 1:18

November 15, 1995

EYES ON THE KING

Colossians 1:9-19

He is the head of the body, the church, ... that in all things He may have the preeminence. --Colossians 1:18

John Henry Jowett, the great English preacher, liked to tell about the time he attended the coronation of Edward VII. Westminster Abbey was filled with royalty. Jowett said, "Much bowing and respect was shown as nobility of high rank entered the cathedral." When the king arrived, however, a hush came over the audience. Every eye was on him, and no longer did the dignitaries of lower status receive the gaze and interest of the people. All the subjects fixed their attention on their royal leader.

This is the way it should be in the life of a Christian. Jesus is the King of kings, and He deserves the place of highest prominence. Naturally we love and respect our families, friends, associates, and those who serve the Lord. But the Lord Jesus must have the preeminence! Our devotion is always to be centered on Him. With all the activities that compete for our time--even the work and program of the church--it's so easy to take our eyes off the Savior.

May we never lose sight of King Jesus who deserves our praise and worship. Let us join the heavenly voices and say, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor" (Rev. 4:11). Yes, Christ is the preeminent One! --R W De Haan

Then let us adore and give Him His right--
All glory and power and wisdom and might,
All honor and blessing with angels above,
And thanks never ceasing, and infinite love. --Wesley

Focusing on Christ puts everything else in perspective

COLOSSIANS 1:9-19

He is the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18).

We can never exaggerate the greatness of Christ. Paul said that "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), that "by Him all things were created" (v. 16), and that "He is before all things" (v. 17). As the preeminent person in human history, Christ is worthy of our love and our praise.

In his classic book *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer paid tribute to Frederick Faber, the Englishman who wrote the song "Faith of Our Fathers."

Tozer said, "His love for the person of Christ was so intense that it threatened to consume him; it burned within him as a sweet and holy madness and flowed from his lips like molten gold. In one of his sermons he said, 'Wherever we turn in the church of God, there is Jesus. He is the beginning, middle, and end of everything to us... There is nothing good, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing joyous which He is not to His servants... No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things, but we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that might be said of Him.

Christ deserves our loving adoration. He is truly the preeminent One. —R W De Haan

When we submit to Jesus' lordship,

we'll give Him our worship.

COLOSSIANS 1:18

SINGLE FOCUS

He is the head of the body, the church, ... that in all things He may have the preeminence. --Colossians 1:18

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If Christ is the center of your life, you'll always be focused on Him.

Colossians 1:19-27

Stand Firm

As our final project for a high school earth science class, a friend and I built a stream table. With extensive help from my father, we built a long plywood box with a hinge in the middle. Then we lined it with plastic and filled it with sand. At one end we attached a hose. At the other end was a drainage hole. After assembling all of it, we raised one end of the stream table, turned on the water, and watched as it created a path directly to the hole at the other end. The next part of the experiment was to place a rock in the stream and watch how it changed the path of the water.

This project taught me as much about life as it did about science. I learned that I can't change the direction things are going if I'm on the bank of the river. I have to step into the stream of life and stand there to divert the flow. That's what Jesus did. The Bible refers to salvation as a rock (2 Sam. 22:47; Ps. 62:2,6-7), and the apostle Paul clarifies that Christ is that Rock (1 Cor. 10:4). God placed Jesus in the stream of history to change its course.

When we remain steadfast in Christ, abounding in the work of the Lord, God uses us to change the course of history through acts of obedience that turn others to Him. — by Julie Ackerman Link

Be sure to put your feet in the right place, then stand firm. —Abraham Lincoln

COLOSSIANS 1:20

F B Meyer

THE BASIS OF PEACE

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—Romans 5:1.

"Having made peace through the blood of His Cross."—Colossians 1:20.

THE BASIS of redemption and peace was laid on Calvary, when our Lord died for the sins of the world. In Lev17:11, we learn that

"the life, or soul, of the flesh is in the blood" (R.V. marg.); from which we infer that the forth-flowing of the blood of Christ was the forth-pouring of His soul as a sacrifice for sin.

It may be asked: Granted that the blood of Christ represents His soul which was poured out for sinful men, how did this marvellous act of self-sacrifice constitute a basis for peace? The full answer to that question is impossible in our present limited knowledge. It is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord our God, hidden from us now, to be revealed when we are full-grown.

But never suppose that the shedding of Christ's blood was necessary to make God love us, to appease His wrath or wring from His unwilling hand an edict of redemption. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." The Father does not love us because Jesus died, but He went to the Cross because of God's love for us who chose us to be joint-heirs with His Son.

But there is one condition to be fulfilled. The access into Peace is open only to those who believe. We are justified by faith; we have peace through believing. The Apostle says that "through our Lord Jesus Christ we have now received the Atonement" (Col1:11). The redemption is accomplished; we have but to receive it. The atonement of peace is made, it is only for us to take it. "For as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." As we receive eternal life, and the Holy Spirit with open and thankful hearts, relying on the Divine assurance by faith, we enter into the great inheritance of Peace, and the gifts of God in Grace and Nature become our own.

PRAYER - O Most Merciful Lord, Grant to me, above all things that can be desired, to rest in Thee, and in Thee to have my heart at peace. Thou art the true peace of the heart, Thou its only rest; out of Thee all things are hard and restless. In this very peace that is in Thee, the one Eternal God, I will sleep and rest. AMEN. - F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-23

THE TOTAL PACKAGE

August 15, 2004

"You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit." – 1 Corinthians 6:20

Our family had lived in the same house for many years, and it was time for a change of scenery. When we finally discovered a house we liked, we began negotiating for its purchase. We had to find out if the refrigerator stayed. And the stove. But we knew some things were not going to stay. The furniture didn't come with the house. And I jokingly wondered if we could keep the cars in the garage. When you buy a house, you may not get the total package. The owner takes his belongings with him, although you may have the option to buy some of them. Many things in life have purchase options. But that's not how it is with our faith in Jesus Christ. When Jesus purchased us with His blood on the cross, He didn't get only a portion of us. He's not just the Lord of the religious stuff; He owns everything. So why do we sometimes live as if parts of us don't belong to Jesus? That's not fair to the buyer. "You were bought at a price," Paul wrote. "Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Corinthians 6:20). Christ bought us—body, soul, and spirit. Let's make sure we let Him use the total package for His glory. – Dave Branon

You have bought us, and no longer
Can we claim to be our own;
Giving freely, naught withholding,
We shall serve You, Lord, alone. – Murray

Jesus gave His all; He deserves our all.

COLOSSIANS 1:19-29

FROM BLOT TO BEAUTY

August 11, 1994

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; ... all things have become new." – 2Corinthians 5:17.

God our Maker faced a situation something like that of the artist, except that the problem was immeasurably greater. Adam was God's supreme creation, but he had ruined himself by sin. With his original perfection stained and disfigured, he was fit only to be eternally discarded. But by the amazing strategy of the cross, our gracious God, the Supreme Artist, took ruined sinners and recreated them to reflect the beauty of Christ's holiness. When we put our faith in the crucified Savior, we are not only completely forgiven, but God's Holy Spirit transforms us, making us into the Creator's prized possession. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians, we will be displaying throughout eternity "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Col 2:7). – V C Grounds

Dear Lord, take up the tangled strands,
Where we have wrought in vain,
That by the skill of Thy dear hands
Some beauty may remain. — Burroughs

Only God can transform a sin-stained soul into a masterpiece of grace.

COLOSSIANS 1:20

F B Meyer

THE GOD OF PEACE

"Now the God of Peace be with you all."—Ro 15:33.

"Having made peace through the blood of His Cross."—Col 1:20.

WE ALL need Peace! There are sources of Peace which are common to all men. The peace of a happy home; of an increasing business and enlarging influence; of the respect and love of our fellows. As a man is conscious of these, he is inclined to say with Job, "I shall die in my nest." We can all understand a peace like that; but there is a "peace that passeth understanding." It is too deep for words. It is like the pillowed depths of the ocean, which are undisturbed by the passing storm. Here is a sufferer, almost always in acute pain, and needing constant attention, and yet so happy. Joy and Peace, like guardian angels, sit by that bedside; and Hope, not blindfolded, touches all the strings of the lyre, and sheds sunshine,—how do you account for it? Let the sceptic and the scoffer answer! Here is a peace that passes understanding which comes from the God of Peace.

For the Christian soul there is a silver lining in every cloud; a blue patch in the darkest sky; a turn in the longest lane; a mountain view which shall compensate the steepest ascent. Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land. The thing impossible shall be; because all things are possible to God.

The peace of God is the peace of the Divine Nature---the very tranquillity which prevails in the heart of the God of Peace. It was of this that Jesus spoke when He said, "My peace I give unto you"; for His own being was filled and blessed with it during His earthly career. "The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always."

There are three things against which we must ever be on our guard lest they rob us of our peace. First, unconfessed sin; second, worry; third, the permission of an unrebuked selfish principle. The Apostle says, "Let the Peace of God rule in your hearts." The Greek word means arbitrate. Let God's Peace act as umpire.

We shall not escape life's discipline. We may expect to abound here, and to be abased there. But amid all, God's Peace, like a white-winged sentinel angel, shall come down to garrison our heart with its affections, and our mind with its thoughts.

PRAYER - I humbly ask, O God, that Thy Peace may be the garrison of my heart and mind; that it may ever rule within me, asserting itself over the tumultuous passions that arise within. And out of this Peace may I arise to serve Thee. AMEN.

COLOSSIANS 1:24

THE MINISTRY OF SUFFERING

Read: Colossians 1:19-29

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, ... for the sake of His body, which is the church. —Colossians 1:24

In this self-indulgent age, many believe that people of faith shouldn't suffer. But according to author George MacDonald, "The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His."

In Colossians 1:24, the apostle Paul said that his own sufferings filled up what was "lacking in the afflictions of Christ." He didn't mean that Christ's death was inadequate to save us. He was indicating that suffering for the Lord is a part of following Him. As we live for Christ and proclaim His sacrifice to a lost world, we will experience suffering.

What an example the apostle is to us! Instead of pitying himself, he joyfully suffered for Christ and His people. He knew that pain and suffering weren't too great a price for the privilege of being a blessing to others.

Hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal, referring to her pain-ridden body, said, "Everybody is so sorry for me except myself." Then she added, "I see my pain in the light of Calvary." Even those who suffer physical infirmities can glorify God and challenge others.

It's not morbid to accept suffering as we serve the Lord—it's our calling and ministry! —J E Yoder

The suffering that we endure
To bring light to a darkened soul
Gives us great reason to rejoice
When lives, once broken, are made whole. —Sper

The call to serve Christ includes the call to suffer for Christ.

COLOSSIANS 1:24

BAND OF BROTHERS

READ: Colossians 1:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29

Of all Shakespeare's great plays, Henry V may rank as the most heroic. In one stirring scene, the English army stands fearfully before superior French troops. King Henry challenges his men to take heart. Because the battle will be fought on "the feast of Crispian," their victory will be remembered in its yearly celebration. The king tells his men, "This day is called the feast of Crispian ... We in it shall be remembered; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

Today, the US Marine Corps refers to itself as a "band of brothers." There is something about interdependence and personal sacrifice while under fire that binds people together for life.

Christians facing opposition can also have such a bond. Paul wrote, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ" (Colossians 1:24).

Did Paul believe Christ's suffering on the cross was insufficient? No, His atonement was completely adequate for all our sin. What Paul meant was that as we complete Christ's work on earth amid painful opposition, we share in His sufferings. Jesus suffered for obeying the will of God, and so must we. But like Paul, we can find joy as we draw closer to our Lord and our band of brothers and sisters. —Dennis Fisher

Oh, how we need support in times
Of suffering and despair—
Upheld with love by saints of God
Who understand and care. —D. De Haan

**Suffering can be a magnet that draws the Christian
close to Christ and fellow Christians.**

COLOSSIANS 1:27

F B Meyer – Our Daily Homily

The only son of a widow runs off to sea when quite a lad. She must needs work for her living, and takes lodgers in her little home. After years have passed, a bronzed and bearded sailor comes to her door for accommodation, which she gladly affords at an agreed price. She has no idea who has come to dwell beneath her roof — it is a secret, a mystery.

By-and-by, one day as they are sitting at the midday meal, a remark, a gesture, startles her; she looks hard into the stranger's face, recognizes him, and, with a cry, rushes into his arms and weeps out on his bosom her joy: "My son, my son, what deceived my old eyes, that I didn't know thee!" That is the glory of the mystery, which breaks in smiles and kisses.

Then he says, "Mother, how hard life has gone with you; your hands are hard with toil. But see, I have plenty of money, and you shall go shares in all. I will take a nice little home, and you shall live there, to keep it as long as you live, and never have to do a stroke of hard toil." That is the riches of the glory of the mystery.

So at your conversion Jesus came into your heart to abide. Too long He has been unrecognized; but of late you have been made aware of the nature and worth of your Heavenly Friend. The mystery has broken in light. Henceforth, realize that all his riches are yours, to be shared and enjoyed; that all your needs may be fully met, even to the abundance of his unsearchable riches; and that there may be an end for ever to all the weary sense of inability and incompetence to meet the inevitable demands of daily living. Christ is in you; let his life within reach out its hands to the life of glory above.

Colossians 1:27-28

WATCHING FOR SOULS

"Christ in you, the hope of glory; Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom."—Col 1:27, 28.

"Watch, and remember, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."-- Acts 20:31.

THE MINISTRY of warning should be a recognized part of the work of the Church and of each individual member. The foghorn warns the ship from the deadly rocks; the red light warns the train of imminent danger; in the days of the plague people were warned from infected areas: how much more should we, who know the wrath of God which abides on those who refuse Christ, raise our voice in warning. We should do it deliberately, earnestly, patiently, and in reliance upon the Spirit of God to make our words, however much they may be resented, the means of arresting the wicked from the error of his ways, and those who are taking their first steps in forbidden paths from pursuing them (Ezek 33:7, 8, 9).

How wonderful it is that God does not commission angels to carry His warnings and appeals; instead of this, the work that angels might love to do is entrusted to men. It is at our peril that we neglect our opportunities in this direction. If the signalman is placed at a point where many lines of rail cross or diverge, and he sleeps at his post, or neglects his duty, he may be tried for manslaughter; and if we know of people in the immediate circle of our influence who are in danger of ruining their physical, moral, and spiritual well-being, we are bound to raise a warning voice. If we saw, upon the upper reaches of a river, a boat full of people hastening towards the rapids unheeding the danger, surely we might be guilty of being an accessory in their destruction, if we failed to do something to warn them of their peril.

Accompanying our words of warning, there should be the clear reiteration of the Love of God. He does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. It is not enough to try and prevent men from taking the wrong path, we must urge and allure them to take the pleasant ways of righteousness and peace. All are included in the love of God. Even sin cannot turn away His love, which is like that described in the parable of the Prodigal Son, or 1Co 13:1-13.

PRAYER - O God, we have left undone many things that we ought to have done. Hands have been reached out for help which we have not given; hearts have turned to us for sympathy which we have not blessed. Forgive us, we pray Thee, and at whatever cost may we follow Christ in His redemptive purpose. AMEN. F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk.

COLOSSIANS 1:28

DAISY CHAINS

August 26, 1999

I was an adult when I made my first daisy chain. Seated in a meadow with a friend, we crafted delicate necklaces by joining daisies together. It was so absorbing that we momentarily forgot about life's pressing needs. Afterward, however, those needs were still there, urgent as ever. That experience reminded me of a story I read about a woman who dreamed that she saw a meadow next to a precipice that dropped hundreds of feet to the rocks below. Scores of blind people were walking toward the edge. She tried to warn them, but there were too many. Then she noticed others in the meadow who could see. But instead of warning the crowd, they sat on the grass making daisy chains. There's certainly nothing wrong with harmless pursuits and times of leisure. But are we so absorbed with our own interests that we forget the countless people who are stumbling blindly into hell? Paul understood the urgency of such a situation. His constant focus was Christ. "Him we preach," he wrote, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). What are you absorbed with? Making daisy chains? Or making disciples? – J E Yoder

So send I you to hearts made hard by hatred,
To eyes made blind because they will not see,
To spend--though it be blood--to spend and spare not--
So send I you to taste of Calvary. – Clarkson

Wanted: Messengers to deliver the good news.

COLOSSIANS 1:29

January 2, 1996

DARTBOARD OR PIPELINE?

To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. --Colossians 1:29

One day during my devotional time, this thought came to my mind: "Don't let life happen to you. Let life happen through you."

The first phrase described me to a T, for I tended to see life as something coming at me. I felt like a worn-out dartboard. I was using all my energies to shield myself from the darts of life's trials.

But the second phrase, "Let life happen through you," presented a different approach. Instead of dodging life's fiery darts, I was to let God's life and love be channeled through me, blessing me on its way to blessing others.

Instead of being life's dartboard, I chose that day to become God's pipeline. Then I could begin living more effectively for Him.

Some days I revert to being a dartboard, but I soon run out of the love and power to bless others. Then through confession, faith, and obedience, I reconnect myself to my heavenly supply center and resume pipeline living.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul mentioned the many troubles he was facing. Yet he was determined to be a channel of blessing by allowing God to work through him.

What about you? Are you a dartboard or a pipeline? It's a God-given challenge and choice for every believer. --J E Yoder

Give as 'twas given to you in your need,
Love as the Master loved you;
Be to the helpless a helper indeed,
Unto your mission be true. --Wilson

God blesses you to bless others.

COLOSSIANS 1:29

June 21, 2005

BETTER THAN YOUR BEST

Colossians 1:19-29

I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. —

When John became a salesman in a well-known insurance company years ago, his aim was to work effectively in his firm without compromising his Christian integrity. But there were those who considered him naive. In their view, one could possess either job security or Christian integrity—not both.

But John did not waver in his commitment to be a godly witness in the business world. Although he was in a job that required accurate calculations, he had a weakness when it came to simple arithmetic. This forced him to depend more on Christ in everything, which enhanced his witness.

John eventually became the company's top salesman, and God used him to win many colleagues to Christ. Later, as a branch manager, John and his team became the company's largest branch worldwide—all without compromising Christian integrity.

Are you striving to live and work without compromise in a tough place? Are you doing your best, but your best is not enough? Colossians 1:29 reminds us that dependence on God's mighty power within us is what makes us effective. John, the businessman, summed it up like this: "God helps me do better than I can!"

He will do the same for you. —Joanie Yoder

Savior, let me walk beside Thee,

Let me feel my hand in Thine;

Let me know the joy of walking

In Thy strength and not in mine. —Sidebotham

Boast not in what you do for Christ,

but in what Christ does for you.