

Complete In Christ

A study in the book of Colossians

Lesson Eight “Continue Earnestly”

This final chapter in the book of Colossians is an encouragement from Paul for them to **continue earnestly** in the faith. This is an encouragement we all need to give heed to.

Like the Colossians, we have many obstacles strewn across the path to stumble us. There are many arrows of deception being shot by the enemy to distract us away from Christ and these predators in our midst are sure to grow more numerous as the final day approaches. Not only must we take heed to ourselves, but we are called to support and encourage one another.

As we go through this final chapter, we need to challenge our own hearts and comfort each other's hearts to stand firm in the faith, and to continue earnestly.

“If God’s goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day, let not ours to Him be like the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away.” Matthew Henry

Read Colossians 4:1-18

In verse 1, Paul encourages masters (or employers) to “.....give.....what is just and fair.”

The Phillips Translation reads, “Remember then, you employers, to be just and fair to those whom you employ, never forgetting that you yourselves have a Heavenly Employer.”

- 1) How might this relate to **favoritism** on the job, in the home, or in the church? I’m sure we can all tell a story or two where we’ve seen favoritism given out in unfair measure and how it has affected us and others. What does the book of James reveal to us about the subject of favoritism? See James 2:1-8.

Jesus warned His disciples in Matthew 10:16, as He sent them out to minister to the lost, that they needed to be, **“Wise as serpents, and gentle (or harmless) as doves.”** Prior to that warning He told them they were being sent out as “sheep in the midst of wolves.”

Barnes notes in his commentary on this verse some excellent reasons of why this is one of the most important instructions in all of the New Testament.

Read over his list of reasons below:

- (1) People of the world judge religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.
- (2) They judge religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and His apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.
- (3) They understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.
- (4) They set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and ceremonies—but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.
- (5) No professing Christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavor to induce him to be a Christian. He will feel, if he does not say—and he might very properly say, that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.
- (6) No person will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honor of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity.

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- 5) That's a lot for us to think about. With these reasons in mind, share in your own words what it means to “walk in wisdom towards those who are without.”

Paul states in the second part of verse 5 our need to be “Redeeming the time.....”

- 6) What does it mean to “redeem the time?” Do you feel this is something you are doing? Read Psalm 90, verses 12 & 17 and share your thoughts.

In verse 6 Paul tells them to “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.....”

- 7) What do these analogies mean? Explain how we are to fill our conversations with grace. Look up the definition of the word **grace** and then explain what the **characteristics of grace** are.

- 8) How do we season our conversations with salt? Research and share what some of the **properties of salt** are.

- 9) What is the reason Paul gives for why we are to fill our conversations with grace and salt? (See verse 6b)

Read Colossians 4:7-11

- 10) We gain some real insight in these verses as to the importance of ministering, comforting, and encouraging one another. We see here examples of sharing and fellowship, comforting, instruction and meeting practical needs. What things have been most meaningful to you regarding the “**ministry of the saints**” in your life?

Paul mentions Epaphras in verse 12, telling them how he is, “.....always laboring fervently for you in prayers....”

- 11) Prayer warriors in our lives.....we may never realize this side of heaven the powerful impact they have had. Are you aware of how someone else’s prayers might have impacted your life? Is there an experience you can share with the group?

Epaphras’ prayer request for them was that they, “.....may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” (Verse 12b)

The Amplified Bible reads, “...that you may [as people of ripe character and clear conviction] stand firm and mature [in spiritual growth], convinced and fully assured in everything willed by God.”

- 12) Are you praying for God to alter people’s **circumstances**, or for their **spiritual growth** and **maturity** in “the will of God” in their lives? How about in your own life? So often our first thought is to ask God to remove the situation that is making us uncomfortable or causing us pain. So often we have tunnel vision in our prayers for ourselves and for others when we are lifting up a need. We want that need to be filled....as soon as possible. We want that pain to go away, that circumstance to change.....the sooner, the better. That is natural, but not always best. Record the words of the psalmist from Psalm 119:71:

- a. Record the words of James in James 1:2-3:

- 13) All of our hardships and trials are used by God as tools in His hand to mold and shape us into His image. That process is often painful, and the things He allows in our lives so often make no sense to us, but He has given us a promise that we can trust in and cling to in Romans 8:28. You may already have that verse memorized. Write it down below.

- 14) Is there a situation or circumstance weighing heavy on your heart right now? Stop and pray that the Lord would accomplish **His perfect will** in the situation and use it somehow to mature, perfect and draw us, or others, closer to Him. You may write your prayer below if you wish to.

Paul adds a personal message in this letter to Archippus to “Take heed to the ministry you have received in the Lord, that you fulfill it.”

- 15) In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul tells us of the diversities of gifts, ministries and activities that are being prepared for us. **Each one of us who are Christians, in the household of faith.** No one is excluded. Whether these have been fully revealed to us or have come to a full fruition in our lives, God’s Word assures us that we all have a unique and special calling that edifies and profits the Body of Christ. Do you know what ministry or ministries you have received from the Lord? List below what spiritual gifts you believe the Lord has given you, and the ministry or ministries He has called you to.

- a. Are you “taking heed” to that ministry and those gifts? If you answered no to that question, ask the Lord to show you what hinderances or obstacles are keeping you from using those gifts you’ve been given by the Holy Spirit, and to remove those obstacles and open up doors of opportunity for you. You can write your prayer below.

- b. Look up Matthew 25:14-30. What is the Lord trying to teach us concerning the gifts or “talents” He has given us?

The message of Colossians is one of comfort in the awareness of the riches we have received in Christ. Its spotlight isn't shining on the hope that **lies ahead**, but on the **assurance** of what we have **already been given**.

I can't think of any better way for us to end our study than with this excerpt from Charles Spurgeon's **Morning & Evening**:

“All the attributes of Christ, as God and man, are at our disposal. All the fullness of the Godhead, whatever that marvelous term may comprehend, is ours to make us **complete**.....Arise, believer, and behold the Lord Jesus yoking the whole of His divine Godhead to the chariot of salvation! How vast His grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His immutability, how infinite His power, how limitless His knowledge!.....the whole of Christ, in His adorable character as the Son Of God, is by Himself made over to us most richly to enjoy. His wisdom is our **direction**, His knowledge our **instruction**, His power our **protection**, His justice our **surety**, His love our **comfort**, His mercy our **solace**, and His immutability our **trust**. He makes no reserve, but opens up the recesses of the Mount of God and bids us dig in it's mines for the hidden treasures. ‘**All, all, all are yours,**’ says He, ‘**be ye satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord.**’ Oh! How sweet thus to behold Jesus, and to call upon Him with the certain confidence that in seeking the interposition of His love and power, we are but asking for that which He has already faithfully promised!”

- 16)** What has ministered to your heart most in this last lesson in Colossians?

17) What is your greatest take-away from this entire study?