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Colossians

The book of Colossians is another letter that Paul wrote from prison. Paul did not start the church in Colossae, and he knew only a few followers of Jesus there. The believers in Colossae were not Jewish. For example, Epaphras, who started the church there, had worshipped Greek and Roman gods before becoming a follower of Jesus. And Paul greets a co-worker named Nympha, who also had worshipped Greek and Roman gods. But now a church met in her home, which may have been in Laodicea, a town near Colossae.

When non-Jews became followers of Jesus, they often had the idea that they were joining a form of Judaism. So many new converts rightly felt the need to study the Old Testament. But some were tempted to adopt Jewish laws like circumcision, Sabbath rules and avoiding certain foods. Many Greeks and Romans respected Judaism as a philosophy. And some Jews described their religion to non-Jews in this way. But Paul points out that this is an appeal to human pride. So he tells the Colossian believers that they do not need to make themselves look wise. He encourages them to be proud of their simple faith in Jesus. They do not need to please anyone else by following a lot of man-made rules. All they need is to follow Jesus. He will give them a new life that will be pleasing to God.

Paul teaches the believers to let this new life control everything they

do. They must “put off” their old ways and “put on” a new way of living, like changing clothes. God has chosen them and has shown them his love. So they must be kind to others. Above all, they must love each other. And they must take this kind of behaviour home with them. In Colossae, the most important male in the house was called “Lord” by the rest of the household. But Paul teaches that there is only one Lord: Jesus the Christ (God’s Chosen King). So the men in the Colossian church must learn to be humble and not treat others as lower than themselves. No matter what role they have, everyone in the home must learn to serve Jesus as their only Lord.

In Paul’s time, the Roman Emperors were also called “Lord”. But Paul tells the Colossians that King Jesus is a more powerful Lord than any earthly ruler—even the great Caesars of Rome! Jesus is God’s plan to make the world right. Jesus is Lord. In this letter, Paul tells the Colossians that...

He thanks God for them and prays for them (1:1-14)

Jesus is the image of the invisible God (1:15-20)

God revealed his truth to change the way people live (1:21-29)

Jesus gives people new life (2:1-23)

Jesus gives believers power to live as new people (3:1 – 4:6)

He and his co-workers send greetings (4:7-18)

1 Greetings from Paul, an apostle for Christ Jesus.* I am an apostle because that is what God wanted. Greet-

***1:1 Christ Jesus** Or “King Jesus”. The term “Christ” is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah”, a royal title. See Mark 15:32; Luke 23:2. See also Christ and Messiah in the Word List.

ings also from Timothy, our brother in Christ.

²To God's holy people who live in Colossae, our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

³In our prayers we always thank God for you. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴We thank him because we have heard about the faith you have in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all of God's people. ⁵Your faith and love come from knowing you will receive what you hope for. God is keeping it safe for you in heaven. It is the same hope you have had since you first heard the true message, the Good News ⁶that was told to you. Throughout the world, this Good News is bringing blessings and is spreading. And that's what has been happening among you since the first time you heard it and understood the truth about God's grace. ⁷You heard it from Epaphras, our dear friend who serves the Lord with us. He helps us[†] as a faithful servant of Christ. ⁸He also told us about the love you have from the Spirit.

⁹Since the day we heard these things about you, we have continued praying for you. This is what we pray:

that God will make you completely sure of what he wants by giving you all the wisdom and spiritual understanding you need; ¹⁰that this will help you live in a way that brings honour to the Lord and pleases him in every way; that your life will produce good works of every

kind and that you will grow in your knowledge of God;[‡] ¹¹that God will strengthen you with his own great power so that you will be patient and not give up when troubles come.

Then you will be happy ¹²and give thanks to the Father. He has made you able to have what he has promised to give all his holy people, who live in the light. ¹³God made us free from the power of darkness. And he brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son. ¹⁴The Son paid the price to make us free, meaning that all our sins are forgiven.

The Son of God Is the Same as God

¹⁵No one can see God, but the Son is exactly like God. He rules over everything that has been made.[¶]

¹⁶Through his power all things were made: things in heaven and on earth, seen and not seen— all spiritual rulers, lords, powers and authorities.

Everything was made through him and for him.

¹⁷The Son was there before anything was made, and all things continue because of him.

¹⁸He is the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning of everything else. And he is the first among all who will be raised from death.[§]

So in all things he is most important.

¹⁹God was pleased for all of himself to live in the Son.

[†]1:7 *us* Many ancient Greek copies have "you".

[‡]1:10 *that your life ... God* Or "that your knowledge of God will produce more and more good works of every kind in your life".

[¶]1:15 *He ... made* Literally, "firstborn of all creation". See firstborn in the Word List.

[§]1:18 *first ... death* Literally, "firstborn from the dead".

²⁰ And through him, God was happy to bring all things back to himself again— things on earth and things in heaven. God made peace through the blood sacrifice of his Son on the cross.

²¹ At one time you were separated from God. You were his enemies in your minds, because the evil you did was against him. ²² But now he has made you his friends again. He did this by the death Christ suffered in his body. He did it so that he could present you to himself as people who are holy, free from blame and without anything that would make you guilty before him. ²³ And that is what will happen if you continue to believe in the Good News you heard. You must remain strong and sure in your faith. You must not let anything cause you to give up the hope that became yours when you heard the Good News. That same Good News has been told to everyone on earth, and that's the work that I, Paul, was given to do.

Paul's Work for the Church

²⁴ I am happy in my sufferings for you. There is much that Christ must still suffer. And I gladly accept my part of those sufferings in my body for the good of his body, the church. ²⁵ I became a servant of the church because God gave me a special work to do. This work helps you. My work is to tell the complete message of God. ²⁶ This message is the secret truth that was hidden since the beginning of time. It was hidden from everyone for ages, but now it has been made known to God's holy people. ²⁷ God decided to let his people know just how rich and glorious that truth is. That secret truth, which is for all people, is that Christ lives among you. ^{**} He is your

hope for sharing in God's glory. ²⁸ So we continue to tell people about Christ. We use all wisdom to counsel every person and teach every person. We are trying to bring everyone before God as people who have grown to be spiritually mature in Christ. ²⁹ To do this, I work and struggle using the great strength that Christ gives me. That strength is working in my life.

2 I want you to know how much concern I have for you and for those in Laodicea and others who have never seen me. ² I want them all to be encouraged and joined together in love and to have the full confidence that comes from understanding. I want them to know completely the secret truth that God has made known. That truth is Christ himself. ³ He is the only place people can find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ I tell you this so that no one can fool you with ideas that sound good but are wrong. ⁵ Even though I am far away, my thoughts are always with you. I am happy to see how well you work together and your strong faith in Christ.

Continue to Follow Christ Jesus

⁶ You accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, so continue to live following him. ⁷ You must depend on Christ only, drawing life and strength from him. Just as you were taught the truth, continue to grow stronger in your understanding of it. And never stop giving thanks to God.

⁸ Be sure you are not led away by the teaching of those who have nothing worth saying and only plan to deceive you. That teaching is only human tradition and comes from the evil forces that rule people's lives. It is not from Christ. ⁹ I say this because God himself—

****1:27 among you** Or "in you".

all that he is—really does live in Christ completely. ¹⁰And because you belong to Christ, you are also complete, having everything you need. Christ is ruler over every other power and authority.

¹¹In Christ you were circumcised in a different way, not by human hands. That is, you took part in Christ's death, which was a kind of circumcision—a stripping away of his physical body.^{††} ¹²When you were baptized, you were buried with him and raised to life with him because of your faith in God's power. God is the one who raised Christ from death.

¹³You were spiritually dead because of your sins and because you were not part of God's people.^{‡‡} But God gave you new life together with Christ. He forgave all our sins. ¹⁴Because we broke God's laws, we owed a debt. A record of that debt listed all the rules we failed to follow. But God forgave us of that debt. He took away the record of it and nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵At the cross he stripped away the power of the rulers and authorities of the spiritual world. He won the victory over them there. And he led them away as prisoners for the whole world to see.

Your New Life Is From Christ Alone

¹⁶So don't let anyone criticize you for what you eat or drink or for not following Jewish customs (festivals, New Moon celebrations or Sabbath days). ¹⁷In the past those things were like a shadow that showed what was coming. But what we have now is real. It is Christ! ¹⁸Some people love doing unpleasant things that make them feel humble. They claim to take part in wor-

ship with angels.^{¶¶} They talk about seeing these things in visions. Don't listen to them when they say you are wrong because you don't do these things. It is so foolish for them to feel such pride, because it is all based on their own human experience. ¹⁹They don't keep themselves under the control of the head. Christ is the head, and the whole body depends on him. Because of Christ all the parts of the body care for each other and help each other. So the body is made stronger and held together as God causes it to grow.

²⁰You died with Christ and were made free from the forces that rule people's lives. So why do you act as if you still belong to the world? I mean, why do you follow rules like these: ²¹"Don't eat this", "Don't taste that", "Don't touch that"? ²²These rules are talking about earthly things that are gone after they are used. They are only human commands and teachings. ²³These rules may seem to be wise as part of a made-up religion in which people punish their bodies and do things to make them feel humble. But these rules don't help people control the desires of their human weakness.

Your New Life

3 You were raised from death with Christ. So live for what is in heaven, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. ²Think only about what is up there, not what is here on earth. ³The old life you had here is gone, and the new life you share with Christ is kept safe for you by God. ⁴When Christ, the centre of your life, comes again, you will share in all his glory.

^{††}2:11 *That is, ... body* Literally, "in the stripping of the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ". See circumcise, circumcision in the Word List.

^{‡‡}2:13 *and because ... God's people* Literally, "and because of the uncircumcision of your flesh".

^{¶¶}2:18 *worship with angels* Or "the worship of angels".

⁵So put an end to any of the sinful things you use your bodies for: committing sexual sin, being indecent, letting sinful desires control you and wanting things that are wrong. And don't keep wanting more and more for yourself, which is the same as worshipping a false god. ⁶God will show his anger against those who don't obey him,^{§§} because they do these evil things. ⁷You also did these things in the past, when you lived like them.

⁸But now put these things out of your life: anger, losing your temper, doing or saying things to hurt others and saying shameful things. ⁹Don't lie to each other. You have taken off those old clothes—the person you once were and the bad things you did then. ¹⁰Now you are wearing a new life, a life that is new every day. You are growing in your understanding of the one who made you. You are becoming more and more like him. ¹¹In this new life it doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, circumcised or not. It doesn't matter if you speak a different language or even if you are a Scythian.* It doesn't matter if you are a slave or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

Your New Life With Each Other

¹²God has chosen you and made you his holy people. He loves you. So your new life should be like this: Show mercy to others. Be kind, humble, gentle and patient. ¹³Don't be angry with each other, but forgive each other. If you feel someone has wronged you, forgive them. Forgive others because the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴Together with these things, the most important part of your

new life is to love each other. Love is what holds everything together in perfect unity. ¹⁵Let the peace that comes from Christ control your thinking. It is for peace that you were chosen to be together in one body.† And always be thankful.

¹⁶Let the teaching of Christ live inside you richly. Use all wisdom to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Everything you say and everything you do should be done for Jesus your Lord. And in all you do, give thanks to God the Father through Jesus.

Your New Life at Home

¹⁸Wives, be willing to serve your husbands. This is the right thing to do in following the Lord.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives, and don't be angry with them.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything. This pleases the Lord.

²¹Fathers, don't upset your children. If you are too hard to please, they might want to stop trying.

²²Slaves, obey your masters in everything. Obey all the time, even when they can't see you. Don't just pretend to work hard so that they will treat you well. No, you must serve your masters sincerely because you respect the Lord. ²³In all the work you are given, do the best you can. Work as though you are working for the Lord, not any earthly master. ²⁴Remember that you will receive your reward from the Lord, who will give you what he promised his people. Yes, you are serving Christ. He is your real Mas-

§§**3:6** *against ... him* Some Greek copies do not have these words.

***3:11** *Scythian* Scythians were known as wild and uncivilized people.

†**3:15** *body* Christ's spiritual body, meaning the church—his people.

ter.[‡] ²⁵ Remember that anyone who does wrong will be punished for that wrong. And God judges everyone the same.

4 Masters, give what is good and fair to your servants. Remember that you have a Master in heaven.

Some Things to Do

² Never stop praying. Be ready for anything by praying and being thankful.

³ Also pray for us. Pray that God will give us opportunities to tell people his message. I am in prison for doing this. But pray that we can continue to tell people the secret truth that God has made known about Christ. ⁴ Pray that I will say what I should to make this truth clear.

⁵ When you have the opportunity to be with those who are not believers, use that time wisely. ⁶ Be kind in the way you talk to them so that what you say will be well received. Be ready with the right response for each person.

News About Those With Paul

⁷ Tychicus is my dear brother in Christ. He is a faithful helper and he serves the Lord with me. He will tell you everything that is happening with me. ⁸ That is why I am sending him. I want you to know how we are, and I am sending him to encourage you. ⁹ I am sending him with Onesimus, the faithful and dear brother from your group. They will

tell you everything that has happened here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, the one here in prison with me, sends you his greetings. Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, also sends his greetings. (I have already told you what to do about Mark. If he comes, welcome him.) ¹¹ And greetings from Jesus, the one who is also called Justus. These are the only Jewish believers who work with me for God's kingdom. They have been a great comfort to me.

¹² Epaphras, another servant of Jesus Christ from your group, sends his greetings. He constantly struggles for you in prayer. He prays that you will grow to be spiritually mature and have everything that God wants for you. ¹³ I know that he has worked hard for you and the people in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Greetings also from Demas and our dear friend Luke, the doctor.

¹⁵ Give our greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea. Greetings also to Nympha and to the church that meets in her house. ¹⁶ After this letter is read to you, be sure it is also read to the church in Laodicea. And you read the letter that I wrote to them. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus, "Be sure to do the work the Lord gave you."

¹⁸ Here's my greeting in my own handwriting—Paul. Remember me in prison. I pray that God's grace will be with you all.

[‡]3:24 *Yes, you ... Master* Or "Serve the Lord Christ." The Greek word translated "Lord" is the same as the word for "master" in verses 22 and 23.