

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

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WRITER. The Apostle Paul (1. 1).

Date. Colossians was sent by the same messenger who bore Ephesians and Philemon, and was probably written at the same time.

Theme. Epaphras, who laboured in the Word in the assembly at Colosse, was Paul's fellow-prisoner at Rome. Doubtless from him Paul learned the state of that church. As to fundamentals that state was excellent (1. 3-8), but in a subtle way two forms of error were at work: The first was legality in its Alexandrian form of asceticism, "touch not, taste not," with a trace of the Judaic observance of "days"; the object of which was the mortification of the body (cf. Rom. 8. 13). The second form of error was false mysticism, "intruding into those things which he hath not seen"—the result of philosophic speculation. Because these are ever present perils, Colossians was written, not for that day only, but for the warning of the Church in all days.

The Epistle is in seven divisions: I. Introduction, 1. 1-8. II. The apostolic prayer, 1. 9-14. III. The exaltation of Christ, Creator, Redeemer, Indweller, 1. 15-29. IV. The Godhead incarnate in Christ, in whom the believer is complete, 2. 1-23. V. The believer's union with Christ in resurrection life and glory, 3. 1-4. VI. Christian living, the fruit of union with Christ, 3. 5-4. 6. VII. Christian fellowship, 4. 7-18.

CHAPTER 1.

Part I. Introduction: the apostolic greeting (vs. 1-8).

PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Part II. The apostle's seven-fold prayer (vs. 9-14).

9 For this cause we also, since

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- ^a I.e. earth.
- ^b Mk.4.8; John 15. 16; Phil.1.11.
- ^c Grace (in salu.). 2 Thes.2.16. (Rom.3.24; John 1.17.)
- ^d Col.4.12; Phm. 23.
- ^e 1 Cor.4.12; Eph. 6.21.
- ^f Holy Spirit. 1 Thes.1.5,6. (Mt.1.18; Acts 2. 4.)
- ^g Bible prayers (N.T.). 1 Thes. 3.10-13. (Mt.6.9; Rev.22.20.)
- ^h Rom.12.2; Eph. 5.10,17.
- ⁱ Eph.1.8.
- ^j Eph.4.1; Phil.1. 27; 1 Thes.2.12.
- ^k Rom.15.2; 1 Cor. 10.33; 1 Thes.4.1.
- ^l John 15.16; 2 Cor. 9.8; Phil.1.11: Tit. 3.1; Heb.13.21.
- ^m 2 Pet.3.18.
- ⁿ Eph.3.16; 6.10.
- ^o 2 Cor.6.4; 12.12; Eph.4.2.
- ^p 2 Cor.8.2; Heb. 10.34.
- ^q Son of his love.
- ^r Rom.3.24, note.
- ^s Eph.1.7.
- ^t 2 Cor.4.4; Heb.1.3.
- ^u Rev.3.14.
- ^v John 1.3; Heb.1.3.

the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Part III. The exaltation of Christ (vs. 15-29).

(1) The seven superiorities of Christ.

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or

dominions, or principalities, or powers: ^aall things were created by him, and for him:

17 And ^bhe is before all things, and by him ^call things consist.

18 And he is the ^dhead of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn ^efrom the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

19 ^fFor it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

(2) *The reconciling work of Christ.*

20 And, having made peace ^gthrough the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he ^hreconciled

22 ⁱIn the body of his flesh through death, to present you ^jholy and unblameable and unrepvable ^kin his sight;

23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the ^lgospel, which ye have heard, and which was ^mpreached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul ⁿam made a minister;

(3) *The mystery of the indwelling Christ.*

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the ^ochurch:

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to ^pfulfil the word of God;

26 *Even* the ^qmystery which hath been hid from ^rages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this ^smystery among the

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^a Rom. 11. 36;

Heb. 2. 10.

^b John 17. 5.

^c Heb. 1. 3.

^d Eph. 1. 22.

^e Rev. 1. 5.

^f For in him all the

fulness of the

Godhead was

pleased to dwell.

^g Sacrifice (of

Christ). Heb. 7.

27. (Gen. 4. 4;

Heb. 10. 18.)

^h Reconciliation.

vs. 20, 21; see

Rom. 5. 10.

ⁱ Eph. 2. 15, 16.

^j Sanctifying, holy

(persons) (N.

T.). Col. 3. 12.

(Mt. 4. 5; Rev. 22.

11.)

^k Eph. 5. 27.

^l Gospel. vs. 5, 6,

23; 1 Thes. 1. 5.

(Gen. 12. 1. 3;

Rev. 14. 6.)

^m Col. 1. 6.

ⁿ 1 Cor. 1. 17; Gal.

2. 2.

^o Church (true).

vs. 18-24; Heb. 2.

12. (Mt. 16. 18;

Heb. 12. 23.)

^p complete.

^q Mt. 13. 11, note.

^r Eph. 3. 2-6.

^s Mt. 13. 11, note.

^t Eph. 4. 24, note.

^u Life (eternal).

Col. 3. 3, 4. (Mt.

7. 14; Rev. 22. 19.)

^v Acts 20. 20, 27.

^w Mt. 5. 48, note.

^x Phil. 1. 30; Col. 1.

29; 1 Thes. 2. 2.

^y 2 Cor. 1. 6.

^z Col. 3. 14.

^a Assurance.

1 Thes. 1. 5. (Isa.

32. 17; Jude 1.)

^b The best author-

ities omit "and

of the Father,"

and of Christ."

^c Eph. 1. 9; 3. 9.

^d vs. 8, 18; Rom. 16.

18; 2 Cor. 11. 13;

Eph. 4. 14; 5. 6.

^e 1 Cor. 14. 40.

^f 1 Pet. 5. 9.

^g kosmos

(Mt. 4. 8) = man-

kind.

Gentiles; which is ^tChrist ^uin you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, ^vwarning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man ^wperfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

CHAPTER 2.

Part IV. The Godhead incarnate in Christ, in whom the believer is complete (Col. 2. 1-23).

FOR I would that ye knew what ^xgreat conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 ^yThat their hearts might be comforted, being ^zknit together in love, and unto all riches of the ^afull assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the ^bmystery of God, ^cand of the Father, and of Christ;

3 ^dIn whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(1) *The danger from enticing words.* (Cf. Rom. 16. 17, 18; 1 Cor. 2. 4; 2 Pet. 2. 3.)

4 And this I say, ^elest any man should beguile you with enticing words,

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and ^fbeholding your order, and the ^gstedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

(2) *The twofold warning against (a) philosophy, (b) legality.*

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the ^hworld, and not after Christ.

¹ Reconciliation. The Greek word signifies "to change thoroughly from," and occurs, Rom. 5. 10; 11. 15; 1 Cor. 7. 11; 2 Cor. 5. 18, 19, 20. Reconciliation looks toward the effect of the death of Christ upon man, as propitiation (Rom. 3. 25, note) is the Godward aspect, and is that effect of the death of Christ upon the believing sinner which, through divine power, works in him a "thorough change" toward God from enmity and aversion to love and trust. It is never said that God is reconciled. God is propitiated, the sinner reconciled (cf. 2 Cor. 5. 18-21).

² The "mystery of God" is Christ, as incarnating the fulness of the Godhead, and all the divine wisdom and knowledge for the redemption and reconciliation of man.

(3) *Nothing can be added to completeness.*

9 For in him ^adwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the ^bhead of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are ^ccircumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of ^dthe sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 ^eBuried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with ^fhim through the faith of the ^goperation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being ^hdead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having ⁱforgiven you all trespasses;

(4) *Law observances were abolished in Christ.* (Cf. Mt. 5. 17.)

14 ^jBlotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having ^kspoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16 Let no man therefore ^ljudge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an ^mholyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17 Which are a ⁿshadow of things to come; but the body ^ois of Christ.

(5) *Warning against false mysticism.*

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of ^pangels, ^qintruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not ^rholding the ^sHead, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

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^a John 1.14; Col. 1.19.

^b Eph.1.20; 1 Pet. 3.22.

^c Deut. 10.16; Jer. 4.4; Rom. 2.29; Phil. 3.3.

^d Omit "the sins of."

^e Rom. 6.4.

^f Eph.1.20.

^g Death (spiritual). Eph.2.1-5. (Gen. 2.17; Eph. 2.5.)

^h Forgiveness. Col. 3.13. (Lev. 4.20; Mt. 26.28.)

ⁱ Eph. 2.15, 16.

^j Eph. 6.12; Heb. 2.14.

^k Rom. 14.3.

^l Sanctify, holy (things) (N.T.). 2 Tim. 3.15. (Mt. 4.5; Rev. 22.11.)

^m Heb. 8.5; 9.9; 10.1.

ⁿ Heb. 1.4, note.

^o holding fast.

^p Eph. 4.15, 16.

^q kosmos = world-system. Jas. 1.27. (John 7.7; Rev. 13.3.)

^r Or, "which do not really honour God, but only satisfy the flesh" (i.e. by creating a reputation for superior sanctity).

^s Flesh. vs. 11, 23; 1 Pet. 3.21. (John 1.13; Jude 23.)

^t Rom. 6.5; Eph. 2.6; Col. 2.12.

^u Rom. 8.24; Eph. 1.20.

^v Rom. 6.2; Gal. 2.20; Col. 2.20.

^w Life (eternal). vs. 3, 4. 1 Tim. 1.16. (Mt. 7.14; Rev. 22.19.)

^x Phil. 3.21; 1 John 3.2.

^y Rom. 8.13; Gal. 5.24.

^z Eph. 5.5.

^a Rom. 1.18; Eph. 5.6; Rev. 22.15.

^b sons.

^c Eph. 2.2; Tit. 3.3.

^d Eph. 4.22; Heb. 12.1; Jas. 1.21; 1 Pet. 2.1.

^e Rom. 6.6, note.

(6) *Warning against asceticism.*

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the ^aworld, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; ^bnot in any honour to the satisfying of the ^cflesh.

CHAPTER 3.

Part V. *The believer's union with Christ, now and hereafter* (vs. 1-4).

IF ye then be ^drisen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where ^eChrist sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 ^fFor ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, *who is our* ^glife, ^hshall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Part VI. *Christian living, the fruit of union with Christ* (Col. 3. 5-4. 6).

5 ⁱMortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is ^jidolatry:

6 For which things' sake the ^kwrath of God cometh on the ^lchildren of disobedience:

7 In the which ^mye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 ⁿBut now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the ^oold man with his deeds;

10 And have put on the new man,

¹ The errorists against whom Paul warns the Colossians, and against whom, in principle, the warning has perpetual significance, were called "Gnostics," from *gnosis*, "knowledge." These Gnostics "came most keenly into conflict with the exalted rank and redeeming work of Christ, to whom they did not leave His full divine dignity, but assigned to Him merely the highest rank in the order of spirits, while they exalted angels as concerned in bringing in the Messianic salvation."—*H. A. W. Meyer*. Paul's characteristic word in Colossians for the divine revelation is *epignosis*, i.e. "full-knowledge" (1. 9, 10); 3. 10, as against the pretended "knowledge" of the errorists. The warnings apply to all extra-biblical forms, doctrines, and customs, and to all ascetic practices.

which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that ^acreated him:

11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: ^bbut Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as the ^celect of God, ^dholy and beloved, ^ebowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ ^fforgave you, so also ^gdo ye.

14 And ^gabove all these things put on ^hcharity, which is the bond of ⁱperfectness.

15 And let the peace of ^jGod ^krule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and ^lbe ye thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; ^mteaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with ⁿgrace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And ^owhatsoever ye do in word or deed, ^pdo all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

18 Wives, ^qsubmit yourselves unto your own husbands, as ^rit is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, ^slove your wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is ^twell pleasing unto the Lord.

21 ^uFathers, provoke not your children to ^vanger, lest they be discouraged.

22 ^wServants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

23 And ^xwhatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the ^yreward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

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^a Eph.4.24, note.

^b Eph.1.23.

^c Election

(corporate).

1 Thes.1.4.

(Deut.7.6;

1 Pet.1.2.)

^d Sanctify,

holy (per-

sons) (N.T.).

1 Thes.5.23.

(Mt.4.5;

Rev.22.11.)

^e Eph.4.24;

Phil.2.1,2.

^f Forgiveness.

Heb.9.22.

(Lev.4.20;

Mt.26.28.)

^g John 13.34; 1

Cor.13; Eph.

5.2; 1 Pet.4.8.

^h love.

ⁱ Mt.5.48, note.

^j Christ.

^k John 14.27;

Rom.14.17;

Phil.4.7.

^l v.17; Phil.4.6;

Col.2.7;

1 Thes.5.18.

^m Eph.5.19,20.

ⁿ Grace (im-

parted). Col.

4.6. (Rom.6.1;

2 Pet.3.18.)

^o 1 Cor.10.31.

^p Cf. Gen.3.16.

^q Eph.5.22;

1 Pet.3.1.

^r Eph.5.25.

^s Eph.6.1.

^t Eph.6.4. ^u

Eph.6.5; 1

Tim.6.1; Tit.

2.9; 1 Pet.2.18.

^v Eph.6.6-8.

^w Rewards.

1 Thes.2.19.

(Dan.12.3;

1 Cor.3.14.)

^x Eph.6.18;

1 Thes.5.17.

^y Mt.13.11,

note.

^z Grace (im-

parted).

2 Thes.1.12.

(Rom.6.1;

2 Pet.3.18.)

^a Acts 20.4;

Eph.6.21;

2 Tim.4.12;

Tit.3.12.

^b Eph.6.22.

^c Phm.10.

^d Acts 19.29;

20.4; 27.2;

Phm.24.

^e Acts 15.37;

2 Tim.4.11.

^f Col.1.7;

Phm.23.

^g Mt.5.48, note.

^h 2 Tim.4.11.

ⁱ 2 Tim.4.10;

Phm.24.

CHAPTER 4.

MASTERS, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

2 ^aContinue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the ^bmystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

6 Let your speech be always with ^cgrace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Part VII. Christian fellowship
(vs. 7-18).

7 All my state shall ^dTychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 ^eWhom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

9 With ^fOnesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

10 ^gAristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and ^hMarcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 ⁱEpaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand ^jperfect and complete in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

14 ^kLuke, the beloved physician, and ^lDemas, greet you.

15 Salute the brethren which are

¹ A touching illustration of priestly service (see 1 Pet. 2. 9, note) as distinguished from ministry of gift. Shut up in prison, no longer able to preach, Epaphras was still, equally with all believers, a priest. No prison could keep him from the throne of grace, so he gave himself wholly to the priestly work of intercession.

in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the ^achurch which is in his house.

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

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^a Churches
(local). vs.15,
16; 1 Thes.1.
1. (Acts 2.41;
Phil.1.1.)
^b Phm.2.
^c Heb.3.3.

17 And say to ^bArchippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.