

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Preaching Jesus

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. (Colossians 1:27-29)

Early in my ministry a very wise man and a good Bible student taught me a simple principle of Biblical interpretation. Always anchor your mind in the passage. As you begin to form thoughts about the Holy Spirit's intent, weigh your possible interpretations against the passage. Some ideas will say more than the passage says; some will say less than the passage. If your ideas either understate or overstate the passage, you have the wrong idea, the wrong interpretation.

Sadly a large number of commentaries present ideas regarding this passage that hopelessly confuse the role of the preacher with the role of the Lord Jesus Christ. They suggest that the presenting of every man in this passage refers to the Second Coming and the triumphant appearance of all God's elect before the Father with Jesus. However, this interpretation requires that we ignore a glaring contradiction of the idea with other Scriptures. For example, consider this passage that few commentaries and Bible students will deny refers to the Second Coming.

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (Hebrews 2:13)

In this Second Coming passage, do we see each preacher presenting the people he convinced to believe the gospel to God? Or do we see the Lord Jesus Christ presenting them to the Father? Simply put, you can't have it both ways. Either Jesus presents His redeemed elect to the Father, or preachers present them. Preachers are not God's one and only Son. They are not God's one and only Savior of sinners. They teach, they warn, they instruct, but they do not redeem, and they shall not finally present anyone to the Father at the Second Coming.

How then do we interpret this passage? How and when do preachers present people they've taught in the gospel to the Lord Jesus Christ? The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary explains "every man" in this passage.

every . . . every man--without distinction of Jew or Gentile, great or small....

every man--Paul is zealous lest the false teachers should seduce *one single* soul of Christ's people at Colosse. So each individual among them should be zealous for himself and his neighbor. Even one soul is of incalculable value.¹

The commentary makes two pertinent points. First, "every man" refers without distinction to Jews and Gentiles, great and small. The appeal of the gospel to God's regenerated elect, is not confined to one superficial class of people. Gentiles are not excluded from the gospel because they are Gentiles. Jews are not left out because they are Jews.

The commentary further refines the application of the term in this verse, "Paul is zealous lest the false teachers should seduce *one single* soul of Christ's people at Colosse," Paul wrote the Colossian letter to every member of the Colossian Church. He did not want the Gnostic seducers to lure even one child of God away from the truth of the gospel.

If we accept these "every man" terms as all-encompassing universals, we cannot avoid concluding the errant view of universal salvation, the highly sentimental, but also highly unbiblical notion that God shall ultimately save every human being. Hell, according to this errant notion, shall be empty, and heaven shall realize a population explosion.

A further interpretational filter appears in this lesson.

perfect in Christ--who is the *element in living union with whom alone each believer can find perfection: perfectly instructed (Eph 4:13)* in doctrine, and *full grown or matured* in faith and practice.²

¹ **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary**, copied from SwordSearcher Bible software.

² JFB, SwordSearcher.

The perfection of which Paul writes reflects the truth of his teaching, not spiritual or moral sinless perfection such as we have positionally and legally in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Colossian letter and any other opportunity he may find, Paul will take advantage of every occasion to teach the error of the false Gnostic gospel and the truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. His objective is to present these disciples to His Lord, and their Lord, in the "here and now" with perfect understanding of the gospel and as fruitful believers in Christ as a consequence of Paul's teaching.

This interpretation comfortably harmonizes with the various passages that reserve the final, Second Coming presentation of all the elect to the Father by the Lord Jesus Christ. It also supports the New Testament's teaching regarding the purpose and role of the gospel.

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" (Ephesians 4:12-15, KJV)

Notice the similar terminology to our study lesson; "...perfecting of the saints..." "...unto a perfect man...." In this true work of the gospel, preaching should confront and transform God's children who hear it, not superficially entertain them. We live in an age that expects preachers to entertain, to be good politicians who tell people what they want to hear, not what God wants them to hear.

Paul uses two terms to frame his preaching.

1. ...warning every man... The word translated "warning" means, "to impart understanding (a mind for something)," with acc. of person (e.g., Test. Jos. 6:8), "to set right," "to have a corrective influence on someone," with double acc. "to lay on the heart of someone." $\nu\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ can mean "to impart

acc. acc. accusative.
Test. Jos. Test. Jos. *Testament of Joseph*.
acc. acc. accusative.

understanding," "to teach"³ Paul will not rest with superficial, politically correct entertainment. He strives to touch mind and heart in his hearers, to change the way they think and act. Nothing less satisfies the New Testament gospel's objective.

2. ...and teaching every man in all wisdom. "...teaching..." refers to the imparting of knowledge, functional and effective knowledge. "The word calls attention to two aspects, being applied on the one side to the insight of the one who is to be instructed and on the other to the knowledge presupposed in the teacher. In relation to the second aspect, especially when it is a question of practical arts and crafts, the example of the teacher forms a bridge to the knowledge and ability of the pupil.² Thus $\delta\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$ is the word used more especially for the impartation of practical or theoretical knowledge when there is continued activity with a view to gradual, systematic and therefore all the more fundamental assimilation."⁴

Notice in the definition of knowledge the process "...is continued activity with a view to gradual, systematic, and therefore all the more fundamental assimilation." This definition matches perfectly with a gradual growing of people under the influence of the gospel to a greater "assimilation" of its truths into their lives. Our "presentation" to the Father at the Second Coming shall be an instantaneous event, "...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...." (1 Corinthians 15:52) The presentation in our study lesson occurs gradually over time as those who hear, believe, and work to obey the gospel gradually become transformed by its absorption into their minds (intellect), hearts (emotions), and lives (personal actions or conduct).

Some will always protest that this idea of the gospel is not realistic. People simply refuse to change so easily. Paul counters that the power behind this transformational teaching is God's power at work both in the hearers and in the preachers of the gospel. We need to expect life-changing results from our preaching.

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-).

² ² "Pupil" is not to be understood here as though the scholar were merely passive; the relationship is rather sociological.

⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel....

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