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“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”

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EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

Chapter 2, Verse 5

[For the sake of new readers it may be helpful to explain that these studies are based on the examination, *phrase by phrase*, of the argument and teaching of the Epistle. They elucidate the important details, such as the exact meaning of leading words, forms of phrases, clauses, etc. The Greek N.T. and not so much the English versions is the Text Book. But this does not imply that a knowledge of the Greek is essential; for those who do not have Greek there is *The Englishman's Greek N.T.*, published by Bagster and Sons of London, which offers wonderful help to any student in getting at the Greek text itself, and the literal English equivalent interlinearly. It may be deemed a 'crutch' by the learned,—but 'it gets you there', crutch and all!

The transliterated Greek is given first, followed by the English R. V. rendering in brackets.]

Ei gar kai tē sarkī apeimi, alla tō pneumati sun humin eimi,
(For though I am absent in flesh, yet am I with you in spirit.).

The use of *gar* here causes some divergence of opinion. Ellicott thinks it introduces the Apostle's reason *why he should warn* them—it is because he is with them in spirit and thus knows their need. It is probably sufficient to understand it as indicating that the reason for his writing lies in *his personal interest* in them, though absent in body and never having seen them.

The *kai* (in *ei kai*, as here) is closely linked with and emphasises *sarkī* (dative of reference) immediately following, contrasting it with *pneumati*; (cf. the construction in 2 Cor. 4:16; 11:6).

Tē sarkī apeimi—"As to the body (or 'bodily') I am absent." Some have inferred from this clause that Paul had at sometime been present at Colossae, but there is no reasonable ground for such a deduction.

En pneumati (in spirit),—see note on ch. 1:8. This is the second and only other occurrence of the word in this epistle. The question arises—is it a reference to the human spirit, as in 1 Cor. 5:3, 4, or to the Holy Spirit, as in Gal. 5:17? It is not difficult to decide, perhaps, in favour of the former, though some take the other view. At the same time, we agree with Moule when he says, "It is scarcely enough to say (as Lightfoot) that this is 'the common antithesis of flesh and spirit, of body and spirit'", for in the passage in Galatians and other places where the two words

occur similarly, the antithesis is plainly between "flesh" (ethical) and the Holy Spirit. The context and doctrine must decide in each separate instance—though even these are in some instances scarcely sufficient to command full agreement on the part of all commentators.

The obvious meaning here of *sarki* is 'body' and not the moral fleshly nature. This, together with the close parallel to 1 Cor. 5:4 are sufficient to decide for "in (my) spirit." It is worth adding, however, that *pneuma*, with at most the exception of 1 Cor. 2:11, is never in St. Paul a merely psychological but always a *religious* conception (Williams, quoting Meyer-Haupt). The passage does not suggest the workings of mind in telepathy, but of the kindled spiritual imagination working in fellowship with, and under control of, the Holy Spirit.

Sun humin = "with you," stronger than either *en humin* ("among you"), or *meth humōn* ("with you," as to locality, generally)—but rather, "joined with you in warm and close union of common interest."

Chairōn kai blepōn humōn tēn taxin kai to stereōma tēs eis Christon pisteōs humōn (joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.)

The order of the participles is peculiar. At what does he rejoice? At their order, etc.? Then why not "seeing and rejoicing?" which would be the logical order. It is questionable also to read as if equivalent to "rejoicing to see." Lightfoot says it is *not* a logical inversion; Paul looked, because it gave him satisfaction to look. Meyer thinks it means, "rejoicing at *being with you in spirit*;" or as Eadie puts it, "I am present with you in spirit, rejoicing in this ideal fellowship, and viewing your order." Alford turns from this in his fifth edition, influenced by Ellicott. The latter assumes a continuation of *sun humin*, as if the Apostle meant "I rejoice *with you*," expressing the Apostle's general feeling of sympathy with them in their difficulties while "beholding" is a more special and *explanatory* addition.

It appears to us sufficient to view "the two actions as synchronous, though not co-ordinate; and each reached in the other,"—the joy arising at what Paul has *heard* about them (ch. 1:4), causes him the more vividly to contemplate their state of harmony

and strength as if in actual view (so Moule and L. Williams). His heart was stirred with thankfulness, joy and sympathy; whilst his alert mind would be lighted up with a spiritual sensitiveness to and appreciation of the firm stand they were offering against the subtle foe.

It is of interest to note the threefold occurrence of the pronoun, *humin* (above), *humōn* here, and again at end of clause. This is probably to emphasise the Apostle's personal interest in them, as already observed, rather than to draw a contrast (as some suggest) with the *other* communities (e.g. Laodicea), where the false teaching might have gained a greater foothold.

Tēn taxis = "orderly state and conduct" (Ellicott). Lightfoot and many others refer this word *taxis* to that group of *military* metaphors used by the Apostle elsewhere (e.g. Eph. 6:11 ff, etc.), as if equivalent to "orderly array of ranks," or "standing arrayed shoulder to shoulder."

But it is used with equal freedom of the orderly conduct of a state, or a household, or even of corporate worship, as illustrated by 1 Cor. 14:40 (see context). In fact, its use in the N.T. [elsewhere in Luke 1:8; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11 (bis), 17] would suggest the *civil* rather than the military aspect as being dominant. The opposite of *taxis* is *ataxia* (disorderly), and though not found in the N.T. a closely related verb (with its cognates) *atakteō* occurs in the Thess. epistles (see 2 Thess. 3:6, 8, 11). Moulton and Milligan¹ have produced evidence from the *koinē* to show, not a military sense but "a certain remissness in *daily work and conduct*"—i.e. in a *civil* aspect, such as Paul refers to in the passages given. Strictly, the context must be the determining factor.

We prefer to understand *taxis* here, therefore, as the orderly arrangement of the harmonious and undivided church, which hitherto has not been disturbed by sectarian divisions or forsaken by its members (in line with Meyer, Alford and Abbott).

The next word *sterēoma* is likewise saddled with a military sense by a majority of commentators, but we are persuaded of the correctness of Meyer's contention (also Abbott's) that, "neither

¹ *The Vocab. of the Greek Test., Part I, p. 89.*

word has this military sense of *itself*, but from the context, and *here* the context suggests nothing of the kind."

The LXX employs *stereōma* often to translate "firmament" (Vulg. *firmamentum*, as even here), and twice to translate Heb. *sela* "cliff" or "rock" (Ps. 18:2; 71:3), and in other passages to convey the meaning of a firm and steady condition. In the N.T. (R.V.) compare the use of its cognates, (a) *stereos*, 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Pet. 5:9; etc; (b) *stereōō*, Acts 3:7, 16; 16:5. In agreement with Alford it seems best to take the word not as an abstract quality (*stereotēs*, as R.V. "steadfastness," or "firmness") but as the concrete product—"the firm structure of your faith," or "the *solid hold* of your faith in Christ."

The former *taxis* refers then to their *outward* united harmony and orderliness, *stereōma* to the *inward* fact of firm faith in Christ, upon which the former was built (see notes on 1.23).

We may gather from this that the church was still substantially sound in the faith. Observe how the Apostle lovingly commends all that he finds praiseworthy in their condition and behaviour.

Chapter 2, verse 6

hōs oun parelabete ton Christon Jēsoun ton Kurion en autō peripateite, (As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him). Vs. 6 and 7 form a transition to the more outspoken warning of verse 8. The Apostle would exhort them, whilst rejoicing at their present steadfastness of testimony, to live out in practice, to the highest degree, the truths they had been taught and had received. In so doing, they would establish their faith yet more firmly against all false teaching, and abound in exultant thanksgiving.

Hōs oun = better perhaps, "as then," instead of "therefore," for here *oun* has a retrospective and *collective* force, embracing not merely the immediately preceding clause (v. 5) but (as the next verse shows) the facts given in ch. 1:4 and 7. They had exhibited the character of their early faith, now they were to continue and grow in the same direction without swerving.

Parelabete, aorist, or point tense, referring to a definite act of faith when they received this Christ as Saviour at conversion. But the meaning does not end there. The Apostle's use of this

verb is consistent in implying—"receive from others *that which is taught*," e.g. ch. 4:17; also 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1, 3; Gal. 1:12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6; etc. And in the next verse he says, "even as ye were taught" (*ḡathōs edidachthēte*)—obviously by Epaphras their teacher. So that it was a reception of Christ in Himself, and of the *teaching* of which He is the Sum and Substance. "We cannot separate Christ as Eternal Truth, and His doctrine."

The next phrase "*ton Christon Jēsoun ton Kurion*" is unique as it stands (i.e. with the article, with the order "Christ Jesus", and without any addition after *Kurion*) though Eph. 3:11 is a very close parallel (*en tō Christō Jēsou tō Kuriō hēmōn*), adding "our" to "Lord".¹ In Phil. 2:11 we have "*Kurios Jēsous Christos*" = "Jesus Christ is Lord": and cf. Phil. 3:8 (where, however, *Christos* has no article, and *Kurios* has "my").

The question arises, what is the precise force of this phrase as here used? Does it imply, (1) "ye received the Christ, even Jesus the Lord" (as Lightfoot, Abbott and Moule); or (2) "ye received Christ Jesus *as* Lord" (Meyer, Eadie, and implied in both A.V. & R.V., and others)? In other words, is the emphasis on the *doctrine* of Christ as a historical and Divine person, or is it rather predicative of the Lordship of Christ for effective living (as in 2 Cor. 4:5, R.V. 1 Pet. 3:15, R.V.)?

In Lightfoot's view the central point in the Colossian heresy was "the subversion of the true idea of *the Christ*," hence (it is argued), the Apostle lays the emphasis on *ton Christon*, a phrase he uses frequently in this Epistle and especially prominent in this section, up to 3:4. Here it may be taken as the immediate object of *parelabete*, the article giving it almost the force of "*this Christ*," in contradistinction to the speculative "Christs" of the heretics.

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 4:5, R. V., "*Christon Jēsoun Kurion*" (= "*as Lord*"), without the article.

We are left to query why Abbott and Robertson assert that *ho Christos Jēsous* is "nowhere used by Paul" when both W. and H. and Nestle (12th ed. 1930) give it in Gal. 5:24 and Eph. 3:1. The MS. evidence is by no means inconsiderable in both places. J. N. Darby's trans. inserts it in the latter ref. Some MSS also have it at Gal. 6:12 (and Nestle inserts it in Square brackets) elsewhere in Acts 5:42; 18:5, 28.

Viewing it thus, "*Jēsoun ton Kurion*¹ is one whole, and intended to define more expressly the nature of THE Christ: As to His humanity He was verily the historical *Jesus*; as to His deity He is the THE LORD of glory. As Ellicot remarks, "the title *ton Kurion*, as both the position and the article show, is plainly emphatic—it marks Him as Lord of all, above all Principality and Power, the Creator of men and *angels* (ch. 1:16)."

At the same time, it is not inconsistent to accept the second view ("Christ Jesus *as* Lord") along with the first. It is in full harmony with Pauline usage (see refs. above) and emphasises the Lordship of Christ, which it was the chief aim of the Apostle to assert. His obvious purpose, as seen by the whole context, is not merely to assert the identity of Christ and the historical Jesus, but to acknowledge His Lordship and sovereign authority in daily life. The *doctrine* has to be expressed in actual *living* if it is to be truly effective.²

(For *peripeteō* see note ch. 1:10). If the reception of Christ the Lord refers to inner life then this walk refers to its outward manifestation—they could not but *walk in Him*.

En autō, 'in Him' (see note on ch. 1:2), repeated in v. 7; "in Whom" in v. 3. The force of *en* doubtless = "in *union* with." Christ is the *sphere* or element *in* Whom and *with* Whom all their life and practice was to be circumscribed. To walk in Him is to walk in closest fellowship with Him.

But the point is not merely one of fellowship. It is, if possible, deeper. As stated above, they had received Christ Jesus *the* Lord, as LORD. Therefore, in the full energy of that vital relationship they were *to walk* in Him, in utter obedience to His claims upon them. If they did this they would be fortified against the insidious errors and pernicious teachings that threatened their stability.

—A. McD. R.

¹ This exact phrase occurs nowhere else but with the addition of *hēmōn* (= 'Jesus *our* Lord') it is found in 1 Cor. 9: 1; Rom. 4: 24; 2 Pet. 1: 2. But here again mere usage is not a final argument; the whole tenor of the context has to be taken into consideration.

² See R. V. Rendering of 1 Pet. 3: 15a for another instance of this same title (except for the omission of 'Jesus,') and even usage.

SUPPOSING

Seven times this word occurs in the New Testament, and every time a mistake is made when people suppose. How often a word is spoken or something has been done, and we suppose, often incorrectly, and then act indiscreetly, whereas we would have been saved much by just being calm and not thinking hastily.

In Luke 2:44, "Supposing him to have been in the company." He was in the Temple on His Father's business, and they were wrong.

In John 20:15, "Supposing Him to be the gardener," and He was the gardener's Creator. Wrong again.

Acts 14:19, "Supposing he had been dead," and Paul was very much alive, for verse 21 sees him preaching the gospel. Again wrong.

Acts 16:27, "Supposing the prisoners had been fled," and Paul said, "We are all here"—don't harm yourself by supposing what doesn't exist.

Acts 27:13, "When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose," they sailed and ran into a cyclone, and we often do that by supposing. Wrong for the fifth time.

Phil. 1:16, "Supposing to add affliction," they thought they would worry Paul by preaching Christ of envy and strife, and in 5:18, this noble soul said he would rejoice.

And the seventh and last time it occurs is in 1 Tim. 6:5, a mistake is made by "supposing that gain is Godliness," whereas God links up *contentment* with it and says *that* is "great gain".

How often we misjudge by supposing!

 THE DIVINELY IMPERATIVE "MUST"

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

For the *Sinner*: "Ye *must* be born again" (3: 7).

For the *Saviour*: "So *must* the Son of Man be lifted up . . ." (3: 14).

For the *Saint*: "He *must* increase, but I *must* decrease" (3: 30).

For the *Seeker* of Souls: "He *must* needs go through Samaria" (4: 4).

For *Spiritual* Worshipers: "God is spirit, and they that worship *must* worship Him in spirit and in truth" (4: 24).

For the *Sent-one* of God: "I *must* work the works of God" (9: 4).

For the *Shepherd* of saints: "Other sheep I have . . . them also I *must* bring . . ." (10: 16).

For the *Security* of saints: The Crucified Saviour "*must* rise again from the dead"—as He did (20: 9).

There are no hopes, no aims, no ideals or expectation ever realized which are not built on *the necessities and essentialities of Truth*.

Mr. Hill's third article on 'THE HOLY TRINITY' is held over to next issue.