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COMMENTARIES

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS **COLOSSIANS**

by John Gill

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth*
— Psalm 60:4

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COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

The Colossians, to whom this epistle is written, were not the Rhodians, by some called Colossians, from Colossus, the large statue of the sun, which stood in the island of Rhodes, and was one of the seven wonders of the world; but the inhabitants of Colosse, a city of the greater Phrygia, in the lesser Asia, near to which stood the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, mentioned in this epistle. Pliny^{f1} speaks of it as one of the chief towns in Phrygia, and^{f2} Herodotus calls it the great city of Phrygia; it is said to have perished a very little time after the writing of this epistle, with the above cities, by an earthquake, in the year of Christ 66, and in the tenth of Nero^{f3}; though it was afterwards rebuilt; for Theophylact says, that in his time it was called Chonae. When the Gospel was brought hither, and by whom, is not known, nor who was the founder of the church in this place; for the Apostle Paul was not, since his face had never been seen by them, (~~5:11~~ Colossians 2:1), though it is said that Epaphras, the same name with Epaphroditus, was fixed by him pastor of this church; and others say Philemon was set over it by him. The occasion of this epistle was this, Epaphras, who had preached the Gospel to the Colossians, and very likely was the first that did, came to Rome, where the Apostle Paul was a prisoner, and gave him an account of them, how they had heard and received the Gospel, and of their faith Christ, and love to the saints; and also declared to him in what danger they were through some false teachers that had got among them, who were for introducing the philosophy of the Gentiles, the ceremonies of the law of Moses, and some pernicious tenets of the followers of Simon Magus, and the Gnostics; upon which the apostle writes this epistle to them, to confirm them in the faith of the Gospel Epaphras had preached unto them, and which was the same he himself preached; and to warn them against those bad men, and their principles; and to exhort them to a discharge of their duty to God, and men, and one another. It was written by the apostle, when in bonds at Rome, as many passages in it show, and about the same time with those to the Philippians and Ephesians; and the epistle to the latter greatly agrees with this, both as

to subject and style. Dr. Lightfoot places it in the year of Christ 60, in the second of the apostle's imprisonment, and in the sixth of Nero's reign.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS 1

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle; the apostle's usual salutation; his thanksgiving to God on behalf of the Colossians for grace received; his prayers, that more might be given them; an enumeration of various blessings of grace, which require thankfulness, in which the glories and excellencies of Christ are particularly set forth: and it is concluded with an exhortation to a steadfast adherence to the Gospel, taken from the nature, excellency, and usefulness of the ministry of it. The inscription, and the salutation, are in (~~5100E~~Colossians 1:1,2), and are the same with those in the epistle to the Ephesians, only Timothy is joined with the apostle here, and the Colossians have the additional character of brethren given them. The thanksgiving is in (~~5100B~~Colossians 1:3-5), the object of it is God, the Father of Christ; the time when made, when in prayer to him; its subject matter, the faith and love of the saints; to which is added, their happiness secured for them in heaven, their hope was conversant with: and whereas the Gospel was the means by which they came to the hearing and knowledge of it, this is commended from the subject of it, the doctrine of truth; from the spread of it in the world; and from its efficacy in bringing forth fruit in all, to whom it came in power, and that with constancy, (~~5100F~~Colossians 1:5,6), and also from the testimony of Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ, and theirs, who was dear to the apostle, and of whom he had the above account of them, (~~5100G~~Colossians 1:7,8). And then follow his prayers for them, that they might have an increase of spiritual knowledge, and that they might put in practice what they knew; and for that purpose he entreats they might be blessed with strength, patience, and longsuffering, (~~5100D~~Colossians 1:9-11). And in order to excite thankfulness in himself and them, he takes notice of various blessings of grace; of the Father's grace in giving a meetness for eternal glory and happiness, by delivering from the power of darkness, and translating into the kingdom of his Son, (~~51012~~Colossians 1:12,13), and of the Son's grace in obtaining redemption by his blood, and procuring the remission of sins, (~~51014~~Colossians 1:14), which leads the apostle to enlarge upon the excellencies of the author of these blessings, in his divine person, as the image of God, and the first cause of

all created beings, (⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15), which he proves by an enumeration of them, as created by him, and for his sake, by his pre-existence to them, and their dependence on him, (⁵⁰¹⁶Colossians 1:16,17), and in his office capacity, as Mediator, being the head of the church, the governor of it, and the first that rose from the dead; by all which it appears that he has, and ought to have the pre-eminence, (⁵⁰¹⁸Colossians 1:18). And this is still more manifest from his having all fulness dwelling in him, to supply his body the church, of which he is the head, (⁵⁰¹⁹Colossians 1:19), and from the reconciliation of all the members of it to God by him, (⁵⁰²⁰Colossians 1:20), which blessing of grace is amplified partly by the subjects of it, who are described by their former state and condition, aliens and enemies, and by their present one, reconciled by the death of Christ in his fleshly body; and partly by the end of it, the presentation of them holy, blameless, and irreprovable in the sight of God, (⁵⁰²¹Colossians 1:21,22). Wherefore it is a duty incumbent on such to abide by the Gospel of Christ, which brings the good tidings of peace and reconciliation, and is the means of faith and hope; and the rather, since they had heard it themselves, and others also, even every creature under heaven; and the apostle was a minister of it, (⁵⁰²³Colossians 1:23), and on his ministration of it he enlarges, by observing his sufferings for the church on account of the Gospel, which he endured with pleasure; and therefore they should, by his example, be encouraged to continue in it, (⁵⁰²⁴Colossians 1:24). Moreover, he argues the same from his commission of God to preach it for their sakes, (⁵⁰²⁵Colossians 1:25), and from the nature and subject matter of it, being a hidden mystery, and containing riches and glory in it; yea, Christ himself, the foundation of hope of eternal glory, (⁵⁰²⁶Colossians 1:26,27), and from the end of preaching it, which was to present every man perfect in Christ; which end the apostle laboured and strove to obtain through the power and energy of divine grace, which wrought in him, and with him, (⁵⁰²⁸Colossians 1:28,29).

Ver. 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*, etc.] The apostle puts his name to this epistle, by which he was known in the Gentile world, as he usually does in all his epistles; and styles himself “an apostle”, as he was, having seen Christ in person, and received his commission, doctrine, and qualifications immediately from him, with a power of doing miracles to confirm the truth of his mission. This he chose to make mention of, partly because the false teachers everywhere insinuated that he was not an apostle; and partly to give the greater sanction and authority, and

command the greater regard and credit to what he should say; as well as to excuse his freedom in writing to them whom he had never seen, since he was an apostle of the Gentiles, and so to them; (see ^{<5113>}Romans 11:13 ^{<5117>}1 Timothy 2:7 ^{<5111>}2 Timothy 1:11); he calls himself an apostle “of Jesus Christ”; not of men, he was not sent out by men, but by Christ, who appeared to him, made him a minister of his, gave him his Gospel by revelation, abundantly qualified him for the work, sent him forth unto the Gentiles, in whose name he went as an ambassador and messenger of his, and whom he preached, and by whom he was greatly succeeded, to the conversion of many souls, who were seals of his apostleship in every place, (^{<4112>}1 Corinthians 9:2): into which office he came

by the will of God; not by the will of men, for he derived no authority and power, nor received any doctrine from men; nor by his own will, of his own head, by any usurpation of his; he did not take this office upon him of himself, but was invested with it, according to the secret will and purpose of God, from everlasting, who had ordained and appointed him to this service, and according to his will of command made known to him in time, when he told him what he should do, and openly separated, and sent him forth to do the work he had called him to; and which arose not from any merits or worthiness of the apostle, but from the sovereign good will and pleasure, free grace and favour, of God, to which the apostle continually ascribes it in all his epistles:

and Timotheus [our] brother; who joined with the apostle in this epistle, and whom he calls a “brother”; partly because of the Christian relation he stood in to him, and them, they being all brethren, children of the same Father, partakers of the same grace of regeneration, belonging to the same family, and so should own and love one another as brethren; and partly and chiefly because of his being a brother, companion, fellow soldier, and a fellow labourer in the Gospel. He mentions him, either because he was known unto them, or that he might be so; and to show the agreement there was between them in the doctrine of Christ, which might have the greater weight with them to abide in it.

Ver. 2. *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ*, etc.] This is the inscription of the epistle, in which the persons wrote unto are described as “saints”, or holy men; not by birth, for all are unholy and unclean by nature; nor by baptism, for that neither takes away sin, nor gives grace; nor merely externally, by an outward reformation; but by separation, being by an act of

eternal election set apart for God, for holiness, and happiness; and by imputation, Christ being made sanctification to them; and by the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God in regeneration, being called with an holy calling, and having principles of grace and holiness wrought in them, and they formed as new men in righteousness and true holiness: and as “brethren”; being born of God, having him for their Father, and being of his household, and a part of the family in heaven and earth named of Christ, and heirs together of the grace of life, and of the heavenly glory: and as “faithful” ones; true and sincere believers in Christ, constant and persevering in the faith of him; faithful to the Gospel, and their profession of it, and to Christ, whose name they bore, and to one another, to whom they stood in the relation of brethren: and all this “in Christ”; and by, and through him; they were saints in him; they were chosen in him, and sanctified in him their head, and received all their holiness from him; they were brethren in him the firstborn of them; his God being their God, and his Father their Father; and had their faith and faithfulness from him, as well as it was exercised towards, and on him: and they are further described by the place of their abode,

which are at Colosse: a city of Phrygia:

grace [be] unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the salutation, and which stands in this form in most of Paul’s epistles; (see Gill on “~~ROM~~ Romans 1:7”). The Syriac version puts “peace” before “grace”, and leaves out the last clause, “and the Lord Jesus Christ”; as does also the Ethiopic version.

Ver. 3. *We give thanks to God*, etc.] Meaning himself and Timothy. This is the beginning of the epistle, which is introduced with a thanksgiving to God; to whom praise and thankfulness are always due as a Creator and preserver, as the author of all good things, as the Father of mercies, temporal and spiritual, and as the covenant God and Father of his people through Christ: wherefore it follows,

and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the sense of which either is, that God the Father, who is the object of praise and thanksgiving, is both the God of Christ, and the Father of Christ, the God of Christ, as Christ is man, and the Father of Christ, as Christ is God; or the latter is exegetical of the former, and may be rendered thus, “God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”: and very properly are thanks given to him under this character, because it is as he is the Father of Christ that he blesses his

people with all spiritual blessings; and because he is their God, as well as his God; and their Father, as well as his Father, though in a different sense, his by nature, theirs by adoption. Moreover, as all their blessings come from God, as the Father of Christ, and through Christ, and for his sake, so it is very proper that thanks should be returned unto him under that character; and through Christ, by whom alone such sacrifices of praise are acceptable to God: it is added,

praying always for you; which, as it is expressive of the constant discharge of the duty of prayer, and the continual remembrance of these saints in it, and shows the affection the apostle had for them; so it points out the time when, and the way and manner in which Paul and Timothy gave thanks to God on account of them; it was when they were at the throne of grace, and in their frequent prayers to God; thankfulness for mercies received, both by ourselves and others, being a branch of the duty of prayer.

Ver. 4. *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus*, etc.] This expresses the matter of their thankfulness, or what it was they gave thanks to God for, their faith in Christ; by which is not only meant their hearty assent to the whole doctrine of faith, concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ, their soundness and steadfastness in it, and their sincere and constant profession of it; but the grace of faith in them, the operation of the Spirit of God in their souls, which had not Moses, nor any mere man, but Christ for its object; by which they looked unto him as a Saviour, went unto him as such, ventured on him, committed themselves unto him, leaned and relied upon him; that grace which comes from him, has him for its author and finisher, and returns unto him, and lives on him. This Paul and Timothy had heard of by their minister Epaphras; and it shows that they made no secret of it, did not keep it to themselves, but declared, confessed, and published it to others, as is the duty of all believers to do; and thanks being given for it to God, makes it a clear point that it was not of themselves, but was the gift of God, otherwise there would have been no need of thankfulness for it; as also, that it is a very eminent grace, and of great use and service to such who are possessed of it.

And of love [which ye have] to all the saints; this is another thing for which thanks are given to God. The object of this grace are “saints”; all men indeed are to be loved, and even our very enemies; and good is to be done to all, but especially to holy and good men, to the household of faith; and these are “all” to be loved and respected; nor is any respect or

difference of persons to be made on account of country, or natural relation, as Jews or Gentiles, or of outward state and condition, as rich or poor, bond or free, or of greater or lesser gifts and grace, weak or strong believers, or of different sentiments in the lesser matters of religion. It denotes both the grace of love itself, which is a fruit of the Spirit implanted in regeneration, and is an evidence of the new birth, and always is where true faith in Christ is, for faith works by it; and also the effects of it, which lies not in bare words, in expressions of spiritual affection and friendship, but in deeds, by serving one another in love, by relieving in necessity, sympathizing in distress, praying with and for one another, and the like; all which these saints were famous for.

Ver. 5. *For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, etc.] These words may be considered either in connection with the foregoing, and express the reason or motive which encouraged these saints to believe in Christ, and to go on believing in him, and hold fast the profession of their faith in him, and to love the saints, and show it upon all occasions, and in every case; because of the rich treasure of glory and happiness in reserve for them in heaven, which they were hoping and waiting for; this encouraged their faith in Christ, and enlarged their love and beneficence to the saints: or else with the thanksgiving of the apostle, and so contains fresh matter of it, that as thanks were given for faith and love, so for “hope”; by which is meant, not the grace of hope, for that is not in heaven, though it enters within the veil, and is conversant with heavenly things, but is in the heart; and though it supposes it, and which these persons had; they were not without it; they had a good hope through grace of eternal glory, for faith, hope, and love, always go together: nor Christ the foundation of hope; there are many things in him, which are a ground of hope of happiness, as his sufferings, and death, and redemption thereby; his resurrection from the dead, his intercessions and preparations; the promise of life in him, and the thing itself being in his gift; his righteousness and grace, which, give a title to it, and meetness for it; and he is also in heaven, but then he cannot be said to be laid up there: but the thing hoped for, everlasting happiness, is intended; (see ⁵⁰²³Titus 2:13) (⁴⁰⁸⁵Galatians 5:5 ⁵⁰⁴⁸2 Timothy 4:8); which is so called, because it is the object of hope; is not yet possessed; is future; is not seen; is difficult, and yet possible to be enjoyed: this is said to be “laid up”; which denotes the preciousness and valuableness of it, it is a treasure, an inheritance, a kingdom, and riches of glory; and the secrecy and hiddenness of it, it consists of things invisible to the bodily eye, and which are out of

the reach of carnal sense and reason, of which faith only has some small glimpse; and also the safety of it, it is hid in Christ, it is reserved “in heaven”, and cannot be come at, and spoiled by men or devils; and likewise the free grace and goodness of God in laying up and providing things of such a nature for his children and friends: the place where it is, in heaven, where moth and rust corrupt not, and thieves cannot break through and steal; and so is safe, and must be of an heavenly nature, as it is for heavenly persons: “for you”; the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, for those who were chosen in Christ, for whom it was prepared from the foundation of the world; for this is not laid up for any, for everyone, but for the chosen of God, and precious; whom God has distinguished by his grace, Christ has redeemed by his blood, and the Spirit regenerates and sanctifies, and who have faith, hope, and love, given unto them; and this was not only laid up for them, but they knew of it, they were made acquainted with it:

whereof ye heard before; before the writing of this epistle, under the ministry of their faithful teacher Epaphras:

in the word of the truth of the Gospel; or in the true word of the Gospel; which comes from the God of truth, is indited by the Spirit of truth, is concerning Christ the truth, and which contains nothing but truth, and lies in the Scriptures of truth: or “in the word of truth”, even the Gospel; which explains what word of truth is meant. The law is the word of truth; and many of the words of men, of the philosophers, were words of truth; but it was not in either of them they had heard of eternal life laid up in heaven; of which there were hopes to be entertained by sinful creatures, enjoying it through Christ: this is what only the Gospel brings an account of; life and immortality are only brought to light by the Gospel; which not only speaks of it, but lays that before men, which give them ground and encouragement to hope for it.

Ver. 6. *Which is come unto you*, etc.] That is, the Gospel, which came to them from God, from heaven, from Christ, out of Jerusalem, from whence the word of the Lord was to come, by the ministers of the Gospel, who being sent, came to Colosse, and there preached it; and so the Syriac version renders the words **tzrktad yh**, “which is preached unto you”. And a wonderful instance of the free grace of God this was; they did not seek, inquire for, and go after the Gospel, but it came to them; and so Christ was found of them by it, who sought him not, and made manifest in his person, grace, and righteousness to them that asked not after him: for

this Gospel came not to them in, word only, but with the power of the Holy Spirit: it was come, *εις υμας*, “into you”, as the phrase may be rendered, into their very hearts, and wrought effectually there, enlightening, convincing, comforting, and instructing them; where it had a place, and remained; for the words may be read, as they are by the Arabic version, “which is present with you”. The Gospel is always in one place or another, and will be to the end of the world; but it is not always in the same place; but as yet it was not removed from Colosse; it was still with them in the external ministry of it, and it remained in their hearts in the powerful and comfortable experience of it:

as [it is] in all the world; as it was come into, and preached to all the world, and was made useful, and continued in all the world at that time. Christ gave his disciples a commission to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; it was no more to be restrained to a particular nation, but was made general and common to all the nations of the world, and accordingly they preached it to all; and by this time had delivered the joyful message to the greater part of the world, which is sometimes meant by all the world, and the whole world; or it had been now preached in all the known and habitable parts of the world by one apostle and another, some being sent into one part, and some into another; so that the grace of God appeared to all men, and the doctrine of it had been preached to every creature under the heaven, according to Christ's commission; the Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, before the end of the Jewish state came, or before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was not many years after the writing of this epistle. Now this shows, that it was the same Gospel which had been preached at Colosse by their faithful minister there, as had been preached in other areas, and in all parts of the world by the apostles; which is said in the commendation of the Gospel, it being one, uniform, consistent, and all of a piece in every place, and as preached by every faithful minister, and might serve greatly to confirm the Colossians in their faith of it:

and bringeth forth fruit: by which is meant, either the conversion of sinners, the fruit of the Gospel ministry, when attended with a divine blessing and power; or the graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, repentance, humility, self-denial, etc. with all the effects thereof, in new obedience, and a godly conversation, which come from Christ, the green fir tree, and are produced by the Spirit, through the preaching of the Gospel. The Vulgate Latin adds, “and increaseth”; the Syriac version has the same;

and it is so read in some Greek copies, as in the Alexandrian copy, two of Stephens's, and in the Complutensian edition; and may intend the spread of the Gospel among others, besides those who first received it, and the growing fruitfulness of the professors of it under its influence:

as [it doth] also in you, since the day ye heard [of it]; as soon as ever it came among them they hearkened to it, they were inclined to hear it externally, and a divine power going along with it, giving them hearing ears, and understanding hearts, they heard it, so as to know it, love it, and believe it; and from that time it brought forth fruit, and increased in them, and they continued in the faith and profession of it; so that as the Gospel is commended both from the large spread and efficacy of it, as well as its uniformity in every place, these Colossians also are commended for their hearing of it, both externally and internally, and for their perseverance in it: and which is further illustrated in the following clause,

and knew the grace of God in truth: by “the grace of God” may be meant the love and favour of God, in the mission and gift of his Son, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners, displayed in the Gospel, of which they had a comfortable experience, it being shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit; or the blessings of grace revealed in the Gospel, as free justification by the righteousness of Christ, full pardon of sin, according to the riches of grace, and adoption of children, arising out of the love and free favour of God, of which they had had a real application made to them through the Gospel, by the Spirit of God; or rather the doctrine of grace itself, so called because it is a declaration of the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners and the means of implanting grace in the heart. This they knew not merely in a notional and speculative manner, but experimentally; for the Gospel was not only come to them, but into them; they had a spiritual knowledge of it, and affection for it; they felt the power of it in their hearts, and tasted and relished the sweetness of it; and owned and “acknowledged” it, as the word here used may be rendered; for as with the heart they believed it so with the mouth they made public profession of it: and this they did “in truth”; they came by the knowledge of the love of God, and the blessings of grace, and the doctrines of it, by the Gospel, the word of truth; in and through that they became acquainted with these things; and having known and embraced the doctrine of the Gospel of the grace of God, in the truth of it, without any mixture of error, as it had been purely, and without adulteration, truly and faithfully preached by their minister, they professed it truly heartily, and sincerely, and without

hypocrisy; which is another part of their commendation, and involves in it the praise of their minister also, which is enlarged upon in the following verses.

Ver. 7. *As ye also learned of Epaphras*, etc.] To know the grace of God, believe the truth of the Gospel, and to own and profess it sincerely.

Our dear fellow servant; a “servant” of Christ he was, and a “fellow” servant of the apostles, jointly engaged with them in preaching the Gospel; which character, as it greatly commends Epaphras, and shows him to be a very considerable preacher of the word, so it expresses the great humility and condescension of the apostle, in putting him upon a level with himself, though he was not in that high office of the apostleship he was. And “dear” this precious servant of Christ was to him, and his fellow ministers, on account of the grace and gifts bestowed on him, because of his usefulness in the ministry, and his faithfulness and integrity in the discharge of it; and whose company and conversation in the prison greatly endeared him to them, for he was a fellow prisoner, as well as a fellow servant, (~~50123~~ Philemon 1:23). It follows,

who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; one whom Christ had made a “minister” and not man, who was qualified, and sent forth, and made successful by him in his service; and who preached none but Christ, and him crucified, in the business of salvation: and he was a “faithful” one; one that sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him; nor to please men, but his master; who concealed no part of his message, but freely and fully declared the whole; he was faithful to Christ, who put him into the ministry, and to the souls of men, to whom he ministered: and therefore it is said, he was such an one “for you”; for them, not for himself; for their spiritual good and advantage; he sought not theirs, but them; he had a great zeal for them, dearly loved them, and spent his time and strength, and made use of his gifts and talents while among them, for their use and benefit.

Ver. 8. *Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*] Not only their love to God, and Christ, and to all the saints, which is before mentioned, but their love to the apostle; though they had only heard of him, and of his great capacity for, and faithfulness and usefulness in preaching of the Gospel, which had greatly endeared him to them. This, he says, was in the Spirit; it was spiritual love, to distinguish it from a carnal and worldly one; they loved him for the spiritual grace that was in him, the spiritual gifts

bestowed on him, the spiritual service he was engaged in, and the spiritual usefulness he was of: or they loved him in, and with their spirits, with all their hearts, sincerely, and without dissimulation; and though they had never seen him in the flesh, yet being, as it were, present with him in spirit, their affections were knit unto him: or this their love was “in the Holy Spirit”, as the Ethiopic version reads it; it was a fruit of the Spirit of God, which he had implanted in their hearts in regeneration, as is also love to God, and likewise to Christ.

Ver. 9. *For this cause we also*, etc.] Not merely for their love to the apostle, and the rest that were with him; which sense is too much contracted, and carries some appearance of meanness and selfishness; but because of their faith in Christ, their love to all the saints, and the good hope they had of eternal happiness; and because they had heard the Gospel, and truly knew it, and sincerely professed it: therefore,

since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire; which shows that the apostles prayed without ceasing; not that they were every moment praying, without intermission, but that they were frequent and constant every day at the throne of grace; and as often as they were there, they were mindful of these Colossians, even ever since they heard of their reception of the Gospel, of their profession of it, and of the fruit it brought forth in them; and in their petitions “prayed” and “desired”, earnestly and importunately entreated God on their behalf:

that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will; the will “of God”, as the Syriac version reads it, by which is meant, not the secret will of God, according to the counsel of which he does all things in nature, providence, and grace, but his revealed will; and that either as it is signified in the law, which declares the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God, relating to what he would have done, or avoided by his creatures; or rather, as it is exhibited in the Gospel, which contains the will of God respecting the salvation of his chosen ones; as that it is his will that Christ should obtain eternal redemption for them, to do which he voluntarily substituted himself in their room, came into this world, and has accomplished it; and that all those that are redeemed by Christ should be regenerated by the Spirit; and that whoever sees the Son, and believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life; as also, that all those whom he has chosen in Christ, and given to him, and he has redeemed by his blood, and who are sanctified by his Spirit, none of them should be lost, but that they should be all saved

with an everlasting salvation. Now the apostle does, not pray that they might have a “knowledge” of this will of God, for some knowledge of it they had already; they had heard of the hope laid up in heaven, in the truth of the word of the Gospel; they had not only had the external, revelation, and had heard the Gospel outwardly preached, but they had known truly the grace of God; and therefore what he asks for is, that they might be “filled” with the knowledge of it; which supposes that they had knowledge, but it was not full and complete; it was imperfect, as is the knowledge of the best of saints in this life; and that they might have a larger measure of it, and such a fulness of it as they were capable of in the present state, and not such an one as the saints will have in heaven, when they shall know even as they are known. He adds,

in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; his meaning is, that they might be led into all the wisdom of God, which is so largely displayed in the revelation of his will concerning the salvation of his people, which is made in the Gospel; which is the manifold wisdom of God, wherein he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence; and contains such a scheme of things, so wisely contrived and formed, that angels desire to look into it; and that they might have a “spiritual understanding” of the mysteries of grace, without which they cannot be discerned to spiritual advantage, nor indeed without the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of them: and the Ethiopic version renders it, by “the prudence of the Holy Ghost”: who searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to the saints, and improves and increases their spiritual and experimental knowledge of them, which is what is here intended.

Ver. 10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin version reads, “of God”; to which the Ethiopic version agrees; but rather the Lord Jesus Christ seems to be designed: and to “walk worthy” of him, is to walk by faith in him; to walk after his Spirit, and according to his word, and in his ordinances; to have the conversation as becomes his Gospel, and worthy of that calling wherewith the saints are called by grace to the obtaining of his kingdom and glory. The apostle prays that their knowledge might issue in practice; for knowledge, without practice, is of no avail: he first asks for knowledge, and then practice, for how should men act according to the will of God, or Christ, unless they know it? and when they know it, they should not rest in their knowledge, but put it in practice:

unto all pleasing. The Syriac reads it, “that ye may please God in all good works”: an unregenerate man cannot please God in anything; without faith in Christ it is impossible to please him by anything man can do; Christ only could, and did always the things that pleased his Father; there are many things done by believers which are displeasing to God; nor is there anything they can do that is pleasing to God but through Christ, in whom their persons and, services are accepted; good works being done in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God, are acceptable unto him through Christ; and therefore are to be carefully maintained, and studiously performed by all those that have a spiritual understanding of the will of God, and believe in Christ their Lord and Redeemer:

being fruitful in every good work; saints are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; good works are the fruit, which, under the influence of divine grace, they bring forth; and this is not of one sort only, as trees usually do, but of every kind; being ingrafted into Christ the true vine, and deriving life, sap, and nourishment from him, they are filled with the fruits of righteousness by him, which they bring forth and bear, to the glory of his heavenly Father; and being such, they are pleasant plants to him, as fruit bearing trees are to the owner of them: wherefore, in order to the saints walking in their lives and conversations unto all pleasing, or pleasing in all things, the apostle prays they might be fruitful in good works, and that in everyone, in every kind of good works:

and increasing in the knowledge of God; not barely of his nature and perfections, as they are displayed in the works of creation; but of his mind, and will, and the mysteries of his grace, as they are revealed in the Gospel; of the knowledge of him in Christ, as the God of all grace, and as a covenant God and Father. The apostle had before prayed for an increase of the knowledge of the will of God, previous to his request, for the putting of it in practice; and now suggests, that an increase of the knowledge of God himself may be expected in a practical use of means, an attendance on the ordinances of Christ, and a diligent performance of good works: from the whole of these petitions, it may be observed by the apostle's asking for them, that all our knowledge, and the increase of it, and all our fruitfulness in good works, are all from the Lord; and therefore we have no reason to boast of our knowledge, nor depend upon our works, but frankly to own, that notwithstanding all we know, and do, we are but unprofitable servants.

Ver. 11. *Strengthened with all might*, etc.] This is still a continuation of the apostle's prayer for these believers; for having prayed for an increase of spiritual knowledge, and that this might be put into practice, he proceeds to pray for strength for them, that they might be enabled to practise what they had knowledge of; to walk worthily, to please God in all things, to bring forth fruit with patience, to persevere in knowledge, practice, fruitfulness, and in an increase thereof. It implies, that believers are weak in themselves, and insufficient to do or bear anything of themselves, but stand in need of strength from above, even of "all might"; of all kind of spiritual might and strength, proportionate to the various kinds of services, temptations, and trials they are called unto, and exercised with: they have need of every kind, degree, and supply of strength, to enable them to resist the temptations of Satan, to stand against them, and bear up under them; to oppose the corruptions of their own nature, that great company which comes upon them, wars against them, threatens to carry them captive, and destroy them, and against which they have no power of their own; to bear the cross, which, without the presence and grace of Christ, is very heavy, and all afflictions and adversities of every sort, which are grievous to the flesh, and at which it recoils; to perform the various duties of religion, and the whole of the work of their generation; which though they have a will unto, yet often know not how to perform, they want renewed strength their souls; and also to persevere in faith and holiness, and hold on and out to the end: and which strength they cannot expect to have from themselves, or from any creature, but

according to his glorious power; the glorious power of God. Power belongs to God, is a perfection of his nature, and has been, and is gloriously displayed in many things; as in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the upholding of all things in their being; in the redemption and salvation of sinners; in their faith and conversion; in supporting the saints under various trials and exercises; and in the safe keeping them through faith unto salvation: from this glorious power of God saints may hope to be supplied with all might, or a sufficient supply of strength for every service, and for every difficulty; as also from the grace that is in Christ, who has strength as well as righteousness for his people, who is the glorious power and arm of the Lord, without whom they can neither do, nor bear anything, but through him strengthening them, they can do, and bear all things; as likewise from the Spirit of the Lord, who is the finger of God, by whom Christ wrought his miracles; and is that glorious power from on high, with

which the apostles being endued, did the wondrous things they did; and it is by the same Spirit that believers are strengthened with might in the inner man:

unto all patience; to bring forth fruit with patience; to run with patience the race set before them; to bear patiently all afflictions and tribulations; to wait patiently for the things promised by God, and for the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the heavenly glory or hope laid up for them in heaven:

and longsuffering; to be slow to anger, and not easily provoked to wrath; to be ready to forgive injuries; and to bear long, and with patience, all reproaches and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; all which require daily fresh supplies of grace and strength, especially to endure all

with joyfulness, as well as with patience and longsuffering, with a cheerful spirit, or with joy in the Holy Ghost; to esteem reproach for Christ's sake above the riches and honours of this world; to rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. This requires strength above that of nature, and a renewed supply of that of grace. This last clause, “with joyfulness”, the Syriac version connects with the following verse, reading it, “with joy do ye give thanks”, etc.

Ver. 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father*, etc.] To God the Father, as the Vulgate Latin and the Syriac versions read the clause; and the Complutensian edition, and some copies, “God and the Father”; who is both the Father of Christ by nature, and of all his people by adoption. The Ethiopic version renders it, as an exhortation or advice, “give ye thanks to the Father”; and so the Syriac version: but the words rather seem to be spoken in the first, than in the second person, and are to be considered in connection with (⁵¹⁰⁰Colossians 1:9). So when the apostle had made an end of his petitions, he enters upon thanksgiving to God:

which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; by the “inheritance”, or “lot”, is meant not the common lot of the children of God to suffer persecution for the sake of Christ, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom, which they are by God the Father counted and made worthy of, with the rest of saints called out of darkness into light; nor their present state and condition, having a power to become the children of God, and to be fellow citizens with the saints, to

enjoy communion with them, under the Gospel dispensation, called “light”, in opposition to Jewish and Gentile darkness, to be brought into which state is an high favour of God; but the heavenly glory, so called, in allusion to the land of Canaan, which was divided by lot to the children of Israel, according to the will and purpose of God; and because it is not acquired by the works of men, but is a pure free grace gift of God, and which he, as the Father of his people, has bequeathed unto them; and which they enjoy through the death of the testator Christ; and of which the Spirit is the earnest; and because this glory is peculiar to such as are the children of God by adopting grace. It is no other than that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fades not away, reserved in the heavens; and designs that substance, or those solid and substantial things they shall possess hereafter; that kingdom, salvation, and glory, they are heirs of; and includes all things they shall inherit, and even God himself, who is their portion, their inheritance, their exceeding great reward, and of whom they are said to be heirs. This is the inheritance “of the saints”, and of none else; who are sanctified or set apart by God the Father in eternal election; who are sanctified by the blood of Christ, or whose sins are expiated by his atoning sacrifice; who are sanctified in Christ, or to whom he is made sanctification; and who are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, or have the work of sanctification begun upon their souls by him; in consequence of which they live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. And this inheritance of theirs is “in light”; unless this clause should be read in connection with the word “saints”, and be descriptive of them; they being called and brought out of darkness into light, and made light in the Lord, light being infused into them; in which light they see light, sin to be exceeding sinful, and Christ to be exceeding precious: or this phrase should be thought to design the means by which the Father makes meet to partake of the inheritance; namely, in or by the light of the Gospel, showing the way of salvation by Christ, and by the light of grace put into their hearts, and by following Christ the light of the world, which is the way to the light of life: though it rather seems to point out the situation and nature of the heavenly inheritance; it is where God dwells, in light inaccessible to mortal creatures, and who is light itself; and where Christ is, who is the light of the new Jerusalem; and where is the light of endless joy, and uninterrupted happiness; and where the saints are blessed with the clear, full, and beatific vision of God in Christ, and of Christ as he is, seeing him, not through a glass darkly, but face to face. This may be said in reference to a notion of the Jews, that the “light” which God created on the first day

is that goodness which he has laid up for them that fear him, and is what he has treasured up for the righteous in the world to come^{f4}. Now the saints meetness for this is not of themselves; by nature they are very unfit for it, being deserving of the wrath of God, and not of an inheritance; and are impure and unholy, and so not fit to partake of the inheritance of saints, or Holy Ones, and much less to dwell and converse with an holy God; and being darkness itself, cannot bear such light, or have communion with it: but God the Father makes them meet, which includes all the acts of his grace towards them, upon them, and in them; such as his choosing them in Christ, and their inheritance for them; in preparing that for them, and them for that; blessing them with all grace, and all spiritual blessings in Christ; putting them among the children by an act of adoption, of his own sovereign will and free grace, and thereby giving them a goodly heritage, and a title to it; justifying them by the righteousness of his Son, and so making them heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and forgiving all their trespasses for Christ's sake; cleansing them from all in his blood, so that being the undefiled in the way, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, they are fit for the undefiled inheritance; regenerating them by his Spirit, and implanting principles of light and life, grace and holiness, in them, without which no man shall see the Lord, or enter into the kingdom of heaven. One copy, as Beza observes, reads it, "which hath called us to be partakers", etc. and so does the Ethiopic version. And all such as the Father has thus called, and made meet, shall certainly be partakers of the inheritance; they partake of it already in Christ their head, and in faith and hope, having the Spirit as an earnest and pledge of it, and will wholly and perfectly enjoy it hereafter: for though, like Canaan's land, it is disposed of by lot, by the will, counsel, and free grace of God, yet will it not be divided into parts as that was; there is but one undivided inheritance, but one part and portion, which all the saints shall jointly and equally partake of, having all and each the same right and title, claim and meetness. For which they have abundant reason to give thanks to the Father, when they consider what they were, beggars on the dunghill, and now advanced to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory; were bankrupts, over their head in debt, owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay, and now all is frankly, forgiven; and besides, a title to, and meetness for, the heavenly inheritance, are freely bestowed on them; and particularly when they consider they are no more worthy of this favour than others that have no share in it, and also how great the inheritance is.

Ver. 13. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,* etc.] That is, from the power of Satan; (see ^{448B}Acts 26:18), who, though once an angel of light, is now darkness itself, and is reserved in chains of darkness; he is a ruler of the darkness of this world; his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness; and he blinds the minds of them that believe not, keeps them in darkness, and increases the natural darkness of their minds; he delights in works of darkness, and tempts men to them; and his everlasting state and portion will be blackness of darkness: his power over men, in a state of unregeneracy, which he usurps, and is suffered to exercise, is very great; he works effectually in them, and leads them captive at his will; and nothing less than the power of God, who is stronger than the strong man armed, can deliver out of his hands; and which is at least one part of the mercy for which thanks are here given; (see Gill on "^{402B}Luke 22:53"); with the Jews, one of the names of Satan is אַחֲרַי , "darkness"^{f5}. Moreover, the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief, with which God's elect, while in a state of nature, are surrounded, and, as it were shut up and imprisoned, so that they have not the least spark of true spiritual light and knowledge, may be also meant; under the power of which they are to such a degree, that they know nothing of God in Christ, of the way of salvation by him, or of the work of the Spirit on their souls, or of the doctrines of the Gospel in an experimental manner; and so they continue, till, by an almighty power, they are turned from darkness to light; when, by powerful grace, they are plucked as brands out of the burning, and delivered from wrath to come, and from that utter darkness of misery and destruction their ways of sin and darkness led and exposed them to. This deliverance is wrought out for them in the effectual calling, when they are internally called, and powerfully brought out of this darkness, by introducing light into them, revealing Christ in them, causing the prince of darkness to flee from them, and the scales of darkness and blindness to fall from their eyes; and which is both an instance or the wonderful grace of God, and of his almighty power, and in which lies in part the saints' meetness for the inheritance; for these words are, in some sort, explanative of the former; for so long as a person is under the power of darkness, he cannot be meet for an inheritance which is in light: it follows, as another branch of this mercy, for which thanks are given,

and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son; not into the kingdom of glory; for though the saints are heirs of it, and rejoice in hope of it, they have not yet an entrance into it; which they will have abundantly

when Christ shall introduce them into it, not only as his Father's, but as his own kingdom and glory: but the kingdom of grace is here meant, or that state of grace, light, and life, which such are brought into, when rescued out of Satan's hands, and recovered out of their former state of ignorance and infidelity; when they are by the drawings of the Father, by his powerful and efficacious grace, brought to Christ, and, in the day his power on their souls, are made willing to submit to his righteousness, and to embrace him as the alone Saviour and Redeemer, and be subject to him as King of saints, observing his commands, keeping his ordinances, and walking in his statutes and judgments with other saints, in a Gospel church state; which is Christ's kingdom here on earth, where he reigns as King over God's holy hill of Zion, being set there by his Father, from whom he has received this kingdom, and will deliver it to him, when it is complete and perfect. Now those whom Jehovah the Father snatches out of Satan's hands, and breaks in upon their souls with divine light and knowledge, he brings into such a state, and into this kingdom of Christ, who is called "his dear Son": or "the Son of his love"; or "his Son of love"; who being his Son by nature, of the same nature with him, and equal to him, always was, is, and will be, the object of his love, complacency, and delight; as he cannot be otherwise, since he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and even as this Son of his is in an office capacity, as the Mediator between God and man, he is his elect, in whom his soul delights; and he is always well pleased with all the chosen ones in him, who are the sons of God through him, and always beloved in him. This clause is added, partly to distinguish the kingdom of Christ, into which the saints are brought in this life, from the kingdom of the Father, or the ultimate glory they shall possess hereafter; and partly to express the security of the saints, and their continuance in the love of God, being in the kingdom, and under the care and government of the Son of his love; and also to make way for what the apostle has further to discourse concerning the person, office, and grace of Christ, in the following verses.

Ver. 14. *In whom we have redemption*, etc.] Which is an excellent and wonderful blessing of grace saints have in and by Christ; and lies in a deliverance from sin, all sin, original and actual, under which they are held captive, in a state of nature, and by which they are made subject to the punishment of death; but through the sacrifice of Christ it is taken, and put away, finished, and made an end of; and they are freed from the damning power of it, or any obligation to punishment for it; and in consequence of

this are delivered from the enslaving governing power of it by his grace and Spirit, and will hereafter be entirely rid of the very being of it: it consists also of a deliverance from the law, the curse and bondage of it, under which they are held on account of sin, the transgression of it; but being delivered from sin, they are also from the law, its accusations, charges, menaces, curses, and condemnation; as likewise out of the hands of Satan, by whom they are led captive; for through the ransom price paid by Christ they are ransomed out of the hands of him that was stronger than they, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered by him that has led captivity captive: in short, this redemption is a deliverance out of the hands of all their enemies, and from all evils and misery, the effects of sin, from death, and hell, and wrath to come. The author of it is Christ, the Son of God, the Son of his love, his dear Son: he was called to this work in the council of peace, in which the affair of redemption was consulted; and he agreed to undertake it in the covenant of grace, of which this is a principal article; and being in his constitution, as Mediator, every way fit and proper for it: as man, the right of redemption belonged to him, being the near kinsman of his people, and, as God, he was mighty and able to perform it; as man he had something to offer, and, as God, could make that sacrifice valuable and effectual to all saving purposes; as man, he had compassion on human nature, and, as God, was concerned for things pertaining to his honour and glory. And thus being every way qualified, he was sent, and came on this errand, and has obtained a redemption, which is precious, plenteous, complete and eternal: it is now with him, and “in him”; and he is made this, and everything else to his people, that they want. The subjects of this blessing are, not angels, but men; and not all men, but some that are redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; who are called by the name of Jacob, the people of Christ, a peculiar people, and the church of God; and evidentially are such, who have faith in Christ, love to the saints, and good hope of eternal life; who know the grace of God in truth, are made meet to be partakers of the eternal inheritance, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ, and are designed by the we in this text: the means by which this blessing is procured, is

through his blood. This phrase is left out indeed in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, and in the Complutensian edition, and in some copies; but rightly stands here, as it does in (Ephesians 1:7), where there is another clause added, which is here omitted, at the end of the verse, “according to the

riches of his grace". This is the blood of Christ, his own blood, and not the blood of bulls and goats, and the same with that of the persons he redeems, but untainted with sin; the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish, of original or actual sin, otherwise it would not have been a sufficient redemption price for his people; nor even then, were it not as it was the blood of the Son of God, of one that was God as well as man, whereby it came to have a proper value and efficacy in it to obtain this blessing: Christ's shedding his blood freely on this account is a proof of his great love to his redeemed ones; the efficacy that was in it to answer this purpose shows the dignity and greatness of his person; and it not being to be effected without it, demonstrates the strictness of divine justice, and that the redemption of men is brought about in a way entirely consistent with the righteousness and holiness of God. A particular branch of this blessing follows, and which serves, in some sense, to illustrate and explain it,

[even] the forgiveness of sins; of all sin, original and actual; of heart, lip, and life, secret and open, past, present, and to come; which lies in a non-imputation of sin, a remembrance of it no more, a removing of it entirely out of the way, a covering and blotting it out of sight, so as to be no more visible and legible: this is in Christ, where all spiritual blessings are; nor is it to be had or expected from an absolute God, but from God in Christ, and through him, through his propitiatory sacrifice; for as redemption, so forgiveness of sin is through his blood, which was shed for it; so that it proceeds upon the foot of satisfaction made to the justice of God by a price paid, and is an act of justice as well as grace, and belongs to the same persons as redemption does; hence those that are redeemed are represented as without fault before the throne; and indeed, the reason why their iniquities are blotted out, and will be remembered no more against them, is, because they are redeemed.

Ver. 15. *Who is the image of the invisible God*, etc.] Not of deity, though the fulness of it dwells in him; nor of himself, though he is the true God, and eternal life; nor of the Spirit, who also is God, and the Spirit of the Son; but the Father, called "God", not to the exclusion of the Son or Spirit, who are with him the one God: "and he is invisible"; not to the Son who lay in his bosom, and had perfect and infinite knowledge of him; nor, in some sense, to angels, who always behold his face, but to men: no man hath seen him corporeally with the eyes of his body, though intellectually with the eyes of the understanding, when enlightened; not in his essence and nature, which is infinite and incomprehensible, but in his works of

creation, providence, and grace; nor immediately, but mediately, in and through Christ, in whom he gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of his person and perfections; and this not perfectly now, but in the other state, when the saints shall see him face to face. But chiefly the Father is said to be invisible, because he did not appear to Old Testament saints; as his voice was never heard, so his shape was never seen; he never assumed any visible form; but whenever any voice was heard, or shape seen, it was the second person that appeared, the Son of God, who is here said to be his “image”, and that, as he is the Son of God; in which sense he is the natural, essential, and eternal image of his Father, an eternal one, perfect and complete, and in which he takes infinite complacency and delight: this designs more than a shadow and representation, or than bare similitude and likeness; it includes sameness of nature and perfections; ascertains the personality of the Son, his distinction from the Father, whose image he is; and yet implies no inferiority, as the following verses clearly show, since all that the Father hath are his. Philo, the Jew^{f6}, often speaks of the **λογος**, or Word of God, as the image of God. Also, this may be understood of him as Mediator, in whom, as such, is a most glorious display of the love, grace, and mercy of God, of his holiness and righteousness, of his truth and faithfulness, and of his power and wisdom:

the firstborn of every creature; not the first of the creation, or the first creature God made; for all things in (^{<50116}Colossians 1:16) are said to be created by him, and therefore he himself can never be a creature; nor is he the first in the new creation, for the apostle in the context is speaking of the old creation, and not the new: but the sense either is, that he was begotten of the Father in a manner inconceivable and inexpressible by men, before any creatures were in being; or that he is the “first Parent”, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered, if instead of **πρωτοτοκος**, we read **πρωτοτοκος**; which is no more than changing the place of the accent, and may be very easily ventured upon, as is done by an ancient writer^{f7}, who observes, that the word is used in this sense by Homer, and is the same as **πρωτογονος**, “first Parent”, and **πρωτοκτιστης**, “first Creator”; and the rather this may be done, seeing the accents were all added since the apostle's days, and especially seeing it makes his reasoning, in the following verses, appear with much more beauty, strength, and force: he is the first Parent of every creature, “for by him were all things created”, etc. (^{<50116}Colossians 1:16), or it may be understood of Christ, as the King, Lord, and Governor of all

creatures; being God's firstborn, he is heir of all things, the right of government belongs to him; he is higher than the kings of the earth, or the angels in heaven, the highest rank of creatures, being the Creator and upholder of all, as the following words show; so the Jews make the word "firstborn" to be synonymous with the word "king", and explain it by רִצְוֹן *l wdg*, "a great one", and "a prince"^{f8}; (see ~~482~~ Psalm 89:27 ~~800~~ Hebrews 1:2,6).

Ver. 16. *For by him were all things created*, etc.] This is a reason proving Christ to be before all creatures, to be the common Parent of them, and to have the government over them, since he is the Creator of them. The creation of all things, by him, is not to be understood of the new creation, for whenever that is spoken of, the word "new" is generally used, or what is equivalent to it, or some clause or phrase added, which determines the sense, and is not the case here: besides, all things that are in heaven are said to be created here: which, to say nothing of the sun, moon, and stars, which are not capable subjects of the new creation, to restrain them to angels, cannot be true of them; for as for those who were once in heaven, but kept not their first estate, and quitted their habitation, these find no place there any more; they never were, nor will be renewed and restored by Christ; and as for the good angels, since they never sinned, they stand in no need of renovation. Moreover, all things that are on earth are also said to be created by him, and are, but not anew: for to confine these only to men, all men are not renewed in the spirit of their minds; all have not faith, nor a good hope through grace, nor love to God and Christ, the greater part of the world lies in open wickedness; and all that profess religion are not new creatures, these are a chosen generation, and a peculiar people: wherefore these words must be understood, not metaphorically, but literally; in which sense all things are created by Christ, not by him as an instrument, but as the efficient cause; for the preposition "by" does not always signify the former; but sometimes the latter; (see ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 1:9 ~~800~~ Galatians 1:1); nor to the exclusion of the Father and Spirit, who, with the Son, were jointly concerned in the creating of all things out of nothing: and these "all things" can only refer to the things that are made: eternal things can never be said to be created; this is a contradiction in terms; the Father is not created by him, nor he himself as the Son of God, nor the Spirit; but everything that is made is created by him: hence it follows, that he himself is no creature, otherwise he must create himself, which also is a contradiction, since every creature is made by him; and consequently he

must be God, for he that made and built all things is God. These are divided as to the subject of them, or place where they are, into things

that are in heaven, and that are in earth. The things that are in heaven, are the things that are in the airy and starry heavens, and in the heaven of heavens. The things in the airy heavens, the fowls thereof, were on the fifth day created by him; and the things in the starry heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, were on the fourth day ordained by him; and the inhabitants of the third heaven, the angels, were made by him, (~~SC007~~ Hebrews 1:7); and, as the Jewish writers ^{f9} say, on the second day of the creation, though some say on the fifth. The earth comprehends the whole terraqueous globe, consisting of land and sea; and the things in it are all that are in the seas, the fishes and other things in it; and all that are in the bowels of the earth, as well as on the surface of it, all metals and minerals, all plants, herbs, and trees, every beast of the forest, the cattle on a thousand hills, the fowls on the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field, and all human creatures. Again, these all things are, as to the quality of them, distributed into

visible and invisible, both in heaven and in earth: the visible things in heaven are the fowls that fly in the airy heaven, the sun, and moon, and stars in the starry heaven, and the bodies of those saints that have been either translated, or raised, in the third heaven; the visible things in the earth are all creatures, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, all bodies, all corporeal and material beings: the invisible things in earth are not only those that are in the innermost parts of it, but the spirits or souls of men; and those in heaven are not the invisible God, Father, Son, and Spirit, but the angels, who are incorporeal and immaterial spirits, and so invisible: and which,

whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, are all made by him; by these some understand civil magistrates among men, and the various degrees and orders of them. By “thrones” they think kings, or monarchs, are meant, who sit on thrones; and by “dominions”, little petty kings, or lords, dukes, and earls; and by “principalities”, governors of provinces and cities; and by “powers”, interior magistrates; and indeed, political governors are sometimes called dominions, dignities, principalities, and powers; and there are different orders of them, the king as supreme, and governors under him; (see ~~SC008~~ Jude 1:8 ~~SC009~~ Titus 3:1 ~~SC013~~ 1 Peter 2:13,14). But since these seem rather to be said of the invisible things in heaven, and to be an explanation of them, angels may rather be thought to

be intended; and are so called, not as denoting different orders and degrees among them, which some have rashly ventured to describe, but because of the use that God makes of them in the government of the world, and the executions of the various affairs of Providence relating to particular persons and kingdoms; though these several names are not so much such as the apostle chose to call them by, as what they were called by others; the three latter are indeed elsewhere used by himself, (⁴⁰²¹Ephesians 1:21 3:10 ⁵⁰²⁰Colossians 2:10); but not the former, “thrones”, which yet are used by Jewish writers, and given to angels. Thus, in a book of theirs, which they esteem very ancient, and ascribe to the patriarch Abraham, it is said ^{f10},

“there is no angel in which the name Jehovah is not found, which is everywhere, as the soul is in every member; wherefore men ought to allow Jehovah to reign in all the members, ^{ysrk l kbw}, “and in all the thrones”, and in all the angels, and in every member of men.”

And elsewhere, speaking of the garments of God,

“by these (say they ^{f11}) ^{ysrk hbq arb}, “the holy blessed God created the thrones”, and the angels, and the living creatures, and the “seraphim”, and the heavens, and the earth, and all that he created.”

And the thrones in (²⁰⁰⁹Daniel 7:9); are interpreted ^{f12}, of

“the superior princes, ^{pyynj wr pykal ml}, “the spiritual angels”, who sit first in the kingdom; and they are called in the words of the Rabbins, “the throne of glory”; for so is the way of kings, that their princes sit before them, everyone on his throne, according to their dignity.”

Now the apostle's sense is, that the angels, the invisible inhabitants of the upper world, are all created by Christ, let them be called by what names they will, that the Jews, or the false teachers, or any sort of heretics of those times thought fit to give them, whether they called them thrones or dominions, etc. And so the Arabic version, rather interpreting than translating the words, renders them thus, “whether you say thrones, or whether you mention dominions, or whether you understand princes, or whether you say powers”; speak of them under what title or appellation you please, they are all the creatures of the Son of God. The apostle seems to have in view, and to oppose some notions of some heretics of his time,

the followers of Simon Magus, who held, that the angels were created by his Helena; or, as others, by what they call “Ennea”, and that these angels created the world, and are to be worshipped; but he here affirms, that

all things were created by him, by Christ, even all the angels; and therefore he, and not they, are to be worshipped, a notion he afterwards takes notice of in the following chapter: and as all things are affirmed to be created by him, which demonstrates the dignity and deity of his person, so likewise

for him; that is, for his pleasure, that he may take delight and complacency in them, and in his own perfections displayed by them; and for his service and use, as the angels, to worship him and minister to him and for others, he sends them to: elect men are made to serve and glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his; and even the non-elect are made to subserve his mediatorial kingdom and interest; yea, the whole world is built and kept in being purely on his account, until he has finished the great affair of the salvation of his people, in the application of it to each of them, as he has completed the impetration of it; and then he will dissolve the heavens, and burn up the earth and all the works that are therein: all are made for his glory, and that end is, and will be answered by them in one way or another.

Ver. 17. *And he is before all things*, etc.] Not only in dignity, being preferable to angels and men in his nature, names, offices, and works, and worthy of more honour than all creatures; but he is before them in existence, as he must needs be, since they are all made by him; he was not only before John the Baptist, his forerunner, before Abraham who saw his day and was glad, before the first man was made, but before the angels were in being, or the heavens and the earth, or any creature were formed; and therefore must be God, who is from everlasting to everlasting:

and by him all things consist; he upholds all things by the word of his power; the heavens have their stability and continuance from him; the pillars of the earth are bore up by him, otherwise that and the inhabitants of it would be dissolved; the angels in heaven are confirmed in their estate by him, and have their standing and security in him; the elector God are in his hands, and are his peculiar care and charge, and therefore shall never perish; yea, all mankind live and move, and have their being in him; the whole frame of nature would burst asunder and break in pieces, was it not held together by him; every created being has its support from him, and its consistence in him; and all the affairs of Providence relating to all creatures

are governed, directed, and managed by him, in conjunction with the Father and the blessed Spirit.

Ver. 18. *And he is the head of the body, the church*, etc.] By “the church” is meant, not any particular congregated church, as the church at Colosse, or Corinth, or any other; but the whole election of grace, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven in the Lamb's book of life; the church which Christ has given himself for, and has purchased with his blood, and builds on himself the rock, and will, at last, present to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; this is compared to an human body, and therefore called “the body”; which is but one, consisting of many members in union with each other, set in their proper places in just symmetry and proportion to each other, and subservient to one another, and are neither more nor fewer; (see ~~1~~1 Corinthians 12:12-14), etc. and of this body, the church, Christ is “the head”; he was the representative head of this body of elect men from all eternity, and in time; he is a political head of them, or in such sense an head unto them, as a king is to his subjects; he reigns in them by his Spirit and grace, and rules them by wholesome laws of his own enacting, and which he inscribes on their hearts, and he protects and defends them by his power; he is an economical head, or in such sense an head of them, as the husband is the head of the wife, and parents and masters are the heads of their families, he standing in all these relations to them; and he is to them what a natural head is to an human body; of all which (see Gill on ~~1~~1 Corinthians 11:3”). The Messiah is called one head, in (~~2~~2 Hosea 1:11); which Jarchi explains by David their king, and Kimchi on the place says, this is the King Messiah:

who is the beginning; which either denotes the eternity of Christ, who was not only in the beginning, and was set up from the beginning, from everlasting, but is also the beginning and the end; and who is, indeed, without beginning of days, or end of life: or his dominion; he is the principality, as the word may be rendered; he is the principality of principalities, the head of all principality and power, the angels; he is the Prince of the kings of the earth; he is King of saints; the kingdom of nature and providence is his, and the government of his people in a special manner is on his shoulders: or this may design his being the first cause of all things; he is the beginning of the creation of God; the efficient cause of all created beings; he is the beginning of the church, of which he is the head; as Eve was from Adam, so is the church from Christ; it is a body of his preparing,

and a temple of his building, and where he sits as a priest on his throne, and has the government of it: the second number, wisdom, in the cabalistic tree of the Jews, is called “the beginning”^{f13}, as is the Logos, or Word, by Philo the Jew^{f14}:

the firstborn from the dead; the first that rose from the dead by his own power, and to an immortal life; for, though others were raised before him, and by him, yet not to a state of immortality; the path of life, to an immortal life, was first shown to him as man; and who also is the firstfruits of them that sleep, and so the pledge and earnest of the future resurrection of the saints; and is both the efficient and exemplary cause of it; the resurrection of the dead will be by him as God, and according to his own, as man:

that in all [things] he might have the pre-eminence; or might be the first and chief over all persons, angels, and men; having a superior nature, name, and place, than the former, and being the firstborn among many brethren designed by the latter: and in all things he is the first, and has the precedence and primacy; in sonship, no one is a Son in the sense he is; in election, he was chosen first, and his people in him; in the covenant, he is the surety, Mediator, and messenger of it, he is that itself; in his human nature, he is fairer than the children of men; in redemption, he was alone, and wrought it out himself; in life, he exceeded all others in purity, in doctrine, and miracles; and in dying he conquered death, and rose first from it; in short, he died, revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of dead and living; and he ought to have the pre-eminence and first place in the affections of our hearts, in the contemplations of our minds, in the desires of our souls, and in the highest praises of our lips.

Ver. 19. *For it pleased [the Father]*, etc.] The phrase, “the Father”, is not in the original text, but is rightly supplied; since he is expressly mentioned in the context, as he who makes the saints meet to be partakers of the heavenly glory; who deliver, them from the power and dominion of sin, and translates them into the kingdom of his dear Son; and who, by Christ, reconciles all things to himself, (⁵⁰¹²Colossians 1:12,13,20), and whose sovereign will and pleasure it is,

that in him should all fulness dwell: by which is meant, not the fulness of the deity, though it is read by some the fulness of the Godhead: which seems to be transcribed from (⁵⁰¹⁹Colossians 2:9); but though all the perfections of God are in Christ, as eternity, omnipotence, omniscience,

omnipresence, immutability, independence, and necessary existence, and every other, or he would not be equal with God; nor could all the fulness of the Godhead be said to dwell in him, should anyone be wanting; yet this is a fulness possessed by him, that does not spring from, nor depend upon the Father's good will and pleasure; but what he naturally and necessarily enjoys by a participation of the same undivided nature and essence with the Father and Spirit: nor is the relative fulness of Christ intended, which is his church, so called, (~~4023~~ Ephesians 1:23); and will be so when all the elect are gathered in, and filled with all the gifts and graces of his Spirit, and are arrived to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; for though every believer dwells in Christ, and Christ in him, yet the church is not said to dwell in Christ, but Christ in the church; moreover, as yet she is not his fulness, at least in the sense she will be, and much less can she be said to be all fulness: nor is this to be understood of Christ's fulness of fitness and abilities, as God-man and Mediator, to perform his work and office as such; though this may be taken into the sense of the text as a part, yet is not the whole; but rather chiefly that dispensatory communicative fulness, which is, of the Father's good will and pleasure, put into the hands of Christ to be distributed to others, is here designed. There is a fulness of nature in Christ; the light of nature is from him, and communicated by him to mankind; the blessings of nature are the blessings of his left hand, which he distributes to his people as he thinks fit; and all things in nature are subservient to his mediatorial kingdom and glory. There is a fulness of grace in him, out of which saints receive, and grace for grace, or a large abundance of it; the fulness of the spirit of grace, and of all the graces and gifts of the Spirit is in him; and of all the blessings of grace, as a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, adoption, sanctification, even of all that grace that is implanted in regeneration, that is necessary to carry on and finish the good work upon the soul; there is a fulness of all light and life, of wisdom, and strength, of peace, joy, and comfort, and of all the promises of grace, both with respect to this world and that which is to come; and there is also a fulness of glory in him, not only the grace, but the glory of the saints, is laid up and hid with him, and is safe and secure in him: this is said to dwell in Christ, which implies its being in him; it is not barely in intention, design, and purpose, but it is really and actually in him, nor is it in any other; and hence it comes to be communicated to the saints: and it also denotes the continuance of it with him; it is an abiding fulness, and yields a continual daily supply to the saints, and will endure to the end of time, and be as sufficient for the last as the first believer; it is like the subject of it, the same

yesterday, today, and for ever: and it also intends the safety of it: the saints' life both of grace and glory is hid with Christ, and is secure, it is out of the reach of men and devils, and can never be lost, or they deprived of it; and all this is owing not to any merits of men, to their faith and holiness, or good works, which are all the fruits of this fulness, but to the good will of God; "it pleased the Father" to place it here for them; it was owing to his good will to his Son, and therefore he puts all things into his hands; and to his elect in him, for, having loved them with an everlasting love, he takes everlasting care of them, and makes everlasting provision for them; it was his pleasure from all eternity to take such a step as this, well knowing it was not proper to put it into the hands of Adam, nor into the hands of angels, nor into their own at once; he saw none so fit for it as his Son, and therefore it pleased him to commit it unto him; and it is his good will and sovereign pleasure, that all grace should come through Christ, all communion with him here, and all enjoyment of him hereafter; which greatly enhances and sets forth the glory of Christ as Mediator, one considerable branch of which is, that he is full of grace and truth; this qualifies him to be the head of the church, and gives a reason, as these words be, why he has, and ought to have, the preeminence in all things.

Ver. 20. *And by him to reconcile all things to himself*, etc.] This depends upon the preceding verse, and is to be connected with that phrase in it, it pleased the Father, (^{<small>5019</small>}Colossians 1:19); and the sense is, that it was the good will and pleasure of God from all eternity, as to lay up all fulness in Christ for his chosen people, so to reconcile them to himself by him; and which is another reason why Christ is, and ought to be considered as the head of the church, whose reconciliation he has procured, and why he ought to have the chief place in all things, and among all persons. Reconciliation supposes a former state of amity and friendship, and in such an one man was originally with God; and a breach of that friendship, which was made and issued in real enmity in the heart of man; and also a restoration to friendship again: and it is to be understood not of a reconciliation of God to men, which the Scriptures nowhere speak of, but of men to God; and is a reconciliation of them, not to the love of God, which his elect always shared in, but to the justice of God, offended by the transgression of a righteous law; and is indeed properly a reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction for their sins, and so of their persons, and whereby all the perfections of God are reconciled to and agree with each other in the salvation of such sinners: now this takes its first rise from God

the Father; it is owing to his sovereign good will and pleasure; he took the first step towards it; he knew what a state of enmity and rebellion his people would fall into; his thoughts ran upon their peace and reconciliation from everlasting; he called a council of peace about it, and in it drew the model of it; he entered into a covenant of peace with his Son, and, in consequence of it, sent him in the fulness of time to effect it, laying on him the chastisement of their peace; it was his pleasure that this affair of reconciliation should be brought about, not by the means of angels, in whom he could put no such trust and confidence, and who, though they rejoice at peace being made on earth, could never have effected it; nor that it should be done by men, who have no knowledge of the way of it, no inclination to it, nor power to make it; but “by him”, his Son Jesus Christ, whom he appointed and called to this work, and sent to do it; and who is therefore, in prophecy, before this reconciliation was actually made, styled “Shiloh”, the Prince of peace, and the peace: and this, when made, was made “to himself”; meaning either to Christ, in whom all the elect were gathered together, as in one head, and were reconciled in one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, through him; or rather to God the Father, to whom they were enemies, yea, enmity itself, and to whom the satisfaction and atonement were made; it being his law that was broken, and his justice that was injured, and to whom they are always in Scripture said to be reconciled; though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, the one God with the Father: moreover, the sense of this phrase may be, that the reconciliation of the elect made by Christ, in a way of full satisfaction to law and justice, is to the glory of God, the glory of all his perfections; as of his grace and mercy, wisdom, power, and faithfulness, so of his righteousness and holiness: the means by which Christ has enacted it are, his sacrifice, sufferings, and death, expressed in the following clause;

having made peace through the blood of his cross. This was what man could not do, what Christ was appointed and sent to do, and what he was every way qualified for as God and man; as man he had blood to shed, and could make reconciliation for sin in the nature which had sinned, and, as God, could draw nigh to his Father, and treat with him about terms of peace, and perform them; and so a fit daysman and Mediator between, God and man: this peace he has made by his “blood”, that is, by the shedding of it, by his death as a sacrifice, which he underwent on the cross; partly to denote the shame, and chiefly to signify the curse he endured in the room of his people: all which shows the malignant nature of sin, the strictness of

justice, and that peace is made in a way of full satisfaction, is upon honourable terms, will be lasting, as it is joyful, being attended with a train of blessings:

by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven: by which are intended not the whole universe and fabric of the world, all creatures and things, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, which have been cursed for the sin of man, and have proved unfriendly to him, but, in consequence of redemption and reconciliation by Christ, will, as some think, in the time of the restitution of all things, be restored to their former state, and to their friendly use to mankind; nor elect men and elect angels, and their reconciliation together, for the apostle is not speaking of the reconciling of these things together, but of the reconciling of them to God, which though it is true of elect men, is not of elect angels, who never fell, and though they have confirming grace, yet not reconciling grace from Christ, which they never needed; nor Jews and Gentiles, for though it is true that God was in Christ reconciling the world of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews to himself, and the chosen of God among both are actually reconciled to God by the death of Christ, yet the one are never called things in heaven, or the other things on earth, in distinction from, and opposition to each other; but rather all the elect of God are here meant, the family of God in heaven and in earth; all the saints that were then in heaven, when actual reconciliation was made by the blood of Christ, and who went thither upon the foot of peace, reconciliation, and redemption, to be made by his sacrifice and death; and all the chosen ones that were or should be on the face of the earth, until the end of time; all these were reconciled to God by Christ: and then the apostle proceeds particularly to mention the Colossians, as also being instances of this grace, good will, and pleasure of God by Christ.

Ver. 21. *And you that were sometime alienated,* etc.] The general blessing of grace and reconciliation, which belongs to the whole body of Christ, the church universal, all the elect of God, whether in heaven or in earth, is here particularly applied to the saints at Colosse, who were eminent instances of it; and that the free grace of God towards them in it might more illustriously appear, the apostle takes notice of what they were before the coming of Christ in the flesh, before the Gospel came among them, and while in a state of unregeneracy, as that they were “alienated”: that is from God, not from his general presence, power, and providence, which reach to all his creatures, but from the life of God; (see ~~408~~ Ephesians 4:18); from

living agreeably to the will of God, being estranged from him who is the fountain of moral and spiritual, as well as natural life; from the law, the rule of life, and from a principle of life in themselves; and altogether disapproving of such a life, as contrary to their carnal affections and lusts: and which alienation from God greatly lay in their forsaking him, the one only and true God, and following and serving strange gods, not attending to the dictates and light of nature; and being destitute of a divine revelation, they went further and further off from God, and from his people, worship, and ordinances; and were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; the source of all which was sin, and was owing to themselves: God did not alienate himself from them first; they alienated themselves from him; their sins separated between God and them, set them at a distance from him, and at enmity to him, and which very early appeared, for they were estranged from the womb:

and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works. They were enemies to God, the true God, and were lovers and worshippers of idols; they were enemies to the being and perfections of God, as all men in a state of nature are; and more or less show it, by either denying there is a God, or wishing there was none, or fancying him to be such an one as themselves; or they dispute his sovereignty, deny his omniscience, arraign his justice and faithfulness, and despise the riches of his grace and goodness; they are enemies to his purposes, providences, and word; cannot bear that he should determine any thing concerning them or others; their eye is evil to him because he is good to others; they reply against him, they run upon him, and charge his decrees with unrighteousness and cruelty; murmur at and quarrel with the dispensations of his providence, as unequal and unjust; cast away the law of the Lord, will not be subject to it, and condemn the revelation of his will. They are enemies to Christ in one shape or another; either to his person, denying his proper deity, or real humanity; or to his offices, not hearkening to him as a prophet, trampling on his blood and sacrifice as a priest, and unwilling to have him to rule over them as a King; or to the way of salvation by him, of pardon by his blood, atonement by his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and acceptance with God through his person; or to his doctrines and ordinances, which are unsuitable to their vicious tastes, carnal affections, and appetites: they are enemies to the Spirit of Christ, by either denying his deity and personality, or by ridiculing the operations of his grace; or treating with contempt, and as foolish, everything of his, the Bible and all the truths contained in it, dictated by

him. They are enemies to the people of God, exceeding mad against them, hate them and persecute them, reckon them the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things, living in malice to them, and hateful and hating one another: and this enmity to everything divine and good is seated “in the mind”; the mind is not the object of this enmity, as some read the words, “to the mind”: for the mind of a carnal man is enmity itself against God; but it is the subject of it, where it has its chief place, and from whence it proceeds, and shows itself in evil actions; and though the word “your” is not in the original text, it is rightly supplied; for the meaning is not that they were enemies “of his mind”; of the mind of the Lord, of his counsels and will, as some read and explain the words, though there is a truth in this, but in their own minds: so that not the body but the soul is the seat of this enmity; and not the inferior faculties of the soul only, the sensitive appetite and passions, but the understanding, the judgment and will, the more noble and rational powers of the soul; from hence spring all the malice and enmity expressed in word and actions: where then is man's free will to that which is good? and hence it is that the mind stands in need of being renewed, enlightened, cleansed and sanctified, and renovation begins here, which is the effect of almighty power; for nothing else can remove the rooted enmity in the heart of men; and which, as deep and as secret as it is, sooner or later, in one way or another, shows itself “by wicked works”; and that frequently, as by loving what God hates, and hating what he loves; by omitting what he commands, and committing what he forbids; by maintaining friendship with the world, and by harbouring his professed enemies, and persecuting his dear friends; and by their wicked words, and evil lives and conversations; and by the various works of the flesh, which are manifest, some being more directly against God, others by which they wrong themselves, and others by which they injure their neighbours:

yet now hath he reconciled; which may be understood either of the Father's reconciling them to himself by his Son; and so the words are a continuation of the account of the Father's grace, as to all the elect in general, so to the Colossians in particular, notwithstanding the black characters in which they stand described in their natural estate: or else of Christ's reconciling them to his Father, by the sacrifice of himself, which he voluntarily offered for them, though this was their case, and of enemies made them friends: and may be meant either of the impetration of reconciliation for them by his sufferings and death; or of the virtue and efficacy of it in the application of it; in the former sense the “now” refers to the coming of Christ into the

world, and the time of his death, and the offering up of his body once for all, when peace and reconciliation were completely made at once for all God's elect; in the latter sense it refers to the time of the conversion of these Colossians, when Christ by his Spirit, in consequence of reconciliation made in the body of his flesh, through death reconciled them to God; to his mind and will, to the way of salvation by himself, to the saints the excellent in the earth, to the Gospel and the ordinances of it, and to all his ways and worship.

Ver. 22. *In the body of his flesh through death*, etc.] Or “through his death”, as the Alexandrian copy and some others, and all the Oriental versions, read. These words express the means by which that reconciliation was made, which in the virtue and efficacy of it was applied particularly to these Colossians at their conversion whereby their minds were actually reconciled to God, as “in” or “by the body of his flesh”; that is, by the offering up of his body on the accursed tree, in which he bore the sins of his people, and made reconciliation for them: and it is so called either to distinguish it from his mystical and spiritual body the church, of which he is the head before spoken of; or from his glorious and immortal body, as now raised and exalted at God's right hand; and to denote the truth of his human body, that it was a real fleshly body, consisting of flesh and blood as ours does, and the same with ours, and not an aerial, celestial bony, or a mere phantom; and also to signify the infirmity and mortality of it, being, excepting sin, in all points like to ours, and subject to death; and that it was in that body his Father prepared for him, and he assumed; and as he was clothed with it in the days of his flesh, or mortal state, that he made reconciliation for the sins of his people, and that “through death” in it; even the death of the cross, by which he bore the penalty of the law, the curse of it, made satisfaction to justice, obtained life, abolished death, and destroyed him that had the power of it, and fixed a sure and lasting peace for all his saints; his end in which was,

to present you holy and unblamable, and unproveable in his sight. This presentation of the saints by Christ is either in his own sight, “before himself”, as the Arabic version reads it; and is here in this present state, they being considered by him both as sanctified and as justified; he taking delight in the graces of his Spirit, and the exercise of them on himself, though imperfect, and in them as clothed with his spotless righteousness, in which they are perfectly comely, all fair, and without spot: or in the latter day glory, the New Jerusalem church state; when the church will be as a

bride prepared for her husband, will be brought into his presence in raiment of needlework, in fine linen clean and white, the righteousness of the saints, and be presented to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; or in the ultimate glory, when all the saints shall be for ever with him, continually before him, and in his sight; which is what his heart was set upon from everlasting, which he had in view in his sufferings and death, and still has in his prayers and preparations: or else this presentation is what has been or will be made before his Father, and in his sight; and which was partly done, when he gathered together all the elect in himself, and represented them on the cross, in the body of his flesh; and partly is now doing in heaven, where he appears in the presence of God for them, bears their names on his breastplate, presents their persons and their cases; and especially will be done at the last day, when he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and say, lo, I and the children thou hast given me: and who will be presented “holy” by him; he being their sanctification, and they having all their sins expiated by his sacrifice, and their persons washed and cleansed in his blood, and their hearts sanctified by his Spirit; which sanctification though it is imperfect in this life, yet will be completed by the author of it at death; without perfect holiness no man shall see God, or be presented in his sight: and this is in consequence of the death of Christ and reconciliation by it and a fruit of electing grace, by which persons are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame; and as here, “unblamable and unproveable”: as they are, not now in themselves, but in Christ, as arrayed with his robe of righteousness and garments of salvation, being all glorious within, and their clothing of wrought gold, in which they will be introduced and presented to himself, and to his Father, faultless, with exceeding joy, and stand so before the throne, and that to all eternity.

Ver. 23. *If ye continue in the faith,* etc.] In the doctrine of faith which they had received and embraced; and in the grace of faith, and the exercise of it which was implanted in them; and in the profession of faith which they had made: not that the virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood, sufferings, and death, and reconciliation of their persons to God thereby, depended upon their faith, and abiding in it; but that faith and continuance in it were necessary means of their presentation in unblemished holiness and righteousness; for if they had not faith, or did not abide in it or if the good work of grace was not wrought upon their souls, and that performed until the day of Christ, they could not be presented holy and blameless: this shows the necessity of the saints' final perseverance in faith and holiness,

and is mentioned with this view, to put them upon a concern about it, and to make use of all means, under divine grace, to enjoy it; and nothing could more strongly incline and move unto it, than the blessed effect of Christ's death, reconciliation and the end of it, to present the reconciled ones blameless; in order to which it is necessary they should hold on and out to the end: hence the Ethiopic version reads the words, not as a condition, but as an exhortation enforced by what goes before; "therefore be ye established in the faith": it follows,

grounded and settled; not on the sandy foundation of man's own righteousness, and peace made by his own performances; but upon the foundation and rock, Christ, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail; and so shall never finally and totally fall away, being rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith of him, in the doctrines of faith, respecting peace by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and life by his death; and so continue steadfast and immovable, always abounding in his work:

and [be] not moved away from the hope of the Gospel; the hope of eternal life and happiness, which as set before us in the Gospel; which that gives a good and solid ground and foundation of, in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; and is the instrumental means, in the hand of the Spirit, of begetting to it, and of encouraging and increasing it: the law gives no hopes of eternal life to a poor sinner; it works wrath, and ministers death; there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment by it; but the Gospel encourages to hope in the Lord, from the consideration of rich mercy and plenteous redemption in him; and this hope of the Gospel is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and not to be let go; this confidence and rejoicing of the hope is to be kept firm unto the end:

which ye have heard; that is, which Gospel they had heard from Epaphras their faithful minister, and that not only externally, but internally; they had heard it and believed it, and it had brought forth fruit in them; for it came to them not in word only, but in power; which is said in commendation of it, and to engage them to continue in it, and abide by it; as is also what follows:

[and] which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; and therefore since it was the same which was everywhere preached, they might depend upon the truth of it, should have the greater value for it, and by no means relinquish it. This must be understood not of every individual creature, even human and rational, that was then, or had been in, the

world; but that it had been, and was preached far and near, in all places all over the world, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; who are sometimes styled “every creature”, “the creature”, “the whole creation”, “all men”, etc. (see ^{<1165>}Mark 16:15 ^{<1189>}Romans 8:19-22) (^{<3011>}Titus 2:11); and of this, the first preaching of the Gospel by Peter after our Lord's resurrection, was an emblem and pledge, (^{<4014>}Acts 2:14-36); and some time after that, the sound of all the apostles went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world:

whereof I Paul am made a minister; by Jesus Christ, who appeared unto him, and called, qualified, and sent him forth as such; and this is mentioned to encourage the Colossians to abide by the truths of the Gospel, since what they had heard and received were what were everywhere preached by the faithful ministers of the word; and particularly by the apostle, who was ordained to be a teacher and preacher of it to the Gentiles. The Alexandrian copy reads, “a preacher and an apostle, and a minister”; (see ^{<5017>}1 Timothy 2:7).

Ver. 24. *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you*, etc.] The apostle, as soon as he had made mention of his being a minister of the Gospel, thinks and speaks of his “sufferings”; for those are what always more or less attend persons in such an office; they are appointed to them by God; Christ has foretold them of them; they are necessary for them; they must expect them, and patiently endure them: the apostle was under them now at this present time, for he wrote this epistle in his bonds when a prisoner at Rome, not for any immorality, any crime he had committed, but for Christ's sake, for his Gospel's sake, for the sake of the churches of Christ to whom he preached, for the confirmation of them, and so of these Colossians; and therefore he says, “for you”; and which he mentions to animate them to abide by the Gospel, for which he was suffering, that it might continue with them and others: nor was he distressed and discouraged at his afflictions, he “rejoiced” in them, because he had the presence of God in them, the Spirit of God and of glory rested on him, and God was glorified by them; he esteemed it an honour done him that grace was given, and he counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ; and as well knowing that he should live and reign with him, since he suffered with him and for him: and what greatly caused and increased his joy was what follows,

and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh; by which are meant not the afflictions or sufferings of Christ in his own

person; for these were all over, he was now entered into his glory, was exalted at the Father's right hand, and was crowned with glory and honour: there was nothing left behind of his sufferings, to be undergone by any of his people; he had drank of the cup and all the dregs of it; he had sustained the whole of his Father's wrath, and all the curses of the law, being abated nothing, but was made perfect through sufferings; having perfectly suffered all, he suffered once and once for all, he will suffer no more; nor is there any need of his suffering more or again, for he has finished sin, wrought righteousness, made peace, and obtained eternal redemption; nor had he any partner in his sufferings, nor did he need any, or left any part of his sufferings to be filled up by others; for he endured all and the whole, which the law and justice of God could require in his own body, in the body of his flesh through death; of these sufferings the apostle does not speak, but of such which he filled up in "his" own "flesh"; and design the afflictions of Christ in his members, which are called "his", because of that near union there is between Christ and them; so that what befalls them may be predicated of him; when anyone of them suffers, he suffers with him, as the sufferings of a part of the body are ascribed to the whole person; and because of that sympathy there is between them, he has a fellow feeling with his people in all their infirmities; in all their afflictions he is afflicted: if Saul persecutes his saints, he persecutes him; whatever injury is done to them, he takes it as done to himself, who are to him as the apple of his eye. Moreover, hereby they are conformed unto him, and made like him; as he was, so are they in this world; there is a good deal of likeness between the afflictions of Christ and his people, though in some things there is a great disparity; add to this, that the afflictions of the saints are endured for Christ's sake, for the sake of his Gospel, and the profession of his name, and therefore called his, and the more cheerfully bore by them: now of these there were some remains to be filled up by the apostle; not that all the afflictions of the whole body of Christ were to be, or have been filled up by him; there was a great deal left behind by him to be filled up by others, and which has been filling up ever since, and still is, and yet all is not fulfilled to this day, nor will be till the end of time; but he speaks only of that part and measure of them, which was to be filled up in his flesh; he had his measure of afflictions allotted to him, great part of which he had endured already, but some remained, the measure was not yet full, though pretty near being completed, which gave him pleasure; it was just filling up, and the time of his departure was at hand, when there would be no more sorrow; for it was only while he was in the flesh he was filling up this measure, and would be

quickly up; and what added to his joy was, that as these were the afflictions of Christ, and the measure of them was appointed by his heavenly Father, to be filled up by him in this mortal state, so they were

for his body's sake, which is the church; not in the room and stead of the church, and people of Christ, as were the sufferings of Christ personal; or to exempt them from sufferings who all have their share in this life; nor for their sins to make reconciliation for them, and procure the remission of them; nor to redeem them, or obtain salvation for them, all which is completed by Christ; but for their good and profit, that the Gospel might continue and be blessed to the conversion of many, for the increase of the church and additions to it, and for the furtherance of the Gospel, and that such who professed it might be established and confirmed in it, by the sufferings of the apostle for it: and such good effects did follow upon his sufferings and afflictions; they were for the consolation of many souls, the strengthening of weak believers, and causing even preachers of the Gospel to wax more confident, and more boldly preach the Gospel without fear of man.

Ver. 25. *Whereof I am made a minister,* etc.] Not of Christ, or of the Gospel as before, though both were true; but of the churches for whose sake he endured afflictions; and which carries in it a reason of his suffering for them: he was not a saviour of the body, nor a redeemer of the church, nor Lord of it; but a minister, a servant of it, that ministered to it in holy things, in the word and ordinances; not a deacon, as the word, sometimes signifies, nor an ordinary minister, or a pastor of a particular church; but a minister of the church in general, being an apostle sent to preach the Gospel everywhere: he was made a minister of it, not by men, or anything he received from men; nor by himself, not by usurpation, he did not thrust himself into this office, or take it upon him of himself; but was put into it by Christ, who counted him faithful, he appeared to him, and made him a minister, qualified him for this office, called him to it, and sent him to perform it: and which he executed

according to the dispensation of God: or divine economy, which denotes such an authority and administration as is used in a family. The church is God's family, it is called the house and household of God, and the household of faith, part of which is in heaven and part on earth; God is the householder or master of the family; Christ is the Son over his own house; ministers are stewards in it, and their work is to give to everyone their

portion of meat in due season; their authority from God to do so, and the exercise of it, are the economy or dispensation of the Gospel committed to them: this is of God and not man, for none but God can give them a power to dispense it, and which is purely of his grace, called therefore the dispensation of the grace of God, (~~4002~~Ephesians 3:2); and here said to be given,

which is given to me for you; not according to any merits of his, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person to Christ and his Gospel; but according to the pure grace of God, and that not for himself, but for the good of others, for the Gentiles especially, and so for the Colossians:

to fulfil the word of God; either the promises and prophecies contained in the word of God, respecting the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and their conversion by it; which had in a great measure their accomplishment through the ministry of the apostle: or to fill all places with the word of God and Gospel of Christ, as the apostle did from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place; and sinners being converted, churches were planted and daily filled with such as should be saved; or to preach fully and faithfully the Gospel, keeping back nothing that was profitable, but declaring the whole counsel of God, continuing faithful to it to the end, as he did: to fill up or fulfil words is an Hebraism, and signifies to confirm them, or act according to them; (see ~~1004~~1 Kings 1:14) and the Septuagint there.

Ver. 26. [*Even*] *the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations*, etc.] This is said, as explanative of the word of God; signifying that he did not mean the Scriptures in general, which are the word of God, and every part of them; some part of which is historical, another prophetic, another practical, and another doctrinal; nor the law, which also is the word of God, but the Gospel, called “the mystery”, as it often is; because it contains things, which, though revealed, are mysteries to a natural man; and even to enlightened persons, who have the clearest view of them, the “modus” of them is not to be accounted for; such as the doctrines of the Trinity, of the union of the two natures in Christ, the incarnation of the Son of God, the union and communion of the church with Christ, the resurrection of the dead, etc. And though perhaps great and special regard may be here had to the calling of the Gentiles, which,

though revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament, was in a great measure hid in them, and not so clearly known in ages and generations past as now, yet the whole may be applied to the Gospel mystery in general; which was first hid in the heart of God, in his thoughts and purposes, in his counsel and covenant, and in his Son, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and then in the ceremonies and shadows of the law, which but few had any insight into, and discerning of; and, during that dispensation, was wholly hid from the Gentiles; and but in part known by the Jews, and but by a few, and comparatively by them very darkly; and not so clearly by the angels themselves, who pry into these mysteries, and now, under the Gospel dispensation, learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God; and indeed it was hidden from all men, Jews and Gentiles, in a state of nature, and even from the wise and prudent of this world:

but now is made manifest to his saints; now under the Gospel dispensation, since the coming of Christ; there is an external revelation of the Gospel by him, more clearly, by whom grace and truth came, called the revelation of Christ; and an internal revelation of it by his Spirit, who is the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; which is made to saints, the holy apostles and prophets, who are the saints to whom this faith, and the mystery of it, were first delivered with so much power and evidence; and to all the elect of God, whom he has separated for himself in eternal election; whom Christ has sanctified by his blood, and to whom he is made sanctification; and who are called with an holy calling, have principles of grace and holiness wrought in them by the Spirit of God, and therefore called “his” saints; these have only a spiritual discerning of the Gospel, for the natural man neither knows nor receives it.

Ver. 27. *To whom God would make known*, etc.] The spring and cause of the manifestation of the Gospel to the saints, and chosen of God, is not their works, for God does not call them with an holy calling according to them, but according to his own grace; nor any preparations and dispositions in them before such manifestation, towards the Gospel and the truths of it, for there are none such naturally in men, but all the reverse; nor a foresight of their better improvement of it, when made known, for this is not the method of divine grace, witness the instances of Sodom and Gomorrha, Tyre and Sidon; nor any holiness in them, or because they were sanctified, for they became so by the power of divine grace, through the Gospel revelation; but it is the pure sovereign good will and pleasure of God; (see ⁴⁰⁰Ephesians 1:9 ⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 11:25,26); as appears from what

they were before the Gospel came unto them, what is made known to them in it and by it; and from this, that they and not others, equally as deserving, are favoured with it:

what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. The apostle, besides calling the Gospel a “mystery”, as before, ascribes “glory” to it; it is a glorious mystery, there is a glory in all the mysteries of it; it is a glorious Gospel, as it is often called, in its author, subject, matter, use, and efficacy: and also “riches” of glory, or glorious riches; containing rich truths, an immense treasure of them, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; rich blessings of justification, pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and eternal life; and rich promises, relating both to this life, and that which is to come; all which were opened and made known, not to the Jews only, but “among the Gentiles” also; who before were aliens, enemies, exceeding wicked, poor, blind, and miserable, but now, through the Gospel, were become rich and glorious, wise, knowing, and happy:

which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; this is to be connected with all that goes before: Christ is the riches of the Gospel; the riches of the divine perfections, which the Gospel more clearly displays than the works of creation or providence, are all in Christ, the fulness of them dwells in him; and this is the grace the Gospel reveals, that he, who was rich with all these, became poor to make us rich; the rich promises of the Gospel were all made to Christ, and are all yea and “Amen” in him; the rich blessings of it are all in his hands, righteousness, peace, and pardon, the riches both of grace and glory; the rich treasures of its divine truths are hid in him; and he is the substance of everyone of them: Christ is also the glory of the Gospel, inasmuch as he is the author, preacher, and subject of it; it is full of the glory of his person, both as the only begotten of the Father, and as the only Mediator between God and man; it is the glass through which this is seen: moreover, the glory of God in him is expressed hereby; the glory of his wisdom and power, of his truth and faithfulness, of his justice and holiness, of his love, grace, and mercy, and every other perfection, is eminently held forth in the Gospel; as this is great in the salvation and redemption of his people by Christ, which the Gospel brings the good news of; add to this, that that glory which the saints shall have with Christ, and will lie in the enjoyment of him to all eternity, is brought to light in the Gospel: Christ is also the mystery of the Gospel; he is one of the persons in the mystery of the Trinity; the mystery of his divine sonship, of his divine person, being God and yet man, man and yet God, and both in one person, and of his

incarnation and redemption, makes a considerable part of the Gospel: and Christ, who is the sum and substance of it, is “in” his people; not only as the omnipresent God, as the author of the light of nature, as the Creator of all things, in whom all live, move, and have their beings, but in a way of special grace; and the phrase is expressive of a revelation of him in them, of their possession of him, of his inhabitation in them by his Spirit and grace, particularly by faith, and of their communion with him, in consequence of their union to him; and being so, he is the ground and foundation of their hopes of glory. There is a glory which the saints are hoping for, which the glories of this world are but a faint resemblance of; which is unseen at present, and which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared unto; what is eternal, and which Christ has entered into, and took possession of; and what will greatly consist in beholding his glory, and in everlasting communion with him; this through grace saints have a good hope of, and are waiting for, and even rejoice at times in the hope of it; of which hope Christ is the foundation; for not only the promise of it is with him, but the glory itself is in his hands; the gift of it is with him, and through him; he has made way by his sufferings and death for the enjoyment of it, and is now preparing it for them, by his presence and intercession; his grace makes them meet for it, his righteousness gives them a title to it, and his Spirit is the earnest of it, and the substance of it will be the fruition of himself.

Ver. 28. *Whom we preach*, etc.] Under the above considerations; as the riches, the glory, and the mystery of the Gospel; as the hope set before lost sinners to lay hold upon; as the only Saviour and Redeemer, by whose righteousness believers are justified, through whose blood their sins are pardoned, by whose sacrifice and satisfaction atonement is made, and in whose person alone is acceptance with God: Christ and him crucified, and salvation by him, were the subjects of the ministry of the apostles; on this they dwelt, and it was this which was blessed for the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, the planting of churches, and the setting up and establishing the kingdom and interest of Christ:

warning every man; of his lost state and condition by nature; of the wrath to come, and the danger he is in of it; of the terrors of the Lord, and of an awful judgment; showing sinners that they are unrighteous and unholy, that their nature is corrupt and impure, their best righteousness imperfect, and cannot justify them before God; that they stand guilty before him, and that

destruction and misery are in all their ways; and therefore advise them to flee from the wrath to come, to the hope set before them in the Gospel:

and teaching every man in all wisdom; not natural, but spiritual and evangelical; the whole Gospel of Christ, the counsel of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, and all the branches of it; teaching them to believe in Christ for salvation, to lay hold on his righteousness for justification, to deal with his blood for pardon, and with his sacrifice for the atonement of their sins; and to observe all things commanded by Christ, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly: by these two words, “warning” and “teaching”, the several parts of the Gospel ministry are expressed; and which extend to all sorts of men, rich and poor, bond and free, greater and lesser sinners, Gentiles as well as Jews; and who are chiefly designed here, and elsewhere, by every man and every creature:

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; not in themselves, in which sense no man is perfect in this life; but in the grace, holiness, and righteousness of Christ, in whom all the saints are complete: or it may regard that ripeness of understanding, and perfection of knowledge, which, when arrived unto, saints become perfect men in Christ; and is the end of the Gospel ministry, and to which men are brought by it; (see ⁴⁰¹³ Ephesians 4:13); and to be understood of the presentation of the saints, not by Christ to himself, and to his Father, but by the ministers of the Gospel, as their glory and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.

Ver. 29. *Whereunto I also labour*, etc.] In the word and doctrine, by preaching Christ, warning sinners of their danger, teaching them the way of salvation, and their duty; with this view, that, in thee great day of account, he might bring a large number of them, and set them before Christ as the seals of his ministry, as instances of the grace of Christ, and as perfect in him:

striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily; meaning either in his prayers, earnestly entreating of God that he would succeed his labours, and bless them to the conversion of many; which sense is favoured by the Syriac version, which renders it, Pçk tmw, “and make supplication”; that is, with that effectual fervent prayer, which was powerfully wrought in him: or in his ministry, combating with many enemies, fighting the good fight of faith; not in his own strength, but through the power of Christ; which enabled him to preach the Gospel far and near, in season and out of

season; which supported his outward man, and strengthened his inward man for that service, and made it effectual to the good of the souls of many: some refer this to the signs, wonders, and miracles, which Christ wrought by him, for the confirmation of the Gospel; but the other sense, which takes in both the power by which he was assisted in preaching, both in body and soul, and that which went along with his ministry to make it useful to others, is to be preferred.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS 2

In this chapter the apostle expresses his great concern for the Colossians, and others he had never seen; exhorts them to constancy in the faith of Christ; warns them of false teachers, and their tenets; takes notice of various blessings and privileges they had by Christ, and cautions against several superstitions and corruptions, which were obtaining among the churches of Christ: in (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:1) the apostle declares the conflict he had for the persons he writes to, and for others, though they had never seen him, which he was desirous they might be acquainted with; partly for the comfort of their hearts, their cement in love, and the improvement of their knowledge of divine things, the treasures of which are in Christ, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:2,3), and partly that they might not be deceived by the enticing words of the false teachers, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:4), and should his absence and distance from them be objected to his professed concern and affection for them, he answers, that notwithstanding that, he was present with them in spirit, and had a discerning of their faith and order, and the steadfastness thereof, with pleasure, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:5), wherefore he exhorts them to perseverance in the faith of Christ, and to an abounding: in it, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:6,7), and to take heed of being hurt by the vain philosophy and traditions of the Jews, but to keep close to Christ, and the truths of his Gospel, seeing all fulness is in him, and they were full in him, who is over all, and superior to all, and therefore had no need to have recourse unto, and hearken to any other, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:9,10), nor did they need any Jewish ordinances, particularly circumcision, since they were partakers of another and better circumcision in Christ; and besides, were buried in baptism with him; and even though they had been dead in sin, and in their fleshly uncircumcision, yet they were alive, quickened with Christ, and had the forgiveness of all their sins for his sake; who had freed them from the ceremonial law, and had rid them of all their former lords and masters, and had brought them into the liberty of the Gospel, (~~SKIP~~Colossians 2:11-15), wherefore he concludes, by way of exhortation and advice, first with respect to Jewish ceremonies, not to suffer them to be imposed upon them, or to regard the censures of men for the non-

observance of them, since these were but shadows, of which Christ is the substance, (^{<S1216>}Colossians 2:16,17), and next with respect to the worship of angels, under a notion of humility, some were for introducing; who are described as bold intruders, vain, proud, and conceited persons, and as not holding the head Christ, to whom the body the church is joined, and by whom it is nourished and increased, (^{<S1218>}Colossians 2:18,19), and seeing now they that are Christ's are dead with him to the ceremonial law, and that dead to them, the apostle argues that they should not be subject to the ordinances, commands, and doctrines of men; some of which he instances in, as if they were still under the rudiments of the world; and the rather, since these things had no true wisdom in them, only a show of it, and were no other than will worship and superstition, and lay in a negligence of the body, and were dishonourable and unsatisfying, (^{<S1220>}Colossians 2:20-23).

Ver. 1. *For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you,* etc.] This is occasioned by what he had said in (^{<S1029>}Colossians 1:29), that he laboured and strove according to the energy of divine power in him, to present every man perfect in Christ; and lest these Colossians should think that these labours and strivings of his were only for all and every of those persons among whom he was, and to whom he personally preached, he would have them know, observe, and assure themselves, that the great conflict, strife, and agony, in which he was engaged, was for them also; by which he means, his fervent prayers and wrestlings with God, the conflicts he had in his own mind, with his own spirit, about the good of the churches of Christ, the care of which were upon him, and even of those to whom he was by face unknown, sometimes hoping, sometimes fearing, sometimes rejoicing, at other times weeping, at what he heard concerning them; also his combats with the false apostles, striving and earnestly contending for the faith of the Gospel, giving no place to them, no, not for an hour, defending truth, refuting error, and fighting the good fight of faith, by preaching, writing, and disputing; likewise the various persecutions, great afflictions, and hardships he met with from men, for the sake of the Gospel; add to all this, the frequent battles he had with the enemy of souls, his wrestlings against principalities and powers, the many temptations of Satan with which he was attacked, to draw him off from the service of Christ, to weaken his hands, and hinder his success in it; all which he endured and went through with a greatness of mind, and that for the good of the churches of Christ, and the glory of his name, which were the great things he had in view and among others, for the good of these Colossians,

and [for] them at Laodicea; the saints of that place, the church of Christ which was there; and is the rather mentioned, because near to Colosse: it was a famous city by the river Lycus, first called Diospolis, and then Rhoas^{f15}, and afterwards Laodicea; it was the metropolis of Phrygia, in which Colosse stood: hence this epistle is ordered to be read to them also, they being infested with false teachers, and in the same situation and circumstances as the Colossians were; and though the apostle was unknown to both of them, having never been at either place, yet was heartily concerned for each of their welfare, and he strove for them as he did for others; one of Stephens's copies adds, "and them in Hierapolis"; (see ^{<S14B>}Colossians 4:13).

And [for] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; meaning the churches in Christ, and believers in him; such as had never heard him preach, nor had any personal knowledge of him, and conversation with him, which tend to knit the hearts of Christians more firmly together; yet his heart was towards them, he laboured for them, by praying for them, writing to them, suffering all things for their sakes, for the confirmation of them, and of the Gospel of Christ. Christian love and care, and the benefit of the labours and sufferings of Gospel ministers, extend and reach to persons that never saw them.

Ver. 2. *That their hearts might be comforted*, etc.] Here follow the reasons why the apostle had so great a conflict, on account of the above persons, and why he was so desirous they should know it; one is, the consolation of their hearts. The hearts of God's people often need comfort, by reason of indwelling sin, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, and afflictive providences; and by reason of false teachers, who greatly trouble them, unsettle their minds, weaken their faith, and fill them with doubts and perplexities, and which was the case with these churches: now the business of Gospel ministers is to comfort such; this is the commission they are sent with; the doctrines of the Gospel are calculated for this very purpose, such as full redemption, free justification, complete pardon of sin, peace and reconciliation; and the bent of their ministry is to comfort distressed minds, upon what account soever; and it must be a comfort to these churches, when they found that they were regarded by so great an apostle; and it might tend to confirm them in the doctrine they had received at first, and deliver them from the scruples the false apostles had injected into their minds, and so administer comfort to them, when they perceived that the

apostle approved of the Gospel they had heard and embraced, and rejected the notions of the false teachers:

being knit together in love: as the members of an human body are, by joints and bands; as love is the bond of union between God and his people, Christ and his members, so between saints and saints; it is the cement that joins and keeps them together, and which edifies and builds them up, and whereby they increase with the increase of God; it makes them to be of one heart and one soul; it renders their communion with one another comfortable and delightful, and strengthens them against the common enemy, who is for dividing, and so destroying; and is what is the joy of Gospel ministers, and what they labour at and strive for, and which is another reason of the apostle's conflict:

and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding; that is, spiritual knowledge and understanding, or the understanding of spiritual things; for the understanding of things natural and civil is not designed; nor a mere notional knowledge of spiritual things, which persons may have, and yet not charity, or love, with which this is here joined; and such an one also, which is sure and certain: for as there is such a thing as the assurance of faith, and the assurance of hope, so likewise of understanding of the Gospel, and the truths of it; concerning which there ought to be no doubt, being to be received upon the credit of a divine testimony: moreover, such a knowledge and understanding of divine things is intended, as is large and abundant, signified by “all riches”; for though it is not complete and perfect in this life, yet it takes a vast compass, and reaches to all the deep things of God; to whatever relates to the person and grace of Christ; to all the things of the Spirit of God; to all the blessings and promises of the covenant of grace; to the riches both of grace and glory, to the things of time and eternity, and which is more clearly explained by the following clause:

to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; that is, to a greater and more perfect knowledge, approbation, and confession of the Gospel, which he had in the preceding chapter called the mystery; (see ⁵⁰⁰²⁶Colossians 1:26,27), and here “the mystery of God”, which he is both the author and subject of: it is by him as the efficient cause, ordained by him, and hid in him before the world was; and it is of him, as the subject matter of it; not as the God of nature and providence, which the works of both declare; but as the God of all grace, as God in Christ, which is the peculiar discovery of the Gospel: and “of” him as “the

Father” of Christ, which is not discoverable by the light of nature, nor known by natural reason, but is a point of divine revelation; and “of” him as the Father of his people by adoption; and of all his grace, in election to grace and glory; in predestination to sonship, and in the council and covenant of grace; in the scheme of salvation and redemption; in the mission of his Son, and the gift of him as a Saviour and Redeemer. The copulative “and” before “the Father”, is left out in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, which read “the mystery of God the Father”; and with it, it may be rendered, as it sometimes is, God, “even the Father”: though the word “God” may be considered essentially, and as after distinguished into two of the persons of the Godhead; “the Father” the first person, so called, in relation to his Son, which is no small part of the mystery of the Gospel; and “Christ” the second person, who is equally God with the Father; and the Spirit, who, though not mentioned, is not excluded from this adorable mystery: and which is the mystery “of Christ”, he being both the efficient cause and the subject matter of it; it treats of his deity and personality; of his offices, as Mediator, prophet, priest, and King; of his incarnation and redemption; of his grace, righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction; of justification by him, pardon through him, and acceptance in him.

Ver. 3. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*] This may be understood either of the mystery of the Gospel, which contains the rich mines and hidden treasures of all divine truths; so called, because of the richness and intrinsic value and excellency of them; and because of their variety and abundance, being the unsearchable riches of Christ: or of Christ himself; and not so much of his personal wisdom, either as God, being the all-wise God, the wisdom of God, an omniscient Being, that knows all persons and things whatever, within the whole circle of wisdom and knowledge; or as man, whose wisdom and knowledge, though created, was very large and abundant; or as Mediator, on whom the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of knowledge, rests; but of that fulness of truth as well as grace, which dwells in him as in its subject and fountain; by whom it comes, and from whom it is derived unto us; and our highest wisdom and knowledge lies in knowing him, whom to know is life eternal; and the excellency of whose knowledge surpasses everything else; it is the greatest riches, and most valuable treasure; nor is there anything worth knowing but what is in Christ, all is laid up in him: and being said to be “hid” in him, shows the excellency of the wisdom and knowledge that is in

him only valuable things being hid, or compared to hid treasure; that this cannot be had without knowing him; that it is imperfect in the present state, and is not yet fully and clearly revealed; and therefore should be inquired after, and searched for, and Christ should be applied unto for it: **atmkj yznm**, “treasures of wisdom”, is a phrase used by the Targumist ^{f16}.

Ver. 4. *And this I say*, etc.] That he had such a conflict for them, and had told them of his care and fear on their account, and had signified his great desire that they might arrive to a more large and certain knowledge of the mysteries of grace, and had asserted that all solid spiritual wisdom and knowledge were in Christ; all which he said, to show his affection for them; to observe unto them, that there was no need to seek for wisdom and knowledge elsewhere, since there was such a fulness of it in Christ, and the Gospel; and to put them upon their guard against false teachers:

lest any man should beguile you with enticing words; by which are meant, not apt and pertinent words, such as are suited to the minds of men, and proper to convey right ideas of divine truth, poignant expressions, sound speech, and strong reasonings; for such the apostle himself used, and yet not enticing words of men's wisdom; and which design mere words, great swelling words of vanity, which like bubbles look big, and make a great noise, but contain nothing but wind and emptiness; fair speeches, specious pretences, false colourings, fallacious reasonings, a show of probability, and appearance of science, falsely so called; whereby deceitful workers, such as the followers of Simon Magus and the Gnostics, used, whom the apostle had in view; beguiled unstable souls, and deceived the hearts of the simple: wherefore the apostle said the above things, showing that all true wisdom was in Christ, and all spiritual knowledge was in the pure and unmixed Gospel; which was not to be parted with for other things, which through art and management, and the cunning craftiness of men, might at first sight carry in them a show of probability, and appearance of truth. The gold, the silver, and precious stones of divine truths, which have been proved by the standard, are not to be given up for such as only look like them, being wrought up through the fallacy of men; who by a set of unmeaning words, paralogisms, and false reasonings, lie in wait to deceive.

Ver. 5. *For though I be absent in the flesh*, etc.] Or body, as the Ethiopic version reads it, and as it is expressed in (~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 5:3); here the apostle anticipates an objection which might be made, how he could have such a conflict and concern for them, and express so much affection for

them, and know so much of their affairs, in what condition and situation they were, and how liable to be deceived by false teachers, when he was absent from them, and had never been among them. That he had never been corporeally present with them, nor was he then, he owns; but this did not hinder but that he might be in another sense present with them, and so have cognizance of them and their state, and be affected towards them, and concerned for them:

yet am I with you in the spirit; as he was with the Corinthians in the place above cited, judging the incestuous person, determining concerning his case, and delivering him up to Satan, and so he was with these Colossians; for as he was a member of the same body with them, he was actuated by the same spirit; and by virtue of their union to each other in their common head, his spirit went out towards them, his heart was knit unto them; he had the same affection for them, and care of them, though he had never seen them with his bodily eyes, as he had for those whom he had seen: moreover, this may regard that extraordinary discerning and presence of his spirit which he had; and which was of the same kind with that of Elisha, when his servant Gehazi went after Naaman the Syrian, and took a present of him, to whom on his return he said, upon his denying that he had been anywhere, “went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?” (~~1~~² Kings 5:26). Elisha's spirit went, and was present with him, and saw and knew all that passed, being under the impulse and inspiration of the Spirit of God, who made all known unto him: so the spirit of the Apostle Paul was at the church at Colosse, and saw: and discerned their whole estate; this being made known by the Spirit of God, under whose inspiration he wrote this letter, suitable to their case:

joying and beholding your order; or as the Syriac version renders it, “I rejoice that I can see your order”: that is, with pleasure observe, consider it, and contemplate on it; and that partly from the relation of Epaphras, and chiefly from the intimations of the Spirit of God in an extraordinary way: by their “order” is meant, either their orderly walk and conversation, which being as becomes the Gospel of Christ, was very pleasing and delightful to the apostle; or rather the order of their church discipline, they having regular officers, pastors, and deacons, ordained among them; who rightly performed their offices, and had respect and subjection yielded to them; the ordinances of the Gospel were duly administered, and constantly attended on; the members of the church were watched over, admonitions given, and censures laid where they were necessary, and everything was done decently

and in order; which was a beautiful sight, and gave the apostle an uncommon pleasure. The word used signifies a military order, such as is observed in armies, in battle array; suggesting, that these Christians were good soldiers of Christ, were enlisted under his banners, and kept in due order, in rank and file; stood fast in one spirit, contended and strove together for the faith of the Gospel, fought the good fight of faith, nor could any hardship move them from their station; so that they were, in the apostle's eye, beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners, (~~2104~~ Song of Solomon 6:4); and so may denote their attachment to the Gospel, and to one another; they were united to, and abode by each other; they served the Lord with one consent, and kept the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, (~~404B~~ Ephesians 4:3), which is a pleasant thing to behold, as well as what follows;

and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ; either in the grace of faith, and the exercise of it on Christ, in opposition to doubtings and unbelief; whereby God is honoured, and with which he is well pleased; souls are filled with peace and joy; Satan is resisted and overcome; and the hearts of others, particularly ministers of the Gospel, are comforted: or in the doctrine of faith respecting Christ, in which they stood fast; notwithstanding there was a majority against it, the wise and learned, the rich and mighty, did not receive it; and though it was opposed by false teachers, persecuted by profane men, and loaded with reproach and obloquy; and also in the profession of it, which they held without wavering: now to see a set of Christians, a church of Christ walking together in Gospel order, steady in their faith on Christ, abiding by the doctrine of faith, and maintaining an honourable profession, how beautiful and delightful is it!

Ver. 6. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord*, etc.]

Receiving Christ is believing in him: faith is the eye of the soul, that sees the beauty, glory, fulness, and suitableness of Christ; the foot that goes to him, and the hand that takes hold on him, and the arm that receives and embraces him; so that this is not a receiving him into the head by notion, but into the heart by faith; and not in part only, but in whole: faith receives a whole Christ, his person as God and man; him in all his offices, as prophet, priest, and King; particularly as a Saviour and Redeemer, he being under that character so exceeding suitable to the case of a sensible sinner; and it receives all blessings of grace along with him, from him, and through him; as a justifying righteousness, remission of sins, adoption of children,

grace for grace, and an inheritance among all them that are sanctified; and both Christ and them, as the free grace gifts of God; which men are altogether undeserving of, and cannot possibly give any valuable consideration for: so these Colossians had received Christ gladly, joyfully, willingly, and with all readiness; and especially as “the Lord”, on which there is a peculiar emphasis in the text; they had received him and believed in him, as the one and only Lord and head of the church; as the one and only Mediator between God and man, to the exclusion of angels, the worship of which the false teachers were introducing; they had received the doctrines of Christ, and not the laws of Moses, which judaizing preachers were desirous of joining with them; they had heard and obeyed the Son, and not the servant; they had submitted to the authority of Christ as King of saints, and had been subject to his ordinances; wherefore the apostle exhorts them to continue and go on, believing in him, and holding to him the head:

[so] walk ye in him; not only in imitation of him as he walked, in the exercise of grace, as love, patience, humility, and meekness, and in the discharge of duty; but by faith in him, going on in a way of believing in him, always looking to him, leaning on him, and deriving grace and strength from him: to walk in Christ, is to walk in and after the Spirit of Christ, under his influence, by his direction, and through his assistance; and to walk in the doctrine of Christ, abiding by it, and increasing in the knowledge of it; and to walk in the ordinances of Christ, which with ill's presence and spirit, are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace: particularly here it may signify, to make use of Christ, and walk on in him, as the way, truth, and the life; as the only way of access to God, and acceptance with him; as the way of salvation, as the only true way to eternal life and happiness, in opposition to every creature, angels, or men; the worshipping of the one, or works done by the other.

Ver. 7. *Rooted and built up in him,* etc.] By these metaphors, the apostle expresses the safe and happy state of these believers; and which he makes use of as arguments, to engage them to walk on in Christ, and as pointing out the manner in which they should. Believers are sometimes compared to trees, and are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; and their root is Christ, from whence as such they spring, and by whom they are filled with the fruits of righteousness; in him they are to abide, keep close unto him, and walk in him; deriving all their life, nourishment, fruitfulness, grace, and perseverance in it, from him as their root: they are also

sometimes compared to a building, to an house, a temple, an habitation for God; and Christ is the sure and only foundation on which they are laid, and where they are safe and secure; and, being fitly joined together, grow up as an holy temple to the Lord; and this being their case, they are to go on laying the whole stress of their salvation on him, building their faith and hope of eternal glory entirely upon him; and building up one another also on their most holy faith, of which he is the substance, as it follows:

and stablished in the faith: that of Christ, or in the doctrine of faith which respects Christ: the apostle here expresses the same thing without a figure, which he had signified by the two foregoing metaphors, and explains what he means by them; namely, that they were well settled and grounded in their faith in Christ, and thoroughly instructed and established in the doctrines of the Gospel; and a very good thing it is to have the heart established with grace, both as a principle and a doctrine; which is God's work, and was the happy case of these persons; wherefore it became them to act as such, and not be like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, or carried about with divers and strange doctrines, but abide by those which had been preached to them by the faithful ministers of Christ, and they had received: as

ye have been taught: by Epaphras their minister, and others; and therefore should not listen to false teachers, and to a contrary doctrine taught by them; considering of whom they had learnt the true doctrine, what evidence it carried with it, and what use it had been of to them, in convincing, converting, comforting, instructing, and establishing them: and therefore should be

abounding therein with thanksgiving; that is, in the faith; as in the grace, so in the doctrine of faith; for as saints are to abound in the work of the Lord, and in every good work, and in the exercise of every grace, so in the knowledge of truth; (see ~~180~~ 2 Corinthians 8:7); and to make use of all means for the increase of, and growth in Gospel grace and light, and the knowledge of a crucified Christ, which is meant by abounding: for all which there is great reason for thanksgiving; both for the unspeakable gift of Christ, who is received as such by faith, and in whom believers are rooted and built up; and for faith itself, which is the gift of God; and also for the Gospel, and the truths of it; and for every degree of spiritual light in it, and knowledge of it.

Ver. 8. *Beware lest any man spoil you*, etc.] Or despoil you; rob you of the rich treasure of the Gospel, strip you of your spiritual armour, take away from you the truths and doctrines of Christ, and divest you of your spiritual privileges and blessings; suggesting, that the false teachers were thieves and robbers, and men of prey: or drive and carry you away as spoils, as the innocent harmless sheep are drove, and carried away by wolves, and by the thief that comes to steal, to kill, and destroy; intimating, that such as these were the heretics of those times; wherefore it became them to be upon their guard, to watch, look out, and beware, lest they should be surprised by these deceitful workers, who lay in wait to deceive; were wolves in sheep's clothing, who transformed themselves into the apostles of Christ; and therefore it became them to take heed, lest any man hurt them, be he ever so wise and learned, or be thought ever so good, religious, and sincere; since men of this cast put on such masks and false appearances, on purpose to beguile. The things by which they imposed upon weak minds are as follow, and therefore to be shunned, avoided, and rejected:

through philosophy: not right philosophy, or true wisdom, the knowledge of God, of the things of nature, of things natural, moral, and civil; which may be attained unto by the use of reason, and light of nature. The apostle does not mean to condemn all arts and sciences, as useless and hurtful, such as natural philosophy in its various branches, ethics, logic, rhetoric, etc. when kept within due bounds, and in their proper place and sphere; for with instances of these the Scriptures themselves abound; but he means that philosophy, or science, which is falsely so called, the false notions of philosophers; such as the eternity of matter, and of this world, the mortality of souls, the worshipping of demons and angels, etc. and also such principles in philosophy, which in themselves, and in the things of nature, are true, but, when applied to divine things, to things above nature, the mere effects of divine power and grace, and of pure revelation, are false; as that out of nothing, nothing can be made, which in the things of nature is true, but not to be applied to the God of nature, who has made the world out of nothing; as also that from a privation to an habit there is no return, which is naturally true, but not to be applied to supernatural things, and supernatural agency; witness the miracles of Christ, in restoring sight to the blind, life to the dead, etc. and therefore is not to be employed against the resurrection of the dead: philosophy may be useful as a handmaid; it is not to be a mistress in theological things; it may subserve, but not govern; it is not to be made use of as a judge, or rule in such matters; the natural man,

on these principles, neither knows nor receives the things of the Spirit of God; judgment is not to be made and formed according to them; as of a trinity of persons in the Godhead; of the sonship of Christ, and his incarnation; of man's redemption by him, of reconciliation and satisfaction by his blood and sacrifice, of the pardon of sin, of a sinner's justification, of the resurrection of the dead, and such like articles of faith: that philosophy which is right, can only be a rule of judgment in things relating to it, and not in those which are out of its sphere: in a word, the apostle here condemns the philosophy of the Jews, and of the Gnostics; the former had introduced natural philosophy into the worship and service of God, and the things appertaining to their religion; and had made the tabernacle and temple, and the most holy place, and the things belonging thereunto, emblems and hieroglyphics of natural things; as of the sun, moon, and stars, and their influences, and of the four elements, and of moral virtue, etc. as appears from the writings of Josephus^{f17}, and Philo^{f18}; when they were types and representatives of spiritual things under the Gospel dispensation; and the latter had brought in the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato, concerning abstinences, purgations, sacrifices, and ceremonies of worship, given to demons and angels: in short, the apostle's meaning is, that philosophy is not to be mixed with the pure Gospel of Christ; it has always been fatal to it; witness the school of Pantaenus in Alexandria, in the early times of Christianity, by which the simplicity of the Gospel was greatly corrupted; and the race of schoolmen a few centuries ago, who introduced the philosophy of Aristotle, Averrois, and others, into all the subjects of divinity: to observe no more, such kind of philosophy is here meant, which may be truly called

vain deceit: that is, that which is vain and empty, and has no solid foundation, even in nature and reason itself; and which being applied to divine things and religious observances, is deceitful and delusory:

after the tradition of men; either of the Gentiles, who had their traditions in religion; or of the Jews, called the traditions of the elders, and of the fathers, which the Pharisees were fond of, by which they transgressed the commandments of God; which the apostle was brought up in, and was zealous of formerly, but now was delivered from, and rightly condemned as idle, trifling, and pernicious:

after the rudiments of the world, or “the elements of the world”; not the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water; or the worship of the sun,

moon, and stars, etc. among the idolatrous Gentiles, but the ceremonial laws of the Jews; (see ⁴⁰⁴⁸Galatians 4:8,9); which were that to them in religion, as the A B C, or letters, are in grammar, the elements and rudiments of it; and though these were to them, when children, useful, but now under the Gospel dispensation are weak, beggarly, and useless, and not to be attended to:

and not after Christ; what he has taught and prescribed, the doctrines and commandments of Christ, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in him; and therefore all such vain and deceitful philosophy, human traditions, and worldly rudiments, are to be rejected; Christ and his Gospel, the revelation he has made, are the standard of doctrine and worship; he only is to be heard and attended to, and whatever it contrary thereunto is to be guarded against.

Ver. 9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*] This is to be understood, not of the doctrine, or Gospel of Christ, as being a perfect revelation of the will of God; but of Christ, and particularly of his human nature, as consisting of a true body and a reasonable soul, in which the Godhead dwells in a most eminent manner: God indeed is everywhere by his powerful presence, was in the tabernacle and temple in a very singular manner, and dwells in the saints in a way of special grace; but resides in the human nature of Christ, in the highest and most exalted manner; that is to deity what the human body is to an human soul, it is the house in which it dwells: so Philo the Jew ^{f19} calls the “Logos” the house of God, who is the soul of the universe; and elsewhere says ^{f20}, that God himself has filled the divine Logos wholly with incorporeal powers. The Godhead dwells in Christ as in a tabernacle, in allusion to the tabernacle of Moses, which looked mean without side, but glorious within; where God granted his presence, and accepted the sacrifices of his people; the human nature of Christ is the true antitypical tabernacle, which God pitched, and not man; and sometimes is called a temple, in allusion to Solomon's; and which is filled with the train of the divine perfections, signified by fulness here: for not the fulness of grace, or a communicative fulness, is here meant; nor the relative fulness, the church; but the fulness of the divine nature, of all the perfections of deity, such as eternity, immensity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, necessary and self existence, and every other; for if anyone perfection was wanting, the fulness, much less all the fulness of the Godhead, would not be in him. The act of inhabitation denotes the union of the two natures in Christ, and

expresses the distinction of them; and is to be understood of the Godhead, as subsisting in the person of the Son of God, and not as subsisting in the person of the Father, or of the Spirit; and shows the permanency of this union, it is a perpetual abiding one; and this fulness is not dependent on the Father's pleasure; it is not said of this as of another fulness, (^{<5019>}Colossians 1:19); that it pleased the Father that it should dwell in him: the manner in which it dwells, is “bodily”; not by power, as in the universe; nor by grace, as in the saints; nor by any glorious emanations of it, as in heaven; nor by gifts, as in the prophets and eminent men of God; nor by signs symbols, and shadows, as in the tabernacle and temple; but essentially and personally, or by personal union of the divine nature, as subsisting in the Son of God to an human body, chosen and prepared for that purpose, together with a reasonable human soul; which is the great mystery of godliness, the glory of the Christian religion, and what qualified Christ for, and recommends him to us as a Saviour; and is a reason why, as these words are, that the Gospel should be abode by, continued in, and that with thankfulness: nor should any regard be had to vain and deceitful philosophy, to the traditions of men, or rudiments of the world: Christ only is to be looked to, attended, and followed, who has all fulness in him.

Ver. 10. *And ye are complete in him*, etc.] Or “filled up”, or “filled full” in him; that is, are perfect in him: saints are in Christ, and all fulness being in him, they are full too, of as much as they stand in need, and are capable of containing: for these words are not an exhortation to perfection, as the Arabic version reads then, be ye complete in him, like those in (^{<0170>}Genesis 17:1 ^{<0188>}Matthew 5:48 ^{<4731>}2 Corinthians 13:11); but are an affirmation, asserting not what the saints shall be hereafter, or in heaven, but what they now are; not in themselves, for in themselves none are perfect, not even those who are truly sanctified; for though all grace is seminally implanted in them, and they have a perfection of parts, of all the parts of the new man, or new creature, and are perfect in comparison of what they sometimes were, and of profane persons and hypocrites, and with respect to weaker believers, yet none are absolutely perfect; the good work of grace is not yet finished in them, sin dwells in them, they are full of wants and complaints; the best of them disclaim perfection as attained to by them, and express their desires of it; but they are perfect in Christ their head, who has all fulness in him, in whom they are chosen and blessed: they are complete and perfect in him as to sanctification; he having all fulness of grace and holiness for them, they have it in him; and he is made perfect sanctification

to them: and as to justification, he has perfectly fulfilled the law for them, he has made full atonement for sin, has obtained eternal redemption, brought in a complete and perfect righteousness, by which they are justified from all things; are freed from sin, and made perfectly comely, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: and as to knowledge, though it is imperfect in them in their present state, yet in Christ all the treasures of it are, and they have no need to go elsewhere for any; they are filled with the knowledge of God and of his will, and are complete therein in Christ; and what knowledge they have, is eternal life, the beginning, pledge, and earnest of it; so that they have no reason to be beholden to angels or men, only to Christ:

which is the head of all principality and power; not only of the body the church, and who is to be held unto as such, from whom all light, life, grace, and strength, are to be derived; but of all others, though in a different sense; and not only of the kings, princes, and potentates of this world, who hold their kingdoms, and receive their crowns from him, and rule by him; but also of the angels, good and bad, often called principalities and powers; especially the former is here meant, of whom Christ is head, being their Creator, Governor, and upholder; who not only maintains them in their beings, but has confirmed them in their state of holiness; so that they are dependent upon him, and beholden to him for all they have and are: with the Jews, “Metatron”, which with them is the name of the angel in ⁽¹²³⁰⁾Exodus 23:20 and seems to be a corruption of the word “mediator”, and to design the Messiah, is said ^{f21} to be King over all the angels. This is mentioned, partly to set forth the glory and excellency of Christ; and partly against worshipping of angels, making use of them as mediators, or applying to them on any account, since Christ is the head of these, and of every creature; therefore no creature is to be looked and applied unto, trusted and depended on: unless rather should be meant the Jewish rulers, Scribes, and Pharisees, their doctors, wise men, and Rabbins, called the princes of this world; the Jews' tutors and governors, to whom Christ is superior; he is the only master and Father, and in whom perfection of wisdom is, and not in them; and therefore should not regard them, their vain philosophy, worldly rudiments and traditions.

Ver. 11. *In whom also ye are circumcised*, etc.] This is said to prevent an objection that might be made to the perfection of these Gentile believers, because they were not circumcised; for the Jews thought that perfection lay in circumcision, at least that there could be no perfection without it:

“great is circumcision (say they ^{f22}), for notwithstanding all the commands which Abraham our father did, he was not called perfect until he was circumcised; as it is written, (^{<0170>}Genesis 17:1); “walk before me, and be thou perfect:””

which objection the apostle anticipates, by observing, that they were circumcised in Christ their head, who is made unto them sanctification; and by him as the meritorious and efficient cause of their regeneration and conversion, or internal circumcision, the antitype and perfection of circumcision in the flesh; for the former, and not the latter, is here meant: these believers were circumcised in Christ, or by him; not with external circumcision, which was peculiar to the Jews, the natural seed of Abraham, prefigured Christ, and had its accomplishment in him, the body and substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law; and so was now nothing, either to Jew or Gentile: as for the Gentiles, they never were obliged unto it; and as for the Jews, it was an insupportable yoke to them, binding them to keep the whole law of Moses, which they could not do, and so it made nothing perfect; but Christ the substance of that, and the end of the whole law, has, the head of the body the church, in whom all the members of it are complete, and are circumcised:

with the circumcision made without hands: which is that of the heart, in the spirit; every man, though he may be circumcised in the flesh, is uncircumcised in heart, until he is circumcised by Christ and his Spirit; which is done, when he is pricked to the heart, and thoroughly convinced of sin, and the exceeding sinfulness of it; when the callousness and hardness of his heart is taken off and removed, and the iniquity of it is, laid open, the plague and corruption in it discerned, and all made naked and bare to the sinner's view; and when he is in pain on account of it, is broken and groans under a sense of it, and is filled with shame for it, and loathing and abhorrence of it: now this is effected not “by the hand of man”, as the Ethiopic version reads it, as outward circumcision was; this is not done by any creature whatever; not by angels, who rejoice at the repentance of sinners, but cannot produce it; nor by ministers of the Gospel, who at most are but instruments of regeneration and conversion; nor by men themselves; this is not by might or power of man, by the strength of his free will, but by the Spirit of God: for though men are sometimes exhorted to circumcise themselves, as in (^{<0506>}Deuteronomy 10:16 ^{<200>}Jeremiah 4:4), in order to convince them of the corruption of their nature, and the need they stand in of spiritual circumcision; yet whereas there is an utter disability in

them to effect it, and they need the power and grace of God for that purpose, the Lord has graciously promised his people to do it himself for them, (⁽⁶³¹⁶⁾Deuteronomy 30:6); so that this circumcision is in the name sense made without hands, as the human nature of Christ is said to be a tabernacle not made with hands, that, is of men, but of God, being what God has pitched, and not man; and it stands opposed to circumcision in the flesh, which was made with hands, (⁽⁴⁰²¹⁾Ephesians 2:11); and by some instrument, as a sharp knife or stone:

in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. The Vulgate Latin version leaves out the word “sins”, and so the Alexandrian copy and some others; and the Syriac version the word “body”: by “the flesh” is meant corrupt nature, which is born of the flesh, and propagated in a carnal way, and is the source and spring of all sin; by “the sins” of it are intended the works of the flesh, the inward motions of sin in the members, and the outward actions of it: these are said to be a “body”, because sin consists of various parts and members, as a body does; and these united together, and which receive frequent and daily additions; and which are committed and yielded to by the members of the natural body; and which body and bulk of sins arising from the corruption of nature are compared to a garment, and a very filthy one it is; in the putting off of which lies spiritual circumcision: this is done several ways; partly by Christ's wrapping himself in the sins of his people, bearing them in his body, and becoming a sacrifice for them, whereby the old man was crucified, and the body of sin destroyed; and by an application of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, to the consciences of his people, whereby their iniquities are caused to pass from them, and they are clothed with change of raiment; and by the power of his Spirit, laying sin under the restraints of grace, not suffering it to have dominion, but causing grace to reign through righteousness; and by the saints themselves, under the influence of grace, who put off the old man with his deeds, according to the former conversation:

by the circumcision of Christ; not that with which Christ was circumcised at eight days old, that he might appear to be truly man, and a son of Abraham, and under the law, and to fulfil all the righteousness of it, but that which he by his Spirit is the author of, and what is before expressed.

Ver. 12. *Buried with him in baptism,* etc.] The apostle goes on to observe how complete and perfect the saints are in Christ; that they are not only circumcised in him in a spiritual sense, and the body of the sins of their

flesh is put off, and removed from them, in allusion to the cutting off and casting away of the foreskin in circumcision; but that they and all their sins were buried with Christ, of which their baptism in water was a lively representation: Christ having died for their sins, was laid in the grave, where he continued for a while, and then rose again; and as they were crucified with him, they were also buried with him, as their head and representative; and all their sins too, which he left behind him in the grave, signified by his grave clothes there; and baptism being performed by immersion, when the person baptized is covered with water, and as it were buried in it, is a very significant emblem of all this; it is a representation of the burial of Christ, and very fitly holds him forth to the view of faith in the state of the dead, in the grave, and points out the place where the Lord lay; and it is also a representation of our burial with him, as being dead to sin, to the law, and to the world, by him. This shows now, that baptism was performed by dipping, or covering the whole body in water, for no other form of administration of baptism, as sprinkling, or pouring water on the face, can represent a burial, or be called one; and this is what many learned interpreters own, and observe on this place:

wherein also ye are risen with [him]; Christ is risen from the dead as the head and representative of his people, and they are risen with him; and their baptism is also an emblem of his and their resurrection, being administered by immersion, in which way only this can be signified; for as the going down into the water, and being under it, represents Christ's descending into the state of the dead, and his continuance in it, so the emersion, or coming up out of the water, represents his rising from the dead, and that of his people in him, in order to walk in newness of life; for the apostle's meaning is, that in baptism saints are risen with Christ, as well as in it buried with him: and this

through the faith of the operation of God; that is, it is through faith that saints see themselves buried and risen with Christ, to which the ordinance of baptism is greatly assisting, where there is true faith; for otherwise, without faith, this ordinance will be of no use to any such end and purpose; and it is not any faith that will avail, but that which is of God's operation; faith is not naturally in men, all men have it not; and those that have it, have it not of themselves, it is the gift of God; it is what he works in them, and by his power performs:

who hath raised him from the dead; this is a periphrasis of God the Father, to whom the resurrection of Christ from the dead is generally ascribed; though not to the exclusion of Christ, and of the Spirit, who were also concerned; and is here added, partly to show in what respect faith, which is God's work, has him for its object, as having raised Christ from the dead, who was delivered for offences, but is risen again through the power of God for justification, and whoever with his heart believes this shall be saved; and partly to show, that the same power is exerted in working true faith in the heart, as was put forth in raising Christ from the dead.

Ver. 13. *And you being dead in your sins*, etc.] Not corporeally, though sin had subjected them to a corporeal death, and their bodies were really mortal, and in a little time must die; but morally, sin had brought a death upon them in a moral sense, they were separated from God, as at death the body is from the soul, and so were alienated from the life of God, and consequently must be dead; they had lost the image of God, which consisted in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and were dead as to the understanding of what was good, as to their affections for it, or will and capacity to do it; and, like dead men, were insensible of their state, their sin, and misery; and altogether inactive and helpless in spiritual things, being destitute of spiritual life, strength, and motion; and were moreover in themselves deserving of eternal death, and according to the law of works, under the sentence of it, and so liable and exposed unto it; and all this for, and on account of their sins, their actual sins and transgressions here meant; which separated them from God, deformed his image in them, and hardened their hearts, that they had no true sight and sense of themselves; as also on account of the corruption of their nature, signified in the next clause:

and the uncircumcision of your flesh; which is to be taken not literally, for the prepuce, or foreskin of their flesh, which was a sign and token of the corruption of nature, but figuratively that itself; it being usual with the Jews to call the vitiosity of nature I r [, “uncircumcision”; which, they say¹²³, is one of the seven names of [r rxy , “the evil imagination”, or corrupt nature, denoting the pollution, loathsomeness, and abominableness of it:

hath he quickened together with him; that is, with Christ; this may be understood either of the quickening of them in conversion and sanctification; for as they were dead in sin in a moral sense, in conversion a principle of life was implanted in them, or grace, as a living principle, was

wrought in their souls by the Spirit of life from Christ; so that they could see their lost state, their need of Christ, the glory of his person and righteousness, the fulness and suitableness of his grace; feel their burdens, and handle the word of life; could hear the Gospel, speak the language of Canaan, breathe in prayer and spiritual desires, walk in Christ, and do all things through him; and this was God's act and not theirs, and owing to his rich mercy and great love: and this may be said to be done "with Christ", because this is in consequence of his being quickened, or raised from the dead; and by it they were made partakers of the life of Christ, they became one spirit with him; and it was not so much they that lived, but Christ lived in them; and besides, they were quickened, in order to live a life of grace and communion with him here, and of glory hereafter: or it may be interpreted of the quickening of them in justification; and the rather, because of what is said in the next clause; and that either openly, as when a sinner is convinced that he is dead in a legal sense, and faith is wrought in him to behold pardon and righteousness in Christ; upon which he prays for the one, and pleads the other; and the Spirit of God seals unto him the pardon of his sins, brings near the righteousness of Christ, enables him to lay hold on it as his, and pronounces him justified by it; and may well be called justification of life, for he is then alive in a legal sense, in his own comfortable view and apprehension of things: or secretly in Christ, as the head and representative of all his people; who when he was quickened, they were quickened with him; when he rose from the dead, they rose with him; and when he was justified, they were instilled in him, and this seems to be the true sense of this passage:

having forgiven you all trespasses. This was a past act, being done and over; not only at first conversion, when a discovery of it was made, but at the death of Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sin; yea, even as early as Christ became a surety, when the sins of his people were not imputed to them, but to him: and this was a single act, and done and complete at once; forgiveness of sin is not done by piecemeals, or at different times, or by divers acts, but is done at once, and includes sin past, present, and to come; and is universal, reaches to all sin, original and actual, before and after conversion; sins of thought, word, and action: and this is God's act, and his only; not men, nor ministers, nor angels, can forgive sin; this is the peculiar prerogative of God, and is owing to his abundant mercy and free grace, and which is signified by the word here used. The Syriac and Arabic versions read, "having forgiven us all our

trespasses”; and so the Alexandrian copy, and some others, read “us” instead of “you”.

Ver. 14. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances*, etc.] Various are the senses interpreters give of these words; some think by the handwriting is meant the covenant God made with Adam, (^{<00217>}Genesis 2:17), which being broken, obliged him and all his posterity to the penalty of death, but is cancelled and abolished by Christ; others, the agreement which the Israelites made with God at Mount Sinai, when they said, “all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient”, (^{<0247>}Exodus 24:7); which was as it were setting their hands, and laying themselves under obligation to obedience, and, in case of failure, to the penalty of the law; others, God's book of remembrance of the sins of men, out of which they are blotted when pardoned; others, the book of conscience, which bears witness to every debt, to every violation and transgression of the law, which may be said to be blotted out, when pacified with an application of the blood and righteousness of Christ; rather with others it signifies the ceremonial law, which lay in divers ordinances and commands, and is what, the apostle afterwards speaks of more clearly and particularly; and may be called so, because submission to it was an acknowledgment both of the faith and guilt of sin; every washing was saying, that a man was polluted and unclean; and every sacrifice was signing a man's own guilt and condemnation, and testifying that he deserved to die as the creature did, which was offered in sacrifice: or rather the whole law of Moses is intended, which was the handwriting of God, and obliged to obedience to it, and to punishment in case of disobedience; and this the Jews^{f24} call *bwj rj ç*, “the writing of the debt”, and is the very phrase the Syriac version uses here: now this was as a debt book, which showed and testified the debts of men; that is, their sins, how many they are guilty of, and what punishment is due unto them: and may well be said to be that

that was against us, which was contrary to us; its nature being holy, just, good, and spiritual, is contrary to the unholy and carnal heart of man, and its commands disagreeable to his mind and will; nor can he perform what it requires; nor can he be subject to it without the grace of God, any more than he can like its precepts; and besides, it is contrary to him, and against him, as it charges him with debts, and proves them upon him, so that he has nothing to say in his defence; yea, it proceeds against him, and curses and condemns, and kills him: but God has “blotted” it out, Christ having engaged as a surety for his people, to pay off all their debts; and this being

done by him, God has crossed the debt book of the law, has blotted it out, so that this book is of no force; it does not stand against these persons, it cannot show or prove any standing debt, it cannot demand any, or inflict any penalty: nay, he has

took it out of the way; it is not to be seen or looked into as a debt book; it is abolished and done away; it is no more as administered by Moses, as a covenant of works, or as to its rigorous exaction, curse, and condemnation; this is true of the whole law of Moses, as well as of the ceremonial, which is utterly abolished and disannulled in every sense, because of the weakness and unprofitableness of it:

nauling it to his cross: to the cross of Christ, showing that the abolition of it is owing to the cross of Christ; where and when he bore the curse and penalty of the law for his people, as well as answered all the types and shadows of it: it is thought to be an allusion to a custom in some countries, to cancel bonds, or antiquate edicts and decrees, by driving a nail through them, so that they could not be legible any more: or it may be to the writing of Pilate, which contained the charge and accusation against Christ; and which was placed over his head upon the cross, and fastened to it with nails^{f25}; every nail in the cross made a scissure in this handwriting, or bond of the law, that lay against us, whereby it was so rent and torn, as to be of no force: thus the Holy Ghost makes use of various expressions, to show that there is nothing in the law standing against the saints; it is blotted out, and cannot be read; it is took away, and cannot be seen; it is nailed to the cross of Christ, and is torn to pieces thereby, that nothing can ever be produced from it to their hurt and condemnation.

Ver. 15. [*And*] *having spoiled principalities and powers*, etc.]

Principalities of hell, the infernal powers of darkness, the devil that had the power of death, the accuser of the brethren, who often objected their debts, with all his works and posse: these Christ has divested of their armour, wherein they trusted to have ruined men, as sin, the law, and death; he has ransomed his people from him that was stronger than they, and taken the prey out of the hands of the mighty; he has bruised the serpent's head, demolished his works, destroyed him himself, and all his powers, and defeated all their counsels and designs against his elect: some render the word *απεκδυσαμενος*, “having put off”, or “unclothed”: and which some of the ancient writers apply to the flesh of Christ, and understand it of his putting off the flesh by death, whereby he gave the

death blow to Satan and his powers, (^{<S1214}Hebrews 2:14), to which sense agrees the Syriac version, which renders the words, *hrgp j l çbw*, “and by the putting off of his body, he exposed to shame principalities and powers”: but it may be better interpreted of unclathing, or stripping principalities and powers of their armour, with which they were clothed; as is usually done to enemies, when they fall into the hands of their conquerors: unless rather this is to be understood of Christ's taking away the power and authority of the Jewish ecclesiastical rulers and governors, by abolishing the ceremonial law, and the ordinances of it; declaring himself to be the alone King and Lawgiver in his house, and requiring subjection to his institutions and appointments, which sense agrees with the context:

he made a show of them openly; when being raised from the dead, he ascended on high, and led captivity captive; he led Satan and his principalities and powers captive, who had led others, as he passed through the air, the territories of the devil, in the sight of God and the holy angels:

triumphing over them in it; which some understand of the cross, as if where and by what he got the victory, there he triumphed; the cross, where his enemies thought to make a show of him, expose him to public scorn and contempt, and to triumph over him, was as it were the triumphant chariot, in which he triumphed over all the powers of hell, when he had conquered them by it: but the words may be rendered “in himself”, as they are by the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions; and the sense be, that as he by himself got the victory, his own arm brought salvation to him, so he alone shared the glory and honour of the triumph: or it may be rendered “in him”, and the whole in this and the preceding verse be applied to God the Father, who, as in (^{<S1212}Colossians 2:12,13); is said to raise Christ from the dead, to quicken sinners dead in sins, and to forgive all their trespasses; so he may be said to blot out the handwriting of ordinances, and to spoil principalities and powers, expose them to public view and shame, and triumph over them, “in him”, in and by his Son Jesus Christ: the whole is an allusion to the victories, spoils, and triumphs, of the Roman emperors, who when they had obtained a victory, a triumph was decreed for them by the senate; in which the emperor was drawn in an open chariot, and the captives being stripped of their armour, and their hands tied behind them, were led before him and exposed to public view and disgrace; while he was shouted and huzzaed through the city of Rome, and had all the marks of honour and respect given him ^{f26}: now all that is said in the preceding

verses show how complete the saints are in and by Christ; and stand in no need of the philosophy of the Gentiles, or the ceremonies of the Jews; nor have anything to fear from their enemies, sin, Satan, and the law, for sin is pardoned, the law is abolished, and Satan conquered.

Ver. 16. *Let no man therefore judge you*, etc.] Since they were complete in Christ, had everything in him, were circumcised in him; and particularly since the handwriting of the law was blotted out, and torn to pieces through the nails of the cross of Christ, the apostle's conclusion is, that they should be judged by no man; they should not regard or submit to any man's judgment, as to the observance of the ceremonial law: Christ is the prophet who was to be raised up like unto Moses, and who only, and not Moses, is to be heard; saints are to call no man master upon earth but him; they are not to be the servants of men, nor should suffer any yoke of bondage to be imposed upon them; and should they be suffered and condemned by others, as if they were transgressors of the law, and their state bad, for not observing the rituals of the former dispensation, they should not regard such censures, for the judaizing Christians were very censorious, they were ready to look upon and condemn a man as an immoral man, as in a state of damnation, if he did not keep the law of Moses; but such rigid censures were to be disregarded, “let no man judge”, or “condemn you”; and though they could not help or hinder the judgment and condemnation of men, yet they could despise them, and not be uneasy with them, but set light by them, as they ought to do. The Syriac version renders it, *^wkdwdn*, “let no man trouble you”, or make you uneasy, by imposing ceremonies on you: the sense is, that the apostle would not have them submit to the yoke they would lay upon them, nor be terrified by their anathemas against them, for the non-observation of the things that follow:

in meat or in drink; or on account of not observing the laws and rules about meats and drinks, in the law of Moses; such as related to the difference between clean and unclean creatures, to abstinence in Nazarites from wine and strong drink, and which forbid drinking out of an uncovered vessel, and which was not clean; hence the washing of cups, etc. religiously observed by the Pharisees. There was no distinction of meats and drinks before the law, but all sorts of herbs and animals, without limitation, were given to be food for men; by the ceremonial law a difference was made between them, some were allowed, and others were forbidden; which law stood only in meats and drinks, and such like things, but is now abolished; for the kingdom of God, or the Gospel dispensation, does not lie in the

observance of such outward things, but in internal ones, in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; it is not any thing that goes into the man that defiles, nor is anything in its own nature common or unclean, but every creature of God is good, so be it, it be used in moderation and with thankfulness:

or in respect of an holyday; or feast, such as the feast of the passover, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of Pentecost; which were three grand festivals, at which all the Jewish males were obliged to appear before the Lord; but were never binding upon the Gentiles, and were what the Christians under the Gospel dispensation had nothing to do with, and even believing Jews were freed from them, as having had their accomplishment in Christ; and therefore were not to be imposed upon them, or they condemned for the neglect of them. The phrase **εν μερει**, which we render “in respect”, has greatly puzzled interpreters; some reading it “in part of a feast”; or holyday; as if the sense was, that no man should judge or condemn them, for not observing some part of a festival, since they were not obliged to observe any at all: others “in the partition”, or “division of a feast”; that is, in the several distinct feasts, as they come in their turns: some^{f27} think the apostle respects the Misna, or oral law of the Jews, in which are several treatises concerning a good day, or an holyday, the beginning of the new year, and the sabbath, which treatises are divided into sections or chapters; and that it is one of these sections or chapters, containing rules about these things, that is here regarded; and then the sense is, let no man judge you or condemn you, for your non-observance of feast days, new moons, and sabbaths, by any part, chapter, or section, of **bwj μwy**, or by anything out of the treatise “concerning a feast day”; or by any part, chapter, or section, of **hñç çar**, the treatise “concerning the beginning of the year”; or by any part, chapter, or section, of **tbç**, the treatise “concerning the sabbath”; and if these treatises are referred to, it proves the antiquity of the Misna. The Syriac version renders it, **ada [d agl wpb**, “in the divisions of the feast”: frequent mention is made of **gj h swrp**, “the division”, or “half of the feast”, in the Jewish writings: thus for instance it is said^{f28},

“three times in a year they clear the chamber (where the half-shekels were put), **swrpb**, “in the half”, or middle of the passover, in the middle of Pentecost, and in the middle of the feast.”

again ^{f29}

“there are three times for tithing of beasts, in the middle of the passover, in the middle of Pentecost, and the middle of the feast;”

that is, of tabernacles: and this, the Jewish commentators say ^{f30}, was fifteen days before each of these festivals: now whether it was to this, *swrp*, “middle”, or “half space”, before each and any of these feasts the apostle refers to, may be considered:

or of the new moon; which the Jews were obliged to observe, by attending religious worship, and offering sacrifices; (see ^{<031>}Numbers 28:11) (^{<1023>}2 Kings 4:23).

Or of the sabbath [days], or “sabbaths”; meaning the jubilee sabbath, which was one year in fifty; and the sabbath of the land, which was one year in seven; and the seventh day sabbath, and some copies read in the singular number, “or of the sabbath”; which were all peculiar to the Jews, were never binding on the Gentiles, and to which believers in Christ, be they who they will, are by no means obliged; nor ought they to observe them, the one any more than the other; and should they be imposed upon them, they ought to reject them; and should they be judged, censured, and condemned, for so doing, they ought not to mind it. It is the sense of the Jews themselves, that the Gentiles are not obliged to keep their sabbath; no, not the proselyte of the gate, or he that dwelt in any of their cities; for they say ^{f31}, that

“it is lawful for a proselyte of the gate to do work on the sabbath day for himself, as for an Israelite on a common feast day; R. Akiba says, as for all Israelite on a feast day; R. Jose says, it is lawful for a proselyte of the gate to do work on the sabbath day for himself, as for an Israelite on a common or week day:”

and this last is the received sense of the nation; nay, they assert that a Gentile that keeps a sabbath is guilty of death ^{f32}; (see Gill on ^{<4027>}Mark 2:27”). Yea, they say ^{f33}, that

“if a Gentile sabbatizes, or keeps a sabbath, though on any of the days of the week, if he makes or appoints it as a sabbath for himself, he is guilty of the same.”

It is the general sense of that people, that the sabbath was peculiarly given to the children of Israel; and that the Gentiles, strangers, or others, were not punishable for the neglect and breach of it ^{f34}; that it is a special and an additional precept, which, with some others, were given them at Marah, over and above the seven commands, which the sons of Noah were only obliged to regard ^{f35}; and that the blessing and sanctifying of it were by the manna provided for that day; and that the passage in (^{OCOB}Genesis 2:3); refers not to the then present time, but **dyt [h l]**, “to time to come”, to the time of the manna ^{f36}.

Ver. 17. *Which are a shadow of things to come*, etc.] By Christ, and under the Gospel dispensation; that is, they were types, figures, and representations of spiritual and evangelical things: the different “meats and drinks”, clean and unclean, allowed or forbidden by the law, were emblems of the two people, the Jews and Gentiles, the one clean, the other unclean; but since these are become one in Christ, the distinction of meats is ceased, these shadows are gone; and also of the different food of regenerate and unregenerate souls, the latter feeding on impure food, the ashes and husks of sensual lusts, or their own works, the former on the milk and meat in the Gospel, the wholesome words of Christ; and likewise the clean meat was a shadow of Christ himself, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. The “holy days”, or “feasts” of the Jews, the feasts of tabernacles, of the passover and Pentecost, were types of Christ; the feast of tabernacles, though it was in remembrance of the Israelites dwelling in tents and booths when they came out of Egypt, yet was also a representation of the people of God dwelling in the earthly houses of their tabernacles here on earth; and particularly of Christ's dwelling, or tabernacling in human nature, and who likewise was born at the time of this feast; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁴John 1:14”). The passover, as it was a commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, and of God's passing over their houses when he smote the firstborn of the Egyptians, so it was a type of Christ our passover sacrificed for us, and was kept by Moses in the faith of him, (⁴⁰¹⁵Hebrews 11:28); there is a very great resemblance, in many particulars, between Christ and the paschal lamb; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁶1 Corinthians 5:7”). The feast of Pentecost, or the feast of harvest and firstfruits, was a shadow of the firstfruits of the Spirit, which Christ having received, gave to his disciples on that day; and of the harvest of souls to be gathered under the Gospel dispensation, of which the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost was an earnest

and pledge. The “new moon” was typical of the church, which is fair as the moon, and receives all her light from Christ the sun of righteousness; and of the renewed state of the church under the Gospel dispensation, when the old things of the law are passed away, and all things relating to church order, ordinances, and discipline, are become new. The “sabbaths” were also shadows of future things; the grand sabbatical year, or the fiftieth year sabbath, or jubilee, in which liberty was proclaimed throughout the land, a general release of debts, and restoration of inheritances, prefigured the liberty we have by Christ from sin, Satan, and the law, the payment of all our debts by Christ, and the right we have through him to the heavenly and incorruptible inheritance. The seventh year sabbath, in which there was no tilling of the land, no ploughing, sowing, nor reaping, was an emblem of salvation through Christ by free grace, and not by the works of men; and the seventh day sabbath was a type of that spiritual rest we have in Christ now, and of that eternal rest we shall have with him in heaven hereafter: now these were but shadows, not real things; or did not contain the truth and substance of the things themselves, of which they were shadows; and though they were representations of divine and spiritual things, yet dark ones, they had not so much as the very image of the things; they were but shadows, and like them fleeting and passing away, and now are gone:

but the body [is] of Christ: or, as the Syriac version reads it, “the body is Christ”; that is, the body, or sum and substance of these shadows, is Christ; he gave rise unto them, he existed before them, as the body is before the shadow; not only as God, as the Son of God, but as Mediator, whom these shadows regarded as such, and as such he cast them; and he is the end of them, the fulfilling end of them; they have all their accomplishment in him: and he is the body of spiritual and heavenly things; the substantial things and doctrines of the Gospel are all of Christ, they all come by him; all the truths, blessings, and promises of grace; are from him and by him, and he himself the sum of them all. The allusion seems to be to a way of speaking among the Jews, who were wont to call the root, foundation, substance, and essence of a thing, *apwg*, “the body of it”^{f37}: so they say^{f38},

“the constitutions concerning the sanctification of the offerings and the tithes, are, both the one and the other, *hrwt ypwg*, “the bodies”, or substantial parts of the law:”

and again^{f39}, that

“the constitutions or rules about the sabbath, the festivals and prevarications, they are as mountains that hang by an hair; for the Scripture is small, and the constitutions are many; the judgments and the services, the purifications and uncleannesses, and the incests, they have, upon which they can support themselves, and these, and these, are **hrwt ypwg**, “the bodies of the law”:]”

they say ^{f40} of a small section, or paragraph, that all the bodies of the law depend upon it: once more ^{f41},

“the sabbaths, and the good days (the feasts or holy days) are **pwg**, “the bodies” of the sign;”

which the phylacteries or frontlets were for; but our apostle says, that Christ is the body and substance of all these shadows, in opposition to these sayings and notions of the Jews: some connect this last clause with the former part of the following verse, rendering it as the Arabic version thus, “because of the communion of the body of Christ, let no man condemn you”; and the Ethiopic version thus, “and let no man account you fools, because of the body of Christ”, but there is nothing in the text to support these versions.

Ver. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward*, etc.] Or prize; the allusion is to the Olympic games, one of which was running races; in which the stadium, or race plot was fixed, a mark set up to look and run unto, a corruptible crown proposed to be run for, and which was held by one who sat as judge, and determined who got the victory, and to whom the crown belonged; these judges sometimes acted the unfair part, and defrauded the victors of their proper right, and to such the apostle compares the false teachers: the Christian's reward, or prize he is running for, is the incorruptible and never fading crown of glory, life, and righteousness; the race plot is the Christian life, spent in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, and in holding fast, and holding out in a profession of faith unto the end; the mark he looks at, and presses towards, is Jesus Christ; and his great concern, the apostle by this metaphor suggests should be, lest by false teachers he should be defrauded of the prize of the high calling of God, through their removing the mark Christ from him, by denying his person and Godhead; or by intercepting his sight of him, placing other objects before him, such as angels, to be worshipped and adored; or by darkening of it, joining Moses and Christ, law and Gospel, works and

grace together, in the business of salvation; whereby he might seem to come short, or be in danger of coming short of the heavenly glory:

in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels; these things the apostle instances in, as in what lay their danger of being beguiled of their reward, or prize. True humility is an excellent grace; it is the clothing and ornament of a Christian; nor is there anything that makes a man more like Christ, than this grace; but in these men here respected, it was only the appearance of humility, it was not real; it was in things they devised and willed, not in things which God commanded, Christ required, or the Scriptures pointed at; they would have been thought to have been very lowly and humble, and to have a great consciousness of their own vileness and unworthiness to draw nigh to Christ the Mediator immediately, and by him to God; wherefore in pretence of great humility, they proposed to make use of angels as mediators with Christ; whereby Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, would be removed out of sight and use; and that humble boldness and holy confidence with God at the throne of grace, through Christ, which believers are allowed to use, would be discouraged and destroyed, and the saints be in danger as to the outward view of things, and in all human appearance of losing their reward: “worshipping of angels” was a practice which very early prevailed among some that were called Christians, and for a long time continued in Phrygia and Pisidia; some make Simon Magus, and others Cerinthus, the author of this idolatry; but was not only a branch of the Platonic philosophy, and so a part of that philosophy and vain deceit before mentioned, (⁵¹¹⁸Colossians 2:8), which these men might have borrowed from the Gentiles, but was a notion and practice of the Jews: before the Babylonish captivity, the names of angels were not known, nor are they ever mentioned by name in Scripture; hence they say ^{f42}, that

“the names of angels came up with them, or by their means from Babylon.”

after this they began to talk much of them, and to have too high a veneration for them, and ascribe too much to them; and observing that the law was ordained, spoken, and given by them, and that the administration of things under the former dispensation was greatly by their means, they fell to worshipping of them ^{f43}; and the believing Jews were hereby in great danger of falling into the same practice: hence the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, writing to the Jewish church, largely insists on the proof of

Christ being superior to angels; showing that he has a more excellent name than they had; that he was the Son of God in such sense as they were not the sons of God; that they were worshippers of him, yea, that they were creatures made by him, and even ministering spirits to his saints, the heirs of salvation: and very rightly, is worshipping of angels condemned here by the apostle, since God only is the object of worship; since these are creatures, and so not to be adored; are worshippers of God and Christ themselves, and have refused adoration when it has been offered to them: that the Jews did, and do worship angels, and make use of them as mediators and intercessors, is clear from their liturgy, or prayer books, where they say^{f44}

“*μυμj r ykaI m*, “O ye angels of mercies”, or ye merciful angels, ministers of the most High, entreat now the face of God for good:”

and elsewhere^{f45},

“they say three times, let Juhach keep us, let Juhach deliver us, and let Juhach help us:”

now Juhach was the name of an angel, who they supposed had the care of men, and is taken from the final letters of those words in (^{3911b}Psalm 91:11), “for he shall give his angels charge over thee”: so they speak of an angel whom they call Sandalphon, who they say is appointed over the prayers of the righteous^{f46}: with this notion the judaizing and false teachers seem to have been tinctured, and against which the apostle here cautions the saints, lest, under a show of humility, they should be drawn into it: and to preserve them from it, he observes, that such an one who should spread and propagate such a notion, was one that was

intruding into those things which he hath not seen; thrusting himself in a bold and daring manner into an inquiry and search after, debate upon, and affirmation of things he could have no certain knowledge of; as of angels, whose nature, qualities, works, and ministrations, he had never seen with his bodily eyes; nor could ever discern with the eyes of his understanding any such things in the Scriptures, which he ascribed to them; but they were the birth of his own mind, the fruits of his own fancy and imagination, things devised in his own brain: being

vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; judging of things not according to the word of God, and with a spiritual judgment, and according to a spiritual

sense and experience, but according to his own carnal reason, and the vanity of his mind; being puffed and swelled with an high opinion of himself, of his great parts and abilities, of his knowledge of things above others, and of his capacity to penetrate into, and find out things which were not seen and known by others: this shows that his humility was forced, and only in outward appearance, and was not true and genuine.

Ver. 19. *And not holding the head*, etc.] Christ, as some copies express it; for by making use of angels as mediators and intercessors, Christ the only Mediator, the Lord and head of angels, and of the church, was dropped and laid aside; which is another reason the apostle gives, why such men, and their principles and practices, should be shunned and avoided by all those that had a regard for Christ the head:

from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God: by “all the body”, or the whole body, is meant the church, the mystical body of Christ; which, like an human body, consists of various members, all in union with one another, and with Christ the head: and “by joints and bands” are intended, either the grace of Christian charity, or love, the bond of perfectness; which is that in Christ's mystical body, as joints and bands are in an human body; for by this the members of Christ are joined, united, and knit together, and make increase: or else the ordinances of the Gospel, by which the saints are kept together in order, and through which is spiritual “nourishment ministered”, from Christ the head to them; who hates not his own flesh, the members of his body, but nourishes and cherishes them, with the wine of divine love, with the water of life, with himself the bread of life, with his flesh which is meat indeed, and with his blood which is drink indeed; with his own wholesome words, even the words of faith and sound doctrine: and it is from him, that the saints “are knit together”: both to one another in him the cornerstone, and also to him, being made one body and one spirit with him; and so from and through him, this body “increaseth with the increase of God”: that which God has appointed for his church, and which he gives; and which it will arrive unto, when all the elect are gathered in, and they are filled with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and these are brought to their proper pitch and full degree; all which is had from, and owing to Christ: for if Christ the head is not held, the body will have no nourishment, but soon become a skeleton; the members of it will soon loosen from one another and fall into pieces, and there will be no spiritual increase or edification: all which are so many

reasons, why the saints should be upon their guard against these false teachers, and judaizing Christians, and which argument and exhortation the apostle further pursues in the following verses.

Ver. 20. *Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ*, etc.] Or “seeing ye are dead with Christ”; for these words do not signify any doubt about it, but suppose it, and press what is taken for granted. They were dead with Christ by virtue of union to him; they being one with him, and considered in him as their head and representative, died in him, and with him; they were crucified with him, as they are said to be buried with him, and risen with him; they were dead with him, by having communion with him in his death; they partook of the benefits of it, as redemption, pardon, justification, and reconciliation; and they were planted together with him in the likeness of his death, not merely partakers of his sufferings, or suffered with him, and were conformable unto his death, by undergoing such like things as he did, but as he died unto sin, and lived unto God, so did they; and through the virtue and efficacy of his death were dead to sin, so as that it was not imputed to them, so as to be freed and discharged from it, that it could not damn and destroy them; yea, so as that itself was crucified with him, and destroyed by him: and also to the law, to the moral law; not but that they lived according to it, as in the hands of Christ, in their walk and conversation, but did not seek for life, righteousness, and salvation by it; they were dead unto it as to justification by it, and even to obedience to it in a rigorous and compulsive way; and to all its terrors and threatenings, being moved to a regard to it from a principle of love to Christ; and to all its accusations and charges, its curses and condemnation, and as a ministration of death, fearing neither a corporeal, nor an eternal one: they were dead also to the ceremonial law, and were free

from the rudiments, or “elements”

of the world: the ordinances of a worldly sanctuary, the rites and ceremonies of the world, or state of the Jews, in opposition to, and distinction from, the Gospel dispensation, or times of the Messiah, called, and that by them, *abh μl w*], “the world to come”: these were like letters to a language, or like the grammar, which contains the rudiments of it; these were the first principles of the oracles of God, which led to Christ, and had their accomplishment and end in him; and so believers were dead unto them, and delivered from them, as they were also to the world, the Jewish state, and were entered into the world to come; and even to this

present evil world, and to the men and things of it, being by Christ crucified to it, and that to them: upon all which the apostle thus reasons,

why, as though living in the world; since ye are dead unto it, and from the rudiments of it, why should ye be as though ye lived in it? his meaning is not, that they should not live in the world, nor among the men of it, for then they must needs go out of the world; saints may live in the world, though they are not of it, and among the inhabitants of it, though they do not belong to them, but to another and better country: nor does he suggest, that they lived according to the course of the world, as they did in their unregenerate state; but what he seems to blame them for, and reason with them about, was, that they acted as if they sought for life and righteousness in the rudiments of the world, or by their obedience to ceremonial rites, or human inventions: for he adds,

are ye subject to ordinances? not civil and political ones, which are for the better and more orderly government of kingdoms, states, and cities, for these the saints ought to be subject to, both for the Lord's sake, and conscience sake; nor Gospel ordinances, as baptism, and the Lord's supper, for such all believers ought to submit unto; but either legal ones, the weak and beggarly elements, the yoke of bondage, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, the handwriting of ordinances, which some were desirous of conforming to; or rather the ordinances and appointments of the Jewish fathers, the traditions of the elders, their constitutions and decrees, which are collected together, and make up their Misna, or oral law; and so the argument is from the one to the other, from the greater to the less, that if they were delivered by Christ from the burdensome rites of the ceremonial law, which were originally appointed by God, it must be great weakness in them to be subject to the ordinances of men; or both the institutions of the ceremonial law, and the decrees of the Jewish doctors about them, which were devised by them, and added to them, and imposed as necessary to be observed, may be intended; of which the apostle gives some particulars in (^{<small>S1021</small>}Colossians 2:21).

Ver. 21. *Touch not, taste not, handle not.*] This the apostle says, not of himself, but in the person of the Jewish doctors; who urging the use of the ceremonial law, to which they added decrees and constitutions of their own, said, “touch not” the dead body of any man, the bone of a man, or a grave, any man or woman in their uncleanness; not only their flesh, but the bed they lay on, or the seat they sat on; or any creature that was by the law

unclean; of a Gentile, or any notorious sinner, or common man: hence the Pharisees used to wash themselves when they returned from market, lest they should have been by any means accidentally defiled by touching any thing unclean. There is a treatise in their Misna, called Oholot, which gives many rules, and is full of decrees about things [gmb μyamj m, “that defile by touching”. And so they likewise said, “taste not”, neither the fat, nor the blood of any creature which might be eaten itself, nor swine's flesh, nor the flesh of any creature that chewed the cud, or divided the hoof; nor might the Nazarites taste wine, or strong drink, or vinegar made of either, or moist grapes, or even the kernels and husks; and if a man ate but the quantity of an olive of any of the above things, he was, according to the Jewish canons, to be cut off, or beaten^{f47}: and they also said, “handle not”; or, as the Syriac and Arabic read, “do not come near”, or “draw not nigh”, to a Gentile, to one of another nation, or any unclean person, to whom they forbid any near approach or conversation; or “handle not” any of the above things. Some think that these several rules have respect only to meats; as “touch not”, that is, do not eat of things forbidden ever so little; nay, “taste not”, do not let anything of them come within your lips; yea, “handle not”, do not so much as touch them with your fingers. Others think that touch not regards abstinence from women; (see ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 7:1); and respects the prohibition of marriage by some in those times; and “taste not”, the forbearance of certain meats, at certain times, which God had not restrained any from; and “handle not”, that is, make no use of, or enjoy your own goods, and so designs that voluntary poverty which some entered into under the direction of false teachers.

Ver. 22. *Which all are to perish with the using*, etc.] Meaning either the ordinances concerning touching, tasting, and handling, which bring destruction and death on them that use them, and comply with them, in order to obtain righteousness and life; for instead of enjoying salvation through them, they were the cause of damnation to them. Or rather the meats not to be touched, tasted, or handled; these are in their own nature perishing things, and perish by being used; they are only of service to the body, and can be of none to the soul; the using of them cannot defile the man, nor an abstinence from them sanctify him, or commend him to God; they only relate to this present life, and will cease with it, and can have no manner of influence on the spiritual and eternal concerns of men: and besides, the ordinances concerning them are not of God, but are

after the commandments and doctrines of men; for so even the ceremonial law, being now abolished, though originally of God, yet the imposition of it, as necessary to salvation, was a commandment and doctrine of man's; and particularly the traditions of the elders, and the various rules and decrees, which the doctors among the Jews obliged men to regard, were human inventions and devices: and this is another reason the apostle makes use of to dissuade from any regard unto them; for whatever is of man, and not of God, in religious worship, ought to be rejected.

Ver. 23. *Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom*, etc.] The authors of them set up for men of wisdom, and were esteemed such, and are often styled $\mu\upsilon\mu\kappa\jmath$, “wise men”; and their scholars that received their traditions, and explained and enforced them on others, $\mu\upsilon\mu\kappa\jmath$ h $ydyml$ t , “the disciples of the wise men”: and they pretended, that these constitutions of theirs were “a hedge for the law”, and for the honour of it, and to preserve it, and keep men from transgressing it; and this carried in it some appearance of wisdom: and their pretensions to it lay in the following things,

in will worship; being what was over and above that which was commanded by God, and so, like the freewill offerings under the law, must be acceptable to him; this was one of their colours, which had some show of wisdom, religion, and zeal:

and humility: in worshipping of angels, and not coming directly, and with boldness, to God or Christ; or rather in subjecting themselves to the yoke of the law, and submitting to the decrees of the fathers and doctors of the church, who were more wise, and learned, and knowing than they, and so had the appearance of prudence, gentleness, and goodness:

and neglecting of the body; by fastings and watchings, whereby they seemed to be very religious and devout, holy and mortified persons, who kept under their bodies, subdued their unruly appetites, and fulfilled not the lusts of the flesh: but then this was only a show of wisdom and godliness; there was no truth nor reality in these things; they were only a mere form, an outside show, a mere pretence; there was no true devotion nor religion in them: and so

not in any honour; or to be had in any esteem; for if the rites of the ceremonial law itself were weak and beggarly elements, much more must

these additions to it, and corruptions of it, be such; and at most only regarded things external, that were

to the satisfying, of the flesh; either the body, or the carnal mind, in which they were vainly pulled up: though some consider this last clause as explanative of the former, “neglecting of the body”, or not sparing it, but afflicting it with austerities of life; depriving it of its proper right, what is necessary for it, not taking due care of it, so as to satisfy nature; whereby instead of honouring, they dishonoured it: for though the body is not to be pampered, and the lusts of it indulged, or luxury and intemperance to be encouraged; yet since the body is the work of God's hands, is the habitation of the soul, and by which it performs its offices, and is the purchase of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and will be raised a glorious body at the last day, it ought not to be neglected and dishonoured; but should have a sufficiency of food and clothing, whereby it may be comfortably and honourably nourished and supported.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS 3

This chapter contains exhortations to several duties, some more general, which relate to all Christians, and others more particular, which belong to saints in such and such a state of life. The apostle begins with an exhortation to seek things heavenly, and not earthly, and to set the affections on the one, and not on the other: the arguments used to enforce it are taken from the saints being risen with Christ; from Christ being in heaven at the Father's right hand; from their being dead to sin, the law, and the world; from their having life in Christ safe and secure; yea, from Christ being their life, and their appearance with him in glory, (~~SICR6~~Colossians 3:1-4). And next he proceeds to an exhortation to the mortification of sin, and the deeds of it, which he urges from the wrath of God coming upon men for these things, and from the consideration of their former state and condition, expressed by walking and living in them, (~~SICR6~~Colossians 3:5-7), and by a metaphor taken from the putting off and on of garments, he exhorts to the putting off of the old man, with his deeds, several of which are mentioned, (~~SICR8~~Colossians 3:8,9), and to the putting on of the new man, and to the exercise of various graces, as mercy, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, charity, and peace, (~~SICR6~~Colossians 3:10-15). And then he proceeds to exhort to such duties as relate to the word and worship of God; as that the word of Christ should have an abiding place in them, and that they should teach and instruct one another by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and do all they did in a religious way, in the name of Christ, with thankfulness to God by him, (~~SICR6~~Colossians 3:16,17). And closes the chapter with the duties of wives to their husbands, and of husbands to their wives, and of children to their parents, and of parents to their children, and of servants to their masters, (~~SICR8~~Colossians 3:18-25).

Ver. 1. *If ye then be risen with Christ*, etc.] The apostle having observed in the former chapter, that the believing Colossians were dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, were buried with him in baptism, and were risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, argues from hence how much it became them to regard a new and spiritual life, and to

seek after superior and heavenly things, and treat with neglect and contempt carnal and earthly ones. For he does not here call in question their being risen with Christ, but takes it for granted that they were, and makes use of it as an argument for his present purpose. They were risen with Christ as their head, and as members in union with him representatively, when he rose from the dead; and emblematically in their baptism, when having gone down into the water, and being baptized, they emerged from it; and spiritually in conversion, when they were raised from a death of sin, to a life of grace, by Christ, as the resurrection and the life, the efficient cause of it, and in virtue of his resurrection from the dead: wherefore being thus raised again in every sense, it highly became them to

seek those things which are above; the better and heavenly country, the continuing city, which is above the heavens, whose builder and maker is God; Christ, who is in heaven, and salvation alone by him without the works of the law; all spiritual blessings, such as pardon, peace, righteousness, life, and glory, which are in heavenly places in him; doctrines and ordinances, which come from heaven, and are the means of supporting a spiritual and heavenly life; especially that bread of life which came down from heaven, and gives life unto the world, and of which if a man eats, he shall never die, but live for ever; and particularly glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, the crown of righteousness laid up above, the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of it; which are to be sought for in the first place with all affection, earnest desire, care, and diligence, not by or for works of righteousness, but in Christ, and as the gifts of God's grace through him.

Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: which contains other reasons and arguments to engage believers to look upwards, and seek after heavenly things; that as Christ, when he died and rose again from the dead, did not stay long on earth, nor minded the things of the world, but ascended up to heaven, where he now is, and will remain until his second coming; so they, being dead and risen with him, should, in their thoughts, desires, and affections, in the exercise of the graces of faith, hope, and love, ascend heavenwards, like pillars of smoke perfumed with frankincense; and the more should their hearts be where he is, and intent on things above there, from the consideration of that great honour and dignity in which he is. He is “on the right hand of God”; in human nature, an honour which none of the angels were ever admitted to: here he “sitteth”, as having done the work of redemption, and entered into his rest,

beholding the travail of his soul with satisfaction, though he continues to be an advocate, and to make intercession for his people; which is another reason enforcing this exhortation.

Ver. 2. *Set your affections on things above*, etc.] For unless the affections are set on them, they will never be sought after in a proper manner. The word signifies to mind them, and think on them, to favour and approve of them, to be affectionately desirous of them, and concerned for them; for where the treasure is, the heart should be; and as the saints' best things are above, their minds and affections should be there likewise; their contemplation should be on those things, and their conversation should be in heaven; nor should they regard anything but what is there, or comes from thence, for they belong not to this world, but to another and better country: their citizenship is in heaven, and there, in a short time, they must have their everlasting residence; and therefore should seek after, and highly prize and value heavenly things, and set their affections on them, and

not on things on the earth; not mind earth and earthly things, temporal enjoyments, riches, and honours; and though food and raiment, and the necessaries of life, are to be sought after, and cared and provided for, yet not with anxiety and perplexity of mind, in an over thoughtful and distressing manner; nor should the heart be set on those outward things, or happiness placed in the possession of them. Moreover, worldly lusts, the members which are on the earth, earthly pleasures that are sinful, may be here meant. Worldly lusts are to be denied, the deeds of the body are to be mortified, carnal desires are not to be gratified and indulged, provision is not to be made for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts; and particularly the vain philosophy of Jews and Gentiles, the traditions of the elders, the ceremonies of the law, which lay in earthly things, in worldly observances, the difference of meats and drinks, keeping of days, months, and years, new moons, feasts, and sabbath days; the rudiments of the world, the commandments and doctrines which were of the earth, and lay in not touching, tasting, and handling certain things that are on earth, and which perish with the using, as opposed to the doctrines of the Gospel, and ordinances of Christ, which are from above, and come from heaven, and have a spiritual and heavenly use: and which is the sense chiefly intended, though it is best to understand the words in their largest compass.

Ver. 3. *For ye are dead*, etc.] Not in a natural or corporeal sense, for they were living in the world; nor in a moral sense, for though they had been

dead in sins, they were quickened by the grace of God; nor in a legal sense, for all their trespasses were forgiven them; (see ^{SK13}Colossians 2:13,20); but they were dead to the law, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, by the body of Christ; and to sin, as to its damning power, through his bearing it in his own body on the tree; and to the world by his cross: and therefore as dead men have nothing to do with the world, and the things of it, so believers being dead with Christ, should have no regard to the rudiments of the world, the ceremonies of the law, and the ordinances of men; to worldly lusts, and to the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; but should be dead as to their desires after, affections for, and subjection to these things:

and your life is hid with Christ in God; which is another reason why they should not mind things on earth, but things in heaven. The saint's "life" is either spiritual, and is a life of grace from Christ, a life of faith on him, and a life of communion with him, and may be distinguished into a life of sanctification, both internal and external, and into a life of justification; or eternal, which is a life free from all the sorrows of this, both outward and inward; a life of perfection and pleasure, of vision and enjoyment of God and Christ, and of fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, angels and saints, and which will never end. This is "theirs", what they have a right unto, and shall everlastingly enjoy: it is not only promised to them, and prepared and laid up for them, but it is given unto them in Christ; and who has made way for their full possession of it, into which he himself will put them, having power, as Mediator, so to do; and even now they have it, the beginning, pledge, and earnest of it. This is said to be "hid", which denotes the secrecy of it, and is true both of spiritual and eternal life. The spiritual life of the saints is hid from the men of the world, who are alienated from the life of God, are ignorant of the Lord of life, and know nothing of the spirit of life; they are strangers to the nature of this life, and to the food on which believers live, the hidden manna; and to the doctrines of the Gospel, by which they are nourished, these are hid to them that are lost; and to all the joys and pleasures of it: and this is sometimes hid from the saints themselves, when temptations are violent, corruptions prevail, grace is low, and seems to be gone, and God hides his face. Eternal life is also an hidden one from natural men; the things that are eternal, are things unseen by the carnal eye, and not to be conceived of by a carnal heart; and can only be beheld, and that in a very glimmering and imperfect manner, by an eye of faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, the clearest one saints have

in this life; for eternal glory and happiness is in part hid from the saints themselves; they see it but through a glass darkly; nor does it appear to themselves, as yet, what that felicity is in its fulness and perfection they shall enjoy. Moreover, this phrase is expressive of the safety, as well as of the value and preciousness of this life, things of worth being hid for security. It is hid, and it is hid “with Christ”; spiritual life is with him, as the head, root, and fountain of it, and so is safe, and can never be lost; because he the head lives, the members shall live also; and as long as it is in him, as the fountain, the streams and supplies of it shall not be wanting to his people; nor can the communication between him and them be ever cut off: eternal life is deposited in his hands by the Father; it is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord God, and is in him for ever safe: nay, it is not only with Christ, where it is secure enough, but it is with Christ “in God”; Christ is in God, the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father; they are one in nature, and so in power and glory; and this union between them, which is natural and perfect, is the foundation of the security both of the persons, and of the life, spiritual and eternal, of God's elect; (see ~~Exod~~ John 10:28-30). Moreover, this life itself is in God. Not only our natural life is in him; we live and move, and have our being in him; but our spiritual and eternal life: he is the spring of it; it arises originally from him; it was purposed in him; it was promised by him; the scheme of it, or what is called the fellowship of the mystery, was hid in him; it was given by him; he is the fountain of it, and that itself; and therefore the saints can never perish, nor need they fear any enemy.

Ver. 4. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear,* etc.] The Vulgate Latin version, and some copies, read, “your life”. Christ is the author of spiritual life, the fountain from whence it springs, the object on which the saints live, yea, their very life itself; it is not so much they that live, as Christ that lives in them: and he is their eternal life; it is in him, and given forth by him; to know him now is the beginning of it; and its perfection hereafter will lie in the vision of him, communion with him, and conformity to him. The Jews have a saying^{f48},

“that lives depend upon the son of Jesse;”

all sorts of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal. At present, Christ, the life of his people, is, as it were, hid; when he had done the work he came into this world about, and which he was manifest in the flesh, he departed out of it, ascended up into heaven, and went to his God and Father, where he is, and

will be retained, until the time of the restitution of all things; and though he appears in the presence of God, and on the behalf of his redeemed ones, yet he is now out of sight, and not to be seen with their bodily eyes; but, ere long, he will be revealed from heaven, and come in the clouds of it, and be seen by all, to the terror and confusion of some, and to the joy and salvation of others; when his appearance will be exceeding glorious, not only in his glorified body, or exalted human nature, and as the Judge of the whole earth, clothed with majesty, authority, and power, but as the Son of God, God equal with the Father, in all the perfections and glory of deity, which will be manifest and apparent to everyone:

then shall ye also appear with him in glory: the dead bodies of the saints will then be raised and united to their souls, which he will bring with him, when he appears; and living saints shall be changed, and be caught up together with the raised ones, into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so they all shall be with him together, wherever he is, whether in the air, or on earth, or in heaven, and while he is in either; and shall be for ever with him, enjoy communion with him, be made like unto him, and behold his glory: yea, they shall “appear in glory” too; with a glory on their bodies, which will be raised in glory like unto the glorious body of Christ; and on their souls, being in perfect holiness, having on the wedding garment, or robe of Christ's righteousness, being clothed upon with their house from heaven, and appearing in the shining robes of immortality, incorruption, and glory; having the glory of God upon them in soul and body, and such a glory revealed in them, as the sufferings of this present life, and all the enjoyments of it, are not to be compared with. All which furnish out strong arguments and reasons, enforcing the above exhortations to seek for, and set the affections on things in heaven, and not on earth.

Ver. 5. *Mortify therefore your members,* etc.] Not your bodies, as the Ethiopic version reads, nor the members of the natural body, but of the body of sin, indwelling sin; which as a body consists of various members, which are parts of it, rise out of it, and are used by it, as the members are by the body; and intend the sins of the flesh, or sinful actions, which are generally performed by the members of the natural body, in which the law of sin is, and by which it operates; so that the mortification the saints are here exhorted to, in consideration of having a spiritual life in them, and a hope of eternal life in Christ, from whence the apostle argues, is not a mortification or destruction of the body of sin itself, or of the being and principle of it in the soul, where it is, and lives, and dwells, and will as long

as the saints are in this tabernacle, but of the deeds of the body, or of sinful actions, as to the life and conversation; and signifies a denial of them, an abstinence from them, and a non-performance of them; (see Gill on “^{

}Romans 8:13”). These members, or deeds of the body, or acts of sin, are called “your”: for as the old man is ours, the vitiosity of nature is what we bring into the world with us, and is rooted and incorporated into us; so the actions that flow from it, and are done by it, are not to be ascribed to God, nor even to Satan, but they are our own actions, and which are performed by the members of our mortal body, or by the faculties of our souls: and are,

which are on earth: or earthly; are concerned about earthly things, the things of the world, worldly lusts and pleasures, which rise out of earthly mindedness, and incline unto it, and are only what are done here on earth, and will have no place in heaven. The particulars of which follow:

fornication; the sin of uncleanness committed by single persons, or out of the state of marriage, and which the Gentiles did not account sinful: hence so much notice is taken of it, with a censure, and so often, by the apostle, in almost all his epistles, and dehorted from, as a sin against the body, as what disqualified for church communion, and was not to be named among the saints, who should be dead to that, and that to them, as to the commission of it.

Uncleanness; of every sort, all other impure actions, as adultery, incest, sodomy, and every other unnatural lust; all which should be abstained from, and never committed by those who profess to be alive unto God.

Inordinate affection; which may intend the passions, or first motions of sin, stirred up by the law, and which work in, and operate by the members of the body, and bring forth fruit unto death, and therefore to be opposed by such as have a life in Christ; and also those vile affections, which some in a judicial way are given up unto, and prevail with those who are effeminate, and abusers of themselves with mankind, and which are to be abhorred and denied by all who are heirs of the grace of life, and expectants of an heavenly one.

Evil concupiscence; so called to distinguish it from that natural concupiscence, or desire after things lawful and necessary, and which is implanted in nature by God himself; and from that spiritual concupiscence or desire after spiritual things, and that lusting against the flesh and carnal

things, which is formed in the heart of a regenerate man by the Spirit of God. It is the same with [rh rxy, “the evil imagination”, or corruption of nature so much spoken of by the Jews. This here is what is forbidden by that law, “thou shalt not covet”, (^{<0207>}Exodus 20:17); and includes every fleshly lust and inordinate desire, or every desire after that which is not lawful, or does not belong to a man; as what is another's property, his wife, or goods, or anything that is his; and so very naturally follows,

covetousness; an immoderate love of money, the root of all evil, an insatiable desire of having more, and of having more than a man's own; and is enlarged as hell, and as death is not satisfied, but still craves more, without making any good use of what is possessed:

which is idolatry. The covetous man, and the idolater, worship the same for matter and substance, even gold and silver; the covetous man lays up his money, makes no use of it, as if it was something sacred; he looks at it, and adores it, and puts his trust and confidence in it, and his heart is so much set upon it, that he neglects the worship of the true God; and indeed no man can serve God and mammon. Some think, that by this *πλεονεξία* rendered “covetousness”, is meant, that greedy desire after the commission of all uncleanness, and impure actions, which were perpetrated by the followers of Simon Magus in their religious assemblies, and under the notion of worship, and as acceptable to God, and therefore called idolatry; and which ought not to be once named, much less practised, among the living members of Christ. Moreover, such filthy actions were performed by the Gentiles in the worship of their deities.

Ver. 6. *For which things' sake*, etc.] Those sins above mentioned, (^{<5185>}Colossians 3:5):

the wrath of God; the effects of it in temporal judgments, and eternal ruin and destruction, the wrath to come, which all are deserving of, and there is only deliverance from by Christ:

cometh upon the children of disobedience: who are disobedient both to the law of God, and Gospel of Christ: who are unbelievers in him, are rebellious and gainsaying, reject his calls, the persuasions of his ministers, set at nought his counsel, and will have none of his reproof. There have been already instances of God's displeasure at sin, his indignation against it, and his judgments on account of it: his wrath is revealed from heaven, and it will come down from thence on disobedient and rebellious sinners, and

that suddenly, and with great power, like a mighty torrent, that there will be no standing before it. This is a reason why such who have life in Christ should mortify, repress, and abstain from the above sins; for though this regards sinners, and ungodly persons, yet the effects of God's wrath on such show how much such sins are displeasing to him, and detested by him, and therefore to be avoided by the saints.

Ver. 7. *In the which ye also walked some time*, etc.] Either in or among the children of disobedience, (^{SINNE}Colossians 3:6), or rather in the aforementioned sins, (^{SINNE}Colossians 3:5). Sin is a road or path, in which sinners walk a way of their own, or of their own choosing and approving, though a dark and crooked one, and which leads to destruction: walking herein denotes a continued series of sinning, a persisting in it, a progress therein, a proceeding from evil to evil, taking pleasure, and going on securely in it; and which is the case and state of God's elect before conversion, which is a turning of them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and out of the ways of sin, into the paths of righteousness, when the course of their walk, of their lives and conversations, is altered; and which is suggested here, and made use of as another reason for the mortification of the deeds of the body of sin, taken from their former state, and their deliverance out of it; and therefore the time past of their lives, when they walked in these things, should suffice, and they should now cease from sin, from a series and course of sinning:

when ye lived in them; in sins, and were dead in them; for to be dead in sin, and to live in sin, is the same thing; living in sin is the death of sin. To live in sin is to live after the flesh, after the dictates of corrupt nature, to live a sinful course of life; it is for a man to give up himself to sin, be wholly bent upon it, take delight in it, and make it his work and business. This had been the case of these believers, but now they were dead to sin, and it became them to live no longer therein, but to mortify it by denying it, and abstaining from it, and living soberly, righteously, and godly.

Ver. 8. *But now you also put off all these*, etc.] Intimating, that now since they were converted and delivered out of the former state in which they were once, and professed not to walk and live in sin, it became them to separate, remove, and put at a distance from them all sins, and every vice, to lay them aside as dead weights upon them, and put them off as filthy garments; for such sins are never to be put on, and cleaved to again as formerly; and that not only those, the above mentioned, fornication,

uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, but the following also,

anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, or “evil speaking”; what vices are here intended, (see Gill on “^{<4081>}Ephesians 4:31”); to which is added,

filthy communication, which comes

out of the mouth: and is to be removed and put out of it, or abstained from; and which is to be understood also of blasphemy, or evil speaking of one another, whereby the credit and reputation of each other may be hurt.

“Filthy communication” is the same with that which is said to be corrupt, (^{<4049>}Ephesians 4:29); and which, though it is applicable to all speech that is unsavoury, unedifying, idle, and useless, and may be properly enough said of flattery, lying, cursing, and swearing; yet chiefly regards obscene language, unchaste words, and filthy talking, which tend to encourage and cherish the sin of uncleanness in any of its branches, flattery, lying, cursing, and swearing; yet chiefly regards obscene language, unchaste words, and filthy talking, which tend to encourage and cherish the sin of uncleanness in any of its branches.

Ver. 9. *Lie not one to another* etc.] Which is another vice of the tongue, and to which mankind are very prone, and ought not to be done to any, and particularly to one another; since the saints are members one of another, and of the same body, which makes the sin the more unnatural; of this vice, (see Gill on “^{<4025>}Ephesians 4:25”), and is another sin that is to be put off, or put away; that is to be abstained from, and not used. The arguments dissuading from this, and the rest, follow,

seeing that ye have put off the old man, with his deeds. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read this as an exhortation, as they do the next verse also. Who is meant by the old man, (see Gill on “^{<5116>}Romans 6:6”), and what by putting him off, (see Gill on “^{<4022>}Ephesians 4:22”), and as for “his deeds”, they are the same with the deceitful lusts there mentioned, and the works of the flesh in (^{<4159>}Galatians 5:19) and with the members of the body of sin in the context, (^{<5135>}Colossians 3:5,8). Some, as Beza, think, that here is an allusion to the rite of baptism in the primitive church; which, as he truly observes, was performed not by aspersion, but immersion; and which required a putting off, and a putting on of clothes, and when the baptized persons professed to renounce the sins of the flesh, and their former conversation, and to live a new life.

Ver. 10. *And have put on the new man*, etc.] Concerning which, and the putting it on, (see Gill on “~~400a~~ Ephesians 4:24”),

which is renewed in knowledge; this man, or principle of grace in the soul, is a new one, which never was there before; and there is a daily renovation of it in the spirit of the mind, by the Spirit of God; for as the outward man decays, the inward man, which is the same with this new man, is renewed day by day, increases in holiness and righteousness, grows in grace, and particularly in “knowledge”; light and knowledge of a man's self, of his lost state and condition by nature, of his need of Christ, and of his salvation, is what appears at the first formation of this new man; and the daily renovation of him lies in an increase of spiritual, experimental, and saving knowledge of God, and Christ, and divine things; and indeed, until a man becomes a new creature, he neither knows, nor is he capable of knowing, the things of the Spirit of God; so that this new man, or principle of grace, begins with spiritual knowledge, and is formed in order to it, and its increase lies in it:

after the image of him that created him; the new man; for this is a creation work, and so not man's, but God's; and is made not after the image of the first man, no not as innocent, and much less as fallen; but after the image of Christ, to which the elect of God are predestinated to be conformed, and which is stamped in regeneration; and more and more appears by every transforming view of Christ, and will be perfected in heaven, when they shall see him as he is, and be perfectly like him, who is not only the pattern, but the Creator of it, even the author and finisher of faith.

Ver. 11. *Where there is neither Greek nor Jew*, etc.] That is, either in Christ, after whose image the new man is created; (see ~~400b~~ Galatians 5:6 6:15) or in the new man, and with respect to

regeneration; or in the whole business of salvation: it matters not of what nation a man is; this has no influence on his new birth, either to forward or hinder it; for he is never the more a new creature, a regenerate man, and interested in salvation, because he is a Jew, which he may be outwardly, and not inwardly; and he may be born again, though he is a Greek or Gentile, as the Syriac version reads; for God of his own will, and abundant mercy, and not out of respect to nations and persons, begets souls again to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance:

circumcision or uncircumcision; a man's being circumcised in the flesh signifies nothing; this he may be, and not a new creature; for that is not true circumcision, but that which is of the heart, and in the spirit: and, on the other hand, it is no objection to a man's being born again, that he is uncircumcised in the flesh; this may be his case, and yet may be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; neither one nor the other is of any account with God, nor makes the man either better or worse.

Barbarian, Scythian; all such were Barbarians to the Romans, that did not speak their language; and as were such also to the Greeks, who were not of their nation, and therefore Greeks and Barbarians are opposed to each other, (see ^{e114}Romans 1:14) and so they are here in the Syriac version, which reads “Greek” and “Barbarian”. The Arabic version, instead of “Barbarian”, reads “Persian”, because it may be, a Persian is so accounted by the Arabians; and because the Scythians were, of all people, the most barbarous and unpolished ^{f49}, and were had in great disdain by others, therefore the apostle mentions them, as being within the reach of the powerful and efficacious grace of God; nor were the fierceness of their dispositions, and the impoliteness of their manners, any bar unto it. Remarkable is the saying of Anacharsis the Scythian, who being reproached by a Grecian, because he was a Scythian, replied ^{f50},

“my country is a reproach to me, but thou art a reproach to thy country.”

It matters not of what nation a man is, so be it he is but a good man; especially in Christianity, all distinctions of this kind cease. It is added,

bond or free; the grace of God in regeneration is not bestowed upon a man because he is a free man, or withheld from another because he is a bond servant. Onesimus, a fugitive servant, was converted by the Apostle Paul in prison; and whoever is called by grace, if he is a free man in a civil sense, he is Christ's servant in a religious one; and if he is a servant of men, he is, in a spiritual sense, the Lord's free man. It is not nation, nor outward privileges, nor the civil state and condition of men, which are regarded by God, or are any motive to him, or have any influence upon the salvation of men:

but Christ is all, and in all; he is “all” efficiently; he is the first cause of all things, the beginning of the creation of God, the author of the old, and of

the new creation, of the regeneration of his people, and of their whole salvation: he is all comprehensively; has all the fulness of the Godhead, all the perfections of deity in him; he is possessed of all spiritual blessings for his people; and has all the promises of the covenant of grace in his hands for them; yea, all fulness of grace dwells in him, in order to be communicated to them: and he is all communicatively; he is their light and life, their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, their food and clothing, their strength and riches, their joy, peace, and comfort, who gives them grace here, and glory hereafter, So, with the Jews, the Shekinah is called **l k**, “all”^{f51}: and this likewise, with the Cabalists^{f52}, is one of the names of the living God, and well agrees with Christ, who has all things in him; and is the reason they give for this divine appellation: and Christ is “in all”; in all places, being infinite, immense, and incomprehensible, as God, and so is everywhere by his power, upholding all things by it; and in all his churches, by his gracious presence, and in the hearts of all his regenerate ones, of whatsoever nation, state, and condition they be: he is revealed in them, formed within them, and dwells in their hearts by faith; and is all in all to them, exceeding precious, altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousands, and whom they esteem above all creatures and things. The Arabic version reads, “Christ is above all, and in all”.

Ver. 12. *Put on therefore*, etc.] As the apostle had argued for the putting off of the members of the body, from their having put off the old man himself; so he now argues from their having put on the new man, to their putting on of his members; that is, to the exercise of the various graces of the Spirit, and the discharge of the several duties of religion; which though they would not be a robe of righteousness, or garments of salvation to them, yet would be very becoming conversation garments, such as would be adorning to themselves, to the doctrine of Christ, and their profession of it, without which they would be naked in their walk, and exposed to shame, **hçwdq j wrb açbl thl**, “to be clothed with the Holy Spirit”, is a phrase used by the Cabalistic doctors^{f53}; and is indeed a Scripture phrase, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon”, **hçbl**, clothed Zechariah, (^{<1200>}2 Chronicles 24:20) and so Esther is said, by the Jewish writers^{f54}, to be “clothed with the Holy Ghost” Here the metaphor is taken from the putting off of clothes; and what is here directed to, is like Joseph's coat, a coat of many colours. The arguments made use of lie in the characters under which the saints are addressed,

as the elect of God, holy and beloved; that is, “as becomes the elect of God”, as the Arabic version renders it; as such who were chosen in Christ from eternity, according to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, and his free grace unto salvation and eternal life; which carries in it a strong argument to enforce the performance of good works, since men are hereby chosen unto holiness, and good works are what God has foreordained that they should walk in, and especially to mercy, and acts of it; since hereby their salvation appears to be not of man's will and works, but of God, that shows mercy; and such who are the objects of this grace are vessels of mercy. The apostle calls all the members of this church by this name, though every individual of them might not be chosen of God; but because they were all under a visible profession of faith and holiness, and the greater part of them were truly believers, he in a judgment of charity gives them all this appellation, and upon the same foot, the next, “holy”; not by birth, for they were by nature unclean and filthy, conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; nor by baptism, which takes away neither original nor actual sin, but leaves men as it finds them, and who ought to be holy before they partake of that; but in Christ imputatively, as he was made of God unto them sanctification; and by him efficaciously, in virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, by which he sanctifies his people; and by his spirit inherently and internally, who is the author of the work of sanctification in the heart; and they were likewise so externally in a professional way, and therefore it highly became them to exercise and practise the following graces and duties, to which they were still more obliged, inasmuch as they were “beloved”; that is, of God, as appeared both from their election and sanctification. God had loved them, and therefore had chosen them in his Son, and had given his Son to die for them, that he might sanctify them; and because of his great love to them, had quickened them when dead in sin, and sanctified them by his spirit: wherefore, since God had so loved them, they ought to show love again to him, and to one another, and put on

bowels of mercies; a sympathizing spirit with saints in distress, weeping with them that weep, suffering with them that suffer, being touched, as their high priest is, with a feeling of their sorrows and weaknesses: it denotes inward pity and compassion to distressed objects, the most tender regard to persons in misery, and such compassion as is free from all hypocrisy and deceit, and therefore is expressed by “bowels”; and what is very large, and reaches to multitudes of objects, and is displayed and

exerted various ways, and therefore signified by “mercies”. Now such a spirit is a very beautiful one; the apostle begins with the innermost of these garments, adding to it

kindness, which is this inward, tender, unfeigned, and abundant mercy put into act and exercise; this is doing good to all men, especially to the household of faith, distributing to the necessities of the saints, and a showing mercy with cheerfulness, and is very ornamental to a Christian professor: as is also

humbleness of mind; which lies in the saints entertaining mean thoughts of themselves, looking upon themselves as the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints; as inferior to others in knowledge, experience, gifts, and graces; in esteeming others better than themselves; in ascribing all they have, and are, to the grace of God; in doing works of mercy and righteousness without ostentation, and boasting of them, or depending on them; owning, that when they have done all they can, they are but unprofitable servants; and this is a beautiful dress for a believer to appear in: be ye clothed with humility; (see ~~1~~ 1 Peter 5:5). And of the like nature is

meekness; which shows itself in not envying the gifts and graces, the usefulness and happiness of others, but rejoicing therein; in quietly submitting to the will of God in all adverse dispensations of Providence, and patiently bearing what he is pleased to lay on them; and in enduring all the insults, reproaches, and indignities of men with calmness. This ornament of a meek and quiet, spirit is in the sight of God of great price, (~~1~~ 1 Peter 3:4). And what follows is natural to it, and explanative of it,

longsuffering: whereby a person patiently bears the evil words and actions of others, and is not easily provoked to wrath by them, but puts up with injuries, and sits down contented with the ill usage he meets with.

Ver. 13. *Forbearing one another*, etc.] Not only bearing one another's burdens, and with one another's weaknesses, but forbearing to render evil for evil, or railing for railing, or to seek revenge for affronts given, in whatsoever way, whether by words or deeds:

and forgiving one another; all trespasses and offences, so far as committed against themselves, and praying to God to forgive them, as committed against him:

if any man have a quarrel against any; let him be who he will, high or low, rich or poor, of whatsoever age, state, or condition, and let his quarrel or complaint be what it will, ever so great, or ever so just and well founded, yet let him put up with it, and forgive it:

even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye; what God is said to do for Christ's sake, (see Gill on "⁴⁰⁶Ephesians 4:32"), what here Christ is said to do: as Mediator, he has procured the remission of sins by the shedding of his blood; and as God he forgives sins freely, fully, forgetting the injuries done, not upbraiding with former offences, and that too without asking, and before there is any appearance of repentance; and so should the saints forgive one another, as they expect to have an application and manifestation of forgiveness to themselves.

Ver. 14. *And above all these things*, etc.] Bowels of mercies, kindness, etc.

put on charity, or brotherly love, for without this all is nothing; they will only be done in show and appearance, in mere guise and hypocrisy, if love is wanting; this actuates and exercises all the rest; it is only from this principle that true sympathy, real kindness, undisguised humility, and meekness, patient longsuffering, and forbearance, and hearty forgiveness proceeds: this is greater, and more excellent, than all the other, and adds a glory, lustre, and beauty to them; this is the upper garment that covers all the rest, for so the words may be rendered, "upon all these things put on charity"; whereby a disciple of Christ is visible, and distinguished, and is known to be what he is; this is like a strait and upper garment, keeps close all that is under it, and within it: and it is called

the bond of perfectness; either of the law, and the duties of religion, which it is said to be the fulfilling of; or rather of the saints, for this is the bond of union between them, which knits and cements them together, so that they are perfectly joined together, and are of one mind and one heart: it is the bond of peace among them, of perfect unity and brotherly love; and a most beautiful and pleasant thing it is for brethren to live and dwell together in unity; such are beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem among themselves, and terrible to their enemies as an army with banners, being not to be divided or broken by them. The Claromontane exemplar reads, "the bond of unity".

Ver. 15. *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts*, etc.] By “the peace of God” is meant, either the peace believers have with God, which is his gift, and passes all understanding, and flows from a comfortable apprehension of interest in the blood, righteousness, and atonement of Christ; or rather that peace which does, or should subsist among the saints themselves, which God is the author of, calls for, and requires, and encourages in them. The Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and, Ethiopic versions, read, “the peace of Christ”; and so the Alexandrian copy, and some others. This may be said to “reign” in their hearts, when it is the governing principle there; when it restrains the turbulent passions of anger, wrath, and revenge, allays undue heats, moderates the spirits, and composes differences. The metaphor is taken from the judge in the Olympic games, who was the umpire, the moderator, and who determined whose the victory was, and to whom the crown belonged; the apostle would have no other umpire among the saints than the peace of God: and the arguments he uses follow,

to the which also you are called in one body; the saints in their effectual calling are called to peace by God, who is the God of peace; by Christ, who is the Prince of peace; and by the Spirit, whose fruit is peace; and through the Gospel, which is the Gospel of peace, and into a Gospel state, which lies in peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost: and they are not only called to this, but they are called “in one body”; though they are many members, yet they are but one body; and therefore ought to be in peace, and that should bear the sway in them, seeing it is unnatural for members of the same body to quarrel with each other.

And be ye thankful; which intends either gratitude to men, to fellow creatures, for any service or kindness done by them, especially to the saints, the members of the same body, who are placed in a subservience, and in order to be useful to each other; or else to God, for all spiritual blessings in Christ, and particularly the peace he gives, for the effectual calling, and a place in the body, the church; and “to Christ”, as the Syriac version reads, for all those graces which come from him, and strength to exercise them, and for himself, and an interest in him, who is all in all; and a grateful spirit, both for spiritual and temporal mercies, is a very becoming and beautiful one, and is another part of the ornament of a Christian: this last is added to make way for what follows.

Ver. 16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy and Arabic version read, “the word of God”; by which may be meant the whole Scripture, all the writings of the Old and New Testament, which are by inspiration of God, were endited by the spirit of Christ, speak and testify of him, and were written for his sake, and on his account, and therefore may be called his word; and are what should be searched into, carefully attended to, diligently read, and frequently meditated upon; and which are able, under a divine blessing, to furnish with all spiritual wisdom, or to make men wise unto salvation: or by the word of Christ may be meant more especially the Gospel, which Christ is the author of as God, the preacher of as man, and the subject matter of as God-man and Mediator: it is the word concerning him, his person and offices; concerning peace and pardon by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and complete salvation through his obedience, sufferings and death. The exhortation to let it

dwell in them, supposes that it had entered into them, and had a place in them through the spirit and power of Christ; and that it should have a constant and fixed place there, and not be like a stranger or wayfaring man, that tarries but for a night, or like a sojourner, that continues but for a while; but as an inhabitant that takes up its residence and abode, never more to depart; and intends not only a frequent reading, and hearing of, and meditating upon the word of God but continuance in the doctrines of the Gospel, with a steady faith in them, and a hearty affection for them; for such an inhabitation imports a very exact knowledge of the Gospel, and familiarity with it, and affectionate respect for it; as persons that dwell in a house, they are well known by those of the family, they are familiarly conversed with, and are treated with love and respect by them: and so the word of Christ, when it has a fixed and established abode in a man's heart, he has an inward, spiritual, experimental knowledge of it; he is continually conversant with it; this word of Christ is his delight, and the men of his counsel his guide, his acquaintance, with whom he takes sweet counsel together, and esteems it above the most valuable things in the world, and receives and retains it as the word of God. The manner in which the apostle would have it dwell is

richly; that is, largely, plentifully, in an abundant manner, as this word signifies; (see ^{<5087>}1 Timothy 6:17) and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it here, “abundantly”; and to the same sense the Arabic version. His meaning is, that not one part of the Scripture only should be regarded and

attended to but the whole of it, every truth and doctrine in it, even the whole counsel of God; which as it is to be declared and preached in its utmost compass, so all and every part of it is to be received in the love of it, and to be abode in and by; there is a fulness in the Scriptures, an abundance of truth in the Gospel, a large affluence of it; it is a rich treasure, an invaluable mine of precious truths; all which should have a place to their full extent, in both preacher and hearer: and that

in all wisdom; or, “unto all wisdom”; in order to attain to all wisdom; not natural wisdom, which is not the design of the Scriptures, nor of the Gospel of Christ; but spiritual wisdom, or wisdom in spiritual things, in things relating to salvation; and which is, and may be arrived unto through attendance to the word of Christ, reading and hearing of it, meditating on it; and especially when accompanied with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and which is to be desired and prayed for.

Teaching and admonishing one another. The Syriac version renders it, “teach and instruct yourselves”; and may regard not only publicly teaching Christ, his Gospel, the truths and doctrines of it, and all his commands and ordinances, for which he qualifies men, and sends them forth in his name; but private teaching, by conference, prayer, and singing the praises of God, according to the measure of the gift of grace bestowed on everyone: and so admonishing may not only respect that branch of the public ministry, which is so called, and intends a putting into the mind, or putting persons in mind both of their privilege and duty; nor only that part of church discipline which lies in the admonition of a delinquent, but private reproofs, warnings, and exhortations; and as by other ways, so, among the rest,

in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; referring very probably to the title of several of David's psalms, **lykçm**; “Maschil”, which signifies giving instruction, or causing to understand; these psalms, and the singing of them, being appointed as an ordinance, of God to teach, instruct, admonish, and edify the saints; for the meaning of these three words, and the difference between them, (see Gill on “~~459~~ Ephesians 5:19”).

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord; that is, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and what is meant by singing of them, see the note on the above place: the manner in which they are to be sung is, “with grace”; meaning either by the assistance of the spirit and grace of God, without which no ordinance can be performed aright, to the glory of God,

and to spiritual profit and edification, (see ^{<4415>}1 Corinthians 14:15), or with grace in the heart in exercise, particularly faith, without which it is impossible to please God, (see ^{<5106>}Hebrews 11:6) or with gratitude to God, with thankfulness of heart for his mercies, and under a grateful sense of them; or in such a manner as will minister grace unto the hearers, be both amiable and edifying, (see ^{<5106>}Colossians 4:6) all these senses may be taken in: that the phrase, “in your hearts”; does not mean mental singing, or what is opposed to singing with the voice, (see Gill on “^{<4169>}Ephesians 5:19”). The object here, as there, is “to the Lord”; the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory, of his person and grace: the Alexandrian copy, and the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read, “to God”: and indeed God, in the three divine Persons, and in all his perfections and works, is the object of praise, and his glory is the end of singing praise.

Ver. 17. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed*, etc.] Whether in preaching the word of Christ, in hearing the Gospel, in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and in conference and conversation with each other; or in whatsoever action, civil or religious throughout the whole life and conversation, in the performance of things natural, moral, and evangelical, relating to God or man, or one another, in the world or church:

do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; both in the strength of Christ, without whom nothing can be well said or done; and according to the mind and will of Christ declared in the Gospel, which is his name; and calling upon his name for assistance in the ministration of his word, administration of his ordinances, and in the performance of every duty, directing all to, and having solely in view his honour and glory:

giving thanks to God, and the Father by him; this shows, that singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, is a distinct thing from giving of thanks, mentioned in the preceding verse. The things for which thanks are to be given, are “all things”; and the time when, always, as in (see Gill on “^{<4169>}Ephesians 5:20”). The person to whom they are to be given is God the Father, the Father of our spirits, and of our mercies, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of us in him; and the person by whom they are to be given, is Christ, which is just and proper, since all mercies come from, and through him; nor is there any other way of bringing and offering the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God; nor are they, nor can they be acceptable to God by, and through any other, but by him alone.

Ver. 18. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands*, etc.] The apostle proceeds from those duties which related to them as church members one towards another, for their mutual good and edification, and the glory of God, to such as concerned them in their own houses and families, as in a natural relation to each other; as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; showing hereby, that the Gospel does not at all break in upon, but establishes the duties of common and civil life. Concerning the duty wives to their husbands, here exhorted to, (see Gill on "~~4922~~Ephesians 5:22"). The reason urging to a regard to it is,

as it is fit in the Lord; that is, Christ, as the Syriac version reads it. Subjection of wives to their own husbands is "fit" and proper in its own nature, by reason of the original creation of man, and of the woman from him: man was made first, and then the woman; and the woman was made out of the man, out of one of his ribs; and so, though not to be trampled under his feet, but to be by his side, and an help meet to him, yet not to be head, or to rule over him. Moreover, the woman was made for the man, and not the man for the woman; add to this, that the woman was in the transgression, and the means of the fall of man, which gave a fresh reason for, and made the obligation to subjection to him the stronger: and it is also a "decent" and becoming thing for wives to be subject to their husbands; for as it is giving honour to them, it is a real ornament to themselves, and is one of those good works which women professing godliness should adorn themselves with; and makes more comely and beautiful than broided hair; gold, pearls, or costly array, yea, than their natural favour and beauty: it is what is fitting "in the Lord": it is what he requires, not only what the law of God requires, (see ~~4934~~1 Corinthians 14:34) and which was enjoined originally, (see ~~0086~~Genesis 3:16) and was charged as a duty under the legal dispensation; but is what is commanded by Christ under the Gospel dispensation, and is to be observed by all those that are "in" him, that profess to be new creatures, converted persons, that so the word of God be not blasphemed, and the enemy have no occasion to reproach, see (~~5016~~Titus 2:5 ~~5464~~1 Timothy 5:14) though this phrase may also be considered as a restriction and limitation of this subjection; that though it reaches to all things, yet only to such as are agreeable to the will of the Lord, and not contrary to the Gospel of Christ; for in these they are not to be subject to them, but to Christ the Lord; but in all other things they are, even as the church is subject to Christ: and when this is the case, such

subjection is regarded by Christ as if it was done to himself; and indeed his honour and glory should be the governing view in it; (see ^{<4872>}Ephesians 5:22).

Ver. 19. *Husbands, love your wives*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<4875>}Ephesians 5:25”).

and be not bitter against them; turning love into hatred of their persons; ruling with rigour, and in a tyrannical manner; behaving towards them in a morose, churlish, and ill natured way; giving them either bitter words, or blows, and denying them their affection, care, provision, protection, and assistance, but using them as servants, or worse. All which is barbarous, brutish, and unchristian, and utterly unbecoming the Gospel.

Ver. 20. *Children, obey your parents*, etc.] Both father and mother; (see Gill on “^{<4881>}Ephesians 6:1”).

in all things; not in things sinful, which are contrary to the law of God, and Gospel of Christ; in things repugnant to the duties of religion, the ordinances of the Gospel, and the doctrines of Christ, parents are to be neglected and disobeyed. God is to be regarded, and not men; but in all things good and lawful, and in all things that are of an indifferent nature, which may, or may not be done, in these things the will of earthly parents is to be attended to; of which there is a considerable instance in the Rechabites, (see ^{<2886>}Jeremiah 35:6-10) and even they are to be obeyed in things that are hard and difficult to be complied with, and which are disagreeable to flesh and blood, as the cases of Isaac and Jephthah's daughter show.

For this is well pleasing unto the Lord; and is a reason sufficient to engage to the performance of the duty; for whatever is grateful and well pleasing to God ought to be done with pleasure by us, from a principle of love to him, by faith in him, and with a view to his glory; and then such an action is acceptable in his sight through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Alexandrian copy reads, “in the Lord”; and so the Vulgate Latin version.

Ver. 21. *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<4884>}Ephesians 6:4”).

lest they be discouraged; or disheartened and dispirited; their spirits be broke through grief and trouble, and they become indolent, sluggish, and unfit for business; or, despairing of having any share in the affections of

their parents, disregard their commands, instructions, and corrections, and grow obdurate, stubborn, and rebellious.

Ver. 22. *Servants, obey in all things your masters*, etc.] That is, in all things relating to the body, and bodily service; not to the conscience, and religious worship; in things worldly, and not spiritual; in all things that are within a master's power, and it is lawful for him to command; and in all things that are fitting and proper that a servant should do; and even in such things as may be difficult, troublesome, and disagreeable to the flesh unto them; (see ^{<170>}Luke 17:7-9) who those servants are that are to obey, and who their masters, said to be according to the flesh, to whom they are to be subject, (see Gill on "^{<105>}Ephesians 6:5").

not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart; (see Gill on "^{<105>}Ephesians 6:5-6").

fearing God; who sees and knows all things, what servants do when their masters are absent from them, and to whom they are accountable; and a servant that fears God will make conscience of discharging his service faithfully, will not misspend his master's time, nor embezzle his goods, or waste his substance; but from a principle of reverential affection for God, and fear of him, with a concern for his name, and a view to his glory, will with all diligence, uprightness, faithfulness, and sincerity, do his duty, seek his master's good and interest, and cheerfully obey all his lawful commands. The Alexandrian copy reads, "fearing the Lord"; and so the Syriac version, "in the fear of the Lord".

Ver. 23. *And whatsoever ye do*, etc.] Some have thought that these words, and the two following verses, regard the Colossians in general, and the performance of any, and all good works by them; but by their connection with the preceding verse, and with the beginning of the next chapter, they appear to concern servants only, and what they do under that character, and under the discharge of their duty:

do it heartily, not by mere force and necessity, grudgingly, and with murmurings, but from the heart, and with good will, having a true, real, and hearty affection for their masters, having their good and interest at heart, and a delight in their service; like the Hebrew servant, that loved his master, as also his wife and children, and therefore would not depart from him, (see ^{<205>}Exodus 21:5),

as to the Lord, and not unto men; (see Gill on "^{<107>}Ephesians 6:7").

Ver. 24. *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance,* etc.] This is said for the encouragement of Christian servants, who, though they may receive little or nothing from their earthly and carnal masters; yet they shall be used and treated as children by the Lord, and by whom they will be possessed of an eternal inheritance, after their work and labour is over: by “the reward of the inheritance” is meant the heavenly glory, called a reward, because the apostle is speaking to servants and therefore uses language agreeable to them; and who, though they may have no reward in this world, yet as there is a God that judgeth in the earth, there is verily one for them in the world to come: and though it is not given for working, yet it is given to those that do good, and continue in well doing; whose works follow, though they do not go before them; and is enjoyed after their work is over, as the servant receives his wages at evening and when he has done his work; though this will not be received as a reward of debt, but of grace; it cannot be of merit, as is clear from the nature of good works themselves, which are all due, to God, prior to the performance of them; and when done in the best manner, are no more than a man's duty, and are done not in his own strength, but by the grace of God; and in many things, yea in everything, he comes short of performing what is incumbent on him; and besides, there is no manner of proportion between: the best services of the saints, and eternal glory: to which may be added, that eternal life is the free gift of their heavenly Father to them, and is here called an inheritance, which never becomes the property of servants in a way of merit, but is the portion of children, from their Father's good pleasure. Wherefore the heavenly glory is such a reward as that it is an “inheritance”; or, as the Syriac version renders it, “in an inheritance”; it lies in an inheritance, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in the heavens; and which is not got by industry, or obtained by the works of the law, nor bought with a price, but is a free bequest of God as a Father to his children; for an inheritance is peculiar to children, and this to the children of God, as these believing servants were; and which comes to them by and through the death of the testator; and it may be called an inheritance, because the heavenly glory is substantial, it is substance, a better and a more enduring substance than any inheritance in this world; and is a very plentiful possession and estate, it consists of all things, yea, God himself is the portion of his people, and they that are his children are heirs of God; there is not only a glory, but riches of glory, a plenty, a fulness of it in this inheritance; the way in which they come by it, is receiving it from Christ; “of the Lord ye shall receive it”. It is in a way of

receiving, and so by gift, as a man can receive nothing but what is given him; and as all grace is in a way of receiving, and therefore boasting in it is excluded, so glory is enjoyed in the same way, and from the same hands, even from Christ, the righteous Judge, that will give it; it is in him they obtain this inheritance, and are in him chosen and predestinated unto it; it is by his resurrection from the dead, and in consequence of it, that they through the power of his Spirit and grace are begotten unto it; it is his grace that makes them meet for it; and he has it in his hands for them; he is a feoffee in trust on their behalf, and is able to give it to them; and will at the last day introduce them into the full possession of it. Now these Christian servants “knowing” all this, having a lively hope of this inheritance, a full persuasion, and a firm faith of right unto it, and meetness for it, and having the Spirit of God as an earnest and pledge of it; the consideration of it must greatly tend to make them quiet and easy in their present servitude, and to encourage them, to the discharge of their duty with diligence, faithfulness, and cheerfulness: since they might assure themselves of the inheritance hereafter, how small soever their reward was now:

for ye serve the Lord Christ; who is a good master, and faithful to all his engagements and promises, all whose servants are respected by him, and honoured by his Father, and shall be for ever where he is.

Ver. 25. *But he that doth wrong*, etc.] Which may be understood, both of servants that do wrong to their masters through sloth and idleness, neglecting their business, embezzling their masters' goods, and defrauding them of their substance; and of masters that injure their servants by withholding from them proper food, and raiment; by cheating them of their wages, either giving them none at all, or too little, or detaining them too long, and by giving them bad language, and hard blows, and such like severe usage:

shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; either in this world, or in the other; God will avenge all such injuries, sooner or later; so that these words may be considered either as said with a view to deter servants from evil practices, or to comfort them under the maltreatment they may meet with from cruel masters:

and there is no respect of persons. The Vulgate Latin and Arabic Versions add, “with God”; which undoubtedly is the sense; he regards not the rich more than the poor; he makes no difference between bond and free, the

servant and the master; he will not take the part of the one, because he is a master, nor neglect, the other, because he is a servant, but will do that which is just and right with regard to them both; (see Gill on “~~400~~ Ephesians 6:9”).

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS 4

This chapter begins with an exhortation to masters to behave towards their servants in a just and equitable manner, from the consideration of their having a master in heaven, which should have concluded the preceding one; and in it the apostle gives some general exhortations, and some particular instructions about reading this, and another epistle, and stirring up their minister to his duty; and great part of it is taken up in expressing his love to the Colossians, and in the salutations of others, and of himself. The general exhortations are to prayer, with watchfulness and thankfulness, not only for themselves, but especially for the ministers of the Gospel, (^{<S1042>}Colossians 4:2-4) and next to a wise behaviour towards them that were of the world, (^{<S1045>}Colossians 4:5) and also to a prudent conversation, particularly in language, with everyone, (^{<S1046>}Colossians 4:6). And then the apostle proceeds to declare his great affection for them, and care of them, which he showed by sending two proper persons to them from him, partly to make known his affairs to them, and partly to know the state and condition they were in, and comfort them, (^{<S1047>}Colossians 4:7-9) and next follow the salutations of various persons to them, who are mentioned by name, and whose characters are given, (^{<S1048>}Colossians 4:10-15). And then he orders them to read this epistle in the church of Laodicea, and also that which came from that place, (^{<S1049>}Colossians 4:16) and to admonish Archippus to take heed to, and fulfil his ministry, since it was what he had received in the Lord, (^{<S1047>}Colossians 4:17). And then closes the epistle with his own salutation and benediction, entreating a remembrance of him and his bonds, (^{<S1048>}Colossians 4:18).

Ver. 1. *Masters, give unto your servants*, etc.] This verse properly belongs to the preceding chapter, with which it should have been concluded. It is indeed strange, that those who made the division of chapters and verses should separate this from the former chapter, to which it so manifestly belongs, and begin a new one with it, when it has no connection with what follows; for the apostle having observed the duty of servants to their

masters, proceeds to direct masters to the discharge of their duty to their servants, by giving them

that which is just and equal: proper food and raiment, which is sufficient and fitting for them; the wages due unto them by law or contract; using them with gentleness and humanity, taking care of them when under affliction, and in sickness; encouraging the diligent and laborious by an addition to their salaries; correcting the disobedient within just bounds, not with too much rigour and severity; and carrying it with an even hand to all, not preferring or indulging one before another, without any reason:

knowing that ye also have a master in heaven: (see Gill on “~~AND~~ Ephesians 6:9”).

Ver. 2. *Continue in prayer*, etc.] This is not said particularly to masters, as in the foregoing verse, but to all the members of the church in general; for the apostle having taken notice of some special duties relating to persons in different stations of life, returns to such as were common to them all; as this of prayer to God is, for such prayer is intended; for though the object is not expressed here, he is in the following verse, and the Mediator Christ is supposed, and also the Holy Spirit, whose assistance is necessary to it. The things exhorted to, and required in prayer, are, first, as in this clause, continuance in it, which does not mean that men should be always formally praying to God; nor can it be thought that saints are always in praying frames of soul, though such are always desirable; but it intends frequency and constancy in prayer, in opposition to an entire restraint and omission of it, and to a performance of it but now and then, or very rarely; for though Christians are not, as the Jews were, bound to certain stated hours of prayer, so many times in a day, yet a day should not pass without prayer to God; for their daily cases call for it; their lives, their health, their daily bread, and all their temporal enjoyments, which depend on his daily goodness, providence, and power; their spiritual affairs, the renewing of the inward man day by day, fresh supplies of grace for new service; their daily trials and afflictions, their continued enemies, sin, Satan, and the world, all fully show the necessity of daily prayer: besides, God does not always immediately answer the prayers of his people, he will be sought unto time after time, even for a blessing he intends to give; and therefore the saints should not be discouraged, but continue in prayer till they receive the mercy, and their importunity is a means of enjoying it, as in the case of the poor widow; and which is an encouraging reason why men should pray

always, and not faint. Add to this, that constant prayer is a means of keeping up a spiritual acquaintance, intercourse, and familiarity with God, and of the soul alive in the vigorous exercise of the graces of the Spirit, and of preserving the saints from temptations and sin; for, generally speaking, restraining prayer before God, and casting off his fear, go together. The next things requisite in prayer are watchfulness and thankfulness:

and watch in the same with thanksgiving. There is not only a watchfulness unto it, previous to a man's entrance on it, as in (^{<4068>}Ephesians 6:18 ^{<4047>}1 Peter 4:7) but a watchfulness in it, which is opposed both to sleepiness of body, and to coldness and indifference of mind, to all careless airs and negligent manner of performing it; and designs an intenseness of mind, an application of thought, and fervency of devotion, and affection in it. It lies in a concern, that the heart be lift up, with the hands to God; in a care, that what is asked is according to the will of God, and that the whole be performed in sincerity, faith, and fear. This is what the Jews call **h l p t** **^wy** [, “the attention of prayer” ^{f55} , and **bl h t nwk** , “the intention of the heart”; and which, they say ^{f56} , is the root of prayer, the main and principal thing in it; and that every prayer which is not with intention, is no prayer ^{f57} ; and which, they observe, lies in this, that a man turns his heart from all (other) thoughts, and seems to himself as if he stood before the divine Majesty. To this

thanksgiving must be added; (see ^{<5046>}Philippians 4:6) for this is well pleasing to God; and the contrary, an ungrateful spirit, is highly resented by him. Besides, a believer has always mercies to bless God for, as well as favours to ask at his hands; nor is he ever in such a situation, either in temporals or spirituals, but he has something to bless God for. Moreover, how should it be expected that a person should succeed in a present request, who is not thankful for a former kindness?

Ver. 3. *Withal, praying also for us,* etc.] The persons to be prayed for are next directed to; and these are not only themselves, though their concern is very near and great, but others also, all the saints and people of God, yea, all men, and in particular the ministers of the Gospel. The apostle desires they would pray for him, and his fellow ministers, and which he says not in dissimulation, under a guise of humility, but in true humility and lowliness of mind; being sensible of the greatness of the ministerial work, which this shows, and of his own imperfection and weakness, and of what advantage the prayers, even of the meanest in the church, might be unto him: and this

shows, that it is the duty of churches, and of particular believers, to pray for their ministers, and, among the rest, as follows,

that God would open to us a door of utterance; or “of the word”; so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic; and Ethiopic versions; meaning, either the word of the Gospel, that the door of that might be opened, that it might have a free course, and be glorified; for though he was bound, that was not; nor does he desire that the door of the prison might be opened, but the door of the word; that there might be an opportunity of preaching it; in which sense this phrase is used, (~~410~~1 Corinthians 16:9 ~~412~~2 Corinthians 2:12) that whereas he could not go abroad to preach it, the hearts of men might be inclined to come to him, and hear it from his mouth; and that the door of their hearts might be opened, that they might attend unto it; that it might have an entrance into them, and a place in them: or else the door of his own speech and words is intended, and the sense be, that God would not only set before him an open door for the preaching of the Gospel, and make it effectual for the conversion of many souls; but that, as he would furnish him with all abilities, and every gift for that service, so that with enlargement of heart, and liberty of mind, he would give him elocution, a mouth and wisdom to speak, utterance and freedom of speech; that the door of the Gospel being opened, or an opportunity given to preach it, and the door of men's hearts opened to receive it, the door, of his lips might be also opened to show forth the praise of the grace of God. The Alexandrian copy adds, “with boldness”, or “boldly”, as in (~~409~~Ephesians 6:19)

to speak the mystery of Christ; the Gospel, of which Christ is the author, preacher, sum, and substance; the whole of which is a mystery; the wisdom of God in a mystery; all the doctrines of it are mysteries; and particularly those, and which are here more especially designed, which regard the person, offices, and grace of Christ, as the mystery of his divine and eternal sonship, of his incarnation, of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in his person, of redemption by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and satisfaction by his sacrifice, things dear to the apostle, and which his soul was full of, and he wanted to speak out; and therefore desires prayer, to be made for him, that a door might be opened, and way made for his speaking of these things with freedom:

for which, says he,

I am also in bonds; this he adds, partly to show how dear the Gospel was to him, that he was willing to suffer, and did suffer cheerfully for the sake

of it; and what an honour he esteemed it to lie in chains for it, of which, nor of that, was he in the least ashamed; and partly to stir them up the more to prayer for him, for his liberty in every respect.

Ver. 4. *That I may make it manifest*, etc.] It being a mystery, a secret, which was hid in God from everlasting, and, during the legal dispensation, was wrapped up in types, and shadows, and sacrifices, and is still hidden unto the natural man. Wherefore the apostle was desirous of making it manifest in a ministerial way; for God only, by his Spirit, makes it manifest in a spiritual, experimental, and saving way.

As, says he,

I ought to speak. The Arabic version adds, “concerning it”, the Gospel, the mystery of Christ. The apostle's meaning is, that he might deliver it with that clearness and evidence, and use that plainness of speech which became the Gospel, and him as a minister of it, and not ambiguous expressions, equivocal phrases, words of double meanings, on purpose to hide things from men, but by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. As also to speak it faithfully, declaring the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that might be profitable to the churches; and with all constancy and certainty, with all boldness and intrepidity of soul, and freedom of mind; not seeking to please men, aiming at vain glory, and popular applause, or being afraid of their faces, menaces, and reproaches.

Ver. 5. *Walk in wisdom*, etc.] Or wisely, circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise men; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁵⁵Ephesians 5:15”).

Towards them that are without; so the Jews used to call the Gentiles, all that were out of their own land, that were not of their nation or religion, who were aliens from them, and strangers to their privileges; and sometimes the unbelieving. Jews bear the same character, (see ⁴⁰⁴¹Mark 4:11). Here it may design such who were not members of this church; so the distinction of those that are without, and such as are within, is used by the apostle in (⁴⁰⁵²1 Corinthians 5:12). A church is an house or family, and such as belong to it are called the household of faith, and those that do not are they that are, without; it is as a city, and, those that are of it are fellow citizens with the saints, but others are strangers and foreigners; it is a garden enclosed, they that are planted in it are those that are within, and such as lie in the wide open field of the world are those that are without:

but inasmuch as there are some who are not members of churches, and yet have the grace of God, this phrase may chiefly regard all unregenerate men, profane sinners, such as have not faith in Christ, nor hope in God, who are entirely destitute of the grace of God. Now it becomes saints to walk wisely towards them; all communication with them is not cut off, or correspondence and conversation with them forbidden; the saints indeed are not to have their conversation among them as in times past; they are to have no fellowship with them in immoral actions, and superstitious practices; but they may be concerned with them in things civil, with respect to trade and commerce, and the common business of life; on these accounts they may keep company with them; otherwise, as the apostle elsewhere says, they must needs go out of the world. But then it is incumbent upon them to behave wisely towards them, with the simplicity of the dove to join the wisdom of the serpent; they should walk inoffensively towards them, and do nothing to provoke them, to injure and persecute them, but take all prudent methods to gain their affections, escape their resentment and wrath, and obtain their liberty of worshipping God without disturbance; they should give to all their due, tribute, custom, fear, and honour, to whom they are due, and owe no man anything but love; they should submit to every ordinance of men and be subject to the higher powers, not only to escape wrath, but for conscience sake, and should give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; they should pray for kings, and all in authority; for the prosperity of the nation, city, and place where they are, for their carnal relations and neighbours, and even their very enemies, and do them all the good, both for soul and body, that lies in their power, and as they have opportunity; and by so doing, they will heap up coals of fire on their heads. Such a prudent walk, and wise conduct, is necessary on account of the Gospel, that the public ministration of it may be continued, that it may spread and get ground, and that it may not be reproached and blasphemed; and on the account of them that are without, that they may not have any stumblingblocks laid in their way, and they be hardened in their impiety and irreligion, and be more set against the truths of the Gospel; and also on account of believers themselves, who ought so to converse with the men of the world, that they are not partakers with them in their sins, and have their manners corrupted by them, or the vital heat of religion damped, and they become dead, lifeless, lukewarm, and indifferent to divine things, which is often the case through an indiscreet and imprudent walk with such men: the apostle adds,

redeeming the time; as an instance of prudent walking towards them that are without; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁶Ephesians 5:16”).

Ver. 6. *Let your speech be always with grace*, etc.] “In grace, or concerning grace”: let grace be the subject matter of your speech and conversation. When saints meet together they should converse with each other about the work of grace upon their souls, how it was begun, and how it has been carried on, and in what case it now is; they should talk of the great things and wonders of grace, which God has done for them, which would be both comfortable and edifying to them, and make for the glory of the grace of God; and also, they should confer together about the doctrines of grace, and so instruct, establish, and build up one another in them; and at least their conversation should always turn on things graceful and acceptable, such as may minister grace unto the hearer, and be useful and edifying; wherefore all obscene words, unchaste expressions, filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, ought not to be used. Or this may regard the manner of the speech, and language of the saints; it should be in the exercise of grace; it should be in truth, faithfulness, and sincerity, without lying, dissimulation, and flattery; it should be in consistence with the grace of love, therefore evil should not be spoken one of another; nor should there be whisperings, backbitings, or anything said that is injurious to the character, credit, and reputation of another; for this is contrary to love, and so not with grace: and whatever is said should be spoken in the fear of God; the reason why so many evil things proceed out of the mouths of men is, because the fear of God is not before their eyes. Moreover, the speech of the saints ought to be in a graceful way, with a cheerful and pleasant countenance, in an affable and courteous manner, and not after a morose, churlish, and ill natured fashion: and this should be “always” the case; not that they should be always talking, for there is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak; but the sense is, that when they do speak, it should be both graceful things, and in a graceful manner; so that there is never any room and place for vain discourse, unprofitable talk, and idle words, which must all be accounted for in the day of judgment.

Seasoned with salt. The Syriac version adds, *Æya*, “as” and reads it, “as if it was seasoned with salt”: grace being that to speech, as salt is to meat; as salt makes meat savoury and agreeable to the palate, so grace, prudence, and holiness, which may be meant by salt, (see ⁴⁰¹⁶Mark 9:50), make discourse savoury, pleasant, and acceptable to a spiritual man, who savours the things that be of God, as all such things are that relate to the grace of

God, the work or doctrines of it; and as salt preserves flesh from putrefaction and corruption, so when grace goes along with speech, it makes it pure and incorrupt, sound speech which cannot be condemned: and the apostle's view is, in this exhortation, that nothing unsavoury and corrupt proceed out of the mouths of believers; (see ^{<404>}Ephesians 4:29),

that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. The Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “and know ye how”, etc. and make it to be a fresh exhortation to the saints to be concerned for such a share of spiritual knowledge, that they may be able to give a proper and pertinent answer, with meekness and fear, to such as shall ask a reason of the hope that is in them; and to make suitable returns to persons according to their age, sex, capacities, and circumstances; for everyone is not to be answered alike, nor the same man under different circumstances; a fool is sometimes to be answered according to his folly, and sometimes not; and this seems to be a better reading than ours, which makes this to be the end of gracious, savoury, and incorrupt speech; whereas knowledge is not acquired by speaking, but ought to go before it; though indeed a person that uses himself to speaking with prudence, purity, and grace, is at all times ready to give an agreeable answer, in a graceful and acceptable manner, to everyone.

Ver. 7. *All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you,* etc.] This Tychicus was an Asian by birth; (see ^{<404>}Acts 20:4). His name signifies “fortunate”, and is the same with “Fortunatus” in Latin, which name is mentioned in (^{<4167>}1 Corinthians 16:17) whether he is the same person may be inquired. It is said that this Tychicus was one of the seventy disciples, and was afterwards bishop of Chalcedon. However, he was employed by the apostle as a messenger to Colosse, as he also was to Ephesus, (see ^{<4171>}Ephesians 6:21 ^{<5042>}2 Timothy 4:12), to inform the members of the church of his state and condition, how it was with him; as that he was in prison at Rome, for the sake of the Gospel, which he continued to abide by, and held fast the profession of, not being in the least moved and intimidated by what he suffered, being supported by the presence of Christ, and the discoveries of his love; and therefore, though his outward state was very mean and uncomfortable, yet the inward state of his soul was right and good; the inward man was renewed day by day. He might also send word by him what his thoughts were about his deliverance, or his dissolution, and what expectation he had of either of these: and that they might give the greater

credit to what Tychicus should relate from him, he gives him the following character,

who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister: the same character is given of him in (~~402~~Ephesians 6:21 (see Gill on "~~402~~Ephesians 6:21")) to which is here added,

and fellow servant in the Lord; he was a “brother” in Christ, being a partaker of the same grace, and in the same spiritual relation; and “beloved” of God, and Christ, of all the churches and saints that knew him, and especially by the apostle; and was also a “minister” of the Gospel, a preacher of Jesus Christ, and a “faithful” one to Christ, to his Gospel, and the souls of men; than which a greater character cannot well be given: and though the apostle was endued with such superior gifts, grace, and usefulness; yet he calls this ministering brother a “fellow servant in the Lord”; he having a commission to preach from the same Lord, and having the same Gospel intrusted with him, and being engaged in the same good work, and having the same ends in view, the glory of Christ, and the good of souls; though he had not equal abilities and qualifications, and was not in the same high post and office as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 8. *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose*, etc.] That is, to relate to them his affairs both temporal and spiritual; and also,

that he might know your estate. The Arabic version renders it, “that I may know your estate” by him when he returned again; as whether they continued steadfast in the Gospel, and observed the order, ordinances, and discipline of it; how it prospered, and was succeeded among them, to their comfort and edification, and to the conversion of others; and what reception the false teachers had among them; and what love, concord, and harmony were among themselves; or what were their afflictions and distresses from their enemies. The Ethiopic version renders it, “that ye may know the history of me”; which agrees with a manuscript mentioned by Grotius, which reads, “that ye may know the things concerning us”, as does the Alexandrian copy; and with (~~402~~Ephesians 6:22) where it is added, as here, and “comfort your hearts”; who might be greatly cast down upon hearing of the sufferings of the apostle, and also with those they themselves endured both from within and from without, from sin, Satan, and the world; *see on Gill* “~~402~~Ephesians 6:22”.

Ver. 9. *With Onesimus*, etc.] Who had been Philemon's servant, ran away from him, and was met with and converted by the Apostle Paul, of whom he says many things in his epistle to his master. According to the Apostolic Constitutions, he was afterwards bishop of Beyrhoea; and some say he suffered martyrdom under Domitian; a servant of this name is mentioned by Suetonius^{f58}, Ignatius^{f59} speaks of one Onesimus as bishop of Ephesus, but not the same with this,

a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you; either one of their ministers, as Epaphras was, (^{<50B2>}Colossians 3:12) or one of their city, who was originally a native of that place; and which the apostle mentions, the more to recommend him; though this is the least part of his commendation; he calls him a “brother”, being both a converted man, and in the ministry; and being faithful in his work to Christ, and greatly beloved, by the saints; and particularly highly in the esteem and affections of the apostle:

they shall make known unto you all things which are done here; at Rome, either to him in prison, or in the church; and being two of them, were a proper number to bear a testimony, and which ought to be received.

Ver. 10. *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you*, etc.] This man was a man of Macedonia, and a Thessalonian; (^{<44B2>}Acts 19:29 20:4) which hinders not but that he might be of the circumcision, or a Jew, as is suggested in the following verse; for he might be born at Thessalonica, and yet be of Jewish parents; nor is his Greek name any objection to it, for the Jews themselves say, that the greatest part of the Israelites that were out of the land, their names are as the names of strangers^{f60}: he was a constant companion of the apostle, and one of his fellow labourers, as in (^{<50B2>}Philemon 1:24) and now a prisoner with him at Rome; and who having some knowledge of the members of the church at Colosse, takes this opportunity of sending his Christian salutation to them:

and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas; the same with John Mark, whose mother's name was Mary, said here to be sister to Barnabas, (^{<44B2>}Acts 12:12,24) concerning whom there was a difference between Paul and Barnabas, (^{<44B7>}Acts 15:37,38), and is the same Mark that wrote the Gospel, and was converted by the Apostle Peter, (^{<40B3>}1 Peter 5:13) and who is said to have received his Gospel from him; he is also mentioned (^{<50B1>}2 Timothy 4:11) (Philemon 24). The Arabic version calls him here, the “brother's son of Barnabas”: and the Syriac version, **hdd rb**, “his uncle's son”: however,

Barnabas being so great a man as he was, and so well known, it added some credit to Mark, that he was a relation of his:

touching whom ye received commandments; not concerning Barnabas, but Mark, concerning whom they had had letters of commendation, either from Barnabas or from Paul, to this purpose:

if he come unto you, receive him; for this was either the substance of those letters, or what the apostle now adds of his own, for the further confirmation of them; and that they might more readily and honourably receive him, when he should come unto them.

Ver. 11. *And Jesus, which is called Justus*, etc.] The former of these names is the same with Joshua, and was very frequent with the Jews, and the later a surname that was sometimes given to men remarkable for holiness and righteousness: so Joseph, called Barsabas, is surnamed Justus, (^{<4023>}Acts 1:23) and James, the brother of our Lord, was called by the Jews James the Just ^{f61}: whether this man was not the same with Justus of Corinth, whose house joined to the synagogue, and into which Paul entered, (^{<4807>}Acts 18:7) is not certain, but is likely: who are of the circumcision; were Jews, were circumcised persons, though not now sticklers for circumcision, and the rest of the ceremonies, as appears by what follows: this is to be understood of all the above persons, that sent their salutations to this church; though some confine it to Marcus, Barnabas's sister's son, and to Jesus, called Justus:

these only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God; who assisted him in preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and in promoting the honour and interest of Christ. These were the only persons of the Jewish nation that were then at Rome under that character; from whence it appears that Peter was not there at that time: the apostle adds,

which have been a comfort unto me; under his afflictions and sufferings, by visiting him, conferring with him, praying for him, communicating to him, and labouring in the Gospel in his room and stead.

Ver. 12. *Epaphras, who is one of you*, etc.] A native of Colosse, and one of their faithful ministers; (see ^{<5007>}Colossians 1:7).

A servant of Christ; not merely in the same sense as every believer is, but as he was a preacher of the Gospel, in which he faithfully served his Lord and master, Christ:

saluteth you; sends his Christian respects to you, for whom he bore a sincere love and hearty affection, as appears by what follows:

always labouring fervently for you in prayers; in all his prayers, which were many and frequent, he never forgot his dear flock at Colosse, of which he was pastor, but strove with God for them, even to an agony, as the word signifies; he wrestled with the Lord as Jacob did, nor, as he, would he let him go without a blessing for this church; he was incessant, importunate, and fervent in prayer for them: and what he prayed in particular for them was,

that ye may stand perfect; in Christ Jesus their head, and in his spotless righteousness; (see ⁵⁰²⁸Colossians 1:28 2:10) and continue believing in him, and looking to him for righteousness and strength, in whom all the fulness, the perfection of grace dwells; and where the saints only are, and can continue to be perfect:

and complete in all the will of God; or “be filled” in it, have a perfect knowledge of the revealed will of God, both as to doctrine and practice, and be enabled to act according to it.

Ver. 13. *For I bear him record*, etc.] The apostle was an eye and ear witness of his fervent prayers, his labour of love, and zealous affection for these saints and others; and therefore, as he judged he ought, he bears a testimony for him,

that he hath a great zeal for you; for their spiritual welfare, that the Gospel might continue with them, and they in that, against false teachers, and their attempts to subvert them; that they might grow in the grace of the Gospel, and walk worthy of it, and be at peace among themselves:

and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis; cities in Phrygia, which lay near to Colosse, the one being situated by the river Lycus, and the other by the Maeander; here were many believers, for whom Epaphras had a like zeal and affections as for the Colossians, and to whom very likely he had been useful, either in conversion or edification, or both. The apostle takes no notice to the Colossians of Epaphras being his fellow prisoner, as, he does in his epistle to (⁵⁰²³Philemon 1:23) it may be for this reason, lest they should be over much distressed and cast down with it.

Ver. 14. *Luke, the beloved physician*, etc.] Luke the Evangelist, though some doubt it, is here intended, who was a constant companion of the

apostle in his troubles, and went with him to Rome, as the Acts of the Apostles wrote by him show, and as from (^{<5341>}2 Timothy 4:11) it appears; so Jerom^{f62} calls the Evangelist Luke, the physician of Antioch, for from thence he was; and being converted by the Apostle Paul, as is very probable, though some make him to be one of the seventy disciples, he became of a physician of bodies, a physician of souls: some say^{f63} he was a scholar of Galen, the famous physician, and others that he was his sister's son; who having heard of Christ's miracles, set out with his master Galen for Judea, to know the truth of them, of which they doubted; Galen died by the way, Luke came to Christ, and being taught by him, became one of the seventy disciples. The apostle calls him "beloved", not on account of his profession, in which he might be useful to many, but as he was a brother in Christ, a minister of the Gospel, and a fellow labourer of his. This is the same person as Lucas, mentioned along with Demas, and others, as here, in (^{<5702>}Philemon 1:24). The name perhaps is Roman, but was, however, well known among the Jews; for they say^{f64}, the

"witnesses that sign a divorce, and their names are as the names of strangers, what is to be done with it? there is none comes into our hands (is received) but **swqwl** "Lukus" and "Lus", and we allow it to be right:"

upon which the gloss says, because these were famous names:

and Demas greet you; the same who, through the love of the present world, forsook the apostle, (^{<5340>}2 Timothy 4:10) which he did either after the writing of this epistle, or if before it, he was now returned again to him: his name seems to be the same with the Roman Dama, unless it should be a contraction of Demetrius, or rather of Demarchos; though the Jews make frequent mention of R. **ymyd**, "Dimi", or "Demi", in their writings^{f65}, which perhaps is the same name with this.

Ver. 15. *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea*, etc.] Where there was a church mentioned in the following verse, of which *see on Gill* "^{<6620>}*Revelation 2:10*".

And Nymphas; which some, unskilful in the Greek language, have took for a woman; whereas it is the name of a man, as the following words show; and is a contraction of Nymphios, or Nymphidios, or Nymphodoros:

and the church which is in his house. This man seems to have been an inhabitant of Laodicea, and that the church there met at his house to worship God, to pray unto him, sing his praise, hear his word, and attend on all ordinances: or his own family was brought up so strictly to the observance of these things, that they looked like a little church of themselves.

Ver. 16. *And when this epistle is read amongst you,* &c,] Which the apostle was now writing, and sent unto them; and which was to be read publicly, before the whole church; being sent not to any particular person, or persons, but to the whole body, and for their general good and instruction:

cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; his will was, that after it had been read to the church at Colosse, it should be sent, or at least a copy of it, to the church of the Laodiceans, in order to be read there: his reason might be, not only because this church was near them, but because it was in much the same situation, being infested with the same sort of false teachers; and therefore what was said to the one, was pertinent to the other:

and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea; which was not an epistle of the apostle to the Laodiceans, as some have thought, but one that was “written from” thence, as the Syriac version renders it. Marcion, the heretic, called the epistle to the Ephesians, the epistle to the Laodiceans, but without any reason; and others have forged an epistle which bears this name, and appears to be a collection out of others, and chiefly from the epistle to the Philippians; and which being short, and may gratify the curious who cannot otherwise come at it, I shall transcribe it, and is as follows^{f66}.

“Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ; to the brethren which are of Laodicea, grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to Christ in every prayer of mine, that ye continue and persevere in good works, expecting the promise in the day of judgment: neither let the vain speeches of some that pretend to truth disturb you, so as to turn you from the truth of the Gospel which is preached by me; and now the Lord cause that those who belong to me may be serviceable for the furtherance of the truth of the Gospel, and doing kind actions, which are of salvation unto eternal life: and now my

bonds are manifest which I suffer in Christ, in which I am glad and rejoice; and this is to my perpetual salvation which is done by your prayers, the Holy Ghost supplying, whether by life or by death; for me to live is life in Christ, and to die is joy; and he will do his own mercy in you, that ye may have the same love, and be unanimous: therefore, most beloved, as ye have heard of the presence of the Lord, so think ye, and do in fear, and you shall have life for ever; for it is God that worketh in you; and whatsoever ye do, do without sin; and what is best, most beloved, rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and take heed of all filth in all gain; let your petitions be openly with God, be ye steadfast in the sense of Christ: and whatsoever things are sound and true, and chaste and just, and lovely, do; and what ye have heard and received retain in the heart, and peace shall be with you. Salute all the brethren with an holy kiss; all the saints salute you; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Cause this to be read to the Colossians, and that which is of the Colossians to you.”

Every one on reading it will easily see that it is a spurious piece, a collection out of other epistles, and very ill put together: however, the apostle here does not speak of any epistle written to the church of Laodicea, but of one that was written from thence; which some think was written by himself, and that he means his first epistle to Timothy, which is said to be written from Laodicea; and the rather, because in that the qualifications of the ministers of the Gospel are given; and also suitable instructions for the discharge of their work, and so very proper to be read in the presence of Archippus; who, from the following verse, seems to have been remiss and negligent, and needed stirring up to the performance of his office: but from (⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 2:1) it appears, that the apostle had not been at Laodices when he wrote this, and had not so much as seen any of the faces of the brethren there in the flesh; it therefore seems rather to be an epistle which was sent from Laodicea to him, or to the Colossians; which having something in it very instructive and useful, the apostle desires it might be publicly read.

Ver. 17. *And say to Archippus*, etc.] A name common among the Grecians. This person the apostle calls his fellow soldier, in (⁵⁰⁰⁰Philemon 1:2) and who was now the minister of the Gospel at Colosse, his fellow minister, or co-pastor Epaphras, being at Rome, and a prisoner there; though by some he is said to be the first bishop of the Laodiceans, but it

seems most likely that he now resided at Colosse, and was their minister: who being negligent in his office, they are called upon to say unto him,

take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. The “ministry” he had, was not that of the office of a deacon, as some have thought, but of a preacher of the word; and this he had “received” gifts for, and was called unto it, and installed in it; and that “in”, and “by the Lord” himself, and to whom he was accountable for it: and therefore it was incumbent on him to “fulfil it”; by constantly preaching the word, and faithfully administering the ordinances; by defending truth, detecting error, reproving vice, visiting the sick, and comforting the feeble minded; taking heed in all things to himself and doctrine, that he feed the whole flock of God with wholesome food; and, as a wise and faithful steward, give to everyone their portion of meat in due season: hence it appears, that when ministers are negligent in the discharge of their duty, the church has a power to admonish and exhort them to a diligent performance of it.

Ver. 18. *The salutation by the hand of me Paul,* etc.] After his amanuensis had finished the epistle, he added his usual salutation to it with his own hand, to prevent all counterfeits and impositions, and that the churches to whom he wrote might be sure of the genuineness of his epistles; but before he added it to it, he either wrote with his own hand, or ordered to be written the following words,

remember my bonds; this he says, partly that they might be animated to abide by the Gospel, for which, as he had told them before, (^{500B}Colossians 4:3) that he was in bonds; and partly to encourage them, by his example, patiently to endure what afflictions and persecutions soever they should meet with, for the sake of it; as also that they might be moved hereby, to remember him in their prayers, that, if it was the will of God, he might be released, and be yet further useful in preaching the Gospel; or however, that he might be supported in his bonds, and cheerfully bear them, and remain steadfast in his faith in Christ unto the end: and then follows the salutation,

grace be with you, Amen; which is common to all his epistles, and well suits them; in which he so much displays the grace of God, as it is expressed in the Gospel; and which his heart was full of, and earnestly desired might be more largely manifested to, and bestowed upon the saints. This epistle is said to be

written from Rome to the Colossians, by Tychicus and Onesimus; and though the subscriptions of the epistles are not always to be depended on, yet this seems to be right; that it was inscribed to the Colossians, there is no doubt; and that it was written from Rome is clear enough, since by several expressions it is plain that he was now a prisoner, and in bonds; and that it was sent by Tychicus and Onesimus is more than probable, from ~~(Colossians~~ Colossians 4:7-9).

FOOTNOTES

Ft1 -- Nat. Hist. 50:5. c. 32.

Ft2 -- Polymnia, 50:7. c. 30.

Ft3 -- Eusebius in Chron.

Ft4 -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 6. 3. & in Exodus fol. 32. 3. & in ^{<0144>}Leviticus 14:4. & 37:4. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 3. 2.

Ft5 -- Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 25. 4.

Ft6 -- De Mund. Opific. p. 6. de Plant. Noe, p. 216, 217. de Coufus. Ling. p. 341. de Somniis, p. 600. de Monarch. p. 823.

Ft7 -- Isidor. Pelusiot. 50:3. Ep. 31.

Ft8 -- R. Sol. Urbin. Ohel Moed, fol. 50. 1.

Ft9 -- Targum Jon. in ^{<0025>}Genesis 1:26. Bereshit Rabba, fol. 1. 1. & 3. 3. Menass. ben Israel, Conciliator in Genesis Qu. 12.

Ft10 -- Sepher Jetzira, p. 17, Ed. Rittangel.

Ft11 -- Tikkune Zohar in ib. p. 127, 128. & Zohar in Exodus fol. 18. 2. & in Leviticus fol. 39. 1. & 47. 2.

Ft12 -- Abarbinel in Daniel fol. 45. 4. & 46. 4.

Ft13 -- Cabala denudata, par. 2. p. 7. & Lex. Cabal. p. 679, 681.

Ft14 -- Philo de Conf. ling. p. 341.

Ft15 -- Plin. Nat. Hist. 50:5. c. 29.

Ft16 -- Jonathan ben Uzziel in ^{<010>}Exodus 40:4.

Ft17 -- Antiqu. 50:3. c. 6. sect. 4. 7.

Ft18 -- De Congressu quaerend. Erud. p. 440. 441. de Vita Mosis, 50:3. p. 665, etc. quod deterius pot. p. 184.

Ft19 -- De Migr. Abraham, p. 389.

Ft20 -- De Sommiis, p. 574.

- Ft21** -- Zohar in Deuteronomy fol. 120. 8.
- Ft22** -- Misn. Nedarim, c. 3. sect. 11.
- Ft23** -- Zohar in Exodus fol. 106. 1. Caphtor, fol. 52. 2.
- Ft24** -- Tzeror Hammor, fol. 87. 1, 3.
- Ft25** -- Nonnus in Joh. 19:19. Vid. Niccqueti Titulus S. Crucis, 50:1. c. 18. p. 128.
- Ft26** -- Vid. Lydium de re Militari, 50:6. c. 3.
- Ft27** -- Vid. Casaubon. Epist. ep. 24.
- Ft28** -- Misn. Shekalim, c. 3. sect. 1.
- Ft29** -- Misn. Becorot, c. 9. sect. 5.
- Ft30** -- Maimon. & Bartenora in ib.
- Ft31** -- T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 9. 1. Piske Tosaphot Yebamot. art. 84. Maimon. Hilch. Sabbat, c. 20. sect. 14.
- Ft32** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 58. 2.
- Ft33** -- Maimon. Hilch. Melachim, c. 10. sect. 9.
- Ft34** -- T. Bab. Betza, fol. 16. 1. Seder Tephillot, fol. 76. 1. Ed. Amtst.
- Ft35** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 56. 2. Seder Olam Rabba, p. 17. & Zuta, p. 101. Ed. Meyer.
- Ft36** -- Jarchi & Baal Hatturim in ~~Gen~~Genesis 2:3. Pirke Eliezer, c. 18.
- Ft37** -- Vid. Misn. Abot, c. 3. sect. 18. & Bartenora in ib. & Halicot Olam, par. 2. c. 1. p. 48.
- Ft38** -- T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 32. 1.
- Ft39** -- Misn. Chagiga, c. 1. sect. 8. T. Bab. Chagiga, fol. 11. 2.
- Ft40** -- T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 63. 1.
- Ft41** -- T. Bab. Menachot, fol. 36. 2. Vid. T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 5. 1.
- Ft42** -- T. Hieros. Roshhashanah, fol. 56. 4.
- Ft43** -- Vid. Clement. Alex Stromat. 50:6. p. 635.

- Ft44** -- Seder Tephillot, Ed. Basil fol. 222. 2.
- Ft45** -- Ib. fol. 335. 1.
- Ft46** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 97. 2. & in Exodus fol. 24. 3.
- Ft47** -- Maimon. Maacolot Asurot, c. 7. sect. 1. & c. 14. sect. 2. & Nezirut, c. 5. sect. 3.
- Ft48** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 2. 3.
- Ft49** -- Vid. Justin. 50:2. c. 1, 2, 3. Plin. 50:4. c. 12. & 6. 17. Herodot. 50:4. c. 46.
- Ft50** -- Laertius in Vita Anacharsis.
- Ft51** -- Tzeror Hammot, fol. 28. 2.
- Ft52** -- Shaare Ora, fol. 6. 1. & 22. 2. & 25. 3.
- Ft53** -- Sepher Jetzirah, Nethib, 17. p. 136,
- Ft54** -- T. Megilla, fol. 14. 2. & 15. 1. Zohar in Numbers fol. 70. 3. & 76. 2. & Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Leviticus fol. 38. 3.
- Ft55** -- T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 164. 2. & Sabbat, fol. 127. 1.
- Ft56** -- R. Aben Ezra in ~~19837~~ Psalm 78:37.
- Ft57** -- Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 4. sect. 15, 16.
- Ft58** -- In Vit. Galbae, c. 13.
- Ft59** -- Ep. ad Ephes. p. 17. & ad Antioch. ascript. p. 89.
- Ft60** -- T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 11. 2.
- Ft61** -- Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 50:2. c. 1.
- Ft62** -- Catalog. Script. Ecclesiastes p. 91. Vid. Nicephor. Hist. 50:2. c. 43.
- Ft63** -- Vid. Castell. Lex. Polyglott. col. 1894.
- Ft64** -- T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 11. 2.
- Ft65** -- T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 19. 2. Nazir, fol. 36. 1. Sota, fol. 43. 2. Bava Kama, fol. 43.

Ft66 -- Jachasin, fol. 87. 2. & 117. 1.