

# Outline of Colossians

## Colossians 1-4 (Outline)

### Salutation (1:1-2).

1. From Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will and Timothy, the brother.
2. Recipients: the saints in Colossae And faithful brothers in Christ.
3. Grace [inclusion: 1:2; 4:18] and peace.

### I. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians (1:3-13 or 1:3-23).

#### A. Thanksgiving to God (1:3-8).

1. For the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus (v. 4).
2. For their love toward all the saints (v. 4).
3. For their heavenly hope through the gospel (v. 5).
  - a. This gospel is universal (v. 6).
  - b. It produces fruit (v. 6).
  - c. It creates internal growth (v. 6, some MSS).
  - d. The Colossians learned it through Epaphras (vv. 7-8).
    - 1) Epaphras is Paul's dear fellow-slave (v. 7).
    - 2) He is a faithful minister of Christ on behalf of the Colossians (v. 7).
    - 3) He declared to Paul the Colossians' love "in the Spirit" (v. 8).

#### B. Continual prayer [to God] for the Colossians (1:9-11).

1. Paul's request: God will fill them with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (v. 9).
2. The result (or purpose) of being filled with this knowledge is a new life-style (walk):
  - a. Worthy of the Lord (v. 10).
  - b. Pleasing to the Lord for all things [or, pleasing to all others] (v. 10).
  - c. Characterized by:
    - 1) Fruitfulness in every good work (v. 10).
    - 2) Spiritual growth in the knowledge of God (v. 10).
    - 3) Full empowerment according to God's strength, which supplies all patience and longsuffering with joy (v. 11).
    - 4) [Gratitude to the Father, v. 12].

#### C. Thanksgiving to the Father (1:12-13).

1. He made the Colossians (you) sufficient to have a share in the inheritance of the saints in light (v. 12).
2. He delivered us out of the authority of darkness (v. 13).
3. He transferred us into the dominion of his Son (v. 13).

### II. The Son's Person and Work (a continuation of Paul's prayer) (1:14-23).

- A. He provides redemption = the forgiveness of sins (v. 14).
- B. He is the image (visible representation) of the invisible God (v. 15).
- C. He is firstborn (supreme) over all creation (v. 15).
  1. All things (in heaven and in earth; visible and invisible) were created in (en) him (v. 16).
    - a. Thrones.

- b. Dominions (lordships).
- c. Principalities (rulers).
- d. Powers (authorities).
- 2. All things have been created (perfect tense) by (dia, agency) him (v. 16).
- 3. All things were created for (eis, benefit or goal) him (v. 16).
- 4. He is before (pro, time or rank) all things (v. 17).
- 5. In him all things cohere (v. 17).
- D. He is the head of the body, the church (v. 18).
- 1. The beginning (originating cause).
- 2. The firstborn from the dead: that in all things he may be the Preeminent One (literally, holding the first place).
- 3. The embodiment of all [God's] fullness (v. 19).
- 4. God's agent (dia) in reconciliation (v. 20).
- a. By making peace through the blood of Christ's cross: cosmic in extent (involving all things on earth and in the heavens).
- b. God reconciled the Colossians to himself (vv. 21-22).
- 1) Prior condition (before): alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works (v. 21).
- 2) Present state (now): reconciled through [Christ's] physical death (v. 22).
- 3) Purpose: to present the Colossians as holy, blameless, and unaccused before God (v. 22).
- 4) Condition to be met: if you continue in the faith (v. 23).
- a) Founded (stable).
- b) Settled (firm).
- c) Not shifting from the hope of the gospel:
  - [1] Which they had heard.
  - [2] Which Paul preached
  - [a] in all creation
  - [b] under heaven.
  - [3] Of which Paul is made a minister.

### III. Paul's Ministry of Suffering for Christ's Body, the Church (1:24-29).

- A. He rejoices in his sufferings on behalf of the Colossians (v. 24).
- B. He fills up (on his part) the things lacking in regard to the afflictions of Christ (v. 24).
- 1. These afflictions are being experienced in his own body.
- 2. But they are being endured for Christ's body, the church.
- C. Furthermore, Paul has become a minister (diakonos, servant) both of the gospel (v. 23) and of the church (vv. 24-25).
- 1. His ministry is a stewardship from God for the purpose of serving the Colossians (v. 25).
- 2. His commission is to declare fully the word of God which is the mystery (v. 26).
- a. The mystery has been hidden (perfect tense) from the ages and from the generations (v. 26).
- b. But now God has manifested it (aorist tense: views the whole process as a single, completed event) to his saints (v. 26).
- c. He wishes to make known to them how great is this glorious mystery among the nations (v. 27).
- d. This mystery is Christ in you, the glorious hope (or, the hope of sharing in glory) (v. 27).
- 3. Paul preaches Christ in order that he may present every man perfect (mature) in Christ [Jesus, TR] (v. 28).

- a. The means he uses is warning every man.
- b. And teaching every man in all wisdom.
- 4. He labors in this work (of preaching in order to present every man mature in Christ) (v. 28).
  - a. The work is agonizing.
  - b. God is the source of power who energizes Paul.

#### IV. Paul's Spiritual Struggle for the Colossians and Others Who Do Not Personally Know Him (2:1-5). (Perhaps this section should be D. under III.)

- A. He desires that the Colossians know he angonizes [in prayer?] (v. 1).
  - 1. For them.
  - 2. For the Laodiceans.
  - 3. For as man as have not seen him face-to-face.
- B. He desires that the hearts of all of them may be comforted (v. 2).
  - 1. Joined as one (knit together) in (or by means of) love.
  - 2. Having all the wealth that comes from insight.
  - 3. Really (or fully) knowing God's mystery, which is Christ (possibly: the mystery of God who is Christ). [The KJV reads: "the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ."]
- C. This comfort is experienced in Christ: in him are stored up (hidden) "all the treasures" (v. 3).
  - 1. Of wisdom.
  - 2. And of knowledge.

#### V. Paul Gives Several Warnings to the Colossians to Beware of "the Philosophy" (2:4-23).

- A. First warning: concerning the danger of being deceived by persuasive argument (v. 4).
  - 1. The problem stated (v. 4).
  - 2. Paul's confidence in the Colossians (v. 5).
    - a. Although he is not with them in the flesh (physically), he is with them in the spirit (spiritually).
    - b. He rejoices to see their order (discipline) and the stability of their faith.
  - 3. To avoid the danger he commands them to continue living (walking) in union with Christ as they originally received him, namely, as Christ Jesus the Lord (v. 6).
    - a. Rooted (perfect tense) (v.7).
    - b. Being built up (if middle voice: continually building themselves up in Christ (v.7).
    - c. Being confirmed (established) in the faith (v. 7).
    - d. As they were taught, abounding in thanksgiving (v.7).
- B. Second warning: concerning the danger of being robbed (cheated) through "the philosophy" (2:8-15).
  - 1. The Colossians must constantly be on the alert (v. 8).
  - 2. Anyone (maybe one particular individual) may destroy their relationship with Christ through the love for wisdom (v. 8).
    - a. Human wisdom is without substance (hollow, empty).
    - b. It is deceptive.
    - c. The philosophy is man-made, derived from the traditions of men.
    - d. It is built on the concept of the elements (stoicheia) of the world."
    - e. Most assuredly, neither its source nor its substance depend on Christ.

3. Reasons why the Colossians must hold on to Christ (2:9-13).
  - a. In Christ dwells all the fullness of deity (theotes, the being of God) in bodily form (or in reality) (v. 9).
  - b. The Colossians are filled (perf. pass. pt.) in him (v. 10).
    - (1) He is the head.
    - (2) The head over all rule and authority [inclusion: 2:10; 2:15].
  - c. They were spiritually circumcised in Christ (v. 11).
    - (1) Not a circumcision done by human hands.
    - (2) A circumcision that consists of putting off the body of fleshly (personal) sins.
    - (3) Their sins were removed by (en) the circumcision of Christ.
    - (4) This circumcision occurred when they were baptized (v. 12).
      - (a) Through faith in God's operation.
      - (b) Faith in the one who raised Jesus from the dead.
  - d. Christ made the Colossians alive with him (v. 13).
    - (1) Formerly, they were dead (in sins).
      - (a) In trespasses (transgressions).
      - (b) In the uncircumcision of their flesh (self).
    - (2) Nevertheless, Christ freely forgave them (us) all the trespasses.
    - (3) At the same time he cancelled (blotted out, wiped out, crossed out) "the handwriting that was against us" (v. 14).
      - (a) This handwriting was composed of (or associated with) ordinances (demands of law, regulations).
      - (b) This handwriting was an obstacle (hostile, contrary) to us.
    - (4) He has removed (pf. tense) it out of the way (from the middle or midst).
      - (a) By nailing it to his cross.
      - (b) When (or after) he had disarmed (put off, stripped) the rulers and the authorities.
    - (5) Finally, he exposed the rulers and authorities openly (made a public spectacle of them) (v. 15).
      - (a) He triumphed over them (leading them captive in triumphal procession).
      - (b) He exposed them by means of (en) the cross.
- C. Third warning: let no man therefore condemn (judge) you for not observing certain ordinances (2:16-17).
  1. The specific ordinances mentioned (v. 16):
    - a. In food.
    - b. In drink.
    - c. Or in respect of a feast.
    - d. Or of a new moon.
    - e. Or of sabbaths.
  2. These things are a shadow of what is to come (or a shadow cast by coming things) (v. 17).
  3. The reality (body) pertains to Christ.
- D. Fourth warning: let no man "defraud you of your rightful prize" by imposing other [Jewish or pagan] ordinances on you (2:18-19).
  1. Human practices being advocated:
    - a. Voluntary humility (perhaps faking humility or finding pleasure in such things as humanly ordained fasting).
  - b. The worship of angels:

- (1) Either the angels are objects of worship,
- (2) Or the worship is like (or corresponds to) that of angels.
- 2. A person who practices such things is intruding into those things he has [not, TR] seen (perhaps a reference to ecstatic visions).
  - a. He is acting in vanity.
  - b. He is being puffed up by his fleshly mind.
- E. Fifth warning: if you died with Christ from the elements of the world (and you did), why do you submit yourselves [or why are you subjected] to human dogmas (decrees, rules)? (2:20-23).
  - 1. A quotation involving human dogmas: Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle (v. 21).
  - 2. All these rules pertain "to things destined to perish with the using" (NASB), according to human commandments and teaching (v. 22).
  - 3. All these rules are merely a demonstration (a show, give the appearance) of human wisdom (v. 23).
    - a. In will-worship (self-chosen worship).
    - b. And (self-imposed) humility.
    - c. And severe treatment of the body.
  - 4. But they are of no value against (do not restrain) fleshly gratification (sensual indulgence).

## VI. The New Person in Christ (3:1-4:6).

- A. Basic introduction: If the Colossians were raised with Christ (and they were), then two important obligations follow (3:1-4).
  - 1. They must keep on seeking the things above, where Christ is sitting at God's right hand (v. 1).
  - 2. They must always fix their minds on the things above (be intent on heavenly things), not the things on the earth (v. 2).
  - 3. Two reasons are given:
    - a. They died (to sin) and their life has been hidden (perf. tense) with Christ in God (v. 3).
    - b. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed (manifested) from heaven, then also the Colossians will be revealed (manifested) with him in glory (v. 4).
- B. The new person as it pertains to personal lifestyle (3:5-15).
  - 1. In keeping with the above obligations, Paul commands the Colossians to put to death what is earthly to them (v. 5).
    - a. Some examples:
      - (1) Fornication (every kind of sexual immorality).
      - (2) Uncleanness (usually refers to sexual impurity, dirt, refuse).
      - (3) Passions (usually refers to sexual passions).
      - (4) Evil desires (base impulses).
      - (5) Covetousness (self-seeking acquisitiveness), which is idolatry.
    - b. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on his children that are characterized by disobedience (v. 6).
    - c. Formerly the Colossians conducted themselves as disobedient children when they lived in these things (v. 7).
  - 2. In contrast to their former life, they must rid themselves of (lay aside, put away) all things that are evil, including (v. 8):
    - a. Anger.
    - b. Rage (passionate outbursts).
    - c. Malice (badness).

- d. Blasphemy (insults against God and man).
  - e. Filthy language (obscene speech, foul-mouthed abuse) out of their mouth.
3. They must keep from lying (or acting falsely) one to another (v. 9).
- a. Because they have put off the old (outworn) man (person, self, state) with his practices.
  - b. And they have put on the new man (person, self, state) (v. 10).
- (1) This new man is being renewed in ever-increasing (eis) knowledge (or for full knowledge).
  - (2) He is being renewed according to the image of the one creating him (God, Eph. 4:24, or Christ, Col. 1:15).
4. In this new (re-created) state there is not present any such distinction as . . . (v. 11):
- a. Greek and Jew.
  - b. Barbarian (one who speaks a strange language).
  - c. Scythian.
  - d. Slave.
  - e. Free person.
5. Christ is all (everything that matters) and in all (present in everything or active in all circumstances).
6. The Colossians must, therefore, put on as God's chosen ones, who are holy and beloved (v. 12):
- a. Bowels of compassion (pity, mercy) = a compassionate heart.
  - b. Kindness (a generous spirit).
  - c. Humility (the genuine kind of gentleness).
  - d. Longsuffering (patience with people, forbearance).
7. The putting on of the above spiritual garments must be accompanied by a new way of dealing with other people (v. 13):
- a. Forbearing one another (putting up with each other).
  - b. Graciously forgiving one another (literally, yourselves).
- (1) Christ forgave them.
  - (2) If anyone among the Colossians has a complaint (cause for complaint, grievance) against anyone, he must likewise be forgiving because he is created in Christ's image.
8. Above all these virtues (or articles of spiritual clothing) there must be love (v. 14).
- a. Love is the bond (that which fastens together) of perfectness (completeness).
  - b. Love binds the articles of spiritual clothing and binds persons in fellowship.
9. And they must let the Christ's peace rule in their hearts (v. 15).
- a. This is the purpose for which (or the goal toward which) they were called (to be united[?]) in one body.
  - b. And this peace must be accompanied by thanksgiving (gratitude).
- C. The new person as it pertains to worship (3:16-17).
1. Paul commands the Colossians to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly (abundantly) (v. 16). [Most versions connect "in all wisdom" here.]
- a. In all wisdom (en paze sophia) teaching and admonishing (warning, instructing) each other (themselves) in (by means of):
- (1) Psalms.
  - (2) Hymns.
  - (3) Spritual songs. ["Spiritual" may modify all three terms.]
- b. With grace (en te chariti) singing in their hearts to God (to the Lord, TR).
2. He also (implicitly) commands them to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 17).

- a. Whatever they may be doing, whether in word (speech) or deed (work, action).
- b. Accompanied by thanksgiving to God the Father through him (the Lord Jesus).
- D. The new person in Christ as it pertains to inter-personal relationships (3:18-4:1).
  - 1. The wives to the husbands (3:18).
    - a. Submit (subject) themselves.
    - b. Motivation: to do what is proper (fitting, becoming, what is due) in the Lord.
  - 2. The husbands to the wives (3:19).
    - a. Love them.
    - b. Always avoid (or stop) being bitter (harsh, sharp, cross; passively = embittered) toward them.
  - 3. The children to the parents (3:20).
    - a. Obey them in all things.
    - b. Motivation: to be acceptable to the Lord.
  - 4. The fathers to the children (3:21).
    - a. Avoid irritating (do not provoke, stir up, exasperate) them.
    - b. Lest they be discouraged (dispirited, disheartened).
  - 5. The slaves to the earthly (in the flesh) masters (3:22-25).
    - a. Obey them in all things (in every respect).
      - (1) Not with eye-service (only what the eye can see or only when the master is watching) as people-pleasers, but in singleness (sincerity) of heart.
      - (2) Motivation: fearing (reverencing) the Lord.
    - b. Work heartily (from the soul, with enthusiasm).
      - (1) In whatever they do.
      - (2) Motivation:
        - (a) (Doing it) for the Lord's benefit and not for human approval.
        - (b) Knowing that from the Lord they will receive (get back) the reward (exact recompense), namely, the inheritance, for you serve to the Lord Christ [if the verb is indicative; however, if the verb is imperative: serve the Lord Christ].
        - (c) But the wrongdoer will receive (get back) the wrong he did, and there is no partiality (there is no respect of persons) [with the Lord].
  - 6. The masters to the slaves (4:1).
    - a. Reciprocate (give, grant) with justice (what is right) and fairness (what is equal).
    - b. Motive: knowing that they also have a Lord (Master) in heaven.
- E. Concluding exhortations (imperatives) (4:2-6).
  - 1. Be persistent in prayer (4:2-4).
    - a. Watching (being wide awake) in it with thanksgiving.
    - b. Praying also for Paul that God may open a door for the preaching of the word.
      - (1) To proclaim the mystery of Christ, because of which he has been bound (= imprisoned).
      - (2) That he may manifest (reveal, make known) it as he ought to (must) speak.
  - 2. Walk (conduct themselves) in wisdom (wisely; perhaps, tactfully) (4:5).
    - a. Toward non-Christians (the ones outside).
    - b. Redeeming the time ("making the most of every opportunity," NIV).
  - 3. Speak always with grace (graciously, courteously) (4:6).
    - a. As if their words have been seasoned with salt.
    - b. In order that they may know how best to respond to each individual.

## VII Personal Remarks (4:7-18).

1. Concerning Tychicus, who is to inform the Colossians about Paul's welfare (4:7-8).
  - a. He is "the" beloved brother, a faithful minister, and fellow-slave in the Lord.
  - b. Paul has sent him to Colossae:
    - (1) To learn of their condition (variant reading: to tell them of Paul's welfare).
    - (2) To comfort their hearts.
2. Concerning Onesimus (4:9).
  - a. He will arrive with Tychicus.
  - b. He is a faithful (trustworthy) and beloved brother.
  - c. He is from Colossae.
  - d. He and Tychicus will tell the Colossians what Paul is doing while in prison.
3. Concerning Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner: he sends his greetings (4:10).
4. Concerning Mark (4:10).
  - a. He is a nephew of Barnabas.
  - b. As they have already been commanded, if he comes to Colossae, they are to receive him.
5. Concerning Jesus, who is called Justus: he also sends greetings (4:11).

(The above men are Jewish; they are Paul's fellow-workers for the kingdom of God; and they have been a great comfort to Paul.)

6. Concerning Epaphras, who also is from Colossae (4:12-13).
  - a. He is a slave of Christ.
  - b. He sends his greetings.
  - c. He agonizes fervently in prayer for the Colossians that they may stand mature (perfect, KJV) and complete in all the will of God.
  - d. Paul bears witness to his zeal for the Colossians, them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.
7. Concerning Luke, the beloved Physician: he sends greetings (4:14).
8. Concerning Demas: he also sends greetings (4:14).
9. Concluding requests sent to the Colossians (4:15-17).
  - a. Greet the brothers in Laodicea.
  - b. Greet Nymphas and the church in his house.
  - c. Cause that the letter Paul is sending to them be read in the church of the Laodiceans.
  - d. Read the letter from Laodicea.
  - e. Tell Archippus to "keep an eye on" his ministry, which he received from the Lord, and fulfil it.
10. Note concerning his personal signature at the conclusion of the letter (4:18).
11. A reminder to remember his bonds (4:18).

Final Benediction: "Grace be with you" (4:18).