



The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians

Christ in You, The Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:1-6 | Review | The Gospel That Brings Forth Fruit

COLOSSIANS 1: 1-2 | PAUL, TIMOTHY, AND THE SAINTS AND BRETHREN IN CHRIST

PAUL, CHOSEN AS AN APOSTLE

Verse 1 —

Paul, in the New Testament, refers to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ on nineteen occasions. The term "apostle" appears 81 times in the New Testament. Out of these instances, it is translated as "apostle" 78 times, as "messenger" twice, and as "he that is sent" once. The word "apostle" is derived from the Greek word "apostello," which means to "send," "send forth," or "send out." By identifying himself in his salutation as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul made it clear to the Colossians that he was sent by Jesus Christ himself.

Today, there are no apostles. They were used by God to build the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), and are no longer in operation today. Apostles differed from pastors. Apostles were chosen, **By the will of God**. The word "**will**" means to *wish or desire*. It was God's desire for Paul to be an apostle. You might recall in the Book of Acts 1:26 that the eleven apostles *cast lots* to select a replacement apostle for Judas, and you might think, "How is that by the will of God?" The answer is found in Acts 1:23-24; God was the decider of the lots. It was not random luck. Pastors today are not called or chosen. Each man "desires" or "reaches" for the *office of episkopos* which is translated as bishop or overseer (1st Timothy 3:1). Then, it is a church that *calls a pastor to the ministry of their church*.

But why did God choose Paul? Because of God's mercy. Paul wrote later in 1st Timothy 1:12-16 that he obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering. Paul was the first to share that any man, Jew, or Gentile, can be justified by belief, and not of works.

Before he met Jesus Christ, Paul was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. Through him, the mercy of the Lord would be seen—anyone, anywhere, anytime could believe in the finished work of Christ and be saved to life everlasting by doing nothing other than believing!

Timotheus (the Greek spelling, often translated as Timothy) traveled with Paul and was with Paul as he wrote this letter, as he often was (2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Timothy was part Jew and part Gentile. He had a Gentile father, but his mother and grandmother were godly Jewesses (2 Timothy 1:5). It was from them he learned the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul met Timotheus while on his second missionary journey at Lystra. Timothy was spoken of highly by the believers in Christ who were there (Acts 16:2). For Timothy to be accepted by the Jewish audiences Paul addressed, he needed to "become a Jew" by circumcision (Acts 16:3).

Timotheus is a compound word that means *timé* (tee-may) = honor, and *theos* = God. Honoring God.

COLOSSIANS WAS ADDRESSED TO TWO GROUPS

Verse 2 —

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ. Many interpret this to mean *saints who are faithful brethren*; one group of people. Paul could be addressing two groups of believers; saints, and faithful brethren in Christ. Adding a comma, like *Young's Literal Translation* does, will make the point:

"To the saints in Colossae, and to the faithful brethren in Christ."

Here, two groups are distinctly separated by the conjunction *kai* (and), **saints, and *kai* faithful**. The word **saints** is ἅγιος *hagios*, which is often translated as holy. Maybe when Paul uses the word saints, he is referring to Jewish believers who were in Christ before him (See Romans 16:7; Galatians 1:22).

Grace and peace. Everyone needs grace and peace—the Colossians did, and so do we. But for the first-century believers, this had greater meaning. In the Old Testament, there was a cycle of obedience, disobedience, judgment, and war—now, in this mystery age where individuals can be saved apart from Israel, God is extending grace and peace. Aren't you glad about that? We live in the Dispensation* when our sins are not held against us—that, beloved, is grace and peace that Paul writes about. It's a familiar phrase of Paul that only comes from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*[A Dispensation is simply a *system of order* in which, while God never changes, the way he deals with mankind does.]

COLOSSIANS 1:3-5 | THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, FAITH, LOVE, AND HOPE

PAUL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER

Verse 3 —

Paul was never selfish in his prayer life. We give thanks...praying always for you. Both he and Timotheus must have spent hours in prayer for the brethren. Paul was adamant about prayer, which is why in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 he gave an ¹imperative, "Pray without ceasing." We don't need books written by men on how to pray. We need to look at the word of God and use it as a model. Paul prayed always for the saints and faithful brethren, and so should we.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY ENCOURAGED BY THE COLOSSIANS

Verse 4—

Paul's and Timothy's prayers began, Paul wrote, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. It is debated whether Paul ever visited the city of Colossae. If he did, it is not mentioned in the Book of Acts or in this letter. Chapter 2:1 could be an indication that he had not visited this city, or the nearby city of Laodicea. But even if he didn't, Paul and Timothy were with this church in spirit and prayer. The faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints had reached them and it warmed their hearts.

THE COLOSSIANS' HOPE WAS IN THE APPEARING OF JESUS CHRIST

Verse 5—

¹ An imperative is a specific mood in Greek grammar which means a command or exhortation.

Adding to their faith and love is the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. They hoped in Christ's appearing. The word **hope** is not indicative of something that *might* happen, but is a word that means a surety of something that *will* happen (1 Timothy 4:8).

Three things connect Christians as we wait for Christ's return: faith, love, and hope. In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul notes that the *greatest of these is love*.

The hope that awaits them in heaven is the hope derived from the truth of the gospel. In this context, the truth refers to the gospel proclaimed by Paul, commonly known as the "Pauline gospel". This gospel emphasizes salvation through grace by means of faith, rather than through our own efforts. Additionally, it teaches the concept of one unified body, known as the body of Christ.

In Romans 1:1, Paul mentioned that he was separated for the gospel of God. This could mean he was separated from Judaism to preach the grace gospel, or separated from the other apostles who preached the Kingdom gospel, to focus on preaching an individual gospel of grace through faith.

Paul wrote **the gospel** in this letter, but in other letters, he uses the term "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25, and 2 Timothy 2:8). The apostle Paul taught a distinct gospel (good news) from the other 12 apostles. This is made clear in Galatians 2:2,7. It was a gospel of the Church becoming one body, made up of Jews and Gentiles; this body would be formed by God's grace. The concept of *one body* was hidden from the Prophets and one was not taught by Jesus. The believing Jews would never have imagined that Gentiles would become a part of their body in Christ. Paul calls it a mystery that was later Jesus revealed this mystery to him only. He states this in Galatians 1:12, and he describes it in more detail in Ephesians 3:6, where it is called a mystery. This good news was "That the Gentiles (uncircumcised) should be fellowheirs, and of the same body" by believing (Acts 13:38,39).

This new dispensation of grace, which began with a revelation to Paul (Ephesians 3:2), now brings salvation outside of Israel (Colossians 3:11). God has made something new. Now the truth of the gospel is that all men may be saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8,9), by believing that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

COLOSSIANS 1:6 | THE GOSPEL THAT BEARS FRUIT

Verse 6 —

For the Colossians, it is truth which is come unto you as *it is* in all the world. They received the truth! And that same truth was coming to everyone throughout the Roman Empire. Today, that same truth of the gospel has come to us. Some will mock, some will be skeptical, and some will believe. And when the word is preached, Paul said that it brings forth fruit (that is, the truth of the gospel). The fruit is, therefore, that which comes from the effects of the gospel. The gospel will do its work. If we preach the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all mankind, it will bear fruit! Just explain it and it will do its work: But explain it correctly—don't mix the Law in with it.

The problem we have is that we might give a gospel presentation that is without truth. A good new message mixed with law and grace—which is not good news, nor is it the truth! For the Colossians, since the day they heard it...and knew of the grace of God in truth, it produced fruit.

If there is anything our world needs today, it is the Grace of God in truth—If you and I share it, God will do His work!