

# THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Importance of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 1. This letter from Paul is a book on Christian doctrine.
  - 2. Doctrine gives instruction against heresy.
- B. The heresy at Colossae
  - 1. It was tied to Judaism and Gnosticism.
  - 2. They emphasized special freedom, super protection, strict behavior, super knowledge and a superior attitude.
  - 3. Like all heresies, Jesus is not enough.
- C. An outline of the Epistle to the Colossians
  - 1. Introduction (1:1-14)
    - a. Greeting (1-2)
    - b. A prayer of thanksgiving for their faith (3-8)
    - c. A prayer of petition for them (9-14)
- D. Review
  - 1. Paul identified himself as an apostle with the authoritative message that combats heretical teachers.
  - 2. The marks of a true believer are faith expressed by love based in hope secured by the Gospel.
  - 3. He told the Colossians that the Gospel was bearing fruit in people worldwide even as it was bearing fruit in them.

## COLOSSIANS 1:9-14, *A PRAYER OF PETITION*

- A. Paul asked that they would have Godly knowledge (9), *And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,*
  - 1. Paul and his companions started praying for the Colossians from the day they heard they had placed faith in Christ.
    - a. *not ceased* means that he prayed for them when he regularly prayed.
    - b. Ephesians 1:16, *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*
  - 2. He prayed that they would be filled with knowledge of God's will.
    - a. *asking* is the word for petition or requesting.
    - b. *filled*
      - 1) It means to be *complete*.
      - 2) Paul wanted them to know all that's necessary for their spiritual well-being.
      - 3) The false teachers were saying that the Colossians were missing necessary knowledge.
    - c. *knowledge*, in the New Testament, always describes moral and religious truth.
      - 1) We could substitute the word *doctrine* for *knowledge* which becomes evident as Paul gave instruction in this letter on the person and work of Christ.
      - 2) Johnson, *The true antidote to heresy is always a deeper and richer knowledge of the truth concerning Jesus Christ.*
    - d. Paul wanted them to know God's *will*.
      - 1) It is what God expects from His children, Romans 12:2, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
      - 2) It is designed to draw us closer to the Lord Jesus Christ, John 17:3, *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*
      - 3) T. Constable, *In the broadest sense, the will of God is the whole purpose of God revealed in Christ.*

- e. *in all spiritual wisdom and understanding*
    - 1) *wisdom* refers to the ability to understand spiritual truth.
    - 2) *understanding* speaks to insight, discernment.
    - 3) Vaughan, '*Wisdom*' and '*understanding*' probably should not be treated separately but should be looked on as expressing a single thought, something like practical wisdom or clear discernment.
    - 4) It is clear discernment which comes by the Holy Spirit not the wisdom promoted by false teachers.
- B. Paul asked that such knowledge would produce Godly behavior (10a), ***so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him:***
- 1. A Christian is to *walk* in a manner worthy of the Lord.
    - a. *Walk* is used by Paul in the Hebrew context, an ethical sense, *to conduct one's life*.
      - 1) For the Hebrew, knowledge and conduct were bound together but for the Greek, knowledge was highly theoretical.
      - 2) One group of Gnostics reasoned that since the body was evil and the spirit was good, it made no difference what one did in the body.
      - 3) Lightfoot, *The end of all knowledge is conduct*.
    - b. *worthy* has the meaning of *comparable merit, of like value*.
      - 1) Our lifestyle is not to be compared to others but to the Lord Jesus Christ.
      - 2) 1 Peter 2:21, *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps*.
      - 3) 1 Peter 1:15, *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*,
  - 2. An obedient Christian pleases the Lord.
    - a. Eadie, *His highest pleasure is to see His own likeness in ...all their thoughts, purposes, and actions, there should be a pervading and paramount desire to walk so worthily of Him, as to secure His approval*.
    - b. It is a lofty goal to please the Lord by our behavior. Thankfully, Paul gives four goals to pursue in verses 10-14.
- C. Paul listed characteristics of Godly behavior that please the Lord (10b-14)
- 1. To be productive (10b), ***bearing fruit in every good work***
    - a. A result of increased spiritual knowledge should be a life which produces good works.
      - 1) Galatians 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*
      - 2) Hughes, *Good works are the outworking of Christ's life in His people*.
      - 3) Lucas, *The harvest of wisdom is works*.
    - b. A productive life should be the norm for Christians, a constant, ongoing reality.
      - 1) M. Anders, *Good works are not a means to achieve salvation, but a natural result of it*.
      - 2) Good works in the life of the believer please God because good works are God's plans for the believer, Ephesians 2:8-10, *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*.
  - 2. To be growing in truth (10c), ***and increasing in the knowledge of God;***
    - a. A characteristic of godly behavior is knowing God better.
      - 1) Spiritual action is built on spiritual understanding.
      - 2) Psalm 25:9, *He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way*.
      - 3) R. Hughes, *A profound knowledge should profoundly affect one's walk...the more one truly serves Him, the more one opens to knowledge of Him-the more one knows of Him, the more one wants to serve Him*.
    - b. Some manuscripts translate it, *and increasing by the knowledge of God*.
      - 1) An increasing knowledge of God is the means by which fruit is born in our lives.
      - 2) Vaughan, *What rain and sunshine are to the nurture of plants, the knowledge of God is to the growth and maturing of the spiritual life*.

3. To be strengthened for adversity (11), *being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;*
  - a. *being strengthened with all power*
    - 1) It is God's ongoing work in our lives that strengthens Christians, Ephesians 3:16, *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*
    - 2) *power is spiritual vitality or ability to perform an activity.*
      - a) Christians are empowered for service with power from our glorious God.
      - b) The same power that created all things is the power God gives Christians to do good works.
  - b. *his glorious might*
    - 1) *might* is divine power, used only of God in the New Testament.
    - 2) Ephesians 6:10, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*
  - c. This God-given strength is given to produce endurance and patience.
    - 1) *endurance*
      - a) It is the capacity to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances, Romans 5:3, *...but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,*
      - b) M. Anders, *...the ability to pass through any experience and trust God to see us through.*
    - 2) *patience*
      - a) It is often tied to relating to others.
      - b) It is self-restraint which does not retaliate.
      - c) Proverbs 15:18, *A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.*
    - 3) Hughes gives an appropriate prayer that expresses Paul's emphasis from this verse, *Lord, give them perseverance in difficulties and patience with people.*
4. To show gratitude to God (12-14),
  - a. Christians are to be thankful people (12a), *giving thanks to the Father,*
    - 1) *with joy* is best tied to this verse, describing how we are to give thanks to our heavenly Father.
      - a) *Joy* is a *state of gladness, well-being.*
      - b) It is a spiritual fruit, Galatians 5:22, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
      - c) It is a gift from God, Isaiah 29:19, *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.*
      - d) W. Wiersbe, *There is a kind of patience that 'endures but does not enjoy.' Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians might experience joyful patience and longsuffering.*
    - 2) Joyful thankfulness is to mark the life of a Christian.
      - a) 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
      - b) Philippians 4:6, *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
      - c) Colossians 4:2, *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*
  - b. There are reasons why Christians should be joyfully thankful.
    - 1) There is an inheritance to be received (12b), *who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*
      - a) The inheritance is for those who qualify.
        - 1] God has made believers competent by His grace to receive an inheritance.
          - a] Ephesians 1:7, *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
          - b] 2 Corinthians 3:6, *who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*
        - 2] M. Anders, *We don't qualify ourselves by our moral achievements or personal worthiness. In grace, God qualifies us when we trust Christ as the atoning sacrifice for our sin.*

- b) It is a shared inheritance by every Christian, Acts 26:18, *to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*
  - c) It is fully received in the kingdom of light.
    - 1] 1 Peter 1:4, *to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,*
    - 2] Revelation 21:23-25, *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.*
- 2) There is a transfer from Satan to the authority of the Savior (13), ***He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,***
- a) God rescued believers from destruction, Ephesians 6:12, *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*
  - b) He freed believers from the control of Satan and placed them in the kingdom of His beloved Son, 1 Peter 2:9, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*
  - c) Jesus is the beloved Son of our Heavenly Father.
    - 1] Ephesians 1:6, *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*
    - 2] Matthew 3:17, *and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*
- 3) There is a positive change of spiritual condition (14), ***in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.***
- a) Redemption is a rescue by ransom paid only by the death of Jesus, Mark 10:45, *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
  - b) Redemption is not only a transfer from one ruler to another, it is an inner change of life.
    - 1] *forgiveness of sins* is not a definition of redemption but a feature of redemption.
    - 2] We are not the same people in a new location but new creations.
      - a] 2 Corinthians 5:17, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself...*
      - b] Hebrews 10:16, *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. All the spirituality one could ever hope for is summed up in Christ.
- B. The reason for spiritual knowledge is to enable Christians to live what they believe.
- C. Christians are to be thankful despite difficult circumstances because our hope is in heaven since Jesus delivered us from darkness to His glorious light.