

The Corrective Epistles

Part 4

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[00:00:01] The person of the Christ, and for his every grace, was made the power by the grace in many lands of grace.

Planning all his wishes, since we with him are here, our lives is his, with Christ he grows, in Christ and at his will.

The hand of the Father now shall be throughout the whole, [00:01:09] and with our faith in him we go, in love the Christ our Lord.

Would you turn please to the epistle to the Colossians, and chapter 2. Colossians chapter 2, verse 1.

For I would that he knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, [00:02:06] and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, [00:03:06] and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Verse 16.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mouth. [00:04:09] We are looking this week, in turn, in the order in which they come in the New Testament, at the five corrective epistles which bear the name of the Apostle Paul. The approach has been to see what the problem or the deficiency was, the way in which Paul combated the error, applied the correction, and the way he moved them away from their negative error [00:05:01] and weaned them onto something which was positive, good, and wholesome. In the first session, we looked at the moral disorder at Corinth and how, in dealing with that, he moved on to outline for them God's order in creation and in the assembly. We moved on to look at Galatians, and we saw there that if evil practice was bad at Corinth, evil doctrine was far worse at Galatia. And in dealing with that, he was able to demonstrate that the very idea of anything other or in addition to Christ and his work being necessary for salvation

was absolute folly insofar as all that we are, as well as all that we've done, [00:06:04] has been brought to an end before God in the cross of Christ. We moved on to the epistle to the Philippians, where the difficulty was one of dissension, and we saw how that undercurrent, evidenced by two sisters who evidently didn't get on very well together, disrupted the whole spiritual tone of the local assembly, and how, in combating that, Paul was able to show the way for unity and unanimity and blessing and the grace of Christ being evidenced in the local conditions. Tonight, we turn to Colossians. Perhaps, for completeness, we might say, if the Lord will, tomorrow night at Felixstowe, we hope to look similarly at the Thessalonian epistles. [00:07:04] Tonight, it's Colossians.

Not disorder, like Corinth, not delusion, like Galatia, not dissension, like Philippians, but error concerning the doctrine of the person of Christ.

It came in two forms. There won't be time to look at the text in detail all the time, but look again at the verses we read, chapter 2, verse 16.

There we have a list over which we could put the heading, Jewish ordinances, Jewish ceremonies. [00:08:05] Look at verse 18, and we can put the heading over that, Grecian philosophy.

Chapter 1 tells us that, generally speaking, the order of the Colossian assembly was good. Their state, generally, was good.

But this pernicious doctrine was being introduced with subtlety, and if they weren't very careful, it would undo all the good that has gone on to date. Now, on the one hand, to say that it was necessary, that there were those things in them which had to be kept in check by the repetition of Jewish-based ceremonial practices [00:09:07] negated at heart the very truth of the Gospel. One reason why we've looked at these things in the order in which they come in the New Testament is because the truth is progressive. If indeed we've learned something of Corinthian truth, and we've learned a little of Galatian truth, and are in the spirit of the Philippians after they were adjusted, it should be relatively straightforward to accept that Jewish ceremonial practices are completely out of court in keeping in check that which has already been given the judicious stroke of death under the hand of God at the cross of Christ.

As to the Grecian philosophy, this was more subtle. [00:10:05] It hadn't been tackled before.

The reasoning was something like this.

Man very low in the hierarchy of beings.

God at the very top, and rightly so.

And in between a hierarchy levels strata of exalted beings, some just a little bit better than men, a little bit superior positionally in the hierarchy, some almost but not quite God.

And these philosophers sounded laudable, plausible to some extent.

They said, Christ, your saviour, your lord, wonderful person.

[00:11:07] He's so wonderful that he's well up the order. Almost but not quite God.

The apostle spends all the epistle, again and again, saying that in every respect and in every aspect, the Lord Jesus is no less than God because he is God. Now, may as well say it now as later, there are three major portions of New Testament teaching which tell us about the personal glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[00:12:01] John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1.

It often appeals to me that we can link them together by thinking of the three phrases, the three pairs of terms, that John puts together seven or eight times in the book of Revelation. He speaks again and again. John, by the Spirit, is able to speak of the Lord Jesus. Many occasions the Lord uses the words of himself. I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega. Not always in the same order.

It seems to me that the terms the first and the last are a matter of being.

The terms the beginning and the end are a matter of doing. [00:13:05] And the terms the alpha and omega are a matter of speaking. In other words, the Lord Jesus in his own person is the sum and substance of all that God is. John 1.

The Lord Jesus is the sum and substance of all that God has ever done, is doing and will do. Colossians 1.

And the Lord Jesus is the only one. He is the sum and substance of all that God has to say, the alpha and omega, Hebrews 1. Another way of putting the same truth, the same comparison. John 1.

The Lord Jesus is the only one who is competent to manifest God, express God, because he is God.

[00:14:04] Colossians 1. The Lord Jesus is the only one who is competent to act for God because he is God. Hebrews 1.

The Lord Jesus is the only one who is really competent to speak for God because he is God. And so his essential deity is expressed in each of these chapters. This is why these three chapters are vital to any self-respecting Christian and Bible student. Well, we can see why then. If there were those who said the Lord Jesus is a good person, and yet almost but not quite on the same level with God, the apostle has to take a tack. He has to take up a method of teaching which will emphasise the essential deity of our Lord Jesus Christ [00:15:05] as an antidote to the poison that these philosophers brought in. Now, we hope to take a similar approach to what we have on other evenings in making an introductory proposition and then following it up by referring to some of the significant words used in the text, injected by the Holy Spirit, constraining Paul to use these words to support and to provide this strain of teaching through the epistle. Now, before we look at the detail, look please at chapter 1 and verse 19.

It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

[00:16:06] We could spend all week on this, couldn't we? Well, I'll tell you what is relevant to our study tonight.

The one who in his person is very God.

All that God is because he is God.

Having come into the world in manhood, the things that are true of him and were true of him in pre-incarnate deity are no less true of him in person, having come into the world in manhood, than they ever were before. They are no less true, having come into the world, than they were before he came. [00:17:02] It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. We'll come back to the words a little later. Chapter 2, verse 9. Notice the tense.

In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. How careful the Apostle is to safeguard the truth concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has already said that the one who is in person, and we are coming to the section treating of it in chapter 1, he says, he who is the son of the Father's love, the eternal joy of an eternally subsisting relationship, which continued to be true when he was here in manhood.

[00:18:05] Chapter 1, verse 19.

Now that he's left earth and gone back to heaven, raised, exalted, seated at the right hand of God, continues to be true of him as it was in pre-incarnate deity, as it was in the days of his flesh, and continues to be so now that he's gone back to heaven. The Apostle safeguards the personal glory of the Lord Jesus before he came, when he was here, and now that he's gone home and seated at the right hand of God. This is what I have been indicating during the week, that when we read the scriptures, let us sometimes browse through an epistle, let us use the telescope rather than the microscope, [00:19:07] get right overall impressions, and then we can comb through in greater detail after we have the framework. Back then to chapter 1.

Let us just cement what has been said. The Apostle is disturbed that in having wrong thoughts of Christ, they should also get wrong thoughts of the grace of God and the salvation which God has wrought. And that concern lest they should get the impression that if Christ wasn't quite God, [00:20:05] that their salvation might be less than complete.

He uses terms to indicate that they couldn't have more than God has given them in blessing them in Christ. Now, we'll go through some of the words that indicate that. Now, there's one group of words that Paul uses to indicate that they could have nothing more.

They have everything. They have all because they have Christ. Now, he uses these words all and every and each and everything time and again. Let us just cast our eyes down the chapter and see how this all-embracing, most full salvation is emphasised. [00:21:03] Chapter 1, verse 4, all the saints. Verse 6, in all the world. Verse 9, all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Verse 10, all pleasing, every good work. Verse 11, all might, all patience and long-suffering. 15, every creature. 16, all things. Again, all things. Verse 17, twice, all things. 18, all things. 19, all fullness. 20, all things.

All things throughout the four chapters must be about 30 times that the Apostle says you have everything. You remember, the Lord said to the disciples, lacked ye anything? And the disciples had to say, nothing Lord. [00:22:02] Oh, that's the message for the Christian believer. That in having Christ and the salvation that Christ has secured and won for us, there is nothing greater or fuller or better that we could ever have. Colossian, Grecian philosophers might say, well, what you've got is good,

but if we could introduce you into the Greek mysteries, all these wonderful philosophical blessings that we know about, if only you could come into them, you'd really know what blessing and joy really is. Paul says, by the Spirit of God, you couldn't have anything fuller or better in that you'd be given Christ. So, this is emphasised in the all and the everything. And again, one of the other groups of terms, special, very often, to Colossians, [00:23:10] he speaks of that which is full and filled and in a compound way, he speaks of what it means to be filled full, to be given a full knowledge unsurpassed by anything that the worldly philosophers could ever conjure up. And again, let us just look at the words that are used. Chapter 1, verse 9, that ye may be filled. 19, it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. 24, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind. I wish I had time to dwell on that. Time does not permit. [00:24:08] Chapter 2, verse 2, the full assurance of understanding.

Chapter 2, verse 9, all the fullness, the fullness of the body, the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. That's what it means there, you know, if I race too quickly over that. The Lord Jesus is God.

He entered into a condition in which he had never subsisted before. He became a man. When he went back to heaven, he went back in a condition in which he had never been in heaven before. He went back in manhood as a man.

[00:25:04] And it's the scripture that we read there, chapter 2, verse 9 says, now in heaven, in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in manhood. Amazing truth.

Well, one of the terms that is used is this special term for fullness, full to the brim, full to overflowing, fuller, so full that nothing else could possibly be added. Ten, and ye are complete in him.

One of the key expressions of the apostle, the Lord Jesus is so refulgent with every grace and beauty and glory.

[00:26:01] And our completeness is in being attached to him and associated with him. Ye are complete in him, again in this compound way, ye are filled full in him. And when we consider that they were exposed to this philosophical error which said, yes, the Lord Jesus is a good man, but something more is required. Let us open to you the mysteries with which we are acquainted. Paul says not so. Everything you could ever need, everything you could ever have is in him. Ye are filled full in him.

Chapter 3, verse 14.

Yes, above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfectness. Not quite the same word here, but again when we come to it we will see, if you are going to have a fullness about your relationships with God, with each other, with people outside, it can only be as based upon your relationship with him. [00:27:26] Verse 12 of chapter 4, Epaphras laboured fervently for you in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. At every stage, every point he makes, he says fullness, completeness, entirety, wholesomeness, good health, being filled full with all that God has prepared for those who love him, you have it in having Christ. There is no need for any addition from whatever source it might come. [00:28:04] Now, I leave to your studies. Take time, a large table, your bible, your concordance, your lexicon, your bible dictionary, we all have them on the shelves. Get them out, follow these words through, have a feast for your soul and see how everything that Paul says and the way that he says it is best calculated to combat the error in the case of the Colossians and to act as a grand preservative if we haven't fallen foul of it yet. Well, as on so many

other occasions and in so many ways, they were wrong or they were exposed to erroneous doctrine concerning the person of Christ and the antidote to the poison was that the apostle presented Christ to the soul. [00:29:05] It sounds trite but it's the only answer and it's not only tradition that says so, it's the example of holy scripture in combating the error, Paul presents the truth of Christ, the pure doctrine of Christ to the soul. Now, we'll need to look at the structure of the epistle just a little more. Chapter one, in general, he goes into raptures about this wonderful person he speaks of as the son of the father's love.

Verse thirteen, the father has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear son, which more literally might be the son of his love, that is the son of the father's love. [00:30:12] I have to try and maintain the discipline of not digressing into some of the weighty matters in the chapter and stick to the main theme. Chapter one then, the son of the father's love. This is the presentation to the soul of that which is the grand preservative against every kind of error, whatever the detail. The soul that is in the good of God manifested, made known in the person of Christ is the soul that is well safeguarded against the attacks of any error that comes along. Now, when we look at this term, the son of the father's love, again in passing, very often, very well, we can say, well, you know, that's Paul's line of doctrine and that's John's line of doctrine. [00:31:18] It's nice to see when they come together. I think there's nothing closer to this term, the son of the father's love, Paul's expression, than John's expression, the only begotten one, the unique beloved one. John uses the term, the only begotten. Paul uses the term, the son of the father's love. Now, note with what care the next section is addressed.

Spheres of blessing are mentioned, not to speak of the spheres, but to show that in every sphere, the son of the father's love must have preeminence.

[00:32:26] Many mighty works are referred to, not to highlight the work, but to highlight that only one person is competent personally to do the work.

Officers may indirectly be referred to, not to highlight the office, but to show that only one is personally worthy to occupy the office. [00:33:03] The emphasis all the way through is on the person who alone is competent. This was why, earlier on, the comparison was made between John 1, where the Lord Jesus is the only one competent to speak for God because he is God. He, the word, the very expression in himself of all that God has to express. Hebrews 1, the only one personally competent to speak for God because in his person he is God. And now, with this subtle attack upon the personal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle highlights with every phrase, every sphere, every work, every office, the unique competence, the unique worthiness of the son of the father's love and therefore that in all things he might have the preeminence. [00:34:06] Now, just to put things in perspective, we are going to look at nine glories of the Lord Jesus. Look at the terms and we have to leave the detail for personal meditation with just an indication here or there. But overall, the personal glories of the son of the father's love. Chapter 2 then moves on to the wonderful blessing in being associated with him and issues that flow from that.

And then, in chapter 3 to the beginning of chapter 4, we have the various responsible relationships in which we live in our responsible lives and how the knowledge of the person of Christ and our association with him affects how we are to respond in these various relationships in our natural life. [00:35:19] And then he ends with various significant salutations. Back then to chapter 1. Notice, and it's no guess to come to the conclusion that I've proposed, the emphasis is on the person. Notice, end of verse 13 of chapter 1, his dear son, the son of the father's love. Verse 14, in whom, I'm sure this is

the way to read it, in whom we have redemption, through his blood. Verse 15, who is the image of the invisible God? 16, by him were all things created. End of the verse, all things created by him and for him. And he is before all things. And by him all things consist. [00:36:20] And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. It pleased the father that in him should all fullness dwell. Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him, to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, and so on. Very often we have to ensure that we read the scriptures with the emphasis in the right place, even by the inflection of the voice, in order that we get the right message that the Lord wants to give us by the spirit through the words of Paul. [00:37:05] So, the emphasis on him. The Grecian philosophers say, well, very good, but limited. The apostle says again and again, in him and in him alone is your every joy and blessing in the fullest possible way. Ye are fulfilled full in him. As to the detail, briefly, in whom we have redemption. Notice here, a small stretch, it is not the redemption that is stressed, it is in whom we have redemption. He is the redeemer, the first glory mentioned. There is only one who could take on the mighty work of redemption. He is the redeemer. Who is the image of the invisible God?

[00:38:11] The best words of all are the words of scripture. But in speaking of scripture, other words we understand come to mind and just seem to put neatly things in a way that we can readily understand. We learn early on that man was made in the image and likeness of God. From there, it is a fairly short meditation to arrive at the conclusion that image involves representation and likeness involves resemblance.

It was God's intention that man was God's representative, the appointed, nominated head of God's fair creation to have dominion over all flesh. He was God's representative. [00:39:17] Or in Christ, there is seen to perfection that which the first man failed to produce. Again, because of who he is, alone competent to represent God because he is God.

These are no mere repetitious phrases. This is the truth of God, the image of the invisible God. We don't get our truth from hymns. And yet, sometimes, I have learned from these good hymns that we sing, things that have out expounded the scripture to me. The penny dropped with me as to the significance of this phrase, image of the invisible God, when we were singing one day, thou art the image in man's lowly guise of the invisible to mortal eyes. [00:40:17] There are things about God that we would never have been able to learn unless the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, had become man and lived amongst men.

No time to speak of the likeness, but take that away from meditation. Image, representation, likeness, resemblance. Well, here we have it, his personal glory, the only one who is fit to represent God in any sphere. He then takes this sphere of creation. Oh, let us safeguard this. The Lord Jesus is not a creature. He became man. It may be possible to say he stepped into his own creation. [00:41:13] And stepping into his own creation, necessarily, he must take the place of first rank, because he is the creator of the universe. So, we have it here. We have this term, first born of all creation. First, not in time, first in rank, first in order, first in eminence, preeminent in all things. This moves on in a very orderly way to speak of the realm of creation.

Putting it simply, perhaps it would not be fair to examine these prepositions in detail. Take it away, think about it. By him were all things created. All things created by him and for him. [00:42:16] Verse 17, by him all things consist. Because of who he is, in the glory of his person. All things were created in virtue of his being. He was the instrumental active agent in bringing all things into being. Again,

very much in line with John, all things were made by him. He was the object in view. It is for his glory and honour that creation was brought into being. He is the creator of all things. And then, this last one, verse 17, by him all things subsist. We can understand this in a simple way, can't we? Everything continues in being in virtue of his being.

[00:43:23] Now, such is his personal glory. All things hang together. All things continue to be. All things continue to exist because he exists. Considering the negative side, if it were possible to consider for a moment the Lord Jesus ceasing to be, ceasing to exist, at that very moment all creation would cease to be, would pass out of existence. He is as vital as that to the creation of God. All things in creation, all their being to him, he created them and they continue in being in virtue of his being. And he is the head of the body. [00:44:19] I suppose, when we consider the headship of Christ, we are taken to verse 19 of chapter 2, where we get the heading, the title, THE HEAD, in speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me leave it for your personal joy to follow through. There are seven headships in scripture where the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the head. In every sphere, he is the head, he is the chief.

[00:45:03] Again, good words that we are used to, that we have heard, that we need to think about. The Lord Jesus is head organically as to the life he is coursing through. Couldn't be there without him. He is the head racially. There is a race which has been brought into being where he is the head. And he is the head administratively. He is in control with all that goes on. And again, those three prime features of headship which were vital in the Colossian context, direction, nourishment and control. In order that everything that goes on, goes on under nourish by him, promoted by him and under his personal control. Well, again, I must leave that to your meditations. Move on please to chapter 2. As we do so, I did not emphasise, worth taking away, verse 18 of chapter 1, HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH. [00:46:17] Notice the distinction there. Ephesians says, the church which is his body. That is the emphasis. In Colossians, he is the head of the body. Ephesians, our blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Here, the emphasis on his personal glory, the head of the body, the church. Who is the beginning, the originator and the origin of all that God is doing? That was true in the realm of creation, true in the realm of resurrection. First born from among the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Verse 20 says he is also the reconciler. Chapter 2, just a touch. It's one thing to say of what is true in Christ personally. We are followers, we are disciples, we are lovers of Christ.

[00:47:27] But as to being complete in him, it is our association with him which God has forged on the basis of the work of Christ and our response to that which brings fullness and blessing and in Colossian terms and full knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ. Again, more homework. Chapter 2, verse 11. The teaching of chapter 2, let me remind you, hangs upon four prepositions. Verse 11, we are circumcised in him.

[00:48:16] Verse 12, we are buried with him in baptism. Verse 17, these Jewish ordinances are a shadow of coming things but the substance, the body, is of Christ. Verse 19, hold the head from whom all the body receives its nourishment and so on. In whom, with whom, of him and from whom. It's all available. It's all been made for us in him and drawn from him, he who is the head of the body.

In him, in the cutting off of the Christ, we learn in verse 11, all that was true of us that was obnoxious to God has been brought to a sudden end in the cutting off of the Christ. [00:49:17] That's death. Verse 12, he says death leads to burial. We are buried with him in baptism with a view to coming out of death in newness of life in association with him who is alive from among the dead. Buried with him in

baptism. We are not only given a new position, risen with Christ, we are given a new condition. We are quickened as verse 13. We've been given new life in him. And he says everything that we have is derived of Christ. Verse 17, we've moved on from the shadow to the substance and then in verse 19 he says the peril of the Colossians was they were not holding the head. [00:50:18] The head was there, refulgent with every fullness of resource. Thereby their actions were tending to cut themselves off from the only possible source of supply. In going back to the old ways and to the old dispensation, even to pagan thinking, they were cutting themselves off in practice from the source of every good thing that God had prepared for them in Christ. So is the teaching of chapter 2. In chapter 3 he says now then, that's the doctrine. Now about the response. Almost every New Testament epistle is on the line of Isaiah 30 verse 21.

[00:51:18] First of all this is the way, the doctrine. Then this is the way, then walk ye in it. Our necessary practical response. First of all the principles, then the practice. First the belief, then the behaviour. First the doctrine, then the duty. Well so it is here. He says since then ye be risen with Christ if this is all true. He said it will affect every relationship that has been forged for you. He says and you'll live in the power of the association which Christ has forged on your behalf with Christ as alive from among the dead. [00:52:04] Look down in the chapter, the first eight verses are our relationships Godward and Christward. What a difference it makes the teaching of the first two chapters. Verses 9 to 17 he says it will affect your relationships within the Christian family, within the Christian circle. Verses 18 to 21 he says it will affect every act within the family circle. Verses 22 to chapter 4 verse 1 he says it will affect your relationships in the business circle as well. Notice one thing in covering those three major circles of responsibility. Notice that seven times over he says that this is the way you will act in the enjoyment of the doctrine if you in a practical way acknowledge the lordship of Christ. [00:53:09] Goes together. The knowledge of that which God has done and the preparedness to be obedient to the lord who shed his blood that the blessing might be ours. Notice just run quickly down them. Verse 17 do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. 18 as it is fit in the Lord. 20 this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Verse 23 do it heartily as to the Lord. 24 knowing that of the Lord. And again ye serve the Lord Christ. Those of you who have alternative translations will note that end of verse 16 singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord could perhaps be better translated singing with grace in your hearts to God. So that's minus one. [00:54:07] And then end of verse 22 in singleness of heart fearing God should perhaps be the Lord. So whichever translation you take. There is this complete acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ. Not a bit of use of my rejoicing in the doctrine if it doesn't lead me to be obedient to the simple commandments that come to me in the scriptures from the Lord who has saved me. So that 7 fold reference covers that. When we get into chapter 4 verses 2 to 6 I would suggest that that section details for us the spirit in which all these relationships must be lived out. First of all doing everything as unto the Lord. Noting in those relationships it's what is offered to others not what is demanded from others. Whether you take it in Romans or any of the epistles in the practical part. [00:55:14] When we come to these business relationships and family relationships and assembly relationships the emphasis is always on what we offer in our relationships with others never what we demand others to give to us. A salutary lesson there. Well that being so as under the lordship of Christ verses 2 to 6 of chapter 4 give us the spirit the only spirit in which they can be lived out. Turn back there please to chapter 1 verse 8.

Epaphras declared unto us your love in the spirit. I was once in a bible reading where a brother started to say there is no reference in Colossians to the Holy Spirit.

[00:56:23] He took a deep breath. No doubt to go on to say at least not in an objective way. Of course he didn't get the chance. Soon as he got to the comma there is no reference to the Holy Spirit in

Colossians. Someone else came down and said it is not correct to say that there is no reference in Colossians to the Holy Spirit. There is of course one love in the spirit. Why one and only one? I can only suggest. In certain epistles the emphasis necessarily is upon the activity and the energy and the power and the constraint and the control of the Holy Spirit in this present dispensation. [00:57:13] In Colossians there has to be no deviation from the major line of truth that in Christ we have everything and all things. There is no need to turn to anyone else. There is no suggestion of any lack in him.

And so most of the time, almost all the time, the reference is to the uniqueness and the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when it comes to our answer to it and carrying on here in the spirit in which he lived his whole life in the days of his flesh, we cannot do that in our own strength. [00:58:05] And in chapter 4 verses 2 to 6 give us the spirit in which every relationship has to be lived out. We have to go back to chapter 1 where Paul says now look, Epaphras is witness that you are already acting in that spirit of mutual affection for one another. You are acting in the right way, in the good of what you know to be true, but that love is not based upon any intellectual superiority like the Grecian philosophers. It's no mere repetition of ceremonies like these Jews were pressing upon them. Neither is it natural sentiment. He says the good order amongst you is because it's love in the spirit. So there is this reference to the spirit, not in an objective way. Speaking of his supremacy, other epistles deal with that as the need arises. [00:59:17] But here, ever so sweetly, one subjective reference to show that in the living out of all that they know to be true, it is to be done in an atmosphere of love in and by and according to the spirit. Take time sometimes, please all of us, to look at the salutations from chapter 4 verse 7 through to the end of the book. Keep those lexicons and dictionaries on the table. See what these special names mean. Look at the derivation of the names. Read from scripture as much as you can about the family, background and business situation of all these people. See what a motley crew they were. Just like us. Don't you ever marvel that we ever get on at all? [01:00:20] You know, sometimes we say, well, we should get on better than we do. Perhaps that's right. But when you see the variety of approach and background and preference and academic achievements and social status and the kind of people we are and whether we're this or that, the marvel is that we get on at all. Well, have that impression gained locally, confirmed when you read these salutations and see how wonderfully well, in the knowledge of the person of Christ, exercising that love in the spirit, how the sweetness of all the things which need to be shown in local assembly conditions came to light at Colossae in the people that were there. [01:01:14] May the Lord help us to study it and put it into practice. Now let us sing our closing hymn, number 492.

We get our teaching from scripture. We can thank God that we have a hymn book where the hymns are always scriptural and very often scripture.

In this hymn, 492, just cast your eye over it. The first verse is a paraphrase of Colossians 3, verse 1, where we begin. Verse 2, the first two verses, Colossians 3, verse 3. The third verse, Thou art the Father's own delight, Luke 3, 22. [01:02:05] We are graced in thee, Ephesians 1, verse 6. Our hidden life in God art thou, again, Colossians 3, 3. But soon thou shalt appear, chapter 3, verse 4. In radiant bliss shall every brow thy glorious image bear, 1 John 3, 2. We do well to be well versed in these sound scriptural hymns that confirm to us what we read in the inspired text of epistles like the epistle to the Colossians. Let us sing the hymn 492.