

Colossians

1 ¹ This letter comes from Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the will of God, and from our brother Timothy.

² To the believers and trusting Christians at Colossae: may you have grace and peace from God our Father. ³ We are always thankful to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for you, and pray for you.

⁴ We've heard about your trust in Christ Jesus and your love for all the believers ⁵ because of the hope prepared for you in heaven. You already heard about this in the good news, the message of truth ⁶ that came to you just as it has gone throughout the whole world, spreading widely and bringing results. It's done the same for you too, ever since you heard it and realized the true nature of God's grace.

⁷ Our dear friend and fellow-worker Epaphras, who is a trustworthy minister of Christ on our behalf, taught you about this. ⁸ He's also made clear to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹ Because of this we continue to pray for you from the time we heard about you, asking God to give you understanding of what he wants you to do and to give you every kind of spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ That way you'll live lives that rightly represent the Lord and please him, producing all kinds of good results and gaining greater knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be made powerfully strong by his wonderful strength, having great patience and endurance.

¹² May you happily praise the Father, who has made it possible for us to share in the inheritance of God's people who live in the light.

¹³ He rescued us from the tyranny of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ through whom we have been set free and our sins forgiven.

¹⁵ The Son is the visible picture of the invisible God. He was before^a all creation, ¹⁶ for everything was created through him—in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, empires, rulers, leaders and authorities—everything was created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He existed before everything, and he holds everything together.

¹⁸ He is also the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the first and highest of those raised from the dead, so that he is

^a**1:15.** Literally, “first-born,” denoting position rather than timing of birth.

supreme in everything. ¹⁹ God was pleased to have his full nature live in him, ²⁰ and through him brought back everything in the universe to himself, since he made peace through the blood of his cross, through him reconciling all those on the earth and in heaven.^b

²¹ You once were alienated from God, enemies in the way you thought and the way you acted, ²² but now he has reconciled you through his dying human body, bringing you into his presence where you stand holy, pure, and faultless. ²³ But your trust in him must continue rock-solid and immovable. Don't be shaken from the hope of the good news that you heard, the good news that's been shared throughout the world—that's the work that I Paul have been doing.

²⁴ I'm happy to have trouble for your sake, for by means of what happens to me physically I'm part of Christ's sufferings that he continues to experience for the sake of his body, the church. ²⁵ I serve the church following the direction God gave me about you, to present fully the word of God to you. ²⁶ This is the mystery that was hidden down through the ages and for many generations, but it's now been revealed to God's people. ²⁷ God wanted to make known to them the glorious wealth of this mystery to the nations:^c Christ living in you is the glorious hope! ²⁸ We're telling everyone about him, instructing and teaching them in the best way we know how so that we can bring everyone before God fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ That's what I'm working for too, making every effort as I rely on his strength which is powerfully at work in me.

2 ¹ I want you to know how hard I'm working for you, and for those at Laodicea—in fact for all those who haven't met me personally— ² so that you may be encouraged. May you be bound together in love, experiencing the great benefit of being completely sure in your understanding, for this is what the true knowledge of God brings. May you know the revealed mystery of God, which is

^b1:20. The “he/him” can be confusing here. Supplying the actual nouns may help, though it makes for a clumsy translation: “God was pleased to have God's full nature live in Christ, and through Christ brought back everything in the universe to himself (God), since Christ made peace through the blood of Christ's cross, through Christ reconciling all those on the earth and in heaven.”

^c1:27. Or “Gentiles.”

Christ! ³ In him you can discover all the rich wisdom and knowledge of God.

⁴ I'm telling you this so that no one will fool you by spinning you a tale.^d ⁵ Even though I'm not physically there with you, I'm with you in spirit. I'm so happy to see the way you stick together and how firm you are in your trust in Christ. ⁶ Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, go on following him, ⁷ grounded in him and built up by him. May your trust in him continue to grow strong, following what you were taught, full of gratitude to God.

⁸ Watch out that nobody enslaves you through their philosophy and worthless delusions, following human traditions and concepts of this world, and not following Christ. ⁹ For the fullness of God's divine nature lives in Christ in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been made full^e in him. He is supreme over every ruler and authority.

¹¹ You were “circumcised” in him but not by human hands. You have been set free from sinful human nature by the “circumcision” Christ performed.^f ¹² You were buried with him in baptism, and you were raised with him through your trust in what God did by raising him from the dead. ¹³ And even though you were dead because of your sins and being physically “uncircumcised,” he brought you to life together with him. He has forgiven us all our sins. ¹⁴ He wiped out the record of our debts according to the Law that was written down against us; he took away this barrier^g by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He stripped away the power of spiritual rulers and authorities,^h and having publicly revealed what they were truly like, he led them captive behind him in victory.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone criticize you for what you eat or what you drink, or regarding which religious festival, new moon ritual, or ceremonial sabbaths you choose to observe.ⁱ ¹⁷ These are just a shadow of what was to come, for the physical reality is Christ.

^d2:4. Literally, “false arguments.”

^e2:10. Or “complete,” “whole.”

^f2:11. Clearly this is not talking about physical circumcision but what it was supposed to mean spiritually.

^g2:14. Note that the barrier is on our side, not God's.

^h2:15. Clearly speaking about *evil* spiritual agencies.

ⁱ2:16. In this context Paul is referring to the various yearly festival days of the Jewish ceremonial system.

¹⁸ Don't let anyone cheat you out of your prize by insisting you have to beat yourself,^j or worship angels. They think they are better than anyone else because of visions they say they've had, and become ridiculously conceited in their sinful minds. ¹⁹ Such people are not connected to the head that directs the body, nourished and joined together through the body's sinews and muscles. As the body is united together it grows the way God wants it to grow.

²⁰ If you died with Christ to the religious demands that this world insists upon,^k why would you make yourself subject to such demands as if you were still part of this world? ²¹ Things like: don't handle that, don't taste that, don't touch that! ²² These commands refer to things that don't last since they're used up,^l and they're based on man-made requirements and teachings. ²³ Such rules may make some kind of sense to those who practice self-centered piety, who are so proud of being humble, and who “mortify the body;” but in reality they don't help at all in dealing with sinful desires.

3 ¹ So if you've been brought back to life with Christ, look for what comes from above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. ² Fix your mind on what's above, not what's here on earth. ³ You died, and your life is kept safe with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ—your life—is revealed, then you will also share in his visible glory.

⁵ So kill your worldly nature—sexual sin, immorality, lust, evil desires, greedily wanting to have more—this is the worship of idols. ⁶ Because of such things, those who disobey experience God's judgment. ⁷ At one time you lived like that when you behaved in such a way, ⁸ but now you should get rid of such things as anger, rage, wickedness, abuse, and using obscenities. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, since you've discarded your old self and what you used to do, ¹⁰ and put on your new self that is always being made more like your Creator, understanding better who he really is. ¹¹ In this new situation there's no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised,

^j2:18. Self-mortification; the phrase could also be translated “false humility.”

^k2:20. Probably referring both to Jewish religious regulations and to pagan ceremonies and taboos.

^l2:22. This tends to indicate that the rules are about food and drink which will of course be consumed and then “used up.”

foreigner, barbarian,^m slave or free, for Christ is everything, and he lives in all of us.

¹² Since you are God's special people, holy and dearly loved, adopt a sympathetic nature that is kind, humble, gentle, and patient. ¹³ Be patient with one another, forgive others among you if you have grievances against one another. Just as the Lord forgave you, you should do the same. ¹⁴ Above all, love one another, which is the perfect bond that will hold you together. ¹⁵ May the peace of Christ direct your thinking, because you were called to this by God who makes you one, and thank God for it! ¹⁶ Let Christ's message fully live in you. In every wise way teach and instruct one another through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing praises to God in gratitude and sincerity. ¹⁷ Whatever you do, whether in word or action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, praising God the Father through him. ¹⁸ You married women, respect your husbands appropriately in the Lord. ¹⁹ You married men, love your wives and don't treat them badly. ²⁰ You children, always do what your parents tell you because this is what pleases the Lord. ²¹ You fathers, don't make your children mad, so they won't feel like giving up. ²² Those of you who are servants, do everything your human masters tell you, not with just an eye to please them, but honestly and sincerely, respecting the Lord. ²³ Do whatever you do really well, as if you're doing it for God, and not for people, ²⁴ because you know that the Lord will give you your reward—an inheritance! You're serving Christ the Lord! ²⁵ Whoever does what's wrong will be paid back for the wrong they've done, and God has no favorites.

4 ¹ You masters, treat your servants in a way that is right and fair, recognizing that you too have a Master in heaven. ² Remember to keep on praying, with an alert and thankful mind! ³ Pray for us too that God may open a door of opportunity to spread the message, to tell about the revealed mystery of Christ—which is the reason I'm here in prison. ⁴ Pray that I may make it as clear as I should when I speak. ⁵ Behave wisely with outsiders, making the best use of every opportunity. ⁶ Always be gracious when you speak. Make sure it's in good taste, and think about how best to answer everyone.

^m3:11. Literally, “Scythian,” a “barbarian” people from what is now southern Russia, the Ukraine, and Central Asia.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about what's happening to me. He's a dear brother, a trustworthy minister and co-worker in the Lord. ⁸ I'm sending him to you for this very reason—so that you'll know how things are with me and this will cheer you up. ⁹ Onesimus is going with him too, a trusted and dear brother, who's one of you. They'll explain to you everything that's going on here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus who's with me here in prison sends his best wishes; likewise Mark, Barnabas' cousin (you've already had instructions to welcome him if he visits you), ¹¹ and Jesus—also called Justus—who are the only Jewish Christiansⁿ among those working with me here for the kingdom of God, men who have been a great help to me. ¹² Epaphras who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends his greetings. He's always passionate in his prayers on your behalf, praying that you'll stand firm as grown-up Christians, totally convinced about everything as God would want. ¹³ For the record I can tell you that he's done a lot for you, and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis as well. ¹⁴ Luke, our dear doctor, and Demas also send their best. ¹⁵ Greet the believers that are in Laodicea—Nympha too, and the church that meets in her house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read to you, make sure it's read to the church in Laodicea too, and that you also read the letter sent to Laodicea. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus, “See that you follow through in doing the ministry God gave you.” ¹⁸ I Paul write my closing greetings with my own hand. Remember I'm in prison. Grace be with you.

ⁿ4:11. Literally, “belonging to the circumcision.”