

Through the Bible

COLOSSIANS

Zac Poonen



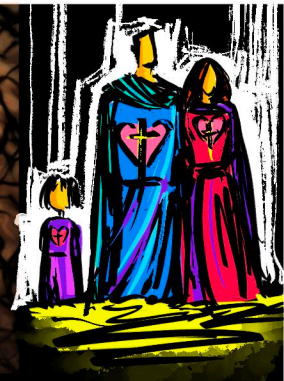
Illustrations by Vinay Kuruville

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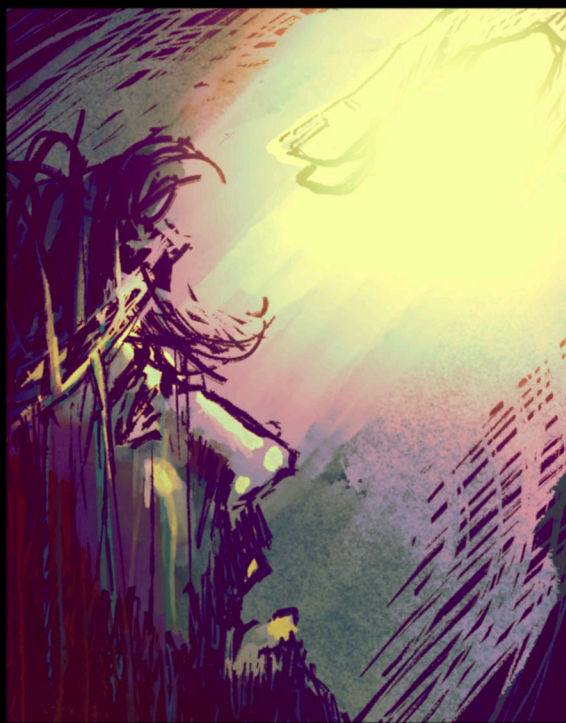
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

69, PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA

COLOSSIANS

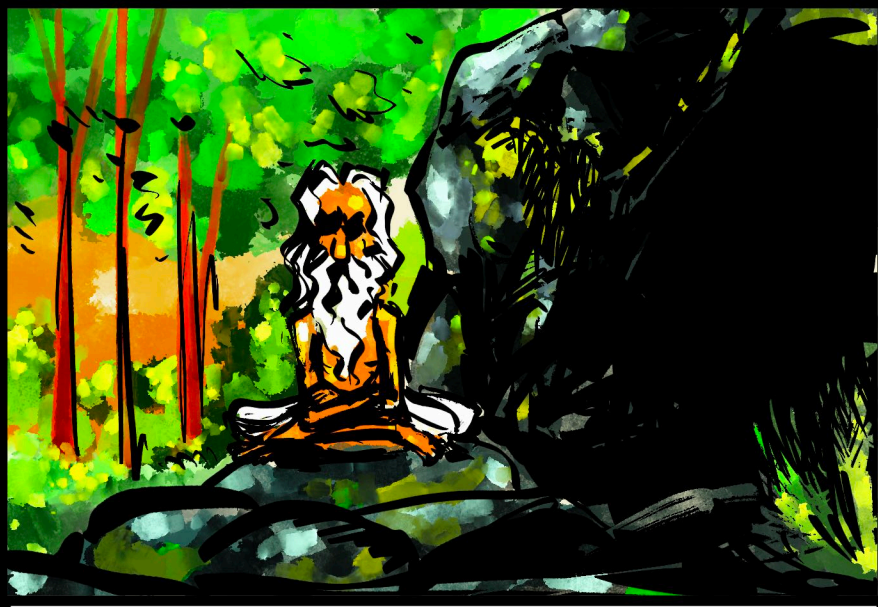


IN *EPHESIANS*, THE THEME WAS 'IN CHRIST'. IN *COLOSSIANS*, THE THEME IS 'CHRIST IN YOU'. (1:27)



THE **FULLNESS** OF GOD DWELLING IN A HUMAN BODY WAS FIRST SEEN IN **JESUS CHRIST** (2:9) AND NOW **CHRIST** DWELLING IN OUR HUMAN BODY CAN **MANIFEST** THAT **SAME DIVINE LIFE**.

IN THIS LETTER, WE SEE PAUL CORRECTING TWO EXTREMES OF **WRONG DOCTRINE** CONCERNING THE HUMAN BODY.



ONE TEACHING WAS THAT THE HUMAN **BODY** WAS ESSENTIALLY **EVIL**. SO IT HAD TO BE **SUPPRESSED** AND TREATED **ROUGHLY**, IF ONE WAS TO BECOME **SPIRITUAL**. THIS TEACHING IS FOUND TODAY AMONG THOSE WHO **SEEK** TO BE **HOLY** THROUGH **ASCETICISM** AND **BODILY DISCIPLINE**.



THE **OTHER** TEACHING WAS THAT THE HUMAN BODY WAS **UNIMPORTANT**, SINCE THE MAIN THING WAS THE HUMAN **SPIRIT**; AND SO **BODILY LUSTS** COULD BE **INDULGED** IN TO ANY EXTENT.



BECAUSE OF THIS **TEACHING**, SOME IN COLOSSE COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT **ALMIGHTY GOD** COULD POSSIBLY COME IN A HUMAN BODY LIKE **OURS** AND WALK AS A **MAN** ON THIS **EARTH**. **JESUS CHRIST IS GOD** -- AND ALWAYS WAS **GOD**. EVEN WHEN HE WAS ON EARTH HE WAS **STILL** **GOD**. BUT HE ALSO **BECAME TOTALLY** A **MAN**.



IF WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS GOD, THEN OUR SINS CANNOT BE FORGIVEN, FOR NO-ONE OTHER THAN GOD HIMSELF CAN TAKE THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE SINS OF ALL HUMANITY ON THE CROSS.

IF WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST BECAME A MAN LIKE US, "MADE IN ALL THINGS LIKE HIS BROTHERS" (HEBREWS 2:17), THEN WE CANNOT FOLLOW HIM, FOR WE CANNOT FOLLOW SOMEONE WHO WAS ONLY GOD. BUT JESUS GAVE UP HIS PRIVILEGES AS GOD WHEN HE LIVED ON EARTH WITH OUR LIMITATIONS, AND THAT IS WHY WE CAN FOLLOW HIM (PHILIPPIANS 2:5).



IT IS NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE A BODY THAT WE SIN. JESUS HAD A BODY LIKE OURS BUT THERE WAS NEVER ANY SIN IN THAT BODY. ON THE OTHER HAND, SATAN WHO HAS NO BODY IS FULL OF SIN.

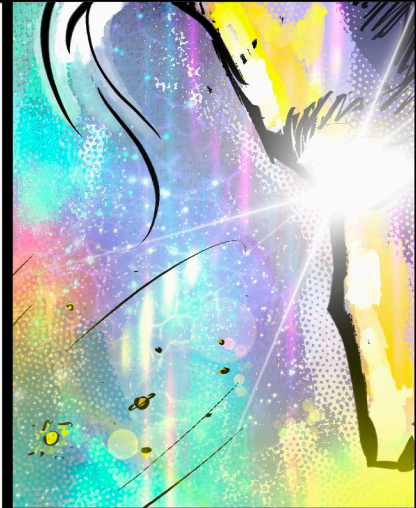


PAUL WAS PRAYING HERE FOR CHRISTIANS HE HAD NEVER MET (1:7, 8, 9) AS THIS CHURCH WAS PROBABLY ESTABLISHED BY EPAPHRAS, ONE OF HIS COWORKERS. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT IN ALL HIS PRAYERS (IN ROMANS TO 2 TIMOTHY) HE PRAYED ONLY FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS FOR THE BELIEVERS.

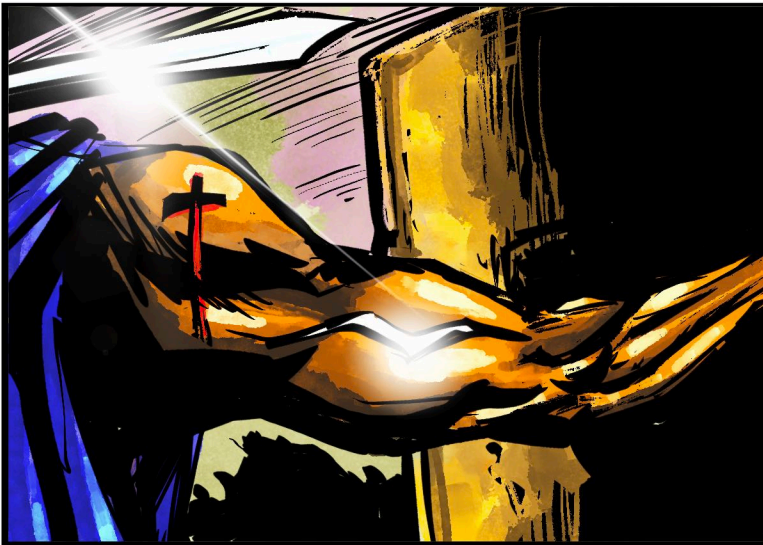


OUR LIFE ON EARTH CAN BE COMPARED TO A JOURNEY TO ETERNITY. THE JOURNEY IS ONLY FOR A SHORT PERIOD. IF WE ARE WISE, WE WILL CONCENTRATE MORE ON HAVING A GOOD FINAL DESTINATION THAN ON HAVING A COMFORTABLE JOURNEY.

HE PRAYED THAT THEY WOULD BE "FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL IN ALL SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING" (1:9). OR IN OTHER WORDS, "I AM PRAYING THAT YOU WILL LOOK AT THINGS FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW" (J.B. PHILIPS PARAPHRASE).



ONLY THEN CAN WE WALK "IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE LORD AND BEAR FRUIT IN EVERY GOOD WORK" (1:10).



PAUL THEN SPEAKS ABOUT "BEING **STRENGTHENED WITH POWER** ACCORDING TO HIS **GLORIOUS MIGHT**" (VERSE 11) WHICH IS A REFERRING TO A LIFE FILLED WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.



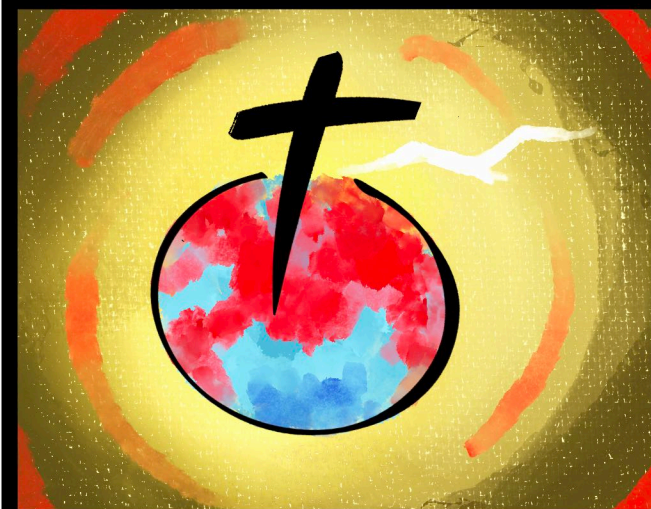
1:15 SAYS "HE IS THE **IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD**, THE **FIRSTBORN** OF ALL CREATION." THAT MEANS HE WAS **GOD IN HUMAN FORM** -- THE ONE WHO **BEGAN (OR CREATED) EVERYTHING** THAT HAS BEEN CREATED, WHO EXISTED BEFORE ANYTHING WAS CREATED AND WHO CREATED ALL THINGS (AS CLARIFIED IN 1:15--17).



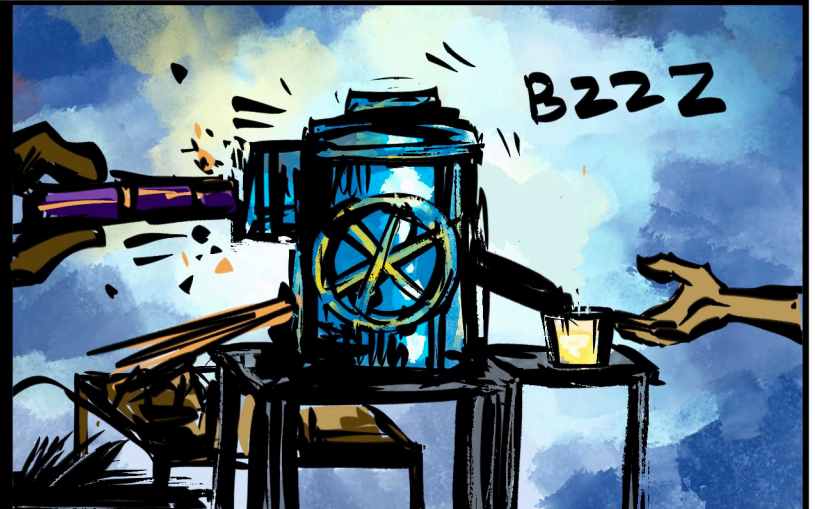
THE "**FLESHLY BODY**" OF CHRIST IS EMPHASISED IN 1:22, BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE THEN SAID THAT HE DID **NOT** HAVE A FLESHLY BODY.



PAUL SAYS IN 1:24, "I DO **MY SHARE** ON BEHALF OF HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE **CHURCH**, IN FILLING UP THAT WHICH IS **LACKING** IN **CHRIST'S AFFLICTION**." CHRIST **SUFFERED** ON EARTH BOTH **INTERNALLY**, **RESISTING SIN** (1 PETER 4:1), AND **EXTERNALLY**, BY **STANDING** FOR THE **TRUTH**. HE **DWELLS** IN US NOW AND HE WANTS TO TAKE US THROUGH THE **SAME SUFFERINGS** HE WENT THROUGH, BUT NOW IN **OUR BODY**. THIS IS A **PRIVILEGE**.



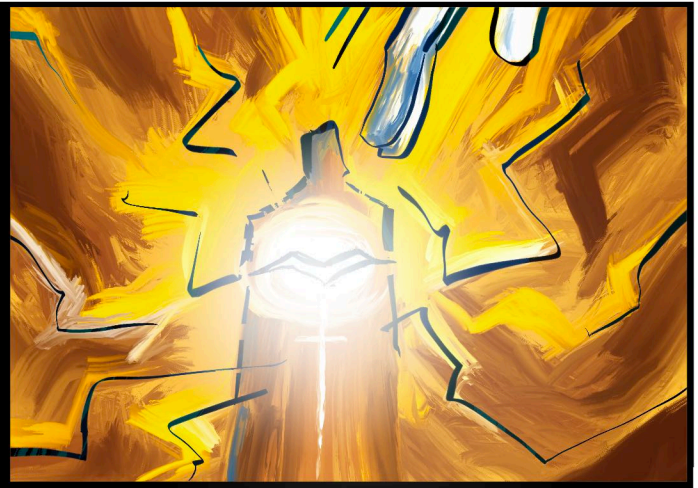
CHRIST GAINED NOTHING FOR HIMSELF THROUGH HIS **SUFFERINGS**. BUT **WE GAINED A LOT**. WHEN WE ARE IN **FELLOWSHIP** WITH **CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS**, WE **OURSELVES GAIN NOTHING** FROM IT, BUT **OTHERS DO**.



SUGARCANE STICKS ARE PUT INTO THE **GRINDER** OVER AND OVER AND THE **JUICE** COMES OUT. THAT'S HOW **GOD** MAKES US ALSO A **BLESSING** TO **OTHERS**. AS WE **HUMBLE** OURSELVES AND **ACCEPT TRIALS JOYFULLY**, FROM THAT **CRUSHING**, THE **RADIANCE** AND **BEAUTY** AND **AROMA** OF **CHRIST** COME FORTH



IN 1:28 WE SEE PAUL'S **ULTIMATE** GOAL WAS TO "PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST." PAUL HAD A BURDEN TO LEAD EVERY SINGLE PERSON TO **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**.

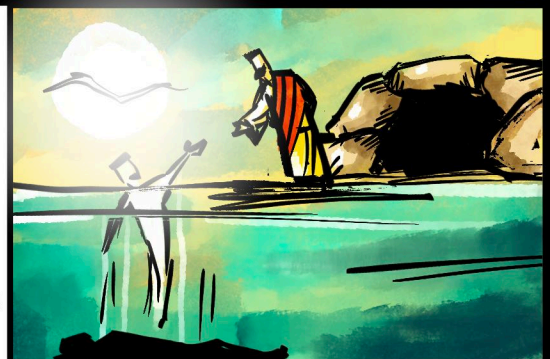


HOW DOES HE DO THIS? HE SAYS IN 1:29 - "WITH THE **MIGHTY POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** -- WHICH **FIRST OF ALL GOD WORKS MIGHTILY INSIDE OF ME.**"

1:22 TALKS ABOUT "**GOD'S MYSTERY, THAT IS, CHRIST HIMSELF.**" THERE ARE TWO MYSTERIES THAT ARE CALLED "**GREAT**" IN BIBLE. 1 TIMOTHY 3:16 TALKS ABOUT THE **SECRET OF HOW TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE**. EPHESIANS 5:32 TALKS ABOUT THE **CHURCH (THE BODY AND BRIDE OF CHRIST)** BEING **ONE FLESH WITH CHRIST**.



WE MUST **RECOGNISE** THAT OUR **FLESH (SELF-WILL)** WAS **CUT OFF ON THE CROSS (2:11)**. WE MUST TAKE THAT POSITION BY **FAITH**. IN **WATER BAPTISM**, WE TESTIFY THAT WE HAVE BEEN **BURIED AND RAISED WITH CHRIST (2:12)**.



IN 2:14,15, WE READ OF THE **TWO THINGS** THAT JESUS DID FOR US ON THE **CROSS**. **GOD'S LAW HAD A LIST OF COMMANDMENTS** THAT WE HAD TO KEEP. BUT **WE BROKE THEM ALL**. **EVERY SIN WE COMMIT IS A DEBT WE OWE TO GOD OUR CREATOR**.

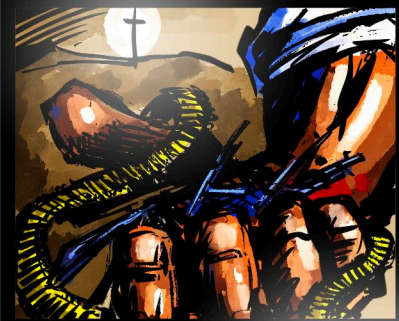


JESUS PAID OUR DEBT **COMPLETELY** ON THE **CROSS** AND **TORE UP THE CERTIFICATE OF DEBT**.



THE **SECOND** THING JESUS DID ON THE CROSS WAS TO **TAKE AWAY** THE **ARMOUR** OF ALL THE **DEMONIC** PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS.

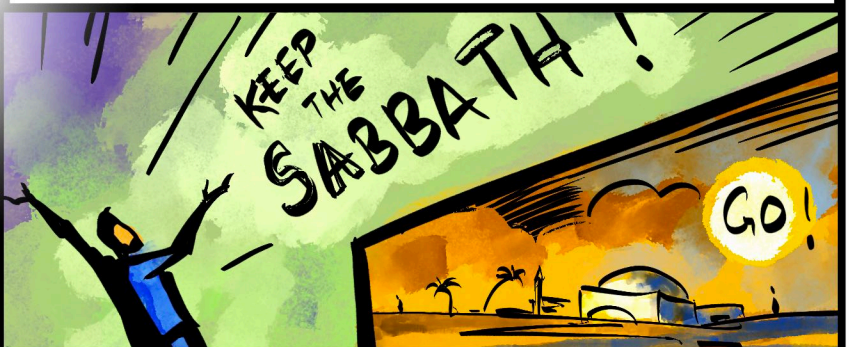
WE CAN PICTURE IT SOMETHING LIKE THIS: A WHOLE LOT OF **DEMONS** HAD **MACHINE GUNS** POINTED AT US, **HELPLESS** HUMAN BEINGS. THEY WERE ALWAYS **SHOOTING** AT US, AND WE ALWAYS HAD TO **RUN FOR COVER** IN **FEAR**.



BUT **JESUS** TOOK AWAY ALL THEIR **MACHINE GUNS** AND **GAVE** THEM ALL TO **US**. NOW **THEY** ARE ON THE **RUN** FROM US. WE **DON'T** HAVE TO BE **AFRAID** OF **SATAN** OR HIS **DEMONS** ANY MORE.



THAT **HUGE GOLIATH** OF A **DEMON** WILL **FALL** BEFORE YOU. THE **NAME** OF **JESUS** IS THE **MIGHTIEST** WEAPON OF ALL.



IF WE LIVE WITH A **CLEAN CONSCIENCE** AND DWELL IN **HUMILITY**, THEN IN THE **NAME** OF **JESUS** WE CAN LIVE IN **VICTORY** OVER ALL OF **SATAN'S FORCES** ALL THE TIME. THE **NAME** OF THE **LORD** IS A **STRONG** AND **MIGHTY TOWER**. THE **RIGHTEOUS** CAN **RUN** INTO THAT **NAME** AND BE **SAFE** (PROVERBS 18:10).

IN 2:16--23, PAUL SPEAKS OF VARIOUS METHODS OF "**BECOMING HOLY**" THAT **PEOPLE** HAVE **THOUGHT UP** WITHOUT ANY **REVELATION** FROM **GOD**. SOME SAY, "**KEEP HOLY DAYS**, **GO ON PILGRIMAGES**, **KEEP THE SABBATH**", ETC.



BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS, "DON'T LET ANYBODY JUDGE YOU IN SUCH MATTERS. THE SABBATH WAS ONLY A SHADOW. THE REALITY IS IN CHRIST." WHEN YOU HAVE THE REALITY WHY DO YOU NEED THE SHADOW?



I LOOK AT MY WIFE'S PHOTOGRAPH ONLY WHEN I AM TRAVELLING AND AWAY FROM HER. BUT IF SHE IS RIGHT BESIDE ME, I WOULD BE CRAZY TO BE LOOKING AT HER PHOTOGRAPH. IN THE SAME WAY, NOW WE HAVE THE REALITY -- CHRIST.



PAUL THEN GOES ON TO SAY, "DON'T LET ANYONE CHEAT YOU OF YOUR PRIZE." THERE IS A PRIZE THAT GOD HAS RESERVED FOR YOU IN HEAVEN. DON'T LET ANYONE CHEAT YOU OF IT BY MAKING YOU DELIGHT IN SELF-ABASEMENT (A FALSE HUMILITY).



FALSE HUMILITY IS ACTUALLY SPIRITUAL PRIDE WEARING THE GARMENTS OF HUMILITY AND PRETENDING TO BE VERY HUMBLE. GET RID OF IT.



PAUL SPEAKS ABOUT WORSHIPPING "ANGELS". THE WORD FOR "ANGEL" CAN ALSO BE TRANSLATED AS "MESSENGER". TO RESPECT A GODLY MAN, TO APPRECIATE HIM AND TO LISTEN TO HIS ADVICE IS ALL VERY GOOD. BUT, BE CAREFUL THAT HE DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE.

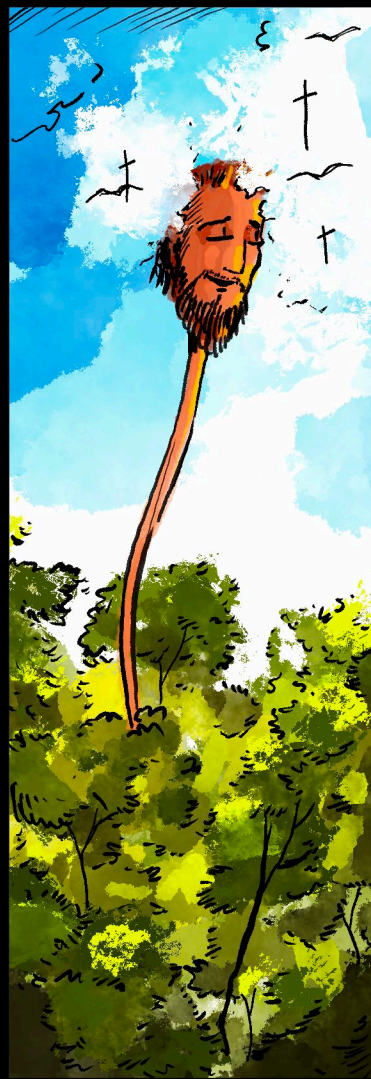


INSTEAD OF HOLDING ON TO THAT MESSENGER, YOU MUST HOLD ON TO THE HEAD (2:19). THE BEST MESSENGER IS THE ONE WHO HELPS YOU TO GET CLOSER TO CHRIST, THE HEAD.



THE OTHER WAY OF HOLINESS THAT MANY PEOPLE TEACH IS THROUGH **DISCIPLINE** (FASTING, SLEEPING ON THE FLOOR ETC (2: 20, 21, 23)) . **SEVERE** TREATMENT OF THE **BODY** DOESN'T MAKE ANYONE **HOLY**. IT DOES HAVE "AN **APPEARANCE OF HOLINESS**", BUT IT DOES **NOT DELIVER** ONE FROM **SIN**.

HOW CAN SIN BE DEALT WITH? IN 3:3, PAUL SAYS, "YOU HAVE **DIED WITH CHRIST**." THAT IS THE WAY. TAKE YOUR **POSITION AS DEAD WITH CHRIST**. YOU HAVE ALSO BEEN **RAISED UP IN CHRIST** (3:1). THAT IS THE WAY TO **GENUINE HOLINESS**.



THERE IS **NO DISTINCTION** BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT **RACES** IN THE **BODY OF CHRIST** (3:11).

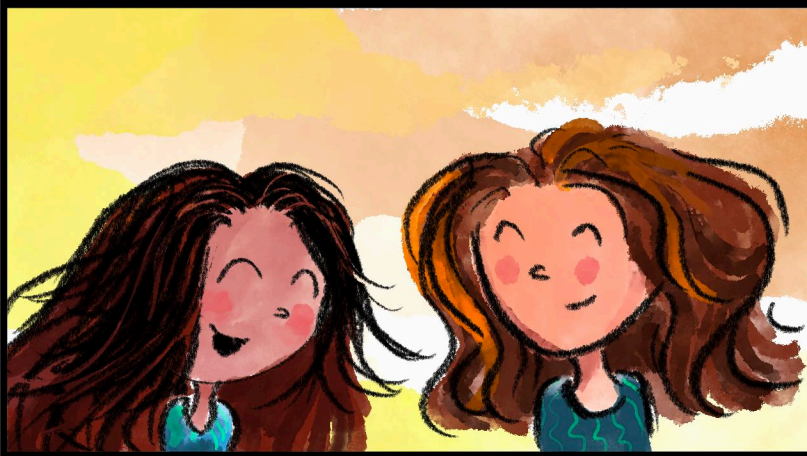
THE **PEACE OF CHRIST** BECOMES THE **REFEREE** IN OUR **HEARTS**, IN OUR **RELATIONSHIPS** WITH EACH OTHER (3:15). IN A **FOOTBALL MATCH**, AS SOON AS A **PLAYER** COMMITS A **FOUL**, THE **REFEREE** BLOWS HIS **WHISTLE**.. THE **GAME** STOPS. **NOTHING** IS **COUNTED** UNTIL THE **FOUL** IS **SET RIGHT**.



ONE **PROOF** OF THAT WILL BE THAT YOUR **MIND** WILL BE **SET ON THE THINGS** THAT ARE **ABOVE** (3:2). YOU **WON'T** BE **OCCUPIED** WITH THE TYPE OF **FOOD** YOU **EAT** AND OTHER **EARTHLY** **DISCIPLINES**.



IN SOME **FOOTBALL MATCHES**, THE **PLAYERS** **ARGUE** WITH THE **REFEREE**. BUT THE **REFEREE'S** **WORD** IS **FINAL**. **DON'T** **ARGUE** WITH HIM, OR HE MAY **SEND** YOU **OFF** THE **FIELD!** JUST **CONFESS** YOUR **SIN** AND **SET** THE **MATTER** **RIGHT** WITH **GOD** AND **MAN**.



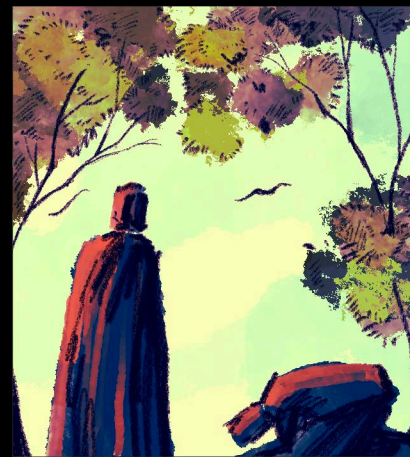
IN 3:15, PAUL SAYS, "BE THANKFUL FOR ONE ANOTHER." HE HAS BEEN SPEAKING ABOUT THE **BODY OF CHRIST**. WE MUST LEARN TO BE **THANKFUL** FOR ONE ANOTHER IN OUR **LOCAL CHURCH**.



PAUL THEN SPEAKS ABOUT **HOME-LIFE**: "**DON'T BE BITTER** AGAINST YOUR **WIFE**" (3:19).



IN 3:21, THERE IS AN EXHORTATION FOR **FATHERS**: "**DON'T EXASPERATE** YOUR CHILDREN." **DON'T** KEEP ON **NAGGING** THEM, OR THEY WILL GET **DISCOURAGED**.



IN 4:1 IS A WORD FOR **MASTERS**: "**TREAT YOUR SLAVES FAIRLY**".



DEVOTE YOURSELF TO PRAYER (4:2).



ALWAYS SPEAK WITH **GRACE**, SO THAT YOU REPLY **WISELY** TO **EVERYONE** (4:6).



IN 4:12, WE READ OF BROTHER **EPAPHRAS** WHO WAS ALWAYS **PRAYING** FOR THE **COLOSSIAN** CHRISTIANS THAT THEY WOULD BECOME **PERFECT**.



IN 4:16, PAUL REFERS TO A LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN TO THE CHURCH IN **LAODICEA**. WE READ OF THE **PATHETIC** STATE OF THIS CHURCH IN REVELATION 3:14--17. IF THEY HAD TAKEN HEED TO THE **WARNINGS** PAUL HAD WRITTEN TO THEM, THEY WOULD **NOT** HAVE **ENDED UP** IN THAT STATE.



PAUL MENTIONS **DEMAS** WHO, AT THIS TIME, WAS A **COWORKER** OF HIS (4:14). BUT **LATER**, **DEMAS** GOT ATTRACTED BY THE THINGS OF THIS **WORLD** AND WENT **ASTRAY** (2 TIMOTHY 4:10).



IN 4:17, WE READ A WONDERFUL EXHORTATION THAT PAUL GIVES **ARCHIPPUS**: "**TAKE HEED** TO THE **MINISTRY** WHICH YOU RECEIVED FROM THE **LORD**, THAT YOU **FULFIL** THAT." **DON'T** GET **SIDETRACKED** AND DO SOMETHING ELSE.