

AN EXPOSITION
UPON THE
EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF
NEAR SEVEN YEARS' WEEK-DAY SERMONS.

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THE ARGUMENT

OF THIS

EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

TH**ERE** are four principal parts of this epistle: first, The proëm; secondly, Doctrine of faith; thirdly, Precepts of life; fourthly, The epilogue, or conclusion. The proëm is expressed in the first eleven verses of the first chapter; the doctrine of faith is expressed in the rest of the verses of the first chapter and the whole second chapter. The precepts of life are set down in the third chapter, and in the beginning of the fourth. And the epilogue is in the rest of the verses of the fourth chapter.

1. The proëm contains two things: first, The salutation, ver. 1, 2; and secondly, A preface, affectionately framed to win attention and respect, wherein he assures them of his singular constancy in remembering them to God, both in thanksgiving for their worthy graces and the means thereof, ver. 3-8; and in earnest prayer for their increase and comfortable perseverance in knowledge and the eminency of sincerity in holy life, ver. 9-11.

2. The doctrine of faith he expresseth two ways: first, By proposition; secondly, By exhortation. In the proposition of doctrine, he doth with singular force of words, and weight of matter, set out both the work of our redemption, ver. 12-14, and the person of our Redeemer; and that first in his relation to God, ver. 15; then in relation to the world,

ver. 15-17; and thirdly, in relation to the church; both the whole in general, ver. 18-20; and the church of the Colossians in particular, ver. 21, 22. And thus of the proposition. Now his exhortation follows, from 23 of chap. i. to the end of chap. ii., and therein he both persuades and dissuades; he persuades by many strong and moving reasons, to a holy endeavour to continue and persevere with all Christian firmness of resolution, in the faith and hope, [which] was already begotten in them by the gospel; and this is contained in the seven last verses of the first chapter, and the seven first verses of the second chapter. He dissuades them from receiving the corrupt doctrine of the false apostles, whether it were drawn from philosophical speculations, or from the traditions of men, or from the ceremonial law of Moses; and he proceeds in this order: first, He lays down the matter of his dehortation, chap. ii. 8; then secondly, He confirms it by divers reasons, from ver. 9 to 16; and lastly, He concludes, and that severally, as against Mosaical rites, ver. 16, 17; against philosophy, ver. 18, 19; and against traditions, ver. 20, and so to the end of that chapter.

Thus of the second part.

3. Thirdly, In giving precepts of life, the apostle holds this order: first, He gives general rules that concern all, as they are Christians; then, he gives

special rules, as they are men of this or that estate of life. The general rules are contained in the first seventeen verses of the third chapter, and the special rules from the eighteenth verse of the third chapter, to the second verse of the fourth. The general rules he reduceth into three heads, viz. : first, The meditation of heavenly things, ver. 1-4 ; secondly, The mortification of vices and injuries, ver. 5-12 ; thirdly, The exercise of holy graces, a number of which he reckoneth, both in the kinds, means, and ends of them, from ver. 12-18. The particular rules concern principally household government ; for he sets down the duty of wives, ver. 18 ; of husbands, ver. 19 ; of children, ver. 20 ; of parents, ver. 21 ; of servants, ver. 22-25 ; and of masters, chap. iv. 1.

4. The epilogue, or conclusion, contains in it both matter of general exhortation, as also matters of

salutation. The general exhortation concerns prayer, ver. 2-4 ; wise conversation, ver. 5 ; and godly communication, ver. 6. Now, after the apostle hath disburdened himself of those general cares, then he taketh liberty to refresh himself and them. And first, he makes entrance by a narration of his care to know their estate, and to inform them of his. To which purpose he sendeth and prayeth Tychicus and Onesimus, ver. 7-9. The salutations then follow ; and they are of two sorts ; for some are signified to them, some are required of them. Of the first sort, he signifies the salutations of six men, three of them Jews, and three Gentiles, ver. 10-14. The salutations required, concern either the Laodiceans, ver. 15, 16, or one of the Colossian preachers, who is not only saluted, but exhorted, ver. 17. And then follows the apostle's general salutations to all in the last verse.

THE PLAIN LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST CHAPTER.

THIS chapter stands of three parts—a proëm, a proposition of doctrine, an exhortation to constancy and perseverance. The proëm is continued from ver. 1–12, the proposition from ver. 12–23, the exhortation from ver. 23 to the end.

The proëm is intended to win attention and affection, and stands of two parts—the salutation and the preface. The salutation is contained in the two first verses, and the preface in the third verse and those that follow to the twelfth.

In the salutation three things are to be observed : first, The persons saluting ; secondly, The persons saluted ; thirdly, The form of the salutation itself.

The persons saluting are two, ver. 1, 2 ; the author of the epistle and an evangelist, famous in the churches, who is named as one that did approve the doctrine of the epistle, and commend it to the use of the churches. The author is described : first, By his name, ‘Paul ;’ secondly, By his office, ‘an apostle,’ which is amplified by the principal efficient, ‘Jesus Christ,’ and by the impulsive cause, ‘the will of God.’ The evangelist is described : first, By his name, ‘Timotheus ;’ secondly, By his adjunct estate, ‘a brother.’ Thus of the persons saluting.

The persons saluted are described : first, By the place of their abode, and so they are citizens and inhabitants of ‘Colosse ;’ secondly, By their spiritual estate, which is set out in four things : 1. They are ‘saints ;’ 2. They are ‘faithful ;’ 3. They are ‘brethren ;’ 4. They are ‘in Christ.’

The form of the salutation expresseth what he accounteth to be the chief good on earth, and that is, ‘grace and peace,’ which are amplified by the causes or fountains of them, ‘from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Thus of the salutation.

In the preface the apostle, ver. 3, demonstrateth his love to them by two things, which he constantly did for them ; he ‘prayed’ for them, and he ‘gave thanks’ for them ; and this he both propounds generally, ver. 3, and expounds particularly in the verses following.

In the general propounding three things are evidently expressed : first, What he did for them—he ‘gave thanks,’ ‘he prayed ;’ secondly, To whom—even to ‘God the Father of our Lord Jesus ;’ thirdly, How long—‘always,’ that is, constantly from day to day.

Now, in the verses that follow he expounds and opens this : first, His thanksgiving, ver. 4–8 ; secondly, His prayer, ver. 9–11. In the thanksgiving he shews for what he gave thanks ; which he refers to two heads : 1. Their graces ; 2. The means by which those graces were wrought and nourished.

The graces are three, faith, love, hope, ver. 4, 5. Their faith is amplified by the object, ‘your faith in Jesus Christ :’ and their love by the extent of it, ‘your love to all the saints ;’ and their hope by the place, ‘which is laid up for you in heaven.’

The means of grace was either principal, ver. 5, 6, or instrumental, ver. 7, 8. The principal ordinary

outward means was the word, which is described and set out six ways: 1. By the ordinance in which it was most effectual, viz., hearing, 'whereof ye have heard;' 2. By the property that was most eminent in the working of it, viz., truth, 'by the word of truth;' 3. By the kind of word, viz., the gospel, 'which is the gospel;' 4. By the providence of God in bringing the means, 'which is come unto you;' 5. By the subject persons upon whom it wrought, viz., 'you and all the world;' 6. By the efficacy of it, 'it is fruitful and increaseth;' which is amplified by the repetition of the persons in whom, and the consideration both of the time, in those words, 'from the day that you heard,' &c., and also, of the adjunct cause, viz., the hearing and the true knowledge of the grace of God, from the day that you heard of it, and 'knew the grace of God in truth.'

Thus of the principal means, the ministry of the word.

The instrumental, or the minister followeth, ver. 7, 8, and he is described: 1. By his name, 'Epaphras;' 2. By the adjunct love of others to him, 'beloved;' 3. By his office, 'a servant;' 4. By his willingness to join with others, 'a fellow-servant;' 5. By his faithfulness in the execution of his office, 'which is for you a faithful minister of Christ;' and lastly, By his delight in his people, which he shews by the good report he cheerfully gives of them, viz., 'who also declared unto us your love in the spirit.' Thus of the thanksgiving.

Now in the opening or unfolding of his practice in praying for them: first, He affirms that he did pray for them; and then, Declares it by shewing what he prayed for. The affirmation is in the beginning of the ninth verse, and the declaration in the rest of the words to the end of the eleventh verse.

In the affirmation there are three things: first, An intimation of a reason, in those words, 'for this cause;' secondly, A consideration of the time, 'since the day we heard of it;' thirdly, The matter affirmed, 'we cease not to pray for you.'

In the declaration he instanceth in one thing he principally prayed about, and that was their 'knowledge;' which he sets out: first, By the object of it, 'the will of God;' secondly, By the parts of it, 'wisdom and understanding;' thirdly, By the end, viz., 'that they might walk worthy,' &c.; fourthly,

By the cause, 'his glorious power;' and fifthly, By the effects, 'patience, long-suffering, and joyfulness.'

In setting down the object, he expresseth also the measure he desired; he would have them filled with the knowledge of God's will, and that he addeth in the second part, when he saith, 'all wisdom and understanding.' The end of all their knowledge he expresseth more largely, ver. 10, which in general is the eminence of holy life, which he expresseth in three several forms of speech, viz.: 1. To walk 'worthy of the Lord;' 2. To walk 'in all pleasing;' and 3. To be 'fruitful in all good works;' unto the fuller attainment of which he notes the means to be, an 'increase in the knowledge of God.'

Hitherto of the proëm.

The proposition of doctrine containeth excellent matter concerning our redemption; where he proceeds in this order: first, He considers the work of our redemption; and secondly, The person of our Redeemer. The work of our redemption, ver. 12-14; the person of our Redeemer, ver. 15 and those that follow to the 23; and all this he expresseth in form of thanksgiving.

The work of our redemption he describes two ways, after he hath touched the first efficient cause of it, viz., God the Father; for in the twelfth verse he seems to shew, that in respect of inchoation, it is a 'making of us fit;' and in respect of consummation, it is a causing of us to enjoy an immortal happiness in heaven, better than that Adam had in paradise, or the Jews in Canaan. And therein he expresseth: first, The manner of tenure or title, in the word 'inheritance;' secondly, The adjunct praise of the company, viz., the saints; and thirdly, The perfection of it, it is 'in light.'

Now, in the end of the 13th ver. he seems to shew that our redemption stands of two parts: first, 'Deliverance from the power of darkness;' secondly, 'Translating into the kingdom of the Son of his love,' one of the many excellent privileges of which estate is noted in the 14th ver., to be 'remission of sins, through the blood of Christ.' And thus of the work of our redemption.

The person of our Redeemer is described three ways, ver. 15-17: first, In relation to God; secondly, In relation to the whole world; thirdly, In relation to the church.