

Class Outline

February 3, 2019

- I. Opening Prayer – Advent II – BCP, p. 92
- II. Syllabus
 - a. Modules and objectives
 - b. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.” (James 3:1 RSV.)
- III. Overview of a Typical Class
 - a. Opening Prayer
 - b. Flash Card (Memory Item) of the Week
 - c. Comments/Questions/Insights on the Previous Week’s Readings
 - d. Examination of a Unique Characteristic or Trait of St. Paul
 - i. Saul – Persecutor of the Way (Feb. 3)
 - ii. Paul – Apostle to the Gentiles (Feb. 10)
 - iii. Paul – Christ’s Suffering Servant (Feb. 24)
 - iv. Paul and the Supernatural (March 3)
 - v. Paul – Prayer Warrior (March 24)
 - vi. Mysteries of St. Paul (March 31)
 - e. Introduction to the Coming Week’s Readings
 - f. Closing Prayer
- IV. Today’s Class
 - a. Flash Card of the Week – II Timothy 3:16-17: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
 - i. All Scripture
 1. Paul, as a Pharisee, would have considered the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (essentially our Old Testament) as “scripture.” Saducees, on the other hand, only regarded the Law (*i.e.*, Pentateuch) as “scripture”.
 2. But...St. Peter indirectly refers to Paul’s epistles as “scripture”: “And count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability.” (II Peter 3:15-17.)
 3. The New Testament canon was not finalized until several centuries after Christ.
 4. The Prayer Book specifically sets forth our accepted canon. *See*, Article VI, p. 603. Note the distinction between “Holy Scripture” and “other Books.”

- ii. By Inspiration of God – “This is the only use in the Bible of the Greek word **theopneustos**, which literally means ‘God-breathed.’ It joins the words **theos** (God) with **pneustos** (breath) to convey the idea that Scripture is breathed out by God, serving as an extension of God Himself.” (www.compellingtruth.org/God-breathed.html) “Inspiration” does not mean word-for-word dictation; rather the writing was influenced by God such that it may be deemed to be His word, expressing precisely what He intended.
- iii. **Profitable** – Investment of time, study and reflection provides valuable returns. Think of the Parable of the Talents in this context. (Matthew 25:14-30.) If scripture is the “talent” given to me, what investment do I make in it? Will the Master be pleased with how I managed that precious asset?
- iv. Doctrine – Any truth taught by the Church as necessary for acceptance by the faithful. (Hardon, *Pocket Catholic Dictionary* (1966).)
- v. Reproof – Censure, rebuke, strong criticism
 - 1. Old Testament Prophets (*e.g.*, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah)
 - 2. Jesus – “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matthew 23:13.)
 - 3. Paul – “O foolish Galatians...” (Galatians 3:1.)
- vi. Correction – *e.g.*, Paul commends the Colossians for their love and faithfulness but writes to warn them that harmful practices and beliefs are creeping into their church
- vii. Instruction in righteousness – the Bible is bursting at the seams with such instruction, not just in hortatory (instructional) passages but also in historical accounts, parables, psalms and proverbs.
- viii. Man of God – despite the fact that Paul is addressing his “spiritual son,” Timothy, the passage unquestionably applies to all believers – man or woman.
- ix. Perfect – Complete (RSV).
- x. Thoroughly furnished – thoroughly equipped; lacking nothing.
- xi. All good works – Believers thoroughly grounded in scripture are fully equipped, fully prepared to answer every call, to meet every challenge and to perform every good work God asks of us. Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations by quoting scripture. Are we able to do that?

V. Paul – Persecutor of the Way (*see* Appendix, front)

VI. Introduction to Colossians (*see* Handout and Appendix, back)

VII. Closing Prayer – Conversion of St. Paul – BCP, 229

Additional Resources

St. Luke’s web page (www.episcopalnet.org) – Daily Offices, Ordo Kalendar, Tracts for Our Times, archived sermons, adult education classes...*and more!*

St. Luke’s Facebook page – Upcoming events, daily Saints, interesting articles...*and more!*

Andrew Scourby’s readings of the King James Bible on YouTube.

Adult Education – St. Luke’s Church – Sedona, AZ

Studies on the Daily Lectionary – Epiphany 4 – Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – Colossians

Week of February 3, 2019

Introduction: Paul’s epistle to the Colossians is one of the so-called Captivity Epistles (the others being Ephesians, Philippians and Philemon), probably written in the early 60s A.D.¹ during Paul’s imprisonment in Rome, which lasted at least two years. (Acts 28:16-31.) Although Paul was permitted to live in his own rented quarters during his imprisonment, it is likely that his right arm would have been chained to the arm of a Roman Praetorian guard twenty-four hours per day. (Acts 28:16, 20.) Paul customarily dictated his epistles to an amanuensis, but he frequently concluded his letters with a brief salutation in his own hand to indicate their authenticity. (See, e.g., Col. 4:18.)

The church at Colossae was probably founded between 55-57 A.D., during Paul’s stay in Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey. (See Acts 19.) However, the church was founded, not by Paul, but by Epaphras – one of Paul’s disciples, a native of Colossae, and Paul’s companion in Rome when he wrote to the Colossians. (Col. 1:7-8, 4:12-13, Philemon 23.) Despite Paul’s earnest desire to visit the Colossians (see Philemon 22), he was apparently not able to do so before his death. According to tradition, Paul was beheaded shortly before the end of the Roman Emperor Nero’s death in 68 A.D.

The Colossian “Heresy”: The principal reason for Paul’s letter to the Colossians was to warn them about succumbing to what is popularly called the Colossian Heresy, or the Colossian Error. Little is known about the precise nature of this so-called heresy other than that it seems to have been a form of **syncretism** involving a combination of asceticism and angelology deriving from both Jewish and Gentile sources. False teaching about intermediary “principalities and powers” and the imposition of overly strict **ascetic** practices were diluting the power and the simplicity of the Gospel, particularly teachings about the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ. The latter half of the letter is **hortatory** – devoted to exhortations towards personal holiness and instruction on “household duties.”

It is important to remember that the original apostles and the early churches did not have the advantage we enjoy today of a complete Holy Bible consisting of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Paul’s gospel message rested largely on his own conversion experience (Acts 9:1-10); revelation directly from Christ (Gal. 1:12); his vast knowledge of Hebrew scriptures (Acts 22:3); and, to some extent, the oral tradition later received from eyewitness accounts by the original apostles and disciples. It is remarkable that the gospel spread so rapidly and so accurately in those days without even more “Colossian Heresies” arising to confuse the message.

Destruction of Colossae: Around 60 A.D. a great earthquake destroyed Colossae as well as nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis. Laodicea and Hierapolis were rebuilt, but Colossae was not. Today, all three cities exist only as ruins. Hierapolis, however, is well-known today for being near Pamukkale, which is noted for its beautiful hot springs.

Outline of Contents*

- I. The greeting, 1:1-2
- II. The true, apostolic gospel, 1:3-2:5
 - a. The prayer for the church, 1:3-12
 - b. The absolute pre-eminence of Christ, 1:13-23
 - c. Paul’s apostolic ministry and authority, 1:24-25
- III. Christian liberty defended against the challenge of the Colossian heresy, 2:6-3:4
- IV. Christian behavior, 3:5-4:6
 - a. General ethical injunctions, 3:5-17
 - b. Household duties, 3:18-4:1
 - c. Exhortation to prayer, 4:2-6
- V. Personal messages, 4:7-17
- VI. Closing greeting and autograph, 4:18

**The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (1962), Vol. 1, p. 660.

¹Dates and locations cited typically reflect the majority view among Bible scholars. Some scholars, for example, believe the Captivity Epistles were written earlier while Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus during his Third Missionary Journey.

Monday – Colossians 1:1-17. *Greetings – Commendation – The Supremacy of Christ*

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, **2** To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, **4** Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, **5** For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; **6** Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: **7** As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; **8** Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. **9** For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; **12** Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: **13** Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: **14** In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: **15** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: **17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

v. 2: reference to *the saints and faithful brethren* does not imply two different groups of believers. A better translation might be “the holy and faithful brethren.”

v. 6: *in all the world* does not mean that the Great Commission given by Jesus to preach the gospel in all the world (Matt. 28:19-20) had already been fulfilled; instead – remarkably – the *same* gospel was being preached everywhere.

v. 10: walking worthy of the Lord *unto all pleasing* means living a life fully pleasing to God.

v. 13: *translated*: delivered

v. 15: *image* and *firstborn* have to do with Jesus’ claim to sovereignty and do not imply he was a “created” being or anything less than God.

v. 17: *before all things*: both as to time and precedence in creation; *consist* hold together

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Exegesis: Following his customary greeting (“Paul, an apostle...”) and a salutary benediction (“grace” and “peace”), Paul gives thanks for the faith and love demonstrated by the Colossians and assures them of his ceaseless prayers for them (vv. 1-12). He then begins a remarkable description of the nature, power and preeminence of Christ (vv. 13-17), which continues into tomorrow’s lesson.

Exposition: Paul often began *and* ended his letters to the churches with benedictions of “grace” and “peace.” One must assume that these words weren’t mere courtesies and that Paul intended such benedictions to have real spiritual effect on the readers and the hearers of his words. When we say “God bless you” to friends or family, do we truly *believe* God will bless them? How so? How can we appropriate Paul’s benedictions today?

Although Paul intends, later in the letter, to issue stern corrections regarding the Colossian Heresy, he first lifts the church up by commending them for their genuine love and faithfulness, and he reminds them of the wonderful hope “laid up” for them in heaven. Paul prays that the Colossians may be granted knowledge of God’s will, along with wisdom, understanding, spiritual strength, fruitfulness in good works, patience, thankfulness, and the ability to live a life fully pleasing to God. This surely serves as a good template for our own prayers – both on behalf of others and for ourselves.

Notice the use of the present tense in vv.12-14: “*hath* made us meet;” “*hath* delivered;” “*hath* translated;” “*we have* redemption [and] forgiveness.” God’s redemptive work in us is already complete. And, by him *all things* hold together (v. 17)!

Question for Reflection: Do I always feel as if I am part of that group referred to in verses 12 and 13?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Tuesday – Colossians 1:18-2:5. Holy, Unblameable and Unreprovable in His Sight

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. **19** For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; **20** And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. **21** And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled **22** In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight: **23** If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; **24** Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: **25** Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; **26** Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: **27** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: **28** Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: **29** Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; **2** That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; **3** In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4** And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. **5** For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

v. 19: *in him should all fulness dwell*: all power belongs to Christ and is not shared with other “thrones,” “dominions” or “principalities”

v. 23: *preached to every creature which is under heaven*: although the Gospel had been preached throughout much of the Roman Empire, this is somewhat of an exaggeration, given that Paul himself hoped to preach the gospel later in Spain (Romans 15:23-24).

v. 24: *and fill up...which is the church*: Paul participates in Christ’s sufferings for the sake of the Church; see also discussion in the Exposition

v. 26: *the mystery which hath been hid*: God did not reveal himself in Jesus until the appropriate time

v. 1: *what great conflict I have for you*: how greatly I strive for you

v. 5: *joying and beholding your order*: rejoicing to see your good order

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Exegesis: Paul continues his description of Christ’s supremacy and all-sufficiency (vv. 18-21) and exhorts the Colossians to “be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (v. 23) as they are in danger of doing because of the Colossian Heresy. He then turns to a description of his own ministry, including his sufferings on behalf of the church and the burden of love – and admiration – he feels for the churches at Colossae and Laodicea.

Exposition: The author of II Peter famously stated that in Paul’s letters there are “some things hard to be understood.” (II Peter 3:16.) Surely, verse 24 in today’s lesson is one of those “hard” passages. The RSV translation reads: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.” The idea is not that Christ’s Atonement was incomplete (*see, e.g.,* v. 20) but that participation in suffering on behalf of the church is an inescapable – and privileged – component of every Christian’s salvation. To put Paul’s ability to “rejoice” in his sufferings into context, take a moment to read II Corinthians 11:23-33, where he describes the punishments and deprivations he had endured. If we are called to suffer in like manner, are we prepared? Does that really happen today?

Questions for Reflection: When was the last time someone tried to “beguile” me “with enticing words” (v. 4)? Was I steadfast in my resistance?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Wednesday – Colossians 2:6-19. *Rooted, Built Up, Established and Abounding*

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: **7** Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. **8** Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. **9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. **10** And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: **11** In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **12** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. **13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; **14** Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; **15** And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. **16** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: **17** Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. **18** Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, **19** And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

v. 10: *ye are complete in him*: you have come to fulness of life in him

v. 13: *quickened*: made alive

v. 14: RSV: having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

v. 15: *spoiled*: disarmed

v. 18: *beguile*: disqualify; *a voluntary humility*: insisting on self-abasement

v. 19: *increaseth with the increase of God*: grows with a growth from God

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Exegesis: Paul now turns to his main purpose in writing to the Colossians, warning them to be on guard against the corrupting influences described in verses 16 through 18. Standing against these “heretical” influences, Paul notes, are: Christ as fully God (v. 9); the spiritual circumcision of Christ (v. 11); burial and rising to life in baptism (v. 12); forgiveness of all trespasses, which were nailed to the cross (vv. 13, 14); Christ’s triumph over all “principalities and powers” (v. 15); and Christ, the Head, the source of the body’s (*i.e.*, the church’s) growth, strength and nourishment.

Exposition: The phrase “as ye have been taught” in verse 7 expresses Paul’s confidence that the founder of the church at Colossae – probably Epaphras, who would himself have been a fairly recent convert – conveyed the gospel message fully and accurately. Again, this would have been largely through the oral tradition. One wonders how much of what Paul writes in verses 9 through 15 had already been conveyed by Epaphras (1:7) and how much, if anything, was supplemental to what had been previously taught. In any event, those must have been heady and thrilling times for the Colossians. They surely had a million questions for Paul, and they must have longed to see him as much as he longed to see them.

Twenty centuries later, Sedona has become a hub – if not *the* hub – in the United States for promoting a syncretistic form of heresy by aggressively marketing healing crystals, vortexes, aura photos, fortune-telling, astrology, angelology, nature worship and New Age spirituality. To some, it all seems like harmless fun. In reality, though, gullible and spiritually hungry souls are led astray by these fraudulent schemes. One yearns, instead, for these seekers to be rooted, built up and established in the word of Christ.

Questions for Reflection: With whom do I “walk” (v. 6)? What are the “vain deceit” and the “tradition of men” verse 8 talks about? Are those things easy to spot? Do I believe verses 13-15? Can others tell, by watching me?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Thursday – Colossians 2:20-3:11. *Seek Those Things Which Are Above*

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, **21** (Touch not; taste not; handle not; **22** Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? **23** Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **2** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. **3** For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. **5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: **6** For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: **7** In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. **8** But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. **9** Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; **10** And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: **11** Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

v. 20: *rudiments of the world*: elemental spirits of the universe

v. 22: *Which are all to perish with the using*: referring to things which all perish as they are used

v. 23: *in will worship*: in promoting rigor of devotion

v. 23: *not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*: but they are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh

v. 5: *Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth*: Put to death therefore what is earthly in you

v. 5: *inordinate affection*: passion; 5: *concupiscence*: desire

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Exegesis: Concluding his warnings against falling prey to the Colossian Heresy (verses 20-23), Paul exhorts the Colossians to “put off the old man,” who is characterized by the sinful qualities and behaviors listed in verses 5-9 and to “put on the new man” who, instead, is renewed in the image of God (v. 10). The phrase “hid with Christ” (v. 3) refers both to the mystery of Christ’s in-dwelling presence within us and the security of our salvation.

Exposition: Notice the affirmative actions expected of the believer: seek those things which are above (v. 1); set your affection on things above (v. 2); mortify your members (v. 5); put off all sinful behaviors (v. 8); put on the new man. Although all our sins have been nailed to the cross (2:14) and our salvation is secure, living a Christian life demands a daily resolve to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), that is, to strive to trust Christ more each day and to serve him better.

Questions for Reflection: Do I always “seek those things which are above” (3:1)? What stops me from doing so more often? Have I put off the things listed in verses 5 through 9?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Friday – Colossians 3:12-17. *The Elect of God, Holy and Beloved*

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; **13** Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. **14** And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. **15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. **17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

v. 12: *the elect of God*: God's chosen ones; *bowels of mercies*: compassion

v. 14: *charity*: love

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Exegesis: Paul continues the “put-on/put-off” theme from yesterday’s lesson, culminating in the command to “put on charity”(i.e., love) (v. 14). All of these “put on” qualities directly impact how we relate to others. In contrast, the admonitions in verses 15 and 16 to “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts,” and to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you” counsel a conscious surrender which enriches and strengthens the inner life, leading to a more effective external witness.

“Predestination” and “election” (see v. 12: the “elect” of God) are terms that often appear together in theological writings. For example, take a moment to read Article XVII of the Articles of Religion in the Book of Common Prayer: “Of Predestination and Election” (BCP, p. 606.) Clear as mud, right? Setting aside “predestination” for another discussion, what *is* clear is that the early Church commonly referred to believers as God’s “elect,” implying that they had supplanted Israel as God’s favored people. Even so, Paul always maintained a special love and hope for his Jewish brethren. (See generally, Rom. 9-11; “[M]y heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Rom. 10:1.)

Exposition: The early Church had a saying, “*unus Christianus, nullus Christianus.*” One Christian, no Christian. Verse 16 underscores not only the importance – but also the obligation – of gathering together as believers to worship God and to build each other up. Similarly, the author of Hebrews urges: “...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:25.) The person who claims he or she can adequately worship God on Sunday either at home or on the proverbial golf course commits a grave error.

The singing of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (v. 16) was an integral – one might say, essential – part of Christian worship from the earliest days. Indeed, at the conclusion of the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples sang a traditional Passover hymn (probably Psalm 118) just before Jesus departed for Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26.) The *1940 Hymnal* used in our parish quotes Canon 24 of the Episcopal Church: “It shall be the duty of every Minister to see that music is used in his congregation as an offering for the glory of God and as a help to the people in their worship....[And, it] shall be his duty to suppress all light and unseemly music and all irreverence in the rendition thereof.” Music is not an option; it is a requirement. On the Sundays when we are not blessed with instrumental accompaniment, we get a sense of what “making a joyful noise” would have been like in the relatively small house churches of Paul’s time!

On the Feast of the Epiphany this year, our Bishop illustrated the teaching value of our *Hymnal* by quoting a wonderful children’s hymn: “Advent tells us Christ is near; Christmas tells us Christ is here. In Epiphany we trace All the glory of his grace...” (Hymn 235.) Supplementing the topical headings contained on each page of the *Hymnal*, the detailed Subject and Topical Indexes at pages 799-802 further illustrate the *Hymnal’s* rich potential as a source for “teaching and admonishing” the faithful through music, as urged by Paul (v. 16).

Questions for Reflection: How many of these things have I “put on” (v. 12)? Which ones haven't I put on? Why? What stops me from living out verse 17 every single day? What must I set aside, in order to do so? What must I begin doing?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Saturday – Colossians 3:18-4:6. *Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord*

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. **20** Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. **21** Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. **22** Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: **23** And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; **24** Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. **25** But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. **2** Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; **3** Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: **4** That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. **5** Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. **6** Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

v. 18: *submit yourselves unto*: be subject to

v. 18: *be not bitter against them*: do not be harsh with them

v. 22: *obey in all things your masters according to the flesh*: obey in all things those who are your earthly masters

v. 25: For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. (RSV)

v. 1: *give unto your servants that which is just and equal*: treat your slaves justly and fairly

v. 4: *manifest*: clear

v. 5: *them that are without*: outsiders

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Exegesis: Verses 3:18 through 4:1 are often referred to as the Household Duties. A very similar passage – with fuller development – is contained in Ephesians 5:22 through 6:9, which is not surprising given that Ephesians and Colossians were likely written at approximately the same time. *See also*, Titus 2:1-10.

Despite Paul’s bleak prospects in prison – and after many years of back-breaking toil and suffering, he continues to hope and pray for opportunities to continue spreading the gospel (4:3). Finally, he urges the fledgling believers at Colossae to be prepared to speak with “outsiders” about their faith with speech seasoned with salt (*i.e.*, neither bland nor insipid), echoing St. Peter’s admonition: “[A]lways be prepared to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...” (I Peter 3:15.)

Exposition: Christ, in his day, was not primarily concerned with changing the social structures of his time. After all, he instructed the Pharisees to “render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matt. 22:21.) He healed the Roman centurion’s servant without telling him he had to resign his military office. (Matt. 8:5-13.) (Even today, at every Mass we humbly repeat the glorious words of the centurion: “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only and my [soul] shall be healed.”) Paul urged: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” (I Timothy 2:1-2.) (Notice that Paul did not say to pray only for those leaders who align with your personal beliefs.) He even sent a runaway slave back to his master! (Philemon 12.)

Much to the chagrin of certain Jews who looked for a political Messiah, the Gospel message was not one of social upheaval and reform but of personal transformation. Jesus knew that desirable social changes would flow naturally as the Gospel spread and took hold. So much that is good in our society today – charities, educational institutions, hospitals, the abolition of slavery, and even the arts – can be traced directly back to the flourishing of Christianity.

So, Paul’s purpose in outlining the so-called Household Duties was not to effect radical change but to impress on every Christian believer the necessity of acting – within the existing social framework – always out of love and mutual respect. No matter where one might fall on the social ladder, “[t]here is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28.)

Questions: How am I doing, in regard to these directives? Have I done a good job redeeming my time this past week (v. 5)? What can I do this week, in order to more fully redeem my time?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Additional Reading

Although the Lectionary excludes **the last few verses of Colossians (4:7-18)**, they are worthy of your time and attention. It is fun to do some detective work to see where the individuals named there appear elsewhere in Acts and in the various epistles.

It is well worth reading **chapter 19 of Acts** for background on Paul's three-year stay in Ephesus, when, as mentioned in the Introduction, the church at Colossae was likely founded by Paul's disciple, Epaphras.

Paul's reference to his (now missing) letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) is made particularly tantalizing by the passage in **Revelation 3:15-22** in which Jesus dictates *his own* letter to the Laodiceans some 30 years after Paul's letter (c. 96 A.D.). Assuming Paul's letter to the Laodiceans was both encouraging and corrective – like his letter to the Colossians – how had the Laodicean church fared by the time Jesus dictated his letter to them?

It is interesting and instructive to read **all of the Captivity Epistles** in one sitting – which can easily be done in under ninety minutes. Note the many similarities between Ephesians and Colossians, both in thematic content and wording. Try to imagine how Philemon (a resident of Colossae) might have responded to Paul's request that Philemon return his runaway slave, Onesimus, to Paul. Also note Paul's poignant request in verse 22 of Philemon that Philemon secure lodging for Paul because he hoped to be released from prison and visit Colossae soon. Instead, Paul was soon to be a martyr. Finally, note the deep affection that Paul expresses in his letter to the Philippians. If Paul had a "teacher's pet" among churches, the church at Philippi may have been it.

Glossary

amanuensis (n.) – one employed to write from dictation or to copy manuscript.

ascetic (adj.) – characterized by or suggesting the practice of severe self-discipline and abstinence from all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.

exegesis (n.) – critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture.

hortatory (adj.) – tending or aiming to exhort.

syncretism (n.) – the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.



Adult Education – St. Luke’s Church – Sedona, AZ
Studies on the Daily Lectionary – Epiphany 4 – Morning Prayer, Second Lesson – Colossians
Week of February 3, 2019

Appendix

Saul of Tarsus – Persecutor of the Way

The Stoning of Stephen: Now when [the Sanhedrin] heard these things [spoken by Stephen] they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

And Saul was consenting to his death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samar’ia, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (Acts 7:54-8:3.)

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Widening the Net: But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2.)

In Paul’s Words

from Paul’s speech to the Jerusalem Mob: “I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cili’cia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gama’li-el², educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.” (Acts 22:3-5.)

from Paul’s defense before Festus and Herod Agrippa: “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. “Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.” (Acts 26:9-12.)

For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (I Corinthians 15:9.)

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. (Galatians 1:13-14.)

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. (Phillipians 3:4-6.)

² “[A] teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people.” (Acts 5:34.) By counseling restraint, Gamaliel likely saved the lives of Peter and other apostles when the council was enraged by their testimony. (Acts 5:33-40.)

Conclusion – Colossians 4:7-18. *Always laboring fervently for you in prayers*

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord; **8** Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; **9** With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) **11** And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. **13** For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. **14** Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. **15** Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. **16** And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. **17** And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. **18** The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

v. 10: *fellow prisoner*: not literally a prisoner; see Philemon 24, where Aristarchus is referred to a fellow laborer

v. 11: *These only are my fellow workers*: Aristarchus, Marcus and Jesus Justus are my only Jewish fellow workers

v. 18: *bonds*: fetters

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Exegesis: For reasons unknown, Epaphras was apparently unable to deliver Paul's letter to the church that he (Epaphras) had founded. So, Paul entrusted that task to Tychicus (vv. 7-8), a longtime companion on Paul's journeys. Tychicus was also Paul's emissary to Ephesus. (Ephesians 6:21; II Timothy 4:12.) Near the conclusion of his Third Missionary Journey, Paul had personally selected both Tychicus and Aristarchus (v. 10) to accompany him on his return trip from Macedonia to Jerusalem to deliver an offering for the poor. (Acts 20:4.) Previously, Aristarchus had been seized prisoner, along with Gaius, during the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:29), and he later accompanied Paul on the perilous Captive Journey from Sidon (in Syria) to Rome. (Acts 27:2-4.)

Onesimus (v. 9) is the former runaway slave whom Paul had converted to Christianity and who was now being sent back to his master, Philemon with a request that Philemon return Onesimus to Paul for further service. Paul makes it clear that Onesimus is now "one of you." That must have been an interesting reunion!

Marcus (v. 10) is widely believed to be John Mark, the author of the second gospel. Nothing more is known about Jesus Justus (v.11). Luke (v. 14) is the author of the third gospel and Acts. Sadly, Demas (v. 14) later deserted Paul. (II Timothy 4:10.) It is not clear where the church that met in the house of Nymphas (v. 15) was located. The "epistle from Laodicea" (v. 16) may have been delivered from Paul at the same time as the epistle to the Colossians, but it has since been lost.

Archippus (v. 17) – perhaps the leader of the Colossian church in the absence of Epaphras – is also mentioned favorably in Philemon 2, but nothing is known about why Paul sent this somewhat enigmatic message to him through this epistle. But, Archippus and the Colossians would certainly have understood what Paul meant.

Exposition: What a tremendous cast of characters! The authors of two gospels and the book of Acts (Mark and Luke); a runaway slave (Onesimus); two church-founders (Epaphras and Nymphas); a church leader (Archippus); Paul's faithful travel companions (Tychicus and Aristarchus); an unknown supporter (Jesus Justus); and a soon-to-be deserter (Demas). All of this for just three small churches in Asia. Given Paul's responsibility for the dozens of churches he had founded, one can easily understand his lament that in addition to the horrific hardship and suffering he had endured, he also had the burden of "that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (II Corinthians 11:28.) Even so, he could hardly wait to get out of prison so he could continue spreading the gospel. (Philemon 22.)

Question for Reflection: If Paul were writing a letter to the churches today, how would he describe me?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

