

***“Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, Living Above and Beyond This World System
Part 4”***

Review: The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — Even When It Is Hard!

- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — For That is the Heart of True Spirituality***
- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — What is that Teaching?***
- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Private Lives***
- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — For That is the Heart of True Spirituality***
 - ***Last time we saw how in Colossians chapter 3 Paul summarized the essence of true spirituality in this way.***

Col. 3:12-17

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ 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 Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

- ***Paul in this passage in Colossians likens this abundant living under God’s inexhaustible grace as with clothing which needs to occasionally be put off and other clothing put on. For he writes that we must put off the old ways of the old man and put on the new life of the new man that God is working to transform us into one step at a time. And this is all when, and only when, “the word of Christ is dwelling in our hearts ...”! What a blessed way of living indeed that is. Amen.***

- *So, thanksgiving is grace receiving (Col. 3:16-17; Eph. 5:20). The new life of Christ in us, the hope of glory, flows like an artesian well, bringing forth songs of grace in the heart (and, of course, "... in the night"). This word of Christ is to dwell in our hearts with the result we read of here. But, we have learned, this is only possible if we RECKON upon what we KNOW of Christ's completed work and then in daily living, when the going gets tough, bear forth the fruit of the spirit.*
- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living — Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Private Lives***
 - *Now the detailed exhortations begin. Since the assembly met in homes (as here in Colosse), the private life of the family whose home the assembly met in was of utmost importance! This passage therefore is focused on home and family with the home and family present there in the home in which the assembly was meeting. The meeting halls were the homes of believers as Col. 4:15 indicates in reference there to the assembly in Laodicea that was meeting in the home of a man named Nymphas. So the teaching here would have special application to this home and its residents though the exhortations are generic and apply to all believers of course.*

Paul addresses wives in one verse, not explaining himself at all here, while in the Ephesians parallel section he provides a more complete teaching in three verses. The difference in detail is even more evident as we will see with what he writes about husbands, where the Colossian teaching is one verse and in the Ephesian's letter eight!!

In the Ephesians teaching we get the whole teaching and it's most important to understand:

Eph. 5:22-24

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

- *So the hierarchy that God has established in the family begins with husband and wives. Wives, the apostle writes here, are to simply submit to their husbands. He does add though this*

qualifier: “as is fit in the Lord”. Paul does not address the circumstances in which many wives have found themselves having become believers while married, or, having married an unbeliever. Or, for other reasons (addictions, for example), they are in abusive relationships. This is not addressed here. Nor are the other circumstances of life where great challenges to the living above this world and its concerns exist.

- *Rather, he writes, that wives should consider the spiritual realities of the marriage bond carefully before being themselves the cause of a breakage in that bond. What should always be kept in mind is that our lives here in this world are not promised by God to be easy or always in every way to our liking. Rather, we are to trust in the Lord that he does all thing well and is working all things for our good. And, as always, this life is a preparation for eternity. Amen.*

But the teaching regarding husbands is far more detailed and pressing!

- *Verse 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

And then in Ephesians there are critical details:

Eph. 5:25-32

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

- *So the husband is exhorted so strongly here to love his wife as Christ loved the church, not to be bitter towards them even though they are imperfect and not always submissive. Love*

truly covers a multitude of sins, praise God and thanksgiving is always in order.

Then the Children are addressed, but also in an abbreviated form:

- **Verse 20 Children**, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
 - *The teaching here and in Ephesians is simply that the parents and especially the father are responsible for the well being of the children. As long as they are living under the care of their parents, they should be thankful for their good provision. Rather than provoking anger or wrath do to poor parenting skills (or simply self-serving carnality), Paul in Ephesians includes the encouraging words "... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Disciple of a Godly sort should always be done in a fitting and appropriate way, and always "... of the Lord". That is challenging but it is what we as fathers are called to by the Lord God. Amen.*
- **Verses 22-25**

Now, finally, for the teaching on servants, or, as they were in Paul's day so often, bond-slaves, or at least, indentured servants! In Paul's day, slavery was common everywhere and was sanctioned by Roman law as "Res privatae, private property, or things belonging to individuals in contrast to res publicae" — quoted from a Wikipedia article. Of course, Biblical theology over time greatly changed the public view of slavery, this even in law itself. Praise God.

Col. 3:22-25

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

- *So there must have been slavery in Colosse, even in the house church setting! This was the law of the land under Roman rule. It was not simply an employee - employer relationship*

thought these verses can surely be properly extended to that realm as is so common today. In fact, since Onesimus, a runaway slave, is mentioned in verse 9 and is the whole focus of the letter to Philemon who was the slave owner!

- *So the exhortation here is very appropriate in the slave owner - slave context clearly. This is not simply an “upstairs — downstairs” situation as made so popular on Masterpiece Theater in our days. No, slaves owned nothing themselves and stealing was a common and acceptable way of life, but not for believers, Paul writes here.*
- *Paul does not address the slavery issue directly, I think because he knew full well that the eradication of slavery in truth demanded the teaching he was giving here. Anything else (for example, just eliminating the legal support for slavery would not actually remove slavery in its essence but only make a change superficially. We see that of course in our own day, with slavery outlawed legally but with it continuing by the control of minds through lies and other equally enslaving means. Satan’s methods often bring bondage and slavery as we all know.*

And finally the Slave Owners!

- *Colossians 4, verse 1: Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*
 - *So the slave owners in fact have greater responsibility than their slaves since they are to treat their slaves with respect and dignity and with righteousness and equality. There is so much there, isn’t there?*

Our Outline Today:

- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Prayer Lives*
- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Public Lives*
- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Yields Results Here and In Heaven*
- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — Closing Words*

I. The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard – It Transforms Our Prayer Lives:

[READ] Col. 4:2-4

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak;

- ***Prayer, with thanksgiving, is the exhortation much like in Phil. 4:***

Phil. 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

- ***But here in Colossians Paul adds himself but in what regard? What was the utmost burden of his heart in asking for prayer for himself as he was under house arrest in Rome? It was that he would be bold to speak of the Sacred Secret of the Christ! We really should take note of this. For is this our great desire or do we have another?***
- ***That he was in bonds because of the Mystery is relevant as well and emphasized in this way. Perhaps the intent is that due to his imprisonment due to his bold speaking he would now perhaps have become less bold. Interesting point to consider for all of us who have suffered due to our stand on the word of God rightly divided.***
- ***So, this was the desire of his heart for their prayers and then that the next verses are about his (and our) public lives says a lot as well. For, he writes, The Mystery is to be a large part of our testimony towards those who are without. And this sets the context for verses 5 & 6.***
- ***Compare with Ephesians letter with which it is very similar:***

Eph. 6:18-20

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

- ***There is nearly the same language here. Again, the two letters (along with Philemon it seems) were written together. That the***

Ephesian exhortation immediately follows the section on the whole armor of God has implications for the intent of the apostle here in these spiritual exhortations to living above and beyond the affairs of this world. But these last exhortations and the context of those provided in a number of closing verses reveal the truth of how the Reckoning that Counts transforms our public lives as well. Not only our private lives are transformed but also our public lives as we shall see in our fellowship today.

II. The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Public Lives:

- *Now Paul gives a general exhortation that is transitional to the final verses in the letter but that also in one statement summarizes our position in this world as believers and also our expected testimony before the world. The exhortation is as general as possible and applies therefore to every circumstance in life:*

[READ] Col. 4:5-6

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

[Compare with Eph. 5:16]

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

- *What does “redeeming the time” refer to in this context with wisdom and a clear demarcation between our lives as believers and the lives of the lost all around us?*

It is found also in Eph. 5:

Eph. 5:14-20

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The early chapters set the context for the latter chapters as always. In Ephesians we find this in chapter 1. Note that wisdom is mentioned here in verse 17 and in a context of prayer just as in our final chapter:

Eph. 1:15-18

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you **the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:**

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

- ***Before one may take God at his word one needs to know that word and comprehend it. The first chapter summarizes that knowledge and the next chapters give further teaching regarding that. Finally, as we saw last time, the reckoning part comes in with the clothing analogy in chapter 5.***
- ***But this wisdom is related to the plan of God almighty regarding our salvation. This is not our wisdom therefore but his given to us. The rest of this letter is about that with the practical part coming in chapter 5 with that wonderful statement about “arising from the dead” or, more literally, “arising out from among the dead ones!” This is the context of the “redeeming the time”.***
- ***Now in the next verses the apostle will give the specific and very practical instruction as to what that would be like in living above and beyond this world.***

III. The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Yields Results Here and In Heaven:

- ***Many who were near and dear to Paul are now mentioned by name, including Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus and Epaphras, just to name a few. Why are these selected and why is he so specific about this? It should be clear that to the apostle personal relationships are where God is working out that grace that he has worked into us and now should be worked out of us with the Lord's empowering towards others. He now mentions a number of his trusted companions and for some has some very special comments. It seems that he wants***

them to know they are all part of his ministry towards them. Perhaps he wonders if he will be with them much longer. We do not know.

- *This letter together with the letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the personal letter to Philemon constitute the so-called “Prison Letters” of the apostle, letters in which Paul teaches the very heights of grace teaching regarding this dispensation of the grace of God with all that means. These letters signify the new and one could say “mature” phase of the Dispensation of Grace, that started much earlier but was for some time focused on going to the Jew first and then the Greeks. Now, with the curtain closing rapidly on the outreach to Israel and the Jews, the ministry to the Gentiles will continue apart from a special ministry to Jews. Soon, (less than 5 years probably), Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Roman general Titus and most Jews will be scattered away from the holy land altogether.*
- *Here is the list. I will consider some of them:*

[READ] Col 4:7-10

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are *done* here.

10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

[READ] Col 4:11-13

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are *my* fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that* are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

[READ] Col 4:14-17

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

- ***Take note of who is in this assembly:***

- ***Tychicus: Tychicus, first and last, Archippus. Who were they? Tychicus was also the bearer of this letter. See also Phile. 7-8. He also brought the letter to Colosse as the end note says. I will mention Archippus later but he seems to be the pastor/elder of the assembly in Colosse. From the book of Acts we learn that Tychicus was a trusted co-worker with Paul and was from Thessalonica.***
- ***Onesimus: He was the runaway slave from Colosse. He carried the letter to Philemon as the end note there says. Verse 9 here says Tychicus and he traveled together to Colosse.***
- ***Aristarchus: He was a co-laborer with Paul as Phile. 24 indicates. He was near and dear to Paul and ultimately would travel with him to Rome by ship (see Acts 27:2)***
- ***Epiphras: And now Epiphras, also mentioned in Philemon, where, also, we see most of the same names we find here in Colossians. This is another reason we concluded that these two letters were written at the same time, of course. Who was Epiphras though? According to Phile. 24 he was a co-prisoner (of the spear)!***
- ***Luke: This is the same Luke as we find in the Acts and the gospel of his name. All are agreed on that. He was a constant companion of the apostle.***
- ***Demas: In 2 Tim. 2:10, Demas has forsaken the apostle. But here he is a trusted companion. So sad ...***
- ***Nymphas: Nymphas seems to be the pastor of the church in Laodicea and a dear co-minister with Paul as we read here.***

- ***Archippus: Archippus is mentioned last. He is also found in the letter to Philemon, verse 2. He seems to be the pastor of the church meeting in Philemon's house!***

Phile. 1:1-2

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,

2 And to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

- ***Names. So many. Whenever I read these lists of names I wonder on the effect on those listed may have been. I am quite sure it was extremely significant in their lives. But what about ours? What book has our names written in it?***

Phil. 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

- ***Where are our names?***

IV. The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — Closing Words:

[READ] Col. 4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

- ***Paul probably used a scribe to actually write this letter as hinted here by his often used language emphasizing that these marks on the page were written by he himself. He also used the emphatic personal pronoun making this even more powerful as a statement.***
- ***And now we have come to the final words here of this very personal and powerful letter, "Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen." The reference to grace is common to his letters. But placing his imprisonment together with grace is unusual. But he does mention his imprisonment early in his prison letters, just not in the final words.***
- ***Our minds probably go back to one of the very first things that Paul knew directly was from the Lord God, recorded in Acts 9, words given to Ananias but for Paul:***

Acts 9:15-16

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

- *So from the beginning suffering for Christ's sake was part of Paul's sacred calling. Is it ours as well, we might ask. Well, the apostle often writes that it is ours as well, or at least seems to imply it. For he is to be our example of what it means to live as a believer today. His often exhortations to imitate him suffice to prove that and his solemn assertion that he is imitating Christ (1 Col. 11:1) make that so clear. For example, one of the clearest statements regarding us is found in Philippians chapter 1:*

Phil. 1:29-30

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

- *Finally, we see epigraphs at end of Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon:*
 - *Colossians: "Written from Rome to the Colossians, by Tychicus and Onesimus"*
 - *Ephesians: "Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus"*
 - *Philemon: "Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant."*
- *These indicate from where the letters were written and by whom they were carried to their designated addressees...*

Application / Conclusions:**Our Outline Today:**

- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Prayer Lives. Our prayers are always in order and so much of our testimony before others depends on them!*
- *The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Transforms Our Public Lives. All our lives in this world, and*

above and beyond it, depend on that reckoning that counts, that makes the difference between religion and Christ who dwells within each of us.

- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — It Yields Results Here and In Heaven. All the individual persons reached in ministry make up that great Body of Christ in the heavenlies. Amen.***
- ***The Reckoning That Counts Makes All the Difference in Living, Even When It Is Hard — Closing Words. The Apostle is and will always be our example. May we imitate him as he imitates Christ Jesus. Amen and amen.***