Colossians*

Colossians 1:1-6 (1) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus 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:
According to Paul, the gospel had come into all the world (v6). Colossi was located 120 miles east of Ephesus in the Lycus River Valley in ancient Phrygia, part of the Roman territory of Asia Minor. It was one of a triad of cities in the area (the other two being Laodicea and Hierapolis), resting at the foot of Mount Cadmus. It's biblical significance lies in the fact that the book of Colossians was addressed to the church there and that Philemon lived in this city. Colossi had been a significant city in the past, but had deteriorated in importance by New Testament times. Nearby cities such as Hierapolis and Laodicea (Colossians 4:13), especially the latter, had become more significant, though all three had churches planted in them, probably about the time of Paul's stay in Ephesus. There is no record that Paul himself ever visited any of them (although he may have traveled through Laodicea on his way to or from Ephesus (as an important trade highway existed there). It seems probable that Epaphras, one of Paul's disciples, may have founded these churches while Paul was in Ephesus. In many respects, Colossians is similar to Ephesians in

content and emphasis, although Ephesians is longer and more fully developed in both its doctrinal and practical aspects. However, Colossians seems to have been written primarily to correct an incipient heresy that seemed to be developing in the church at Colossi and possibly spreading to other churches. This heresy was a tendency to compromise with the pagan belief of the Greek philosophers that everything is a god, possibly with an admixture of Judaizing legalism. Many varieties of evolutionary philosophy thrived in the Greek/Roman world of the day, but the essential basis of all of them was denial of the true transcendent Creator God of the universe. Hence in the Colossian epistle Paul was led to set forth the grandest Christology message in the entire Bible. Turn to;

Colossians 1:12-18 (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:
(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: all things were created by him, and for him:
(17) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
(18) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Thus Paul was restating Jesus Christ as Creator, Sustainer and Reconciler of all things in heaven and earth. Such things which had already been stated in the gospel of John. Paul then went on to insist that all wisdom, knowledge and salvation

were centered in Christ and to warn against all human philosophy after the tradition of men, turn with me to;
Colossians 2:1-3 (1) For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;
(2) That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;
(3) **In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**.
Verse 3 is a direct denial of the theories of philosophy; a mixture of Judaism, philosophy, idolatry, and extreme bodily self-denial that had to be encountered when Paul wrote this epistle (E.M. Zerr).
It's amazing how theories come and go, all robbing God of His glory. Rampant in our society is profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: (1 Tim 6:20) *such things we are to avoid. The first half of Paul's letter to the Colossians, especially the second chapter, is an effort to combat false teachings that were being promoted to the Church there. This epistle is generally dated to the period of 58-60 AD, and is commonly thought to have been written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. In recent years, many scholars have concluded that the internal evidence within the epistle indicates an early form of Gnosticism as the culprit in Colossi. In order to grasp some of the points Paul makes in his letter, a rudimentary understanding of the basic tenets of Gnosticism is required. Gnosticism wasn't a separate religion; rather, it was a philosophy that was blended with components of existing religions. Apparently, elements of Judaism/ Christianity were combined with Gnostic beliefs soon after the Church began, creating the heretical teachings that Paul combats in his letter to the Colossians. The term "Gnostic" comes from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge.*

Gnosticism was a complex religious philosophy which taught that salvation could only be achieved through secret knowledge. Although there were many different types of Gnosticism, they had several common features, (a denial of the true humanity of Christ; a heresy holding that the body of Jesus was a phantom and considered the earthly life of Christ and especially His sufferings on the cross to be unreal, a denial of the personality of the Supreme God, and also the denial of the free will of mankind.) In the present world there is the heresy that, baptism is not necessary for salvation, even tho Paul emphatically teaches; Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Ro 6:3). *Would not the false doctrine, "*baptism is not necessary*", downgrade Christ's sufferings on the cross as unreal much like the gnostic heresy? One reason why some religious people do not feel that baptism in water is a prerequisite for salvation is because, "it doesn't make any sense." Why would God demand that a sinner be immersed in water in order to receive the abundant heavenly blessings found "in Christ?" The need to confess faith in Jesus as the Son of God makes good sense. It also is logical to repent of one's sins. But what good is baptism? First, regardless of whether God's instructions seem sensible to us or not, God expects His commandments to be obeyed. One of the many lessons that a person learns from studying the Old Testament is that God oftentimes gave commands that seemed somewhat illogical to man. Likewise many people acknowledge a similar attitude toward the new. But if one were to ask, Jack why do you most always bring up baptism in a sermon? Well, for one thing, Philip did and salvation is the purpose of the gospel. When the people of Samaria believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized. When the Eunuch believed Philip preaching Jesus, he was baptized. How did they know? For people to reject the command to be immersed in water simply*

because they feel that baptism and eternal salvation are totally unrelated, is as wrong as it was for Jonah to reject God's command and he ended up in the belly of the whale, or Naaman to reject God's command to dip in the river Jordan seven times, or Nadab and Abihu who died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD. But the new testament clearly teaches that our old man is crucified with Him in the act of baptism. Paul brings this forward to the Colossians, turn to;
Colossians 2:20-23 (20) Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, 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; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.
'Shew of wisdom' means that these unauthorized theories and practices have an appearance of wisdom only, and 'will worship' means that which is suggested by the human will, instead of the will of God, which things are in the world today. Most of the people who benefited from Paul's ministry hadn't even met him in person (a truth that has been magnified through the centuries as people read the writings of Paul in the New Testament), but that point is irrelevant. Paul taught by means of the Holy Spirit, and it was by means of the Holy Spirit that people both "heard" him and were "with" him. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the Spirit (Col 2:5). *The letter to the Colossians, like the letter to the Romans, was a letter addressed to a congregation which Paul had not established himself. Most of the members were unknown to Paul, as it appears from Colossians 2:1 in which he wrote:* For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; *Yet Paul enjoyed a close connection*

with the church in Colossi, which was located in the same Roman province of Asia in which Ephesus was the capital and where Paul had labored for more than two years. Many people from that entire area must have came to hear Paul, no doubt from Colossi as well. Furthermore those who worked with Paul, as well as those who were converted by Paul's preaching, most likely carried the gospel of Jesus to the entire area, for Acts 19:10 states: And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. *For all in Asia to have heard the word, was a mighty deed which of necessity would have required Paul to have helpers. The apostle goes on to observe how complete and perfect the saints are in Christ; that they are not only circumcised in him in a spiritual sense, and the body of the sins of their flesh is put off, and removed from them, in allusion to circumcision; but that they were buried with Christ, of which their baptism in water was a lively representation, are you listening?;* Buried with him in baptism, wherein also **ye are risen with him** through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead (Col 2:12). *Self explanatory, but let's break it down;* ***(1st) Buried with Him in baptism;*** *Christ having died for their sins, was laid in the grave, where He continued for a while and then rose again. The phrase, "If ye then be risen with Christ", pertains to they that were buried with Him in baptism as their head and representative and all their sins which He left behind in the grave, signified by His grave clothes there. And baptism being performed by immersion, is when the person baptized is covered with water, and as it were--buried in it, and is a very significant emblem of all this; it is a representation of the burial of Christ, and very fitly holds Him forth to the view of faith in the state of the dead, in the grave, and points out the place where the Lord lay; and it is also a representation of our burial with Him, as being dead to sin, to the law of ordinances, and to the world. This shows*

now, that baptism was performed by dipping, or covering the whole body in water, for no other form, such as sprinkling, or pouring water on the face, can represent a burial, or be called one.
(2nd) wherein also ye are risen with him; *Christ is risen from the dead as the head and representative of His people, and they are risen with him; and baptism is emblematic of His and their resurrection, being administered by immersion in water, in which way only can this be signified. For as the going down into the water, and being under it, represents Christ's descending into the state of the dead, and His continuance in it. So the emerging, or coming up out of the water, represents His rising from the dead, and that of His people in Him, in order to walk in newness of life. The apostle's meaning is, that in baptism they are risen with Christ, as well as buried with Him.*
(3rd) through the faith of the operation of God;
That is, it is through faith that saints see themselves buried and risen with Christ, to which the ordinance of baptism is associated where there is true faith; for without faith, this ordinance will be of no use to any such purpose. And it is not a faith only that will avail, but that which is of God's operation; it is the gift of God. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Eph 2:8).
(4th) who hath raised him from the dead; *This is a working of God the Father, to whom the resurrection of Christ from the dead is ascribed; though not to the exclusion of Christ and of the Spirit, who were also concerned. It is here added, partly to show in what respect faith, which is God's work, as having raised Christ from the dead. Who was delivered for offenses, but is risen again through the power of God for justification.* For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: (Rom 1:16). *As Christians are freed from the ceremonial law, they must walk the more closely*

with God in gospel obedience. As heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, both cannot be followed together; and affection to the one will weaken and abate affection to the other. Those that are born again are dead to sin, because its dominion is broken, its power subdued by the operation of grace. To be dead, then, means this, that those who have the Holy Spirit, mortifying within themselves the lusts of the flesh are able to despise earthly things, and to desire those that are heavenly. Christ is, at present, one whom we have not seen; but our comfort is, that our life is safe with him. The streams of this living water flow into the soul by the influences of the Holy Spirit through faith. Christ lives in the believer by His Spirit, and the believer lives to Him in all he does. At the next descent of Christ, there will be a general assembling of all the redeemed; and those whose life is now hid with Christ, shall then appear with Him in His glory. Do we look for such happiness, and should we not set our affections upon such things, and live above this world? The answer should be yes, yes and yes. Turn with me to;

Colossians 3:5-8 (5) Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:
(6) For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:
(7) In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.
(8) But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

It is our duty to mortify our members which incline to the things of the world. Mortify them, put them to death, suppress them, as weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them. Continual opposition must be made to all corrupt workings and no provision made for carnal indulgences that mortify or put to death the soul. Occasions of sin must be avoided: the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes,

and the love of the world, and covetousness, which is idolatry. It is necessary to mortify sins, because if we do not kill them, they will kill us. And for the blessings we enjoy in this life, we should, out of a pure heart thank God the Father for all that we have and be willing to use them for good. Turn to;
Colossians 3:14-21 (14) And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
(15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.
(16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
(17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.
(18) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.
(19) Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
(20) Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
(21) Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.
The scriptures that are most taken up in displaying the glory of the Divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular in stressing the duties of the Christian life. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel. Submission is the privilege and duty of wives. But it is submission not to a severe lord or stern tyrant, but to her own husband, who by privilege is engaged in an affectionate duty toward his wife. Husbands must love their wives with tender and faithful affection. And as parents, they must be tender and faithfully attendant, as well as children obedient. How happy would true religion make the world, if it every where prevailed, influenced every state of things, and every relation of life! But the profession of those persons who are regardless of duties, and give cause for complaint against

those who are connected with true religion, deceive themselves, as well as bringing reproach upon the gospel. Now turn with me to;

Colossians 4:10-11 (10) Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, 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 fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

Paul had differed with Barnabas, on account of Mark, yet he is not only reconciled, but recommends him to the churches; an example of a truly Christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault and repented, it must not always be remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. The apostle had comfort in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, working out their own salvation, and endeavoring to promote the salvation of others. May I suggest we do the same. That we promote; Faith in Christ is the effect of belief and obedience to baptism is the effect of faith. Salvation is to them that first believe the testimony of God, by faith repent of their sins, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and are baptized into Him for remission of sins. They have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. This is the gospel. If you have not obeyed the message, do it now while you can. If one needs prayer for other reasons, in either case come while we gently persuade with song.

This message approved by
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Revised; 04152020
Study Aids; Bible Commentary by E.M. Zerr
This message presented to; BaronOk-Oct2013/