

## Colossians

**1:1** Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus through the desire of God, and brother Timothy<sup>1</sup> **1:2** to the set-apart ones in Colossae and believing brothers in the Messiah—grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

**1:3** When we pray, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, for you,<sup>3</sup> **1:4** because we have heard of your belief in the Messiah Jesus and the love which you have for all those who are set apart,<sup>4</sup> **1:5** on account of the hope that is stored away for you in the heavens, which you heard about beforehand in the message of the truth of the good news,<sup>5</sup> **1:6** which has come to you. Just as it is certainly bearing fruit and increasing in all the world, to the same degree it is also bearing fruit and increasing in you from the day you heard and understood the grace of God contained in the truth,<sup>6</sup> **1:7** just as you learned about it from Epaphras, our fellow slave, who is loved. He is a faithful servant of the Messiah on your behalf,<sup>7</sup> and **1:8** he also informed us of your love because of the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

**1:9** On account of this, we also, from the day we heard, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you be filled with the knowledge of His desire contained in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,<sup>9</sup> **1:10** so that you may live a life congruent with the Lord, to the extent that everything you do is pleasing to Him—[1] bearing fruit by means of every good action, [2] increasing in an understanding of God,<sup>10</sup> **1:11** [3] being made capable with all power according to His glorious strength for all perseverance and long-suffering,<sup>11</sup> **1:12** [4] with joy thanking the Father who, by means of the light, has made you qualified for a portion of the inheritance of those who are set apart.<sup>12</sup>

**1:13** He rescued us from the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His Son whom He loves,<sup>13</sup> **1:14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our evil actions.<sup>14</sup> **1:15** He is the icon of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,<sup>15</sup> **1:16** because all things in the heavens and on the earth were created in him, all things visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers, or authorities. All things have been created with him in view and for him.<sup>16</sup>

**1:17** Thus, he is before all things, and all things have been put in their place in him.<sup>17</sup> **1:18** For example, he is the head of the body of the gathering. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he may be the one who takes preeminence in the all,<sup>18</sup> **1:19** because He was pleased for all the fullness to dwell in him,<sup>19</sup> **1:20** and through him to reconcile the all to Himself, whether those on the earth or in the heavens, having made peace through his blood of the cross.<sup>20</sup>

**1:21** Certainly, in the past, you were alienated and enemies in your mind in the midst of evil actions.<sup>21</sup> **1:22** But now He has reconciled you with the body of his flesh through death to present you as set apart, acceptable, and beyond criticism in His presence,<sup>22</sup> **1:23** if indeed you continue in your belief, having been established, solidly in place, and without being moved away from the hope of the good news which you heard, which has been proclaimed in all the creation under heaven, for which I, Paul, became a servant.<sup>23</sup>

**1:24** As it is, I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and I fill up the shortage of the tribulations of the Messiah with my flesh on behalf of his body, which is the gathering,<sup>24</sup> **1:25** for which I became a servant for your benefit, according to God's arrangement,

which was given to me to be oriented towards you, in order to fill out the message/story of God,<sup>25</sup> 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden during past ages and generations. However, now, it has been manifested to those who are set apart and who belong to Him,<sup>26</sup> 1:27 to whom among the Gentiles God desired to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is the Messiah in you, the hope of glory.<sup>27</sup>

1:28 We proclaim him, while we admonish every man and teach every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man as having accomplished his goal (*telos*) (*τέλειον*) in the Messiah.<sup>28</sup> 1:29 Indeed, I am laboring towards this goal, as I struggle in accordance with His activity which He is working within me with His power.<sup>29</sup>

2:1 I want you to know how great a struggle I am having on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea, in fact on behalf of as many as have not seen me personally,<sup>30</sup> 2:2 so that their hearts may be encouraged, while being brought together because of [God's] love and towards all the wealth of a complete certainty of understanding, which is to say towards a true knowledge of the mystery of God, the Messiah,<sup>31</sup> 2:3 in whom are all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

2:4 I am saying this so that no one deceives you with a fallacious argument.<sup>33</sup> 2:5 For even if I am physically absent, nevertheless, I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and watching your orderliness and the steadfastness of your belief in the Messiah.<sup>34</sup> 2:6 Therefore, just as you received the Messiah Jesus, the Lord, live in him,<sup>35</sup> 2:7 being firmly rooted and built up in him, in addition to being established in your belief, just as you were taught. While overflowing with gratitude,<sup>36</sup> 2:8 see to it that there is no one who takes control of you through love for human wisdom and worthless deception in accordance with traditional teachings of men, in accordance with the basic principles associated with systemism, instead of according to the Messiah.<sup>37</sup> 2:9 The reason this makes sense is because all the fullness from God dwells in him bodily.<sup>38</sup> 2:10 In fact, you have been fullness-ed because of him. He is the head of every ruler and authority.<sup>39</sup>

2:11 In your association with him, you were indeed circumcised with a circumcision done without hands, by the removal of the body of the flesh, by the circumcision associated with the Messiah,<sup>40</sup> 2:12 and you were buried with him by means of baptism. Because of him, you were also raised with him in view of belief in the activity of God, who raised him from the dead.<sup>41</sup>

2:13 Even though you were dead in the midst of your moral transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with him, because He has graced/forgiven all our moral transgressions.<sup>42</sup> 2:14 He has canceled out the record of legal debts that condemned us. In fact, he removed it from our midst by nailing it to the cross,<sup>43</sup> 2:15 thereby disarming the rulers and authorities. He boldly disgraced them publicly and led them in triumphal procession because of it.<sup>44</sup>

2:16 Therefore, do not let someone condemn you in regard to food or drink or your taking part in a festival, a new moon, or a Sabbath.<sup>45</sup> 2:17 These are a shadow of future things, but the real thing has to do with the Messiah.<sup>46</sup> 2:18 Let no one cheat you out of your prize, taking pleasure in lowliness and the worship of the *angeli*/divinely revealed texts. He has perceived these things while claiming special status, because he is conceited in vain by his fleshly mind.<sup>47</sup> 2:19 Indeed, he does not hold on to the head, in accordance with which the whole body, while being supported and held together by joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that comes from God.<sup>48</sup>

**2:20** If you died with the Messiah with respect to the basic principles associated with systemism, why, as if living within the framework of systemism, would you put yourself under legal obligation to<sup>49</sup> **2:21** “Do not grasp; do not taste; do not touch,”<sup>50</sup> **2:22** which involve things all designed for being destroyed by being consumed? In accordance with the commandments and teachings of men,<sup>51</sup> **2:23** such things, while having a message which certainly has a touch of wisdom within the framework of self-made piety and humility and intense treatment of the body, are of no value for the purpose of fleshly indulgence.<sup>52</sup>

**3:1** Therefore, if you were raised with the Messiah, seek the things above where the Messiah has been seated at the right hand of God.<sup>53</sup> **3:2** Set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the earth,<sup>54</sup> **3:3** because you have died and your life has been hidden with the Messiah in God.<sup>55</sup> **3:4** When the Messiah, our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.<sup>56</sup>

**3:5** Therefore, put to death the “members” on earth—sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and boundaryless evil, which constitutes the worship of idols.<sup>57</sup> **3:6** On account of these things, the anger of God is coming on the sons of disobedience,<sup>58</sup> **3:7** among whom you also formerly acted as a way of life when you were living by means of these same modes of behavior.<sup>59</sup>

**3:8** You should now put all these things aside—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech which comes out of your mouth.<sup>60</sup> **3:9** Do not lie to one another, because you have taken off the old man with his practices,<sup>61</sup> **3:10** and you have put on the new man, who was renewed for the purpose of having true knowledge, in accordance with the image of the One who created him,<sup>62</sup> **3:11** whereby there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, neither barbarian, Scythian, slave, nor freeman. Instead, the Messiah is everyone and in everyone.<sup>63</sup>

**3:12** Therefore, as those who are the chosen of God, set apart and loved, certainly put on an inwardness of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,<sup>64</sup> **3:13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against someone. Just as the Lord forgives you, so also should you forgive others.<sup>65</sup> **3:14** Above all these, put on love, which is the bond that makes for reaching the goal (*telos*) (τῆς ἡμετέρας τελειότητος).<sup>66</sup>

**3:15** Let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were called in one body, dominate in your hearts, and be thankful.<sup>67</sup> **3:16** Let the message of the Messiah dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another—as you sing with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God with thankfulness in your hearts.<sup>68</sup> **3:17** And whatever you do in speech or action, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, being thankful to God the Father because of him.<sup>69</sup>

**3:18** Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.<sup>70</sup>

**3:19** Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them.<sup>71</sup>

**3:20** Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing in the Lord.<sup>72</sup>

**3:21** Fathers, do not irritate your children, so that they do not become discouraged.<sup>73</sup>

**3:22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters according to everything, not as men-pleasers when they are watching, but with a single-mindedness of heart, because you fear the Lord.<sup>74</sup> **3:23** Whatever you do, do on the basis of your inwardness, as for the Lord and not for men,<sup>75</sup> **3:24** knowing that you will receive the “wage” of the inheritance from the Lord. You are a slave of the Messiah, the Lord.<sup>76</sup> **3:25** He who does wrong will receive the consequences of what he has done wrong, and this without partiality.<sup>77</sup>

**4:1** Masters, allow your slaves to experience moral behavior and equality, knowing that you have a master in heaven.<sup>78</sup>

**4:2** Be persistent in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.<sup>79</sup> **4:3** Praying at the same time for us, that God will open for us a door for the message, in order to talk about the mystery of the Messiah, because of which I am in prison,<sup>80</sup> **4:4** so that I may reveal it just as it is required that I speak.<sup>81</sup>

**4:5** Conduct yourselves with wisdom towards outsiders, buying up the season.<sup>82</sup> **4:6** Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, in order that you may know how you must respond to each person.<sup>83</sup>

**4:7** Tychicus, the brother who is loved, a faithful servant, a fellow slave because of the Lord, will make you aware of everything concerning me.<sup>84</sup> **4:8** I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.<sup>85</sup> **4:9** I have sent him with Onesimus, the faithful brother who is loved, who is from you. They will inform you about the whole situation here.<sup>86</sup>

**4:10** Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner, sends you his greetings. And Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, about whom you received instructions, if he comes to you, welcome him,<sup>87</sup> **4:11** as well as Jesus, who is called Justus. They are from the circumcision. These are the only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God. They have been an encouragement to me.<sup>88</sup>

**4:12** Epaphras, one of your own and a slave of the Messiah, greets you, always laboring on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand as those who have reached their goal and have become completely filled with the whole desire of God.<sup>89</sup> **4:13** I bear witness to the fact that he has great concern for you and those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.<sup>90</sup> **4:14** Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as well as does Demas.<sup>91</sup>

**4:15** Greet the brothers in Laodicea and Nympha, along with the gathering that it is in her house.<sup>92</sup> **4:16** When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the gathering of the Laodiceans, and you should also read the letter that is coming from the Laodiceans.<sup>93</sup>

**4:17** Say to Archippus, “Pay attention to the service that you received because of the Lord, that you may complete it.”<sup>94</sup>

**4:18** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός – Assuming that Paul wrote this letter while he was under house arrest in Rome awaiting an audience with Caesar Nero, it was written around A.D. 60. As usual, in this first verse Paul introduces himself as an apostle, a commissioned authoritative spokesman on behalf of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, Paul has the knowledge, ability, responsibility, and right to present the biblical message with the same level of accuracy and authority as Jesus himself. He also says in this verse that he was given this responsibility, etc. by God because it was what God desires. Unlike Ephesians where Paul does not mention a co-author of the letter, he indicates that Timothy is writing this letter with him. From Acts 16, we learn that Timothy has become a faithful traveling companion from Lystra in central Turkey since Paul’s second missionary journey around A.D. 52. Thus, Timothy is with Paul in Rome and writes and sends this letter just as Paul is.

<sup>2</sup> τοῖς ἐν Ἑκκοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul and Timothy go on to say that they are addressing those who have been inwardly made different in the world by God and who live in the city of Colossae in western Turkey. These are the same ones who are believers, which also identifies them as inwardly changed and open to the truth of the gospel which they have heard from their fellow Colossian Epaphras (cf. 1:7,8). The syntax suggests that the phrase “in the Messiah” refers not to the object of their belief, but to their being in the group which has Jesus of Nazareth as its main member. This primary person in the group is the Jewish Messiah, the advocate and high priest for morally depraved human beings at the final judgment, as well as the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, i.e., the one who fulfills the role of king of the Davidic Covenant.

Paul and Timothy also call them “brothers,” because they are members of the family of God, drawn into a relationship with Him and by Him of being His sons and daughters, those whom He has created to be with Jesus the Messiah in the eternal Kingdom of God.

In several letters, Paul mentions that he would have grace coming from both the transcendent Creator, the Father, and His instrument of mercy within the creation, Jesus the Messiah, who will stand with believing morally depraved human beings at the judgment and act as their savior and advocate, which will result in eternal life for them.

<sup>3</sup> Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ὁ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε ἕνεκεν ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι – cf. 1 Corinthians 1:4 for the use of πάντοτε, “I thank my God always for you (Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ ὁμοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν), on the basis of the grace of God which was given to you in the Messiah Jesus.” This suggests the translation as I have rendered it for Colossians 1:3.

Paul and Timothy begin the body of this letter by stating that they are very grateful to God for these Colossian believers. They now also identify God, the transcendent Creator, as the Father of the Messiah Jesus. Going back to 2 Samuel 7, we learn that the kings of Israel from the line of David were each the Son of God, which means that they ruled over God’s creation with a level of authority just under that of God Himself. Jesus is the final Son of God, who will permanently and eternally rule over the millennial kingdom in the present realm and new and perfect creation of the future after it.

And Paul and Timothy express this gratitude to God when they pray.

<sup>4</sup> ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους – Paul and Timothy had never met the Colossians. It was one of their own, Epaphras, who had presented the biblical message to them so that they believed (cf. vs. 6,7). But Epaphras has come to Paul and Timothy in Rome and reported the effect that God has caused of his teaching these people the message of Jesus as the Messiah. There were two radical effects that throughout the NT letters become the obvious and necessary characteristics of people who respond positively. The first is that they adopt a new worldview and set of beliefs about the nature of reality, so that they now believe that there is a transcendent Creator who long ago chose the descendants of Abraham through Isaac, i.e., the Jews, to be His instruments of communicating Himself to the rest of the world, to the Gentiles, and that the most important Jew is Jesus of Nazareth, who is both their advocate at the final judgment and the king of the eternal Kingdom of God.

The second characteristic of authentically changed people is that they demonstrate a heartfelt care and concern for others who have gone through the same inward change by God, becoming believers in Jesus as the Messiah, because they know that these are the people with whom they will spend eternity (cf. v. 5). This love for those in the community of believers would have been far different from any obligation these Gentiles would have felt or considered towards their fellow followers of the pagan gods in the Greek/Roman culture of Colossae. As long as they were obeying the laws of the Roman Empire, they were treating the other pagan idolaters adequately. However, now that they have become believers in Jesus as the Messiah and the God who sent him, the ethical behavior to which they had become obligated was much higher than they were used to.

<sup>5</sup> διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – Paul and Timothy identify the intellectual and theological basis for the Colossians’ belief in Jesus and mutual love. It is God’s promise of eternal life, which allows the Colossians to have an eager and confident expectation in God’s providing them with the fulfillment of this promise. This thing, eternal life, is like something that God has stored in a safe place, keeping it there until He chooses the time to make it an actuality for authentic believers. It is this that is promised by God that Epaphras articulated to the Colossians that was such good news to them, because the ideas about it resonated as truth to them and was much better as ideas than the pagan idolatry that they had believed before. In other words, it really was “good news” and not the pathetic and hopeless ideas of pagan idolatry, like those of

modern atheistic and so-called “scientific” Darwinian evolution.

It makes sense that Paul and Timothy finish this sentence with the first words of v. 6, τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, “which has come to you.” In other words, the ideas of Jesus as the Messiah were genuinely presented to them by Epaphras, and they genuinely listened to these ideas.

<sup>6</sup> τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἔστιν καρποφορούμενον ἠὲ καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἤκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ – Paul and Timothy point out that there is a similarity between the effect of the presentation of the biblical ideas in other parts of the Roman Empire and the effect among the Colossians. However, it is not the ideas alone that are having this effect. But it is the inward work of the Spirit of God within the creation that takes hearing of these ideas by human beings and causes them to respond positively to them, thus capturing their imaginations with the correct view of the nature of reality and motivating them to want to learn more and to live their lives on the basis of these ideas.

Paul and Timothy state that these ideas contain and encapsulate the concept of God’s grace, whereby He independently chooses to change rebellious human beings in the midst of the profound problem of their not being able to change themselves.

<sup>7</sup> καθὼς ἔμαθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ἑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Epaphras is mentioned in only this letter and Philemon, not in Acts. We know from Philemon that he is a traveling companion of Paul, along with people such as Luke. We learn here that it was not Paul who presented the message of Jesus as the Messiah to the Colossians, but Epaphras. Thus, Paul and Timothy are following up on what Epaphras had said and done. They also say that Epaphras is one of those people who is loved by Paul and his companions, because he has become a committed disciple, student, and follower of Jesus as the Messiah, which happens to have been, in one sense, for the sake of the Colossians, because his life’s story resulted in his presenting them with the truth of the message of Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι – When Epaphras came to Rome to visit Paul, who is under house arrest, he was able to tell Paul and Timothy about his fellow Colossians’ embracing the message of Jesus as the Messiah. In turn, this motivated them to love Paul and his companions [or, brought about their love for God? No, probably love in general for each other and all Christians in the light of the context of 1:4], which all occurred because the Spirit of God worked powerfully within them to changed them from pagan idolators to believing that reality comprises a transcendent Creator, His story, and the focal point of this story, the Messiah Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

<sup>9</sup> Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἤκούσαμεν, οὐ παυόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι ἠὲ καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ – Assuming Paul is under house arrest in Rome as he describes in more detail in his letter to the Philippians, Epaphras has traveled from Colossae in western Turkey to Rome to visit Paul and, hopefully, be an encouragement to him, just as Timothy and Epaphroditus have been (cf. Philippians 2:19-30). This would mean also that this letter was written around A.D. 60.

As usual, Paul’s and Timothy’s prayer to God in regard to fellow believers in the Jesus Messiah is their knowledge of this message that includes precisely what God’s desire is for them in terms of how they should live their lives differently from when they were pagan idolators. is up to within the creation and His purposes for having brought it into existence. To gain this knowledge makes a human being wise and a person of true understanding in the midst of all the foolish and erroneous ideas circulating in the world about how people can and should live their lives.

<sup>10</sup> περιπατήσαι ἠὲ ἄξιως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι ἵνα ἐπίγνωσι τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul and Timothy indicate that the purpose of having good and correct knowledge about the nature of reality and God’s intentions for the creation is so that human beings can live out their existences on earth in conjunction with what God actually wants, thus behaving in a way that is overall pleasing to God, even if it is in the midst of disobedience to Him on occasion because of a person’s continued moral depravity. Paul and Timothy mention four things that are pleasing to God as human being lives according to what God wants in this life —

1. The first thing is demonstrating the fruit, the effects, of having genuine, biblical inwardness and correct knowledge of reality by means of the gospel. This fruit is good acts of love and mercy that correspond to God’s moral commandments.

2. The second thing is to make progress in growing in the knowledge and understanding of the God as the transcendent Creator and author of this story of the cosmos.

<sup>11</sup> ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν Μετὰ χαρᾶς – 3. The third thing is having supernaturally the ability to endure any level of suffering and pain with a person’s authentic belief intact, because God causes a person’s belief to persevere through the inward work of His Spirit.

<sup>12</sup> εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ – 4. The fourth thing is a genuine, biblical joy in the midst of any level of pain and suffering that even results in being grateful to God for what He has done and will do by causing an inwardly changed person to qualify to obtain his part in eternal life. Paul and Timothy say that God has accomplished this making the Colossian Christians qualified for their eternal destiny with “light,” i.e., with enlightening the minds of the Colossians with the ideas of biblical truth and causing them to respond positively to these ideas by embracing them as the one and only true worldview. This happens to people who become radically different for everyone else in their world who foolishly embraces other ideas about reality that are not true. Light is the truth, and those who genuinely embrace the light of truth inherit eternal mercy and life.

<sup>13</sup> ὅς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ – Paul and Timothy now hitchhike off their mentioning “those who are set apart” in v. 12 to expand the first person plural pronoun to include the Colossian Christians and themselves. They describe not only what God has accomplished vis-à-vis the Colossian Christians and themselves, but also who Jesus actually is. They say that God has disassociated believers in the Jewish Messiah from the normally unavoidable domination of evil in the world that is a result of mankind’s rebellion against God. Paul, Timothy, and the Colossian Christians had submitted themselves to the authority of evil in the world that is dominant by virtue of man’s moral depravity and that is characterized by the darkness of lies and false ideas about the nature of reality and how to live in this world as existing human beings. Now they are pursuing submission to Jesus’ authority as their future, eternal ruler in the Kingdom of God and to God’s moral commandments within the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah which start with love and include compassion, tenderness, kindness, patience, mercy, and gentleness. In turn, God has shifted believers’ from an eternal position of being condemned and destroyed by God to living eventually and forever in the new creation, over which Jesus will reign as its king, because he is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant as God’s proxy within the creation. Paul and Timothy also identify Jesus as the one whom God loves—i.e., ultimately as the most loved thing within the creation.

<sup>14</sup> ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν ἡμῶν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν – Paul and Timothy state that it is on account of Jesus, who has qualified to be their intermediary at the final judgment, that the Colossian believers and they have obtained freedom from God’s justice and condemnation. Their rebellion against God is not held against them to the point that they receive what they deserve, God’s eternal punishment.

<sup>15</sup> ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως – Paul and Timothy say that Jesus is the very icon of God within the creation. In other words, he is God within the creation the same way that the image in a photograph is the same as the person whom the image represents. Therefore, while it is theologically impossible to see the transcendent Creator in His transcendence, because a person would have to become uncreated, it is possible to see the icon of God within the creation, Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, Jesus is the physical and created representation of the non-physical, transcendent, and uncreated God. cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4.

In addition, Paul and Timothy call Jesus the “firstborn of all creation,” indicating that he has the right as the Son of God to inherit whatever God would leave him as the inheritance of God, which the Bible describes as the whole creation itself. Therefore, Jesus owns the whole creation as its ruler within the creation.

<sup>16</sup> ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται – Paul and Timothy now provide the reason for why Jesus can be called the “firstborn of all creation,” who inherits it and receives it as his own possession. God made the cosmos because of the Messiah, so that he could rule over the entire cosmos and conquer all the evil within it once he qualified to do so through his life, death, and resurrection (cf. Hebrews). Thus, “in him,” i.e., in regard to Jesus as the icon of God on earth and firstborn of all creation, God has made the creation.

Sometimes Paul uses τὰ πάντα to refer to the complete aggregate of authentic believers in God. cf. Ephesians 4:4-10, “He who ‘descends’ is also he who ‘ascends’ far above all of the heavens, in order that he fill out the all.” But because Paul includes thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities in this “all,” it refers to all things and especially other authorities who try to impose their worldview on other people. All these things have been created for the purpose of Jesus’ demonstrating his greater authority and understanding of truth.

cf. Ephesians 6:10-12 where Paul lists some of these things as that which comprise the evil within the present realm. Similarly, here Paul and Timothy are saying that these things were created for the purpose of the Messiah’s demonstrating his power and authority over them. Any other human being who attempts to exercise authority over others with the intent to declare or encourage to believe what is “true” contrary to the biblical message about how to understand reality and live morally within it will find that Jesus is greater in authority than he is and will ultimately crush him because of his rebellion against God.

<sup>17</sup> καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν – Paul and Timothy say that Jesus, the Messiah, has a preeminent position in terms of his value in comparison to everything else that exists within the creation. Thus, Jesus is the focal point of all that God is doing with His creation. Nothing exists apart from its relationship to the Messiah and God’s purposes of eventually making him the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God after being every authentic believer’s advocate and intercessor at the final judgment.

<sup>18</sup> καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὅς ἐστιν ἡ ἀρχὴ πρωτότοκος ὅτι ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων – Here it is appropriate to change the interpretation of πᾶσιν from all things to all those in the Messiah by virtue of their authentic faith during human history. Consequently, Jesus heads up the entire collection of those who authentically believe that he is God’s anointed king and final high-priest—as well as previous authentic believers in OT times such as Abraham, et al. It is as though they comprise his “body,” and he comprises the “head” and primary part of this “body.” They derive their purpose in life and manner of living from him. In this and other contexts where Paul and his co-writers have mentioned the ideas of headship and body to refer to Jesus and his followers, Paul means that Jesus is the ultimate teacher of truth through his apostles who were given the responsibility by God to convey this truth with the same authority and accuracy as Jesus. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5. Thus, Jesus also should be seen as at the beginning of a long line of human beings who will inhabit the eternal Kingdom of God after they have died similarly to Jesus. While all believers stand in line after Jesus, he is the first one who has been raised by God from the dead, in the sense that he takes precedence over all other human beings who will

obtain citizenship in the Kingdom of God. It really is he who “owns” this kingdom as his inheritance and allows the rest of us to live in it and to occupy a portion of it for his sake.

<sup>19</sup> ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα ἵκατοικῆσαι – Paul and Timothy now give a theological reason for why Jesus has the highest position of status and value within the eternal Kingdom of God. It is because either 1) the transcendent Creator chose to manifest Himself in Jesus as a human being, to incorporate Himself into the story of creation through the role of the Son of God and the Messiah, the Davidic king, which obviously makes Jesus vastly different from any previous Son of God and king of Israel, including David, or 2) God chose to have all that people ought to know, acknowledge, and understand about the nature of reality that leads to their reaching their existential goal as human beings to exist as this person, Jesus of Nazareth. By virtue of the way that Paul uses τὸ πλήρωμα and the verb form in Colossians 1:9 (πληρωθῆτε), Colossians 2:9,10 (ἔστε...πεπληρωμένοι), and Colossians 4:12 (πεπληρωμένοι, thinking that the MT has the correct word), he is referring to the second option above. A morally depraved human being obtains “fullness” by virtue of discovering and embracing the ideas involving the Jewish Messiah, because he is the fullness of knowledge in the sense that everything in the created reality makes sense in the light of who he is. Thus, the believer who obtains the fullness of this fullness of knowledge places himself on the road to the proper existential goal that God has designed into the created reality—eternal mercy and life from God in the Kingdom of God of the next, eternal realm. Our earthly goal is to know all that is possible about Jesus the Messiah (Colossians 4:12) so that we may reach our eternal goal of life in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, there are actually a total of four options for the word “fullness”; 1) that which fully reveals God to the extent that a created, human being can do so, 2) that in the creation which gives meaning and purpose to everything else, including God, when it is known and understood, 3) the entire group of believers throughout history who obtain eternal life through Jesus (cf. Ephesians), and 4) full, ontological deity. The fourth option is the most common interpretation in line with the traditional view of the trinity and Jesus’ being the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person. The first option is similar to the fourth. But the second option, as stated above, is the most coherent in Colossians in the light of how both “fullness” and “filled” are being used by Paul in this context. Jesus “takes preeminence among everyone” (1:18) because everything which a sinful human being really needs to know for the sake of his living out his human existence in the best possible manner is found in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 2:2,3).

This is not exactly the same as Paul’s use of fullness in Ephesians (options #3) where it is the entire group of people, both Jews and Gentiles, who make up the “chosen people of God” in regard to the eternal kingdom. This group is “in the Messiah” as opposed to the Jews’ thinking that they must be “in Moses” through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. So, fullness of knowledge and understanding by knowing all one can know about Jesus (here in Colossians) vs. fullness of the entire group of people chosen by God for eternal life (in Ephesians).

<sup>20</sup> καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς ἑαυτὸν εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ ἵδι’ αὐτοῦ) εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – Paul has said in Romans 1 that all human beings are hostile towards God and fundamentally rebels against Him, without any ability of their own to stop rebelling and escape God’s justice and punishment which they deserve. However, God has provided Jesus as the very instrument of His granting people mercy, but Jesus had to qualify for this role by willingly dying on a cross. Thus Jesus can take people who were wholly at war with God during their existences on earth and move God to grant them peace and mercy because God had changed them inwardly during the course of their lives to embrace the truth of the biblical message and to look forward to His eternal mercy. This will involve those who have already died (“in the heavens”) or who are still alive when Jesus returns (“on the earth”).

<sup>21</sup> Καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς – Again, as stated by Paul in Romans 1, these Colossian Christians began their lives as abject rebels against God and fundamentally evil in every aspect of their humanity, even if they looked or did that which appeared to be “good.” Indeed, they were intellectually and spiritual enemies of God and considered Him their enemy, too.

<sup>22</sup> νυνὶ δὲ ἵκατοκλήλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου ἵ παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ – By virtue of the Colossians’ positive response to the apostolic message that Epaphras presented to them, it can be said that God has destined them to receive the eternally beneficial effect of Jesus’ death, his advocating for them at the final judgment so that they will live eternal lives as those who were hostile enemies of God but now have become friends of God whose relationship has been mended and put right. Thus, God will be able to present the Colossian Christians to Himself as those who qualify for eternal mercy at the final judgment by virtue of His having set them apart as those who have persevered in their belief in the midst of and through the hardships of the present realm. This means, too, that they will be radically different at the judgment from those who rebel against God during their entire lives, thus being acceptable to God, so that no one can bring a charge against them and prevent God from banishing them from His presence by destroying them when He executes His justice on those who have not been inwardly changed by the work of His Spirit.

<sup>23</sup> εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἐδραῖοι ὅκαὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὐ ἠκούσατε, τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ ἵ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, οὐ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἵ διάκονος – Paul and Timothy are saying that it will be necessary for the Colossians, and, by implication, any Christian, to believe enduringly through all the the difficult circumstances of life that could possibly derail a morally depraved human being’s belief. They also indicate that this kind of endurance happens to and for only people who go through a genuine, theological process of God’s changing them, thus committing Himself to causing them by His own transcendent power



to continue to expect with confidence the promise of the great ideas of the apostolic message with which they have been presented and to which they have listened with the result that they have embraced these ideas as true.

Paul and Timothy also identify these ideas as having been presented within the creation as far as God has caused it to do so. Paul singles himself out as someone who serves this message by talking about wherever he goes with the apostolic authority that Jesus specifically gave him on behalf of the Gentiles.

<sup>24</sup> Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ἵπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐκκλησία – Paul continues with the first person singular in order to emphasize his own suffering for the sake to the biblical message because of his unique role as the apostle to the Gentiles.

While the statement in this verse in other translations may sound as though Paul thinks that Jesus' death on the cross lacked all that was necessary to rescue people from God's justice, i.e., that it was deficient and lacking in complete effect for saving sinners, he does not mean this. He cannot mean it, because he so carefully and completely explains in Hebrews that Jesus did qualify to be our high priest at the judgment by virtue of the suffering that he experienced. Therefore, here Paul means that God's plan was not for the Messiah only to suffer in the present realm, but for his followers to do so also, especially his authoritative spokesmen, the apostles. Even Jesus spoke of what Paul was going to have to endure in order to fulfill his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles, when he said to Ananias in Damascus, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15,16). Therefore, the "deficiencies" (τὰ ὑστερήματα) are not actually shortcomings or flaws on Jesus' part when he suffered, but simply not the only suffering which God has planned within history to demonstrate the moral depravity of mankind. Included in this didactic suffering is that of the Paul, and probably the other apostles as well, as they all encounter a world which is fundamentally hostile to the truth of the biblical message (cf. 1:21). Consequently, Paul, having been falsely accused in Jerusalem, imprisoned in Caesarea Maritima for two years, and now imprisoned in Rome is having to go through some rather extreme suffering on behalf of the rest of the people who are believers in Jesus as the Messiah, as he continues to carry out his responsibility as their authoritative spokesman for Jesus the Messiah. In this way, he is acting for the "body" so to speak of Jesus, who is its head and chief spokesman of the biblical truth. As a result, every Christian to some extent fills up the shortage of the suffering of the Messiah by experiencing the hostility of the world and its effects that bring suffering to true believers. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:10, "as we pray earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply the shortage (τὰ ὑστερήματα) in your belief"—by providing the Thessalonian Christians with more teaching about the truth of the gospel, resulting in the growth of their knowledge and understanding.

<sup>25</sup> ἧς ἐγεγόνην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul was assigned by God the responsibility to serve people who would become followers of Jesus as the Messiah. This, in turn, has been of great benefit to the people in Ephesus according to God's sovereign plan and orchestrating history, so that Paul set his mind to go to Ephesus and proclaim the apostolic message to them. This has all been part of the story that God is writing as the transcendent Creator. Thus, Paul's activities are part of the process of God's completing the story, whose end is to gather a group of people who will live eternally with Jesus as their king in the Kingdom of God.

<sup>26</sup> τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν – νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ – A mystery is information that has not been completely revealed up to this point. It is something which is understandable, but not yet clear. As a result, one's understanding of it becomes full or filled out once it is made clear. The information of which Paul is speaking is regarding the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. God has now made it clear who, what, how, and why the Messiah is the central element of the story of His creation, which includes his having to suffer in order to qualify to be our King and High Priest. Thus, the mystery is the *Jewish* Messiah Jesus as the King and Priest of both Jews and Gentiles.

The Old Testament provided good and accurate information about the Messiah, his suffering, and his goal of becoming both king and priest for Jews and Gentiles. However, deriving a completely clear picture of the Messiah from the Old Testament is not a simple and straightforward task. As a result, we can understand why the Jews, even after studying the Old Testament, were still a little hazy on who and what the Messiah would be. Then, when Jesus arrived on the scene in Israel, performed miracles, and ultimately suffered death on a cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the "mystery" was cleared up, and God made available to people to learn all the fullness of knowledge of the Messiah which He intended to communicate.

Consequently, those whom God has made different from the rest of the world *among both the Jewish ethnic group and all the Gentile ethnic groups* by changing them inwardly so that they no longer fundamentally rebel against God have had this message proclaimed to them, and they are now owned by God as His people, i.e., as those who understand clearly through the gospel the "mystery" of the Messiah—"Christ in you [whether Jew or Gentile, and there in Colossae mainly Gentiles], the hope of glory."

<sup>27</sup> οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι τί τὸ πλοῦτος ἡ δόξα τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὃ ἐστὶν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης – Paul said in v. 25 that he became a servant of the people who become believers in the Messiah, but Paul is the apostle specifically to the Gentiles. Therefore, he mentions them in this verse as those to whom has revealed the truth about the Messiah through his fulfilling his responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Thus, God's purposes have been to involve not only Abraham's descendants through Isaac, the Jews, but also all other kinds of people in the world, the Gentiles. Paul describes the content of the message of Jesus as the Messiah that has now become clear through his first appearance as being extremely valuable, because the outcome for people who embrace this message is their own being made magnificent by God's changing them into morally perfect people in the eternal Kingdom of God. It is this that the Colossian Christians can confidently and eagerly expect, while they hold Jesus the Messiah in their thoughts and retain the ideas that they have learned about him within themselves.

<sup>28</sup> ὃν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νοουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες ὅτι πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ – Paul categorically states that it is Jesus about whom he speaks, everywhere he goes, and he also encourages each of his listeners with the true wisdom that is contained in the ideas about Jesus. Paul also says that his purpose in doing so is to be able to bring before God people who have completed the only proper and existential goal for human beings, that of believing in and following Jesus as the Messiah throughout their entire lives from the moment they become believers to the moment of either their death or Jesus' return, whichever occurs first. Thus, they do this "in the Messiah," i.e., within the context of being his followers and associated with him.

<sup>29</sup> εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει – Paul describes his own existence as a diligent laborer, working hard and struggling against all opposition to the truth of God that comes from rebellious human beings. Yet, his struggle is not on the basis of his own innate, human power. He knows that, because God has chosen him and assigned him the responsibility to be the apostle to the Gentiles, that God is committed to working faithfully and powerfully within him to bring about the actions that Paul engages in to fulfill this responsibility.

<sup>30</sup> Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναί ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἵνα καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί – Looking at Paul's letters to communities of Christians to whom he had personally presented the apostolic message of Jesus the Messiah, it is easy to conclude that his greatest desire was for these people to continue in their belief in order to affirm his own calling by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Indeed, he struggled to write what would ultimately be the most helpful to these communities so that they would endure various problematic and painful situations with genuine belief. Now, it is possible to imagine how much more Paul was struggling emotionally, spiritually, and as he wrote with respect to the perseverance of the belief of Christians whom he has never met before.

<sup>31</sup> ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν Ἰσχυροὶ ἐν ἀγάπῃ ὡς καὶ εἰς ἅπαντες τοὺς πληροφῶντας τῆς συνέσεως, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ – Thus, Paul's intent as he worked hard to write this letter and the one to the Laodiceans (cf. 4:16) is that these fairly new Christians in Colossae, along with new Christians anywhere who have become such through the efforts of people other than himself, not only continue in their belief because they have grasped the eternal significance of the ideas that they have believed, but also pursue growing in their understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, because true human wisdom consists in knowing as much as possible about him. In other words, there is nothing more valuable to understand than what God is up to with the Jewish Messiah in this creation, which God has slowly but surely been revealing down through history by means of the creation, the Jews, and the OT scriptures, and has now become just that much more explicit by virtue of the Messiah's actual appearance on earth as Jesus of Nazareth.

<sup>32</sup> ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ ἡ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι – Thus, Paul can say that, if we liken wisdom and knowledge to the greatest treasure for which human beings would hunt, then Jesus the Messiah is the sole repository of this treasure. It simply does not exist anywhere else, but within the context of what God is doing with the Jewish Messiah.

<sup>33</sup> Τοῦτο λέγω, ἵνα ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζηται ἐν πιθανολογίᾳ – Paul's purpose in hammering home the point about the Messiah's being the object of learning in order to gain genuine wisdom and knowledge is so that they Colossian Christians are not sidetracked by any of the myriad of erroneous systems of thought wandering around the Roman Empire, including the Judaism of his day that focused so intently on the Mosaic Covenant and earning God's blessings through purportedly obeying it.

<sup>34</sup> εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι, χαίρων καὶ βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν τάξιν καὶ τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν – Paul implies that there will be people who in the Colossians' very presence who will try to be very influential with respect to who they approach God, and he would like to be one of these. However, because he is under house arrest in Rome and cannot leave, he must communicate to them via this letter, and he experiences a certain level of joy in knowing that they are focused on the Messiah as their repository of knowledge and wisdom, and not on the Mosaic Covenant. Indeed, he has heard from Epaphras that they are relatively steadfast and stable in this belief.

<sup>35</sup> Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε – Thus, Paul encourages these Christians to continue to live out their existences on earth on the same basis as their experience of originally hearing from Epaphras about the Messiah, who is Jesus and their king.

<sup>36</sup> ἔρριζομένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ βεβαιούμενοι ἵνα ἡ πίστις καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε, περισσεύοντες ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ – Like trees sitting on the top of the ground with their roots extending underground in order to keep them standing up and unmovable by any forces that would impinge upon them, Paul's desire is for these Colossian Christians to stand in life with their intellectual roots extending into the knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah in line with what

Epaphras had originally said to them, which Paul implies was the correct and authoritative apostolic message. These solidly biblical intellectual ideas will keep them well situated in life, regardless of what they encounter.

<sup>37</sup> βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν – Paul wants his readers to remain grateful, indeed so grateful that their gratitude never ceases, as they face into the opposition to the focal point of God’s purpose as the Messiah, and people try to convince them that something else besides the Messiah is more worthy of their intellectual attention. Paul identifies these other systems of thought as mere “human” wisdom, not that which comes from God, and “worthless deception,” not as valuable understanding. He also says that these human systems are nevertheless right in line with what this cosmos is all about, i.e., human beings’ rebelling against God at the core of their beings. This is quite an accusation when he is talking about Judaism and the Jews’ adherence to their traditions that they have purportedly derived from the Old Testament of the Bible, yet from an erroneous perspective. Consequently, Paul is identifying Judaism as just as much an idolatry as paganism.

Most likely these “basic principles associated with systemism” (τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) are the same which Paul identifies in Galatians 4:3ff. as human thinking which believes that God’s blessings can be earned through the performance of religious actions and ceremonies, even if the adherents of these principles firmly and openly assert that they believe in the grace of God and the Messiah’s death as the means to gain God’s mercy and eternal life.

<sup>38</sup> ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς – cf. 1:19. Instead, the fullness of truth and the correct way to understand the nature of reality is with the Messiah as the focal point of one’s attention and pursuit of knowledge. The “traditional teachings of men” (2:8) are nothing in comparison to being taught about the Messiah. As a sinner contemplates the very person of the Messiah, i.e., his bodily appearance in Israel, then he also contemplates the very truth of God and what He is up to within the created reality. In this way, the “the fullness [of truth] from God dwells [metaphorically] in him.”

<sup>39</sup> καὶ ἐστὶ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας – Jesus is the top teacher and determiner on earth of truth. Every teaching authority must submit to his instruction and perspective on reality in order to be correct. Thus, the Colossian Christians find their intellectual, spiritual, and moral fullness in being taught by Jesus that is commensurate with their changed inwardness, as Paul will go on to say.

<sup>40</sup> Ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετιμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος ἧς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul dives right into the Jewish error which the Colossians are going to have to face, because Jews have been trying to undermine the gospel ever since Peter first presented it to Cornelius in Acts 9. The “removal of the body of the flesh” is metaphorical for the repudiation of one’s moral depravity and using it either to live completely apart from God or to gain His favor and blessing through religious and moral performance. This all involves a changed heart by the Spirit, resulting in a person’s no longer being enslaved to moral depravity and rebellion against God, but instead acquiring true belief and understanding in the midst of his depravity.

Thus, Paul is saying that the Gentile Colossian Christians have undergone a divine and internal circumcision, while at the same time they are not obligated at all to follow the Mosaic Covenants prescription of outward, physical circumcision. Thus, they have received from God an inward circumcision associated with the Messiah, because it leads to belief in the Messiah only for obtaining God’s mercy, not to pursuing religious performance to make oneself deserving of God’s mercy.

<sup>41</sup> συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ ἑσθρατισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγήρητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγειραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν – As with the statement in the next verse 2:13), “He made you alive,” Paul is saying that the Colossian Christians have experienced a kind of resurrection whereby they are now headed towards eternal life.

<sup>42</sup> καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ὅ[ἐν] τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, συνεζωοποίησεν ἡμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ, χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα – Notice Paul goes on to reference legal issues and being a sinner, i.e., being condemned by God, not inward subjective issues. Thus, “dead” more likely refers to eternal condemnation and destruction, not to their inwardness that was changed when they were “born again.” Similar to Ephesians 2:1ff., Paul is saying that the Colossian believers are morally depraved human beings, deserving of God’s eternal condemnation, death, and destruction. Yet, God has inwardly changed them which results in their being destined for eternal life. This process by God requires and, indeed, includes His not punishing them for their rebellion against Him and acts of evil.”

Another way to say this is, “Even though you were as headed towards eternal death, because you deserved destruction from God...”

Another way to say the second part of this is, “He has made you people who are headed towards eternal life with him...”

<sup>43</sup> ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον ὅ τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπενατίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ – Paul switches to the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural and includes himself to say that Jesus officially provided a means for God’s forgiveness for us at the judgment by virtue of his death. Thus, any record of legal debts that someone, even God, could bring to bear on the decision at the judgment with respect to us Jesus effectively destroyed, so that now we can enjoy his advocacy and appealing to God the Father for mercy on our behalf, an appeal that will work and result in life in the eternal Kingdom of God for us. This was like taking a list of all with which God could charge us and nailing it to Jesus’ actual cross, as if to say that with his death dies the list and its condemnatory effect on us.

<sup>44</sup> ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἵ ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν ἑαυτῷ – Through his death and resurrection, a bold public display of his obedience to God, Jesus strips any religious leader, especially Jewish leader, who would suggest that God’s forgiveness and mercy come through some other means than him, of their authority. These are the same authorities to whom anyone would appeal who is attempting to “deceive [the Colossians] with a fallacious argument” (2:4). Thus, these authorities easily represent all leaders who are satanic and diabolical and who stand in opposition to God with their hostility to His truth. This element of human opposition includes, obviously, the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ and Paul’s day who were promoting what amounted to idolatry through a misunderstanding of the Mosaic Covenant, when they were teaching that it is only through obedience to it that God’s mercy is earned and obtained. Paul likens Jesus’ handling of these religious rulers to the Roman army’s handling of the prisoners from conquered lands. As the latter are led through the streets of Rome in demonstration of their subjugation to Roman authority, Jesus leads the former through the streets of truth in demonstration of their subjugation and deference to him, even if they will neither now nor ever bow to him in their hearts. All this demonstrates the superiority of Jesus as a leader of truth in comparison to all other leaders.

<sup>45</sup> Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς ἱκρινέτω ἐν βρώσει ἢ καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων – Paul now lists specific elements of “human wisdom” and “worthless deception” that contemporary rulers might demand that the Colossian Christians follow in order to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings while also believing in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Galatians where Paul condemns these same kind of religious people). These definitely sound very Jewish, i.e., adherence to the dietary laws of the Mosaic Covenant, as well as participating in the three annual festivals that God prescribed and that required that the Jews travel to Jerusalem each time. “New moon” refers to the first day of each lunar month, because the Jews used a lunar and not a solar calendar. In Numbers 10:10, God commanded them to blow the festival trumpets over their offerings and sacrifices to Him on the first day of each lunar month. Doing no work on the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20:8).

Thus, Paul is addressing the common issue of his day that appears in all his letters, the Jews’ requiring that Gentiles follow the Mosaic Covenant and be as Jewish in their appearance as they are while they also believe in the Jewish Messiah (cf. Romans, Galatians, Philippians 3, etc.).

<sup>46</sup> ἃ ἔστιν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul states that the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant and the Covenant *per se* are less than substantive in comparison to the Messiah (and the New Covenant, by implication).

<sup>47</sup> μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων ὅτι ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ θρησκευία τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεῦον, εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ – The Jewish leaders rightly considered the Hebrew scriptures and specifically the Mosaic Covenant to be divinely provided and authoritative. However, they failed to interpret them correctly by virtue of focusing on the details of individual statements as opposed to seeing the whole picture that God was painting about His eternal plans and purposes that include the Gentiles as followers of the Jewish Messiah, who themselves are not obligated to the Mosaic Covenant. Paul is saying that, by focusing on the texts without considering the concept of grace, these Jewish leaders themselves do not qualify for God’s mercy and eternal life, and the Colossians would, in a sense, disqualify themselves also if they were to abandon the biblical focal point, the Messiah. In addition, any Jewish leader who claims that his perspective on God is the correct one first asserts that his knowledge comes from a special and trustworthy source that gives him a level of intellectual status within the Jewish community whereby people should believe what he says to be true. Perhaps the religious leader is referring to the one who has taught him, e.g., Gamaliel, one of the leading rabbis of Paul’s day, and who, indeed, taught Paul. It would be like a Christian teacher’s using the seminary that he attended, or the worldwide Christian leaders who back him up in his theology as the reason why people should follow him and believe as true what he says about the Bible. However, as Paul says, this kind of appeal to authority to validate one’s status within either the Jewish or Christian community is illegitimate and comes from pride, vanity, and a desire to rebel against God rather than from humility and a desire to submit to God.

<sup>48</sup> καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλὴν ἵ, ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἀφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον αὐξῆσει τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ θεοῦ – The joints and ligaments that hold together the body of the Messiah, the individual believers, is the truth of the biblical message with the Messiah at the center of this message. Just as believers come together on the basis of this truth (cf. 2:2), they also remain together on the basis of it. Paul is saying that, regardless of how much this error filled Jewish leader claims that he believes in Jesus as the Messiah, he has actually abandoned Jesus, so that his so-called leadership does not come from God as the continued focus on the true Jesus within the Christian community does come from God. Instead, his knowledge and leadership comes from his fleshly and rebellious mind.

<sup>49</sup> Εἰ ἵ ἀπεθάνατε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε – Here τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου refer specifically to the Mosaic Covenant, and Paul asks a rhetorical question based upon the metaphor of joining Jesus on his cross, because a person who understands and acknowledges the complete significance of Jesus’ death also recognizes that he, the morally depraved human being for whom Jesus died, is not only an abject rebel against God, but also a completely incapable human being when it comes to gaining God’s acceptance, mercy, and eternal life. Thus, the person realizes that the general principles of human religion, including that of Judaism that takes the specific part of the biblical message called the Mosaic Covenant and turns it into a human and not divine religion, are fundamentally characteristic of that which is evil instead of that which is good. Therefore, the true believer

wholeheartedly repudiates not only his own moral depravity, but any system of religion that is based on depravity and not on God's grace. Paul asks his Colossian readers if it makes sense to repudiate moral depravity on the basis of Jesus' death and then approach God on the basis of moral depravity. Obviously not.

<sup>50</sup> μή ἄψη μηδὲ γέυση μηδὲ θίγης – Here, Paul uses the very words that he envisions the Jewish leaders' using who want to impose the dietary and separation (keeping themselves separate from people who are not following the Mosaic Covenant and from objects that are outside of the Covenant and considered profane by it) laws.

<sup>51</sup> ἃ ἔστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει, κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων – Paul describes the stuff of the Mosaic Covenant as strictly for the present, temporary realm and, therefore, fundamentally unhelpful for obtaining eternal life in comparison to the stuff of the Messiah. He is implying that the only “thing” within the present creation that helps human beings with respect to their relationship with God is not external, but instead internal. It is their belief along with their choices to act on the basis of the biblical message, especially their choice to love one another within the community of believers. Everything else will disappear in the fire of the judgment of God at the end of the present realm.

Paul is also claiming that the imperatives that the Jewish leaders use, such as, “Do not eat this unclean food,” are mere commandments of men and not God, even if the words seem to match those of the Mosaic Covenant. This is because the presuppositions underlying them have their source in man's moral depravity/rebellion against God and not in the goodness of God. Such comments by Paul help us realize that people, including and perhaps most especially leaders, can be saying all the apparent right things in Christian churches and be completely hostile to God and Jesus, i.e., the biblical God and Jesus.

<sup>52</sup> ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθησκίᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη ἢ [καὶ] ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός – Paul admits that a human, religious system that uses the Bible as its basis actually contains an element of truth and wisdom, which is what makes it so insidious, cunning, and oftentimes difficult to discern as error. because no human effort, religious or otherwise, i.e., even moral, can solve the problem of man's moral depravity and consequent eternal condemnation and disapproval by God. But, obviously a lot of people are fooled by the outward religious piety of these false Christians, and Paul wants his Colossian readers to keep their guard up so that they are not taken in by them. These very same religious leaders appear to be promoting that which is good and right, even biblically, but, instead, they are advocating evil, because they themselves are ruled by their moral depravity and not by a changed heart and authentic belief.

<sup>53</sup> Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε, οὐ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος – Rather than focusing on the earthly and temporary Mosaic Covenant, Paul exhorts these Gentile Colossian Christians to look towards eternity for their understanding and motivation to obey God. If they have been raised with the Messiah, i.e., if they have repudiated their moral depravity (died with the Messiah), then they should pay attention to God's promise of mercy, eternal life, and moral perfection of which He has made them aware through the inner working of His grace. The latter constitutes being raised with the Messiah, who metaphorically sits at the transcendent God's right hand and rules over the entire creation from this position. In other words, whoever “sits at God's right hand” also is the highest authority within the creation and rules over it, just under the authority of God's Himself, who is outside of the creation and occupies the highest position of authority.

<sup>54</sup> τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – It is not that Paul is saying that everything on earth is evil, but that caring more about the temporal than the eternal, except for caring about one's belief and love for others in the present realm, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the nature of reality and the biblical truth. Thus, to the extent that Christians communicate to the rest of humanity that they are establishing themselves in the world and carving out a place for themselves within it, they distort and miscommunicate the biblical message.

<sup>55</sup> ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ – Now Paul refers to the Colossian Christians having gone through a sort of death by facing into their moral depravity and fundamentally desiring and choosing to be different kind of people, especially when God produces eternity for them and changes them into morally perfect people, after first granting them mercy and forgiveness. In addition, just as the Messiah cannot physically be seen by all the people in the world, giving them a kind of excuse to ignore him, these Colossian Christians' with all that their belief means with respect to the future and their eternal destiny is invisible to the world, too. Thus, they have died to the world, this earth, and this realm, not that they care nothing about it. But it is not their focus. It is not their goal to save it and solve its problems, because they know that not even God is going to do so. Things will only get worse, and God will eventually destroy this earth and the present realm. Consequently, it makes no sense for Christians to invest themselves heavily in the efforts of mankind to ensure that the world improves and even to save the world from all its problems, because these efforts will always ultimately fail.

<sup>56</sup> ὅταν ὁ Χριστός φανερωθῇ, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὡς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ – Nevertheless, Paul says that when God sends the Messiah back to earth to complete his task of gathering living believers and destroying his enemies, then what it means for the Colossians to be followers of the Messiah will finally become most obvious, too. No one, except God in His mind, can actually see what the Colossian readers' Christianity is all about, both now and in the future. But, eventually, it will become clear and visible to everyone, with the result being so marvelous that they will share in the spectacle of the glory of the Messiah.

<sup>57</sup> Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη ἢ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πορνείαν ἀκαθαρσίαν πάθος ἐπιθυμίαν ὀκακὴν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ἧτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία – This segue into these issues of mainly sexual immorality demonstrates Paul's close

association of them in his mind with Judaistic legalism, which he has just been discussing. Both legalism and abject sexual immorality originate within man's moral depravity and rebellion against God. In other words, Judaistic legalism is on the same par with pagan idolatry which promoted unbridled sexual immorality. But they both will incur God's anger, justice, and condemnation. Thus, repudiating one's more depravity leads to repudiating immoral inwardness and actions that coincide with it, especially in this context sexual immorality which was so prevalent in the culture(s) of the Roman Empire.

Paul also reveals by his thoughts here that outward worship of pagan gods is no different in its evil quality as inward moral depravity that is accompanied by other immoral actions. Both constitute the worship of idols, i.e., the things of the present realm, in contrast to the worship of the one true God. Hence, any rejection of the biblical God and adherence to another view of reality is idolatry, whether or not small figurines in temples are involved.

"Members on earth" (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), here, refers to the corporal package in which the Colossian Christians reside that is fundamentally hostile towards God and the biblical message.

<sup>58</sup> δι' ἧς ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ [ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας] – Paul states that man's moral depravity will produce at some time in the future a response of anger, justice, and eternal condemnation from God. And it will be because people have chosen to be the children of the spirit of the world that is committed to disobeying God and violating His moral commandments.

<sup>59</sup> ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιπατήσατέ ποτε, ὅτε ἐζήτε ἐν τούτοις – Paul also reminds his Colossian readers that, prior to their embracing the biblical message of Jesus as the Messiah, they wholeheartedly joined their unbelieving friends and fellow Colossians in pursuing immorality. This was their natural and accepted lifestyle.

<sup>60</sup> νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα, ὀργὴν, θυμὸν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν – Paul further delineates exactly what comprises immorality. He lists first anger and then wrath, both probably coming from pride and selfishness when people do not get their own way. He then lists malice and slander, that people use when they want to get back at others whom they dislike and want to encourage mutual dislike of them in their society. Finally, Paul mentions abusive speech that comes out the Colossians' mouths, that was probably so common and accepted in the culture of the Roman Empire and that provided people with a means to beat up on people they hated without actually hitting them physically.

<sup>61</sup> μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ – Paul exhorts the Colossian Christians to speak the truth to each other, in contrast, certainly, to the way they use to behave, using lies and deception to further their own selfish causes and to promote their own ungodly agendas. But Paul says that this constitutes a former person who they were, which should be set aside, because, as he goes on to say, they each have become a new person.

<sup>62</sup> καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν – The new way of being for the Colossian Christians Paul calls "the new man," and says that they have gone through a divinely caused transition that is intended to motivate them to understand reality from a perspective completely different from that of pagan idolatry and that is absolutely true and right, i.e., the biblical perspective. Paul also identifies the biblical perspective as that which corresponds to all that Jesus as the Messiah was and now represents. He then ends this sentence by saying that this quality of knowledge is in accordance, or lines up with, God Himself, who is the One who created the "new man" that constitutes each individual Colossian Christian [or, who is the One who created the icon of God, Jesus the Messiah?].

<sup>63</sup> ὅπου οὐκ ἐν Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαίος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δούλος, ἢ ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός – The Mosaic Covenant rightly makes a distinction between the Jews as the chosen people of God and Gentiles, who basically are not, while cultural aspects of the Roman Empire make a distinction between other kinds of people, such as slaves and their masters. However, the Messiah, even though he is Jewish, makes no distinction like this among his followers, because God has basically created a new person who is a *bona fide* follower of Jesus the Jewish Messiah, who advocates for all his followers, regardless of their ethnicity. Thus, after someone is presented with the message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the only distinction that is valid for him to embrace is that of belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah vs. unbelief. Nevertheless, none of us can correctly assess the authenticity of authentic, inward belief in people. Only God can and should. Thus, a person's ethnic, social, religious, etc. condition is not important in establishing his identity and status before God. Only his association with the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, is.

<sup>64</sup> Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ χρηστότητα ταπεινοφροσύνην πραύτητα μακροθυμίαν – While the Jews are definitely the earthly chosen people of God, any Gentile who becomes an authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah becomes a chosen one similarly—but not for the purpose of following the Mosaic Covenant on earth. Instead, a Gentile is called by God to pursue moral obedience through love among especially his fellow believers that results in obtaining mercy and citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God.

The believer's love is founded on his being loved by God and chosen by Him, before He even began to create this present cosmos, to become a believer in the Jewish Messiah. His love also comes from being set apart inwardly by God through the "circumcising of the heart" work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Deut. 10:16; Romans 2:29), so that he is now fundamentally committed to treating other believers kindly, humbly, gently, and patiently, while he feels with them in the midst of any pain or suffering that they are enduring.

<sup>65</sup> ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη ἱμομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἰσχυρὸς ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς – Paul includes not holding against fellow believers any mistreatment that they have perpetrated towards one another, but, instead, granting them the same kind of mercy that God will give them at the judgment. It is a given. Christians are going to do wrong against other Christians, but God’s call to morality would have them not require that they pay, in the present life, for their wrongdoing—so hard when we are wired more for justice than for mercy, and when our pride gets involved and demands that we be avenged.

<sup>66</sup> ἐπὶ πάνσιν δὲ τοῦτοισι τὴν ἀγάπην, ἣ ἔστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς ἁγιότητος – Paul clearly identifies love as the catch-all for what he is exhorting the Colossians to do. By treating each other with love, the Colossian Christians will bind themselves together to reach their common goal of God’s eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God with Jesus as their advocate and king.

<sup>67</sup> καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ βραβεύετο ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ὀνόματι καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε – In the light of the work which the Messiah brings about, particularly reconciling sinful human beings to a wrathful God, thus changing their status before God from enemies to friends and bringing about peace between the two warring parties, God and man, Paul exhorts this peace that comes from the Messiah’s work dominate the hearts and minds of the Colossian believers. It is this for which they should be most grateful, because peace with God through Jesus results in escaping God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction. In addition, they were all called to be at peace with God together as a group who will remain together into eternity with all other genuine believers throughout history.

Another option is: if Paul were writing in Hebrew, he would have said the shalom of the Messiah, referring to the future eternal realm of the kind of life that will be whole and completely satisfying by virtue of its inhabitants being morally perfect. Paul would be saying that the knowledge and hope of this future existence, that will be the result of the Abrahamic promise, should be the basis for each and every decision that the Colossian Christians make in the present realm.

<sup>68</sup> Ὁ λόγος τοῦ ἰσχυροῦ ἐνοικεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς, ψαλμοῖς ἡμῶν ὡς πνευματικαῖς ἐν ὀσμῇ χάριτος ἄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ – The ideas about the biblical purpose of the Jewish Messiah, that Epaphras first presented to the Colossians and that constitute the apostolic message, are worth having dominate their minds, Paul says. And then, any manner that they want to use to convey these ideas to one another, even through singing to one another, is fine as long as the basis of such communication is genuine gratitude to God that is buzzing around inside of them because God has changed their inwardness and granting the certain expectation of eternal life and salvation of destruction. Thus, these ideas remain the basis for how they live their lives and treat one another, in contrast to the ideas of pagan idolatry that used to dominate their minds.

<sup>69</sup> καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι ἰσχυροῦ Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ – For these new Gentile believers, their pagan worldview dominated their thinking before they were confronted with the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, so that they could be said to have done everything in the name of pagan idolatry and rebellion against God. Now, Paul wants their biblical worldview to dominate their thinking. Thus, just as Jesus’ goal was to qualify to be the Son of God as King and High Priest through his death on the cross, so should Christians’ goal be to mimic him and act like him in regard to their moral behavior in order to acquire the same kind of eternal destiny that he has obtained of living forever in the Kingdom of God. This should include a gratitude towards God for what He has done in bringing them to an understanding of and belief in the biblical message with its accompanying promise of life in the eternal kingdom. In this way, Jesus as the Messiah, along with all that will happen in the present and future cosmos, will be the basis for whatever the Colossian Christians say and do publicly and privately.

<sup>70</sup> Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ – One has to wonder how radical this concept was women living in the Roman Empire in central Turkey. Assuming that women were not very well treated, Paul is encouraging those who are married to be led by their husbands down their path of life in being obedient to God and the Messiah. In addition and maybe primarily as in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is indicating that becoming subordinate to God does not release a person from being subordinate to those human beings where this was the relationship before his readers became Christians—whether wives being subordinate to husbands, or children to parents, or slaves to masters, while the ones in the superordinate position should act lovingly in the light of their being subordinate to Jesus.

<sup>71</sup> Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας ὡς καὶ ἡ ἐκκλησία – Likewise, assuming that men who were sinners were prone to abuse their superordinate position and mistreat their wives, Paul is exhorting these former pagan Gentile men, now turned believers in the Jewish Messiah, to behave towards their wives in the same way that the Messiah has behaved towards them—with love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, etc.

<sup>72</sup> Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ – Similarly, Paul’s exhortation to young people is to be willing to be instructed by their parents in how to live before God and as followers of the Jewish Messiah. Presumably, Christian parents are going to have more wisdom than their children.

<sup>73</sup> Οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἔρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμῶσιν – We can imagine that fathers as sinners were used to irritating their children freely and maliciously in the rather violent and immoral environment of the Roman Empire. Paul would have them act completely differently in the light of their new belief in the biblical God and being subordinate to God.

<sup>74</sup> Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε ἠκατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις, μὴ ἐν ῥοφθαλμοδουλίᾳ ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλότῃ καρδίᾳ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον – Even for survival purposes and perhaps simply to make life easier for themselves, slaves were probably used to serving their masters just to please them. Now, Paul would have those slaves who have converted to Christianity continue in a subordinate position and carry out their responsibilities in the light of their desire to please God and not man. This comes from having one main goal in life, to obtain eternal mercy from God and escape the condemnation of His judgment.

In addition, Paul wants them to be obedient to their masters in accordance with all that they understand of the biblical message, that calls people who are in positions of subordination and following others to comply with those who are in positions of superordination, which includes the relationship of slaves/masters respectively—in spite of the fact that this is basically an evil institution brought into existence by evil men. This will demonstrate that the slaves are willing to recognize their current lot in life within their own existential reality. In other words, Paul hardly expected that slavery would all of a sudden disappear within the Roman Empire while Christian slaves would continue to exist. Therefore, Paul is not condoning slavery. He is accepting it in a situation where he has no control over it.

<sup>75</sup> ὁ ἐὰν ποιῆτε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ ἵ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις – Paul continues with his exhortation to the Colossian slaves to make choices out of the inward change that has occurred within them, a change that should orient their motivation for their behavior towards God and not towards their fellow men.

<sup>76</sup> εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπὸ κυρίου ῥαπολήμνεσθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας ῥ. τῷ ῥ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ δουλεύετε – The benefit that a Christian slave hopes for out of life is eternal life and nothing else. This is because he serves ultimately the Jewish Messiah and not man. Thus, subordination to the man, Jesus the Messiah, should include subordination to any other human beings where it simply is what life calls for—regardless of whether the institution, i.e., marriage, family, slavery, business/corporation, a national country, etc., has been prescribed by God or man.

<sup>77</sup> ὁ γὰρ ἀδικῶν κομίζεται ὁ ἠδικησεν. καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσοποληψία – Paul's exhortation to these new, Gentile believers and to those who are specifically slaves in Roman households is to obey their earthly masters on the basis of the fact that people who do what is wrong, e.g., disobey their earthly masters, will incur the consequences of God's justice, which is eternal condemnation. And God does not play any favorites. Either a person genuinely and authentically pursues obedience to Him in the present realm, or he does not. The former will acquire God's mercy through their advocate Jesus. The latter will experience God's condemnation and eternal destruction.

<sup>78</sup> Οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον ἐν οὐρανῷ – Of course Paul is speaking to Christian men who have slaves in their household. He wants them to provide their slaves with an environment that would be far different from that of others who serve masters who are pagan idolaters, who have no good reason to treat them kindly, graciously, patiently, and with a sense that they both will appear before the same judge, the transcendent Creator, at the end of history, thus making them equal in status and accountability before God. Paul wants the Christian masters to do just exactly this, because it is only right as followers of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus to whom they all subordinate themselves.

<sup>79</sup> Τῇ προσευχῇ ῥπροσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ῥἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ – Paul always encourages people to pray. But the question is, for what? In the next verse, Paul encourages them to pray for Silvanus, Timothy, and him, that God will allow them to speak the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah to those in Rome, i.e., whomever would be willing to listen to him in Rome. Paul is under house arrest in Rome, waiting for an audience with Caesar Nero in regard to his arrest in Jerusalem and the Jews' accusing him of violating the temple laws.

Here, Paul must mean that he wants his readers to pray that God may grant them perseverance in their belief in order that they may qualify for eternal mercy at the judgment, because this is always the most important issue for him with respect to those to whom he writes his letters.

<sup>80</sup> προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν. ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου ῥ λαλήσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ ῥΧριστοῦ, δι' ῥδ καὶ δέδεμαι – see notes for 4:3

<sup>81</sup> ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι – Paul feels not only a sense of obligation to be the apostle to the Gentiles but also a sense of urgency. He basically can never get enough of fulfilling his responsibility as Jesus' authoritative spokesman to the Gentiles.

<sup>82</sup> Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἕξω τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι – Paul is saying that God's call to Christians is not only to love one another, but also to be gracious to non-believers, even as Jesus was.

“Buying up the season” = making the most of the time and opportunity to interact with unbelievers, having the perspective that this may be the last time that they have the opportunity to “hear” the gospel before they face the judgment of God

<sup>83</sup> ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἄλατι ἠρτυμένος, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι – In addition, Paul says that gracious conduct towards non-believers means being ready to provide whatever elements of truth (“salt”) to the conversation.

<sup>84</sup> Τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν Τύχικος ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ – Thus, Tychicus is the bearer of this letter. He is mentioned as Tychicus of Asia in Acts and as a traveling companion of Paul (Acts 20:4). Paul also mentions him in Ephesians as the bearer of that letter, so that he probably was carrying both at the same time from Rome to these two cities. Paul also mentions in 2 Timothy that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus, but this is probably later around A.D. 68 after his second arrest and imprisonment in Rome.



<sup>85</sup> ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ἵνα ἴνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέση τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν – Paul expects Tychicus to provide the Colossians with much more information about their situation in Rome than he is giving in this letter. He also expects him to encourage them even more than he is doing in his letter.

<sup>86</sup> σὺν Ὀνησίμῳ τῷ πιστῷ καὶ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ, ὅς ἐστιν ἐξ ὑμῶν πάντα ὑμῖν γνωρίσουσιν τὰ ὅδε – Onesimus is the slave mentioned in Philemon and is the one whom Paul is “returning” to Philemon. So this latter letter was probably written and carried at the same time as Colossians. We notice in what high regard to his understanding of the truth and ability to express it Paul holds Onesimus, even though he is a slave. Onesimus’ calling in life means nothing to Paul. Only whether or not he has a changed heart and understands the biblical message.

<sup>87</sup> Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου καὶ Μάρκος ὁ ἀνεψιὸς Βαρναβᾶ (περὶ οὗ ἐλάβετε ἐντολὰς, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δεξασθε αὐτόν) – It is interesting that Mark, Barnabas’ cousin, is back in Paul’s good graces after Paul would not allow him to accompany him on his second evangelistic excursion (cf. Acts 15:37-39).

Aristarchus, perhaps from Thessalonica, is mentioned with Tychicus in Acts 20:4 as a traveling companion of Paul.

<sup>88</sup> καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούδος, οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οἳ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, οἵτινες ἐγενήθησαν μοι παρηγορία – Not too many people have hung in there with Paul in his experience of being arrested in Jerusalem, incarcerated in Caesarea Maritima for two years, and then transported to Rome to be imprisoned until he can meet with Caesar Nero. If that is true of him, what about Christians in other times of history and other places?

<sup>89</sup> ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν, δούλος Ἰησοῦ [Χριστοῦ], πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, ἵνα ἵσταθῆτε τέλειοι καὶ ἵπεπληρορημένοι ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ – In chapter 1, verse 7 Paul says that Epaphras was the first person to present the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah to the Colossians.

Obviously, he is from Colossae, has reported to Paul regarding the Colossian Christians, and is going to remain with him in Rome while Tychicus and Onesimus carry this letter to them. We notice that Epaphras prays for the perseverance of the Colossians’ belief, so that they may stand at the judgment and qualify for eternal mercy by virtue of the fact that they did what God required of them in the present realm. While τέλειοι = “those who have reached their goal” could refer to the goal of eternal life, it seems better here to interpret here as reaching the goal of fully knowing and understanding the gospel and Jesus the Messiah in the light of the next part of the sentence, “have become completely filled with the whole desire of God,” i.e., God’s desire for what sinful human beings should know and how sinful human beings should live as disciples of Jesus the Messiah, thus qualifying them for their eternal goal (cf. 1:5).

<sup>90</sup> μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτῷ ὅτι ἔχει πολλὴν ἰσχύον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱεραπόλει – Epaphras is genuinely hoping that the Christians in Colossae and nearby Hierapolis will truly hold on to their belief and obtain entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

<sup>91</sup> ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Λουκᾶς ὁ ἱατρός ὁ ἀγαπητὸς καὶ Δημᾶς – Demas is listed here as basically being on the same page as Paul, but a few years later in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul speaks of him as having loved the present world and left Paul to go to Thessalonica. Right now though, here are two more people who have accompanied Paul to Rome and are with him in his prison circumstances.

<sup>92</sup> Ἀσπασασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν – Paul wants the Colossians to be encouraging and loving towards their fellow believers in the nearby city of Laodicea.

<sup>93</sup> καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ’ ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε – This indicates that three letters are going out by means of Tychicus and Onesimus—one to the Ephesians, one to the Colossians, and a third to the Laodiceans. We have the first two but not the third.

<sup>94</sup> καὶ εἶπατε Ἀρχίππῳ βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν ἣν παρέλαβες ἐν κυρίῳ, ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς – We have no idea why Paul feels this must be said, but more than likely it is because he has heard from Epaphras that Archippus is not doing what he ought to do.

<sup>95</sup> Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου. μνημονεύετε μου τῶν δεσμῶν. ἡ χάρις μεθ’ ὑμῶν – Finally, in typical fashion, Paul writes this last sentence instead of some secretary who wrote the rest of the letter while he dictated it. There is nothing he wants more than for God’s grace to be extended towards the Colossian Christians and to continue to be extended until they reach their existential goal of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.