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Colossians 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Topics.

- Continue steadfastly in prayer.
- The mystery of Christ.
- God's promises to Abraham.
- · Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders
- Stand fully assured in all the will of God.
- House churches and the global church.
- The worldwide family of God.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter Paul talked of being raised with Christ, seeking the things that are above and of a Christian's life being hidden with Christ in God. He told brothers and sisters in Christ when the Lord appears, they will appear with him in glory and spoke of putting off the old-self and putting on the new-self and stated that Christ is all in all.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

Paul told the Colossians to have this letter read to the church in Laodicea and instructed the Colossians to read the letter he had Written to the Laodiceans) (Col. 4:16).

COLOSSIANS 4:1

Continue Steadfastly in Prayer, being Watchful in it with Thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:1: Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a
Master in heaven.

These words of Paul link back to the end of the previous chapter in which Paul told slaves to obey their masters (Col 3:22).

NOTICE: Paul refers to the Lord as the master of every brother and sister in Christ. When we meditate on this for a moment it becomes obvious that no matter who we are or what position in life we hold or don't hold, no matter whether single, or married, noble or lowly, rich or poor, a boss or a worker whatever our state in life or whoever we are all of us are called to treat each other justly and fairly regardless of the position of authority or lack of it. This is especially true when one considers that the Lord Jesus Christ is our master and as such laid his life down for us clearly showing that we are all called to treat others with fairness and with respect. Added to this Paul said to the Colossian brothers and sisters and by extension to all who are in Christ:

• Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality (Col. 3:23-25).

This means that God has no favourites and will judge all of us according to how we treat other humans.

NOTE: since the Bible is God's word it reveals His perfect will and teaches the perfect standard since it cannot teach anything less, thus the reason and need for grace since not one of us attain with utter perfection to the high calling in Christ, nevertheless this should be the aim and focus of those who are in Christ. Paul gloriously expressed this mindset in the following majestic words:

• Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own, brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philip. 3:12-14).

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

Continue Steadfastly in Prayer.

• Colossians 4:2-4: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Watchful; means to rouse and keep awake, watch or be vigilant, it carries the idea of collecting one's faculties. Prayer in the context of these verses is not limited to those special moments we set aside to be on our own with the Lord, but embraces the idea of being in union with the Lord in the thoughts of our minds as we go about our daily lives. This is why Paul says, "Be watchful in it" (v2) meaning be alert, mindful, cautious, observant and aware, to the temptations or looming troubles that may be around us in contrast to being in a mental vacuum or mindless fantasy that is oblivious to enticements, persecution and dangers that have the potential not only to affect us, but also affect the lives and faith of other brothers and sisters in Christ.

The mystery of Christ: to help understand what the words, "The mystery of Christ" mean and what this mystery of Christ is it helps to look at the meaning of the word mystery as used in ancient times and various other Scriptures in which the word mystery is used.

Mysteries: in ancient time's meant something unknown, but only unknown by those who are not initiated. Like the Masons, they have all sorts of mysteries that the initiated know, but those outside the sect don't.

The following verses show that when the word 'mystery' is used in the Bible it carries the same idea.

Jesus said to the apostles:

• To you has been given the *mystery* (secret in ESV) of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables (Mark 4:11).

Paul said:

• We impart a *mystery* (secret in ESV) and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory (1 Cor. 2:7).

Paul told the Ephesians:

• The *mystery* was made known to me by revelation, when you read this you can perceive my insight into the *mystery* of Christ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This *mystery* is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephes. 3:3-6).

In Paul's letter to the Colossians he wrote:

• The *mystery* hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints (the Jews) and to them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this *mystery*, which is Christ in you (the Gentiles) the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27).

The mystery of Christ: is that Gentiles in Christ have now become partakers of all the eternal promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Israel. Up until now these promises were only granted to the descendants of Abraham and to those who were circumcised and adopted Moses laws of purification and the religious customs and traditions of Israel, but now all these promises are in Christ whoever is in Christ is a brother or sister of Christ and as such becomes an adopted child of God and therefore an heir to all the eternal promises made to Abraham, David and Israel, which means that the two nations (Israel and the Gentiles) now become one nation in Christ, this one nation is also called a new creature in Christ, a new man, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Some religious teachers today still proclaim that the Jews are God's favourites and in the eternal kingdom will have an exalted position over the Gentiles, but this is not so, since any Jew who denies Christ will not inherit the promises made to Abraham whereas any Gentile who accepts Christ will receive them all, not only this but whoever is in Christ regardless of birthright is counted as equals before God. Paul made this abundantly clear when he stated:

• There is neither Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free; but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11)

This means that in Christ all are counted equal and all are saved to eternal life and all will inherit the eternal promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and the nation of Israel.

The mystery of Christ in the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ embraces all that the Old Testament prophets spoke about regarding the seed of the woman in (Genesis 3:15), the promised seed of Abraham, the promised seed of David and the prophet to come like Moses and all the eternal promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Israel.

All of these Old Testament promises are now fulfilled in Christ.

- Jews and Gentiles are saved to eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:3-6) (Col. 1:10-29).
- Everything that is needed for eternal salvation is in Christ.
- The plans purposes and promises of God are revealed and fulfilled in Christ.
- The character nature and power of God are perfectly revealed in Christ.
- God's grace mercy and love are revealed in Christ's life and in his brutal and cruel death.

Paul was asking the Colossians to continually pray that God would not only open doors for him but that he would be able to clearly proclaim the mystery of Christ to his listeners (v4) which was that Jews and Gentiles (people from all nations and all walks of life) are now saved in the same manner and can all be partakers of the eternal promises God made to Abraham.

The Apostle Paul had written to the Ephesians saying:

• **Ephesians 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (*Jews*), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (*Gentiles*) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,

having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (*Gentiles*) who once were far off (*from God*) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (*Jews and Gentiles*) peace, who has made us (*Jews and Gentiles*) both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (*Jesus*) might create in himself one new man (*i.e., Nation*) in place of the two (*Jews and Gentiles*), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (*Jews and Gentiles*) both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (*between the Jews and the Gentiles*). ¹⁷And he (*Jesus*) came and preached peace to you (*Gentiles*) who were far off (*from God*) and peace to those who were near (*Jews*). ¹⁸For through him (*Jesus*) we both (*Jews and Gentiles*) have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (*Gentiles*) are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints (*Jews*) and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure being joined together (*Jews and Gentiles*) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (*Jews and Gentiles*) also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this New Nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The practical application of what this means is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to whoever belongs to Christ. The book of Revelation states:

 When Christ returns everyone will see him (the Gentiles) and those who pierced him (the Jews).

And tells us:

• Jesus the faithful witness and the ruler of kings on earth loves us (Jews and Gentiles), freed us from our sins by his blood and ransomed a people for God from every tribe (Jews) and language and people and nation (Gentiles) to be a kingdom and priests to God and they and will reign on the earth (Revelation 1:5-10).

Paul is in prison because of the mystery of Christ: Paul says he is in prison because of "The mystery of Christ that he proclaims" (v3). This is because the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection destroyed the entire religious system of the Jews since the Gospel proclaims that humble and repentant sinners are saved by faith in Christ and by God's grace and not by being circumcised or by keeping Moses laws of purification and religious rites, customs and traditions. It is because Paul is proclaiming the mystery of Christ that he is in jail since it proclaims that whoever (Jew or Gentile) accepts the Lord Jesus Christ is totally set free from all Jewish religious practices and therefore the Jews that did have great authority, power and control over the people suddenly lost it all. Christ's death and resurrection brought their religious empire to a sudden crash, thus the reason they rose up in such fury against anyone who proclaimed the mystery of Christ and the majestic message of the gospel.

God's promises to Abraham: Paul in this chapter said, "He is in prison because he declared the mystery of Christ" (Col 4:3) and in the book of Acts he said, "I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers," (Acts26:6). Both of these statements refer to the following promise. The LORD promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude

of nations. God swore He would make Abrahams name great, bless him, nations, and kings would come from him and He would give to him and to his offspring after him all the land of Canaan/Israel for an everlasting possession. God promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they cannot be numbered and God will be their God. The LORD confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Now the majestic wonder and beauty of God's promise is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes that the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. that is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written:

• I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (creation and the resurrection).

In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Paul tells us that "The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7) and then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Galatians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

Conduct yourselves Wisely Toward Outsiders.

• Colossians 4:5-6: Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

There is perhaps no other more important instruction in the New Testament than this regarding Christian behaviour. The following are some of the reasons for making this statement.

- People of the world judge Christianity not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the lives and hear in the conversations of those who confess to believe in Christ.
- Those outside the Kingdom of God understand the nature of Christianity so well that they know when its members are not consistent with it.
- Those who do not know Christ set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the

professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of Christ and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. Though Christians may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and ceremonies – they are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless accompanied with a life of integrity and honesty.

- If a person confessing Christ cheats someone (no matter how small), it is vain for them to endeavour to introduce that person to be a Christian because they will feel, (even though they may not say it) that they want nothing to do with a religion that does not make a person honest.
- The honour of Christianity is dependent on its adherents and their interaction with others and the lives they lead.

These verses shine a spotlight upon the reason why, Paul told those in Christ, "to walk wisely toward outsiders" (v5), which was so that outsiders will have no occasion to reproach the name of Christ or the Christian faith.

NOTE: this does not mean that a brother or sister in Christ should stop witnessing until they have obtained to the perfect standard the law, since then no-one would be able to testify, rather the idea underlying the words "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders" (v5) is that those in the Kingdom of God should live a life of integrity and treat those outside the Kingdom of God with respect and decency.

COLOSSIANS 4:7-15

Paul's Final Greetings.

• Colossians 4:7-15: Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. ¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions— if he comes to you, welcome him). ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³For I bear him (Epaphras) witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.

Paul's sends men who have comforted him and faithful men who have ministered with him who care about the Colossian and Laodicean brothers and sister's well-being and their spiritual faith to encourage their hearts in Christ and tell them everything that has been happening and how Paul and those with him in prison are doing. Ponder for a moment the tremendous excitement of the faithful in these two churches when these faithful men who have ministered with Paul visit them. I have no-doubt their fellowship was full of praise, overwhelming joy and went on through the long hours of the night.

Stand fully assured in all the will of God: Epaphras prays that the Colossians and by extension all brothers and sisters in Christ would, "Stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God" (v12). This prayer carries the following five ideas:

1. Being fully assured that they are saved by faith in Christ and by God's grace in contrast to their own self-effort and keeping religious rites, ceremonies, customs and traditions.

- 2. That they would live to honour God and to reflect Christ's character (howbeit not perfectly) so that they would be a good testimony to his name.
- 3. That they, 'Love their neighbour as themselves,' meaning they do-good to others and not harm physically, verbally, emotionally, mentally or spiritually.
- 4. That they are not led away from Christ or from grace by man's reasoning and shallow and superficial human philosophy and the deception of false teachers.
- 5. That they are able to discern the will of God in any given circumstance contrasted to legalistically and dogmatically following the letter of the law since in human life there are many situations that are not black and white, but have many shades of grey in these circumstances the acceptable and perfect will of God is to do all things from love. A good starting point to find the will of God in these situations is to ask ourselves the following questions:
 - In this circumstance what is the loving and kind thing to do?
 - What can I do, that will help everyone involved?
 - What would be the best and most compassionate action I can take that will benefit the people in this difficult and mixed up situation?

The reason these things are God's will and why He desires that we live in this manner, is because when we do, no-matter what is said or done it will honour the Lord Jesus Christ and keep us from harm and from trouble and this kind of behaviour will not only hold the body of Christ together in unity and harmony, but will also encourage those with a right heart attitude to seek after God. Added to these is the fact that people of the world judge Christianity not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the lives and hear in the conversations of those who confess to believe in Christ and therefore the honour of Christianity is dependent on its adherents and their interaction with others and the lives they lead.

House churches and the global church: notice a woman named Nympha has a church in her house (v15) it is interesting to notice that during the New Testament most churches were in people's houses there is no mention of an actual church building. For this reason, when we think of the word church it should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians. When the Bible uses the term church it primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is:

• Loving Thy Neighbour as Thyself (Mark 12:28-31).

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law (James 2:8) and means, do good to others. Those who deliberately harm or use people, especially those who belong to Christ for their own selfish gain and greed, sexually, financially, emotionally and spiritually are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity (Matt 7:21-23). The Bible teaches that some will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to

know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use his name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ. Nevertheless Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom (Matt. 8:12) (Matt. 22:13) (Matt. 25:30). Jesus said:

• I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

Building God's church is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather it is about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation and whether conditions etc.), but if it is built using guilt and borrowing such vast amounts of money that not only the oversight of that church, but also the congregation are put under financial oppression it is not in the will of God. Building God's House (Temple) is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, thus the New Testament church is Global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The global family of God: Since the Bible was written in an entirely different culture to ours and the body of Christ is a global family filled with people from different nations, countries, cultures, backgrounds, knowledge, levels of education, hurts and troubled pasts there is always going to be certain amount of Scripture we will all understand differently. Paul in the book of Romans tells us to avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that he taught the brothers and sisters in Rome, but in the context of his letter the doctrines he has in mind are:

- 1. Doctrines that are contrary to the teaching that salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ contrasted to works of the law, self-effort and keeping religious customs and traditions etc.
- 2. Doctrines that are contrary to the truth that Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ become one nation in Christ, contrasted to them being two separate nations.
- 3. Doctrines that are contrary to godly behaviour and lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the three major topics Paul has focused on in his letter to the brothers and sisters in Rome and the doctrines he has in his mind when he says be careful of those who cause divisions and create obstacles. Naturally within the global family of Christ there are many varied understandings of many Scripture, but not all teachings are important to know to be saved to eternal life nor does one have to have perfect understanding of every teaching of the Bible to know Christ and be in union with him. No one has to be a walking Bible encyclopaedia to be in the family of Christ and saved to eternal life, but should any teacher proclaim a message of works and self-effort to be saved or teach that Jews and Gentiles are two separate groups/nations in Christ, or teach doctrines that lead people away from godly behaviour and from Christ Paul says they should be avoided (Rom 16:17-19).

NOTE: though the visible global church in many regions has not presented a good reflection of Christ to the secular world, it should always be remembered that there are literally hundreds of thousands of humble Christian brothers and sisters in Christ spending their time helping the

poor and the less fortunate, but sadly this type of news does not attract the attention of global T.V. news media since there is no profit to be made in good news. The body is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore should be walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion and grace etc. that Christ walked in while on earth.

COLOSSIANS 4:16-18

Paul's Letter is to be Read to the Colossians and the Laodiceans.

• Colossians 4:16-18: And when this letter has been read among you (Colossians) have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfil the ministry that you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Some of Paul's letters were written by Scribes, but this one he wrote himself. No-doubt scribes wrote his messages when he was speaking in public or to groups of disciples. It was the custom of this era that scribes would record what the apostles spoke and it is certain other faithful scribes made copies that were passed around the Christian churches and read to the congregations. This is one of the ways in which the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was spread. The Colossian and Laodicea church were only about eight miles apart so it was quiet easy for them to visit each other and it is certain that once they heard that the church at Laodicea had a letter from Paul they would have immediately sent disciples to get it since they did not have Bibles as we do today and every letter no-matter how small would have been like treasured gold to them.

NOTE: there are many other ancient writings and scrolls of various disciples existing today that never made it into the Cannon of the Bible, but if all letters were entered into God's 'Holy Book' we would most likely need a trolley to carry it around, added to this there is more than enough contained within the Bible for anyone with a seeking heart to find God, the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal life and so much more wonder and splendour.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.