

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE

{ *Colossae was located in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) on the south bank of the Lycus river. It was situated along the important trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates valley. The polyglot population made for prejudice in the community. Because of the movements of people and ideas along the trade route the city was a hot bed of fantastic theological theories. It's sister cities were Laodicea and Hierapolis.* }

CHAPTER I

SALUTATION

<Colossians 1:1-2>

¹ Paul, who by the will of God is an Apostle of Jesus Christ and our brother Timothy <*The name means, "honor of God".*> greet ² the people of God (*literally, saints*) at Colossae who are our faithful fellow believers (*literally, brothers*) in union with Christ. May grace and peace be given you from God [our Father.]¹

PAUL THANKS GOD FOR THE COLOSSIANS

<Colossians 1:3-8>

³ We constantly give thanks to [God, the] ² Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we pray on your behalf. ⁴ We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all the people of God (*or, saints*) ⁵ because of the hope that is stored up in heaven for you. You have already heard of their hope in the word of truth when the Good News arrived in your midst. ⁶ It was also spread to the entire world providing fruitful results just as when, ⁷ on the day you first heard of the grace of God from Epaphras, <*A shortened form of the name Epaphroditus. The name means, "charming".*> our dearly loved fellow servant, you came to know it as it truly is. To you he is a faithful minister (*or, servant*) in Christ ⁸ and he has informed us of your love which the Spirit has inspired. <*Note: In Greek this entire passage is one sentence.*>

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

<Colossians 1:9-23>

⁹ It is because of this that we have not ceased to pray for you, ever since we received the news, (*cf. verse 8*) asking that you might be filled with all spiritual wisdom and insight in spiritual matters, ¹⁰ so that your lives might be worthy of the Lord and completely satisfactory to Him. Your lives, then, will be fruitful in every good work and you will grow in your knowledge of God. ¹¹ We pray that you will be invigorated with power from the strength which comes from God's glorious nature and be prepared to endure all things with cheerful patience and perseverance ¹² and that you might give thanks [to God (*literally, the Father*)] ³ who has made [you] ⁴ fit to receive your share in

1 {B} So: B, D, K, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Armenian & Ethiopic (Rome) . "our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" Aleph, A, C, G, I, many other minuscules, Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic (Pell Platt). "our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" P.

2 {D} So, or in a similar form, B, C & D in the original hand & G. "the God and" Aleph, A, C in the second corrective hand, D in the third corrective hand, I, K, P, Psi, many minuscules & Old Latin.

3 {C} So: P61, A, C in the original hand, D, K, Psi, many minuscules, some Old Latin, Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic. "together with the Father" P46 & B. "the Father of Christ" several minuscules. "the Father and God" C in the third corrective hand & several minuscules. "the Father God" Aleph. Other variants occur.

4 {C} Minor variants occur.

the inheritance of the saints of light. ¹³ He has rescued us from the control of darkness and has transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son ¹⁴ in whom we have our redemption through the forgiveness of our sins.

¹⁵ Christ is the visible representation of the invisible God.

He takes precedence over all that was created

(literally, the firstborn of all creation).

¹⁶ By Him <as the agent> all things were created in heaven and on earth,

those things that are visible and those that are invisible, including thrones, rulers, princes and powers.

¹⁷ All these were created by Him and exist.

Through Him the entire universe holds together.

¹⁸ In addition He is the head of His body which is the church.

He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,

in order that He might have the foremost place in the entire universe.

¹⁹ It was God who decided that all of divine perfection should dwell in Him.

²⁰ It was through the Son that He would reconcile all things [to Himself] ⁵ whether they were on earth or in heaven.

God has made peace through His blood which was shed on the cross.

<In the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland text the verses 15-20 are printed as poetry. This is not the case in the 26th edition.>

²¹ You were, at one time, estranged and had a hostile attitude, being occupied with evil deeds. ²² Christ has now, in His human body, [reconciled] ⁶ you to God by means of His death, bringing you into His presence as those who are holy, blameless and without reproach. ²³ That is, assuming that you keep on holding firmly to your faith as your foundation, never shifting from your hope which is inspired by the Good News (or, the Gospel) you have heard. This Good News has been proclaimed (or, announced) to the entire creation (or, every creature under heaven) of which I, Paul, have become a minister (or, servant).

PAUL'S MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH

<Colossians 1:24-2:5>

²⁴ I am glad in the midst of my sufferings on your behalf, by completing in my body whatever is lacking in Christ's afflictions <The Greek word "θλιψις" differs from Paul's usual word for "suffering", "παθημα", hence the translation "afflictions" was selected.> on behalf (or, for the sake of) of His body, which is the Church. ²⁵ I have become a minister (literally, servant) of the Church by divine appointment on your behalf so that I might proclaim the Word of God to you in its entirety (or, to the full). ²⁶ This truth has been kept secret from all ages and generations of the past but is now being revealed to God's dedicated followers (or, believers). ²⁷ It was God's will to reveal the vast wealth of glory to all nations, which is: 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' ²⁸ Him we proclaim to all, warning everyone and instructing all in the entire range of wisdom so that we might bring

5 {D} So: P46, Aleph, A, C, D in the third corrective hand, K, P, Psi, 048, many minuscules, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac & Bohairic Coptic. Omitted by B, D in the original hand, G, I, many other minuscules, Old Latin, Sahidic Coptic, Armenian & Ethiopic.

6 {D} Minor variants occur in the word form.

everyone into God's presence, having become a mature Christian (*or, been made perfect through Christ*).²⁹ With this end in view I toil as does a wrestler, using my energy *<which is really supplied by Christ>* as I rely on Him who is powerfully at work in me.

CHAPTER II

¹ I want you to know how great my struggle is in which I am engaged on your behalf and on behalf of the Laodoeans. *<A sister city to Colossae, located on the trade route from the east to Pergamum and Asia. It was about 10 miles west of Colossae. The city is one of the seven cities in Revelation. cf. 3:14-22.>* In fact, it is even a struggle on behalf of all who have not met me personally. ² I desire that their hearts be cheered (*i.e. encouraged*) and that they might become welded together in love. I desire that they might advance toward the great wealth of conviction that is brought about by true understanding of the secrets [of God, that is, Christ, Himself.]⁷ ³ In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. ⁴ I am telling you this to prevent you from being led astray by someone's seemingly plausible arguments. ⁵ Even though I am absent from you bodily, in spirit I am present and I am full of joy to witness your well-ordered condition and the solidarity which your Christian faith supplies.

FULLNESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST

<Colossians 2:6-19>

⁶ You have received Christ Jesus, the Lord. Therefore live in union with Him. ⁷ Be firmly rooted in Him, building your lives on Him and always continue being strengthened in the faith just as you have been taught. Be overflowing [with thanksgiving (*or, gratitude*)].⁸ ⁸ Be careful of anyone who might lead you away (*or, make you a captive*) through philosophy and empty fraud (*or, deception*) based on human tradition and on the elementary knowledge which the world is able to supply instead of following Christ. ⁹ It is in Christ that all the fullness (*or, completeness*) of God's nature *<i.e. the Godhead>* dwells in bodily form. ¹⁰ He is the ruler (*literally, the head*) over all princes and rulers (*or, over every power*). ¹¹ In Him also, you were circumcised, not with a physical circumcision (*or, with human hands*) when you were divested (*or, stripped*) of your sinful nature. This is the kind of circumcision Christ provides (*or, that is Christ's*).¹² [In baptism]⁹ you were buried with Him. In baptism you were also raised with Christ as the result of your faith which has been provided you by virtue of the power of God who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ At one time you were spiritually dead because of your sins, in the uncircumcision of your natural state. However, He has made [you]¹⁰ alive with Him (*or, live jointly with Him*) for He forgave us all of all of our sins (*literally, false steps*).¹⁴ He canceled (*literally, removed the writing*) the bond by means of which we ourselves were committed to the binding rules of the law and cleared it out of the way entirely (*or, completely did away with it*) by nailing it to His cross. ¹⁵ On that cross He triumphed over princes and authorities, freeing Himself from their power (*literally, thus making a public spectacle of them*) when by means of the cross He triumphed over them.

7 {B} So: P46 & B. "of Christ" several minuscules. "God the Father in Christ Jesus" 33. Many other variants occur, the more important being, "the God and Father of Christ" Aleph in the second corrective hand, Psi & several minuscules. "of the God and Father and of Christ" D in the third corrective hand, K & many minuscules.

8 {C} So: Aleph in the original hand, A, C, I, 0208, a number of minuscules, Sahidic Coptic & Ethiopic. "with your thanksgiving" B, D in the third corrective hand, K & many minuscules, & in a variant form, Aleph in the second corrective hand, D in the original hand, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Armenian.

9 {C} Minor variants occur.

10 {C} Minor variants occur. The word "you" is omitted by Aleph in the third corrective hand, D, G, P, Psi, 0208 & many minuscules.

16 Therefore, do not allow anyone to sit in judgment of you regarding what you eat or what you drink or regarding the observation of a festival (*or, holy day*), a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These all were foreshadowing what was to come, but the reality belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one rob you of your prize, <*The idea being, as might be done by an umpire.*> priding themselves in false [humility] 11 and based on their angel worship, or their bragging about visions or boasting about their human way of thinking. 19 Someone like that does not keep hold of the one who is the head <*i.e. Christ*> through whom the entire body is held together by its joints and ligaments, being nourished and strengthened, growing as God wants it to grow.

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

<Colossians 2:20-3:17>

20 If you have died with Christ you have escaped from the world's elementary principles. Why then would you go through life as if you still belonged to this world (*or, as if you were dominated by this world*)? Why do you pay attention to the rules, <*The Greek word for "rules" "δογματιζω" is the root of our word "dogma".*> 21 such as, 'Do not handle this.' or 'Do not taste that.' 'Do not touch the next thing.' 22 All these rules are mere human commands. 23 They certainly give the impression of wisdom but are, by their self imposed devotion, only sham [humility and] 12 ascetic treatment of the body. This is, however, of no genuine value in combating the indulgence of the carnal (*or, lower*) side of our nature.

CHAPTER III

1 If you have been raised to life with Christ you must seek those things which are of a higher nature (*literally, from above*) where Christ is enthroned at the right hand of God. 2 Your constant concern must be with those things which belong to the heavenly realm, not with things that are worldly. 3 For: you have died to this world and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ appears, He is [your] 13 real life. It is then that you will also appear with Him in glory.

5 Therefore, put to death your worldly desires: fornication (*or, sexual immorality*), impurity (*or, lust*), unholy desire along with greed which is idolatrous. 6 It is because of these very things that God's wrath will come [on the children (*literally, sons*) of disobedience.] 14 7 Such was also your conduct while you were dominated (*or, addicted*) by the power of such desires. 8 Now! You must rid your life of these things: anger, temper, maliciousness (*or, hateful feelings*), abusiveness (*or, slander*), and foul language, for these must never come from your lips. 9 Do not be dishonest (*or, tell lies*) for you have stripped off the old nature with its practices 10 and have the new self which is being remolded until you have a fuller knowledge of the image of Him who created it. 11 Because of this there is no distinction. There is no Greek or Jew, no circumcised or uncircumcised, no barbarian <*The word origin for "barbarian" is those who spoke in a language that was not understood, as if a person were saying "bar bar bar".*> or Scythian, (*People who lived along the shores of the Black Sea. They were invaders who pushed as far as Egypt in 626 B. C.*) no one who is slave or free. No! Christ is all and in all.

12 Now then: clothe yourselves as God's chosen people who are consecrated to God. Be

11 {B} G adds "ideas of humility" Other variants in the Greek word for "humility" "ταπεινοφροσυνη" is substituted in some manuscripts with a different word with a similar meaning.

12 {D} So: Aleph, A, C, K, H, K, P, Psi, many minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta Syriac, Sahidic Coptic & Aramaic. "humility, wisdom and..." G. Other variants occur.

13 {C} Minor variants occur.

14 {D} So: Aleph, A, C, possibly D <the manuscript is not able to be read clearly at that spot>, G, H, I, K, P, Psi, numerous minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Herculian Syriac, Bohairic Coptic & Armenian. Omitted by P46, B, Sahidic Coptic & Ethiopic.

tenderhearted (*or, compassionate*), kindly, humble, gentle and patient. ¹³ Bear with (*or, tolerate*) one another, forgive one another, should anyone have a grievance against another. In the same manner as the [Lord] ¹⁵ forgave you, so should you also forgive. ¹⁴ Beyond all this, put on love, for this is the bond of perfect unity (*or, harmony*). ¹⁵ Let the peace which Christ gives you be the solution to all the questions you have in your hearts. God has called you to this peace as members of one body. Also: be thankful! ¹⁶ Let the riches of [Christ's] ¹⁶ message (*literally, the word of Christ*) remain in your hearts. Teach and admonish one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with God's grace in your hearts. ¹⁷ Everything you do, whether it is with words or actions, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus through whom you are giving thanks to [God the Father.] ¹⁷

SOCIAL DUTIES OF THE NEW LIFE

<Colossians 3:18-4:1>

¹⁸ Married women submit <*The word has its source in military life, i.e. the relationship with a superior officer. Perhaps the word "adapt" would convey the concept.*> to your husbands for that is what a person in the Lord's service ought to do. ¹⁹ Married men, love your wives and do not deal harshly (*literally, do not make them bitter*) with them.

²⁰ Children, be obedient toward your parents in every way. The reason is that this obedience pleases God. ²¹ Parents (*literally, fathers*) do not irritate your children for if you do they might become discouraged.

²² Employees (*literally, slaves*), be obedient in every way to your employers (*literally, masters*). Do this not merely with a pretense of obedience (*literally, eye service, i.e. to attract attention when you are being watched*) as if you are only to please people, but with unmixed motives because you have respect (*or, reverence, literally, fear*) for the Lord. ²³ Whatever your task, let your heart be in your work <*i.e. put yourself energetically into your work*> for that which is being accomplished is for the Lord and not just for people. ²⁴ You are aware (*or, know*) that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. Christ as the Lord (*or, Master*) is the one for whom you are toiling. ²⁵ The one who does what is wrong will receive recompense for the wrong things that are done. There is no partiality <*i.e. everyone is treated alike before God*>.

CHAPTER IV

¹ Employers (*literally, masters*), deal justly and fairly with your employees (*literally, slaves*). Be aware that you have a Master in heaven.

EXHORTATION

<Colossians 4:2-6>

² Be earnest and untiring in prayer. Keep alert as you pray and as you give thanks. At the same time, ^{3,4} keep on praying for us also, in order that God might give us the opportunity (*literally, open up a door*) to proclaim the message (*literally, mystery*) of Christ as fully as we ought, since it is for this reason that I am being held in prison. ⁵ Behave wisely in the presence of those who are outside the family of faith, making the most of your opportunities. ⁶ Let your conversation <*The word implies not simply words but also your manner of life.*> always be gracious (*literally, seasoned with salt*) so that you might give a suitable answer for each person who asks questions.

¹⁵ {C} So: P46, A, B, C in the second corrective hand, D, G & Old Latin. "Christ" Aleph in the third corrective hand, C, D in the third corrective hand, K, P, Psi, many minuscules Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Ethiopic. "God" Aleph in the original hand. "God in Christ" 33.

¹⁶ {B} So: P46, Aleph in the third corrective hand, B, C in the second corrective hand, D, G, K, P, Psi & many minuscules. "God" A, C in the original hand & a number of minuscules. "Lord" Aleph in the original hand, I, 2177 & Bohairic Coptic.

¹⁷ {C} So: D, G, K, Psi & many minuscules. cf. Ephesians 5:20. "God" P46, Aleph, B, C, several minuscules, Old Latin, Peshitta & Harclean Syriac, Sahidic & Bohairic Coptic & Armenian. "Father and God" 326.

FINAL GREETINGS

<Colossians 4:7-18>

⁷ Tychicus, <He was the bearer of the Epistle to the Ephesians. cf. Ephesians 6:21. A native of the province of Asia (present day Turkey). His name means "chance happening".> our much loved brother, our trusted assistant and fellow servant in the Lord's work will give you information (or, news) about me. ⁸ It is for this purpose that I have sent him to you that you might [know how we are getting along] ¹⁸ and that he might encourage you (literally, cheer up your hearts). ⁹ With him I am sending our faithful and trusted brother, Onesimus, <The name means, "useful". A slave of Philemon. cf. Philemon.> who is one of yourselves <i.e. of your community and faith>. They will inform you of everything that is happening here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, <The name perhaps means "best ruler". A Macedonian from Thessalonica. cf. Acts 19:29; 27:2, Philemon 24.> my fellow prisoner, sends you greetings as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. <The name means "son of exhortation" or "son of prophecy".> (You have already received instructions about him <i.e. Mark> that, should he come to you, you are to welcome him.) ¹⁹ ¹¹ Jesus who is also called Justus <The name means "righteous" or "just".> sends you greetings. These are the only Jewish Christian converts (literally, ones of the circumcision) who are working with me on behalf of the Kingdom of God and they have been a comfort to me. ¹² Greetings from Epaphras, one of you, and a servant (or, slave) of Christ [Jesus]. ²⁰ ¹³ He is always wrestling on your behalf as he prays for you, asking that you might stand firm, as mature persons holding clear convictions with regard to everything pertaining to the will of God! I can assure you that he is a man who is deeply concerned about you and takes an interest in you and in the congregation in Laodocia <Cf. 2:21> as well as those who are in Hierapolis. <This city was located 12 miles northwest of Colossae.> ¹⁴ Luke, <An affectionate form of the name Loukas. In Latin it would be Lucius.> our beloved physician sends greetings along with Demas. <Cf. Philemon 24, II Timothy 4:10. The name means "popular".> ¹⁵ Greet the congregation (literally, brothers) in Laodocia and [greet Nymphia along with the church that meets in her house.] ²¹ <It is uncertain if Nymphia is male or female. The name does not clarify this. The name means "sacred to the nymphs".> ¹⁶ After this letter has been read in your midst permit it to also be read in Laodocia. You must also have the letter that is being sent to Laodocia read to you. ¹⁷ In addition, tell Archippus <Tradition says he was the son of Philemon and Appia. The name means "master of the horse".> to be faithful in carrying out the ministry he has received from the Lord.

¹⁸ With my own hand I write this: Greetings, Paul. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be to you! [Amen.] ²²

18 {C} Minor variants occur.

19 The parenthesis appear in Nestle-Ahland 26th and 27th editions.

20 {*} So: P46, D, F, G, Psi, 075 & the majority text. Omitted by P, minuscule 1241 & many Old Latin manuscripts.

21 {C} Minor variants, mainly of word order occur in the manuscripts.

22 {A} Added by Aleph in the third corrective hand, D, K, P, Psi, numerous minuscules, Old Latin versions, Syriac & Bohairic Coptic.

SUBSCRIPTION

{*"To the Colossians" Aleph, B in the original hand, C, Psi, 048, 33 & with minor variants, D, F & G. "To the Colossians, written in Rome" A, B in the first corrective hand & P. "To the Colossians, written in Rome, delivered by Tychicus and Onesimus" 075, 1739, 1881 & the majority text. "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians, written in Rome and delivered by Tychicus" 0278. Variations also appear in P46, 323, 365, 629, 630, 1505 & 2464. }*