

THE VISION AND REALIZATION OF THE ONE NEW MAN

BY ED MARKS

The Vision of the One New Man

God's ultimate intention in His creation was to have a corporate man to express Him and to represent Him. God created man in His own image for His expression and gave man His dominion so that man would represent Him to deal with His enemy (Gen. 1:26). The church as the corporate new man in the new creation bears God's image for God's expression and fights against God's enemy for God's kingdom (Col. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:15; 4:24; 6:10-20). What was divided and scattered in the old man at Babel is recovered in the oneness of the new man (Gen. 11:5-9; Acts 2:5-12; Col. 3:10-11). The new man as the masterpiece of God was created through Christ's death on the cross. The word for *masterpiece* in Greek is *poiema*, literally meaning "poem"; it denotes the Maker's work of art to express His infinite wisdom and divine design. Ephesians 2:10 says that we were "created" in Christ Jesus to be His masterpiece, and verse 15 reveals that the new man was created through Christ's death on the cross. Thus, we may say that His death was a new-man-creating death. While Christ was dying, He was doing His greatest work in the invisible, divine, and mystical realm. He was creating His masterpiece, the one new man.

Ephesians 2:15 reveals that on the cross Christ abolished in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances that He might create the two—the Jews and the Gentiles—in Himself into one new man, so making peace. We need to pay careful attention to two phrases in verse 15: *in His flesh* and *in Himself*. "In His flesh" Christ terminated all the negative things in the universe through His all-inclusive death. He terminated Satan, the devil, the enemy of God (Heb. 2:14); sin (Rom. 8:3; John 1:29); the flesh of fallen man (Gal. 5:24); the world, the cosmos, the evil system of Satan (John 12:31); the old creation represented by the old man (Rom. 6:6); and the separating ordinances of the law (Eph. 2:15). "In Himself" as the sphere, element, and essence, Christ created the Jews and the Gentiles into

one new man. He is not only the Creator of the one new man, the church, but also the sphere in which and the element and essence with which the new man was created. As the element and essence of the one new man, He has made God's divine nature one entity with humanity (2 Pet. 1:4; Col. 3:10-11). In the creating of the new man, first our natural man was crucified by Christ, and then through the crossing out of the old man, Christ imparted the divine element into us, causing us to become a new entity in the universe, a new invention of God (Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:17).

The law of the commandments in ordinances is not the law of the moral commandments but the law of the ritual commandments, such as the ordinances of circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, and eating certain foods. Ordinances are the different forms or ways of living and worship, which create enmity and division among mankind. On the cross Christ abolished all the regulations regarding living and worship, regulations that have divided the nations (Col. 2:14). From the time of Babel, mankind has been divided by ordinances concerning the ways of living and worship. We should overcome Babel by being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3-4). Christ Himself should be our only source; we should not allow anything of our background, culture, or nationality to be our source, because in the new man Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11). The worldly people regard cultural differences as a source of prestige, but in Christ we have lost this prestige. Now our only prestige is Christ and the genuine oneness of the Spirit. If the believers in Christ would be willing to let go of their cultural pride, it will be possible to have the proper church life unveiled in the New Testament.

In the one new man Christ is all the members (in life and nature but not in the Godhead) and is in all the members—He is all and in all. The Christ who dwells in us is the constituent of the new man (1:27; 3:11). Because Christ is all the members of the new man, there is no

possibility, no room, for any natural person (for any race, nationality, culture, or social status) in the new man. No matter what kind of person we may be, as far as the one new man is concerned, we are all nobodies. In the one new man there is only one person, one “somebody”—the all-inclusive Christ (2:17; 3:4, 11).

For the new man we all need to take Christ as our person. Christ Himself is our peace in the one new man, and He is the One making His home in our hearts (Eph. 2:15; 3:17). Christ is in all of us as one person; therefore, we all have only one person (Gal. 2:20). For the practical existence of the one new man, the total person of the old man must be put away, and we must live by our new person (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22-24). We need to live a life in the new man by taking Christ as our person, with Him as the One making all the decisions in us. Once we see that we are a part of the new man, we will not be able to decide things merely by ourselves. We need to see that we are a corporate Body and a corporate new man and that both our living (person) and our moving (life) are corporate (1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4-5). The members of the one new man “with one accord” and “with one mouth” (15:6) all “speak the same thing” (1 Cor. 1:10). Although we are many and come from many places, we have one mouth and we speak the same thing; this is because we all are the one new man having only one person—the all-inclusive Christ. As He makes His home in our hearts (Eph. 3:17), He becomes the unique content of our speaking, and He Himself is our peace, our miraculous harmony, in the one new man (2:14).

The Realization of the One New Man

Allowing the Peace of Christ to Arbitrate in Our Hearts

For the realization of the one new man, we need to allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts. Colossians 3:12-15 says,

Put on therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, inward parts of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also should you forgive. And over all these things put on love, which is the uniting bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.

The Greek term for *arbitrate* can also be rendered “umpire, preside, or be enthroned as a ruler and decider of everything” (Lee, Recovery Version, note 2). The arbitrating peace of Christ dissolves our complaint against anyone. In our living in the new man with the members

of the Body of Christ, we may be offended at someone and be conscious of a conflict within our being as to whether or not we should forgive this offending party. Thus, there is the need of inward arbitration to settle the disputes within us. We need to give place to the presiding peace of Christ and allow this peace, which is the oneness of the new man, to rule within us and have the final word. We need to set aside our opinion, our concept, and listen to the word of the indwelling Referee.

If we allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts, this peace will settle all the disputes among us. We shall have peace with God vertically and with the saints horizontally. Through the arbitration of the peace of Christ, our problems are solved, and the friction between the saints disappears. Then the Body life is preserved in sweetness, and the new man is maintained in a practical way. The arbitrating peace of Christ is Christ working within us to exercise His rule over us, to speak the last word, and to make the final decision (cf. Isa. 9:6-7). If we stay under the ruling of the enthroned peace of Christ, we shall not offend others or damage them. Rather, by the Lord’s grace and with His peace, we shall minister Christ as life to others. This peace should hold all the believers together to become their uniting bond (Eph. 4:3).

Letting the Word of Christ Dwell in Us Richly

For the realization of the one new man, we need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16). When the peace of Christ arbitrates in us and keeps us in a situation full of oneness and harmony, we become the place of God’s speaking, His oracle (vv. 15-17; Rev. 2:1, 7). God’s speaking requires oneness; division causes God’s speaking to diminish, even to cease altogether (cf. Lev. 1:1). Since oneness is a necessary condition for God’s speaking, we need to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts. For the word of Christ to dwell in us richly means that it has adequate room in us to permeate and saturate our whole being. It is crucial for us to let the word of Christ enter into us, dwell in us, prevail in us, and replace our concepts, opinions, and philosophies (Psa. 119:130; John 8:31; 15:7). The word of God enlightens us (Psa. 119:105), nourishes us (Matt. 4:4; 1 Tim. 4:6), and waters us to quench our thirst (Isa. 55:1, 8-11). The word of God also strengthens us (1 John 2:14; Prov. 4:20-22), washes us (Eph. 5:26), and builds us up (Acts 20:32). The word of God completes us, perfects us (2 Tim. 3:15-17), and edifies us by sanctifying us (John 17:17). By allowing the word of God to inhabit us, we can become a proper human being, a God-man filled with Christ as the reality of the attributes of God (Col. 3:16-25; Phil. 4:5-8).

Persevering in Prayer

For the realization of the one new man, we also need to

persevere in prayer (Col. 4:2). We need to allow adequate time for prayer, which will enable us to absorb more of the riches of Christ as the all-inclusive good land, the One who is our God-allotted portion and the One in whom we walk and live (1:12; 2:6-7). We need to take time to absorb the Lord, contacting Him in a definite and prevailing way (Luke 8:13; Matt. 14:22-23; 6:6). The best time to meet with God personally and privately is in the early morning. At that time we can go to Him alone, without any persons, matters, or things to distract us (Mark 1:35). When we pray, coming forward to the throne of grace, grace will become like a river flowing in us and supplying us (Heb. 4:16; cf. Rev. 22:1).

In order to fight on God's side against Satan, we need to persevere in prayer. We should follow the example of Daniel, who prayed habitually three times a day with thanksgiving to the Lord, even at the risk of his life. As those who take sides with God in prayer, we realize that the whole fallen universe is against us and, in particular, against our prayer. Resistance to prayer lies not only outside of us but also within us (Matt. 26:41). We need to overcome this resistance by setting aside definite times for prayer and by having the attitude that prayer is our most important business and that nothing should be allowed to interfere with it (Acts 12:5, 12). We also need to remain in an atmosphere of prayer by continually exercising our spirit (Eph. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:7; 2 Tim. 1:7; Col. 1:3, 9). We need to pray without ceasing, to persevere in prayer, keeping ourselves intimately connected to the Lord (1 Thes. 5:17; Matt. 26:41; Col. 2:19). Even in the smallest details we need to inquire of the Lord. To do this is to persevere in prayer and thereby to live Christ (cf. Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:6-8). As we are ruled by the peace of Christ and inhabited by the word of Christ through persevering in prayer, He permeates and replaces us with Himself until all our natural distinctions have been eliminated, and we become the one new man in reality (Col. 3:15-17; 4:2-3; 3:10-11).

*Enjoying the All-inclusive Christ
as the Reality of all Positive Things*

For the practical existence and realization of the one new man, we also need to enjoy Christ as the reality of all positive things. Colossians 2:16-18 says,

AS CHRIST MAKES HIS HOME
IN OUR HEARTS, HE BECOMES THE
UNIQUE CONTENT OF OUR SPEAKING,
AND HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE,
OUR MIRACULOUS HARMONY,
IN THE ONE NEW MAN.

Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbath, which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ. Let no one defraud you by judging you unworthy of your prize.

As with a man's physical body, the body in 2:17 is the substance, and like the shadow of a man's body, the rituals in the law are a shadow of Christ, who is the substance and reality of the gospel. Colossians unveils such an all-inclusive Christ as the focus of God's economy (1:17-18; 3:11). Daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly Christ is the reality of every positive thing, implying the universal extensiveness of the all-inclusive Christ. Daily Christ is our food and drink for our satisfaction and strengthening (1 Cor. 10:3-4). Weekly Christ is our Sabbath for our completion and rest in Him (Matt. 11:28-30). Monthly Christ is our new moon as a new beginning with light in darkness (1 John 1:5; John 1:4-5; 8:12). Also, yearly Christ is our feast for our joy and enjoyment (1 Cor. 5:8). The extensive Christ, who is full of attractiveness and rich in magnetism, is the essence of the Bible and the unique reality of our living (Luke 24:44; John 5:39-40; Matt. 1:1; cf. Rev. 22:21).

According to the context, the "prize" in Colossians 2:18 is the enjoyment of Christ as the body of the shadows. To be defrauded of our prize is to be defrauded of the subjective enjoyment of Christ (cf. Gen. 15:1; Phil. 3:8). Our need is for the subjective Christ to become our enjoyment to complete the divine revelation of Christ within us (Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19). If we are short in the experience and enjoyment of Christ, we are also short concerning God's revelation of Christ (Col. 1:25-28). Whatever we do day by day should remind us of Christ as the reality of that thing. If we follow the practice of taking Christ as the reality of all the material things in our daily life, our daily walk will be revolutionized and transformed, and we will be full of Christ (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:19-21). We need to enjoy Christ daily as the reality of all our necessities. Christ is our breath (John 20:22), Christ is our drink (4:10, 14; 7:37-39), Christ is our food (6:35, 57), Christ is our light (1:4; 8:12), Christ is our clothing (Gal. 3:27), and Christ is our dwelling place, our abode (John 15:5, 7). To take Christ as our dwelling place, our abode, our habitation, is the highest and fullest experience of God (Psa. 90:1; 91:1).

The all-inclusive Christ is the reality of all the positive

things in the universe. *Hymns*, #496 expresses this great truth:

- 1 Christ is the one reality of all,
Of Godhead and of man and all things else;
No man without Him ever findeth God,
Without Him man and everything is false.
- 2 All types and figures of the ancient time,
All things we ever need, both great and small,
Only are shadows of the Christ of God,
Showing that He must be our all in all.
- 3 All things are vanity of vanities,
Christ, the reality all things to fill;
Though everything we may enjoy and own,
If we're devoid of Christ we're empty still.
- 4 Christ is our real God, our real Lord,
Christ is our real life, our real light;
Christ is our real food, our real drink,
Our real clothing, and our real might.
- 5 Christ also is the one reality
Of all our doctrine and theology;
And all our scriptural knowledge without Him
Is just in letter and is vanity.
- 6 Christ, the reality of time and space,
Christ, the reality of every stage;
Christ is the one reality of all
Thru all eternity from age to age.

Because the universe with the billions of things and persons in it was created for the purpose of describing Christ (Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1-4; Acts 14:17), He, in revealing Himself to His disciples, could easily find in any environment something or someone to serve as an illustration of Him. For example, in John 1:51 Christ is unveiled as the real ladder in Jacob's dream, the One who brings heaven to earth and joins earth to heaven. In John 10:9-11 Christ is unveiled as the door, the pasture, the abundant life, and the good Shepherd. In John 12:24 Christ is revealed as a grain of wheat falling into the earth to die and then resurrecting to produce many grains, many sons of God. In Matthew 12:40-42 Christ is the real Jonah who died and remained in the heart of the earth for three days so that He could come out in resurrection and bring the gospel to the Gentiles; He is also the real Solomon, the resurrected, enthroned, and coming King, the One who speaks the words of wisdom and builds up the church as the true temple of the living God.

The Old Testament uses six major categories of things as types to describe Christ: (1) Human beings typify Christ, such as Adam (Rom. 5:14), Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-3), Isaac (Matt. 1:2), Jonah (12:41), and Solomon (v. 42). (2) Animals typify Christ, such as a lamb (John 1:29), a lion, an ox, an eagle (Ezek. 1:10), and a gazelle (S. S. 2:9). (3) Plants typify Christ (who is the tree of

life—Gen. 2:9), such as the vine tree (Judg. 9:13; John 15:1), the apple tree (S. S. 2:3), the fig tree, the pomegranate tree, and the olive tree (Deut. 8:8); the different parts of a tree are also types of Christ, such as the root, the stump, the sprout, the shoot, the branch, and the fruit (Isa. 11:1, 10; 4:2; Luke 1:42; Rev. 5:5). (4) Minerals typify Christ, such as gold, silver, copper, and iron (Deut. 8:9, 13), and different kinds of stone: the living stone (Dan. 2:34-35; 1 Pet. 2:4), the rock (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4), the cornerstone (Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42), the topstone of multiplied grace (Zech. 4:7; cf. John 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2), the foundation stone, and precious stones (Gen. 2:12; Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21; 1 Cor. 3:11-12). (5) Offerings typify Christ, such as the sin offering, trespass offering, burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, wave offering, heave offering, and drink offering (Lev. 1—7; Exo. 29:26-28; Num. 28:7-10; cf. John 4:24). (6) Foods typify Christ, such as bread, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, wheat, barley, milk, and honey (6:35; Deut. 8:8-9; 26:9).

In the New Testament Christ is the Spirit of reality who makes the untraceable riches of all that He is real to us, guiding us into Himself as the reality (John 14:6, 17; 16:13; 1 John 5:6). The elements of the reality of all the types are in the Spirit, and the Spirit transfuses and dispenses all these riches into us through the Lord's words (Phil. 1:19; John 6:63; Col. 3:16; Eph. 6:17-18; Rev. 2:7).

The Christ who is the reality of all positive things is the One who is the Head and person of the Body as the one new man. Thus, to hold the Head is simply to enjoy Christ as the reality of all positive things. Colossians 2:19 says, "Holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God." Since the Christ we enjoy as everything is the Head of the Body as the new man, the more we enjoy Him, the more we become Body-conscious. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ is not an individualistic matter but a Body matter, a matter of living in the one new man. The more we enjoy Christ, the more we love the other members of the Body (1:4, 8). Because Christ's headship is in resurrection (v. 18), the enjoyment of Christ spontaneously brings us into resurrection and saves us from our natural being. Thus, we can live in the reality of the new man, where there cannot be and where there is no room for any natural person (3:10-11). The enjoyment of Christ brings us into the heavenlies in ascension. We can be experientially in the heavens only by enjoying Christ, the Head, as the life-giving Spirit in our spirit (vv. 1-2; 2 Cor. 3:17; 2 Tim. 4:22; Rom. 8:10, 34). As we enjoy Christ and hold Him as the Head, we absorb the riches of the extensive, all-inclusive Christ. These riches become in us the increase of God by which the Body grows and the new man is perfected for its building up and renewal.

*Experiencing Christ as Our Life and Taking Christ
as Our Person for the One New Man*

In order to experience Christ as our life and take Christ as our person for the realization of the one new man, we need to see that we have one position, one life, one living, one destiny, and one glory with Christ (Col. 3:1-4; cf. 1 Cor. 6:17). Our position is that we are in Christ; because we are in Him, we are where He is—sitting at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1; John 17:24; Eph. 2:6). The Son's position is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:10); we are in the Son (1 Cor. 1:30), so we are in the Father (John 14:20; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1). It is when we are in the spirit that we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven practically and experientially. There is a transmission taking place from Christ in heaven to us on earth by means of the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit (Eph. 1:19, 22-23; 2:22).

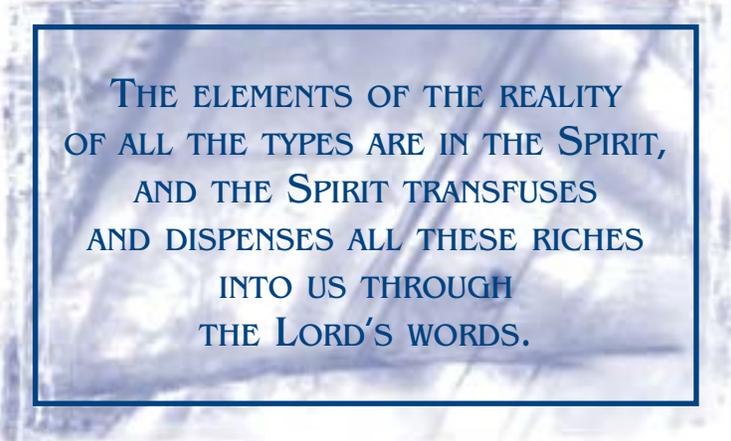
The very Christ who is sitting on the throne in heaven (Rom. 8:34) is also now in us (Rom. 8:10), that is, in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), where the habitation of God is (Eph. 2:22)... Since today our spirit is the place of God's habitation, it is now the gate of heaven, where Christ is the ladder that joins us, the people on earth, to heaven, and brings heaven to us. Hence, whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter through the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder. (Lee, Recovery Version, Heb. 4:16, note 1)

Our spirit is the receiving end of the divine transmission, whereas the throne of God is the transmitting end (Heb. 4:16).

The life of God is the life of Christ, and the life of Christ has become our life (John 5:26; Col. 3:4). For Christ to be our life means that He is subjective to us to the uttermost (John 1:4; 14:6; 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:10, 6, 11). It is impossible to separate a person from the life of that person, for a person's life is the person himself; thus, to say that Christ is our life means that Christ has become us and that we have one life and living with Him (John 14:6; Phil. 1:21). With Christ as the believers' life there are three characteristics, which distinguish it from the natural life: (1) This life is a crucified life (Gal. 2:20). (2) This life is a resurrected life (John 11:25). (3) This is a life hidden in God (Col. 3:3; Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18).

To seek the things which are above and set our mind on them is to join ourselves to the Lord in His heavenly ministry, His divine enterprise; this is to live Christ, to have a living that is one with Christ's living (Col. 3:1-2). In His heavenly ministry Christ today is living as the High Priest to intercede for the churches (Heb. 8:1; 4:14; 7:25; 4:16; Col. 4:2). In His heavenly ministry Christ today is living as the heavenly Minister to supply the saints with the riches of Christ (Heb. 8:1-2; Eph. 3:8). In His heavenly ministry Christ today is living as the universal Administrator of God's government for the accomplishment of God's purpose (Rev. 4:1-2, 5; 5:6; 1:11-12). From the throne in the heavens the divine transmission brings the things above into the local churches (Eph. 1:19, 22-23). In Revelation 4 and 5 we have a vision of our "central government," and in Revelation 1 through 3 we have a vision of the local churches as the "embassies." Through the seven Spirits what is in the heavenly "headquarters"

is transmitted into the churches as the "embassies." What takes place in the local churches should be under the direction of the throne of God in heaven (4:2-3) While we are living under the direction of the ruling and enthroned Christ, He is leading us into glory for us to be manifested with Him in glory (Heb. 2:10; Col. 3:4). Our destiny is glory.



THE ELEMENTS OF THE REALITY
OF ALL THE TYPES ARE IN THE SPIRIT,
AND THE SPIRIT TRANSFUSES
AND DISPENSES ALL THESE RICHES
INTO US THROUGH
THE LORD'S WORDS.

Our life is the Christ who dwells within us, and this life is hidden with Christ in God; the Christ hidden in God is typified by the manna hidden in the golden pot (v. 4; Exo. 16:32-34; Rev. 2:17). Christ as the hidden manna is in God the Father as the golden pot; the Father is in Christ as the Ark with His two natures, divinity and humanity; and Christ as the indwelling Spirit lives in our regenerated spirit to be the reality of the Holy of Holies (cf. John 14:16-20; 2 Tim. 4:22). When we eat Christ as the hidden manna, we are incorporated into Him for the mutual abode of God and man (John 15:5, 7; 8:31; 6:57, 63; 14:23).

That Christ is our life is a strong indication that we are to take Him as life and live by Him, that we are to live Him in our daily life (Col. 3:4). Christ must be our life in a practical and experiential way; day by day we need to be saved in His life (Rom. 5:10). To be saved in the divine life from the slavery of sin, the law of sin, is by the release of the law of the consummated Spirit (8:2). To be saved in the divine life from the present age of the world is by

the sanctification of the consummated Spirit (12:2; 6:19, 22). To be saved in the divine life from our natural being is by the transformation of the life-giving Spirit (12:2). To be saved in the divine life from individualism is by being built up in the Body of Christ (v. 5). To be saved in the divine life from self-likeness is by the conformation to Christ's image by the life-imparting Spirit (8:29). To be saved in the divine life from our body of humiliation is by the transfiguration in the virtue of the divine life (vv. 11, 30; Phil. 3:21). To be saved in the divine life is to reign in the divine life (Rom. 5:17). To be saved in the divine life will result in the victory over Satan (16:20). The new man is the spontaneous issue of our experiencing Christ as our life and taking Christ as our person to live Him (Col. 3:3-4, 10-11).

An Illustration of the Believers' Equal Status in the New Man

The Epistle of Paul to Philemon provides a beautiful illustration of the believers' equal status in the new man. The case of Onesimus (a runaway slave) and Philemon (his master) reveals that in the new man all the societal distinctions among the believers have been eliminated. Note 1 of Philemon 16 in the Recovery Version says,

This short Epistle serves the special purpose of showing us the equality, in God's eternal life and divine love, of all the members in the Body of Christ. In the semisavage age of Paul, the life of Christ had annulled, among the believers, the strong institution of slavery. Since the sentiment of the love of the Christian fellowship was so powerful and prevailing that the evil social order among fallen mankind was spontaneously ignored, any need for institutional emancipation was obviated. Because of the divine birth and because they were living by the divine life, all the believers in Christ had equal status in the church,

which was the new man in Christ and in which there was no discrimination between free and bond (Col. 3:10-11). This was based on three facts: (1) Christ's death on the cross abolished the ordinances of the different ways of life, for the creating of the one new man (Eph. 2:15); (2) we all were baptized into Christ and were made one in Him without any differences (Gal. 3:27-28); and (3) in the new man Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). Such a life with such a love in equal fellowship is well able to maintain good order in the church (in Titus), carry out God's economy concerning the church (in 1 Timothy), and stand against the tide of the church's decline (in 2 Timothy). It is of the Lord's sovereignty that in the arrangement of the New Testament this Epistle was positioned after the three preceding books.

In the practice of the economy of God, it is crucial that all social ranks and differences among races and nations are swallowed up. In the new man there cannot be and there is no room for any natural person, for Christ is all the members and in all the members (Col. 3:10-11). The wonderful Christ is the peace of the new man, and it is His very person, His presence, that makes us all one. If we see that the believers have an equal status in the new man, there will be no problems among us and no divisions between us concerning social rank, nationality, or race, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. There is only one Body of Christ, one church, and the believers are all one new man, the unique new creation, in the Triune God (Eph. 4:4; John 17:21; 2 Cor. 5:17). **AF**

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Commentary on the Epistle to Philemon

In the Epistle to the Colossians Paul emphasized that all the believers are part of the new man. Furthermore, in the new man there cannot be Greek and Jew, slave and freeman. Philemon was a freeman, and Onesimus was his bond-servant. But in the new man they were of equal status...

The Epistle to Philemon should be regarded as a continuation of Colossians 4 and considered an illustration of how in the new man all social rank is put aside... This short Epistle serves the special purpose of showing us the equality in eternal life and divine love of all the members in the Body of Christ. The distinction of social rank and status among the believers is nullified not by an outward legal act, but by an inward change of constitution. Ranks have been abolished because the believers have been constituted of Christ's life. Christ's life had been constituted into Philemon, and the same life with the same divine element had been constituted into his slave, Onesimus. According to the flesh, Philemon was a master and was free, and Onesimus was a slave and was not free. But according to the inner constitution, both were the same. Because of the divine birth and a living by the divine life, all the believers in Christ have equal status in the church, which is the new man in Christ, with no discrimination between free and bond.

From the *Life-study of Philemon* by Witness Lee, pp. 10-11