

COLOSSIANS

Greetings (1:1-2)

1 From Paul, by God's will an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, my brother in the faith.

²To the brothers in Colosse who are also in Christ, called to be holy and faithful to the Lord.

May God our Father impart His grace and peace to you all.

A rich inheritance (1:3-6a)

³⁻⁴We are always thankful to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we know about your faith in Him and the love you have for all the saints, those whom God has called and set apart for Himself and His purposes. ⁵⁻⁶This faith and love are the result of the hope that you have; for you are sure He has a rich reward for you in heaven, the inheritance about which you have heard already through the Word of truth, the good news you have received of who Jesus Christ is and all He has done for you.

The gospel spreads (1:6b-8)

⁶This gospel is now being spread effectively all over the world; the good news of God's Kingdom. The power of this gospel has been growing among you since you first heard about and understood the wonder of God's grace, the wonderful truth that has come to all of us who believe. ⁷⁻⁸You first learned about this great truth through Epaphras, our beloved brother and fellow servant of Christ, who visited you faithfully on our behalf and has now told us of the love that fills your lives, through all the Holy Spirit has imparted to you.

Paul's continuous prayer (1:9-14)

⁹This is why, since we heard of what God is doing among you, we have never stopped praying for you, asking God to make you aware of His will; that He will give you all the spiritual wisdom and understanding you need. ¹⁰The reason why we pray like this is simple.

We want you to live lives worthy of the Lord, so that you please Him in every way possible. For then you will produce much fruit for His glory, through all the good works you do as you continue to know Him better. ¹¹⁻¹²He strengthens you with all the power of His glorious might, and it is this power at work in you that gives you patience, enables you to persist in doing His will and causes you to maintain your joy, thanking God the Father for all He has done in you.

Yes, it is His work in you that means you are now qualified to share in the inheritance He has prepared for all those He has called and set apart to belong to the Kingdom of light. ¹³For He has already rescued us from the devil's dominion of darkness and has brought us into His own Kingdom, the Kingdom that belongs to the Son He loves. ¹⁴It is through Him that we have been made worthy in God's sight through the forgiveness of all our sins, so that now we belong to Him.

Christ supreme over all (1:15-18)

¹⁵⁻¹⁶Jesus Christ is exactly like His Father, who remains invisible to us. He is God's firstborn, with authority to rule over all creation because everything was created by Him, whether in heaven or on earth, both the visible and invisible, every ruling power and authority. Yes, everything was created by Him and for His purposes.

¹⁷So the Son has pre-eminence above all that has been created, for He existed before creation began and only in Him is everything sustained.

¹⁸He is the Head of His Body, the church, for He was the first to rise from the dead, so that having conquered everything that opposed God's purposes He should now have supremacy over all things.

Reconciled to God through Christ (1:19-23)

¹⁹⁻²⁰You see, it was God's good purpose to place the fullness of His life in His Son so that through His life, death and resurrection, everything on earth could be brought back to His will and made one with all that is in heaven. And all this has been made possible through the cross, for through the shedding of His blood the Son has made peace between God and man.

²¹You used to be separated from God. You were His enemies because of the ways you thought and believed, which were evil in His sight. ²²But now, through what Christ endured in His physical body, you have been reconciled to God so that you are now one with Him. It is through His death that He has made you holy before

God, and it is Christ who will one day present you to His Father perfect, free from any accusation the devil could bring against you. ²³However, for Him to complete this purpose you have to persist in your faith, allowing nothing to shake your trust in Him, so that you attain the hope you have received through the gospel, your rich inheritance in heaven.

This is the good news you heard at the beginning of your Christian walk, the hope that is held out to the whole of creation. And I, Paul, have become a servant of this wonderful gospel!

Paul's service to the church (1:24-29)

²⁴I rejoice in what I had to suffer for your sake. It was only suffering to my flesh, my natural man, and a continuation of the affliction that Christ Himself suffered for the sake of His Body, the church. ²⁵I have become your servant in this because of the commission God gave me, to bring you God's Word in all the fullness of its truth and power. ²⁶He is now revealing the secrets that have been hidden during previous times and generations; but these truths are revealed only to His saints, to those who belong to Him. ²⁷He has chosen to reveal to all who are His among the nations, the glorious riches that are centred in this mystery that Christ has now come to live in you, and in Him alone is your hope of glory, now and for all eternity.

²⁸This is why we speak only of Christ, encouraging, correcting and teaching everyone with the wisdom He has given us, so that we can present everyone perfect in Christ because they believe the gospel we proclaim. What a wonderful prospect! ²⁹And it is this that inspires me to work so hard, depending on His power to work in and through me, and enabling me to prevail through all the struggles.

Understanding truth guards against deception (2:1-5)

2 And I want you to know that I do have to struggle for you, for those at Laodicea and for others, even though I do not know them personally. ²My intention is that I might be able to encourage their hearts and urge them to be united in love. I want them to come to a complete understanding of all the riches that are available to them as the mystery of the fullness of Christ is unfolded to them. ³For in Him all the riches of wisdom and true knowledge are to be found!

⁴I speak in this way to warn you against those who want to deceive you with teaching that sounds right but is not grounded in

the truth of Christ. ⁵Even though I am not with you physically, I am with you in spirit and it gives me great joy to know that you maintain good order in the church and that you remain strong in your faith in Christ.

Be built up in Christ (2:6-8)

⁶So this is my message to you: because you have already received Christ Jesus as your Lord, continue to live in Him. ⁷You have been rooted in Him, so now grow up in Him. Let your trust in Him continue to grow stronger as you live in the good of what you have been taught. And let your hearts overflow with thankfulness to God.

⁸Be sure that no one puts you into bondage through clever sounding but empty talk that is the result of worldly thinking and dependence on the traditional way of looking at things, instead of being revelation of the truth in Christ.

Sinful nature buried with Christ (2:9-15)

⁹For in Him the complete revelation of who God is has come to us in human form. ¹⁰In Christ you have been given the fullness of His life. And He is supreme above every power and authority. ¹¹Because you live in Him, you have received a spiritual circumcision, not one done by men but by Christ Himself. ¹²This circumcision involved cutting away your old sinful nature, which was buried once and for all with Christ when you were baptised. Now you have been raised to new life with Him through believing in God's power; that as He raised Christ from the dead, so He has also raised you from the death of sin to a new life with Him.

¹³⁻¹⁴You were spiritually dead because of your unforgiven sins, because that old sinful nature had not been cut away. But then God brought you to life with Christ, He forgave all your sins and cancelled the written code of rules and regulations that were impossible for you to keep, and only consigned you to failure and defeat. Jesus removed this code by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵There He also disarmed the demonic powers and authorities that oppose us. His triumph over them on the cross was a public defeat for them!

Don't be bound by legalism (2:16-23)

¹⁶So now you do not have to allow anyone to judge you according to the old rules and regulations about what you should eat or drink, for example. Neither do you have to observe the religious festivals,

the New Moon celebration or the Sabbath day. ¹⁷Such things were a shadow of what God would reveal in the future. But now we have the reality itself that is only to be found in Christ.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹There will be those who want to influence you by drawing you away from the truth so that you are not able to lay hold of your inheritance. Such people put on a display of false humility and they hold to strange doctrines about angels.

Beware of anyone who goes into great detail about what he has claimed to see in spiritual visions; his unspiritual mind is full of pride and useless thoughts and he is no longer submitted to Christ, the Head of the Body. For it is only Christ who is able to keep all the various parts of the Body working together in unity, enabling it to grow in the way He desires.

²⁰When you died with Christ, you died to those worldly principles that stand opposed to the principles of God's Kingdom. So it makes no sense to live as if you still belong to the world rather than to Christ. ²¹Neither do you have to submit to those religious rules, 'Do not handle this!' 'Do not taste that!' 'Do not touch'. ²²These religious regulations contain no life because they are really human commands and teachings. ²³They can appear to be wise because they promote a discipline of worship and seem to encourage humility, although really this is a false kind of humility. They even encourage strict discipline of the body, but are totally incapable of dealing with the real problem – the need to deal with the sensual indulgence of the flesh.

A new life in Christ (3:1-4)

3 You have been raised with Christ to share in His risen life. So set your hearts on heavenly things, for that is where Christ is now seated at God's right hand. ²You need to have heavenly thinking and not be restricted by mere worldly thoughts.

³Because you died with Christ, your life is now hidden with Christ – in God! ⁴Because He is your life, you will appear with Him in glory when He comes again.

Made into the likeness of Christ (3:5-10)

⁵So put to death anything that belongs to the old earthly nature, such things as sexual immorality, any kind of impurity or lust, all evil desires and greed, for that is idolatry. ⁶In His wrath God has condemned all such things and those guilty of such sin. ⁷In your old life you were bound by such things. ⁸But now you are to have a

completely different walk, in which you can free yourself of all such things, together with anger, rage, malice, slander and speaking in a foul or unclean way. ⁹Neither are you to lie to each other because you have left that old self behind with all the things you used to do then. ¹⁰Now you have a new self that receives fresh revelation of God your Creator and makes you more and more like Him.

Living in unity with others (3:11-17)

¹¹In Christ there is no difference between Greek and Jew. It doesn't matter whether you are circumcised or uncircumcised, what your nationality or background is, whether you were born in slavery or freedom. Christ is everything to all who believe in Him, and He lives in them all!

¹²So I speak to you as God's chosen people. You are holy, set apart by God to belong to Him as His own children. You are dearly loved by Him and can clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Yes, be patient with one another and forgive any differences that arise between you. Forgive as the Lord forgave you, no matter how deeply hurt you feel.

¹⁴The highest virtue is love, for this keeps all these other qualities in their right place and enables you to live in unity with others.

¹⁵As members of the one Body of Christ, you have been called to live at peace with all the other members. So let the peace of Christ be a guiding principle of your life. And always be thankful to God.

¹⁶Let the truth, the Word of Christ, live in you in all its richness. Then you will be able to teach, encourage and correct one another with godly wisdom. Keep praising God by singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with hearts full of thankfulness to God.

¹⁷Be sure that no matter what you say or do, you are able to do everything in the Name of Jesus, because you do what pleases Him, and you do it with thankfulness to God the Father because of all you received in His Son.

Instructions to Christian families (3:18-21)

¹⁸It is right before God that you wives submit to your husbands.

¹⁹And husbands, you are to love your wives and not treat them harshly.

²⁰Children, you are to obey your parents at all times for this pleases the Lord. ²¹And fathers, be careful not to frustrate your children or cause them to feel bitter, for they will then be discouraged from following the Lord.

Instructions for workers and employers (3:22-4:1)

²²When you are at work, be good examples through your obedient attitude towards those who are over you. Do your best at all times, not only when you are being watched by your boss or because you want to be in his good books. No, always serve with a good heart and because you are intent on honouring God. ²³Do everything wholeheartedly as if you were doing it directly for the Lord, not for men. ²⁴Your reward will come from Him, the rich inheritance He has promised you. At all times you are serving the Lord Christ!

²⁵On the other hand, those who do what is wrong store up for themselves a different kind of return, for God does not act with favouritism but treats everybody justly.

4 Those of you in positions of responsibility in the workplace, be sure to treat your employees in ways that are right and honourable, because you know that you will be held accountable by your Master in heaven.

Be devoted in prayer (4:2-4)

²Be sure that you are devoted in prayer, that you have a disciplined prayer life so that you are alert spiritually, living in dependence on the Lord and thankful to Him in all things. ³⁻⁴Pray for us as well, that He will provide ready-made opportunities for us to proclaim the message of Christ, in order to give people revelation of the truth. I am held captive for doing this; yet even so I want to proclaim the message of the Kingdom clearly in the way that I should.

Be wise with unbelievers (4:5-18)

⁵You have to be wise in the way you behave towards unbelievers and to make the most of every opportunity you have to share the gospel with them. ⁶You will need to be gracious in the way you speak, and able to answer the questions asked of you. Your words can come as salt to bring seasoning into tasteless lives.

⁷⁻⁸I am sending Tychicus to you so he can bring you further news about my circumstances. He is a dear and faithful brother, a fellow minister and the Lord's true servant. What he tells you will encourage your hearts.

⁹Onesimus, another faithful and dear brother, will come with him. He is one with you and will tell you all about what is taking place here.

¹⁰Aristarchus is held prisoner with me and sends you his greetings, as does Mark, Barnabas' cousin. If he comes to visit you, welcome him in the way you have already been instructed. ¹¹Jesus Justus also greets you. These are the only Jewish brethren who work with me for God's Kingdom and they have each been used to bless and encourage me.

¹²Epaphras, one of your own servants of Christ Jesus, greets you. He continues to wrestle in prayer for you so that you will be strong in doing God's will, showing your maturity in the faith and how confident you are in the Lord. ¹³I can assure you that he works so hard for you and your fellow believers at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

¹⁴Our dear brothers Dr. Luke and Demas also greet you. ¹⁵Please pass my own greetings onto the brothers at Laodicea, and the church that meets at Nympha's house.

¹⁶When you have read this letter and taken note of what I have said, pass it on to the church at Laodicea. Be sure that in return you receive the letter I wrote to the Laodiceans.

¹⁷I have a message for Archippus: "Make certain that you finish the work the Lord gave as His commission to you."

¹⁸I, Paul, write this final greeting in my own hand. Remember me in my chains. The Lord's grace be with you always.