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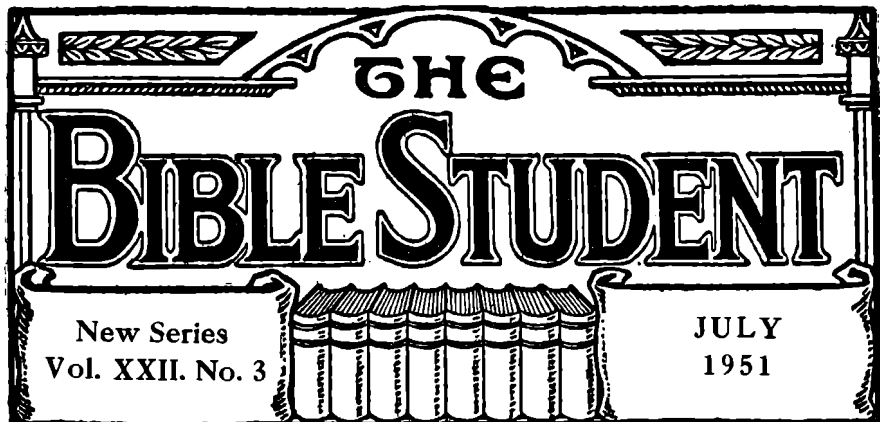
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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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# EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS\*

## Chapter 3: 15—4: 1

Verse 15—*καὶ ἡ εἰρήνῃ τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεuetō en tais kardiais humōn* (And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts). The R.V. "Christ" agrees with most of the oldest MSS. It is the peace that Christ gives (Jn. 14:27), and He Himself is our peace (Eph. 2:14). The verb *brabeuetō* is from *brabeus*, umpire, and implies a means of settlement between conflicting motives or impulses, etc. This peace is the deciding argument, as we say, as to which motive or impulse shall prevail—it will "settle all questionings" (Weymouth); "decide all doubts" (20th Cent. N.T.). And, as Moule remarks: "such settlement of debates *there* would quite preclude all harsh conflicts *in the community*." In 2 Thess. 3:16 Paul prays, "may the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every place." "He can break the complex that holds us fast and give calmness. So then let the peace that Christ gives cast the deciding vote in all our struggles" (Robertson).

*eis hēn kai eklēthēte en heni sōmati* (to which also ye were called in one body). God has called us to peace (1 Cor. 7:15). See also Eph. 4:3 ff. But the main point here is probably not so much the organic union of the one body, as the practical disposition for unity of spirit between members of the one body; the manifestation of this unity in daily intercourse. This will be effective if we let Phil. 4:6 and 7 become our daily practice.

*καὶ eucharistoi ginesthe* (and be ye thankful), that is, "keep on being thankful" (see ch. 2:7; 3:17; 4:2). It is a continuous aim and process. This is the only occurrence of the word in the N.T., but the verb occurs frequently. There can be no doubt of the practical effect upon the whole personality of such a spirit, where gratitude or thankfulness is ever on the point of bursting forth in spite of the many trials and adversities of our daily life. Lightfoot paraphrases, "Forget yourselves in thanksgiving toward God."

\* The previous set of Notes appeared in the *January* issue, 1951.

## Verse 16

*ho logos tou Christou enoikeitō en humin plousiōs en pasē sophia* (Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom). This is the only occurrence of the phrase "the word of Christ", and draws a variety of opinions from commentators. It would appear to us not to refer so much to doctrine, as to heart enjoyment and worship of the One who is the great Object of the apostle's and our affections and devotion. Naturally such heart exercise will have its foundations in the doctrines and teaching of the N.T. It will be informed and regulated by the revealed will and word of God, which is implied in the added phrase, "in all wisdom", probably. If Christ is the dominant Object of our affections, His 'word' spoken to the soul in moments of meditation on *the Word*, will have its transforming effect in our daily life, and so "*dwell in us richly*".

*didaskontes kai nouthetountes heautous psalmois, humnois, odais pneumatikais, en chariti adontes en tais kardiais humōn tō theō* (teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord). In ch. 1:28 the apostle employed both these verbs (in the reverse order), with the same idea as here, but he adds here the note of song. The whole verse implies spiritual edification in a collective sense, and yet as individuals each filled with the one Spirit and acknowledging the One Head even Christ, *mutually* responsible to "build up each other on our most holy faith" (Jude 20, 21). Dr. A. Maclaren's remarks here are worth quoting: "I cannot but believe that the practice of confining public teaching of the church to *an official class* has done harm. Why should one man be for ever speaking, and hundreds of people who are able to teach, sitting dumb to listen to him?" (*The Expos. Bible*). Note the emphasis in this verse on "one another"—that is, according to the measure of gift given to each, imparting to others what God has given for the edification of all. But the apostle is careful to add that the teaching, admonishing, and singing require *grace*—the grace of God is the regulative atmosphere or element in which it is to take place.

## Verse 17

*kai pan ho ti ean poiēte en logō ē en ergō, panta en onomati kuriou Iēsou, eucharistountes tō theō patri di autou* (And whatso-

ever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him.) Words and deeds make up the daily life of all of us, revealing character, motive, and disposition, consciously or more often, unconsciously. *All* should be fulfilled "in the Name", that is (a) doing all as under His guiding eye; (b) relying upon His promised help; (c) ever seeking to be conformed to His image (cf. vs. 23, 24). Note the R.V. "giving thanks to God the Father through Him", with which cf. Eph. 5:20, R.V. How closely after all, do hard work and heart worship go together!

#### Verse 18 to Ch. 4:1

These next nine verses (wrongly divided by the new chapter) turn the attention from the hortatory to the social life of the Christian, specially as expressed in the family household. They are exceedingly practical, and more than ever need to be applied in these days when evil principles are making havoc of even Christian homes.

The principles which the apostle had already dealt with are now applied to the various relations of family life: Husband and wife; parent and children; servants and masters. The passage should be carefully compared with the corresponding part in Ephesians 5:22; 6:9, which offers a very instructive parallel. There is a marked difference, however, in regard to the amount of space devoted to the various classes in the two epistles, and the student will find it profitable to note these comparisons and differences. One point may here be mentioned, viz. the duties of slaves (servants) are more fully enumerated than in the companion letter. This we shall have occasion to comment upon later.

*Hai gunaiķes, hupotassethe tois andrasin, hōs anēķen en ķuriō* (wives be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord). The verb is in the middle voice and present tense = subject yourselves (i.e. without any question of "compulsion"), and continue in subjection as a divine vocation ordained of God (1 Cor. 11:3). No such sense as "subservience" is implied; the man is to "give honour to the wife" (1 Pet. 3:7). This, the apostle states, "is appropriate in the Lord", a phrase that Paul finds expressive of all life's holy relations (Eph. 4:16, 1 Pet. 5:5). Other passages should be read with this—Eph. 5:21-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6.

## Verse 19

*Hoi andres, agapate tas gunaikas kai mē pikrainesthe pros autas* (Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them). The same is enlarged on the Eph. 5:25-33 and reasons are added. The supreme place of love in this relation above all others is the key-note of the marriage tie as revealed in Scripture. On "bitter" Moule aptly remarks: Bitter, "with the wretched irritability of a supposed absolute superiority and authority", which gives a very good idea of the meaning of the word as used here. "The husband's primacy is not for dominion but for guidance, with sweetness, wisdom and peace" (Quesnel).

## Verse 20

*Ta tekna, hupakouete tois goneusin kata panta, touto gar euareston estin en kuriō* (Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing in the Lord). In Eph. 6:1 Paul adds the special promise in the fifth commandment, here he lays down the general rule. It is given as the mark of the ungodly to disobey parents in Rom. 1:30, and specially in the last days in 2 Tim. 3:2. The "all things" is necessarily limited by the superior claims of God Himself (see Matt. 10:37). Whatsoever is "well-pleasing" to God can never be wrong.

## Verse 21

*hoi pateres, mē erethizete ta tekna humōn, hina mē athumōsin* (Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged). The Greek *pateres* in Heb. 11:23 is the same but translated parents; both are permissible. Here it means the father as the "natural representative of the dual parental authority." The verb is only used again in 2 Cor. 9:2, "stir up", and means to irritate or chafe, but used in the latter passage in a good sense. The word *athumōsin* means lit. to lose heart, which leads on to a state of sullenness, "dout-careness", and even rebellion against all parental control such as we see more prevalent today. The apostle in Eph. 6:4 points out the right method of positive instruction in addition, "nurture them in the chastening", in a proper Christian spirit, so as to lead rather drive them into the right way.

## Verses 22—Ch. 4:1

This section on the Christians social obligations closes with an extended reference to the relationship which should exist between

masters and servants within the Christian circle. The ideas and conditions attaching to this subject have vastly changed since the apostle wrote, but the Christian principles which should govern in this sphere are as true and needful today as ever, for they belong to the Christian ethic of all ages.

#### Verse 22

*hoi douloi, hupakouete kata panta tois, kata sarka kuriois, me en ophthalmoudouleiais hos anthropareskoi, all' 'en haploteti kardias phoboumenoi ton kurion* (Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord). The Gk. word *doulos* is lit. slave, but now translated servant, because slavery as an institution no longer exists—which, incidentally, is the result of the practical application of the true Christian ethic. Here the subject is dealt with far more fully than the preceding subjects have been. The reason may be due to the special circumstances of Onesimus, the bearer of the letter, being himself a slave (see previous notes). Some think Paul made the incident of Onesimus' conversion the opportunity to expose the unnatural and unrighteous principles which at that time governed slavery. As here dealt with it covers the whole social question of "employer and employed" in whatever form it is found.

There is a fourfold appeal in this verse, (a) for *obedience*. The tense of the verb is lit. "keep on obeying"; not spasmodically or only under favourable conditions but always, and "in all things"—with the sole limitation imposed upon both parties by the claims of the heavenly Master (see Eph. 6:5, and cf. 1 Pet. 2:18; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2). (b) "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers"—i.e. free from false motives. (c) "Singleness of heart", lit. in simplicity. (d) "Fearing the Lord", who is our true Master and whom we serve in serving others: He watches over our highest interests, as we follow His direction and seek His help.

#### Verse 23

*ho ean poiēte, ek psuchēs ergazesthe hōs tō kuriō kai ouk anthrōpois*, (whatsoever ye do, work heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men). This and the next verse are really an expansion of the previous clause, that it is the Lord Himself we serve (see 1 Cor. 10:31). "Heartily" is lit. "from the soul" (cf. Eph. 6:7 same expression): There is a *spiritual value* in the

job, hence "put soul into it." Note the comprehensive "whatsoever"—balk at nothing!

## Verse 24

*eidotes hoti apo kuriou apolēmpsesthe tēn antapodosin tēs klēronomias tō kuriō Christō douleuete* (Knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: Ye serve the Lord Christ). This is the climax, as it were, of the appeal and argument. The Unseen Master is the One we, in reality, are serving, in every part of our daily toil. His reward at the end of our day is or should be our aim. Lightfoot remarks here that, by a beautiful paradox the *slave* is here also seen as an *heir*, which by human reckoning could not be. "He is God's heir" (Gal. 4:7) by divine Law. In the final clause, (for) "ye serve the Lord Christ", the verb may be imperative or indicative. Moule favours the latter: "Christ is the Master whose bondmen *ye are*". Robertson and L. Williams read it as the imperative: "*go on serving* the Lord Christ", which connects with the next clause as in R.V. "For the one who does wrong", etc. It is not actually clear who the wrong-doer is, the slave or the master, but the point in v. 25 holds good in either case.

## Verse 25

*Ho gar adikōn komisetai ho ēdikēsen, kai ouk estin prosōpolēmpsia.* (For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons). The divine principles of future reward are here stated: (a) the wrong-doer will certainly receive his due. (b) Such reward will be without partiality, for the righteous God dispenses it Himself.

## Chap. 4: 1

*Hoi kurioi, to dikaion kai tēn isotēta tois doulois parechesthe, eidotes hoti kai humeis echete kurion en ouranō* (Masters, render to your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven). Compare this with Eph. 6:9. The verb *parechesthe* = "render on your part", or "provide for". It is in the middle voice, implying an emphasis on the obligations of masters to do their part in *justice and with equality*. *Isotēta* also means 'equity.' *Eidotes* = "knowing as you do already", or as a fundamental proposition (cf. Eph. 6:8). The same moral principles of right and wrong apply to both parties, and to *all* men.

—A. McD. R.