



## The Book of Colossians – February 2024

The Book of Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul with the accompaniment of his son in the faith, Timothy. It is possible that Timothy served as a ministerial assistant of sorts to the Apostle Paul which may explain the usage of the singular “I” being used within the letter itself.

This letter was written somewhere around 62 A.D. which is roughly 8 years before Jerusalem was to be destroyed by Titus and the Tenth Legion that were to march on Jerusalem to destroy it; fulfilling the prophesy of Christ found in the Gospel of Saint Mark chapter 13.

According to Historical Scholars, the Letter to the Colossians was written at roughly the same time that Paul wrote Philemon and Ephesians. All three letters were written during the same time while Paul was imprisoned waiting to appeal to Caesar. This course was set in motion during the Book of Acts when he utilized his roman citizenship to save his life from the mob that sought to kill him noted in the Book of Acts chapter 16.

The Church of the Colossians was in a city called “Colossae” that was a smaller city/township in Asia Minor with a distance of roughly 12 miles from the Church at Laodicea and 14 miles from Hierapolis. Laodicea was one of the Churches that the Apostle John addresses in the Book of the Revelation when Christ is addressing the internal states of 7 specific churches in Asia.

The theme and focus of this letter was to instill in the Church body at Colossae that Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm. He has secured redemption for his people, enabling them to participate with him in his death, resurrection, and fullness. The first part of his letter to the Colossians was first to deal with doctrine and the second portion was to address the expectation of the conduct of believers: Doctrine and Conduct

Though we do not know exactly what the doctrinal issues were that Paul was seeking to address, we can gather from what he addresses that there were influences gaining traction that were leading some within the Church body into error due to their doctrinal stances. Overall the point is this; Jesus plus anything else is error. We must depend on Christ alone.

## Chapter 1

### 1. Greeting (1:1-2)

a. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, <sup>2</sup>To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”

b. Paul is introducing himself as the author and makes reference to Timothy as being a part of the writing or perhaps present when the letter itself was written. There are several letters that Paul writes that Timothy is mentioned as well as letters that Paul would later write to Timothy directly; namely, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy.

## 2. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

a. <sup>3</sup>“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, <sup>5</sup>because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, <sup>6</sup>which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing – as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, <sup>7</sup>just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf <sup>8</sup>and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.”

b. Paul begins this section with celebrating the Lord’s call of this local church and celebrates the church itself for their faith in Christ and the love that they have shown. Paul goes on to notate a man by the name of Epaphras who is suggested to have been the pastor.

c. A few different commentaries suggest a few different points concerning Epaphras: either Epaphras was established by Paul over this church or that Epaphras had helped to establish the church but either wound up in prison with Paul, hence Paul’s

statement of Epaphras' report to Paul, or by a letter sent from Epaphras to Paul while Paul was in prison to provide a status report, etc.

### 3. Prayer (1:9-14)

a. <sup>9</sup>“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup>He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

b. In verse 9 it references “from the day we heard”; it is noted that it is very probable that the Apostle Paul had never been able to get to this church fellowship to visit because of his imprisonment. It was this imprisonment of Paul, but also his roman citizenship, that allowed him to write all of the letters that he did.



c. Paul in this passage of text is praying for the Church to walk upright, bear good fruit, and increase in the knowledge of God; trusting the Lord to provide unto them knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

#### 4. Praise to Christ (1:15-20)

##### a. Christ is Lord of Creation (1:15-17)

i. <sup>15</sup>“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.<sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.<sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

ii. “He is the image of the invisible God; the firstborn of all creation; i.e. - the Gospel of Saint John 1 - in the beginning was the Word! Jesus did not become God; He is the Embodiment of God in the Flesh! And not only is He God in the Flesh, He is all powerful with all authority!

- iii. Note: Ephesians 6:12 references to the fact that we war  
“against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
- iv. This is the same inference in Colossians as in Ephesians; but in Colossians, it is made clear that Christ is above all these things and has authority above all over these entities.
- v. The Gospel of Saint Matthew 28:18-20, “<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- vi. Christ is the Archaeo - He is the Great Architect of the Ages!

## b. Christ is Lord of Redemption (1:18-20)

- i. **“<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”**
- ii. Notice the position of authority of Christ noted in verse 18; He is the head of the church and in him was the fullness of God and this fullness was well pleased to do so.
- iii. The point of what may seem to be harping by the Apostle Paul, and later in with the writing of the Gospel of John we see this theme and emphasis as well, is due to the influences of Gnosticism.
- iv. Paul is in a constant fight against the influences of Gnosticism being injected into theological circles that question everything from the deity of Christ to whether or not He was even crucified physically but was rather a spirit and his crucifixion was a mirage. All of which is rubbish!
- v. Remember, Christ plus anything else is error. Christ is the Lord of Redemption!



## 5. Reconciliation of the Colossians to God (1:21-23)

a. “<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

b. This expanse of text from verses 21 to 23 gives us some insight into what took place at our point of salvation and the salvific work of Grace through Christ. We all, at one point, were alienated and hostile in our minds doing evil things but through the process of regeneration through Christ Jesus, we are redeemed! The focus must be and must always remain to be on Christ and His finished work at the Cross!

## 6. The Apostle Paul's Labor for the Gospel (1:24-2:3)

a. Paul's suffering and stewardship of the mystery (1:24-28)

i. “<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup> of which I became

a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,<sup>26</sup> the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.<sup>27</sup> 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 hope of glory.<sup>28</sup> Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

- ii. The blessing that Paul finds in his sufferings is for the sake of seeing a church that is healthy and vibrant; all his struggles were worth it because of seeing his labor not be in vain.
- iii. Verse 26 - <sup>26</sup>the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.
- iv. This mystery was the mystery of salvation and the prophetic utterances that had been shadowed in secrecy until the appointed time; prophecies of Messiah, etc.
- v. 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, <sup>7</sup>“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.<sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

vi. Why would they have not done it? Because what they meant for evil played them right into the hands of God Himself; for it was through the rulers of this age being ignorant to the mystery hid in God to save mankind that opened the door of salvation unto mankind. If they had known that crucifying Christ would break the power of darkness over mankind then they would have never had him crucified.

b. Paul's labor for the Colossians (1:29-2:3)

i. <sup>29</sup>“For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. <sup>1</sup>For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

ii. In the closing portion of Paul's segment in chapter one of this letter, it spills over a little bit into the second chapter of which we will continue in next week.

- iii. As our time comes to an end for tonight, I want to point us all to one theme of Paul's ending; His dependence upon Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit to do to work of the ministry.
- iv. Paul feels the literal burden of the Church; He cares about those who are a part of the faith with a love that can only be described as fatherly at the very least. (Repeat verse 29 - 2:3)

## Chapter 2

### 1) Overlap of Chapters - Paul's labor for the Colossians (1:29-2:3)

a) “<sup>29</sup>For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. <sup>1</sup>For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

- i) In this closing portion of Paul's segment in chapter one of this letter, it spills over a little bit into the second chapter of which we will continue in this week.
- ii) As I shared last week, I want to point us all to one theme of Paul's ending; His dependence upon Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit to do to work of the ministry.
- iii) Paul feels the literal burden of the Church; He cares about those who are a part of the faith with a love that can only be described as fatherly at the very least. The Apostle Paul loved the Church.

## 2) Second Part of Introduction (2:4-5)

a) <sup>4</sup>I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.”

i) The challenge of Paul to the Church is take into account, comparatively speaking, the difference between the Sufferings of Paul to ensure the Church was sound doctrinally versus those who seek to create division. The point was that there were those who claimed to have a deeper understanding of mysteries or revelations.

ii) Hence the reason why Paul states the following, “to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

iii) Friends, the deepest mystery and revelation of the Bible is Christ Jesus! Paul states that in Christ are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This cornerstone teaching totally disarmed those claiming to have deeper revelations or insights of which Paul was combating against.



iv) In verse 5, Paul celebrates them and rejoices for them to maintain a good order and a firmness in their faith in Christ. Remember, Jesus plus anything else is error. It is all about Christ and Christ alone.

### 3) Alive in Christ (2:6-15)

a) <sup>6</sup>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

i) Note the action words used in these two verses: walk, rooted, built up, established. All of these, for me, point to one thing: stable.

ii) The Apostle Paul wanted the church to be stable and consistent; not unstable and tossed about by the winds and waves of change.

iii) And may we accept this challenge as well; walk in him, be rooted and built up in Him and established in our precious faith in Jesus!

b) <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup>and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

- i) In verse 8, Paul uses a very particular word that is translated in English as “captive”. It is the Greek word, “sylagogon” which means “to plunder, lead captive” (Strong’s Greek 4812).
- ii) Paul is trying to protect the church from being defrauded by those who would desire to manipulate or pollute their faith by philosophy and empty deceit or even by the use of elemental spirits of the world (i.e. – use of supernatural manifestation for the sake of manipulation and control) This is a manifestation of the Spirit of Antichrist; manifests miracles for the sake of control.
- iii) Verse 9 speaks to the deity and nature of Christ Himself; **“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...”**
- iv) The words used there for whole and fullness is “pan” and “pleroma” which interpret to mean “all completion”; Paul is trying to get the Church at Colossae to understand that in Christ dwelt the fullness of Godhead bodily in “all completion”.
- v) And it is that “all completion” that we have been filled with for He is the head of all rule and authority. Jesus fills us all in all!

c) <sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

i) In verse 11, there is the reference to the Circumcision of Christ made without hands by the putting off of the body of flesh. Paul lends more insight to this teaching found in Romans 2:28-29.

ii) Romans 2:28-29, <sup>28</sup> “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”

- iii) Thus, the Circumcision of Christ is performed by the Spirit of God doing an inward work in the life of the Christian; it is an outward expression of an inward work. It is the changing of one's nature and not just the correction of one's actions.
- iv) And all of this is accomplished by faith and through sacrament of baptism and the power of the Holy Ghost.
- v) Paul goes on to explain that the work that Christ did on the Cross not only has the power to do a work in us but He, Christ, has the right forgive us of our sins because, having died in our place on the cross, he canceled the record of our debts, our sins, by nailing it all to His Cross through His flesh.
- vi) Verse 15 is so powerful because it lends to the mystery that Paul keeps referring to Christ as above all else and how Christ is and was and forever shall be the Mystery hidden before the foundations of the World.
- vii) And it is this mystery that the principalities and powers of this wicked age did not understand nor know because if they had, they would have never crucified the Lord of Glory. The Scripture teaches such according to Paul's Letter to the Church at Corinth.

viii) 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, “<sup>6</sup>Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. <sup>7</sup>But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. <sup>8</sup>None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

ix) And it is because of 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, that Paul states what he does to the Church at Colossae in Colossians 2:15, “<sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”

x) Christ’s death not only saves our soul but it destroyed the power of Darkness by triumphing over them through His Cross!

#### 4) Let No One Disqualify You (2:16-23)

a) “<sup>16</sup>Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. “

i) Here is the balance for us all to embrace: Foreshadowing of things to come versus the Substance that it all represents. This is the challenge that Paul is cautioning all members of the church to not fall into the trap of being more embracing of the shadow over the substance that the shadow is foreshadowing.

ii) Because Christ is our substance, He is our Sabbath. He is our provision. He is our Rest. He is our Peace. We rest in the Substance of His finished work and not the striving of the foreshadowing of what was to come. We trust in His finished work upon the Cross alone!

b) <sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup> and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

i) Let no one disqualify you by insisting on asceticism and the worship of angels, details about visions etc. The word asceticism defined means “severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.”



- ii) The point of Paul using this word is to bring balance of expectation and proper Biblical balance. The issue with asceticism is found in people using such actions as a means of self-elevation.
- iii) For example, take fasting for instance; Jesus spoke to this issue in the Gospel of Saint Matthew 6:16-18, <sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
- iv) Note how Christ differentiates between private consecration versus public asceticism. As it were, if you are going to consecrate then do so in private but when you use spiritual practices to get people to think you are more spiritual than you are then you are in error. The point of matters of spirituality are for self-development and progression; not for self-elevation and get others to higher of us than they should.
- v) We should cling to Christ and His Finished Work; not our own!

c) <sup>20</sup> If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—<sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” <sup>22</sup> (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? <sup>23</sup> These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”

i) I close with the last portion of verse 23, “, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” The fact of the matter is that rules never stopped any one from doing anything; love and relationship is what does that. The Scripture teaches us in Proverbs 11:1, “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.”

ii) Church family, proper doctrine is not found in dogma but rather a healthy balance and understanding in proper context and application. Any extreme is typically an unjust balance; healthy doctrine is balanced on the scales of a healthy Scriptural basis.

iii) And it is from this point that I desire to close; our Biblical formation must be balanced upon the basis of Scripture and not anything else; asceticism, man-made religion or mysticism.