

## Scripture Text Commentaries

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Colossians

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## Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for Colossians 1

### *The Greatness of IESO The Anointed One*

A. Greeting and giving of thanks.

1. (Colossians 1:1-2) Paulo greets the Followers in Colosse.

**Paulo, an apostle of IESO The Anointed One by the will of Aleim, and Timotheo our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in The Anointed One who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from Aleim our Father and the Ruler IESO The Anointed One.**

a. **Paulo:** According to the custom of writing letters in that day, the author's name is given first. Therefore the author was **Paulo**; he wrote the letter while in Roman custody (Colossians 4:3, 4:10, and 4:18), probably from Rome and around a.d. 63.

i. Paulo probably wrote the letter because of the visit of Epaphrha from Colosse (Colossians 1:7). It is likely that Paulo himself had never visited the city (Colossians 2:1).

b. **An apostle of IESO The Anointed One by the will of Aleim:** Paulo was qualified to write this letter of instruction to the Colossians, though he had never met them personally, because he was **an apostle**.

i. "The literal meaning of *apostolos* is 'one sent'; but at its deepest level it denotes an authorized spokesman for Aleim, one commissioned and empowered to act as his representative." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **And Timotheo our brother:** Timotheo was an honoured companion of Paulo, but he was not an **apostle**. "Though Timotheo is here joined in the salutation, yet he has never been understood as having any part in composing this epistle. He has been considered as the amanuensis or scribe of the apostle." (Peter Damonse)

c. **To the saints and faithful brethren:** When Paulo addressed the **saints**, he did not separate some Followers from others in the Colossian Ekklesia. Every true Follower is a saint. However, Paulo may make a distinction with the phrase **faithful brethren**. He may refer to those who haven't embraced the false teaching that concerned Paulo so much in this letter.

d. **Who are in Colosse:** The city of Colosse was probably the smallest and least important city that Paulo ever wrote to. It might surprise us that Paulo would turn his attention to the Followers in **Colosse** at a time when he had so many other concerns. Yet he apparently thought the situation in Colosse was important enough for apostolic attention.

i. Paulo wrote because there were problems among the Followers in Colosse, but the doctrinal problem – sometimes described as "The Colossian Heresy" – is difficult to precisely describe. It probably was a corruption of the Faith with elements of mystical and legalistic Judaism perhaps combined with early Gnosticism.

ii. The first century religious environment was much like our own. It was a time of religious mixing, with people borrowing a little from this religion and a little from that religion. The only difference was that in the first century, one joined a *group* who did the borrowing. In our modern culture one does the borrowing *one's self*.

iii. Whatever the problem was precisely, Paulo dwelt on the solution: *a better understanding of IESO*. Knowing the *real*

IESO helps us to stay away from the counterfeit, no matter how it comes packaged.

e. **In Colosse:** The city of **Colosse** is not even mentioned in the Book of Acts. All our Scriptural information about the Ekklesia there comes from this letter and a few allusions in the letter to Philemon.

i. From these sources we learn that Epaphrha was responsible for bringing the Glad Tidings to the Colossians (Colossians 1:6-7). He was a native of the city (Colossians 4:12), and also got the message out to neighbouring towns in the Lycus Valley like Hierapolis and Laodicea (Colossians 4:13).

ii. Perhaps Epaphrha heard the Glad Tidings himself when Paulo was in Ephesus. As Paulo taught in the lecture hall of Tirhannou, *all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Ruler* (Acts 19:10). It would not be surprising if some people from Colosse heard the Glad Tidings at that time.

iii. Historically, **Colosse** was a prosperous city, and famous (along with other cities in its region) for its fabric dyes. Yet by Paulo's time the glory it had as a city was on the decline.

iv. Peter Damonse adds an interesting comment: "That this city perished by an earthquake, a short time after the date of this epistle, we have the testimony of Eusebio." Tacitus also mentioned this earthquake, which happened around a.d. 60.

f. **Grace to you and peace from Aleim the Father and our Ruler IESO The Anointed One:** Paulo's greeting was familiar but heartfelt. "Grace is Aleim's unconditioned goodwill toward men and women which is decisively expressed in the saving work of The Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)

i. This letter – full of love and concern, written to a Ekklesia Paulo had neither planted nor visited – shows the power of Follower love. Paulo didn't need to see or meet or directly know these Followers in order to love them and be concerned for them.

2. (Colossians 1:3) Paulo's habit of prayer for the Colossians.

**We give thanks to the Aleim and Father of our Ruler IESO The Anointed One, praying always for you,**

a. **Praying always for you:** Though he had never met most of them, the Followers of Colosse were on Paulo's prayer list. He prayed for them not only often, but **always**.

b. **We give thanks:** When Paulo did pray for the Colossians, he did it full of gratitude. Perhaps those who pray the most end up having the most reasons to thank Aleim.

3. (Colossians 1:4-8) Why Paulo was thankful.

**Since we heard of your faith in The Anointed One IESO and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the Glad Tidings, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of Aleim in truth; as you also learned from Epaphrha, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of The Anointed One on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.**

a. **Since we heard:** Paulo was thankful for their **faith in The Anointed One IESO** and their **love for all the saints**. Genuine **faith** in IESO will always have a true **love** for Aleim's people as a companion.

b. **Because of the hope:** Paulo was thankful for the **hope** laid up for them in heaven. He was thankful when he considered the destiny of the Colossian Followers.

i. We notice the familiar triad of **faith, hope, and love**. These were not merely theological ideas to Paulo; they dominated his thinking as a Follower.

c. **Which you heard before in the word of the truth:** Paulo was thankful that their eternal destiny was affected by the **truth of the Glad Tidings**, brought by Epaphrha (as you also learned from Epaphrha).

i. Epaphrha is described as a **faithful minister of The Anointed One on your behalf**. This doesn't mean that Epaphrha was *superior* to the other Followers in Colosse. The word **minister** does not mean "superior"; it means "one who serves."

d. **And is bringing forth fruit:** Paulo was thankful that the Glad Tidings was **bringing forth fruit over all the world**, even while Paulo was in a Roman prison.

i. The phrase "**in all the world**" was "A legitimate hyperbole, for the Glad Tidings was spreading all over the Roman Empire." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "The doctrine of the Glad Tidings is represented as a *traveller*, whose object it is to visit the whole habitable earth... So rapid is this *traveller* in his course, that he had already gone nearly through the whole of the countries under the Roman dominion, and will travel on until he has proclaimed his message to every people, and kindred, and nation, and tongue." (Peter Damonse)

B. How Paulo prayed for the Colossian Followers.

1. (Colossians 1:9-11) Paulo petitions Aleim on behalf of the Colossians.

**For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Ruler, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of Aleim; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;**

a. **To ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will:** First, Paulo prayed that they would have a **knowledge of His will**, informed by a true **spiritual understanding**. To *know Aleim* and *what He requires of us* is our first responsibility.

i. "If you read this epistle through, you will observe that Paulo frequently alludes to knowledge and wisdom. To the point in which he judged the Ekklesia to be deficient he turned his prayerful attention. He would not have them ignorant. He knew that spiritual ignorance is the constant source of error, instability, and sorrow; and therefore he desired that they might be soundly taught in the things of Aleim." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **That you may walk worthy of the Ruler, fully pleasing Him:** Second, Paulo prayed that they would live according to the same knowledge they received, living out a **walk worthy of the Ruler**.

i. This is a familiar pattern, repeated over and over again in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament). Our walk is based on

our knowledge of Aleim and our understanding of His will.

c. **Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of Aleim.** This is how we can be **fully pleasing** to Aleim and how we can have a **worthy walk**.

i. This is an echo of IESO's thought in Ioanne 15:7-8: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

ii. " 'Fruitful in every good work.' Here is room and range enough – in 'every good work.' Have you the ability to preach the Glad Tidings? Preach it! Does a little child need comforting? Comfort it! Can you stand up and vindicate a glorious truth before thousands? Do it! Does a poor saint need a bit of dinner from your table? Send it to her. Let works of obedience, testimony, zeal, charity, piety, and philanthropy all be found in your life. Do not select big things as your special he, but glorify the Ruler also in the littles – 'fruitful in every good work.' " (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Strengthened with all might:** As we **walk worthy of the Ruler**, His strength is there to help us meet all of life's challenges, and to endure and overcome problems with circumstances (**patience**) and people (**longsuffering**) with joy. 2. (Colossians 1:12-14) Paulo's specific thanks to the Father.

**Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

a. **Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us:** In the divine administration, the Father is mentioned in connection with the broad sweep of His plan of redemption. He is the Aleim who *initiates* the plan of the ages.

b. **To be partakers of the inheritance of the saints:** It is the Father who qualifies us, not our own works. We gain this as an **inheritance**, instead of earning it as a wage.

c. **He has delivered us from the power of darkness:** Followers have been **delivered** from satan's domain. The word has the idea of a rescue by a sovereign power.

i. Another place where this same phrase for **power of darkness** is used is in Louka 22:53, where IESO spoke of the darkness surrounding His arrest and passion in the same terms. "These words refer to the sinister forces marshaled against him for decisive combat in the spiritual realm." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. The **power of darkness** may be seen in its effects, and for those who have been **delivered... from the power of darkness** these effects should be less and less evident in the life.

- The power of darkness lulls us to sleep.
- The power of darkness is skilled at concealment.
- The power of darkness afflicts and depresses man.
- The power of darkness can fascinate us.
- The power of darkness emboldens some men.

iii. "Beloved, we still are tempted by satan, but we are not under his power; we have to fight with him, but we are not his slaves. He is not our king; he has no rights over us; we do not

obey him; we will not listen to his temptations.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **And conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love:** According to Edgar Phillips, the word we translate **conveyed** had a special significance in the ancient world. When one empire conquered another, the custom was to take the population of the defeated empire and transfer it completely to the conqueror’s land. It is in this sense that Paulo says we have been **conveyed** into Aleim’s kingdom. Everything we have and everything we are now belongs to Him.

i. **The Son of His love** is a Hebraic way of saying “Aleim’s dear Son.”

e. **In whom we have redemption through His blood:** **Redemption** has the idea of release by a legal ransom. The price for our release was paid by the blood of IESO.

i. This is one reason why pleading the blood of IESO – in the right sense, not in a magical or superstitious sense – has such great significance in spiritual warfare. It shows the “receipt” of our lawful purchase as redeemed people.

ii. One of the great sticky questions of theology is *to whom was the price paid?* Some say it was to *Aleim* that the ransom price was paid, but we were prisoners of *satan*’s kingdom. Others say it was to *satan* that the ransom price was paid, but what does Aleim owe to *satan*? This question probably simply extends the metaphor too far.

f. **The forgiveness of sins:** The word translated **forgiveness** is the ancient Greek word *aphesis*, most literally rendered “a sending away.” Our sin and guilt is *sent away* because of what IESO did on the tree for us.

i. “It thus speaks of the removal of our sins from us, so that they are no longer barriers that separate us from Aleim.” (Edgar Phillips)

3. (Colossians 1:15-20) Paulo’s meditation on the person and work of IESO.

**He is the image of the invisible Aleim, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Ekklesia, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His tree.**

a. **He is:** Paulo started out thanking the Father for His plan of redemption (Colossians 1:12). He couldn’t do that without also thinking of the Son, who is the great Redeemer.

i. Most scholars think that Colossians 1:15-20 came from a poem or a hymn in the early Ekklesia that described what Followers believed about IESO. This is entirely possible, but can’t be proven one way or another.

b. **He is the image of the invisible Aleim:** The word translated **image** (the ancient Greek word *eikon*) expressed two ideas.

· *Likeness*, as in the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror.

· *Manifestation*, with the sense that Aleim is fully revealed in IESO.

i. If Paulo meant that IESO was merely similar to the Father, he would have used the ancient Greek word *homoioima*, which speaks merely of similar appearance. The stronger word used here proves that Paulo knew that IESO is Aleim just as Aleim the Father is Aleim. It means that “IESO is the very stamp of Aleim the Father.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. “Aleim is invisible, which does not merely mean that He cannot be seen by our bodily eye, but that He is unknowable. In the exalted The Anointed One the unknowable Aleim becomes known.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. According to Edgar Phillips, the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo equated the *eikon* of Aleim with the *Logos*. Paulo used this important and meaningful word with great purpose.

c. **The firstborn over all creation:** **Firstborn** (the ancient Greek word *prototokos*) can describe either priority in time or supremacy in rank. As Paulo used it here, he probably had both ideas in mind, with IESO being before all created things and IESO being of a supremely different order than all created things.

i. **Firstborn** is also used of IESO in Colossians 1:18, Romans 8:29, Hebrews 1:6, and Revelation 1:5.

ii. In no way does the title **firstborn** indicate that IESO is less than Aleim. In fact, the ancient Rabbis called IEUE Himself “Firstborn of the World” (Rabbi Bechai, cited in Edgar Phillips). Ancient rabbis used **firstborn** as a Messianic title: “Aleim said, As I made Iakob a first-born (2nd MoUse (Exodus) 4:22), so also will I make king Moseea a first-born (Psalms 89:27).”

iii. “The use of this word does not show what Arius argued: that Paulo regarded The Anointed One as a creature like ‘all creation’... It is rather the comparative (superlative) force of *protos* that is used.” (Edgar Phillips)

iv. Bishop Edgar Phillips, a noted Greek scholar, on the use of both *eikon* (**image**) and *prototokos* (**firstborn**): “As the Person of The Anointed One was the Divine response alike to the philosophical questionings of the Alexandrian Jew and to the patriotic hopes of the Palestinian, these two currents of thought meet in the term *prototokos* as applied to our Ruler, who is both the true *Logos* and the true Moseea.” (Edgar Phillips)

v. “*Prototokos* in its primary sense expresses temporal priority, and then, on account of the privileges of the firstborn, it gains the further sense of dominion... Whether the word retains anything of its original meaning here is doubtful.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **For by Him all things were created:** There is no doubt that IESO is the author of *all* creation. He Himself is not a created being. When we behold the wonder and the glory of the world IESO **created**, we worship and honour Him all the more.

i. Comets have vapor trails up to 10,000 miles long. If you could capture all that vapor, and put it in a bottle, the amount of vapor actually present in the bottle would take up less than 1 cubic inch of space.



- ii. Saturn's rings are 500,000 miles in circumference, but only about a foot thick.
- iii. If the sun were the size of a beachball and put on top of the Empire State Building, the nearest group of stars would be as far away as Australia is to the Empire State Building.
- iv. The earth travels around the sun about eight times the speed of a bullet fired from a gun.
- v. There are more insects in one square mile of rural land than there are human beings on the entire earth.
- vi. A single human chromosome contains twenty billion bits of information. How much information is that? If written in ordinary books, in ordinary language, it would take about four thousand volumes.
- vii. According to Greek scholar A.T. Edgar Phillips, **all things were created** has the idea of "stand created" or "remain created." Edgar Phillips adds: "The permanence of the universe rests, then, on The Anointed One far more than on gravity. It is a Christ-centric universe."
- e. **Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers:** As will be demonstrated in the rest of the letter, the Colossian Heresy seemed taken with an elaborate angelology, which effectively placed angels as mediators between Aleim and man. Paulo emphasized that whatever ranks of spirit beings there may be, IESO created them all and they all ultimately answer to Him.
- f. **He is before all things... who is the beginning:** Centuries after Paulo, a dangerous (yet popular) teacher named Arius claimed that IESO was not truly Aleim and that there was a time when He did not exist. Paulo rightly understood and insisted that IESO **is before all things** and is Himself **the beginning**.
  - i. "As all creation necessarily exists in *time*, and had a *commencement*, and there was an infinite duration in which it *did not exist*, whatever was *before* or *prior* to that must be *no part of creation*; and the Being who existed prior to creation, *and before all things*-all existence of every kind, must be the unoriginated and eternal Aleim: but Paulo says, *IESO The Anointed One was before all things*; ergo, the apostle conceived IESO The Anointed One to be truly, and essentially Aleim." (Peter Damonse)
  - g. **In Him all things consist:** The idea that IESO is both the unifying principle and the personal sustainer of all creation.
  - i. "Hence, Aleim, as the *Preserver*, is as necessary to the continuance of all things, as Aleim the *Creator* was to their original production. But this *preserving* or *continuing* power is here ascribed to *The Anointed One*." (Peter Damonse)
  - h. **Head of the body, the Ekklesia:** This describes IESO's relationship to the Ekklesia. Here, **head** probably refers to IESO's role as **source** of the Ekklesia, even as we refer to the **head** of a river.
  - i. **That in all things He may have the preeminence:** This is a fitting summary of the verses found in Colossians 1:15-18.
  - i. Peter Damonse on Colossians 1:16-17: "Now, allowing Paulo to have understood the terms which he used, he must have considered IESO The Anointed One as being truly and properly *Aleim*.... Unless there be some secret way of understanding the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> verses, which Aleim has nowhere revealed, taken in their sober and rational sense and

- meaning they must forever settle this very important point."
- j. **Fullness:** This translates the ancient Greek word *pleroma*, and was really just another way to say that IESO is truly Aleim.
  - i. The word **fullness** was "a recognized technical term in theology, denoting the totality of the Divine powers and attributes." (Edgar Phillips)
  - ii. According to Edgar Phillips, *pleroma* was used by the Gnostic teachers in a technical sense, to express the sum-total of divine powers and attributes "The Anointed One may have been ranked with these inferior images of the divine by the Colossian teachers. Hence the significance of the assertion that the *totality* of the divine dwells in Him."
  - iii. "The Gnostics distributed the divine powers among various aeons. Paulo gathers them all up in The Anointed One, a full and flat statement of the deity of The Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)
- k. **For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell:** The ancient Greek word for **dwell** is here used in the sense of a *permanent dwelling*. There is an entirely different word used for the sense of a *temporary* dwelling place. Paulo wanted to emphasize the idea that IESO was not *temporarily* Aleim, but is *permanently* Aleim.
  - i. "Two mighty words; '*fullness*' a substantial, comprehensive, expressive word in itself, and '*all*,' a great little word including everything. When combined in the expression, '*all fullness*,' we have before us a superlative wealth of meaning." (Edgar Phillips)
  - ii. Once it pleased the Father to bruise Him (Isaia 53:10); now it pleases the Father that in Him all the fullness of Aleim should dwell.
  - iii. "Thus the phrase *in Him should all the fullness dwell* gathers into a grand climax the previous statements – *image of Aleim, first-born of all creation, Creator, the eternally preexistent, the Head of the Ekklesia, the victor over death, first in all things*. On this summit we pause, looking like Ioanne, from The Anointed One in His fullness of deity to the exhibition of that divine fullness in redemption consummated in heaven."
  - iv. The fullness has been put into IESO The Anointed One. Not into a Ekklesia; not into a priesthood; not into a building; not into a sacrament; not into the saints; not into a method or a program, but *in IESO The Anointed One Himself*. It was put into Him as a "distribution point" – so that those who wanted more of Aleim and all that He is could find it in IESO The Anointed One.
- l. **And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself:** IESO's atoning work is full and broad. Yet we should not take Colossians 1:20 as an endorsement of universalism.
- m. **Through the blood of the tree:** Again we notice where the peace was made. We don't make our own peace with Aleim, but IESO made peace for us through His work on the tree.
  - i. However, we should not regard **the blood of the tree** in a superstitious manner. It is not a magical potion, nor is it the literal blood of IESO, literally applied that saves or cleanses us. If that were so, then His Roman executioners, splattered with His blood, would have been automatically saved, and the actual number of molecules of IESO's literal blood would limit

the number of people who could be saved. The **blood of the tree** speaks to us of the real, physical death of IESO The Anointed One in our place, on our behalf, before Aleim. *That literal death in our place, and the literal judgment He bore on our behalf, is what saves us.*

4. (Colossians 1:21-23) How the greatness of IESO's work touches the lives of the Colossians.

**And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight; if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Glad Tidings which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paulo, became a minister.**

a. **Who once were alienated:** The ancient Greek word translated **alienated** (*apellotriomenous*) is literally "transferred to another owner." This transfer of ownership, from Aleim to satan and self, affected us in both *mind* and *behaviour*.

i. Belonging to the race of , we are born **alienated** from Aleim. Then as individuals, we each choose to accept and embrace that alienation with our **wicked works**.

ii. **Once were alienated:** This means that in IESO we are *no longer alienated*. The difference between a believer and a non-believer isn't merely forgiveness; there is a complete change of status.

b. **Yet now He has reconciled:** Aleim's answer to the problem of **alienation** is *reconciliation*, initiated by His work on the tree (**reconciled in the body of His flesh through death**). In the work of reconciliation, Aleim didn't meet us halfway. Aleim meets us all the way and invites us to accept it.

i. One may use two different ways of understanding human need and Aleim's salvation.

- We can see Aleim as the judge, and we are guilty before Him. Therefore, we need forgiveness and justification.
- We can see Aleim as our friend, and we have damaged our relationship with Him. Therefore, we need reconciliation.

ii. Both of these are true; neither one should be promoted at the expense of the other.

iii. The phrase **body of His flesh** is redundant. Paulo wanted to emphasize that this happened because of something that happened to a real man on a real tree.

c. **To present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight:** This is the result of Aleim's work of reconciliation. Taken together, these words show that in IESO we are pure and can't even be justly accused of impurity.

i. The idea of presenting us **holy and blameless** before Aleim may recall the terminology used when priests inspected potential sacrifices. We are presented to Aleim as a living sacrifice.

ii. A desire to be saved means a desire to be *made holy, and blameless, and above reproach*; not merely a desire to escape the fires of hell on our own terms.

d. **If indeed you continue in the faith:** Those truly reconciled must truly persevere. Paulo's main focus is continuing in the *truth of the Glad Tidings (continue in the faith... not moved*

**away from the hope of the Glad Tidings which you heard)**. It is important for Followers to continue in divine conduct, but we are not saved by our divine conduct. So it is even more important for Followers to continue in the truth of the Glad Tidings because we are saved by grace through faith.

i. "If the Glad Tidings teaches the final perseverance of the saints, it teaches at the same time that the saints are those who finally persevere – in The Anointed One. Continuance is the test of reality." (Edgar Phillips)

C. What Paulo did for the Colossians.

1. (Colossians 1:24) Paulo suffers for their sake.

**I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of The Anointed One, for the sake of His body, which is the Ekklesia,**

a. **I now rejoice in my sufferings for you:** Paulo wrote this from a Roman jail. He was able to see that his **sufferings** worked something good for others, so he could say that his **sufferings were for** the Colossians and other Followers.

b. **And fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of The Anointed One:** This word **afflictions** is never used for the suffering of IESO on the tree. Most commentators see this as a reference to the affliction IESO endured in ministry. *These afflictions* are not yet complete, and in this sense IESO still "suffers" as He ministers through His people.

i. "Paulo attaches no atoning value whatever to his own sufferings for the Ekklesia." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "The term 'afflictions of The Anointed One' is never associated with the redemptive suffering of IESO upon the tree. It speaks, rather, of those ministerial sufferings which Paulo bears because he represents IESO The Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **For the sake of His body, which is the Ekklesia:** Paulo did not suffer for *himself* in the way that an ascetic might. Instead he suffered **for the sake of** the body of The Anointed One.

i. Ascetics focus on *their* holiness, on *their* spiritual growth, and on *their* perfection. Paulo followed in the footsteps of IESO and was an others-centred person. Paulo found holiness, spiritual growth, and maturity when he pursued these things for others.

2. (Colossians 1:25-26) Paulo is a servant of the Ekklesia, revealing the mystery of Aleim that was once hidden.

**Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from Aleim which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of Aleim, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.**

a. **Of which I became a minister:** Paulo was a **minister** – that is, a *servant* of the body of The Anointed One, the Ekklesia. He did not take this position on his own initiative, but **according to the stewardship from Aleim**. Aleim put Paulo into this position, he did not put himself.

b. **The word of Aleim, the mystery which has been hidden:** In the Scriptural sense, a **mystery** is not a riddle. It is a truth that can only be known by revelation and not by intuition. *Now* it can be known, because it **now has been revealed to His saints**.

i. **Hidden from ages and generations:** This reminds us that there are aspects to Aleim's plan that *were not* clearly revealed

in the Scriptures (Old Testament). The specific **mystery** Paulo refers to here deals with many aspects of the work of IESO in His people, but especially the plan of the Ekklesia, to make one body out of Jew and non Jew, taken from the “trunk” of Israhel, yet not Israhel.

ii. “The mystery is this: that Aleim had designed to grant the Nations the same privileges with the Jews, and make them His people who were not His people. That this in what Paulo means by the *mystery*, see Ephesians 3:3, etc.” (Peter Damonse)

3. (Colossians 1:27) Part of the mystery: that IESO would actually indwell believers.

**To them Aleim willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Nations: which is The Anointed One in you, the hope of glory.**

a. **This mystery among the Nations: which is The Anointed One in you:** The wonder and glory of the abiding, indwelling IESO was not clearly revealed in the Scriptures (Old Testament), especially that He would abide in **the Nations**. Therefore, this aspect of the work of IESO in His people was a **mystery** that wasn’t revealed until the time of IESO and the apostles.

i. “This is the crowning wonder to Paulo that Aleim had included the Nations in His redemptive grace.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. This means that Aleim is revealed to us in IESO. Classic theologians use the Latin term *deusabsconditus* to refer to the “hidden Aleim,” the Aleim than cannot be clearly seen or known. The Latin theological term *deusrevelatus* refers to the “revealed Aleim.” In IESO, the *deusabsconditus* has become the *deusrevelatus*.

b. **The Anointed One in you, the hope of glory:** This is the Follower’s **hope of glory**. It isn’t our own hard work or devotion to Aleim, or the power of our own spirituality. Instead, it is the abiding presence of IESO: **The Anointed One in you**.

4. (Colossians 1:28-29) Paulo’s motto for apostolic ministry.

**Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in The Anointed One IESO. To this end I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.**

a. **Him we preach:** This was the focus of Paulo’s preaching. He didn’t preach himself, or his opinions, or even lots and lots of entertaining stories. He preached *IESO*.

b. **Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom:** Paulo wanted the whole Glad Tidings for the whole world. He wouldn’t hold back in either area – it was for **every man**, and he presented it in **all wisdom**.

i. Some translate the word **warning** as “counseling.” The ancient Greek verb *nouthetountes* means, “To impart understanding,” “to lay on the mind or the heart.” The stress is on influencing not only the intellect, but also the will and disposition. It describes a basic means of education.

ii. The work of **warning** – or helping to impart understanding – was a passion for Paulo in ministry (Acts 20:31). It is also the job of Ekklesia leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12) and of the Ekklesia body in general (Colossians 3:16), providing that

they are *able* to admonish others (Romans 15:14).

c. **That we may present every man perfect in The Anointed One IESO:** The goal of Paulo’s ministry was to bring people to maturity in The Anointed One, and not to dependence upon himself.

i. “Therefore, the aim of this epistle, and, indeed, of all apostolic work is admonishing and teaching every man toward the realization of perfection in The Anointed One, because that issues in the perfecting of the whole Ekklesia.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. This work was for **every man**. In contrast, the false teachers at Colosse “believed the way of salvation to be so involved that it could be understood only by a select few who made up sort of a spiritual aristocracy.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Striving according to His working which works in me mightily:** Paulo’s work was empowered by Aleim’s mighty strength. But Aleim’s strength in Paulo’s life didn’t mean that he did nothing. He worked hard **according to His working**.

i. “The word ‘struggling’ [**striving**], whose root can mean ‘to compete in the games’, carries, as of then in Paulo, the idea of athletic contest: Paulo does not go about his work half-heartedly, hoping vaguely that grace will fill in the gaps which he is too lazy to work at himself.” (Edgar Phillips)

## Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for Colossians 2

*Answering the Colossian Heresy*

A. Paulo's conflict.

1. (Colossians 2:1) The depth of Paulo's conflict for the Colossians and others.

**For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,**

a. **What a great conflict I have for you:** This **great conflict** was *inside Paulo (I have for you)*. It wasn't that Paulo fought with others about the Colossian Followers. Paulo described his spiritual warfare and heartfelt care for the Colossians as a **great conflict**.

i. Paulo used athletic imagery in Colossians 1:29 (*striving*), and he continues that sports metaphor with the words **great conflict**.

b. **For as many as have not seen my face in the flesh:** Apparently, Paulo had never visited Colosse himself. Most of the Colossian Followers had never seen his **face in the flesh**. Even as Paulo's authority extended to those he had never met – to those who had never seen his face – so it also extends to us.

2. (Colossians 2:2-3) Paulo's specific concerns and goals in the spiritual conflict.

**That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of Aleim, both of the Father and of The Anointed One, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

a. **That their hearts may be encouraged:** Paulo wanted this because he was concerned about their *enthusiasm*. He knew that discouraged, downcast Followers are easy prey for the world, the flesh, and the devil.

i. **Encouraged:** "The word he uses is *paraklein*. Sometimes that word means to *comfort*, sometimes to *exhort*, but always at the back of it there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and gallantry." (Edgar Phillips) Paulo wanted these Followers to be fit for heroic action.

b. **Being knit together in love:** Paulo wanted this because he was concerned about their *unity*. The unity wouldn't come from coercion, but **love**.

c. **Attaining to all riches of the full assurance of the understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery:** Paulo wanted this because he was concerned about their *understanding*. He knew that their unity and steadfastness was not just a matter of **love**, but also of growing together in Aleim's truth.

i. Paulo knew that their unity came from not *only* love, but also from the truth, from both being **knit together in love** and growing in the **understanding** and **knowledge** of Aleim's truth.

ii. The true wisdom Paulo wanted them to know in IESO would bring them together – indeed, **knit them together in love** – instead of dividing them the way that false wisdom did.

iii. For Paulo, real **riches** were found in the believer's **full assurance**. Many lack **full assurance** about the character of

Aleim and are unconvinced that *He is really good and loving*. Others lack **full assurance** of their salvation and wonder if their *Follower life is for real*. Great freedom and confidence comes when we come to this **full assurance**.

d. **To the knowledge of the mystery of Aleim:** The term **mystery of Aleim** is used in a few different ways in the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament). Here, Paulo uses the term regarding the character and person of Aleim – something we could not know unless it was revealed by Him.

i. "The word 'The Anointed One' is in the same case as 'mystery,' placing it in apposition with it. The mystery is The Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "Others might lead them astray with specious talk of mysteries; but there was one mystery above all others – the mystery of Aleim's loving purpose, disclosed in The Anointed One alone – and Paulo's concern was that they should come to know this all-surpassing mystery, and know it as an indwelling presence." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Three mysteries are described in Colossians 1:24 through 2:3:

· The Ekklesia as the Body of The Anointed One, for which Paulo suffered and served (Colossians 1:24-26).

· The Indwelling The Anointed One, the hope of glory in each individual believer (Colossians 1:27).

· The Revealed IESO, the treasury of all wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:2-3).

e. **The Anointed One, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:** This is an important idea in Paulo's letter to the Colossians. With this, Paulo refuted some of the bad teaching troubling the Colossian Followers. They were influenced by teachers who told them to seek the **treasures of wisdom and knowledge**, but *not* to seek them in IESO. Paulo wrote, "You will only find **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** in IESO. He has them **all**." It's not wrong to seek after **wisdom and knowledge**; but we must seek it all in IESO.

i. When Paulo said this wisdom is **hidden** in The Anointed One, he used the ancient Greek word *apokruphos*. "His very use of that word is a blow aimed at the Gnostics.... Gnostics believed that a great mass of elaborate knowledge was necessary for salvation. That knowledge they set down in their books which they called *apokruphos* because they were barred to the ordinary man." (Edgar Phillips) Paulo wanted all to know that real **wisdom** was not hidden in secret books, but deposited in IESO The Anointed One so that all can access it.

ii. " 'Hidden' does not, however, mean that they are concealed but rather that they are laid up or stored away as a treasure." (Phillip Prins)

iii. "Everything we might want to ask about Aleim and His purposes can and must now be answered – this is the force of the verse – with reference to the impaled and risen IESO, the Moseea." (Edgar Phillips)

iv. "He is indeed the Mystery of Aleim, profound in the wonder of His being, and yet so real that the tiniest child talks of Him with sweet familiarity." (Edgar Phillips)

v. When Paulo describes the truth of Aleim with words like **riches** and **treasures**, he reminds us that Aleim's truth is precious and worthy of sacrificial seeking.



3. (Colossians 2:4) Paulo's earnest warning.

**Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.**

a. **Lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words:** Those who told the Colossians to find wisdom and knowledge apart from the simplicity of IESO were very **persuasive**. The lure of "hidden" and "deep" wisdom and knowledge can be both strong and deceptive.

b. **Lest anyone should deceive you:** Paulo did not say that they had *already* been deceived, but he clearly saw the danger and warned them about it.

i. It might sound simple, but deceivers are deceivers. They won't announce their false doctrine as false doctrine, and it will often be similar enough to the truth to be dangerous.

4. (Colossians 2:5-7) Paulo's confidence in their present standing.

**For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in The Anointed One. As you have therefore received The Anointed One IESO the Ruler, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.**

a. **I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit:** Through prayer – the core of his *conflict* mentioned in Colossians 2:1 – Paulo genuinely felt he was among the Colossian Followers **in spirit**, even though he was **absent in the flesh**.

i. "Paulo's sense of being spiritually present with his absent friends could be extraordinarily strong and vivid. Perhaps the most remarkable example is found in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, where he speaks of himself as present in spirit at a Ekklesia meeting in Corinth (at a time when he was resident in Ephesus)." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Rejoicing to see your good order:** Continuing with the thought from the previous verse, Paulo did not see a Colossian Ekklesia that was given over to heresy. They were under serious danger, but they were still in **good order** and displayed the **steadfastness** of their **faith**.

i. According to Phillip Prins, the words **order** and **steadfastness** are both military words. "He sees the situation of the Colossians as being like that of an army under attack and affirms that their lines were unbroken, their discipline intact, and their 'faith in The Anointed One' unshaken."

c. **As you have therefore received The Anointed One IESO the Ruler, so walk in Him:** This is a wonderful rule for Follower living. We cannot perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit; therefore just as you **received** IESO, **walk in Him** in the same way. The simple things of the Follower life provide continual and reliable spiritual fuel for growth. We always have to be reminded of the **things we have been taught**.

i. "When he says that they have 'received' The Anointed One IESO as their Ruler, he uses the verb which was specifically employed to denote the receiving of something which was delivered by tradition. In other words, the Colossians have received The Anointed One Himself as their 'tradition,' and this should prove a sufficient safeguard against following the

'tradition of men' (Colossians 2:8)." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "That is, Paulo is speaking of the doctrines regarding the Person and Work of the Ruler IESO, rather than of Him personally, for the former were involved in the Colossian heresy." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. "He does not receive his qualities and attributes [of holiness] as things apart from the Ruler IESO; but receiving Him, he obtains them. The holy man is he who has learned the art of receiving IESO." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **So walk in Him, rooted and built up:** Paulo used a curious combination of metaphors. As Followers, we **walk**, but we are also **rooted**, and we are also **built up**. The metaphors are somewhat mixed, but the message is clear: be established and keep growing.

i. "It is not usual with the apostle to employ this double metaphor, taken partly from the *growth of a tree* and the *increase of a building*. They are to be *rooted*; as the good *seed* had been already *sown*, it is to take root, and the roots are to spread far, wide, and deep. They are to be *grounded*; as the *foundation* has already been *laid*, they are to *build* thereon. In the one case, they are to bear much fruit; in the other, they are to grow up to be a habitation of Aleim through the Spirit." (Peter Damonse)

B. Paulo warns against and exposes the Colossian heresy.

1. (Colossians 2:8) A warning: Don't be cheated by philosophies and traditions.

**Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to The Anointed One.**

a. **Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy:** The false teaching among the Colossians was marked by an emphasis on **philosophy and empty deceit**. Most of all, it was **according to the tradition of men**. It had the stamp of *man* on it, not *Aleim*.

i. Edgar Phillips says the best sense of the phrase **cheat you** is actually, "lead you away as prey." It also had the ideas of robbing and plundering. "Their goods were the salvation they had received from The Anointed One; and both the non Jew and Jewish teachers endeavoured to deprive them of these, by perverting their minds, and leading them off from the truths of Our Faith." (Peter Damonse)

ii. This **philosophy** that threatened the Colossian Followers was a strange eclectic mix of early Gnosticism, Greek philosophy, local mystery religions, and Jewish mysticism. The philosophy threatening the Colossian Followers was so dangerous because it was not obviously sinful and licentious. It was high-sounding and seemed highly intelligent.

iii. Edgar Phillips on the word **philosophy**: "It had originally a good meaning, *the love of wisdom*, but is used by Paulo in the sense of *vain speculation*, and with special reference to its being the name by which the false teachers at Colossae designated not only their speculative system, but also their practical system, so that it covered their ascetic practices no less than mysticism."

iv. There is significant debate among commentators as to the exact nature of the Colossian heresy. Some see it as predominately an expression of early Gnosticism with some

Jewish mystical elements added; others see it as primarily Jewish mysticism with a few aspects of early Gnosticism. Whatever the exact origin or composition of this heresy, it seems clear that it had both elements.

v. The connection to early Gnosticism is clear from the way Paulo brings forth his points.

- Gnosticism taught that Aleim (as a Perfect Spirit) could not come into direct contact with the material world. Paulo took care to point out that IESO is Aleim, and He came *in the body of His flesh* ([Colossians 1:19-22](#)).

- Gnosticism taught that since Aleim could not have direct contact with the material world, that Aleim Himself did not create the world, but He worked through lesser spirits or angels. Paulo took care to show that IESO was the creator of the world ([Colossians 1:15-16](#)).

- Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) taught that Aleim did not deal directly with man and the material world, but that He dealt with the world through a series of mediators. Paulo took care to show that IESO did the work of reconciliation Himself ([Colossians 1:19-20](#)).

- Gnosticism (and some forms of Jewish mysticism) greatly esteemed these supposed mediators, and considered them angelic beings of a sort. Paulo was careful to warn the Colossians that angels should not be worshipped ([Colossians 2:18](#)).

vi. The connection to Jewish mysticism is clear from the way Paulo brings forth a few more points.

- Jewish influence on Our Faith emphasized dietary laws. Paulo took care to say that Followers were not under Jewish dietary laws ([Colossians 2:16](#)).

- Jewish influence on the Faith emphasized the observance of particular days as an obligation. Paulo took care to say that Followers were not under these obligations ([Colossians 2:16](#)).

b. **According to the tradition of men:** The Colossian heresy promoted itself as *traditional*. It could trace some or many of its ideas back to traditions among the Jews or the Greek philosophers or both. Paulo here warned that **the tradition of men** has no equal authority to the word of Aleim.

c. **According to the basic principles of the world:** The ancient Greek word translated **basic principles** is *stoicheia*. It is a word that can mean several different things based on their context, and Paulo may have used such a broad word to cover a variety of meanings.

i. “The noun *stoicheia* means primarily things placed side by side in a row; it is used of the letters of the alphabet, the ABCs, and then, since learning one’s ABCs is the first lesson in a literary education, it comes to mean ‘rudiments,’ ‘first principles’ (cf. [Hebrews 5:12](#), as the ‘rudiments’ of the Glad Tidings).” (Edgar Phillips) Because of this association with fundamental elements, the word came to also refer to basic elements such as earth, water, air, and fire.

ii. Many ancient mystery religions thought of the world as a dangerous place, threatened by spirits or spiritual forces they called *elements* or *elemental forces* (such as Paulo uses the word in [Colossians 2:8](#) and [2:20](#)). They thought one was protected from these dangerous spiritual forces by either worshipping them or by finding protection under a greater deity or spiritual power that was superior to these *elements*.

iii. Yet, one might say that Paulo’s meaning here certainly *includes* an answer to early Gnostic ideas, but the meaning also goes beyond those specific ideas. “It has been frequently taken in this sense as the ABC of religious knowledge... the expression must apply to something both [Jews and pagans] had in common.” (Edgar Phillips)

iv. Common to both Jews and pagans was the basic idea of *cause and effect* and in a sense it rules nature and the minds of men. We live under the idea that we get what we deserve; when we are good, we deserve to receive good; when we are bad, we deserve to receive bad. Paulo warned the Colossians to not subject themselves to this grace-eliminating kind of thinking, and to consider themselves dead to it.

2. ([Colossians 2:9-10](#)) The completeness of IESO and our connection with Him shows other philosophies and traditions are unnecessary.

**For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Diety bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**

a. **In Him dwells all the fullness of the Diety:** This is a dramatic, airtight declaration of the full Deity of IESO. Since **all the fullness of the Diety** dwells in IESO, He cannot be a halfway Aleim or a junior aleim.

i. **Diety:** “Paulo is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fullness of absolute Diety; they were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up His Person for a season and with splendor not His own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect Aleim; and the apostle uses *theotes* to express this essential and personal Diety of the Son.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **All the fullness of the Diety bodily:** The false teaching among the Colossian Followers was something like an early form of the Gnostic heresies that would come later. These Gnostic heresies made a radical separation between the *spiritual* and the *material*. That is why Paulo needed to make it clear that **all the fullness of the Diety** was in IESO **bodily**, not in some strange, mystical sense. Ioanne also dealt with this false teaching in [1 Ioanne 4:2-3](#) and other passages.

i. A false teaching related to this in the early Ekklesia was called *Docetism*, which claimed that IESO had no actual human body; He only *seemed* to have one. Another false teaching was called *Cerinthianism*, and it said that “IESO the man” was separate and distinct from “the Spirit of The Anointed One.”

c. **And you are complete in Him:** This can only be true because IESO is truly Aleim. If He were not Aleim, we couldn’t be **complete** in Him. Anything that says we are *not complete in Him* also takes away from the deity of IESO.

i. If all the fullness of Aleim dwells in IESO, and as believers we are united to Him in a faith-relationship, then *we* are also **complete in Him**. Therefore there was no need to go to the false promises and attractions presented by the false teachers among the Colossians.

ii. **You are complete in Him:** Paulo says that this is a fact to be enjoyed, not a status to be achieved.

d. **Head of all principality and power:** In many Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament) passages, **principality and power** describes ranks of angelic beings, either faithful or fallen angelic beings ([Romans 8:38](#), [Ephesians 1:21](#),

Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, Paulo here declares IESO' authority over all spirit beings. The false teaching among the Colossian Followers emphasized these lesser spirit beings, but Paulo makes it clear that IESO is far above them.

3. (Colossians 2:11-12) The work of IESO in His people through spiritual circumcision and illustrated by baptism.

**In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of The Anointed One, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of Aleim, who raised Him from the dead.**

a. **In Him you were also circumcised:** Most of the Colossian Followers were Nations who had never been physically circumcised. Paulo assures them that they **were** indeed circumcised in a spiritual sense, which is even more important than physical circumcision.

i. The Colossians Followers had to deal with a whole variety of false teaching. Not only did they have wrong ideas about IESO, but they also had wrong ideas about things like circumcision. Apparently, they were being taught that they had to be circumcised to be right with Aleim. Paulo makes it clear that they *were* circumcised, **by putting off the sins of the flesh**.

ii. "It seems probable that the false teachers set a high value on circumcision, and urged it on the Colossians, not as indispensable to salvation, in which case Paulo would have definitely attacked them on this point, but as conferring higher sanctity." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Our spiritual circumcision meant the **putting off** of the old man. "The Greek word for 'putting off', a double compound, denotes both stripping off and casting away. The imagery is that of discarding – or being divested of – a piece of filthy clothing." (Phillip Prins)

iv. **You were also circumcised:** "A definite historical fact is referred to, as is shown by the aorist [verb tense]. This was their conversion, the inward circumcision of the heart, by which they entered on the blessings of the New Covenant." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **By the circumcision of The Anointed One, buried with Him in baptism:** Paulo says these non Jew Followers find their true **circumcision** in their **baptism**. Followers don't need to be circumcised, they need to be baptized.

i. Even the Scriptures (Old Testament) acknowledges that there are two types of circumcision: one of the body and one of the heart (5th MoUse (Deuteronomy) 10:16 and 30:6; Ierhemia 4:4 and 9:25; Ezekiel 44:7 and 44:9). Sincere baptism shows that the real "circumcision of the heart" has taken place.

c. **Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of Aleim:** Baptism *answers* circumcision, but it doesn't *illustrate* it. Yet baptism does illustrate our identification with the death and resurrection life of IESO. We were **buried** with IESO, and **buried** under the water. We are also **raised with Him**, and raised up out of the water.

i. It is as if Paulo wrote: "Circumcision is not important; what

is important is the spiritual cutting away of the flesh that IESO performs in the life of every believer. If you want a ceremony to mark this spiritual transformation in your life, look to your baptism and not to circumcision."

ii. Because Paulo made a connection here between circumcision and baptism, some – especially Reformed theologians – say that just as babies were circumcised, so babies should be baptized. But this presses Paulo's analogy between circumcision and baptism too far and neglects examples of baptism in the Book of Acts. Paulo doesn't say that circumcision and baptism are the same thing, but that circumcision is unnecessary for salvation because we are identified in IESO and we are baptized to show that.

iii. "The emphasis of the verse, however, is not on the analogy between circumcision and baptism; that concept, though implied, is soon dismissed, and the thought shifts to that of baptism as symbolizing the believer's participation in the burial and resurrection of The Anointed One." (Phillip Prins)

iv. **Through faith in the working of Aleim:** This demonstrates that Paulo understood that the power of regeneration was not in baptism or received by the act of baptism, but received **through faith in the working of Aleim**.

4. (Colossians 2:13-15) The work of IESO in His people through His work on the tree.

**And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the tree. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**

a. **And you, being dead:** This is the place of every person before they *are raised with Him through faith in the working of Aleim* as Paulo described in Colossians 2:12. Before we have new life, we are **dead**. Before a person comes to new life in IESO, he is not a sick man who needs a doctor; he is a **dead** person who needs a Saviour.

i. We are not only **made alive**, but **made alive together with Him**. "It is true that He gave us life from the dead? He gave us pardon of sin; He gave us imputed righteousness. These are all precious things, but you see we are not content with them; we have received *The Anointed One Himself*. The Son of Aleim has been poured out into us, and we have received Him, and appropriated Him." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh:** Before we have new life in IESO, we are dead **in our trespasses**. A trespass is a specific kind of sin: overstepping a boundary. We are dead because we overstep Aleim's boundaries in our sin and rebellion.

c. **He has made alive together with Him:** We can't make ourselves alive, but Aleim can make us **alive together with IESO**. We can never be **made alive** apart from IESO.

i. The new birth (**made alive**) and cleansing (**forgiven you all**) go together as features of the New Covenant, as prophesied by the Scriptures (Old Testament) (Ezekiel 36:25-27) and the Prophetic Scriptures (New Testament) (Ioanne 3:5).

ii. **Having forgiven us** is the ancient Greek word *charizomai* –



a verb form of the ancient Greek word *charis* (grace). We are forgiven by grace.

d. **Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us:** The **handwriting of requirements** has in mind a list of our crimes or moral debt before Aleim, a debt that no imperfect person can completely pay. But it can be **taken out of the way**, by payment from a perfect man, IESO The Anointed One.

i. The term **handwriting** is a general word for a handwritten document and has been understood in various ways. Some take it in a *legal* sense and say it represents the charges against a prisoner, or a confession of wrong made by a prisoner. Others take it in a *financial* sense and see it as a debit or ledger sheet that shows we are bankrupt before Aleim. Either way, it means that the document that once condemned us is now taken out of the way, having been nailed to the tree.

ii. “Each of the ten commandments has, as it were, united with the rest to draw up an indictment against us. The first commandment says, ‘He has broken me.’ The second cries, ‘He has broken me,’ — the third, ‘He has broken me;’ and the whole ten together have laid the same charge against each one of us; that is the handwriting of the law condemning every man of woman born while he remains in a state of nature.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. “It might even be said that He took the document, ordinances and all, and nailed it to His tree as an act of triumphant defiance in the face of those blackmailing powers that were holding it over men and women in order to command their allegiance.” (Edgar Phillips)

iv. According to Edgar Phillips, the ancient Greek word translated **wiped out** is a compound of the word *to anoint* and the prefix that means *completely*. The idea is that something was *completely wiped over*, and in the ancient world the term was used of whitewashing a wall, or overlaying a wall with gold. It means that the accusations against us were completely wiped away and covered over.

e. **Having nailed it to the tree:** IESO not only *paid* for the writing that was against us; He also took **it out of the way**, and then **nailed it to the tree**. He did everything possible to make certain that the **handwriting of requirements that was against us** could no longer accuse us.

i. “Paulo, looking at the tree, saw there instead the *titulus* that expressed the charge against all IESO’ people, the written code that stood over against them, disqualifying them from the life of the new age. And it was Aleim, not Pilato, that put it there.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. We remember that the accusations of IESO’ crime were nailed to the tree and hung above His head (Matthio 27:37). Since we are identified with IESO in His death on the tree (Romans 6:3-8), it is as if the **handwriting of requirements that was against us** was also nailed to the tree, just like the accusation against IESO.

f. **Having disarmed principalities and powers:** Another aspect of IESO’ work on the tree is that He **disarmed principalities and powers**. These ranks of hostile angelic beings (Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 6:12) don’t have the same weapons to use against Followers that they have against those who are not in IESO.

i. The greatest powers of the earth at that time – Rome, the greatest governmental power and Judaism, the greatest religious power – conspired together to put the Son of Aleim on the tree. “These powers, angry at his challenge to their sovereignty, stripped *him* naked, held *him* up to public contempt, and celebrated a triumph over *him*.” (Edgar Phillips) Here Paulo shows us again the paradox of the tree; that the victorious IESO took the spiritual powers animating these earthly powers and stripped *them*, held *them* up to contempt, and publicly triumphed over *them*.

ii. We can only imagine how satan and every dark gleeful demon attacked IESO as He hung on the tree on our behalf, as if He were a guilty sinner. “As He was suspended there, bound hand and foot to the wood in apparent weakness, they imagined they had Him at their mercy, and flung themselves on Him with hostile intent. But, far from suffering their attack without resistance, He grappled with them and mastered them, stripping them of the amour in which they trusted, and held them aloft in His outstretched hands, displaying to the universe their helplessness and His own unvanquished strength.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Paulo wrote in another place that if the rulers of this age – by which he meant both the spiritual powers of darkness and their earthly representatives – had known what would happen on the tree, they would have never impaled IESO (1 Corinthians 2:8). They were defeating themselves and they didn’t even know it.

iv. Against the believer, what weapons do demonic spirits therefore now have? They are **disarmed**, except for their ability to *deceive* and to create *fear*. These are effective “weapons” that are not tangible weapons at all. Demonic spirits only have power towards us that we grant them by believing their lies. The weapons are in *our* hands, not *theirs*. We will one-day see how afraid they were of *us*.

g. **Triumphing over them:** Paulo used similar phrasing in 2 Corinthians 2:14, where he had in mind the Roman victory parade where a conquering general led his defeated captives through the streets in triumph.

i. Perhaps satan, for a moment, thought that he had won at the tree. But Hell’s imagined victory was turned into a defeat that **disarmed** every spiritual enemy who fights against those living under the light and power of the tree. The **public spectacle** of defeated demonic spirits makes their defeat all the more humiliating.

ii. “The Anointed One, in this picture, is the conquering general; the powers and authorities are the vanquished enemy displayed as the spoils of battle before the entire universe.” (Phillip Prins)

iii. “The death of The Anointed One was not only a pardon; it also manifested might. It not only canceled a debt; it was a glorious triumph.” (JP Phillips)

5. (Colossians 2:16-17) Applying the truth of IESO’ victory in light of the Colossian heresy.

**So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of The Anointed One.**

a. **So let no one judge you:** The opening “so” is important. It connects this thought with the previous thought. *Because*



IESO won such a glorious victory on the tree, we are to **let no one judge you in food or in drink** or in other matters related to legalism. A life that is centred on IESO and what He did on the tree has no place for legalism.

i. "It would be preposterous indeed for those who had reaped the benefit of The Anointed One's victory to put themselves voluntarily under the control of the powers which he had conquered." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come:** The Scriptures (Old Testament) law had certain provisions that are done away with in IESO, regarding such things as **food and sabbaths**. It isn't that those laws were *bad*, simply that they were **a shadow of things to come**. Once the **substance** – IESO The Anointed One – has come, we don't need to **shadow** anymore.

i. The point is clear: days and foods, as observed under the Mosaic Law, are not binding upon New Covenant people. The shadow has passed, the reality has come. So for the Follower, *all* foods are pure (1 [Timotheo 4:4-5](#)) and *all* days belong to Aleim.

ii. Followers are therefore free to keep a kosher diet or to observe the sabbath if they please. There is nothing wrong with those things. However, they cannot think that eating kosher or sabbath observance makes them any closer to Aleim, and they cannot **judge** another brother or sister who does not observe such laws.

iii. "The regulations of Judaism were designed for the period when the people of Aleim consisted of one racial, cultural, and geographical unit, and are simply put out of date now that this people is becoming a world-wide family. They were the 'shadows' that the approaching new age casts before it." (Edgar Phillips)

6. ([Colossians 2:18-19](#)) Paulo rebukes the strange mysticism of the Colossian heresy.

**Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from Aleim.**

a. **Taking delight in false humility and worship of angels:** These aspects of **false humility** and the **worship of angels** were parts of the false teaching troubling the Colossian Followers. That is why Paulo touches back on these themes throughout the letter of Colossians. The antidote for both of these false teachings is simply more of IESO, exalting Him above **angels**, and realizing that because of His finished work there is nothing to take pride in.

i. "That is to say, the heretics probably insisted that their worship of angels rather than the supreme Aleim was an expression of humility on their part." (Phillip Prins)

ii. "Their humility found an expression in angel worship. It is therefore that lowliness which causes a man to think himself unworthy to come into fellowship with Aleim, and therefore prompts to worship of the angels." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **False humility** and the **worship of angels** do not make anyone more spiritual. Instead, **holding fast to the Head**

(IESO) makes us truly spiritual.

c. **Intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head:** This describes the spiritual arrogance of these false teachers and those who believed what they taught. There are few things more dangerous among Followers than spiritual pride and arrogance.

i. **Intruding into those things which he has not seen:** "That is a mistranslation. The correct translation should be 'making a parade of things which he has seen.' The Gnostic prided himself upon the special visions of secret things which were not open to the eyes of ordinary men and women." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **Vainly puffed up:** "*Vainly* characterizes the emptiness of such pretension; *puffed up*, the swelling intellectual pride of those who make it. The humility is thus characterized as affected, and the teachers as charlatans." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **From whom all the body:** When these strange, mystical movements arise in the Ekklesia, they don't appeal to the *whole body*, but only to a few "elite" Followers. This is not the cause under **the Head**, IESO – He wants **all the body** to grow together.

e. **Grows with the increase which is from Aleim:** This is Aleim's plan for Ekklesia growth. We remain faithful and connected to IESO (our **Head**), and Aleim gives the increase.

7. ([Colossians 2:20-23](#)) Paulo rebukes the essence of legalism.

**Therefore, if you died with The Anointed One from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations; "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.**

a. **Do not... do not... do not:** This is a perfect description of legalistic religion, defined more by what we *don't do* than by what we *do*. Our Faith is a moral religion; it does have clear moral boundaries. But at its foundation, Our Faith is a religion of *positive action*.

b. **You died with The Anointed One from the basic principles of the world:** Remembering this is the key to living above legalism. Our identification with IESO in both His death and resurrection (as mentioned before in [Colossians 2:12](#)) becomes the foundation for our Follower life, instead of our law-keeping.

i. **Which perish with the using:** "They are things which come to an end in the very act of being used. Handling them, eating them, or the like involves their destruction. Food, once eaten, ceases to be food. These are not the things that matter most; these are not the ultimate realities." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **According to the commandments and doctrines of men:** One aspect of legalism is that the **doctrines of men** are promoted as the laws of Aleim.

d. **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom... but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh:** We might regard this as the greatest indictment against legalism in the Scripture. At the bottom line, legalism's rules have no

value in restraining the **indulgence of the flesh**.

i. All such legalistic rules may have an **appearance** of wisdom, but they have no real value. Legalism doesn't restrain the flesh; it *feeds* the flesh in a subtle, powerful way. "In fact, the most rigorous asceticism can coexist with insufferable spiritual pride, one of the subtlest and most intractable of the 'works of the flesh.'" (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **Self-imposed religion** is man reaching to Aleim, trying to justify himself by keeping a list of rules. Our Faith is Aleim reaching down to man in love through The Anointed One.

## Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for Colossians 3

**Put Off, Put On**

A. Put off the old man.

1. (Colossians 3:1-4) The basis for Paulo's practical instruction.

**If then you were raised with The Anointed One, seek those things which are above, where The Anointed One is, sitting at the right hand of Aleim. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with The Anointed One in Aleim. When The Anointed One who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.**

a. **If then you were raised with The Anointed One:** Paulo here begins a section where he focuses on practical Follower living, with the clear understanding that practical Follower living is built on the foundation of theological truth. Because we know that IESO is really raised from the dead, then our identification with Him becomes real. It is only because we **were raised with The Anointed One** that we can **seek those things which are above**.

i. The idea of being **raised with The Anointed One** was introduced back in Colossians 2:12, where Paulo used baptism to illustrate this spiritual reality. Now, seeing that we are **raised with The Anointed One**, certain behaviour is appropriate to us.

ii. "The opening verses of chapter 3 sustain the closest connection with the closing verses of chapter 2. There the apostle reminds the Colossians that ascetic regulations are of no real value in restraining indulgence of the flesh. The only remedy for sinful passions is found in the believers' experience of union with The Anointed One." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Because we **were raised with The Anointed One**, we should act just as IESO did when He was resurrected.

· After His resurrection, IESO left the tomb. So should we – we don't live there anymore.

· After His resurrection, IESO spent His remaining time being with and ministering to His disciples. So should we – live our lives to be with and to serve one another.

· After His resurrection, IESO lived in supernatural power with the ability to do impossible things. So should we – with the power and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

· After His resurrection, IESO looked forward to heaven, knowing He would soon enough ascend there. So should we – recognizing that our citizenship is in heaven.

iv. To emphasize it even more, Paulo added the phrase, **sitting at the right hand of Aleim**: "This phrase, particularly in its allusion to Psalms 110, focuses attention on the sovereign rule which The Anointed One now exercises. The command to aspire to the things of heaven is a command to meditate and dwell upon The Anointed One's sort of life, and on the fact that he is now enthroned as the Ruler of the world." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Set your mind on things above:** The best Follower living comes from minds that are fixed on *heaven*. They realize that their lives are now **hidden with The Anointed One in Aleim**, and since IESO is enthroned in heaven, their thoughts and hearts are connected to heaven also.

i. "The believer is to 'seek the things... above.' The word 'seek' marks aspiration, desire, and passion.... In order to seek these things the mind must be set on them." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "Love *heavenly things*; *study* them; let your hearts be entirely *engrossed* by them. Now, that you are converted to Aleim, act in reference to heavenly things as ye did formerly in reference to those of earth." (Peter Damonse)

iii. " 'Earthly things' are not all evil, but some of them are. Even things harmless in themselves become harmful if permitted to take the place that should be reserved for the things above." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **When The Anointed One who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory:** The promise of the return of IESO is not only that we will see *His* glory, but so that we also **will appear with Him in glory**. This is the *revealing of the sons of Aleim* mentioned in Romans 8:19

i. **The Anointed One who is our life:** In another place, Paulo wrote *For me to live is The Anointed One* (Philippians 1:21). Here he shows that this idea was not just for special apostles, but for all believers – **The Anointed One who is our life**. Sometimes we say, "Music is his life" or "Sports is his life" or "He lives for his work." Of the Follower it should be said, "IESO The Anointed One is his life."

ii. On that day, all will see the saints of Aleim for what they *really are*, not as they merely appear to this world. "Paulo, the prisoner, an eccentric Jew to the Romans and a worse-than-non Jew traitor to the Jews, will be seen as Paulo the apostle, the servant of the King. The Colossians, insignificant ex-pagans from a third-rate country town, will be seen in a glory which, if it were now to appear, one might be tempted to worship." (Edgar Phillips)

2. (Colossians 3:5-7) **Put to death** the things that are against Aleim and part of this world.

**Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of Aleim is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.**

a. **Therefore put to death your members:** **Therefore** points back to our identification with the risen and enthroned Ruler IESO mentioned in Colossians 3:1-4. It is because we understand this fact that we can **put to death** the things in our life that are contrary to our identity with IESO.

i. "The verb *nekrosate*, meaning literally 'to make dead,' is very strong. It suggests that we are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes. We are to wipe them out, completely exterminate the old way of life." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. We **put to death** in the sense of denying these things and considering them dead to us and us dead to them. "To *gratify* any sensual appetite is to give it the very food and nourishment by which it lives, thrives, and is active." (Peter Damonse)

iii. There is importance in *listing* and *naming* these sins as Paulo does in this section. "It is far easier to drift into a sin which one does not know by name than consciously to choose one whose very title should be repugnant to a Follower." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Fornication, uncleanness, passion and evil desire:** Each of

these terms refers to sexual sins. **Covetousness** is simple, but insidious greed, and nothing less than **idolatry**. There is no way that IESO would walk in any of these sins, so if we identify with Him, we won't walk in them either.

i. **Fornication**: "The word here translated *sexual immorality* refers to any intercourse outside marriage; in the ancient world, as in the modern, intercourse with a prostitute would be a specific, and in a pagan culture a frequent, instance of this." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **Uncleanness**: "A wider range of meaning than fornication. It includes the misuse of sex, but is applicable to various forms of moral evil." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Edgar Phillips lists three ways that covetousness is terribly destructive:

- "First, it is idolatry, in that it only obtains when man thinks of life consisting in things possessed, rather than in righteous relationship to Aleim."

- "It is also a sin against others, for to satisfy the desire, others are wronged."

- "Finally, it is self-destructive, for these wrong conceptions and activities always react upon the soul to its own undoing."

- Edgar Phillips added: "And yet, what ecclesiastical court ever yet arraigned a Ekklesia-member for covetousness?"

iv. "Every divine man seeks his happiness in Aleim; the covetous man seeks that in his money which Aleim alone can give; therefore his covetousness is properly *idolatry*." (Peter Damonse)

c. **Because of these things**: The sins mentioned previously are part of the way the world lives and not the way IESO lives. Every Follower is faced with a question: "Who will I identify with, the world or with IESO?"

d. **The wrath of Aleim is coming upon the sons of disobedience**: These sins invite **the wrath of Aleim**. Because the world loves this kind of sinful lifestyle, they don't come in humility to IESO. As they continue in these sins, it adds to their condemnation. One sin is enough to send anyone to hell ([Iakobo 2:10](#)), but there are greater levels of condemnation ([Matthio 23:14](#)).

i. In part, **the wrath of Aleim** comes as Aleim allows men to continue in sinful – and therefore self-destructive – behaviour (as in [Romans 1:24-32](#)).

e. **In which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them**: These sins may mark a world in rebellion against Aleim, but they are in the *past tense* for the Follower.

i. Simply put, the Follower should not live like the **sons of disobedience**. A true Follower can not be comfortable in habitual sin.

ii. Paulo says that Followers **once walked** in these sins. It is possible – though tragic – that these sins should *occasionally* mark a Follower's life, but they must not be a Follower's **walk**, their manner of living.

3. ([Colossians 3:8-9](#)) Removing other traces of worldliness.

**But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,**

a. **But now you yourselves are to put off all these**: The sins Paulo next lists (**anger, wrath**, and so forth) are regarded by

many as "little" sins that Followers may overlook with little danger. Paulo challenges us to **put off** the old man in *every* area of our lives.

i. "Put off all those old habits, just as you would discard an outworn suit of clothes which no longer fitted you." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie**: Each of these sins are primarily committed by what we *say*. When Paulo calls the believer to a deeper obedience, he tells us to *bridle* our *tongue* (as did Iakobo in [Iakobo 1:26](#) and [3:1-9](#)).

i. Nevertheless, it is also possible to **lie to one another** without words. "It is easy to distort the truth; an alteration in the tone of voice or an eloquent look will do it; and there are silences which can be as false and misleading as any words." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Since you have put off the old man with his deeds**: The more notorious sins of [Colossians 3:5](#) are easily seen as incompatible with the nature of IESO. But these "lesser" sins are also incompatible, so **put off** these sins also.

i. In this section ([Colossians 3:5-9](#)) Paulo showed two high priorities in Follower living: sexual morality connected with a right attitude towards material things, *and* simple getting along in love with one another. It is easy for a Follower community to compromise one for the other, but Paulo (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) insisted that they *both* have a high place in Follower practice.

ii. **You have put off the old man with his deeds** means that in IESO The Anointed One, the saints of Aleim are *different people*. Therefore, "When a tide of passion or a surge of anger is felt, it must be dealt with as the alien intruder it really is, and turned out of the house as having no right to be there at all, let alone to be giving orders." (Edgar Phillips)

B. Put on the new man.

1. ([Colossians 3:10-11](#)) As we put off the old man, we must put on the new man.

**And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but The Anointed One is all and in all.**

a. **Put on the new man**: The phrase Paulo used was commonly used for changing a set of clothes. We can almost picture a person taking off the old and putting on the **new man** in IESO.

b. **Who is renewed in knowledge**: Because the new man is **renewed in knowledge**, he is hungry to know what *Aleim says* in His Word.

c. **According to the image of Him who created him**: Paulo is clearly alluding to [1st MoUse \(Genesis\) 1:27](#), where it is said that Aleim created in His own image. Nevertheless, now that the first is regarded as the **old man** who should be put off and discarded, because now we are created after the **image** of the *second*, IESO The Anointed One.

d. **Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free**: The new man is part of a family, which favours no race, nationality, class, culture or ethnicity. It only favours IESO,



because in this new family, **The Anointed One is all and in all.**

i. This work of the new creation not only deals with the old man and gives us the new man patterned after IESO The Anointed One; it also breaks down the barriers that separate people in society. Among new creation people it doesn't matter if one is **Greek** or **Jew** or **circumcised** or **uncircumcised** or a **Scythian** or a **slave** or a **free** man. All those barriers are broken down.

ii. "He therefore adds to barbarian the Scythian as the extreme example." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. All of these barriers existed in the ancient Roman world; and the power of Aleim through the Glad Tidings of IESO The Anointed One broke them all down. Especially powerful was the barrier between **slave** and **free**, but Our Faith changed that. "In times of persecution slaves showed that they could face the trial and suffer for their faith as courageously as freeborn Romans. The slave-girl Blandina and her mistress both suffered in the persecution which broke out against the Ekklesias of the Rhone valley in a.d. 177, but it was the slave-girl who was the hero of the persecution, impressing friend and foe alike as a 'noble athlete' in the contest of martyrdom." (Edgar Phillips)

"In the arena of Carthage in a.d. 202 a profound impression was made on the spectators when the Roman matron Perpetua stood hand-in-hand with her slave Felicitas, as both women faced a common death for a common faith." (Edgar Phillips)

2. (Colossians 3:12-17) Life of the new man.

**Therefore, as the elect of Aleim, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as The Anointed One forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Aleim rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of The Anointed One dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Ruler. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Ruler IESO, giving thanks to Aleim the Father through Him.**

a. **Therefore, as the elect of Aleim:** The new man is **elect of Aleim**. This means that Aleim has *chosen* the Follower, and chosen him to be something special in His plan. "**Elect**" is a word that frightens some, but it should be taken both as a comfort and as a destiny to fulfill.

b. **Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility:** Each one of the qualities mentioned in this passage express themselves in *relationships*. A significant measure of our Follower life is found simply in how we treat people and the quality of our relationships with them.

i. "It is most significant to note that everyone of the graces listed has to do with personal relationships between man and man. There is no mention of virtues like efficiency or cleverness, not even of diligence or industry – not that these things are unimportant. But the great basic Follower virtues are those which govern human relationships." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **Tender mercies:** If something is **tender**, it is sensitive to touch. "The apostle would have them to *feel* the *slightest touch* of another's misery; and, as their clothes are put over their body, so their tenderest feeling should be always within reach of the miserable." (Peter Damonse)

iii. **Kindness:** "The ancient writers defined *chrestotes* as the virtue of the man whose neighbour's good is as dear to him as his own.... It is used of wine which has grown mellow with age and lost its harshness. It is the word used when IESO said, 'My yoke is *easy*.' (Matthio 11:30)." (Edgar Phillips)

iv. We can say that **humility** (which was *not* considered a virtue among the ancient Greeks) is the "parent" of both **meekness** and **longsuffering**. **Meekness** shows how **humility** will effect my *actions* towards others; I will not dominate, manipulate, or coerce for my own ends, even if I have the power and the ability. **Longsuffering** shows how **humility** will effect my *reaction* towards others; I will not become impatient, short, or filled with resentment towards the weaknesses and sins of others.

c. **Forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as The Anointed One forgave you, so you also must do:** We are told to live **forgiving one another**, after the pattern of IESO's forgiveness towards us. Understanding the way IESO forgave us will always make us *more* generous with forgiveness, and never less generous.

i. When we consider the staggering debt IESO forgave for us, and the comparative smallness of the debts others have toward us, it is base ingratitude for us to not forgive them (as in the parable IESO spoke in Matthio 18:21-35). "The forgiveness they have received is used to enforce the duty of forgiving others." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. When one thinks of how **The Anointed One forgave you** it should make us much more generous with forgiveness.

- Aleim holds back His anger a very long time when we sin against Him. He bears with us a long time, even when we sorely provoke Him.

- Aleim reaches out to *bad people* to bring forgiveness to them; the habit of man is to not reconcile if the offending person is a person of bad character.

- Aleim makes the first move towards us in forgiveness; the habit of man is to only be reconciled if the offending party craves forgiveness and makes the first move.

- Aleim forgives often knowing that we will sin again, sometimes in the exact same way. It is the habit of man to forgive only if the offending party solemnly promises to never do the wrong again.

- Aleim's forgiveness is so complete and glorious that He grants adoption to those former offenders. In the habit of man, even when forgiveness is offered, he will not lift again the former offender to a place of high status and partnership.

- Aleim bore *all* the penalty for the wrong we did against Him. In the habit of man, when he is wronged, he will not forgive unless the offender agrees to bear all the penalty for the wrong done.

- Aleim keeps reaching out to man for reconciliation even when man refuses Him again and again. In the habit of man, one will not continue to offer reconciliation if it is rejected once.

· Aleim requires no probationary period to receive His forgiveness; in the habit of man, one will not restore an offender without a period of probation.

· Aleim's forgiveness offers complete restoration and honour; in the habit of man, we feel we should be complimented when we merely *tolerate* those who sin against us.

· Once having forgiven, Aleim puts His trust in us and invites us back to work with Him as co-labourers. In the habit of man, one will not trust someone who has formerly wronged him.

iii. "Suppose that someone had grievously offended anyone of you, and that he asked your forgiveness, do you not think that you would probably say to him, 'Well, yes, I forgive you; but I – I – I – cannot forget it'? Ah! dear friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off, it is a lame forgiveness, and is not worth much." (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection:** Love is the summary of all the things described in this passage. Love perfectly fulfills what Aleim requires of us in relationships.

i. **But above all these things put on love:** "*Upon all, over all;* as the *outer garment* envelopes all the clothing, so let *charity* or *love* invest and encompass all the rest.... Let this, therefore, be as the *upper garment*... that invests the whole man." (Peter Damonse)

ii. "All the virtues listed in vv. 12, 13 are, on the highest level, manifestations of love; but love is larger than anyone of them, indeed, larger than all of them combined." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. "The other virtues, pursued without love, become distorted and unbalanced." (Edgar Phillips)

e. **And let the peace of Aleim rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body:** The rule of the **peace of Aleim** means that **peace** should *characterize* the community of Aleim's people, and that **peace** is a standard for discerning Aleim's will.

i. "The apostle says, Let it rule. The Greek word means arbitrate. Whenever there is a doubtful issue to be decided, and by one course your peace may be disturbed, whilst by another it may be maintained, choose the things that make for peace, whether for yourselves or others. Let Aleim's peace act as umpire." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "Let the peace of The Anointed One *judge, decide, and govern* in your hearts, as the *brabeus*, or judge, does in the Olympic contests.... When a man loses his *peace*, it is an awful proof that he has lost something else that he has given way to evil, and grieved the Spirit of Aleim." (Peter Damonse)

iii. Edgar Phillips sees the context of community: " 'Peace' here is not the inward, individual peace of mind which accompanies humble confident trust in Aleim's love, but a peace which characterizes the community, the 'body' as a whole."

f. **Let the word of The Anointed One dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs:** The new man walks in the word of Aleim and in worship with other believers.

i. **Dwell in you:** "There appears to be here an allusion to the *Shechinah*, or symbol of the Divine presence, which *dwelt* in the *tabernacle* and first *temple*." (Peter Damonse)

ii. **Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs:** This variety

suggests that Aleim delights in creative, spontaneous worship. The emphasis is more on *variety* than on *strict categories*. "We can scarcely say what is the exact difference between these three expressions." (Peter Damonse)

iii. "The word of The Anointed One is to dwell in them so richly that it finds spontaneous expression in religious song in the Follower assemblies or the home." (Edgar Phillips)

g. **Do all in the name of the Ruler IESO:** The new man lives his life, **all** his life, for IESO. He will only seek to do the things that he *may* do **in the name of the Ruler IESO**, and he will persevere in the difficulty of doing such things, knowing that he is doing them **in the name of the Ruler IESO**.

3. (Colossians 3:18-19) The new man's marriage relationship.

**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Ruler. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.**

a. **Wives, submit:** The ancient Greek word translated **submit** is essentially a word borrowed from the military. It literally means "to be under in rank." It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank, with generals and colonels and majors and captains and sergeants and privates. There are levels of rank, and one is obligated to respect those in higher rank.

i. We know that as a person, a private can be smarter, more talented, and be a better person than a general. But he is still *under rank* to the general. He isn't submitted to the general so much as a *person* as he is to the general as a *general*. In the same way, the wife doesn't submit to her husband because he *deserves* it. She submits because he is her husband.

ii. The idea of submission doesn't have anything to do with someone being smarter or better or more talented. It has to do with a Aleim-appointed order. "Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that 'rank' has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability." (Edgar Phillips)

iii. "The equality of men and women before the Ruler, of which Paulo wrote in Galatians 3:28, has not been retracted: but neither does it mean identity of role or function." (Edgar Phillips)

iv. Therefore, submission means you are part of a team. If the family is a team, then the husband is "captain" of the team. The wife has her place in relation to the "captain," and the children have their place in relation to the "captain" and the wife.

v. "The form of the verb (*hypotasses the*, middle voice) shows that the submission is to be voluntary. The wife's submission is never to be forced on her by a demanding husband; it is the deference that a loving wife, conscious that her home (just as any other institution) must have a head, gladly shows." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Wives, submit to your own husbands:** This defines the *sphere* of a wife's submission – to her **own husband**. The Scripture never commands nor recommends a *general* submission of women unto men. It is commanded only in the spheres of the home and in the Ekklesia. Aleim does not command that men have exclusive authority in the areas of politics, business, education, and so on.

c. **As is fitting in the Ruler:** This is a crucial phrase. It colours everything else we understand about this passage.

There have been two main “wrong” interpretations of this phrase, each favouring a certain “position.”

i. The interpretation that “favours” the husband says that **as is fitting in the Ruler** means that a wife should submit to her husband as if he were Aleim Himself. The idea is “you submit to Aleim in absolutely everything without question, so you must submit to your husband in the same absolute way.” This thinks that **as is fitting in the Ruler** defines the *extent* of submission. But this is wrong. Simply put, *in no place* does the Scripture say that a person should submit to another in that way. There are limits to the submission your employer can expect of you. There are limits to the submission the government can expect of you. There are limits to the submission parents can expect of children. In no place does the Scripture teach an unqualified, without exception, submission – except to Aleim and Aleim alone. To violate this is to commit the sin of idolatry.

ii. The interpretation that “favours” the wife says that **as is fitting in the Ruler** means “I’ll submit to him as long as he does what the Ruler wants.” And then it is the wife’s job to decide what the Ruler wants. This thinks that **as is fitting in the Ruler** defines the *limit* of submission. This is also wrong. It is true that there are limits to a wife’s submission, but when the wife approaches **as is fitting in the Ruler** in this way, then it degenerates into a case of “I’ll submit to my husband when I agree with him. I’ll submit to him when he makes the right decisions and carries them out the right way. When he makes a wrong decision, he isn’t **in the Ruler**, so I shouldn’t submit to him then. It isn’t **fitting** to do so.” Simply put, *that is not submission at all*. Except for those who are just plain cantankerous and argumentative, *everyone* submits to others when they are in agreement. It is only when there is a *disagreement* that submission is tested.

iii. **As is fitting in the Ruler** does not define the *extent* of a wife’s submission. It does not define the *limit* of a wife’s submission. It defines the *motive* of a wife’s submission. It means, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands because it is a part of your duty to the Ruler, because it is an expression of your submission to the Ruler.” They submit simply because it is **fitting in the Ruler** to do it. It honours Aleim’s Word and His order of authority. It is part of their Follower duty and discipleship.

iv. “The phrase ‘in the Ruler’ indicates that wifely submission is proper not only in the natural order but also in the Follower order. The whole thing, then, is lifted to a new and higher level.” (Edgar Phillips)

v. Therefore, **as is fitting in the Ruler** means:

- For wives, submission to their husband is part of their Follower life.
- When a wife doesn’t obey this word to **submit to your own husband as is fitting in the Ruler**, she doesn’t just fall short as a wife. She falls short as a follower of IESO The Anointed One.
- This means that the command to submit is completely out of the realm of “my nature” or “my personality.” Wives aren’t expected to submit because they are the “submissive type.” They are expected to submit because it is **fitting in the Ruler**.
- This has nothing to do with your husband’s intelligence or

giftedness or capability. It has to do with honouring the Ruler IESO The Anointed One.

- This has nothing to do with whether or not your husband is “right” on a particular issue. It has to do with IESO being right.

- This means that a woman should take great care in how she *chooses* her husband. Remember, ladies: this is what Aleim requires of you in marriage. This is *His* expectation of you. Instead of looking for an attractive man, instead of looking for a wealthy man, instead of looking for a romantic man, you better first look for a man you can *respect*.

vi. As is the case in every human relationship, the command to submit is not absolute. There are exceptions to this command for a wife to **submit to her own husband**.

- When the husband asks the wife to sin, she must not submit.
- When the husband is medically incapacitated, insane, or under the influence of mind altering substances, the wife may not submit.
- When the husband is violent and physically threatening, the wife may not submit.
- When the husband breaks the marriage bond by adultery, the wife does not need to submit to her husband being in an adulterous relationship.

vii. “If a Stoic disciple asked why he should behave in a particular way, his teacher would no doubt tell him that it was ‘fitting’ because it was in conformity with nature. When a Follower convert asked the same question, he was told that such behaviour was ‘fitting in the Ruler’; members of the believing community should live thus for The Anointed One’s sake.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Husbands, love your wives:** Paulo’s words to husbands safeguards his words to wives. Though wives are to submit to their husbands, it never excuses husbands acting as tyrants over their wives. Instead, a husband must **love** his wife, and the ancient Greek word translated **love** her is *agape*.

i. Significantly, this puts an obligation upon the **husbands**. In the ancient world – under Jewish, Greek, and Roman customs, *all* power and privileges belonged to husbands in regard to wives, to fathers in regard to children, and to masters in regard to slaves. There were no complimentary powers or privileges on the part of wives, children, or slaves.

ii. “*Agapao* does not denote affection or romantic attachment; it rather denotes caring love, a deliberate attitude of mind that concerns itself with the well-being of the one loved.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Strictly speaking, *agape* can’t be defined as “Aleim’s love,” because men are said to *agape* sin and the world (Ioanne 3:19, 1 Ioanne 2:15). But it can be defined as a sacrificial, giving, absorbing, love. The word has little to do with emotion; it has much to do with self-denial for the sake of another.

- It is a love that loves without changing.
- It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment.
- It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing.
- It is love that loves even when it is rejected.
- *Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not

demand or expect repayment from the love given. It gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive.

iv. We can read this passage and think that Paulo means, “Husband, be kind to your wife.” Or “Husband, be nice to your wife.” There is no doubt that for many marriages, this would be a huge improvement. But that isn’t what Paulo writes about. What he really means is, “Husband, continually practice self-denial for the sake of your wife.”

v. Of course, this *agape* love is the kind of love IESO has for His people and this is the love husbands should imitate towards their wives ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).

e. **And do not be bitter toward them:** The implication is perhaps the wife has given the husband some *reason to be bitter*. Paulo says, “That doesn’t matter, husband.” The husband may feel perfectly justified in his harsh or unloving attitude and actions towards his wife, but he is not justified – *no matter how the wife has been towards the husband*.

i. *Agape* loves even when there are obvious and glaring deficiencies, even when the receiver is unworthy of the love.

4. ([Colossians 3:20-21](#)) The new man’s parent and child relationship.

**Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Ruler. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.**

a. **Children, obey your parents in all things:** Paulo has in mind children who are still in their parents’ household and under their authority. For these, they must not only *honour* their father and mother (as in [Ephesians 6:2](#)), but they must also **obey** them, and **obey** them **in all things**.

i. When a child is grown and out of his parents’ household, he is no longer under the same obligation of *obedience*, but the obligation to *honour your father and mother* remains.

b. **For this is well pleasing to the Ruler:** This is one of the important *reasons* for a child’s obedience. When a child respects his parent’s authority, he is respecting Aleim’s order of authority in other areas of life.

i. This idea of an order of authority and submission to an order of authority are so important to Aleim that they are part of His very being. The First Person of the Holy Diety is called the *Father*; the Second Person of the Holy Diety is called the *Son*. Inherent in those titles is a relationship of authority and submission to authority.

ii. The Father exercises authority over the Son, and the Son submits to the Father’s authority – and this is in the very nature and being of Aleim! Our failure to exercise Scriptural authority, and our failure to submit to Scriptural authority, isn’t just wrong and sad – it sins against the very nature of Aleim. Remember [1 Samouel 15:23](#): *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*.

c. **Fathers, do not provoke your children:** Children have a responsibility to obey, but parents – here, put into one as **fathers** – have a responsibility to **not provoke** their **children**. Parents can **provoke** their children by being too harsh, too demanding, too controlling, unforgiving, or just plain angry. This harshness can be expressed through words, through actions, or through non-verbal communication.

i. In most parenting problems, the parent blames the child. It is easy to do because the problem is usually most evident in the

bad behaviour in the child. But Paulo wisely reminds us that the bad behaviour may actually be *provoked* by the parent. When this is the case, it doesn’t justify the bad behaviour of the child, but it may explain part of its cause. It is commanded to parents to do everything they can to **not provoke** their **children**.

ii. **Provoke:** “Irritate by exacting commands and perpetual faultfinding and interference for interference’ sake.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. “Parents, and specially fathers, are urged not to irritate their children by being so unreasonable in their demands that their children lose heart and come to think that it is useless trying to please their parents.” (Edgar Phillips)

iv. “The word ‘fathers’ can refer to parents of both sexes, though it may well have an eye to the importance of the father’s role, within Aleim’s created order, in the upbringing of children.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Lest they become discouraged:** Children who grow up with parents who provoke them will **become discouraged**. They will not feel the love and the support from their parents like the should, and they will come to believe that the whole world is against them because they feel their parents are against them. This reminds us how important it is to season our parenting with lots of grace. Perhaps we should be as gracious, gentle, forgiving, and longsuffering with our children as Aleim is with us.

5. ([Colossians 3:22-4:1](#)) The new man’s servant and master relationship.

**Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing Aleim. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Ruler and not to men, knowing that from the Ruler you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Ruler The Anointed One. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**

a. **Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh:** As Followers put on the new man, they will show a properly submissive attitude towards their **masters** – in a modern context, towards their employer or supervisor.

i. This is another sphere of Aleim’s order of authority. Employees have a Aleim-ordained role of obedience and submission to their employers or supervisors.

ii. “It will be noted that this section is far longer than the other two; and its length may well be due to long talks which Paulo had with the runaway slave, Onesimo, whom later he was to send back to his master Philemon.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. “More than half the people seen on the streets of the great cities of the Roman world were slaves. And this was the status of the majority of ‘professional’ people such as teachers and doctors as well as that of menials and craftsmen.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing Aleim:** We are always tempted to work just as hard as we have to, thinking we only have to please man. But Aleim wants every worker to see that ultimately, they work for



*Him*. Therefore, they should **do it heartily, as to the Ruler and not to men**. Aleim promises to **reward** those who work with that kind of heart.

i. The Follower who is a dishonest, lazy or unreliable worker has something far worse to deal with than a reprimand from his earthly supervisor. His heavenly supervisor may prepare a reprimand as well.

ii. “Far more culpable is the attitude of modern ‘clockwatchers,’ who have contracted to serve their employer and receive an agreed remuneration for their labour. But Follower slaves – or Follower employees today – have the highest of all motives for faithful and conscientious performance of duty; they are above all else servants of The Anointed One, and will work first and foremost so as to please him.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. **The reward of the inheritance:** “One should properly read ‘*the inheritance*’; the reference is clearly to the life of the age to come. This is ironic, since in earthly terms slaves could not inherit property.” (Edgar Phillips)

iv. **For you serve the Ruler The Anointed One:** “The force of this unusual phrase (Paulo nowhere else allows the titles ‘Ruler’ and ‘The Anointed One’ to stand together without the name ‘IESO’ as well) could be brought out by a paraphrase: ‘so work for the true Master – The Anointed One!’ ” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done:** When a Follower worker does poorly in his job, he should not expect special leniency from his boss, especially if his boss is a Follower. Being a Follower should make us *more* responsible, not *less* responsible.

i. “It is possible for an unfaithful servant to wrong and defraud his master in a great variety of ways without being detected; but let all such remember what is here said: he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done; Aleim sees him, and will punish him for his breach of honesty and trust.” (Peter Damonse)

ii. **Will be repaid... and there is no partiality:** For ancient Follower slaves and for modern Follower workers, there is no guarantee on earth of fairness of treatment from those whom they work for. Sometimes **partiality** means that bad workers are unfairly rewarded and good employees are penalized or left unrewarded. Paulo assures both our ancient brethren and us that there is a final rewarding and punishment, and with this **there is no partiality**.

iii. In Ephesians 6:9 Paulo addressed masters and warned *them* that there was *no partiality with* Aleim. Here, he warned *servants* that there is **no partiality** with Aleim. “In Ephesians masters are not to think that Aleim is influenced by social position; in the present passage, slaves are not to act unscrupulously just because they know men treat them as irresponsible chattel.” (Edgar Phillips)

d. **Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair:** As Followers put on the new man, they will be **just and fair** to those who work for them. It is a terrible thing for a boss to cheat or mistreat his workers, but far worse for a Follower to do it.

i. **Just and fair:** This is even more powerful than a command for masters to be *kind or pleasant* to slaves. One can be kind

or pleasant to animals or pets; but we are only **just and fair** to fellow human beings. Paulo asked masters to make a recognition that would undermine the very foundations of slavery.

ii. Through the history of Our Faith, there have been some who used these passages where Paulo speaks to slaves and their masters to *justify* or even *promote* the practice of slavery. Others have *blamed* these passages for the practice of slavery. Yet one can never blame Our Faith for slavery; it was a universal practice that pre-dated both Our Faith and the Jewish nation. Instead, one should see that the *abolition* of slavery came from Follower people and impulses, and not from any other major religion and certainly not from secularism.

iii. Without making an overt protest against slavery, Paulo seemed to understand that if he could establish the point that slaves were equals in the body of The Anointed One, full human beings with both responsibilities and rights (that they should be treated in a manner both **just and fair**), then in time the whole structure of slavery in the Roman Empire would crumble – and it did.

## Patrick Damonse :: Study Guide for Colossians 4

**Prayer Life, Personal Witness, and Final Greetings**

A. The inner life of prayer and the outer life of witness.

1. (Colossians 4:2-4) The inner life of prayer.

**Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that Aleim would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of The Anointed One, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.**

a. **Continue earnestly in prayer:** Paulo supported the Colossian Ekklesia through His prayers for them (Colossians 1:3-8). Their life and ministry would continue to prosper through continued vigilance in prayer, including prayer on their part.

i. The ancient Greek word translated **continue** is “Built on a root meaning ‘to be strong,’ it always connotes earnest adherence to a person or thing. In this passage it implies persistence and fervour.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. This sort of *earnest* prayer is important, but does not come easy. **Earnestly in prayer** speaks of great effort steadily applied. “Heaven’s gate is not to be stormed by one weapon but by many. Spare no arrows, Follower. Watch and see that none of the arms in thy armoury are rusty. Besiege the throne of Aleim with a hundred hands, and look at the promise with a hundred eyes. You have a great work on hand for you have to move the arm that moves the world; watch, then, for every means of moving that arm. See to it that you ply every promise; that you use every argument; that you wrestle with all might.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **Being vigilant in it with thanksgiving:** We are to be **vigilant** in prayer, but always praying **with thanksgiving** for the great things Aleim has done.

i. Edgar Phillips on **vigilant**: “Literally the Greek means to be *wakeful*. The phrase could well mean that Paulo is telling them not to go to sleep when they pray.” Sometimes, because of the tiredness of our body or mind, we struggle against sleep when we pray. Other times we pray *as if* we were asleep, and our prayers simply sound and feel tired and sleepy.

ii. “Prayer should be mingled with praise. I have heard that in New England after the Puritans had settled there a long while, they used to have very often a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, till they had so many days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, that at last a good senator proposed that they should change it for once, and have a day of thanksgiving.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. “The connection here with thanksgiving may suggest the threefold rhythm: intercession, ‘watching’ for answers to prayer, and thanksgiving when answers appear.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Meanwhile praying also for us:** Paulo seemed to say, “As long as we are on the subject of prayer, please pray **for us!**” But Paulo didn’t ask for prayer for his personal needs (which were many), but **that Aleim would open to us a door for the word.**

i. The same word picture of an open door as an open opportunity for the Glad Tidings is seen in passages such as Acts 14:27, 1 Corinthians 16:9, and 2 Corinthians 2:12.

d. **As I ought to speak:** Even though Paulo was **in chains** for his faithfulness to the Glad Tidings, he knew that he **ought to speak** it in a way that would **make it manifest** (clearly evident). Paulo wanted prayer that he would continue to make the Glad Tidings clear and evident, even if it meant more **chains**.

i. Edgar Phillips comments on Paulo’s words, **as I ought to speak**: “Wonderful as Paulo’s preaching was to his hearers and seems to us, he was never satisfied with it. What preacher can be?”

2. (Colossians 4:5-6) The outer life of witness.

**Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**

a. **Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside:** The Follower life isn’t only lived in the prayer closet. There also must be practical, lived-out Our Faith, which lives wisely **toward those who are outside**. How we *speak* has a lot to do with this, so we must let our **speech always be with grace**.

i. “Distorted accounts of Follower conduct and belief were in circulation; it was important that Followers should give no colour to these calumnies, but should rather give the lie to them by their regular manner of life.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. **Let your speech always be with grace:** “The word ‘grace’ has, in Greek as in English, the possible double meaning of Aleim’s grace and human graciousness.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. “In classical writers ‘salt’ expressed the wit with which conversation was flavoured.” (Edgar Phillips) “Grace and salt (wit, sense) make an ideal combination.” (Edgar Phillips)

b. **That you may know how you ought to answer each one:** Paulo believed that Followers would **answer** others from Scriptural truth, and that they would work at knowing how to communicate those answers to **those who are outside**.

i. Edgar Phillips translates Colossians 4:6 this way: *Let your speech always be with gracious charm, seasoned with the salt of wit, so that you will know the right answer to give in every case*. He explains: “Here is an interesting injunction. It is all too true that Our Faith in the minds of many is connected with a kind of sanctimonious dullness and an outlook in which laughter is almost a heresy.... The Follower must commend his message with the charm and the wit which were in IESO himself.”

ii. “They must strive to cultivate the gift of pleasant and wise conversation, so that they may be able to speak appropriately to each individual (with his peculiar needs) with whom they come in contact.” (Edgar Phillips)

iii. Colossians 4:2-6 shows that Aleim is concerned *both* about our personal prayer life *and* our interaction with the world. He cares both about the prayer closet and the public street, and He wants us to care about both also.

iv. This is also an important idea to connect with the earlier passages of Colossians. Paulo spent considerable time in this letter explaining the truth and refuting bad doctrine. Yet all the correct knowledge was of little good until it was applied in *both* the prayer closet and the public street of daily life. We could say that here, Paulo genuinely completes his letter.

B. Personal notes concluding the letter.

1. (Colossians 4:7-9) Regarding Tichiko and Onesimo, messengers of the letter.

**Tichiko, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Ruler, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, with Onesimo, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are* happening here.**

a. **Tichiko, a beloved brother:** Apparently, the Colossian Followers didn't know who Tichiko was. He would carry this letter to them (**will tell you all the news about me**).

i. Apparently Epaphrha, who brought the news from Colosse to Paulo in Rome (Colossians 1:7), would not return to Colosse soon; so Paulo sent **Tichiko** instead.

ii. **Tichiko** is mentioned in Acts 20:4 as one of the men who came with Paulo from the Roman province of Asia to Jerusalem, to carry the offering of those believers to the needy Followers of Jerusalem and Judea.

iii. "The reference to Tichiko is almost word for word identical with Ephesians 6:21-22. He was evidently the bearer of the letter to the Ephesians as well as this one." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **With Onesimo, a faithful and beloved brother:** Onesimo was a slave owned by a believer in Colosse, but he ran away and came into contact with Paulo in Rome. There, Onesimo became a Follower and a dedicated helper to Paulo. His story is continued in Paulo's letter to Philemon.

i. Paulo *could have* wrote about Onesimo, "the escaped slave who I am sending back to his master." Instead, he called him **a faithful and beloved brother**, and let the Colossian Followers know that Onesimo was now **one of you**.

2. (Colossians 4:10-11) Greetings from three of Paulo's faithful Jewish friends.

**Arhistarhcho my fellow prisoner greets you, with Marhkho the cousin of Barhnaba (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), and Ieso who is called Iusto. These *are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of Aleim who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.***

a. **Arhistarhcho:** He was a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4). He was Paulo's travel companion, and with the apostle when the Ephesian mob seized Paulo (Acts 19:29). He was also with Paulo when he set sail for Rome under his Roman imprisonment (Acts 27:2). Here Paulo calls him **my fellow prisoner**. It seems that **Arhistarhcho** had an interesting habit of being *with* Paulo in hard times. Some (such as William Ramsay) suggest that he actually made himself Paulo's slave so that he could travel with him on this journey to Rome.

b. **Marhkho the cousin of Barhnaba... if he comes to you, welcome him:** Though Paulo had much earlier a falling out with both Barhnaba and Marhkho (Acts 13:5, 13:13, and 15:36-40), clearly by the time he wrote this all was in the past. The grace of Aleim working in Paulo meant that time changed him and softened him towards others who had previously offended him.

i. "It is from this reference alone that we learn that Marhkho

was Barhnaba's cousin – a piece of information which throws light on the special consideration which Barhnaba gives to Marhkho in the narrative of Acts." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Because Paulo identified Marhkho in terms of his relationships with Barhnaba, it seems that the Colossian Followers knew who Barhnaba was. Either this was through his reputation or through further missionary journeys that were not recorded in the Book of Acts. It reminds us that the Book of Acts is an *incomplete* record of the history of the early Ekklesia.

c. **Ieso who is called Iusto:** Of this man, we know nothing except his name. He is numbered among these previous four men, all of them *comforters* to Paulo in his Roman custody preceding his trial before Caesar (**they have proved to be a comfort to me**).

d. **My only fellow workers... who are of the circumcision:** At that time, Paulo had only three **fellow workers** with a Jewish heritage. Yet these three did a great work, they **proved to be a comfort to Paulo**.

i. Paulo was in Roman custody because of a Jewish riot on the temple mount over the mere mention of Aleim's offer of grace to the Nations (Acts 22:21-22).

ii. Peter Damonse drew out a logical conclusion from the words, **These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of Aleim who are of the circumcision**: "It is evident, therefore, that Petrho was not now at Rome, else he certainly would have been mentioned in this list; for we cannot suppose that he was in the list of those who preached The Anointed One in an exceptionable way, and from impure and unholy motives: indeed, there is no evidence that Petrho ever saw Rome."

3. (Colossians 4:12-13) Greetings from Epaphrha.

**Epaphrha, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of The Anointed One, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of Aleim. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis.**

a. **Always labouring fervently for you in prayers:** Prayer is hard work, and Epaphrha worked diligently at it, especially knowing the danger of the false teaching in Colosse. So, Epaphrha prayed that the Colossian Followers would **stand perfect and complete in all the will of Aleim**. This is a wonderful prayer to pray for anyone.

i. Paulo called Epaphrha a **bondservant of The Anointed One**, using a phrase that he often applied to himself, but never to anyone else, except here and in Philippians 1:1 where he speaks of himself and Timotheo together as *bondservants* of IESO.

ii. Epaphrha was a **bondservant**, and *prayer* was an important area where he worked hard. **Labouring fervently** "is a free translation of *echeipolynponon*, a phrase the key word of which (*ponom*) suggest heavy toil to the extent of pain." (Edgar Phillips)

b. **He has a great zeal for you:** Epaphrha prayed well because he *cared* well. If he lagged in **zeal**, he certainly would have lagged in prayer.

4. (Colossians 4:14) Greetings from Louka and Dema.

**Louka the beloved physician and Dema greet you.**

a. **Louka the beloved physician:** This is the one passage that informs us that Louka, the human author of the *Glad Tidings* of Louka and the Book of Acts, was a physician. We also see that his works are written with a more scientific, analytical mindset (Louka 1:1-4) and have much detail that a physician would be interested in (Louka 4:38, 5:12-15, and 8:43).

i. Perhaps Louka was in Rome to deliver a document he recently finished – the *Glad Tidings of Louka* and the *Book of Acts*, which probably were together a “friend of the court” report, explaining to the Romans why Paulo stood before Caesar’s court.

b. **Dema:** Here, nothing positive is said about Dema, only that he greets the Colossian Followers and therefore must have been known to them. In Philemon 1:24 he is grouped among Paulo’s *fellow labourers*. Yet in the last mention of him (2 Timotheo 4:10), Paulo said that Dema had forsaken him, *having loved this present world*, and that he had gone on to Thessalonica.

i. “Surely here we have the faint outlines of a study in degeneration, loss of enthusiasm and failure in the faith.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. The six people who greeted the Colossians were connected with Paulo in Rome, during the time of his house arrest and custody before appearing on trial before Caesar. This shows that during this imprisonment – unlike the later one described in 2 Timotheo – Paulo, though chained, enjoyed at least the occasional company of many friends and associates.

5. (Colossians 4:15) Greeting to Nymphas and the Laodiceans.

**Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the Ekklesia that is in his house.**

a. **Laodicea:** This was the same city later mentioned in the scathing rebuke of Revelation 3:14-22, and it was a neighbouring city of Colosse, along with Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13).

b. **Nymphas:** There has been some considerable debate as to if Paulo referred to a *man* or a *woman* with this name. Some manuscripts have the masculine form and some have the feminine.

i. “Much ink has been spilt over the question whether the individual here mentioned is a woman (Nympha) or a man (Nymphas). Both forms are found in the manuscript tradition, and certainty seems impossible on this (fortunately not very significant) point.” (Edgar Phillips)

c. **The Ekklesia that is in his house:** Having no buildings of their own, the early Ekklesia met as “house Ekklesias.” Because few houses were large, there were usually several “house Ekklesias” in a city, with a pastor or elder over each one.

i. “Such house-Ekklesias were apparently smaller circles of fellowship within the larger fellowship of the city *ekklesia*.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. “We must remember that there was no such thing as a special Ekklesia building until the third century. Up to that time the Follower congregations met in the houses of those who where the leaders of the Ekklesia.” (Edgar Phillips)

6. (Colossians 4:16) Instructions for spreading the message in this letter.

**Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the Ekklesia of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.**

a. **Now when this epistle is read among you:** When Paulo and other apostles wrote letters to Ekklesias, the letters were simply publicly read in the congregations. It was a way for the apostle to teach that Ekklesia even when he could not personally be there.

b. **See that it is read also in the Ekklesia of the Laodiceans:** It was the general practice to distribute all apostolic letters among the Ekklesias, especially those close to each other.

i. “Here we undoubtedly have the principle reason for the preservation of Paulo’s letters in the sub-apostolic period, and their eventual adoption as part of the canonical ‘new covenant’ books: their author intended them to carry, in writing, the authority which had been invested in him as an apostle.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. This helps us to understand how and why the letters would have been copied almost immediately, and how slight mistakes in copying the manuscripts could come in at an early date.

c. **And that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea:** Apparently, Paulo wrote a letter to the Laodiceans that we do not have. We should not assume from this that our treasure of inspiration is incomplete. The Holy Spirit has chosen to preserve those letters that are inspired for the Ekklesia in a universal sense. Paulo was not inspired in this way every time he set pen to paper.

i. It may be that this “missing” Laodicean letter was actually the letter to the Ephesians. “It is well-nigh certain that *Ephesians* was not written to the Ekklesia at Ephesus but was an encyclical letter meant to circulate among the Ekklesias of Asia. It may be that this encyclical had reached Laodicea and was now on the way to Colosse.” (Edgar Phillips)

ii. There is a Latin letter of Paulo to the Laodiceans and it was mentioned as early as the fifth century by Jerome. But Jerome himself called it a forgery and that most people in his day agreed that it was not authentic. It is mainly made up of phrases from Philipians and Galatians. Peter Damorse had a low opinion of this letter: “As to its being the work of Paulo, little or nothing need be said; its barrenness of meaning, poverty of style, incoherency of manner, and total want of design and object, are a sufficient refutation of its pretensions.”

7. (Colossians 4:17) A special word to Arhchippo.

And say to Arhchippo, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Ruler, that you may fulfill it.”

a. **And say to Arhchippo:** This special word to Arhchippo is of special interest. Paulo wrote another short word regarding Arhchippo in another letter, mentioning *Arhchippo our fellow soldier, and to the Ekklesia in your house* (Philemon 1:2).

i. This mention in Philemon 1:2 makes some people believe that he was the son of Philemon, since he is mentioned in the context of the wife of Philemon (*Apphia*) and his household (*the Ekklesia in your house*). It also shows that Paulo thought highly of Arhchippo and valued him as an associate in Aleim’s work (*our fellow soldier*).

ii. The context of Colossians 4:17 leads some to think that



though Arhchippo was part of the family of Philemon, he was connected with the Ekklesia at Laodicea. Perhaps Arhchippo was the pastor of the Ekklesia at Laodicea. Of course, there is no way to know this for certain.

b. **Say to Arhchippo, "Take heed to the ministry"**: Paulo wanted Arhchippo to be encouraged and strengthened, but he did not make this appeal to Arhchippo directly. He asked that it come to Arhchippo *through* the Colossians (or the Laodiceans).

i. "Presumably he would be present when the letter was read, either in the Colossian Ekklesia or, later, when it had been sent to Laodicea. This was perhaps calculated to impress him the more with the solemnity of his responsibility to carry out his service." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. Therefore, it was *more fitting* for the Colossians (or Laodiceans) to say this to Arhchippo than for Paulo himself to say it to him. He needed to hear this from the people around him: "Fulfill your ministry." When the Colossians spoke up, then Arhchippo knew his ministry was *wanted*. "Many an *Arhchippo* is sluggish, because the *Colossians* are silent."

iii. They need to say "*fulfill your ministry*" directly to Archippus, not *behind* him. Whispering it behind his back would do no good. They had to say it *to* him.

c. **Take heed to the ministry**: This encouragement to **Arhchippo** spoke both to him and to us regarding some enduring principles of ministry.

- Aleim gives **ministry** to His people.

- True **ministry** is **received in the Ruler**.

- **Ministry** may be left *unfulfilled*.

- One must **take heed** to their ministry in order for it to be **fulfilled**.

- We should encourage *others* to **fulfill** their **ministry**.

i. "It is more likely, therefore, that the words of the apostle convey no censure, but are rather intended to stir him up to further diligence, and to encourage him in the work, seeing he had so much false doctrine and so many false teachers to contend with." (Peter Damonse)

ii. Thinking Arhchippo to be a pastor, Trapp applied the principle of **take heed to the ministry** to him: "The Ekklesia is thy proper element, the pulpit thy right *ubi* [place]; the sanctuary should be the centre of all thy circumference."

8. (Colossians 4:18) Conclusion.

This salutation by my own hand; Paulo. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

a. **This salutation by my own hand**: As was the custom in that day, Paulo generally dictated his letters and personally signed a postscript with his **own hand**.

b. **Remember my chains**: There is much emotion, sorrow, and strength in this simple phrase. Paulo not only knew the confinement and loneliness of the prisoner; he also had the uncertainty of not knowing if his case before Caesar's court would end with his execution.

i. "The chain clanked afresh as Paulo took the pen to sign the salutation. He was not likely to forget it himself." (Edgar Phillips)

ii. "Paulo's references to his sufferings are not pleas for sympathy; they are his claims to authority, the guarantees of his right to speak." (Edgar Phillips)

c. **Grace be with you**: Paulo's conclusion is the only one possible for the apostle of grace, confronting a heresy emphasizing elaborate hidden mysteries and righteousness through works. We can only go forward safely in the Follower life if grace is with us.