

Colossians Study

The Apostle's Praise of the Church
and Thankfulness to God

Colossians 1:1-8

The Theme of the Letter

The theme of the letter to the Colossians is the all surpassing greatness and sufficiency of the preeminent Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the creator and sustainer of all things for His purpose and glory (Col 1:13-20)

General Outline

1. How they received the gospel (vs. 1–6):

Paul commends them in regard to three things:

a. Their faith toward the Lord (vs. 2–4a)

b. Their love toward each other (v. 4b)

c. Their hope toward the future (vs. 5–6)

2. From whom they received the gospel (vs. 7–8)

a. Epaphras shared Christ with them (v. 7)

b. He is now ministering with Paul. (vs. 8 ; 4:12)

Verse 1:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by
the will of God...

Now there is an understatement if I ever heard
one!

...and Timothy our brother

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” And the Lord said to him, “(1) Get up and go to the street called Straight, and (2) inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for (3) he is praying, and (4) he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him, “**Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.**” So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, **and immediately** he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” ~ Acts 9:10-20

*“While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me.” And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’” And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ‘But get up and stand on your feet; **for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;** rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’ ~ Acts 26:12-18*

*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. **For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.** For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. **But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles,** I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. ~ Galatians 1:11-17*

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? ~ 2 Cor 11:22-29

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. ~ 2 Cor 11:32

And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted. ~ Acts 20:9-12

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. ~ Acts 28:3-5 See Luke 10:16

Verse 2:

To the saints and faithful brethren...

Saints is the Greek word “hagioi.” It refers to the set apart ones or holy ones. We are holy only because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus.

and Faithful Brethren - In a letter written to combat a heretical group of false teachers, it is significant that Paul wrote to the holy and faithful ones.

Verse 2 cont...

In Christ - This is Paul's favorite way to refer to Christians.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father (and the Lord Jesus Christ).

Grace is unmerited favor towards us.

Peace is the result of the work of Christ on our behalf (Rom 5:1) and flows out of our understanding the character of God and the promises of the gospel.

Paul calls God "our Father."

Verses 3 - 8 are one long prayer of thanksgiving to God...

In summary, Paul is thankful for their faith, love, and hope. These three things set us apart as Christians.

Thanksgiving is a reoccurring theme in Colossians. You can see it also in 1:12, 2:7, 3:15, and 4:2

Praying always for you...

*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, **we have not ceased to pray for you** and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. 1:9-12*

...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus

Most likely Paul and his missionary team had heard everything from Epaphras.

Notice their faith and love were **because** of the hope laid up (or reserved) for them in heaven (V. 5)

The concept of faith can have three different connotations.

OT background meant “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness,” therefore, it was used of believers living godly lives.

It was used of believers receiving God’s free offer of forgiveness in Christ.

Finally, it was used in the collective sense of Christian doctrines or truths about Jesus.

...and the love which you have for all the saints

The Greek word used here is agape - ἀγάπη.

Defined as: The quality of warm regard for and interest in another, esteem, affection, regard, love (BDAG)

It is exemplified by Jesus in His deep concern for others.

And it's a mark of a believer...

*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us;
and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1
John 3:16)*

because of the hope laid up for you in heaven,

In his writings, Paul uses Hope in different but related ways:

- the Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:13
- trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23
- ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:8
- the glory of God, Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
- assurance of salvation, 1 Thess. 5:8
- eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
- redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20
- faith, Rom. 8:23–25
- title for God, Rom. 15:13
- Paul's desire for believers, 2 Cor. 1:7

of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel

The term “the gospel” gr. τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, means the good news.

Words in Greek that begin with “ευ” generally mean “good” “something” - as in this case “good news.”

So words like Eu - gene for example are good!!!

In this case “good genes” or possibly “good birth.”

which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

In the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24), Jesus told His disciples that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached “in the whole world” before that generation passed away. (V. 34)

...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. (Col 1:23)

... constantly bearing fruit and increasing

The gr. words are two present participles καρποφορούμενον and αὐξανόμενον.

The are either in the Middle or Passive voice.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” Mt 13:31-32

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.” Mt 13:33

just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Paul is also thanking God that the gospel of kingdom of Christ is spreading throughout the earth.

The gospel came to Paul from Christ. It was passed on to Epaphras who then passed it on to the people at Colossae who were passing it on to others!!!

Jesus said to Peter, ... I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. Mt 16:18

