Spurgeon on Colossians 2

- Spurgeon on Colossians - Part 1
- Spurgeon on Colossians - Part 2
- Colossians Illustrations 1
- Colossians Illustrations 2
- Colossians Illustrations 3
- Colossians Illustrations 4

SPURGEON
ON COLOSSIANS
Part 2

Colossians 2:6 A Consistent Walk for Time to Come

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"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." — Colossians 2:6.

Though the shepherd cares for the lambs, and carries them in his arms, he doth not cease his care when they become sheep; but, so long as they shall need to be tended, so long will he watch over them. Hence it is that our apostle, though always quick of eye after newborn souls, and abundantly anxious to bring sinners to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, is equally in a conflict of soul for the spiritual healthfulness of those who have been born again. Our text contains one of those loving-admonitions. It is addressed, not to the ungodly, not to those who are strangers to our Lord and Master, but to those who have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." Longing for their spiritual good, and anxious that they shall be established in the faith, he admonishes them thus, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

In endeavoring, by God's help, to speak upon this subject, we all have three points. There is here, first, a fact stated concerning believers: they have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." Then there is an exhortation, or a counsel, offered to such: "walk ye in him." Besides which we have a model held up for our imitation. How are we to walk in him? Why, just in the same way as we at first received him. Let our first coming to Christ be to us the mirror of how we shall walk in him all our days.

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I. All true Christians are here described in the text as having received Christ Jesus the Lord.

The first point to which I would particularly direct, your attention is the personality of this reception. Believers have, it is true, received Christ's words; they prize every precept, they value every doctrine; but this is not all. They have received Christ himself. While they have received Christ's ordinances, and are not slow be walk in obedience to the things which he hath commanded, they do not stay here. They have received Christ himself — his person, his Godhead, and his humanity. They have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." And, mark you, there is a very great distinction here, and a great mystery also. A great distinction, I say; for there are some who do, I think, even wholly believe the doctrines which Christ has taught, and am profoundly orthodox, add are full of an earnest controversial spirit for the faith once delivered to the saints; and yet, for all that, they do not seem to have received him, the very Christ of God; and, truly, there are many who have received both baptism and the Lord's supper, yet, despite what any may say, we believe that they have not received Christ, but are still as great strangers to him as though they had only passed through the rites common to mankind, or the rites in which heathens indulge. There is a vast difference between the outward reception of the doctrine, or the ordinance, and the inward reception of Christ. We said also, that herein is a mystery, — such a mystery that only he who has received Christ can understand it. The preacher cannot tell you what it is to receive Christ. Human language is not adapted to convoy to the mind this deep enigma, this matchless secret. We know what it is, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." We can describe it in such a measure that our friends, who have also received Christ, will know that we understand the mystery; but to the carnal mind it will ever remain a puzzle how Christ can be "in us the hope of glory," — how we can eat his flesh and drink his blood. They run away to some carnal interpretation, and suppose that the broil is turned into flesh at the Eucharist or that the wine is transformed into blood. That is carnal talk, and this they talk because they know not

what is the mystery of this receiving Christ, and this walking in Christ.

This much, however, we may affirm. The believer has received Christ into his knowledge. He knows him to be God and to be Man. He knows him to be set forth of the Father as the Redeemer, but, he knows him also by a personal acquaintance. His eyes have not seen him, and yet he has looked to him, and has, by faith, seen the King in his beauty. His hands have not handled him, and yet, there has been a secret touch, by which the virtue has come out of Christ, and has flowed into him. He, has never sat down at a communion table when Christ has been physically present, and yet full often he could say, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” He has talked with me as a man talketh with his friend; and the strongest sense that can be attached to that sweet word “communion” is tame in reference to the believer’s connection with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in that sense of knowing him, intimately knowing him, the believer has received Christ.

Not only has he received Christ into his cognizance, but into his understanding. He understands, with all saints, the love of Jesus in its height, and depth, and length, and breadth. He has so seen Christ as to understand of him that he was before all time as the Ancient of Days, and then had his delights with the sons of men in the great covenant decree of electing love. He understands how he became made flesh with us, — married to us, when he came on earth, the Son of Mary, “bone of our bone, and flesh, of our flesh.” He knows by experience what is the meaning of the atonement. He can understand how justice is satisfied and grace, magnified. Without confounding or making mistakes, he knows how God was ever gracious and full of love and yet how Christ Jesus came, that the love of God might be shed abroad in our hearrs, and we reconciled unto God by his death. Hence the Christian does not read of Christ as though he were a mere historical personage, nor of his work as a great mystery which he cannot comprehend; but he has received Christ into his understanding.

Ah, beloved! this is a very poor and shallow sense compared with the next. I have received but one ounce of Christ into my understanding, but, bless his name, I have received the whole of him into my affections. Good Rutherford used to pray for a larger heart, that he might hold more of Christ; and perhaps you recollect that strange extravaganza of prayer in which he says, “Oh, that I had a heart as deep, and wide, and high as heaven, that I might hold Christ in it!” And then said he, “Since the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, oh, that I had a heart as vast as seven heavens, that I might get the whole of Christ into me, and hold him in my arms!” And truly, Christian, in one sense, you have taken all of Christ into your soul, have you not? Do you not love him, — not a part of him, but the whole of him? I hope you can truly say to Christ, —

Hast thou a lamb in all thy flock I would disdain to feed?
Hast thou a foe, before whose face I fear thy cause to plead?

Thou know’st I love thee, dearest Lord
But oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love thee more.

We must not leave this part of the subject without adding that the believer has received Christ into his trust, and this he did at his spiritual birth. He received Christ into the arms of his faith. He took Jesus Christ to be, henceforth, the unbuttressed pillar of his confidence, the one rock of his salvation, his strong castle and high tower. And, in this sense, every soul that is saved has “received Christ Jesus the Lord.”

Our text seems to point to a threefold character in which we have received Christ. We have received him as the Christ. My soul, hast thou ever seen him, as the Father’s anointed One, — as the chosen and sent One, ordained of old, — as One that is mighty, upon whom help should be laid? Hast thou seen him as God’s great High Priest, ordained as was Aaron, chosen of God from among men? Hast thou looked upon him as David did, as One chosen out of the people? We must accept Christ as the anointed One, and the right way thus to receive him is to receive him as the garments of Aaron received the oil that flowed from his head. Christ is the anointed One, and then you and I become anointed ones through the Holy Spirit which distils from him to us, and so we receive him as Christ.

And then he is called “Jesus”; and we must receive him as the Savior. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” Justification is receiving Christ as Jesus; so is sanctification; only I think I must say justification and pardon receive Christ as Jesus, and sanctification receives him as Christ Jesus, both as the anointed One and the Savior. May you and I be daily delivered from sin, — the guilt and power of it, and so receive him as Jesus!

There is a peculiar emphasis about the next expression. The article is emphatic here, “Christ Jesus the Lord.” To me, if I receive Christ, he must be Lord, — not one of the lords that may have dominion over me, but the Lord, peculiarly and specially; and though hitherto other lords have had dominion over me, now I am to obey him, and him only. What sayest thou, professor? Hast thou received Christ, Jesus the Lord? Is thy will subject to his will! Dost thou desire only to act according to his bidding? Are his commands thy desire? Is his will thy will? Is he thy Lord? For, mark you, you can never truly receive him as Christ, or as Jesus,

unless you receive him as the Lord. Thus, then, another sense in which we receive him is by subjecting ourselves entirely to him, sitting at his feet, wearing his yoke, taking up his cross, and bearing his reproach.

You will note that there is also, in this description of a Christian, the thought of his entire dependence. The apostle does not, say, "As ye have therefore fought for and won or earned Christ Jesus," but, "as ye have therefore received him." It is a stripping word, which divests the creature of everything like boasting. What is there to glory in if I be a receiver? The apostle in another place says, "If thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" The vessel that is filled under the flowing stream cannot boast, though it be never so full; for it was naturally empty, and owes its fullness to the stream. The beggar in the street, let him receive gold, yet cannot boast of the gold, because he is a receiver. He who gave must have the honor of the benefaction, — not the person who received. So let thy faith be never so strong, let thy confidence in Christ be never so glorious, thou hast nothing to boast of in it, for thou hast "received Christ Jesus." Beloved, here is a test for us: is our religion a receiving religion, or is it a working and an earning religion? An earning religion sends souls to hell. It is only a receiving religion that will take you to heaven. You may tug, and toil, and do your best, and make yourselves, as you think, as holy as the best of the apostles; but when you have done your utmost, you have done nothing whatever. You have built a card-house, which shall soon fall down. But when you come, as an empty-handed sinner, having nothing of your own, and receive Christ Jesus, then you have bowed your will to God's will; or rather, grace has bowed it, and you are saved, according to the Lord's own word, "He that believeth on me is not condemned." Thus you have dependence connected with the personality of the Christian's faith.

We have also here certainty: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Oh, how many Christians — I hope they are Christians — talk as if they really thought it was impossible to attain to any assurance of faith whatever! It is the fashion with some Christians to say, "Well, I hope," and "I trust" and they have a notion that this is being very humble-minded; but to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," is thought, to be pride, The declaration of Job, "I knew that my Redeemer liveth," or of the spouse in the Canticles, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies;" is thought to be vain presumption and boasting; but indeed, beloved, it is no such thing. Doubting is pride, but believing is humility. Let me prove it.

I think I used this illustration among you some little time ago. There are two children of one parent, and the father says to the two children, "On such a day, I intend to give you both a toy, which has been the object of your ambition for many a day." Well, the older boy of the two sits down, and calculates that the present will be expensive, and he begins to doubt whether his father can afford to purchase it. He remembers many times in which he has offended his parent, or broken his parent's commands, and, therefore, he doubts whether he shall ever have it. For he feels that he is unworthy; hence, he goes about the house without any joy, without any confidence. If anybody asks him whether his father will give hint this present or not, he says, "Well, I — I hope so. I trust so." Now, there is his little brother, and the moment he heard that he was to have this present, he clapped his hands, and ran out to his companions, and said, "I am to have such-and-such a thing given me." His brother checked him, "You are too presumptuous to say that." "No," said the little one, "for father said he would give these toys to us." "Oh, but," said the other, "remember that you and I have often broken his commands!" But he said he would."

"Oh, but the thing is expensive!"

"Ah but father said he would; and unless you can prove that my father tells lies, I shall go and rejoice in the bright hope that he will keep his promise."

Now, I think that the younger of the two is less presumptuous than his brother, for certainly it is a high presumption for a child to doubt the veracity of his parent. No matter how excellent your reasoning may seem to be, and how clear it may be to the eye of the flesh, it is always pride to doubt God; and to believe God, though to the carnal mind, which never can understand the bravery of faith, it may look like presumption, is always a badge of the truest, and most reverent humility. Beloved, you must know whether you are Christ's or not. I exhort you not to give sleep to your eyes till you do know it. What! can you rest when you do not know whether you are saved or not? O sirs, can you sit down at your tables, and feast, — can you go about your daily business with this thought in your mind, "If I should drop down dead, I do not know whether I should be found in heaven or in hell?" I tell you nothing but, certainties will suit my soul. I hope I never shall rest comfortable while under a doubt of my interest in Christ. Doubts may come, these we can understand; but to be comfortable under doubts, we hope we never shall comprehend. No, nothing but to —

"Read my title clear

To mansions in the skies," —

and give me joy and peace through believing. "Ye have received Christ the Lord." Just pass the question round the gallery there, and ask yourselves down below, "Have I received Christ Jesus the Lord?" Say "Yes," or "No," and God help you to give the answer solemnly as in his sight!

II. As briefly as possible we turn to notice the counsel given: "As ye have therefore received Christ. Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

There are three things suggested by the word "**walk** " — continuance, progress, activity.

To walk in a certain way means continuing in it. Now, Christian, you took Christ to be your All-in-all, did you not? Well, then, continue to take him as your All-in-all. The true way for a Christian to live is to live entirely upon Christ. Living by frames and feelings is a dying form of life. "He lived by a feeling experience," said one; said a poor method of living, too! Christians have experiences, and they have feelings; but, if they are wise, they Rover feed upon these things, but upon Christ himself. You took Christ to be your All-in-all at first. You did not then mix up your frames stud feedings with him; you looked entirely out of self to him. Well, near, continue in the same frame of mind. You sat down at the foot of the cross, and you said, —

"Now free from sin, I'll walk at large

My Savior's blood's my full discharge;

At his dear feet myself I lay, —

A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Well, then; keep there! Keep there! Never get an inch beyond that position. When you get sanctified, still look to Christ as if you were unsanctified. When you are on the verge of being glorified, look to him as if you were just newly come out of the hole of the pit. Hang upon Christ, you who are the best, just as though you were the worst. The same faith which saved Mary Magdalene, which saved Saul of Tarsus, must save you in the moment, when you shall be the nearest to the perfect image of Christ Jesus. It is "none but Jesus" now to your soul; let it be "none but Jesus, — none but Jesus," as long as you live.

In walking, there is not only continuance, but also progress. After a man becomes a Christian, he has not to lay again the foundation, but he has to go on, and to advance in the divine life. Still, wherever he shall advance, he is always to say, "None but Christ! Christ is all." Depend upon it, every inch of progress that you make beyond a simple reliance upon Lord Jesus Christ, will entail the painful necessity of your going back. If you begin to patch Christ's robe of righteousness with the very best rags of your own, no matter how cleanly you may have washed them, every rag will have to be unravelled, and every stitch will have to be cut. There is the rock Christ Jesus. Some Christians begin building their own stages on the rock. How carefully they tie the timbers together, how neatly they plane and smooth them; and then riley get high up upon these stages that they have built, and they feel so happy, — they have such frames! such feelings! such graces! such fullness! and they are inclined to look down upon those poor souls who are crying, "None but Jesus!" By-and-by, there comes a storm, and the edifice they have built begins to creak, and crack, and rock to and fro, and they begin to cry, "Ah! where are we now? Now we shall perish! Now Christ's love begins to dry up! New he will fail us!" Nay, — no such thing! It is not Christ who is failing you; it is not the rock that is shaking, but what you have built upon the rock. Come down from the stage which you have built, and, as Job says, "embrace the rock for want of a shelter." I believe those souls have the most safety and comfort who trust simply to Christ. Was it not Irving who said that he believed his good works had done him more harm than his bad works had done him, for his bad ones drove him to Christ, but his good ones led him to rely upon them? And, after all, are not our good works bad works, for is there not something in all of them to make us fly to the fountain of the Savior's blood for cleansing?

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him," also implies activity. Christians are not to be lie-a-beds, nor for ever to sit still. There is an activity in religion, without which it is of little worth. Feed the hungry; clothe the naked; help the poor; teach the ignorant; comfort the miserable; but take care that, when you do all this, you do it in Christ, and for Christ, and let no thought of merit stain the act; let no reflection of getting salvation for yourself come in to mar it all, but in Christ Jesus walk day by day. Ah, brethren! if a thunderstorm were to come on just now while we are sitting here, and if the lightning should come flashing in at these windows, and run with its blue flame down these columns, you and I might begin to feel some alarm; and if one were struck dead in our presence in what kind of state would you and I like to he amidst such confusion and alarm? If I were to choose the words which I would like to say at such a moment, they would be these, —

"Nothing in my hand I bring;

Simply to thy cross I cling."

You are on board ship in a steam just now; there goes a mast into the water; the beats have all drifted away; the ship is pretty sure to be dashed on yonder rock; pallor is on every cheek, and turmoil every side. What is your prayer as you kneel down? What are your thoughts? Do you think now about your sermons, about your visitings of the sick, about your prayers and your experiences?

No! I tell you that they will seem to you to be nothing better than dross and dung when you are in suck a state of apprehension; but you will cling to Christ's cross and be conveyed to heaven, let the stormy winds blow as they will. And if everything-were silent to-night, could we hear nothing but the ticking of the watch, were we ourselves reclining on our death-pillow, while loving friends wiped the clammy sweat from our brow, surely we should each one wish to say —

"My hope is built on nothing less

Than Jesu's blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame;

But wholly lean on Jesu's name:

On Christ, the solid reek, I stand;

All other ground is sinking sand."

Well, walk ye in him just as ye would walk in the valley of the shadow of death, but walk on the mountain-tops of life's activities.

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III. Let us now say a few words on our third point, — the model which is presented to us here. We are to walk in him as we received him.

And how did we receive him? Let us remember. You will not have to strain your memories much, for, methinks, though other days have mingled with their fellows, and, like coins worn in the circulation, have lost their impress, yet the day when you first received Christ will be as fresh as though it were newly minted in time. Oh, that first day!

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground

Where Jesus did thee meet?"

Some of us can never forget either that place or that time. Well, how did we receive Christ?'

We received him very gratefully, having no claim whatever to his grace. We felt that we had done everything to deserve God's wrath. We confessed that there was no merit in us, but we perceived that there was mercy in him.

"We saw One hanging on a tree

In agonies and blood," —

and as he told us to look at him, and assured us that there was life in a look, we did look, and we were lightened, and we found life in him. Surely we had shaken our hands of all merit, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire at Melita. We had no confidence then in any resolution of our own, in any performances yet to come, much less in anything past. Well, then, we are to come now as empty-handed as we came them; our song is to be, —

"Nothing in my hand I bring;

Simply to thy cross I cling."

How did we receive Christ? Well, we received him very humbly. Whatever pride may be in our heart, — and there is much of it, and I suppose, we shall never get, rid of it till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets, — there was as little that day as we ever had at any time. Oh, how humbly did we creep to the foot of the cross! We were then broken in heart and contrite in spirit. Ah, Christian! can you remember what humble views you had of yourself, — what a sink of depravity you felt your heart to be? Do you not recollect Augustine's expression when he compares himself to a walking dunghill, and did you not feel yourself to be something of that kind, — so base, so loathsome, that you could only stand afar off, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" And you cried to Christ just as Peter did, "Lord, save me;" and just as the sea seemed about to swallow you up, you laid hold upon his outstretched hand, and you were saved. Now, to-night, do the same. Your danger is as great as ever out of Christ. Your sin is as great as ever out of him. Come then, casting away all the pride which your experiences and graces may have wrought in you; come to him, and take him for your All-in-all!

How did we receive Christ? If I recollect rightly, — and I think I do, — we received him very joyfully. Oh, what joy my soul had when first I knew the Lord! It was holyday in my soul that day. Perhaps we have never had such joyous days since then, and the reason has been, most likely, because we have been thinking about other things, and have not thought so much about Christ, Jesus the Lord. Come, let us again take him! The wine is as sweet; let us drink as deeply as ever. Christ, the bread of heaven, is

as nourishing; come, let us eat as heartily as ever. Fill your omers, O ye poor and weak ones! Gather much, for ye shall have nothing over. This manna is very sweet; it tastes like wafers made of honey. Come to my Master as ye came at first and he will give you to drink of the living waters once again!

How did we receive Christ? I am sure we received him very graciously. He stood at, the door, and knocked, and we said, “Come in.” Your Savior, my dear friends, was long a stranger to your hearts. “Come in,” we said. We knew that he meant to take the best seat at the table; we understood that he came as Master and Lord; but we said, “Come in.” We did not quite know all that the cross might mean; but whatever it might mean, we meant to take it up. Surely that day, when he asked us, “Can ye drink of my cup, and can ye be baptized with my baptism?” our soul said, “We are able;” and though we have been unfaithful to him, yet I hope to-night we can take Christ as unreservedly as ever. Had I dreamed, when first I preached his gospel, that the way of the ministry would be so rough and thorny, my flesh would have shunned it; but, despite all, let it be what it is, and ten thousand times worse, come in, my Master; come and take thy servant; let me lie like a consecrated bullock upon the altar, to be wholly burned, and not an atom left!

Brethren, do you not feel the same? On this platform I have sometimes prayed that, if the crushing of us might lift Christ one inch the higher, it might be so; and if the dragging of our names through mire and dirt could make Christ’s Church more pure we have prayed that it might be so. We have prayed that, if any shame, if any dishonor, if any pain might put one more jewel in his crown than could be there in any other way, we might have the honor of suffering and being made ashamed for his sake. And I think, brethren, though the flesh struggleth, we, may pray to-night, “Lord, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar.” We have received Christ, and in that same way, — unreservedly, we desire to walk in him.

“Have ye counted the cost?

Have ye counted the cost,

Ye followers of the cross?

And are ye prepared, for your Master’s sake,

To suffer all worldly loss?

“And can ye endure with that virgin band,
The lowly and pure in heart,
Who, whithersoever the Lamb doth lead,
From his footsteps ne’er depart?

“Do ye answer, ’We can’? Do ye answer, ’We can,
Through his love’s constraining power’?
But do ye remember the flesh is weak,
And will shrink in the trial-hour?

“Yet yield to his love who around you now
The bands of a man would cast,
The cords of his love who was given for you
To his altar binding you fast.

“Ye may count the cost, ye may count the cost,
Of all Egypt’s treasure;
But the riches of Christ ye never can count;
His love ye never can measure.”

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.”

But, oh! some of you have never received him, so my last word is to them. Do you ask, “What is the way of salvation?” It is by receiving Christ. Oh, them, come and receive him! May the Holy Spirit’s power lead sinners to Christ! You need not bring anything to him. You need not bring a soft heart to him; you need not bring tears of repentance to him; but just come and take Christ. Remember, it is not what you are, but if is what Christ is that saves you. Never look at yourself, but look at the wounds of Jesus. There is life there. God help you to look, — to look to-night! And if ye shall find him, our prayer shall be that, from this day forth, ye shall walk in him; and he shall have the glory.

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Colossians 3:11 Christ is All

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"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." — Colossians 3:11.

PAUL is writing concerning the new creation, and he says that, in it, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all." The new creation is a very different thing from the old one. Blessed are all they who have both seen the kingdom of heaven and entered into it. In the first creation, we are born of the flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is, even at the best, nothing but flesh, and can never be anything better; but, in the new creation, we are born of the Spirit, and so we become spiritual, and understand spiritual things. The new life, in Christ Jesus, is an eternal life, and it links all those who possess it with the eternal; realities at the right hand of God above.

In some respects, the new creation is so like the old one that a parallel might to drawn between them; but, in far more respects, it is not at all like the old creation. Many things are absent from the new creation, which were found in the old one; and many things, which were accounted of great value in the first creation, are of little or no worth in the new; while many distinctions, which were greatly prized in the old creation, are treated as more insignificant trifles in the new creation. The all-important thing is for each one of us to put to himself or herself the question, "Do I know what it is to have been renewed in knowledge after the image of him who creates anew? Do I know what it is to have been born twice, to have been born again, born from above, by the effectual working of God the Holy Spirit? Do I understand what it is to have spiritually entered a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness? "It is concerning this great truth that I am going to speak; and, first, I shall say something upon what is obliterated in the new creation; and, secondly, upon what stands in its stead.

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I. First, as to What Is Obliterated In The New Creation: There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free."

That is to say, first, in the kingdom of Christ, there is an obliteration of all national distinctions. I suppose there will always be national distinctions, in the world, until Christ comes, even if they should all be terminated then. The mischief was wrought when men tried to build the city and tower, in the plain of Shinar, and so brought Babel, or confusion into the world. The one family became transformed into many, — a necessary evil to prevent a still greater one. The unity at Babel would have been far worse than the confusion has ever been, just as the spiritual union of Babylon, that is, Rome, the Papal system, has been infinitely more mischievous, to the Church and to the world, than the division of Christians into various sects and parties could ever have been. Babel has not been an altogether unmitigated evil; it has, no doubt, wrought a certain amount of good, and prevented colossal streams of evil from reaching a still more awful culmination. Still, the separation is, in itself, an evil; and it is, therefore, in the Lord's own time and way, to be done away with; and, spiritually, it is already abolished. In the Church of Christ, wherever there is real union of heart among believers, nationality is no hindrance to true Christian fellowship. I feel just as much love toward any brother or sister in Christ, who is not of our British race, as I do toward our own Christian countrymen and countrywomen; indeed, I sometimes think I feel even more the force of the spiritual union when I catch the Swiss tone, or the French, or the German, breaking out in the midst of the English, as we often do here, thank God. I seem to feel all the more interest in these beloved brethren and sisters because of the little difference in nationality that there is between us. Certainly, brethren, in any part of the true Church of Christ, all national distinctions are swept away, and we "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

Under the Christian dispensation, the distinction or division of nationality has gone from us in this sense. We once had our national heroes; each nation still glories in its great men of the heroic age, or in its mythical heroes; but the one Champion and Hero of Christianity is our Lord Jesus Christ, who has slain our dragon foes, routed all our adversaries, broken down the massive fortress of our great enemy, and set the captives free. We sing no longer of the valiant deeds of our national heroes, — St. George, St. Andrew St. Patrick, St. Denis, and the other "saints" so-called, who were either only legendary, or else anything but "saints" as we understand the term. We sing the prowess of the King of all saints, the mighty Son of David, who is worthy of our loftiest minstrelsy. King Arthur and the knights of the round table, we are quite willing to forget when we think of "another King, one Jesus," and of another table, where they who sit are not merely good knights of Jesus Christ, but are made kings and priests unto him who sit at

the head of the festal board. Barbarian, Scythian, Greek, Jew, — these distinctions are all gone so far as we are concerned, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. We boast not of our national or natural descent, or of the heroes whose blood may be in our veins; it is enough for us that Christ has lived, and Christ has died, and Christ has "spoiled principalities and powers," and trampled down sin, death, and hell, even as he fell amid the agonies of Calvary.

Away, too, has gone all our national history, so far as there may have been any desire to exalt it for the purpose of angering Christian brethren and sisters of another race. I wish that even the names of wars and famous battlefields could be altogether forgotten; but if they do remain in the memories of those of us who are Christians, we will not boast as he did who said, "But 'twas a famous victory;" nor will we proudly sing of —

"The flag that braved a thousand years

The battle and the breeze."

As Christians, our true history begins - nay, I must correct myself, for it had no beginning except in that dateless eternity when the Divine Trinity in Unity conceived the wondrous plan of predestinating grace, electing love, the substitutional sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of his chosen people, the full and free justification of all who believe, and the eternal glory of the whole redeemed family of God. This is our past, present, and future history; we, who are Christians, take down the Volume of the Book wherein these things are written, and we make our boast in the Lord, and thus the boasting is not sinful.

As to laws and customs, of which each nation has its own, it is not wrong for a Christian to take delight in a good custom which has been long establisibed, or earnestly to contend for the maintenance of ancient laws; which have preserved inviolate the liberty of the people age after age; but, still, the customs of Christians are learned from the example of Christ, and the laws of believers are the precepts laid down by him. When we are dealing with matters relating to the Church of Christ, we have no English customs, or French customs, or American customs, or German customs; or, if we have, we should let them go, and have only Christian customs henceforth. Did our Lord Jesus Christ command anything? Then, let it be done. Did he forbid anything? Then, away with it. Would he smile upon a certain action? Then, perform it at once. Would he frown upon it? Then, mind that you do the same. Blessed is the believer who has realized that the laws and customs for the people of God to observe are plainly written out in the life of Christ, and that he has become to us, now, "all, and in all."

Christ, by giving liberty to all his people, has also obliterated the distinctions of nationality which we once located in various countries. One remembers, with interest, the old declaration, "Romanus sum," ("I am a Roman,") for a citizen of Rome, wherever he might go, felt that he was a free man whom none would dare to hurt, else Roman legion would ask the reason why; and an Englishman, in every country, wherever he may be, still feels that he is one who was born free, and who would sooner die than become a slave, or hold another man or woman in slavery. But, brethren and sisters, there is a higher liberty than this, — the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free; and when we come into the Church of God, we talk about that liberty, and we believe that Christians, even if they had not the civil and religious rights which we possess, would still be as free in Christ as we are. There are still many, in various parts of the world, who do not enjoy the liberties that we have; who, notwithstanding their bonds, are spiritually free; for, as the Son hath made them free, they are free indeed.

Christ also takes from us all inclination or power to boast of our national prestige. To me, it is prestige enough to be a Christian; — to bear the cross Christ gives me to carry, and to follow in the footsteps of the great Cross-bearer. What is the power, in which some boast, of sending soldiers and cannon to a distant shore, compared with the almighty power wherewith Christ guards the weakest of us who dares to trust him? What reason is there for a man to be lifted up with conceit just because he happens to have been born in this or that highly-favored country? What is such a privilege compared with the glories which appertain to the man who is born again from above, who is an heir of heaven, a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and who can truthfully say, "All things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's."

What is the wondrous internationalism that levels all these various nationalities in the Church of Christ, and makes us all one in him, Spiritually, we have all been born in one country; the New Jerusalem is the mother of us all. It is not my boast that I am a citizen of this or that earthly city or town here; it is my joy that I am one of the citizens of "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Christ has fired all of us, who are his people, with a common enthusiasm. He has revealed himself to each one of us as he doth not unto the world; and, in the happy remembrance that we belong to him, we forget that we are called by this or that national name, and only remember that he is our Lord, and that we are to follow where he leads the way. He has pointed us to heaven, as the leader of the Goths and Huns pointed his followers to Italy, and said, "There is the country whence come the luscious wines of which you have tasted. Go, and take the vineyards, and grow the vines for yourselves;" and so they forgot that they belonged to various tribes, and they all united under the one commander who promised to lead them on to the conquest of the rich land for which they panted. And now, we, who are in Christ Jesus, having tasted of the Eshcol clusters which grow in the heavenly Canaan, follow our glorious Leader and Commander, as the Israelites followed Joshua, forgetting that we belong to so many different tribes, but knowing that there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for all who follow where Jehovah

Jesus leads the way.

The next thing to be observed, in our text, is that ceremonial distinctions are obliterated. When Paul says that "there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision," he recalls the fact that, under the law, there were some who were peculiarly the children of promise, to whom were committed the oracles of God; but there is no such thing as that law. Then there were others, who stood outside the pale of the law, — the sinners of the Gentiles, who were left in darkness until their time for receiving the light should come; but Christ has fused these two into one; and, now, in his Church, "there is neither Greek nor Jew." I marvel at the insanity of those who try to prove that we are Jews, — the lost ten tribes, forsooth! I grant you that the business transactions of a great many citizens of London afford some support to the theory, but it is only a theory, and a very crazy one, too. But suppose they were able to prove that we are of the seed of Abraham, after the flesh, it would not make any difference to us, for we are expressly told that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision," for all believers are one in Christ Jesus. The all-important consideration is, — Are we Christians? Do we really believe in Jesus Christ, to the salvation of our souls? The apostle truly says, "Christ is all," for he has done away with all the distinctions that formerly existed between Jews and Gentiles. He has levelled down and he has levelled up. First he has levelled down the Jews, and made them stand in the same class as the Gentiles, shutting them up under the custody of the very law in which they gloried, and making them see that they can never come out of that bondage except by using the key of faith in Christ. So our Lord Jesus has stopped the mouths of both Jews and Gentiles, and made them stand equally guilty before God; far, on the other hand, he has levelled up the outcast and despised Gentiles, and has admitted us to all the privileges of his ancient covenant, making us to be heirs of Abraham, in a spiritual sense, "though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." He has given to us all the blessings which belong to Abraham's seed, because we, too, possess like precious faith as the-father of the faithful himself had. So, "now in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." Oh, what a blessing it is that all national and ceremonial distinctions are gone for ever, and that "Christ is all" to all who believe in him!

A more difficult point, perhaps, is that of social distinctions; but that also has gone from the Church of Christ. "There is neither bond nor free," says the apostle. Well, blessed be God, slavery has almost ceased to exist. Among Christians, it has become a by-word and a proverb, though there was a time when some of them pleaded for it as a divinely-ordained institution. But, oh, may the last vestige of it speedily disappear, and may every man see it to be both his duty and his privilege to yield to his brotherman his God-given rights and liberties! Yet, even in such a free country as ours happily is, there are still distinctions between one class and another, and I expect there always will be. I do not suppose there ever can be, in this world, any system, even if we could have the profoundest philosophers to invent it, in which everybody will be equal. Or, if they ever should be all equal, they would not remain so for more than five minutes. We are not all equal in our form, and shape, and capacity, and ability; and we never shall be. We could not have the various members of our body all equal; if we had such an arrangement as that, our body would be a monstrosity. There are some members of the body which must have a more honorable office and function than others have; but all the members are in the body, and necessary to its due proportion. So is it in the Church of Christ, which is his mystical body; yet, brethren, how very, very minute are the distinctions between the various members of that body! You, my brother, are rich, as the world reckons riches. Well, do not boast of your wealth, for riches are very apt to take to themselves wings, and fly away. Probably, more of you are poor so far as worldly wealth is concerned. Well, then, do not murmur, for "all things are yours" if you are Christ's; and, soon, you will be where you will know nothing of poverty again for ever and ever. True Christianity practically wipes out all these distinctions by saying, "This man, as one of Christ's stewards, has more of his Lord's money entrusted to him than others have, so he is bound to do more with it than they do with their portion, he must give away more than they do." This other man has far less than his rich brother, but Christ says that he is responsible for the right use of what he hash, and not for what he hath not. As the poor widow's two mites drop into the treasury of the Lord, he receives her gift with as sweet a smile as that which he accorded to the lavish gifts of David and Solomon. In his Church, Christ teaches us that, if we have more than others, we simply hold it in trust for those who have less than we have; and I believe that some of the Lord's children are poor in order that there may be an opportunity for their fellow Christians to minister to them out of their abundance. We could not prove our devotion to Christ, in practical service such as he best loves, if there were not needy ones whom we could succor and support. Our Lord has told us how he will say, in the great day of account, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat;" but that could not be the case if there was not one of the least of his brethren, who was hungry, and whom we could feed for his sake. "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." But he could not say that if none of his poor brethren were thirsty. "I was sick, and ye visited me." So, there must be sick saints to be visited, and cases of distress, of various kinds, to be relieved; otherwise, there could not be the opportunity of practically proving our love to our Lord. In the Church of Christ, it ought always to be so, brethren; we should love each other with a pure heart fervently; we should bear each other's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; and we should care for one another, and seek, as far as we can, to supply one another's needs. The rich brother must not exalt himself above the poor one, nor must, the poor Christian envy his richer brethren and sisters in Christ; for, in him, all these distinctions are obliterated, and we sit down, at his table, as members of the one family of which he is the glorious and ever-living Head; and we dwell together in unity, praising him that

national, ceremonial, and social distinctions have, for us, all passed away, and that “Christ is all, and in all.”

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II. Possibly, I have taken up too much of our time in describing what is obliterated from the old creation; so, now, I will try more briefly to show you What Takes Its Place In The Creation: “Christ is all, and in all.”

First, Christ is all our culture. Has Christianity wiped out that grand name “Greek”? Yes, in the old meaning of it; and, in some senses, it is a great pity that it is gone, for the Greek was a cultured man, the Greek’s every movement was elegance itself, the Greek was the standard of classic beauty and eloquence; but Christianity has wiped all that out, and written, in its place, “Christ is all.” And, brethren, the culture, the gracefulness, the beauty, the comeliness, the eloquence, — in the sight of the best Judge of all those things, namely, God, the ever-blessed, — which Christ gives to the true Christian, is better than all that Greek art or civilization ever produced, so we may cheerfully let it all go, and say, “Christ is all.”

Next, Christ is all our revelation There was the “Jew”; — he was a fine fellow, and there is still much to admire in him. The Semitic race seems to have been specially constituted by God for devout worship; and the Jew, the descendant of believing Abraham, is still a firm believer in one part of God’s Word; he is, spiritually, a staunch Conservative in that matter, the very backbone of the world’s belief. Alas, that his faith is so incomplete, and that there is mingled with it so much tradition received from his fathers! Will you wipe out that name “Jew”? Yes, because we, who believe in Jesus, glory in him even as the Jew gloried in having received the oracles of God. Christ is “the Word of God” incarnate, and all the divine revelation is centered in him; and we hold fast the eternal verities which have been committed unto us, because of the power of Christ that rests upon us.

Then, next, Christ is all our ritual. There is not a circumcision now. That was the special mark of those who were separated from all the rest of mankind; they bore in their body undoubted indications that they were set apart to be the Lord’s peculiar possession. Someone asks, “Will you do away with that distinguishing rite?” Yes, we will; for, in Christ, every true Christian is set apart unto God, marked as Jesus Christ’s special separated one by the circumcision made without hands.

Further, Christ is all our simplicity. Here is a man, who says that “uncircumcision” is his distinguishing mark, and adds, “I am not separated or set apart from others, as the so-called ’priest’ is; I am a man among my fellow-men. Wherever I go, I can mingle with others, and feel that they are my brethren. I belong to the ’uncircumcision.’ Will you rule that out? “Yes, we will, because we have, in Christ, all that uncircumcision mean; for he who becomes a real Christian is the truest of all men, he is the most free from that spirit which says, “Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.” He is the true philanthropist, the real lover of men, even as Christ was. He was no separatist, in the sense in which some use that word. He went to a wedding feast; he ate bread in the house of a publican; and a woman of the city, who was a sinner, was permitted to wash his feet with her tears. He mingled with the rest of mankind, and “the common people heard him gladly; “ and he would have us to be as he was, the true Man among men, the great Lover of our race.

Once more, Christ is all our natural traditions, and our unconquerable-ness and liberty. Here is “the rude barbarian”, as the poet calls him; he says, “I shall never give up the free, manly life that I have lived so long. By my unshorn beard,” for that is the meaning of the term Barbarian, “I swear it shall be so.” “By the wild steppes and wide plains, over which I roam unconquerable,” says the Scythian, “I will never bend to the conventionalities of civilization, and be the slave of your modern luxuries.” Well, it is almost a pity to have done with Barbarians and Scythians, in this sense, for there is a good deal about them to be commended; but we must wipe them all out. If they come into the Church of Christ, he must be “all, and in all;” because everything that is manly, everything that is natural, everything that is free, everything that is bold, everything that is unconquerable will be put into them if “Christ is all” to them. They will get all the excellences that are in that freedom, without the faults appertaining to it.

Further, “Christ is all”, as our Master, if we be “bond.” I think I see, in the great assembly at Coloese, which Paul addressed, one who said, “But I am a bond slave; a man bought me at the auction mart, and here, on my back, are the marks of the slave-holder’s lash.” And I think I hear him add, “I wish that disgrace could be wiped out.” But Paul says, “Brother, it is wiped out; you are no bond slave, really, for Christ has made you free.” Then the great apostle of the Gentiles comes, and sits down by his side, and says to him, “The Church of Christ has absorbed you, brother, by making us all like you; for we are all servants of one Master; and look,” says Paul, as he bares his own back, and shows the scars from his repeated scourgings, “from henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” “And so,” says he, laying his hand on the poor Christian slave, “I, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ, share your servitude, and with me you are Christ’s free man”

Lastly, Christ is our Magna Carta; yea, our liberty itself if we be “free.” Here comes the free man, who was born free. Shall that clause stand, “neither bond nor free”? Oh, yes, let it stand; but not so stand that we glory in our national freedom, for Christ has given us a higher freedom. I may slightly alter the familiar couplet, and say, —

“He is the free man whom
The Lord makes free,

And all are slaves beside."

Oh, what multitudes of people, in London, are slaves; — miserable slaves to the opinions of their neighbors, — slaves to the caprice of Mrs. Grundy, — slaves to "respectability"! Some of you dare not do a thing that you know to be right, because somebody might make a remark about it. What are you but slaves? Ay, and there are slaves in the pulpit, every Sunday, who dare not speak the truth for fear somebody should be offended; and there are also slaves in the pews, and slaves in the shops, and slaves all around. What a wretched life a slave lives! Yet, till you become a Christian, and know what it is to wear Christ's bonds about your willing wrists, you will always feel the galling fetters of society, and the bonds of custom, fashion, or this or that. But Jesus makes us free with a higher freedom, so we wipe out the mere terrestrial freedom, which is too often only a sham, and we write, "Christ is all."

So, to conclude, remember that, if you have Christ as your Savior, you do not need anybody else to save you. I see an old gentleman, over there in Rome, with a triple crown on his head. We do not want him, for "Christ is all." He says that, he is the vicegerent of God; that is not true; but if it were, it would not matter, for "Christ is all," so we can do without the Pope. Then I see another gentleman, with an all-round dog collar of the Roman kennel type; and he tells me that, if I will confess my sins to him as the priest of the parish, he can give me absolution; but, seeing that "Christ is all," we can do without that gentleman as well as the other one; for anything that is over and above "all" must be a superfluty, if nothing worse. So is it with everything that is beside or beyond Christ; faith can get to Christ without Pope or priest. Everything that is outside Christ is a lie, for "Christ is all." All that is true must be inside, him, so we can do without all others in the matter of our soul's salvation.

But supposing that we have not received Christ as our Savior, then how unspeakably poor we are! If we have not, grasped Christ by faith, we have not laid hold of anything, for "Christ is all;" and if we have not him who is all, we have nothing at all. "Oh!" says one, "I am a regular chapel-goer." Yes; as far, as good; but if you have not Christ, you have nothing, for "Christ is all." "But I have been baptized," says another. Ah! but if you have not savingly trusted in Christ, your baptism is only another sin added to all your others. "But I go to communion," says another. So much the worse for you if you have not trusted in Christ as your Savior. I wish I could put this thought into the heart of everyone here who is without Christ, — nay, I pray the Holy Spirit, to impress this thought upon your heart, — if you are without Christ, you are without everything that is worth having, for "Christ is all."

But, Christians, I would like to make your hearts dance by reminding you that, if you have Christ as your Savior, you are rich to all the intents of bliss, for you have "all" that your heart can wish to have. Nobody else can say as much as that; the richest man in the world has only got something, though the something may be very great. Alexander conquered one world but you, believer, in getting Christ, as yours, have this world and also that which is to come, life and death, time and eternity. Oh, revel in the thought that, as Christ is yours, you are rich to an infinity of riches, for "Christ is all."

Now, if Christ really is yours, and as Christ is all, then love him, and honor him, and praise him. Mother, what were you doing this afternoon? Pressing that dear child of yours to your bosom, and saying, "She is my all"? Take back those words, for they are not true. If you love Christ, he is your all, and you cannot have another "all." Someone else has one who is very near and very dear. If you are that someone else, and you have said in your heart, "He is my all," or "She is my all," you have done wrong, for nothing and no one but Christ must be your "all." You will be an idolater, and you will grieve the Holy Spirit, if anything, or anyone, except Christ, becomes your "all." You, who have lately lost your loved ones, and you, who have been brought low by recent losses in business, are you fretting over your losses? If so, remember that you have not lost your "all." You still have Christ, and he is "all." Then, what have you lost? Ye, I know that you have something to grieve over; but, after all, your "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" therefore, comfort yourself with this thought, — "I have not really lost anything, for I still have all." When you have all things, find Christ in all; and when you have lost all things, then find all things in Christ. I do not know, but I think that the latter is the better of the two.

Now, if Christ be all, then, beloved brethren and sisters, let us live for him. If he is all, let us spend our strength, and be ready to lay down the last particle of it that we have, and to die for him; and then let us, whenever we need anything, go to him for it, for "Christ is all." Let us draw upon this bank, for its resources are infinite; we shall never exhaust them.

Lastly, and chiefly, let us send our hearts right on to where he is. Where our treasure is, there should our hearts be also. Come, my heart, up and away! What hast thou here that can fill thee? What hast thou here that can satisfy thee! Plume thy wings, and be up and away, for there is thy roosting-place; there is the tree of life which never can be felled. Up and away, and build there for ever! The Lord help each one of you to do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Colossians 3:16 Christ's Indwelling Word

NO. 2679

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 17TH, 1900,
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"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonish-tag one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." — Colossians 3:16.

That is a very beautiful name for Holy Scripture, I hardly remember to have met with it anywhere else: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you." Remember, dear friends, that Christ himself is the Word of God, and recollect also that the Scriptures are the word of the Word. They are "the word of Christ." I think that they will be all the sweeter to you if you realize that they speak to you of Christ, that he is the sum and substance of them, that they direct you to Christ, in fact, as John says of his Gospel, that they were "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Remember, also, that the Scriptures do, in effect, come to us from Christ. Every promise of this blessed Book is a promise of Christ, "for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us; they all come to us through Christ, God speaks them to us through him as the Mediator. Indeed, we may regard the whole of the Sacred Scriptures, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, as being "the word of Christ."

The text tells us, first, how to treat the Scriptures: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" and, secondly, it tells us how to profit by them: "in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

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I. First, then, we are told here how to treat the scriptures: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

In order that it may dwell in you, it must first enter into you. It is implied, in our text, that the apostle says, "Let the word of Christ enter into you." Then you must read it, or hear it, for, unless you do, you will not know what there is in it. Yet there must be something more than the mere hearing or reading of it; for some hear the truth with one ear, but let it go away out of the other ear; and others are great readers, yet they seem to read only what is on the surface. The letter passes under their eye, but the deep spiritual meaning never enters into their heart. If you read a portion of Scripture every day, I commend you for doing so; if you make a practice of reading right through the Bible in a stated period, T commend you still more. Some I know read the Bible through every year, in due course. This is well; but all this may be done, and yet "the word of Christ" may never have entered into the reader. You know how children sometimes learn their lessons. I am afraid that, at a great many schools, there is no true instruction; but the scholars have simply to repeat their lessons, without ever getting at the sense and meaning of them; and, a week or two after, they have forgotten all that they were supposed to have learnt. Do not let it be so with our knowledge of Scripture; let us not merely know it so as to be able to turn to its different chapters, or to be familiar with certain passages in it, or even to repeat all its words. This is but to let "the word of Christ" pass by your door, or look in at your window; but Paul says, "Let it dwell in you."

So I say again that, in order that it may dwell in you, it must first enter into you. You must really know the spiritual meaning of it; you must believe it; you must live upon it; you must drink it in; you must let it soak into your innermost being as the dew saturated the fleece of Gideon. It is not enough to have a Bible on the shelf; it is infinitely better to have its truths stored up within your soul. It is a good thing to carry your Testament in your pocket, it is far better to carry its message in your heart. But mind that you let it get right into you. How differently some people read the Bible from the way in which they read any other book! I have seen a young woman sitting down, on board a steamboat, completely absorbed in a very suspicious-looking book. I have passed behind her, and passed before her, but she has not taken the slightest notice of me. Presently, I saw a tear brushed away from her eye; I knew that she was not reading the Bible, and it was my firm conviction that she was reading a novel. I have often noticed how such people let the novels get right into them, trash as they generally are; but when the most of people do read the Bible, they appear to be anxious to get the unpleasant task finished, and put away. In some cases, they seem to think that they have performed a very proper action; but they have not been in the least affected by it, moved by it, stirred by it. Yet, if there is any book that can thrill the soul, it is the Bible. If we read it aright, we shall, as it were, lay our fingers among its wondrous harp-strings, and bring out from them matchless music such as no other instrument in the world could ever produce. There is no book so fitted or so suited to us as the Bible is. There is no book that knows us so well, there is no book that is so much at home with us, there is no book that. has so much power over us, if we will but give ourselves up to it; yet, often, we only let it look in at our window, or knock at our door, instead of inviting it to enter our very heart and soul, and therefore we miss its power.

Then, when it once gets into you, let it remain there. A person could not be said to dwell in a house even though he should enter into the most private part of it, if he only passed through it, and went away. A man who dwells in a house abides, resides, remains, continues there. Oh, to have "the word of Christ" always dwelling inside of us; — in the memory, never forgotten; in the heart,

always loved; in the understanding, really grasped; with all the powers and passions of the mind fully submitted to its control! I love those clear Christian people who do not need to refer to the printed page when you speak to them about the things of God, for they have the truth in their hearts. They have a springing well within their souls at all times; and they have only to hear a Scriptural theme started, and straightway they begin to speak of the things which they have looked upon, and their hands have handled, of the Word of life, because it dwells in them.

What is the good of merely external religion? I heard of some people who met together to pray about a certain matter, but they could not pray because the Bishop had not sent the form of prayer which they were to use on that occasion. I think that, if they were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they might have managed to speak to God without the necessity of having a written or printed form to guide them. Yet there are many who fancy they cannot offer a proper prayer unless they have it in a book; and they cannot talk about the things of God, or they can say but very little about them, because they have not "the word of Christ" dwelling within them. O dear friends, let it be always in you, from morning to night, abiding as a constant visitor within your spirit; — nay, not merely as a visitor, let it dwell with you —

"No more a stranger or a guest,

But like a child at home."

Further, "let the word of Christ dwell in you" so as to occupy your whole being. If it dwells within you, let it take such entire possession of your being that it shall fill you. To push the truth of Christ up into a corner of your nature, — to fill the major part of your being with other knowledge and other thought, — is a poor way to treat "the word of Christ." It deserves the fullest attention of the best faculties that any man possesses. The truth revealed by the Holy Ghost is so sublime that its poetry outsoars the eagle-wing even of a Milton. It is a deep so profound that the plumb-line of Sir Isaac Newton could never find the bottom of it. The greatest minds have been delighted to yield their highest faculties to its wondrous truths. Dear young friends, you who have only lately put on Christ, I beseech you not to let other books stand on the front shelf, and the Bible lie behind. Do not, for the most part, read those other books, and only read small portions of Scripture now and then; let it always have the chief place. The most excellent of all sciences is the science of Christ crucified, and the Bible is the text-book for all who would learn it. If other forms of knowledge are useful, they are like the planets; but the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ Jesus is as the sun. Let this always be the center of your system of knowledge, and let all the rest that you know move in subordination and subjection to that first and best form of knowledge. If I may know myself, and know my Savior; — if I may know my sin, and the atonement by which it is put away; — if I may know my way through this life, and my way into the eternal life above, I will be content if I know but little else. Fain would I intermeddle with all knowledge; and, though "much study is a weariness of the flesh," yet would I find a pleasure in such weariness, if I only knew even as much as Solomon knew. But it would be vanity of vanities, and altogether vanity, if you and I were as wise as Solomon, and yet did not know the truth of God. Therefore, "let the word of Christ dwell in you" so as to occupy the whole of your being; let it be the resident, the occupant, the master and ruler of your entire nature.

Once more. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you;" that is, let it be your most familiar friend. We know the people who live in our home, but we do not really know other people. When someone asked Mr. Whitefield, "What do you think of Mr. So-and-so's character?" he answered, "I cannot say, for I never lived with him." Ah! that is the true test; it is living with people that lets you know what they are. In like manner, if you will live with "the word of Christ," especially if you will let it dwell in you, and abide with you as a constant friend, you will get to know it better; and the better you know it, the more you will love it. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if you meet with a man who finds fault with the Bible, you may be certain that he never read it. If he would but read it in the right spirit, he would be of another opinion. And if you find a professing Christian indifferent to his Bible, you may be sure that the very dust upon its cover will rise up in judgment against him. The Bible-reader is ever the Bible-lover, and the Bible-searcher is the man who searches it more and more. Various pursuits have a measure of fascination about them, but the study of God's Word is fascinating to the highest degree. Jerome said, when he was pondering a certain text, "I adore the infinity of Rely Scripture; "I have often felt that I could say the same. The Bible is a book that has no bounds to it. Its thoughts are not as men's thoughts, a multitude of which may go to make up half an ounce; but any one of the thoughts of God can outweigh all the thoughts of men. This Book is not a book of pence, or a book of silver, or e'en a book of gold, but a book whose every leaf is of untold value. He shall be enriched indeed who lets "the word of Christ" richly dwell in him.

My dear friends, I should like you so to read the Bible that everybody in the Bible should seem to be a friend of yours. I should like you to feel as if you had talked' with Abraham, and conversed with David. I can truly say that there is hardly anybody in the world that I know so well as I know David. In making The Treasury of David, I have labored, year after year, in that rich field of inspiration, the Book of Psalms, till I do assure you that David and I are quite familiar friends, and I think I know more about him than about any man I ever saw in my life, I seem to know the ins and outs of his constitution and experience, his grievous faults and the graces of his spirit. I want you to be on just such intimate terms with somebody or other in the Bible, — John, if you like; or Mary. Sit at Jesus' feet with her. Or Martha; it will not hurt you to make the acquaintance of Martha, and do a great deal of serving, though I do not want you to get cumbered with it. But do find your choicest friends in the Scripture. Take the whole company of Bible saints home

to your heart, let them live inside your soul. Let old Noah come in with his ark, if he likes; and let Daniel come in with his lions' den, if he pleases; and all the rest of the godly men and women of the olden time, take them all into your very nature, and be on familiar terms with them; but, most of all, be specially intimate with him of whom they all speak, namely, Jesus Christ your blessed Lord and Master.

As for the doctrines revealed in the Bible, you should have them at your fingers' ends. The great truths of the Word of God should be as familiar to you as a scholar makes his much-loved classics to be, or as the mathematician makes his plus and minus, his a and his x, familiar to him from hour to hour. So do you prize "the word of Christ;" "let it dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

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II. But now, secondly, I am to tell you How to profit by?he word of christ, if we once get it to dwell in us.

First, seek to profit by it yourself: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it make you wise. The man who studies his Bible well will become a wise, man. If God the Holy Ghost teaches him, I believe that he will become a wise man even in something more than a spiritual sense. Every Scotch child used to be taught the Book of Proverbs, it was one of the class-books of Scotch schools; and I have heard it said that this particular form of instruction has largely helped to make our Scotch friends so sharp and cute; and I should not wonder if that is the case. They certainly are as wise a race of people as we are likely to meet with. I wish our Irish friends also would study the Book of Proverbs. If it would make them as cool as it has made our Scotch friends, it might improve them without taking away. any of their natural humor and warmth of heart. I wish that English people also would read more of the Bible. I can truly say that, when I have met with men in whom "the word of Christ" has dwelt richly, I have often found them very shrewd even about common-place things. I recollect a man, in a certain workshop, making a great many very rude remarks, and at last he was silenced by one of the workmen who said to him, "I think, sir, you are referred to in the twentieth chapter of Proverbs." lie did not explain his meaning; but the man who was thus addressed went home, and when 'he looked up the chapter, he found these words in the third verse, "Every foot will be meddling." It was an admirable rebuke for him, and all the better because, he had an hour or two before he knew exactly what it was; and when he reached his home, and was at leisure to think, he could look up the passage, and see how appropriate it was to his case. If you will take the Word of God for your guide, even in domestic and business matters, you will often manifest a shrewdness which, perhaps, may not be natural to you, but which will come to you through "the word of Christ" dwelling in you richly in all wisdom. That, however, is only a small part of the profit which it will bring to you.

Do you want wisdom with which to master yourself? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Do you need something to cheer a naturally sinking spirit? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Do you wish for that which will calm an angry mind, a temper all too apt to be suddenly excited? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Are you in a calling where you are sorely tempted, and do you long to know how to be kept from falling into sin? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Is your position a very difficult one? Are you scarcely able to balance the claims of different relationships? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Are you expecting to have a time of intense strain and trial such as you have never experienced before? Prepare yourself for it by letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It shall give you all manner of wisdom by which you shall be able to baffle even the subtlety of the old serpent himself. We used to have, in many of our churches, a number of solid, substantial men, — "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;" and an equal proportion of deeply-taught, godly matrons, true mothers in Israel. Well, those stalwart Christians were brought up on such spiritual meat as I have been commending to you. They were diligent students of the Word of God; and if we are to have a succession of such men and women, they can only be qualified by going to the University of Scripture, and taking their degree by permitting "the word of Christ" to dwell in them richly.

The next way of using "the word of Christ" to profit is to seek to profit others by it: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

We are to know the truth ourselves so as to be able to teach and admonish one another.

First, we are to seek the profit of our fellows by teaching one another. No one man can ever teach such a vast congregation as I have, so as to give the separate instruction that is needed by each one; this work must be done by the members of the church themselves. "The word of Christ" must dwell in you, and then you must become a Mutual Instruction Society. Every Christian should exercise the office of the pastorate according to his ability and his opportunity. In such a church as this, every one of the members must look well not only to his own spiritual affairs, but also to the wellbeing of others. What sweet and gracious instructions the older ones among you can give if you tell out your experience! It is very interesting to any of us to hear it, but how helpful it is to the beginners in the divine life!

And if, in addition to relating your experience, you talk of the Scriptures that have been opened up to you, — the promises that have been fulfilled to you, — the passages in the Bible that have been applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit who inspired them,

— you will greatly instruct your fellow-Christians. A dear brother in the Lord said to me, the other day, “I do not often meet now with those people who talk about the things of God to one another. Even when I meet with Christians, their conversation is generally concerning a meeting or a Conference that is going to be held, or something that is to be done; but we do not seem to talk much about Jesus Christ himself, and about experimental truth, and about the sorrows and the joys of God’s people.” I wish we did talk more of such things. It is well to be busy for the Lord; but it is better still to be in communion with him. You who are deeply taught in the Scriptures should try to teach others also for their profit.

One way of teaching one another is mentioned in the text: “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” A learned divine, a little while ago, discovered that no hymn ought to be sung unless it was distinctly directed and addressed to God, and was intended to be throughout full of praise. Well, we do have some remarkably wise men nowadays, — at least, in their own estimation, — but it appears that the apostle Paul thought that “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” were to be used for instruction and admonition as well as for the praises of God. And, to my mind, there is no teaching that is likely to be more useful than that which is accompanied by the right kind of singing. When I am preaching, I often find a verse of a hymn the very best thing I can quote; and I have not the shadow of a doubt that, frequently, a verse of sacred poetry has struck a man who has been altogether missed by the rest of the sermon. Think how compactly truth can be taught by means of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” and how likely it is to be remembered when the very measure and rhyme and rhythm help the memory to treasure up the message. I shall never forgot what repentance is while I can say, —

“Repentance is to leave

The sins I loved before,

And show that I in earnest grieve

By doing so no more.”

It is well to have truth put into the form of a verse that the memory may be able to lay hold of it, and to retain it. Do try, dear friends, to get so full of “the word of Christ” in all forms of it, that you may run over with it. You know, it cannot come out of you if it is not first in you. If you do not get “the word of Christ” into you, you will not be instructive in your general conversation.

In addition to instruction, there is to be admonition. That is a very difficult thing to administer wisely. I have known a brother try to admonish another, and I have felt that he would have done better if he had left the task alone, for he has only caused irritation and resentment; but there is a gracious way of admonishing which cannot be too frequently practiced, When I first began to preach, I am afraid that I used to say a great many strange things, — which, of course, I do not do now; — but having, on a certain occasion, said something rather striking, and perhaps not quite wise, there was an excellent Christian man who wanted to set me right, he did not come and thrust himself upon me in a very solemn manner, and provoke me to scoff at him, and his reproof also. Neither did he say anything so as to irritate me; but finding my Bible lying about, he stuck a pin into it at the words, “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” When I was at home, I looked at that pin, and I looked at that text, and I said to myself, “Whose house was I in last?” When I recollected, I said, “That is the man who stuck that pin in there, depend upon it.” I never felt vexed with him; on the contrary, I was very grateful to him, and I always loved and admired him; and I thought, “Now, if he had spoken to me about what I had said, it is possible that he might have stuck the pin into me where I should not have liked it; but as he only stuck it into my Bible, it did not irritate me.” You see, also, that I gratefully recollect the rebuke even to this day.

Sometimes, the best way to give an admonition will be by singing a psalm or a hymn. The clerks in the old meeting-houses, when they used to be allowed to choose the hymns, have often taken away much of the evil effect of an erroneous sermon by their wise selection of the closing verses. Now and then, if you are discreet, you can quote an appropriate verse, — as people say, “accidentally for the purpose,” — and you can bring in a portion of a psalm that shall exactly say for you what you might have said in a blundering way; and the dear brother who has done wrong will accept the rebuke without being enraged by it. When you attempt to snuff the candle, do not put it out by your clumsiness; but take the golden snuffers, — in the form of a verse of a psalm, or a hymn, or a spiritual song, — and even while you sing it, you will be administering the admonition and the instruction which it is your duty to give. I wish to put this matter so that it shall be remembered by you, and I want especially to press it home upon you, dear friends, members of this church of more than five thousand souls. What can we do unless you all look after one another? And how shall we ever get on unless, in addition to preaching, there shall be continual mutual instruction going on, wise and joyful and cheerful, and accepted in a kind, loving, and generous spirit? God fill you with “the word of Christ,” that you may thus teach and admonish one another!

But, lastly, “the word of Christ,” when it dwells in us, is to profit us in our relation to God himself; for, after all, the main object of our singing — the principal purpose of our teaching and admonishing — must be the glory of God: “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Oh, may “the word of Christ dwell in us” so richly that you shall bless God from morning to night! may you who overflow

with holy thought and sacred knowledge that your whole being shall be a hymn of praise to the Most High, and your entire existence shall be a glorious hallelujah! I do not think that we any of us sufficiently value the divine ordinance of praise; neither do I think that we ever shall till “the word of Christ” has taken full possession of our souls.

You have been upstairs to pray, you say, and you have got no comfort from the exercise. Let me suggest that, the next time you go upstairs, you sing a psalm. “Oh, I have been up and down!” says one, “trying to arouse myself into earnestness of supplication.” May I also propose to you that you do not try that method again for a while, but begin to praise God. How many times a day do you praise him? I think you do get alone to pray, and you would be ashamed if you did not, once, twice, or three or even more times in the day; but how often do you praise God? Now, you know that you will not pray in heaven; there it will be all praise. Then do not neglect that necessary part of your education which is to “begin the music here.” Start at once praising the Lord. Many of our doubts and fears would fly away if we praised God more; and many of our trials and troubles would altogether vanish if we began to sing of our mercies. Oftentimes, depression of spirit, that will not yield to a whole night of wrestling, would yield to ten minutes of thanksgiving before God. Praying is the stalk of the wheat, but praise is the very ear of it. Praying is the leaf of the rose, but praise is the rose itself, redolent with the richest perfume.

Praise God, then, “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” and if you say you do not know how to do it, then “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” It is a praise-begetting thing. Out of every Book of Scripture will stream praise unto Jehovah. Out of every promise will spring a sonnet. Out of every divine truth, enjoyed and lived upon, will rise a spiritual song. The who]e revelation of God is the condensed essence of praise; you have only to give it a fitting opportunity, by setting it simmering on the fire of a graceful heart, and you shall find a sweet cloud of holy incense rising from it acceptable to the Most High. Therefore, beloved, be much with your Bibles, and let your Bibles be much with you; for your own profit, for the profit of others, and for the glory of God. So be it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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Spurgeon's Exposition of Colossians 1

Colossians 1:1, 2. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

> Kindness is the very breath of Christianity, so the apostle will not begin the subject matter of his letter until first of all he has breathed out a benediction upon those to whom he writes.
>
> Paul begins with a salutation in which he wishes the Colossian Christians the best of all blessings. It is the very spirit of our holy religion to wish well to others, and I am sure that we cannot have a better wish for our dearest friends than this, “Grace be unto you, and peace.” Grace will save you; peace will make you know that you are saved. Grace is the root of every blessing; peace is the sweet flower that makes life so sweet and so fragrant. May you have both of these blessings “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”! There is no peace for you apart from this blessed combination, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, may you know your adoption, and may you know your redemption!

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

> Paul very graciously blends his giving of thanks and his constant prayer for these Christians at Colosse, and therein sets us an example that we may well imitate.
>
> We are not only to pray for those who have no faith, but the very fact that men have faith should lead us to pray for them. Where there is evidently life in the seed, and it begins to sprout, let us water it with our prayers, and with our thanks, too. “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,” —

Colossians 1:4-6. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

> “Faith” — ”love” — ”hope” — these are three divine sisters, which should ever go hand in hand. We must never be satisfied unless we see in ourselves and in our fellow-Christians these three delightful fruits of the Spirit of God. Notice the order here, — faith, and love, and then hope. Perhaps the Colossians were a little deficient in this last grace, so the apostle prayed constantly for them, “for the hope which is laid up for you in

heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

If there is a way of knowing the grace of God which is of no value, it is when it is not known in truth, that is to say, when it is only head-knowledge, not heart-knowledge. But, oh, when in truth the grace of God sinks into the soul, and changes the whole nature, then it is an experience for which we may well give thanks to God.

We do not know the grace of God in truth unless it brings forth fruit in us. We may know it with the head very correctly, but yet we do not truly know it unless it is knowledge in the heart, knowledge in the inner man. We do not really know it unless it affects our lives, and brings forth faith love, hope; — faith, which lifts us above the world; love, which preserves us from selfishness; and hope, which keeps us up under all trials.

Colossians 1:7, 8. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Epaphras told them of Paul's prayers for them; and when he came back from Colosse, he told Paul of their great love in the Spirit.

I like to read of these godly men speaking well of one another. Nowadays, it is thought to be a distinguishing mark of faithfulness to be able to pick holes in the coats of our fellow-Christians. Now, we cannot help perceiving their defects, and sometimes it is our duty to speak of them, and to speak of them faithfully, but let us also observe all the virtues that are to be found in them otherwise we may despise the work of the Holy Spirit, and rob him of his glory. How kindly Paul speaks of Epaphras, and how kindly Epaphras speaks of the church at Colosse!

Colossians 1:9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in his wisdom and spiritual understanding,

See! the apostle asks for them something more even than faith, and hope, and love, — that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This shows what a valuable thing it is to know and understand the will of God.

If you have the graces of the Spirit, it is important that they should be deepened, that they should grow through being fed with divine nourishment. What the water is to the plant, making it further to develop itself, that is the knowledge of God's will to our gifts and graces; they grow and become fruitful through an increase in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10, 11. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

If we have faith, and hope, and love, it is desirable that we add to these a fullness of knowledge, and to this holiness of life and fruitfulness of service that we may have patience to endure the afflictions of this life, and longsuffering with which to put up with the provocations of the ungodly.

Now the apostle is handling the string he most delights to touch. He is at home with everything which concerns the welfare of saints; but when he begins to talk of his Lord and Master, then it is that he seems to ride in a chariot of fire with horses of fire, and he grows mightily eloquent under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. See how he talks of the great central truth of the atoning sacrifice: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Colossians 1:12-14. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

And now Paul, having mentioned his Master's great work, — redemption by blood and the forgiveness of sins — goes on at a tangent, as it were. He is so enthusiastic with regard to Christ and his great atoning sacrifice that the very thought of Christ's blood stirs his own blood, and he seems like a man all on fire with holy fervor as he writes: —

Colossians 1:15-17. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Note how Paul harps upon that one string, “He.” See how much he dwells upon the divine person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising him, he keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name; and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes him great in our hearts, and then we try to make him great by our words and by our acts.

How can anyone ever read this passage, and yet say that Christ Jesus is only a man? By what twisting of words on such language as this be applied to the most eminent prophet or apostle who ever lived? Surely he must be God by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist.

But Paul’s next sentence is to us the sweetest of all: —

Colossians 1:18. And he is the head of the body, the church:

He is joined by an indissoluble union to his people, and is the head of their glory, their wisdom, and their strength.

O beloved! as the sun is to be seen mirrored, not only in the face of the great deep, but in every little drop of dew that hangs upon each blade of grass, so is the glory of Christ to be seen, not only in his universal Church, but in every separate individual in whom his Spirit has wrought holiness.

Colossians 1:18. Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Are we giving him the pre-eminence in all things? That theology must be false which puts Jesus in the second place, or even lower than that, and that experience is a wrong one which does not put Christ always in the front. He must in all things always stand first.

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

That we might have to go to him for it; it pleased the Father to make errands for us so as to take us to Christ, and to make our very emptiness thus to minister to the glory of Christ.

Colossians 1:20-23. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,

This is a text that ought to be read and pondered every day by the many unstable professors who are in the church at this present time: “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,” like a building that will have no further settlements, no more starting of the stones, no more cracking of the walls, because your foundation is secure, and you are firmly built upon it.

Colossians 1:23, 24. And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,

Oh how blessed it is when a man has so mastered himself that his sufferings for his fellow-Christians become a matter of rejoicing for himself! He not only accepts them, and bears them with patience, but he says: —

How delighted he is to have such a gospel to preach, such a hope to tell out to the sons of men! Oh, if we had to creep from a sick bed, or to come up from a dungeon, if we were aching in every bone of our body, and if we were depressed in soul, this ought to be enough to make us full of gladness to overflowing, that we have such a Christ to preach, and such fullness of blessing to declare to the sons of men!

Colossians 1:24. And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church:

There is nothing “behind” as to the atoning efficacy of the sufferings of Christ, but there is much yet to be endured in order that all the elect may be brought to Christ. Some must suffer through their extraordinary labors in preaching the gospel, others through bearing reproach for the truth’s sake, and Paul was glad to take, in his mortal body, his share of the sufferings to be endured for the sake of Christ’s Church, which is his mystical body.

As if there were so much suffering to be endured to bring in the redeemed from the world, and so much self-sacrifice to be made in order that those whom Christ has redeemed may come to know of that redemption, and may be brought to him, and Paul was glad to make up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in

his flesh, “for his body’s sake, which is the church:” —

Colossians 1:25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of and which is given to me for you, to fulfill the world of God;

This is a wonderful expression, “made a minister.” The true minister is of God’s making; a man-made minister must be a poor creature, but a God made minister will prove his calling: “whereof I am made a minister,”

Colossians 1:27. but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ is you, the hope of glory.

This is the most blessed of all mysteries, I trust that many of us understand it; may the Holy Ghost reveal it to any who know it not!

“Christ in you” is glory begun, a sure pledge and earnest of a glory greater than you can yet conceive. If Christ be in you, you have the beginnings of heaven; you have, in fact, the excellence and flower of heaven, for there is no heaven but the glory of Christ.

Colossians 1:28. Whom we preach, —

That is, Christ; it is not so much what we preach as whom we preach. We preach the person of Christ: “whom we preach,” —

Colossians 1:28, 29. Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily

There will never be any mighty work come from us unless there be first a mighty work in us, no man truly labors for souls unless the Holy Ghost has first wrought mightily in him.

If God’s people strive mightily, it is because God works mightily in them. Nothing can come out of a man but what God puts into him. We work to will and to do when he works in us according to his good pleasure. Oh, for more of the agonizing of the Spirit within us, that there might be more of agonizing in our spirits for the glory of God!

Spurgeon's Exposition of Colossians 2

Colossians 2:1. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

Paul had not met these Colossian Christians, but he had heard of their faith, and hope, and love, and he so desired their good that he had a continual care for them in his heart. He carried that care to God in prayer, yet he still bore them in loving remembrance. They were always on his heart as a sick child is ever on the heart of its mother.

Colossians 2:2, 3. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He wanted them to know God, and to rest comforted and happy in what he revealed. He saw in them a tendency to look abroad for something more than that, a desire to tack something else on to the gospel, a wish to try and find some fresh light outside the Word, and over this he greatly grieved. He himself was more than satisfied with the gospel, and he wanted them to be, in that respect, as he was.

Colossians 2:4. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

They did not openly contradict the gospel, they pretended to have a great affection for it, and then they tried to tear the very heart out of it with their enticing words of man’s wisdom.

Colossians 2:5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

He never forgot them; and it was his joy when he found them standing fast in Christ, and his sorrow and his horror when they went away after anyone else.

Colossians 2:6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

“Do not turn away from him, do not dream of going beyond him. You received him at first very simply, you

trusted in him entirely, so go on doing so. You were satisfied with Christ when you first came to him, so be satisfied with him still, for you do not need anything more than Christ, and there is nothing more than Christ."

Do not go away from him. You have received him; keep to him. Whatever he was to you at first, let him be that to you to the very last. Do not begin with Christ, and then go back to self; let it be all Christ from first to last.

That is, keep on as you began. Christ was enough for you when, as poor, guilty sinners, you came and trusted him; so keep on trusting him in the same way as you did at the first. Do not try to live by feeling, after having lived by faith. Do not begin to live upon outward forms and ceremonies after having found salvation by grace through faith: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"

Colossians 2:7. Rooted and built up in him,

"Take a living hold of Christ as a tree does of the soil. Be also built up in him; as a building settles down upon the foundation, so do you settle down upon Christ."

Growing in him. Have your very life, like a tree, rooted in Christ; and like a temple, built up in Christ.

Christians are to make progress in the heavenward road; but they are not to have any other foundation for their faith than they had at the begining of their Christian career. We are still to stand fast as we stood at the first; we are to be rooted, grounded, "stablished in the faith," keeping to the old truth that saved our souls, and laying hold upon the same Savior with greater tenacity every hour of our lives. We are not to be like chaff driven before the wind,— for ever moving; but to be like the cedars of Lebanon, firmly rooted, and withstanding the heaviest storms.

Colossians 2:7. And established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

When a man is established in the truth that he knows, and rejoices in what he has already received, he will not go away from it.

Do not forget what you have been taught; do not reject it; keep to it. He who should learn one system of philosophy, and then unlearn it, and begin another, and then unlearn that, and begin another, would be more likely to turn out a fool than a philosopher; and he who begins to learn the faith in one way, and then tries to learn it in another way, and then attempts to learn it in yet another way, is more likely to be a sceptic than to be a saint.

Colossians 2:8. Beware lest any man spoil you (plunder you, it might be rendered,) through philosophy and vein deceit,

"Beware of those who pretend that they are going to enrich you, but whose real object is to plunder you. They say that they will give you advanced thought, deeper ideas, a system more congruous with the age; but it is" —

Plenty of people would spoil you in this way, by teaching you their profound thoughts, their grand inventions, their bright ideas. Beware of all of them.

Colossians 2:8. After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

"What do you want with their traditions? Christ has revealed his truth to you. What do you want with the world's rudiments? You have gone beyond such elementary, useless knowledge as that, for you have got the truth itself."

Cleave to Christ, beloved. Go no further than he leads you; and turn not away from him either to the right hand or to the left. In him are contained all the riches of grace, and all the treasures of knowledge. If you would become truly wise, seek to know more of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

In Christ, we enter into the fullness and completeness of life both materially and spiritually.

Everything, then, must be in Christ if all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him. Why do you want to go anywhere else for wisdom? What can you find by going elsewhere? "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

You have everything in Christ that you ought to want; you are fully furnished, completely supplied and equipped for all future service. You need not go to Christ for the supply of some of your needs, and then go

elsewhere for the supply of other needs; but, “ye are complete in him.”

Colossians 2:10 Complete in Him

You are like vessels filled up to the brim. You are like warriors thoroughly furnished, fully armed for the fight: “Ye are complete in him.”

Colossians 2:10, 11. Which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

“The Jew boasts that he is a circumcised man, but you have spiritually all that circumcision meant literally. Even though you have not the wounded your flesh, you have more than that, for you have the death of the flesh and your very flesh has been buried with Christ. All that circumcision can possibly mean you have in Christ.”

All that the Jew ever had you have in Christ, only you have the real purification of which his rite was but a symbol.

Anything good that there was in Judaism, you have secured to you in Christ. Whatever there was of blessing and privilege in the covenant mark in the flesh of those whom God made to be his people in the olden time, you have handed on to you by the death of Christ.

Colossians 2:12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

“You have death, burial, and resurrection, all in Christ; and you received the outward sign and token of this when you were baptized, so believe firmly that it is so, and do not look anywhere else for it. You are neither dead nor buried apart from Christ, nor are you driven apart from him all you have is in him.”

It is only as you are one with Christ that baptism will be to you what he intended; but “buried with him in baptism,” you are dead to all beside, and all your life lies in him.

Colossians 2:13. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

“You do not need to go to a ’priest’ for pardon, for Christ has forgiven you all your trespasses.

Your pardon is given to you in Christ. Oh, how full and how free is that forgiveness that comes to you through Christ Jesus!

You are so complete in Christ that confession to man and priestly absolution from man would be of no use to you.”

All your life is in Christ; you are “quickened together with him.”

Colossians 2:14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

“All the Mosaic ceremonials, from which you were shut out as Gentiles, are abolished. Christ has driven a nail through them and fastened them up to his cross.” As, sometimes, a banker stamps through a cheque when it is paid, so has Christ but through the very heart of all Jewish ordinances by what he has done for his people.

Colossians 2:15. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Exhibiting them as his prisoners in a triumphal procession, as the victorious Roman Generals did when they returned from war.

His cross was his triumph. Then he led captivity captive. What more do you want? Your enemy is vanquished, your sins blotted out, your death changed to life, your necessities all supplied. Will you not stay at home with Christ? “Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” Canst thou have a better lover than thy Lord, a dearer husband than the heavenly Bridegroom? Oh, love the Lord, ye his saints; cling to him, and make much of him; let him be all in all to you!

The Lord Jesus Christ has done everything for his people, fought their battle, won their victory, and, on their behalf, celebrated the triumph in the streets of heaven, “leading captivity captive.” What more, then, do we want? Surely Christ is enough for us.

Colossians 2:16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days;

> “Do not put yourselves under rules and regulations which God has not ordained. If you think it is right for you to abstain from certain drinks do so, but do not act thus simply because others do so. If you abstain from certain meats, because they have been offered to idols, and the consciences of others might be offended if you partook of them, do not act thus as though it would save you. Do not make yourself subject to the judgment of other men, for Christ is your Law-giver and Lord.”
>
> Do not let anybody come in, and tell you that it is necessary for your salvation that you should abstain from this meat or that drink, that there is a merit in fasting for forty days in Lent, or that you cannot be saved without observing such and such a holy clay. Your salvation is in Christ. Keep you to that, and add nothing to this one foundation which is once for all laid in him.
>
> Do not put yourself under the bondage of any rules and regulations that may be made by men. If you choose to do anything, or to abstain from something else, because you judge it to be right and beneficial, do so. Christ is your only Ruler and Leader; and if he does not command anything, let it not signify to you who does command, it,

Colossians 2:17. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

> That is all that they are: “a shadow of things to come.” Christ is the real one thing needful. Mind that you have the substance, for then you can let the shadows go.
>
> “You can do without the shadow now that you have the substance; so keep to that.” Some men multiply church ordinances; they have this form and that form, well, let them have them if they find them of service; but do not you bring yourself under subjection to anything of the kind; follow the New Testament and above all things keep close to Christ, for he is everything to you.
>
> All this regard for meats, and drinks, and holy days, and new moons, is but a shadow; what is the great substance that is all-important?

Colossians 2:18. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility-

> Do not be beguiled by those who tell you that you ought to pay reverence to angels, and saints, and I know not what besides. One day is called St. Matthew’s, and another is St. Michael’s, and one, I suppose, is St. Judas’s day; there are all sorts of supposed saints, some of whom are never mentioned in the Bible, and about whom nobody ought to care at all: “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels,” —
>
> We know those who say, “We do not know anything, we are only seekers, trying to find out the truth.” They talk very humbly considering how desperately proud they really are, but that humility which makes men doubt is mock humility, and is not of God. “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” When you have learned the truth from the Scriptures, be dogmatic about it, do not be afraid of the presumption of which venue will accuse you, or the bigotry which they will impute to you.

Colossians 2:18. And worship of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

> Agnostics by their name confess that they do not know, but do not let them take away from you what you do know, and set you to investigate matters which are beyond you with a judgment which they would lead you to think is well nigh infallible, whereas your judgment is very fallible indeed. Be not puffed up by your fleshly mind.

Colossians 2:19. And not holding the Head,

> That is the point, these people get away from the Deity of Christ, they get away from the atoning blood, they get away from glorifying him who alone is the Truth.

Colossians 2:19. From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increased with the increase of God.

> Take away the head, and there is death, everything is out of order then. If the Head be denied, if any doctrine be taught which is contrary to the glory of Christ, you have killed the body however much you may pretend to

be increasing and feeding it

Colossians 2:20-22. Therefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances. (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which, all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

You may and you should feel that there are some things which you will not touch, or taste, or handle. You had better let poisonous drugs alone; but, at the same time, if any man seeks to impose upon you any regulation concerning them as a part of the faith, you may resist it and repudiate it, and plead your freedom in Christ.

I have actually seen this text (Touch not; taste note, etc…) quoted as though it stood as a matter of teaching,-"Touch not; taste not; handle not;"— whereas the apostle here means, "Why are ye subject to such ordinances of men when Christ has set yon free from them all? If, with a view to the good of your fellowmen, you choose not to touch, or taste, or handle, you will act very wisely; but, as far as your own conscience is concerned, do not submit to any merely human regulations as to your manner of life,"

Colossians 2:23. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will I worship,-

There were some of the Jews who would not eat certain kinds of meat, and others who would fast for long periods. Some thought it was very wicked to eat flesh meat on a certain day, and there were many such notions; and similar superstitions still survive among us, such as not eating meat on Fridays, being afraid of thirteen people sitting at table, and so on: but you have nothing to do with all that kind of rubbish so get away from it. If you are a believer in Christ, tread all such nonsense under your feet. "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will I worship," —

Colossians 2:23. And humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor-

There is no honor about such things, they are contemptible: "not in any honour" —

Colossians 2:23. To the satisfying of the flesh.

That is all such things would do, — make you seem better than other people; so do not be led into these ways, but stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free.

Spurgeon's Exposition of Colossians 3

Colossians 3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Oh! how often we need to be called to this, for the flesh is groveling, and it holds down the spirit; and very often we are seeking the things below as if we had not yet attained to the new life and did not know anything about the resurrection power of Christ within the soul. Now, if it is that you, believers, have risen with Christ, do not live as if you had never done so, but "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Your Lord and Master has gone up to heaven. You profess that he represents you, and that you have gone up there in him and with him. Then do not seek the things that are down here below, the things of earth; but live where your life has gone. Where your treasure is, there let your heart be also. "Seek those things which are above."

Colossians 3:2. Set your affection.

Not "your affections." Tie them up into one bundle. Make one of them.

Colossians 3:2. On things above, not on things on the earth.

You say that you were dead with Christ, and that you have risen with Christ. Live, then, the risen life, and not the life of those who have never undergone this matchless process. Live above.

Colossians 3:3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

The old life is dead. You are dead to it. You will not be consumed by it; you cannot be controlled by it. You have a newer and higher life. Let it have full scope.

You have a new life now; it is up yonder, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Do you not feel

drawings upward? Are there no longings after the high and heavenly estate where Jesus is? Come, beloved, let your soul break loose for a while; and, like a lark that, having found its liberty, ascends with joyous wing, singing as it rises till it is out of mortal sight, so let it be with you.

You profess to be dead to the world; is that profession false? You have observed that Scriptural ordinance in which you profess to be buried with Christ; was that observance only an empty form?

Colossians 3:4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Christ was hidden while he was here. The world knew him not. So is your life. But there is to be a glorious manifestation. When Christ is made manifest, so shall you be. Wait for him.

You are hidden now, your life is veiled in him; but, at his second coming he shall shine forth in all his glory, and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Beloved, seek no greatness here; ask not for any exaltation of yourself among the sons of men; but wait for your true manifestation with Christ in glory.

Colossians 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Since you are dead, let all the lusts of the flesh be put to death. Kill those. They were once a part of you. Your nature lusted this way. Mortify them. Do not merely restrain them and try to keep them under. These things you are to have nothing to do with.

Kill all these evil things; do not let them live in you for a single moment. The command applies, not only to the grosser actions which are summed up under the head of fornication and uncleanness, but to all that leads to those foul sins; not only to the fire, but also to the sparks, such as “inordinate affection,” a sort of softness which is seen in some persons, men and women, too, and which often leads to something far worse; — and “evil concupiscence,” the first desires towards that which is unchaste. God give us grace to kill these loathsome things at once, for if thoughts of evil are indulged, they soon become acts of evil, and then who knows how far we may go in the way of unholiness? Sin, if allowed to grow in the heart, will soon take gigantic strides, and come out in the life. Depend upon it, whenever a professing Christian goes into overt sin of the kind mentioned here, he does not do it on a sudden. The evil has long been festering and fomenting within his heart, or it would not have manifested itself thus. Oh! if he had only watched, and destroyed the thief ere he broke open the house, what a mercy it would have been! You notice that covetousness is put down with the most filthy sins, and it is described as idolatry. The desire to possess the goods that belong to others, the lust to get gain at any price, this is idolatry.

Colossians 3:6, 7. For which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

“When ye lived in them.” But now you do not live in them. You are dead to them. If it should ever come to pass that you fall into any of these things, you will loathe yourself with bitterest repentance that you could find comfort, satisfaction, life in them. You are dead to them.

This was true of the Colossians, and it was true of almost all those to whom Paul wrote, for these gross evils were scarcely regarded as sins in his time, so polluted had the nations become. I hope that, in the case of many now living, they have been preserved by Christian training from having walked even for a time in such sins.

Colossians 3:8–10. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds: And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Put them all off, like old clothes that are never to be worn again: “Put off all these;”

It is hard work for some to pull that garment off, for it fits them so tightly. This burning coat of wrath will not readily come off; but the apostle’s command is, “Put it off! Put it off!” It does not become a Christian to be an angry man.

Christ will not live in a heart that harbors malice.

Thank God that, if we ever wore that robe, we pulled it off long ago.

8. Filthy communication out of your mouth. - All talking that is of a dubious character must go. Anything which

savours of corruption and defilement must be put away from every Christian.

No lies. Such communications are filthy. But you put these things away through your union with Christ in his risen life. Therefore, abhor them. Avoid the very appearance of them, and cry for grace to be kept from them, for you have been “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

In Paul’s day, lying was thought to be a virtue unless the liar happened to be found out; in that case, it was considered wrong; but to lie through thick and thin, and to lie so dexterously as to deceive, was looked upon by an Oriental as an accomplishment of which he might be proud. So the apostle might well write, “Lie not one to another,” —

Colossians 3:10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

There is nothing false or untrue in God. God is true, and in him is no falsehood at all; and if you and I have really been renewed, as we profess to have been, we shall hate the very semblance of a lie, and our word will be as good as our bond.

Colossians 3:11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

In the new life there is no distinction of race and nationality. We are born into one family; we become members of Christ’s body; and this is the one thing we have got to keep up—separation from all the world beside: no separations in the church, no disunion, nothing that would cause it, for we are one in Christ, and Christ is all. Now, as we have to put off these things, that is the negative side: that is the law’s side, for the law says, “Thou shalt not”—“Thou shalt not.” But now look at the positive side.

Whenever you hear certain very wise brethren say, “Such-and-such a promise in the Bible is for Israel, not for the Gentiles,” do not you be misled in the least by their assertion; but just quote this text to them: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” These distinctions all vanish when once we come to Christ; we are one in him, and every promise to believers is good to all who are in Christ Jesus, for “Christ is all, and in all.”

Colossians 3:12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:

This is what you have got to wear, even on the outside—to put it on; not to have a latent kindness in your heart and a degree of humbleness deep down in your soul if you could get at it; but you are to put it on. It is to be the very dress you wear. These are the sacred vestments of your daily priesthood. Put them on.

Be ready to feel for others; be very considerate of their needs. Look at others as if they were your kith and kin; if you and they are in Christ, they are indeed your kin, so put on kinned-ness, or “kindness,’ —

(Humbleness) Do not try to be a big man. He who thinks himself big has not yet learnt the true spirit of Christianity. Especially towards those who are sorrowful and sad, be pitiful, be kind, be humble.

(Meekness) If others try to provoke you, do not be provoked by them; but be gentle and meek.

(Longsuffering) Continue to put up with others, remembering the Lord’s longsuffering with you.

Colossians 3:13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Just as readily, just as freely, just as heartily, just as completely.

Hear this, beloved, I pray you; especially those of you who have hot tempers, and have fallen out with one another. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Remember how much Christ has forgiven you, and show a forbearing and forgiving spirit to others.

Colossians 3:14–15. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

For that is the great foundation of every godly fruit. We are in such a hurry, in such dreadful haste, so selfish, so discontented, so impetuous, and the major part of our sins spring from that condition of mind. But if we were godly, restful, peaceful, how many sins we should avoid! “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”

The perfect bond, the girdle that goes round, and keeps every other garment of virtue in its place.

Colossians 3:15. To the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

It looks like a very small virtue to be thankful. Yet, dear friends, the absence of it is one of the grossest of vices. To be ungrateful is a mean thing; to be ungrateful to God is a base thing. And yet how many may accuse themselves of it! Who among us is as grateful as he should be? Be thankful.

That is a nice little text, “Be ye thankful.” When you are grumbling at your plain food, put this as a sandwich between your bread and butter, “Be ye thankful.” When you are complaining of the East wind, just try if you cannot spell this little sentence, “Be ye thankful.” When you are murmuring about those sharp pains and that long sickness, this is the kind of tune for the little bird to whistle at your window, “Be ye thankful.” We have all much for which we ought to be thankful, however sad we may think our lot to be. Look on the bright side, rejoice in God: “Be ye thankful.”

Do not fall out with one another. You are called to peace, for you are cared in one body. Does one hand in the body fight with the other hand? Does the foot contend with the eye? Of course not, for they are in one body. So are you in one body with all your fellow-Christians, therefore lay aside all strife. I deeply deplore when I see Christians — and especially eminent Christians — contending with one another about minor matters of small account. Surely, almost anything ought to be borne before there should be public strife among members of the one body. God grant that such a state of things may speedily come to an end wherever it has existed! We have enough to do to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” without contending for our own dignity or honor.

Colossians 3:16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you.

Alexander had a casket of gold studded with gems to carry Homer’s works. Let your own heart be a casket for the command of Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you.”

Colossians 3:16–18. Richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship, but it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith.

Do not draw any line of demarcation, and say, “So far is secular, and so far is religious.” Let your whole life be religious; and if there is anything proposed to you, in which you cannot glorify God, do not touch it,. “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

If any of you go to the theater, can you go there in the name of the Lord Jesus? Why, you would not dare to cross the threshold with such blasphemy in your soul! And when you go to any place of doubtful amusement, can you go there giving thanks to God and the Father by Jesus Christ? Can you thank the Lord that you are permitted to go, and pray for divine blessing when you go, and when you come away? A lady once said to a Christian minister, “The pleasures of going to the play are very great; there is the pleasure of thinking of it beforehand, the enjoyment of it at the time, and then the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards.” “Yes, madam,” said the good man, “and there is one other pleasure which you seem to have forgotten, that is the pleasure of thinking of it on your dying bed; I would like you to remember that.” Let me read this verse again: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” If you cannot do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, do not do it at all if you are a Christian; and even if you are not a Christian, you will be accountable to God, by-and-by, for all that you do.

Colossians 3:19. Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Oh! there are some spirits that are very bitter. A little thing puts them out, and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness; yet there are some such husbands.

Colossians 3:20–21. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

The duties are mutual. Scripture maintains an equilibrium. It does not lay down commands for one class, and then leave the other to exercise whatever tyrannical oppression it may please. The child is to obey, but the

father must not provoke.

Colossians 3:22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers;

How much there is of that! How quickly the hands go when the master's eye looks on! But the Christian servant remembers God's eye, and is diligent always. "Not with eyeservice as men pleasers."

Spurgeon's Exposition of Colossians 4

Colossians 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

See how he keeps putting that in—"Be ye thankful"—"with thanksgiving." Why, that is the oil that makes the machinery go around without its causing obstruction. May we have much of that thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:3, 4. Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

So the preacher of the gospel asks your prayers; and it is a part of the duties arising out of the relationship between Christian men that those who are taught should pray for those who teach God's Word.