Colossians - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

Words of Truth: Volume 2, Colossians 1

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There is a great character in Col. 1 The apostle contemplates in the saints, two characters of knowledge—the knowledge of “the grace of God in truth,” and the “knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” (v. 6-9.) The saints at Colosse had attained the first; he desired for them that they might attain the second.

According to this, he contemplates two characters of ministry in himself—the ministry of “the gospel,” and the ministry of “His body, the church.” (v. 23-25.)

These distinctions should prepare us for much that we see in this clay. Saints have commonly attained the knowledge of “the truth,” or of “the grace of God in truth,” that is, of “the gospel”; but they have come short of the knowledge of “His will,” that is, “the mystery.” We are to accept them with all thankfulness, as the apostle accepted the Colossians (v. 3.); but we are also to desire as he did for the Colossians, that they might go on to reach the knowledge of the mystery in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

This is very simple and easy to be understood from this 1St ch. to the Colossians. The humbling thing to us is, that the knowledge of “His will” which we have in measure attained, has done so little for our souls; and that others with less attainment that way, may have reached far beyond us in other ways.

But I will touch upon another secret in this chapter. Wherever the eye turns it is filled with one object, and that is “the pre-eminence of Christ.” In the regions of creation, providence, redemption, and glory, this is so, as the 1St chapter of Hebrews tells us in a more succinct form. He made the world; He upholds all things; He has purged our sins, and sat down in the highest place in heaven, and He is appointed heir of all things. So, here, when I look at creation, or all things in their original estate, I see Him as their Creator, nothing less than that, and that gives Him pre-eminence in the midst of them.

When I look at Providence, or all things in their upheld consistent estate, I see Him as “before” them, and that gives Him pre-eminence there.

When I look at Redemption, or at the great scene of reconciliation, I see Him as the Head of the body, the first-born from the dead, and that gives Him pre-eminence in the great regions of reconciliation. Nay, to Himself it is, that all has returned in the way of reconciliation, and by Himself

And lastly, when I look at Glary, or at the time of the inheritance, I see Him as having all things—all things created for Him, as well as by Him: “the first-born of every creature,” or the heir of the whole creation of God, and that gives Him as surely, pre-eminence in the great scene of the glory, or the kingdom. Thus, wherever we look, in whatever direction our eye is turned, backward or forward, upward or around, the pre-eminence of Christ is made to shine before us.

Words of Truth: Volume 4, Head of the Body - the Church, The

I desire to speak a little on what God has said as to the Headship of Christ to the church. I shall not, however, confine myself to this glory, but shall distinguish a little some of the various glories of Christ, which are full of comfort and strength to the believer. Our best blessing is not what we have through, but in Christ. This gives the certainty of the guidance of the Holy Ghost; He unfolds what is in Christ, whose glory God has always before Him. The Father glorified the Son; but the Son adds, “That I may glorify Thee.” The one object of the Son when here on earth was to bring glory to the Father. This is what secures the fullest blessing to us. In truth a very large part of the glory of Christ is what He shares with us and brings us into.

The Headship of the Church is very far from being the measure of the fullness of the glory of Christ—it is but one of many glories. The great thing is to look well that what we have we have from God. If souls are happy Christ is everything; where the heart is not happy all goes wrong. The present state of the world proves this; it is always changing and shifting therefore to meet the need. All things totter—everything is inquired into—souls are not happy—souls are not satisfied.

There is but one object that can meet the need of a renewed heart, and but one object in which God delights; this object is Christ. When He is the object, power always goes forth from that object to the one engaged with Him. One of the great objects of Christ’s work here was to show forth the name Father. His very special designation of Son shows that God is not only God but Father, has not only one Son, but He reveals the Son that He may have children. Now, in heaven Christ is still declaring the Father. The Sonship of Christ has nothing to do with time. When He entered this world He was still the Son. His being the Son of the virgin did not make Him a Son of the Father, as He was from all eternity. Yet even as Son of the virgin He was Son of God, as born into the world. (Psa. 2:7; Luke 1:35.)

He was Son of God as Son of the virgin. The gospel of Luke insists on this. His being born into the world did not make him Son of God. He was the Son of the Father before the world was, as He said, “I came forth from the Father;” not merely God, although not first revealed as Son, yet He was the object of revelation when God revealed Himself. When God was pleased to make various manifestations of Himself, it was always through the Son; always this blessed person, not yet having become a man, but a kind of angelic manifestation of Jehovah; therefore, in the gospel of John He is called the Word—one who reveals God. Wherever you find Father there you always find Son. “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.” Where God is simply spoken of, it is the Word. It is the same person, but different relationships, the Word

bringing out the nature of God, and the Son the relationship to the Father. The name of Father had not been known before; it was reserved for the Son to bring it out familiarly for the heart of man.

If there is a name the Lord Jesus loves to bring forward it is “Son of Man”—because of His love—as such He comes town to the nearest and most intimate place. It is significant not only of His love but of His humility, and of His rejection, too; and love shows itself in humility. Where, there is no evil love is taken up with serving; where there is evil, it cannot but be taken up with the evil until it is put away. “Being found in fashion as a man”— “He took upon him the form of a servant.” He came to meet man in his deepest need. He could not cease to be God, but He came to bring God to man, and then man to God by redemption.

One peculiarity of scripture is, that it is never like a treatise of man summing up all in one strain, and the reason is that God would make us dependent on all His Word and Himself. We might have our favorite parts, but it is good for us to accustom ourselves to the whole Word, and if he can’t get anything from some part, not to leave off reading it but wait upon God for light, and then perhaps that very part will be our stay’ during some conflict with the enemy.

God has always Jesus in view; this is part of Christ’s glory, that the highest relationship He adorns, and the lowest He dignifies. There is not relationship that He does not fill, and complete, and bring fresh honor to.

The Colossian saints were in danger of adding something to Christ. When people are wrong they never see it. If we had Christ always as our object, we should never go wrong. There is many a person who has just found Jesus and had a bright manifestation of Him too, and made a bold confession, but where the soul rests on this there is danger. Take Peter, for instance. The very moment after he had boldly confessed Christ as the Son of the living God, the Lord has to rebuke him with “Get thee behind me, Satan.” But no one can go astray with Jesus in view. In the thought of man there is only shame in the Cross, in the presence of Jesus it is the measure of His deep grace—we know that the Cross and Jesus suit each other! If we separate the one from the other what should we not take from Christ?

The whole moral glory of God, in a ruined world, depends on the Cross; man could not have been blessed, nor the devil defeated, except just as a matter of power, and the moral glory of Christ would be gone. It was the cross alone which vindicated God in delivering us from our sins; the victory in the wilderness did not rid us from one of our sins. It was there that one Man triumphed where all others fell.

These Colossians had been tempted by the mind of man to think that Christianity might be added to. They reasoned thus: If God’s grace has so blessed the Gospel to a few poor fishermen, and done such wonders by them, what a wonderful thing the Gospel would be if we could bring in a little of man’s philosophy and wisdom, and the best parts of the law, and the Jews and the Gentiles, and let Christ crown them all! What would it be then? What the Holy Ghost insists upon is, that Christ is all, or Christ is nothing—the attempt to bring something to add to His luster is folly, to add to Him is —to lose Him! Christ is honored by our seeing that “in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” The Lord Jesus is the perfection of God and man in one person.

I must now distinguish a little between His glory, as Head of the Church, and His other glories. In order to meet this delusion of the Colossians, this epistle, more than any other, brings out the various glories of Christ, so that the Colossians might not look here or there, or at any other person, but simply at Christ, and that so the ground might be pre-occupied. When this is not so, it is the reason that we fail in walk, fail in faith. If I think of myself in the presence of Christ, I feel my own failure—if I look at another saint in His presence, I see a reflection of Christ and His perfections. There is always something to bless God for in the weakest of His saints, and something to call for humility in ourselves. That does not set aside this, that the more simply I have Christ before me, the more simply I shall know how to walk. Does not He deserve that it should be so? The walk of a Christian flows from Christ. I must grow in the knowledge of Christ, and then grow in my walk. Truth set forth in a person, a divine person, exercises not only our minds and affections, but calls for our worship. Hence the soul is put in such an attitude that there can be progress. It is in the path of lowly adoration and delight in Christ, that our souls make most way. If I separate troth from Christ I shall soon lose its integrity.

The Colossians were in danger of departing from this, and the apostle wants them to walk worthy, and be fruitful, and the only way is to increase in the knowledge of God. He proceeds to inform them of what God has given them in Christ; (ver. 12,) they were already made meet, not hoping to be. Can you take that place? What peace it gives what deliverance from all effort, and the idea of something lacking? Christianity is but the revelation of what Christ has done, so that the light of God shining on you, finds nothing unworthy of the light in which you are to dwell; not one single spot on what His grace has given you, which is unworthy of His presence.

Thus you will find that although Scripture reveals such astonishing things, it does it so very simply. Scripture unfolds to the believer a real solid ground why he should be thus blessed. What ground so solid for the believer and so worthy of God as this? The Son of God has come to “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Not merely an act of obedience, or a life of obedience. His whole life was that. But what was to glorify God about sin? That cannot be you will say. This is just what Christ has done. Man only sees in the death of Christ a satisfaction; but God is glorified about our sins, not merely satisfied, that would be too meager. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

The Son of man is not only the term of love and lowliness, but of One about to suffer. What strange words! That there was a new glory even for God—a glory which was suitable for a Divine Person. He was about to make the Cross the birthplace of a new glory! God was morally glorified in the place of rejection and suffering. Christ became a Man, not merely that God might testify His complacency in man, but to bear the judgment and punishment for sin, and to take away the curse and bring a glory to God in man about sin. All that man had ever done was to bring shame to God by his sins—God, who had looked down in patience, now comes forth; and Jesus goes down and takes that awful thing, sin, our sins, on Him, and so endures and bears them; so that God acquired a glory that He never had before, and that could only be brought to Him by His own Son, and God is glorified in Him.” Why God? Why not Father? Because the thing that touched God was sin-all His life the Father was glorified. He that was God had become a Man; and God is so glorified that He takes up that same Jesus, the crucified Son of man, and sets Him at His own right hand. He waited for nothing, but immediately glorified Christ risen from the dead, and then glorifies Him by making Him to be Head of a new thing.

Jesus was the One who had always made God known—the Person of Him who was afterward revealed as Son. All through the Old Testament He was the image of the invisible God—partially revealed in the Old Testament, perfectly in the New Testament. The Divine Son became a Man; He took on Him the limits of a human body. If He became a man what could He be but the First Son? Jesus came in comparatively late in this world’s history,—yet He was the first-born. How could that be? Of course there was many a one before Him, but still He would be first if

He were born last. It is a question of dignity and not of time. (Adam was never born, so he could not be first.) The reason is because He was Creator. How could a Creator, no matter when He was pleased to be born, be anything but the first-born? “For by him.” “All things were created by him, and for him.” He was an end as well as a means. There is no one of all the Divine persons so intimately bound up with the origination of everything in creation as the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no one of the Divine persons who is surrounded with such peculiar glory, and such pains taken to manifest His glory as Jesus, because He took the place of man and bore our sins— yet He is called “God over all”—and this is said of Jesus, not of the Father or the Holy Ghost.

“He is the Head of the body” —the Church. When did He become so? This is the last relationship that remained. for Jesus to take up. Jesus bears our sins on the cross—Jesus goes down into death—Jesus breaks the power of the grave and disappears from view. Jesus rises not only conqueror over all the power of Satan in this world, but over sin and death, and in this capacity becomes Head of the Body, not merely as man or God, but as risen Man, who goes into heaven to the right hand of God. Then, and not before, is He “Head of the body.” How do we know that? From God and God’s Word-our only certain means of knowledge Ephesians gives us ample light on this great subject. One Scripture is enough to prove anything God says. Never treat Scripture with so little confidence as to require a great many reiterated assertions to make anything true. You would not require a respectable man to prove and corroborate his words; nor a rogue, because you could not bind him to his words. You will never find the same truth repeated absolutely in Scripture-there is always a shade of difference. In Ephesians the Spirit of God is more full of the Church—in Colossians—of Christ. The Colossians were in danger of bringing in something instead of Christ, whereas the Ephesians saints were very happy in Christ, so the Holy Ghost could talk to them of themselves and their blessings. When we are occupied with Christ we can take up a thousand things that otherwise would be dangerous.

Christ is made Head over all things after He is raised.

The Headship of Christ is a heavenly relationship. You will never understand the Church, till you understand what Christ is to the Church; and it is a dangerous doctrine if dislocated from Christ. Keep up the link between Christ and the Church, and He has His place. Nothing is right where Christ has not His place—where Christ has His place then we begin to see other things in their places. You could not have the body without the Head.

When the Head is in its place then the body is formed. When He went into heaven there was no spiritual body in connection with Him, but when the Holy Ghost was sent down, then it was formed. If He had not been Son of God and Son of man He could not have been Head of the Church—but it is quite distinct. His taking a place in heaven after the work of atonement made Him Head of the body. No man has a right to have an opinion on divine things. It is the way of a Christian to be guided by God in all things, and to be led by Him. It is evident the more a person knows, and the less he follows, the deeper will be his condemnation; like the servant beaten with many stripes. If a person does not live in what he believes all is vain show. It is a blessed thing to exercise simple subjection to the work of God. Not till the great work of redemption was accomplished did He become Head of the Church—therefore it is founded on all sin gone—founded on the absolute remission of sins; our Lord Himself even was not Head of the Church until He had put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Collected Writings, Red Sea and Jordan, The

Why are we said to be co-risen with Christ in Colossians 2:11, before we are said to be co-quickened with Him in Colossians 2:12?

The doctrine of the Epistle to the Colossians lies between that of the Romans and the Ephesians. In Romans the believer is dead with Christ to sin, dead to the law, but not risen. Romans 6 does not go so far as being risen with Christ. Our responsibilities, as in the old creation, are discussed most fully; all are under sin, all under judgment before God. The death of Christ — His precious blood presented to God — meets all our guilt, and we are justified freely by His grace, through righteousness. Our state then is taken up from Romans 5:12 and onwards, and deliverance from that (our old state) by our having died with Christ to sin and from under law, which had its application to our old state, as in Adam. Chapter 6 unfolds this truth with regard to sin; Romans 7 as regards the law, which is the strength of sin. But we are not seen as risen with Christ. The nearest approach to such is the statement of Romans 6:8: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him;” and this verse leads us onwards towards the Colossians — putting it as a result of the doctrine there unfolded — forming the link with that Epistle. The saint, however, is not risen with Christ; but is dead with Him to sin, and to the law.

In Colossians we get a step further. Here he is risen, co-raised with Christ, and he is dead absolutely. “Ye are dead”; not merely dead to this or that, though “with Christ.” He is “dead with Christ” — “dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world” —but he is not in heavenly places yet. He has a hope laid up in heaven; and his state is a subjective one suited to heaven, though not there.

In Ephesians we find his responsibility in and of the new creation unfolded (compare Eph. 2:10); and he is not only dead with Christ to sin and the law (Romans), with the hope and result before him in the words, “If we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live through Him (Rom. 6:8),” nor merely “dead” absolutely and co-risen with Christ (Colossians), but he is co-quickened, co-raised, and co-seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, both Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2). He has left the place of death as a sinner, and the world as formed for the first man, and he is brought into the full place of being in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

This ground has been gone over before, and I do not follow out what has been before many; but desire to present other features of truth.

First of all, let me remark that I do not think we find the typical teaching of the “Jordan” in Romans 6. It is the Red Sea; though, like it, Israel passed through, and enjoyed full deliverance from their enemies. In the type they saw sins, and death, and judgment all behind them. Sins were their part; death was Satan’s, who wields its power (Heb. 2); judgment was God’s part; and all are passed forever. They were, so to speak, dead to all these. But remark, it is never stated that they came up out of the Red Sea. Historically, of course, we know it was so; but it would have marred the type to have recorded it, as it would in Romans 6 to have said, we were risen with Christ. It is fully stated afterward that the people came up out of the Jordan; and there it was needed to say so, but not before. Thus the Red Sea is one aspect of the truth — that which is seen in Romans 6 — and like as in this chapter (vs. 8) we have to look out for more. So in the song of Moses (vs. 16) they anticipate the truth, yet to be experienced, in their passing over the Jordan, and. being planted in the mountain of the Lord’s inheritance — in the place He had made for Himself to dwell in; in the sanctuary which His hands had established. But they only looked for this in the hope of

faith. They are not therefore said to have come up out of the Red Sea, as they are not said in Romans 6 to be risen with Christ. But in Josh. 4:17,19, we read that Joshua said to the priests, “Come ye up out of Jordan.” “And the people came up out of Jordan,” which rolled on in his channel as heretofore. And they were thus cut off from the world, as the death of Christ has done for us. And as at the Red Sea they looked forward to the Jordan, so now at the Jordan they look back at the Red Sea, as we read: “For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up from before us, until we were gone over (vs. 23).” The Red Sea and the Jordan thus coalesce, and form two sides of the same truth, though quite distinct. We cannot confound, and we cannot separate them. Romans 6 does not take in the Jordan and risen with Christ, though it looks out for it. Colossians 2 does not take merely dead to sin and the law and the type of the Red Sea, though it looks back at it, as we shall see. Exodus 14, 15 does not say that Israel came up out of the Red Sea, though they sang a song, which looked for more to come. At Jordan they are said to have come up out of the Jordan, and are taught to look back at and connect it with the deliverance of the Red Sea. Let the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce for a moment in our minds, and let us drop out the wilderness from our thoughts. (Eph. 1 does this; as will Israel’s future deliverance, which bases the nameless Psalm 114 on this likewise. “The sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back.”) Let these two waters lie together, and let the wilderness lip of the Red Sea touch the side of Jordan eastward. Israel enter death from all who pursued at the Egyptian lip of the sea, and rise on the Canaan side of Jordan in full and complete deliverance and redemption, into the land of promise. The wilderness is never in the purpose of God, though it is His plan to test and prove His own heart and ours.

When He announced this purpose He left out all allusion to it. “I am come down to deliver them... and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, &c. (Ex. 3:8).” When Moses proclaimed it, He said, “I am the Lord, and I will bring you out... and I will bring you in unto the land (Ex. 6:6, 8).” When Faith accepted it, it sang, “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of shine inheritance (Ex. 15:13, 17).” When Experience looked back upon it with the words, “And He brought us out from them, that He might bring us in (Deut. 6:23).” Now when we turn to Colossians 2 we find an apparent difficulty; but, like all such, if we wait on divine instruction we shall get it from God. “If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God,” surely applies indirectly even in these things. Why are we said to be “risen” with Christ before we are said to have been co-quickened with Him? (Col. 2:12, 13). Let me draw your attention to it for a little. I must leave full details aside in doing so, interesting though they are. One first thought in his mind is to establish their souls (as all others whom he had never seen in the flesh, Col. 2:1) in conscious union with Christ in glory, and this without naming the bond — the Holy Spirit. He saw the danger in the want of this; and how the soul was open to every device of the enemy; and he would unfold the glories of Christ as he never had before, and give them the consciousness of “completeness in him.” To have even named the bond of union — the Spirit of God, to such a state would have been to occupy them with the Holy Spirit rather than Christ Himself, and damage their souls. Instead of this he would lead them most blessedly, as in Colossians 1:9-14, into the true experience of the Spirit in the soul which is at peace — that is, the thoughts begin with God, and flow downwards from the light of His glory into the conscience of him who is their recipient. The Spirit of God reasons ever from God to us; and when the soul is at peace and the heart free, the reasonings and experience of the soul flow in the same direction. How strange, and yet how lovely, then, to find the apostle in the one passage praying to God, writing Scripture, teaching the saints, and giving the true experience of the soul who stands in grace, by the same words! In Colossians 2:12-14, he begins in the light of the Father’s presence with praise, and by seven steps he reasons downwards from His heart, to the conscience of the worshiper, giving them the true direction of thought, when the soul is right with God.

1. “Giving thanks unto the Father.”

2. “Which hath made us meet.”

3. “To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

4. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,”

5. “And hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son,”

6. “In whom we have redemption,”

7. “And the forgiveness of our sins.”

We learn this in the inverse way, from us to Him: from the depths of the need of conscience, to the light of the Father’s presence. We see this in the order of the offerings, and in their application. How in the unfolding of the doctrine of them He begins with God, and in their application to the sinner he begins with him, and so on constantly. I allude to the first chapter of Colossians, because it helps us in the second. It gives us our apprehension, experimentally known, what we have through grace. Colossians 2 gives us God’s side rather. He looks at Christ Jesus, the Lord; He beholds Him in whom dwelleth all the completeness of the Godhead bodily, as man. In Him “we are complete.” From Him he reasons in the same way as in the first chapter — from God downwards to our depths of need. Here Christ and His identification with His people, that they may be thus “complete in Him,” is his theme. Again we find seven steps in the train of thought:

1. “In Him dwelleth all the completeness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him.” “God is complete in Christ for us; we are complete in Him for God,” as one has said.

2. “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” He has left the scene, given up His life here below, and all that connected Him to this scene and Israel His people. He is gone on high, the beginning of the creation of God.

3. “In whom also ye are co-risen through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” [Remark here that in verse 12 I have omitted the first clause — “Buried with Him in baptism.” I would read that clause as a parenthesis. Just as Romans 6 was the link forward with Colossians (see also Ex. 15:16), so this parenthesis is the link backwards with Romans 6. (See also Josh. 4:23.) This, too, relieves us from any controversy as to whether should be translated “in whom “or “in which; “either translation being possible from the original words; the spiritual sense alone determines the true translation. Read verses 11 and 12 for a moment, omitting the parenthesis, and the meaning is plain. “In putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ … in whom also ye are co-raised through the faith of the operation of God,” &c. This leaves baptism its own true meaning, that of the person baptized being buried to death. It does not, in my mind, go farther

than that, and just ends there; the person is buried to death, as we read in Romans 6, “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death.” Read the first clause of Colossians 2:12 as a parenthetic link connecting us with Romans 6, and read what follows as in connection with “Christ... in whom ye also are co-risen,” &c., and all is plain. Faith in God’s operation comes in there and clears baptism of the thought of resurrection, though it follows where there is faith in God’s operation.]

4. “And you being dead in your offenses, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He co-quickened us together with Him.”

5. “Having forgiven us all the offenses.”

6. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us... nailing it to His cross.”

7. “And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

Thus we see the reason why the co-raising us up with Christ should come before the co-quickening; because the Spirit of God reasons in the true divine order — from God in Christ to us, and down to all our ruin in which we lay, by the seven steps of His truth.

(1) Complete in Him;

(2) circumcised in Him;

(3) co-risen with Him;

(4) co-quickened together with Him;

(5) forgiven through Him;

(6) the law1 nailed to His cross; and

(7) the whole power of Satan destroyed.

Now let me notice another thing which is very fine. The seven steps of Colossians 1 give us our subjective consciousness, what we possess and know in our own souls experience, what we have from God. Those in Colossians 2 give us rather the objective unfolding by revelation — what is in Christ for us, apart from our experience, though known to faith, of course. Both lines of thought reasoning from God to us, whether in a revelation objectively presented in Christ, or what our own souls consciously possess in Him.

Christian Friend, 1880, pp. 5-13.

Collected Writings, Reward in Colossians 2:18

Q. H. D. L. What is the “reward” in Colossians 2:18?

A. The passage might be rendered, “Let none circumvent you,” or “cheat you.” That is, as if he said, Do not allow things to get an entrance into your mind, so that you would be cheated out of that which Christianity had given you, in Christ, by voluntary humility, &c. There is no special separate word for “reward” in the passage, but the word is required to get at the full sense of the verb. The words I give in italics are all used to express one word in the original language, namely, “Let no man beguile you of your reward.” It is not used in any other place in Scripture.

Collected Writings, Colossians 4:12

Q. What is to “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God?” (Col. 4:12).

A. Epaphras’ prayer was the echo of the apostle’s, as one may say (see Col. 1:9, and 2:1-3). Paul had never seen the Colossians, but had heard of them through Epaphras. He could thank God as to what he had heard of them (Col. 1:3, &c.), but he could agonize in prayer for them, that they might know more of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; thus to walk worthy of the Lord. That they might know, too, the mystery of Christ and the Church; or, as he terms it here, “The mystery of God, wherein are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Conversion only was not sufficient in Paul’s mind, and Epaphras had learned this, and his prayer (Col. 4:12) took its tone from his lesson and from Paul.

Words of Truth 5:37-39.

Words of Truth: Volume N3, Grace With Salt

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

Our words should be “always with grace,” and prove themselves such by ministering good to the souls of others, “grace to the hearer.” This, however, will be ofttimes in the pungency of admonition or rebuke, and at times with severity or decision, or even with indignation and zeal. In this character they will be “seasoned with salt.” And having these fine qualities, being thus gracious and yet salted, they will be such as will bear their own virtues, that we have known how to answer every man.

The Lord Jesus, among all others, illustrated this form of moral perfection. He knew how to answer every man with words which always were with grace, or to the soul's profit, but at times seasoned, or seasoned highly, with salt.

In answering inquiries He did not so much aim at satisfying them, as at reaching the conscience or the condition of those who put them.

In His silence, as well as in His words, when He had to stand before the Jew or the Gentile at the last, before either the Priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace full moral beauty and perfection, witnessing that at least One among the sons of men knew "when to keep silence and when to speak."

Great variety in His style presents itself to us in all this. Sometimes He is gentle, sometimes peremptory, sometimes He reasons, sometimes He rebukes at once, and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of awful condemnation and judgment.

He knows the moral of the scene before Him. "By Him actions were weighed" in their value as before God; and His words as well as His doings answer them accordingly.

Matt. 15 has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection is specially shown us. In the course of the action there, the Lord is called to answer Pharisees, the multitude, Peter, Syro-phoenician, and the disciples again and again in their mistake, and stupidity, and selfishness; and His tone of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of deep, wise, and gracious training of the soul, are all precious and admirable in their place and occasion.

And, let me ask, is there not a fitness in its not being said of the Lord in Luke 2 That He was either teaching or learning, though it is said that He was hearing and asking questions? It seems to me that there is. To have taught would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders; to have learned, would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and brighter light which He knew He carried in Himself; for, "He was wiser than his teachers, and had more understanding than the ancients," we may surely say of Him, I mean not as God, but as One "filled with wisdom," as it is said of Him.

But here again we get the grace of which that Scripture— "Let your speech be alway with grace" — speaks. For of this child, in the Temple with the Doctors, we read that He was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." So that He knew how in perfection of grace to use the fullness of wisdom that was in Him, and He is, therefore, not presented to us as either teaching or learning.

Elihu comes to remembrance here. Elihu was silent while years were before him, and, while multitude of days was speaking; but he knew that he had the Spirit of God, and the rights of the Spirit he must assert, though otherwise he would have been silent to the end.

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