

Life is in God alone

When God created life it was empowered into animation by the breath of God (Gen 2:7). To have life, one had to receive something from God. However, after the Fall men who are sinners, and who are under God's curse, procreate and make new living beings. Such men are no longer in God's image (which was ruined by the Fall¹) and so these are lesser creatures than God originally created. Children that are born to people of the Adamic race are not righteous, not godly, are not in the image of God and are not really living the life that God originally gave Adam before the Fall. This life is substandard, weak, sinful and cannot do any good at all; it can only will sinful acts (Rm 3:10-18).

This means that all human beings that are not Christians do not have proper life. It is a kind of living but it is not life as God intended it because their spirit is dead within them. True life involves a spiritual component that is active towards God; sinners do not have this spiritual component and thus are considered to be dead. This is the condition which God warned Adam that would arise if he disobeyed God's command: 'of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die', (Gen 2:17). The devil's temptation that he would be like God was the archetypal lie, which is still peddled by false religions. What Adam gained was knowledge of evil; he had no knowledge of evil before because he was holy and without blemish.

Adam continued to live physically, but died spiritually towards God; fellowship with God was lost, along with the image of God. All unbelieving men are, thus, dead in sins, only knowing evil.

*And you **He made alive**, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Eph 2:1-3*

Let the dead bury their own dead. Matt 8:22

It is important to understand the origin of the life in God because we must not live like men in the world.

Light – symbol of life

Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Eph 5:14

Note that the expected object of this sentence ought to be 'life' but the Spirit uses 'light'. This is because light and life are nearly synonymous in Scripture; light is a symbol of divine life. God is life and God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16); indeed John tells us that God is light (1 Jn 1:5). Jesus said that he is the light (Jn 12:35-36, 46, 8:12) while the apostle John introduces Jesus as the light of God (Jn 1:7-9). Light is typical of life:

¹ The idea that all men are still in God's image is preposterous and almost blasphemous since men are sinners and cannot bear witness to God at all. They are in death and follow the devil (Eph 2:1-2). Jesus even said to certain sinners that their father was the devil and not God and thus they followed his unrighteousness. Children of wrath, enemies of God, cannot be in the image of God. God is intrinsically holy and this is his most important attribute. Man was created as a rational being and holy, and thus was made in the image of God. Since man no longer has holiness, he cannot be in God's image. The key part of the image is holiness; rationality is just the means of expressing this holiness. Rationality is not the key part of the image. Fallen angels are rational but they are not in God's image.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. Jn 1:4

The expression of life in this current world is like the appearance of light. Thus when a living word of Scripture is opened up to a person, giving them revelation of a certain truth, it is spoken as being like having light shone upon them. The truth they received has enlightened their mind and brought life.

This is why sinners are said to be walking in darkness (Isa 9:2, 50:10, 60:2; Matt 4:16; Lk 1:79). Sinners have no life, have no knowledge of God and are thus in darkness. Being without life is being in darkness.

Believers have two natures, and must choose each day which to express. The old nature is the Adamic life, which is in spiritual darkness and death. If believers live in this nature they will experience darkness and be effectively dead; nothing they do will prosper. However, if believers walk in the Spirit and put on the new nature they will be living in life and walking in the light. Everything they do will be blessed. For this reason believers are continually exhorted to walk worthy (Eph 4:1; Col 1:10; 1 Thess 2:12) and to walk in the light,

Walk as children of light. Eph 5:8

O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD. Isa 2:5

So, Christian widows who seek after pleasure, instead of godliness, and backslide are living in death,

Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. 1 Tim 5:5-6

So also those who live in the flesh instead of walking in the Spirit are in death,

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life. Rm 8:5-6

So also the church at Sardis,

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"'. Rev 3:1

Living in the old nature is living in the life of normal men and it is living in the realm of death as far as God is concerned. We must understand more about the life of God that we have received and seek to live in it.

The life of believers

Believers receive life through the divine act of regeneration, being born again. This is not figurative language but believers are made into a new type of humanity, they are new creatures.

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor 5:17

As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Rm 6:4

It is of immense importance that disciples understand this. They are no longer men derived from Adam, they are part of a new creation; they are a new type of human being, one without sin.

However, this becoming a new creature is not separate from divine life but an inclusion into it. Believers are made into new creatures in Christ. Believers are made alive together with Christ, they are joined with him in resurrection.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him. Col 2:13

[God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:5-6

Christ *who is* our life. Col 3:4

The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim 1:1

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rm 8:2

The end of the natural life of men, living in continual spiritual death, is the death of their physical life and entrance into torment (Lk 16:24). Believers have short-circuited this process by dying with Christ at the time of their conversion and then being spiritually raised with Christ (regeneration). The change of their life at the end, when it is clothed with a new glorious body, is but the consummation of what has already transpired at conversion. The believer's real life is one of resurrection and newness in Christ now.

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection. Rm 6:4-5

Thus believers have real life because they are in Christ and not in Adam. In Adam all is death; in Christ all is life. Scripture calls this type of life, 'eternal life' since it is the life of the eternal God.

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. Jn 20:31

So grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rm 5:21

The gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rm 6:23

We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 Jn 5:20

This is the purpose of the Gospel, to bring life and light to the elect of God.

... who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Tim 1:9-10

The power that works this newness of life in believers is the power of Christ's resurrection, That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. Phil 3:10

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*. Eph 1:18-20

The expression of this life is in patient well doing.

The consequence of all this is that believers are living a completely different type of life to that enjoyed by mere men. They need to understand how this life operates by the Spirit and how powerful it is within them. The chief expression of this power in experience is the ability to be long-suffering and patient with joy in the face of trials,

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father. Col 1:11-12

This is an important Scripture. Note that believers are strengthened with all might (what can be more powerful than 'all might'), and this might is according to God's glorious power. This is the almighty power of God, as revealed in the raising of Christ, that is given to believers for being patient. It is not given to effect miracles or raise the dead but to be long-suffering, giving thanks. The testimony of God is seen in the patience of believers when they suffer and yet give thanks. There is no greater testimony. This is the witness of the cross.

Those foolish people² who think that the power in the Christian life is directed at healing and miracle working have failed to read God's word correctly and understand how this life operates. They also fail to see what God requires of us to be a testimony to his name today. The glory of miracle working is but following the type of life that sinful men have, wanting power and notoriety. The same could be said of those Christian leaders who seek to be a testimony to God by building a big church in an important town and filling it with hundreds of members. Again this is thinking like the world which God tells us is not only sinful but satanic (see later). We must not think according to the basic principles of the world because we are a different type of creature than mere men.

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 Christ. Col 2:8

Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked. 2 Pt 3:17

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. 1 Cor 3:19

The course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. Eph 2:2

When we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ... But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements. Gal 4:9

Worse is that these desires for a loud testimony are contrary to God's clear word (such as building small churches in homes).

² Am I justified in using the word 'foolish' here in the light of Matt 5:22? I believe it is most appropriate. The warning in Matthew 5:22 is about anger towards a brother without cause expressed in disparaging language. In other words, insulting a brother without any reason out of pure anger. However, when using the term in a factual sense, with good reason, is acceptable as part of an admonition. Thus the Spirit uses the term 'fool' repeatedly (especially in Proverbs) as a warning. God uses it (Lk 12:20). Jesus uses it (Matt 7:26) and Paul uses it, even of believers (Gal 3:1-3). I am using it of Charismatic charlatans who prey upon the gullible and cause spiritual abuse and fraud.

Deception

The essence of deception is to change a person's thinking so that he begins to think according to the world, according to the life of the world, which is according to satanic principles. The basic principles of the world are demonic, which is why every wind of false doctrine is demonic (1 Tim 4:1).

The world, at the end when its sin is full and ripe for judgment, is the abode of demons, **Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. Rev 18:2-3**

Babylon is the fallen world, seen in false religious terms, and the world becomes the expression of demonic principles. What begins with idolatry ends with the wicked corruption of the entire society, and part of this corruption is the desire for wealth and luxury.

The point of deception is to make Christians live like ordinary men and not according to resurrection power; this is walking in the old nature. Those who bring teaching to enforce this deception cheat believers. They are robbers and plunderers.

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 Christ. Col 2:8

Christians have real life and they are meant to live that divine life according to divine instructions. The devil knows the power that comes from this and seeks to do everything he can, through deception, to make Christians live an ordinary life, being preoccupied with ordinary things and building churches according to worldly principles. Those false teachers who do the devil's work in deceiving the people are plunderers.

'**Beware lest anyone cheat you**' literally means, beware lest anyone carry you off as booty or as captive; plunder you; take control of you; and is figuratively used of brainwashing someone with religious error or false teaching to take control of, lead astray, prey on someone spiritually. False teachers are plunderers, brainwashers, and serve the devil's purposes. They do it by making you think like mere men, like the world.

The means are as follows:

1. Through philosophy.
2. Through empty deceit.
3. According to the tradition of men.
4. According to the basic principles of the world.
5. And not according to Christ.

Through philosophy

Meaning literally, 'the love of wisdom' it is used as zeal for skill in any art or science or branch of knowledge. Paul only uses this once for the theology, or rather theosophy, of Jewish Christian ascetics, which busied itself with refined and speculative enquiries into the nature and classes of angels, into the ritual of the Mosaic law and the regulations of Jewish tradition respecting practical life (*Thayer's expanded lexicon*). It is used in a negative sense in the NT; of a view of the world opposed to that derived from divine revelation or understanding (*Friberg's Lexicon*).

In other words, deception uses worldly ideas, seeking to get Christians into the life of men.

Through empty deceit

The essential meaning of this is vanity, emptiness. The deceptive teachings of men are filled with empty thoughts, talks that have no quality, speeches that are empty and devoid of any spiritual meat. I suspect that very many sermons these days are filled with such emptiness; this is why there is no spiritual fruit from them. Empty teaching produces empty, fruitless disciples.

According to the tradition of men

This means the body of teaching of mere men. It is the teaching that arises from the world of men that has no life.

According to the basic principles of the world

'Basic principles, is 'elements', in the sense of that which is the foundation of a thing; the material causes; the elementary principles from which things arise. An old word describing this is 'rudiments'. In essence this is talking about the elementary principles behind the unreal life of men; the basic principles of the life in the world, not divine life.

And not according to Christ

This sums everything else up; the various means of deceit, or false teaching, are not of Christ. If they are not of Christ then they are of the devil – plain and simple.

So the basis of deceit is – the basic principles of the life of this world, which are set in motion by Satan.

If you are living and working by the principles of this world, this natural life, then you are in opposition to God and are following Satan. This alone condemns pretty well most of the church's tradition and practice in the world today. Its leadership structures are worldly; its focus on a dedicated building is worldly; its dependence upon money is worldly; its reliance upon government tax rebates is worldly, and so on. All these things are following the basic principles of human life, and this life is in opposition to God. Following these ideas is demonic and will cause untold damage. Many of the expressions of the modern church has arisen from the old nature, from worldly thinking and from death.

Losing your reward

Following these worldly ideas is called being cheated, or plundered, by Paul. The cheating that comes from thinking like men is to lose your reward. This is a very serious matter. Those who seek glory, honour, power, position and money in this life will lose their heavenly reward, because they have already had their reward by robbing the Lord's people in this life.

Let no one cheat (defraud) you of your reward. Col 2:18

Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward. 2 Jn 1:8

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Rev 3:11

Thus leaders whose whole life has been based upon worldly thinking, upon the principles of this life, will lose their rewards. They had an affluent life as a result of the sacrificial giving of the Lord's people (who are often poor) and did no work with their own hands to support themselves for decades (unlike Paul). Thus they have received their reward already, having taken all this wealth when Scripture does not support it (except in the case of men totally given to the word, such as itinerant preachers).

It is also the penalty for following heresy and walking away from the truth. If you are a genuine Christian who follows heresy, you will get to heaven but will lose your rewards and not have a full inheritance. The glory will still be wonderful, but your position in the new world will be of a lesser responsibility (a crown, representing authority, can be taken away³).

This shows the seriousness of not following the life that God gives us but being bewitched to focus on a lesser kind of life.

If you think that Christians will not be judged and can suffer loss, then think again,
We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Rm 14:10-12

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God. 1 Cor 4:5

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10 [The root meaning of the word 'bad' here is 'evil'.]

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Gal 6:7-8

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. He who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Col 3:23-25

All the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. Rev 2:23

The simplicity of Christian life

Has God not chosen the poor of this world. Jm 2:5

It is astounding that the originator and head of the world's greatest religion led a very simple life. Remember that Jesus is God in the flesh and when God came to dwell on earth amongst men he did not come as the king he is, but as a poor Jew.

Jesus not only became a man to achieve redemption, but also to demonstrate the Christian life. Jesus models the way we should live. Jesus lived humbly and in the lowest estate amongst society. He had no home when he left his mother to begin his ministry but even his parents were poor giving the cheapest sacrificial offering on Jesus' birth. Though he later had some wealthy patrons, who gave him gifts such as the tunic without seams, Jesus' life was poor and very simple.

The life of God on earth was expressed in simplicity and not extravagance or opulence. This establishes a principle for Christian discipleship, which is obvious but is also

³ This verse (Rev 3:11), amongst many others, demonstrates that rewards can be lost. Thus rewards are blessings given by God for work done in this life, for being faithful. Those few teachers (usually Strict Baptists) who claim that there are no rewards are totally wrong. Apart from the scores of passages teaching rewards, their claim that 'crown' always means the gift of eternal life in Christ are shown to be wrong here since this crown can be lost. If it meant eternal life here then the verse teaches that salvation can be lost; something these Baptists would not wish to affirm.

expressed in the denunciation of riches and rich people (cf. Jm 2:6, 5:1). This principle, on its own, destroys all the fallacies promoted by Word of Faith teachers proclaiming a health and wealth false gospel.

The Christian life and church practice are very simple. This simplicity tends to be corrupted by association with the human world and both Christian living and church life become more complicated. This is dangerous.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 2 Cor 11:3

For instance, church life is very simple, easy to run and costs no money – if it meets according to God’s word in a home with a small team of equal elders who are not salaried, and where everyone is subject to each other. On the contrary, the practice of most churches, following the basic principles (i.e. satanic principles) of the world are to have an expensive dedicated building, large numbers of members who are difficult to reach individually, a hierarchical leadership team with a single authoritarian leader and a formal meeting structure. None of these things are Scriptural but they do follow the pragmatic thinking of the world, and thus Satan.

It is safe to say that when a leader promotes a plan to enlarge a church building, or to have a bigger new one, or to engage in a strategy entirely based on accruing large numbers, he is followed the basic principles of the life of the world, and thus a satanic strategy. The life of God is simple.

The aid to clarifying other doctrines

Realising that natural men do not have proper life helps us to understand many other aspects of theology. For instance, many Christians err in thinking that God loves all men because they have a superficial understanding of God, because they have insufficient knowledge of the Bible (which blatantly says that God hates certain people), but primarily because they think that all men are made in God’s image. When you realise that only believers have real life you understand why it is impossible for God to love men whose life is fallen, ungodly, sinful and lawless. There is no way that a holy God can love natural men who have no real life. God loves his own, and his own are those who are in Christ, and Christ is the apple of God’s eye. These elect were chosen in Christ from eternity, unlike ordinary men who were passed by from eternity and left in their sins.

The difference between the elect who are loved and the reprobate who are under God’s wrath (Jn 3:36) is one of life. The elect have real life, life from God; the reprobate have sinful life, lesser life, life dominated by Satan, the ruler of this world of sin.

Hold fast to Christ and the life he gives

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 God. Therefore, if you died with Christ 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. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on

things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 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 God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 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, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

Col 2:18–3:10

This passage needs to be read and studied in its entirety, very carefully. It marks a progression that can be summarised as:

- a) We must be careful not to lose our reward.
- b) Some examples are given as to how this can occur, but there are many more reasons. A key reason is the vanity caused by trusting in your own fleshly, earthly, worldly mind; that is thinking like the life of the world; being in the old nature.
- c) The opposite of this is holding fast to Christ; living in the new nature. This ensures growth.
- d) Holding fast to Christ involves having died to the world and its form of life.
- e) More examples are given of this worldly form of life – legalism, formalism, superficiality, and such like. He particularly has in mind the outward form of religion found in Jewish formalities but also in the asceticism of Gnostic ideas.⁴
- f) A key aspect of the life of the world is the commandments and doctrines of men. This includes all the false teaching and erroneous practices found in modern churches.
- g) All these things merely give an appearance of wisdom and religion but are of no value in actually living the life of God, which alone controls the lusts of the flesh.
- h) Paul then instructs true Christians who are living in the new nature to do the following: to seek the above – i.e. set your mind on heavenly matters, on matters of the new life in Christ, on those things that please God. Focus on Christ who is seated with God in the glory and with all authority. Direct your mind away from earthly matters and direct it to spiritual matters. Keep in mind that you have died to this world, to this earthly life, and remember that your real life is that which is in Christ, hidden in God. Consider the glory that will be revealed in the giving of a new, glorious, spiritual body like Christ's and the enjoyment of heaven.
- i) Having considered all these things, the practical point is to actually put to death the works of the old nature; Paul thus lists some (not all) of the expressions of the old nature to help us identify that we are in it. These things attract the wrath of God.
- j) He again demands that we must put off the old nature and gives yet more examples of its expression. [This shows that those teachers who think that at conversion believers have once-for-all put off the old nature and that it is dead and gone (like Martyn Lloyd-Jones) are very wrong.] This time his list is more mundane and less obvious (anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, lying); this shows how serious the old nature is and how often believers are in it. Many churches are full of these things; how much malice and anger are evidenced in aggressive Christian web sites?
- k) Paul ends with a final exhortation that since we once put off the old man and put on Christ at conversion, we must continue being renewed in knowledge by continually putting on the new man and learning more about Christ – in other words, living in the eternal life that God gives.

⁴ For instance the references to Gnosticism includes the worship of angels and asceticism. Both these ideas also refer to certain Judaising tendencies of the time, which included a worship of angels in some Jewish sects. Commentators see references to Judaising in other parts of this letter also.

Conclusion

Christianity is not adopting anything. It is not adopting a new type of behaviour; it is not adopting new habits, such as church-going; it is not adopting new friends; it is not even adopting new ideas (theology). Christianity is living a new kind of life which is not like the life of sinners. This life is in Christ and from God.

You cannot tack Christianity on to living like the world lives. That is hypocrisy and death. Christianity is the actual living of the life that God supplies in Christ. Thus righteous behaviour is the actual lifestyle that Christ lives; being in church is living with the family of God; theology is the study of God who is our Father. These are all expressions of new life and not hobbies or habits grafted on to our old life.

To live this life one has to die to the old life, which we carry with us until Christ returns when it is removed forever. We died with Christ at conversion and were raised in new life; but this gave us two natures and we must choose daily that which we express. Your heart was cleansed and renewed in regeneration but must be further cleansed when it chooses to sin. Temptation is the strategic act of the enemy to get us to choose the old nature; his purpose is not simply for us to commit sin but to live in the wrong life that has no power or holiness. Repentance is the choosing of the new nature and walking in resurrection power. Renewing of the mind is putting on the new nature and learning more about the new life in Christ. The more we put on Christ (the new nature) the more we walk in the Spirit of Christ and the more we learn about God.

Knowledge and practice are identified in Scripture. That is, true knowledge, divine understanding, always leads to good practice, to righteousness. Failure of practice is always the result of a lack of knowledge or adopting false knowledge. Thus teaching is a crucial issue for believers. Theology is vital for righteousness. The person that grows in his knowledge of God is the person that grows in holiness.

Thus Paul in Colossians 2, verses 2-3 says,

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 God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He wanted the Colossian believers to grow in grace and to improve their testimony of love and this was to be achieved by assurance of understanding and knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and Christ. Wisdom and knowledge are storehouses of treasure that enable people to live richly in life. Those people who understand God and know Christ by experience will lead worthy lives. Thus the purpose of Paul's writing is expressed in chapter one, verses 9-10

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 Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

To walk worthy we must know God's will and understand the attributes and decrees of God. If we do not know God we cannot walk right. Theology, the study of God, is the absolute vital foundation for Christian living; without theology there is no Christian testimony at all.

So, the believer must live in the life that God gave him in Christ and not live like the world. To do this he needs to focus on Christ at all times; choose the new nature; and above all

must learn the wisdom and knowledge of God, through studying his word, to give him the discernment to choose right. To fail in this is to live in death and lose your reward.

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