

Epistle of Paul to the Colossians III (Chapters 1:15-29) God Reveals the Riches of His Glory

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In our series and study that we are doing through the book of Colossians in the *Expanded Amplified Translation* for the purpose of studying. Paul's epistles are so absolutely inspiring that we need to have as full an understanding in its amplified meaning of these epistles as we can. And last time we came down through Col. 1:18, *who is the firstborn*. Let's just review a couple of Scriptures concerning that, so that we really fully understand and comprehend that Jesus was literally the firstborn *twice*.

Matthew 1:25—this talks about Jesus' first birth, His human birth: "But he [Joseph] did not have sexual relations *with* her until *after* she had given birth to her Son, the **firstborn**; and he called His name Jesus." The Greek for *firstborn* there is 'prototokos.' When we come to Col. 1 (*KJV*), where it says that 'He is the firstborn of every creature,' that is kind of a misleading translation, simply because it doesn't mean the firstborn of every *creature*.

Here is the way I translated it beginning in Colossians 1:15: "Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* firstborn... ['prototokos' *by the resurrection*] ...of all creation"—in reference to what God is doing/creating in us.

That is the creation He is talking about, not everything that has been made. And this is where people really get off the beam where they say that Jesus was the first created of God, the firstborn of God, and so forth. That is not correct.

It means that He is: "...*the* firstborn of all creation" (v 15)—by the resurrection, the prototype of all that God is creating by this means.

Now, another Scripture I want to review in Revelation, the first chapter, so that we can be sure and understand that there is a difference between *first begotten* or *only begotten* and **firstborn**. The Greek word, which is translated *begotten* is 'gennaos.' Jesus Christ being the *only begotten*, in the Greek is 'monogenes.' Mono: we have that even today, we have a monorail that means a *single* rail—or *one*. So, 'monogenes' means *the only begotten*.

Here in Revelation 1:5 it says: "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead..." The Greek there is 'prototokos'—so Jesus was *born again*.

Now, one other Scripture we need to cover: Romans 8:29. I wanted to be sure and review this because this always becomes a central part of our understanding as we are going forward in understanding the Word of God. Romans 8:29: "Because those whom He did foreknow... [He called us before the resurrection] ...He also predestinated... [the predestination of God's plan] ...to be conformed... [to be made like] ...to the image of His own Son..."

Then, if you have the image, the image is made after the reality; you cannot have an image unless there is a reality. That's why when God said: 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.' That shows that we are made in the image of God. That means that God—being the reality—has a body, a face, hands, legs, feet, etc. So, when we see 'image of His Son' here, *Christ is the reality*. And we are going to be made in that spiritual image of His Son.

"...that He might be *the* firstborn [prototokos] among many brethren." And so that is what it means of Jesus Christ being the firstborn of every creature. That does not mean of the creation but of those that God is creating now. We are created in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The process of conversion is a *spiritual* creation.

Colossians 1:15: "Who is *the* image of the invisible God..." If we are going to be in the image of Jesus Christ—Who is the firstborn among many brethren—then it is going to be that resemblance of family. That's why when Philip said, 'Show us the Father.' Jesus answered and said, 'Have I not been with you so long a time that you have known Me, Philip, if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.'

"...*the* firstborn of all creation" (v 15)—by the resurrection, the prototype of all that God is creating by this means.

Verse 16: "Because by Him... [the Son] ...were all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: all things... [everything that exists] ...were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist" (vs 16-17).

Verse:18: “And He is the Head of the Body, the Church... [the assembly of the called-out ones] ... Who is *the* Beginning, *the* Firstborn [‘prototokos’] ...from among the dead so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence.... [through all eternity] ...For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (vs 18-19).

Paul is leading up to show us the greatness of the calling of God, to show us the greatness of Jesus Christ as our Savior and to show the tremendous and fantastic plan that God has for us.

When we come to Col. 2 we will see how penurious, how vain and how empty is the philosophy that was trying to deceive the brethren there in Colossi to following into the worship of fallen angels.

Verse 20: “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven.” That is quite a statement!

Let’s look at this and study these verses a little bit more in detail. First of all, we know that Christ was made the Head of the Church, and Jesus Christ is the only One Who can be the Head of the Church. Too many times people have placed men between them and God, and literally made the man the head of the Church and were more willing to follow the commands of a man than the clear commands of Jesus Christ. This is why the Apostle Paul is making it absolutely clear that ***Christ is the Head of the Church***, He is sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven above and that is what we need to constantly look to.

We see that Paul continues in the same theme in Ephesians as he did in Colossians; Ephesians 1:20 talks about the mighty power of God: “Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from *the* dead, and set *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above every principality and authority and power and lordship... [that means anything that is on the earth or that Satan has] ...and every name that is named—not only in this age, but also in the *age* to come” (vs 20-21)—which is the Kingdom of God. This is almost exactly the same as he is expressing to those in the book of Colossians, the same thing concerning Christ.

Verse 22: “He has subordinated all things under His feet, and has given Him *to be* head over all things to the *Church*, which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all” (vs 22-23). So, in other words:

- there is absolutely nothing in this world
- there is nothing that has been created

- there is nothing that Satan can offer
- there is nothing that the demons can offer
- there is nothing that any human being can offer that can fill what God is going to do with us, through us and to us

We need to really just grasp that and keep it in mind constantly.

Talking about Christ as the Head of the Church also the husband of the Church that He is going to marry:

Ephesians 5:23. “For the husband is *the* head of the wife, even as Christ *is the* Head of the Church; and He is *the* Savior of the body.”

We might interject in there, this just came to mind, so let’s put it in there, this does not mean that the husband wields the rod of iron over his wife. Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees: ‘*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*’ Go learn what that means. In this sense we need to, as husbands, understand what it means that *Christ is the Head of the Church* and He is *the Savior of the body*.

Verse 25: “Husbands, love your own wives, in the same way that Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it... [‘gave’ means to *give up*] ...so that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of the water by *the* Word; that He might present it to Himself *as* the glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be Holy and without blame. In the same way, husbands are duty-bound to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself” (vs 25-28).

- that is not done with beatings
- that is not done with commanding
- that is not done with a rod of iron
- that is not done with a heavy hand

that is done in love

That doesn’t mean that you become weak or mousy or anything like that, it just means that if Christ is in you, since He’s the Head of the Church, we as husbands need to conduct our lives toward our wives in that particular way. But also that the wife needs to submit to her husband as the Church submits to the Lord. So, it works all ways.

Coupled with that, let’s understand that there is, because Christ is the Head of the Church, there is always a limiting factor on every minister, and we need to understand that. I am sure we do, but let’s just rehearse it and emphasize it here.

1-Corinthians 11:1: “Be imitators of me, exactly as I also *am* of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, because you have remembered me in all

things, and you are keeping the ordinances in the way that I delivered *them* to you. But I want you to understand that the Head of every man is Christ, and *the head of the woman is the man, and the Head of Christ is God*" (vs 1-3). Jesus said, 'My Father is greater than I am.'

Now, let's go to the book of Revelation where it says that Christ is *the Beginning*. I talked to someone who said that he needed to understand what this verse meant. Let's see what Jesus said concerning Himself. Stop and think about this for a minute. Jesus created everything that there is. God the Father had Him—Jesus Christ—create everything; that's why He is called the Word in John, the first chapter. Jesus was God before He became flesh, and it's not true that while He was in the flesh He was 100% God—He wasn't! He *emptied* Himself and took upon Him the same form and image as man. (Philip. 2).

So, He was not wholly God. He was God in the flesh, but God in the flesh is not the same as God in the Spirit. That's why when Jesus was on the earth, He had to pray with strong cryings and tears 'to Him who is able to save Him from death.' And if He were wholly God in the flesh, then He couldn't have died. Since He was God that means that He continued to exist from all eternity just as God the Father. He is the One Who is the Creator, because God the Father delegated that to Him.

Revelation 1:8, Jesus said: "I am Alpha and Omega, *the Beginning and the Ending...*" That means He is the agent of the beginning, that does not mean that He was the beginning of the creation of God or the first thing that God created; doesn't mean that at all. He is the agent of the beginning; He is the agent of the ending.

Verse 8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the Ending,*' says the Lord, 'Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty.'"

Rev. 3:14 is where many go to say that Christ was the beginning of the creation of God, because that is what it is in the English. But it doesn't mean that He was that *thing* that was created first. It means that He was the *agent* of the beginning of the creation of God.

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel of the Church of *the Laodiceans*, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the *Beginner* of the creation of God." That doesn't mean He Himself was the first thing created, that means He was the One Who *began* the creation, and He is continuing to do it with God the Father in us, because what God is doing in us now is the greatest

creation that God is accomplishing. This is why that it is through Jesus Christ that all these things have been done.

Colossians 1:20—let's look at just a couple of things here that are very important: "...by Him to reconcile all things to Himself..."

Acts 3 becomes very important in understanding how God is going to reconcile everything, and there is a statement that is made there, which is quite profound and that most people miss. It talks about Jesus Christ—here is the sermon that was given:

Acts 3:19: "Therefore, repent and be converted in order that your sins may be blotted out, so that *the* times of refreshing may come from *the* presence of the Lord; and *that* He may send Him Who was before proclaimed to you Jesus Christ Whom *the* heaven must indeed receive until *the* times of restoration of all things..." (vs 19-21). And that restitution is the reconciliation of everything. We are the first part of that reconciliation right now. That is what is so important, and that is done through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:20: "...having made peace through the blood of His cross..." There is so much we could say about the blood of Jesus Christ.

I could actually take another sermon for it, but let me just mention to go back and reread the section in *The Christian Passover* book concerning the blood of Jesus Christ and what it does for us, we will cover just a few of those verses. Let's see *how* God did this and in what *way* He did this, and because of His love He did this *for us*.

Romans 5:6: "For even when we were without strength, at the appointed time Christ died for *the* ungodly. For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, although perhaps someone might have the courage even to die for a good man. But God commends His own love to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood..." (vs 6-9).

It is through His blood that we are put in right standing with God the Father in heaven above. That is what is so fantastic, and that is what is so important for us to comprehend. The blood of Christ and His sacrifice only can accomplish that. Just remember this: ***Nothing can substitute for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!***

Verse 9: "Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the

death of His own Son...” (vs 9-10). Isn’t that something? That is really a verse *to think about, to pray about, to understand* that *God reconciled us*, set the things in motion so that we could be reconciled while we were still enemies of God, and for us who live in this age, before we were ever born.

“...much more *then*, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *this*, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation” (vs 10-11). That is through Jesus Christ by God the Father in heaven above in the Holy of Holies with Jesus Christ sitting at His right hand.

Colossians 1:20 here is the part I want to cover: “...by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven.”

- What is there to reconcile in the heavens and the universe?

That means *to make everything right, to bring it back together*.

- What is going to be the final act of reconciliation that is going to take care of things that occurred in heaven?
- Why are there things in heaven that need to be reconciled?

The reason is this:

- Satan the devil rebelled—did he not? *Yes, he did* (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28).
- He took one third of the angels with him—did he not? *Yes!* (Rev. 12:4).

God still has not reconciled the problems that that has caused. Since the demons and Satan have rejected God, He cannot make it right by their repentance because *they have refused to repent*. God has to make it right. What is the vehicle that God is going to do to make it right? *God is going to bind Satan and the demons!*

There is one verse in the book of Hebrews that says He is going to destroy the devil, there is another one, which says that he is going to be in the ‘blackness of darkness forever and ever.’ So, it is not clear exactly from the Bible exactly what is going to happen to Satan the devil and the demons, but we know that there can be no total peace, there can be no total reconciliation of all of God’s creation and His plan until Satan the devil has been taken care of, along with his demons. That is why, when we read in the book of Revelation that after Satan is used for the last time, he is cast back into the Lake of Fire and then Satan is no more heard of and only after

that is done and then the Great White Throne Judgment—where salvation will be offered to everyone who never had an opportunity and those human beings who reject the plan of God and will have committed the unpardonable sin—will die the second death.

In order to make things right when you have something that is irreconcilable then you must eliminate it, and that is what God is going to do so that all that will be reconciled with Him will be together in the Kingdom of God. Then, and only then, can New Jerusalem come down out of heaven from God the Father and be on the earth. So, that is quite a statement where it says that He might reconcile all things, “...whether it be the things on earth, or the things in the heavens and universe” (v 20).

We covered part of this in Rom. 5, that He reconciled us while we were still enemies of God, v 21: “For you *were* once alienated and enemies... [antagonistically estranged; hostile to God] ...in *your* minds by wicked works; but now He has reconciled *you*.”

Let’s look a little bit about the nature that we have as human beings with the *law of sin and death* in us. This is why there is nothing, brethren—no force from the outside that is going to correct the problems of the inside—because we are enemies of God in our mind:

- by our thoughts
- by our works
- by the law of sin and death within us

I had the local church do a project; you might want to do this, and I would appreciate your input on it: Think of every reason why the *mark of the beast*—when it comes—will be hailed as the best thing that has ever happened, which the Bible says is the worst. Why:

- businesses will like it
- banks will like it
- individuals will like it
- governments will like it

And it just dawned on me another reason why the *mark of the beast* is so insidious: because that is the ultimate outside force, which is used to coerce people into doing what is right, *as the society considers the things that are right*.

Whereas God, on the other hand, wants us to have the character by choice to do the things that are right, rather than being forced to do the things that are right from the outside. That is why the *mark of the beast* is so absolutely awful, *it takes away your choice and your character and you give it up to the*

force of Satan the devil through the **mark of the beast** to coerce people to do what they should do by choice. **The mark of the beast won't change the heart!** The reason is that **only God can change the heart**. That is why Christ has to come *into* us. That is why we must be reconciled to God.

Mark 7:20: "And He said, 'That which springs forth from *within* a man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evils go forth from within, and *these* defile a man'" (vs 20-23).

Hence then we are enemies of God. And you cannot correct that with the *mark of the beast*. You may be able to force people for a while to do something. You may be able to coerce them into not stealing. You may be able to coerce them into not cheating on their business dealings, or whatever it may be. You can coerce them to bring the underground economy up aboveboard because now there is no cash. But **you have not changed the heart** and that is what is so important. **God wants the heart changed:**

- by conversion
- by His Spirit
- by His righteousness
- by His love
- and by His goodness

The word *enemy* in the Greek is the same word as we find in Rom. 8 concerning the carnal mind being enmity, and we are enemies of God. Where? **In our mind! That's what must be changed!** That's why Jesus Christ told the Pharisees to 'clean first the inside of the cup and then the outside will be clean,' because the Pharisees were those who liked to take and make everything clean and look right on the *outside*, but **within they were full of excess and extortion**, just like whited sepulchers full of excesses and rotteness. Let's look at what God did in this reconciliation.

Romans 8:1: "Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." Even though we still have the *law of sin and death* in us, even though we have not overcome, **we are saved by grace**. God does not condemn us, because we are fighting to overcome sin, because we are to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ. The sins that we have are the inner battles, because as Paul said every time he wanted to do good *evil was present*. **Only the Spirit of God can expose that evilness and that wickedness of your mind!** That is why the struggle is so intense.

Because that struggle is intense and because you don't want to do the works of the flesh, you don't want to sin—but you want to follow Christ—therefore, there is no condemnation to you who are in Christ Jesus.

"...who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit... [that is what you are following: the things of the Spirit of God] ...because the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and death. For what *was* impossible for the Law to do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son in *the* likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (vs 1-3).

Please understand that that means in exactly the same flesh that we have with the *law of sin and death* in us. That is why it says that Jesus Christ Himself bore in His body our sins to the cross (1-Peter 2:24).

Christ had to overcome the *law of sin and death*. When you really understand it, the judgment that God put on all human beings, to give them, within their members and in their minds *the law of sin and death*, **God took the same judgment upon Himself to redeem us!** That is so profound, brethren, that it is still hard for us to really grasp that kind of love. When you think and you ask yourself: What is the greatest thing that I would do for someone else?

- we can't even come close to the greatness of what Christ has done
- we can't even come near to the love of what God has done for us

That God would do this in the person of Jesus Christ, give up being God Who is:

- Holy
- perfect
- righteous
- sinless

To take upon Him the likeness, the same flesh as we have, with the law of sin and death in Him so that He could die! In His living in the flesh He would never sin; that He could be that perfect sacrifice. That is really fantastic when we really grasp it. And when we do then:

- Do you want to sin? *No!*
- Do you want to do those things that are carnal? *No!*
- Do you want to have just the physical things in this life? *No!*

Since you have the Spirit of God and are walking after the Spirit, you are minding the things

of the Spirit and not the things of the flesh. The very fact that you keep God's commandments, the very fact that you want to do those things that please God, shows that you are not doing those things of the flesh to follow the flesh.

Verse 4: "In order that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us... [s the true righteousness] ...who are not walking according to *the* flesh, but according to *the* Spirit: For those who walk according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who walk according to *the* Spirit mind the things of the Spirit" (vs 4-5). That is what we are doing, brethren, right now at this minute studying the Word of God.

Verse 6: "For to be carnally minded... [or that is to follow the mind of the flesh] ...*is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace... [that is what Christ has brought] ...because the carnal mind *is* **enmity**... [same root word as *enemy*] ...against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be*" (vs 6-7).

The very fact that you want to keep the commandments of God, the very fact that you are desiring to do those things that are pleasing to God, shows that you have the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God is leading you and you are not carnal minded in as much as you are not trying to live your life by the schemes and the sins of the flesh, but you are trying to live your life by the commands of God through His Holy Spirit, which He has given through His Son Jesus Christ.

"...for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God.... [because they do not have the Spirit of God] ...However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit, if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (vs 7-9).

This is really quite a profound statement when it says in Colossians 1:21: "And all of you were once alienated and antagonistically estranged, even in a state of mental animosity and enmity, actually enemies (of God) in your minds by your own wicked, malevolent and evil works, your own daily actions and deeds; yet now at this time has He reconciled and ransomed you in the body of His own flesh through His sacrifice, even the death (the very death of the Son of God) to present you before God the Father, (yes, in His very presence)..." (vs 21-22).

We need to understand that, brethren. When we pray to God, and our prayers go up to Him, they come right before the very throne of God. Just like it

says there in Rev. 8 when John saw the altar and the incense coming up from the altar was the prayers of all the saints coming right up before God the Father. When we pray and we say, 'Our Father' we have direct access to the greatest Being in the universe. That is what the reconciliation is all about.

Here is how we stand before God: "...as Holy and consecrated, even unblamable, unimpeachable and unblemished before Him" (v 22). That is an awesome thing to understand. That is tremendous to understand.

Romans 3:22: "Even *the* righteousness of God..."—which means that we have been given the gift of the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us.

"...*that is* through *the* faith of Jesus Christ, toward all and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; *but* are being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus; Whom God has openly manifested *to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness, in respect to the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God..." (vs 22-26).

This righteousness and the gift of righteousness, which is imputed to us, is given so that we may stand before Him Holy and blameless and spotless and without blemish. That is a wonderful and awesome thing!

Romans 5:17: "For if by the offense of the one man death reigned by the one, how much more shall those who receive the abundance of grace and the **gift of righteousness**..." God gives that to us, a fantastic and tremendous gift. **No one can earn the righteousness of Jesus Christ**, because only Christ was wholly righteous. God gives this righteousness to us, imputes this righteousness to us, **through His love!**

- How we are to operate within this?
- How we are to do this?
- How we are to live our lives?

It is not going to be that God is there dogging our every step of the way to make us do His will. That is what the *mark of the beast* is going to be so people are going to be *made* to keep the laws of the land, *made* to submit to authority. **God does not want that**; He wants us:

- to voluntarily love Him:
- to choose His way
- to submit to His way
- to keep His commandments

Now, let's come here to Philippians 2:12: "So then, my beloved even as you have always obeyed..." Very important thing; that means that we have no pretense in what we are doing, we are striving to obey at all times.

"...not as in my presence only..." (v 12). Too many people do that. That is called *politics*, to do things to be seen, and we have to realize the One we have to deal with, we stand before Him naked, so *God knows!*

"...but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God Who works in you..." (vs 12-13). ***That righteousness is created by Christ in us, with God's Spirit and God is working within us!***

"...both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Do all things without complaints and disputes; so that you may be blameless... [that connects right with Col. 1.] ...and without offense, innocent children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (vs 13-15).

Brethren, I tell you the darkness is coming on this world so fast, it is breathtaking! These Scriptures really have a lot of meaning for us. Now here is how we do it:

Verse 16: "Holding forth the Word of Life..." That's what we have to hold onto, because the words of Jesus Christ has given us, inspired for us, ***they are Life and they are Truth!***

Note: 1-Cor. 6:9-11, which shows the past conduct of many of those that God called, including us.

Colossians 1:22: Be "...Holy and unblamable and unimpeachable before Him; if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast..." (vs 22-23)—which is *Christ in us*, and that is the whole purpose. Paul is bringing this whole first chapter up to a crescendo in v 27.

Verse 23: "If indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, *and* which was proclaimed in all the creation that *is* under heaven..."

We really don't understand how far the Gospel was preached with the twelve apostles and the Church that God raised up in the first century. We have a small, little pittance of what the Church was with what is contained in the New Testament. But Paul says that it was preached under heaven to all the creation. So, how far that was, we do not know. It is continuing to be preached—isn't it?

"...of which I, Paul, became a servant. Now, I am rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and I am

filling up in my flesh that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church" (vs 23-24).

Now, let's look at a couple of references we can tie in this with the Apostle Paul. Let's see the very calling of the Apostle Paul. It was prophesied in the very beginning of his ministry that when he was Saul. It is interesting, Carl [Franklin] pointed this out to me some time ago: 'It's interesting that Saul, who is of the tribe of Benjamin—first king of Israel—failed and was a sinner. Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, who is a Pharisee, who is a killer and destroying the Church God called, succeeded.' That is just a little interesting sidelight as you go through the Bible.

Here is the calling of Saul who became Paul, Acts 9:1: "Now Saul, still breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, asking him *for* letters..." (vs 1-2). Those were arrest warrants, because the high priest was sitting in the seat of Moses and gave that judgment.

"...to take to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who were of that way, he might bring *them* bound, both men and women, to Jerusalem" (v 2).

So then, God called him, knocked him off his donkey and he became blind and they led him into Damascus and he was three days without sight (vs 3-9).

Verse 10: "Now, there was in Damascus a certain disciple named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Behold, I *am here*, Lord.' And the Lord *said* to him, 'Arise *and* go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* named Saul from Tarsus; for behold, he is praying, And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming and putting *his* hands on him, so that he may receive sight.' Then Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many *people* about this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And *even* in this place he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for this *man* is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before *the* Gentiles, and kings, and *the* children of Israel; for I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name.'" (vs 10-16).

So, right with the beginning of the calling of the Apostle Paul, it was a *calling to a ministry*, which had tremendous suffering to it. That is why I did the two sermons, *So, You Think You Have Suffered*. Paul understood this, that's why he said

even in his body he was filling up the afflictions of Christ.

Now, let's see another view of how Paul viewed his status with God. Isn't that something? Most ministers today, or most people who desire to be ministers are looking for all the power, and all the glory, and all the things that they can get out of it, rather than as the Apostle Paul was when Christ told him 'you're going to suffer.' Well, a little later down the line they learn that. Hopefully they repent and change; let's hope so. Now let's see what the Apostle Paul counted everything that there was and how he looked at the suffering that he was going through.

Philippians 3:8: "But then truly, **I count all things to be loss** for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung; that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness...*" (vs 8-9). The right standing with God, which is the gift of God through His grace.

"...which *is by the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God *that is* based on faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death... [How did he endure all of this suffering?] ...**If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead...**" (vs 9-11).

He always had that as a goal and he counted all of that as nothing. You can read there in Acts 4 that when the apostles were beaten and let go, they came back and prayed with the brethren, they were praying that they were counted worthy to share in the sufferings that Christ suffered. On the other hand, we are not to go out and provoke suffering. Listen, it'll find us, because we are human beings and we're living in this evil world.

Colossians 1:25: "For which I became a servant, according to the administration of God"—stewardship of God.

This is interesting because the ministration or administration and **stewardship of God**—something which most people today have very little concept of—one who is given responsibility and complete control over someone else's goods or property to run as a trustee honestly and forthrightly, realizing constantly that nothing belongs to him. That is how Paul viewed his ministry and that is how every minister needs to view the Church of God. That they are the husbandry of God, they are the sheep of God, they are the inheritance of God and do not belong to the minister.

Paul understood this, that is why it's "...that *was given to me for you in order* to complete the Word of God" (v 25). Paul here, at this point, knew that he was going to finish and help complete writing the New Testament. And the message of God is:

Verse 26: "*Even the mystery...*"—of God's own will and desire. Isn't that something? God has given us the understanding, at least as much as we are able to grasp, of His own secret plan and of His own will and desire.

"...that has been hidden from ages and from generations..." (v 26)—or civilizations That's why salvation was not given until Christ came to bring it, except with the few exceptions of those kings and prophets in the Old Testament, and such as those that are called the patriarchs. Those were the only ones who received salvation until Christ.

"...but has now been revealed to His saints" (v 26). What we have and understand is so profound, and it was revealed through Jesus Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Now here is what he is coming to. This is the fulcrum; the central theme of the first chapter and all of the rest of the book of Colossians hangs on v 27. You have the first chapter leading up to this, which then gets our mind on Christ, then you have the second chapter, which shows how philosophy leads away from this and then you have the third chapter, which shows us how to grow and overcome and develop the character of God which v 27 is talking about.

Verse 27: "To whom **God did will...** [that means He purposed] ...**to make known what are the riches of the glory**, of this mystery among the Gentiles... [nations other than the Jews and the Israelites] ...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"—which shall be revealed in us.

That is the whole key to understanding the book of Colossians. **It is Christ in us, the hope of glory!** That is of the splendorous magnitude of the great plan of God.

Verse 28: "Whom we preach, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. For this cause I also labor, striving according to His inner working, which works in me with power" (vs 28-29).

That is the whole purpose and goal of the ministry. If any minister wants to know what his goal is in teaching the brethren, there it is right there in vs 28 and 29. Now let's look at some verses which will help expand and amplify v 27.

Ephesians 1:4: “According as He has personally chosen us...” That is God the Father, the One who calls us. Think of that for a minute! If you think about the Psalm that David had when he said, ‘O Lord, when I consider the heavens and the earth and the things that you have made, what is man that You think on him? Behold, You have made him a little lower than God, a little lower than Elohim.’ Brethren that is fantastic when you realize that God the Father Himself is the One Who draws us to Christ.

“...He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world...” (v 4). That was His plan, not that God followed every genetic trace of our ancestors down to us and said, ‘Okay because of the genes, I am choosing them.’ *No!* This is *by grace*, this is not by inheritance of a physical, genetic line.

This was His plan “...before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love; having predestinated us for sonship...” (vs 4-5). Not adoption, *sonship*, we are going to be the children of God, not the children of someone else adopted by God. This means sonship of children.

“...to Himself through Jesus Christ...” (v 5). It is to God the Father, *Himself*. We receive the begetting, what? *From God the Father!*

So it is, “...to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will... [that still blows my mind, brethren; that means *of His very own will and desire*] ...to *the* praise of *the* glory of His grace...” (vs 5-6)—which means that the angels and those who come into the Kingdom of God after the first resurrection *will praise God for the glory that He has done in us*. That is why the Apostle Paul said, ‘that Christ in us is the hope of this glory.’

“...wherein He has made us objects of *His* grace in the Beloved *Son*; in Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence; having made known to us the mystery of **His own will**...” (vs 6-9).

That is *His own will!* Isn’t that something? God has revealed and made known to us, by His calling, by His Spirit, by the New Testament, *His own will*. Brethren, that just thrills me every time I think of it, and that humbles me every time I think of it. It is so awesome that it just leaves me in a kind of blubbering mass of unworthiness, and I am sure that it affects you the same way, that God would do that.

Verse 9: “Having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.” That is awesome! That is something! That is absolutely something!

Let’s really grasp and understand this to the very best that God’s Spirit will lead us to understand it:

- we grow in *knowledge*
- we grow in *understanding*
- we grow in *God’s Spirit*
- and we grow in the *spiritual feeling and emotion* of these things

When we first heard we are going to be the sons of God, ‘oh yeah, that is interesting.’ But now when we hear that we are the children of God:

- Doesn’t it have a whole lot more meaning than it did when you first heard it?
- Doesn’t it sink deeper into your consciousness and into your mind, your soul, heart and being, that God has loved us this much?

1-John 3:1: “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has give to us...” Remember what David said, ‘What is man, that You are mindful of him?’ You might put your own name there. What am I? What are you? That God is mindful of us!

“...that we should be called the children of God! For this very reason, the world does not know us...” (v 1). It doesn’t comprehend us. It doesn’t understand our belief, faith and love.

“...because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is” (vs 1-2).

What is this to do for us? *God wants us to be inspired!* God is not going to *beat us* into the Kingdom of God. God wants us to love Him and be inspired. That is what v 3 says, that

- *if* we understand this
- *if* we understand the calling of God
- *if* we understand the love of God
- *if* we comprehend it to the degree and the point that we do now

—which we hope to grow in more in the future— here is what we are going to do, v 3: “And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure.” That means *cleanses himself*. How do you cleanse yourself?

1-John 1:7: “However, if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin” That is how we are purifying ourselves, through Jesus Christ.

1-John 3:3: “And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He [Christ] is pure.”

To see the tremendous calling that God has given and what God is holding out to us freely is the tremendous, wonderful and fantastic gift that God has that *we are going to be His sons*. Of course, the Apostle Paul said that this was made known by revelation. You can’t find this in the Old Testament.

- that is why the New Testament must interpret the Old
- that is why the New Covenant is superior to the Old
- that is why the Word of God in the New Testament gives us:
 - ✓ the very words of God
 - ✓ the life of God
 - ✓ the mind of God
 - ✓ the purpose of God

which was not understood in past ages.

Ephesians 3:11: “According to *His* eternal purpose, which He has wrought in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom we have boldness and *direct* access **with confidence through His very own faith**” (vs 11-12). We never fail on that faith.

- we may get weak
- we may have our difficulties
- we may struggle in overcoming sin

that is true, absolutely, without a doubt. But we can have “...confidence through His *very own faith*.” That is by Christ’s faith in us.

Verse 13: “So then, I beseech *you* not to faint at my tribulations for you, which are *working for* your glory.” Paul was writing this from prison. Paul understood the afflictions and tribulations he went through.

Verse 14: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (vs 14-15). And yes:

- God is a *family*
- God is creating *His family*
- we are going to be the firstborn in the Kingdom of God, the firstfruits after Christ, at the first resurrection
- we are going to be named after the Father

That is why He has called us, that is why He has given us His Spirit.

Verse 16: “That He may grant you according to the riches of His glory...” Right from the very Being of God Himself through His Holy Spirit *to you* of the riches of His glory.

Here is what God wants to be for you: ...to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man” (v 16). The inner man because that is where it is at brethren.

Verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; *and* that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height” (vs 17-18).

- God wants us to understand His plan
- God wants us to know His love
- God wants us to understand about Jesus Christ

Verse 19: “And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge...” That means it surpasses any human knowledge or any human wisdom or any human philosophy. It’s got to come from God.

“...so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (v 19). That is what God wants for you. And, of course, that will be completed *at the resurrection*.

Notice this promise, v 20: “Now to Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...” When you get discouraged, brethren, think on these things and turn to this verse and just tell God that you know that He is able to do abundantly above everything we might even think of, or even ask Him. So, the awesome destiny that God has for us is overwhelming, brethren. How’s He going to do it?

“...according to the power that is working in us, to Him *be* glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, *even* into the ages of eternity. Amen” (vs 20-21).

Now what I want you to do is capture whatever inspiration that God gave us today. Sort of encapsulate that in your mind:

- think on the *plan* of God
- think on the *purpose* of God
- think on the *Family* of God
- think on the *calling* of God
- think on the *magnificence* of Christ
- think on the *greatness* of His sacrifice

- think on the *overwhelming abundance* of His love that He has given to us

Then I want you to get that paper that Carl Franklin gave us at the Feast concerning the trinity: Study: *Mystery of the Trinity* and I want you to labor through it. It is going to be difficult, I know. Some of you may have already read part of it or perhaps a few of you may have read all of it. I will have to admit I have not quite completed it all myself, so I am going to try and do it by next week. I want you to compare this greatest thing of philosophy that is contained in this paper showing the trinity and hypostasis and the pagan thoughts about God, and understand that it is the rudiments of the demonic spirits of this world.

I want you to compare the greatness of God's plan as compared to the penurious stupidity of the philosophy of men. Then we will understand Col. 2. I am going to read Col. 2 in the *King James*.

When you consider all that has been said here and the inspiration that God has given us to understand His way.

Colossians 2:8: "Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ."

Doesn't that make that verse leap right off the page? So, we can understand *there is nothing to compare with what God has given us!* And the wisdom of this world through its philosophy or 'sophia'—as it is in the Greek, or 'philosophia': *lover of wisdom*—nothing can compare with that.

That is why Paul said, *'The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor is it entered into the heart of men the things which God has prepared for those that love Him.'* And brethren, philosophy and theology and the things of the world *can never replace or compare to the greatness of God's plan.*

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible. in its Original Order, A Faithful Version* (except where noted)

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 1:25
- 2) Colossians 1:15
- 3) Revelation 1:5
- 4) Romans 8:29
- 5) Colossians 1:15-20
- 6) Ephesians 1:20-23
- 7) Ephesians 5:23, 25-28
- 8) 1 Corinthians 11:1-3

- 9) Revelation 1:8
- 10) Revelation 3:14
- 11) Colossians 1:20
- 12) Acts 3:19-21
- 13) Romans 5:6-11
- 14) Colossians 1:20-21
- 15) Mark 7:20-23
- 16) Romans 8:1-9
- 17) Colossians 1:21-22
- 18) Romans 3:22-26
- 19) Romans 5:17
- 20) Philippians 2:12-16
- 21) Colossians 1:22-24
- 22) Acts 9:1-2, 10-16
- 23) Philippians 3:8-11
- 24) Colossians 1:25-29
- 25) Ephesians 1:4-9
- 26) 1 John 3:1-3
- 27) 1 John 1:7
- 28) 1 John 3:3
- 29) Ephesians 3:11-21
- 30) Colossians 2:8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Philippians 2
- Isaiah 14
- Ezekiel 28
- Revelation 12:4
- 1 Peter 2:24
- Revelation 8
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Acts 9:3-9; 4

Also referenced:

- Booklet: *The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians, An Inspirational Study; A New Expanded-Amplified Translation* by Fred R. Coulter
- Book: *The Christian Passover* by Fred R. Coulter
- Sermons: *So You Think You Have Suffered!*
- Study: *Mystery of the Trinity* by Carl Franklin (truthofgod.org)

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