

“Equipping believers for growth and service by encountering God through his word.”

THE BIBLE FOR TODAY
MAY 12, 2010



OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

Greetings (1:1-2)

The Themes (1:3-2:5)

A. Thanksgiving

B. Prayer and Meditation

C. Paul's Ministry and Reason for Writing

Appeal for Christian Maturity (2:6-4:6)

A. Continue in Christ

B. Let No One Exclude You

C. Live in Accordance with Life of Christ

Final Greetings (4:7-18)

THE THEMES (1:3-2:5)

- A complex whole; usually disconnected by breaking into parts
- A foundation for the whole letter; Colossians are part of a total ministry taking place in the world through Christ—Paul thanks God for them, prays for them, shows their connection to others
- Encourages their work together toward maturity of faith; we can live in maturity *through* and *in* the all sufficient Christ

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all his people—

- “Always prays:” regularly, not just when feels like it (Jewish prayers given at morning, noon, and evening)
- “Lord Jesus Christ;” not an honor title, but reflects who Jesus is in relationship to God’s work and plan for the world
- “Faith, love, hope;” signs of new life-behavior in Christ, love not just for those in the church but those in the region of Colossae (spilled over)

⁵ --*the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true word of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you.*

- Hope in Christ is for heaven, yes, but it leads to faith and love *now*; to walk in the gospel teaching, *to live a Christ modeled*
- Hope comes from the truth of the gospel
- The gospel: not a messenger or a person with persuasive speech, but a power in the world; flows across the world—the church is the representative of the gospel that is bearing fruit (like a plant)—the gospel is powered by the Holy Spirit; the church is to be obedient to proclaim the gospel and be obedient to the truth
- Truth of the gospel: not empirical or head knowledge but reliability of the claim—Christ is all sufficient for life

6b In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world— just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

- Paul heard the testimony from Epaphras, which is leading Paul to a more fuller discussion of Christ and maturity of faith in his letter
- They heard: A clear recognition of the gospel: God loved the world and sent Christ to restore us to him; this restoration leads us to love God and to also “desire a deeper intellectual understanding of God’s nature and purpose.” (NT Wright)
- In understanding the meaning of the gospel/ the meaning of the cross, the Colossians can come to know a new beginning, a new “Genesis.”

PRAYER AND MEDITATION (1:9-23)

- Verses 9-23 are one single unit, sentence in Greek
- Built on thanksgiving prayer earlier; now prays the church will grow: in knowledge (9), in holiness (10), in spiritual power (11)
- Paul prays now for what God will do in them because what he has *already done* in them
- God will continue the work of grace he started in his church and his people

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,

- The knowledge of God's saving purpose in Christ; this knowledge forms the basis for holiness and thanksgiving to God for what he has done in Christ
- Not private knowledge or exclusive, but for everyone (*gospel is inclusive*); not like Gnostics
- Wisdom and knowledge through the Spirit help us to live abundant, fruitful, obedient lives (*verse 9 is a type of heading for what follows*).

We are to grow in spiritual AND practical life together,
not one over the other.

“For Christians to ‘grow up’ in every way will include the awakening of intellectual powers, the ability to think coherently and practically about God and his purposes for his people.” (NT Wright)

Knowledge of God’s will and doing God’s will are linked in biblical thought.

Being filled with ‘wisdom and understanding’ lead to walking worthy of God, having a fruitful life, experiencing growth in the knowledge of God, and becoming stronger in endurance with patience.
(Patzia)

10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,

- ‘live worthy:’ *image to spiral up*— to continue growing up into the Head in our lives; cannot be perfect, but can walk to please God
- The result of the knowledge of God’s will in Christ will “lead our *profession* to correspond with our *confession*,” please God in all things we do; have a fruitfulness in good works and personal growth; if not growing in works *and* life, then stagnate
- *Strength* (continuous activity, not one time); *endurance* (lasting and continuous leading to a goal); *patience* (self restraint without retaliation)

¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- Image of the Exodus event (the time of the new covenant with Israel; God's power in the journey)
- Brought out of the darkness where we are controlled by sin of self sufficiency and disobedience to a new relationship *in* and *through* Christ
- We are not longer subject to darkness or evil forces, but reminded we can live victoriously in the power of Christ

THE BIBLE FOR TODAY

- Prayer: morning, noon, evening—how are we praying for the church and for the world?
- Thankful for the church and believers worldwide; thankful for the gospel at work in the world
- Loving of believers locally and worldwide
- WE do not own the gospel; it is alive and at work in the world
- Grow deeper in our knowledge of God—to obedience and walk
- God will continue doing what he has already done if we have faith in the truth/ hope of the gospel