

## Colossians 1:1-2 Godward Introductions

**Introduction:** This book contains 95 verses and just under 2,000 words. It will take you about 13 minutes to read the entire book, 15 if you read a little slower.

### 1) The background:

- a) Time:
  - i) Probably in the early 60's AD (Feb. 60 through late 61 or early 62).
  - ii) An earthquake struck the city about this same time.
- b) Locations:
  - i) From:
    - (1) Probably from a Roman prison. (Col. 4:3, 10, 18)
    - (2) Written along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon.
  - ii) To:
    - (1) The city of Colosse was in the region known as Phrygia.
      - (a) A predominantly Gentile region with some Jewish presence.
    - (2) To primarily Gentile believers in Colosse whom he had never met. (1:4, 8; 2:1, 13)
      - (a) There was a Jewish element as well. (3:11; 4:11)
    - (3) Colosse was a rather insignificant, declining city @ 100 miles east of Ephesus. It is considered the least important church to whom Paul wrote.
    - (4) Their spiritual leader was Epaphras. (1:7-8; 4:12-13)
      - (a) The church may have been in existence for @ 5 years.
- c) Occasion:
  - i) Epaphras has traveled about 1,000 miles to come to Paul to wisely seek guidance in leading the congregation in Colosse.
  - ii) Because they were facing a temptation to return to their pagan ways (2:8) and a temptation to embrace unorthodox, syncretistic teaching from one influential false teacher (2:4, 8, 16, 18-19), that diminished Christ (2:20), Paul seeks to provide a Christ-centered focus that should impact them in what they believe and how they live. In other words, **orthodoxy** (right belief) must lead to **orthopraxy** (right behavior).
- d) The unique vocabulary:
  - i) There are 34 words that appear nowhere else in the New Testament.
  - ii) There are 55 words that do not occur in any of Paul's other writings.
- e) The purpose:
  - i) To exalt the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

## 2) The authors—1:1

- a) <sup>1</sup> *Paul, an apostle* [ἀπόστολος] *of Christ Jesus by the will* [θέλημα] *of God,*
- Paul becomes a believer in @ 35 AD. He has been a believer for @ 25 years at this point.
  - i) **Humility:** Paul is an apostle by the will of God, not by volunteering or by self-effort.
  - ii) **Authority:** Paul is Jesus' authorized representative, to Whom he is accountable.
    - (1) Three uses of apostle in the NT: (Douglas Moo)
      - (a) **general** (Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25)
      - (b) **semitechnical** (Barnabas in Acts 14:14)
      - (c) **technical** (The Twelve and Paul).
- b) *and Timothy our brother,*
- i) He grew up @ 175 miles to the east of Colosse near Lystra.
    - (1) He was born to a Gentile father and a Jewish mother (named Eunice). (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5)
    - (2) He had a godly grandmother (named Lois). (2 Tim. 1:5)
  - ii) He has been ministering with Paul for @ 10 years.

## 3) The readers—1:2a

- a) Their description:
- i) Set apart: <sup>2</sup> *To the saints* [ἅγιοις]
  - ii) Loyal: *and faithful* [πιστός]
    - (1) In this letter, Paul specifically highlights three people as faithful: Epaphras (1:7), Tychicus (4:7), and Onesimus (4:9).
  - iii) Affectionate: *brothers*
    - (1) They share a common relationship before God the Father.
- b) Their spheres:
- i) Their **spiritual** sphere: *in Christ*
    - (1) This sphere of our life must dominate the geographic sphere.
  - ii) Their **geographic** sphere: *in Colossae*:
    - (1) This sphere of our life must be submissive to the spiritual sphere.

## 4) The blessing—1:2b

- a) Emphasis
- i) A desire for enablement, Greek: *Grace* [χάρις] *to you*
  - ii) A desire for wholeness, Hebrew: *and peace* [εἰρήνη]
- b) Source:
- i) *from God our Father.*
  - ii) Most Greek MSS read: *and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**5) Things we need to remember:**

- a) Your view of Jesus Christ impacts every other area of your life. If you are wrong on this doctrine, you will go astray.
- b) Your doctrine of Jesus Christ must be free from any and all additives and pollutants. It does not need to be mixed with anything else.
- c) Do we recognize our need for grace and peace?

Colossians 1:3-8  
Godward Gratitude and Maturity

**Introduction:** This begins the theological section that runs through 1:3-2:4. 1:3-8 are one sentence in the original language, but not always so in some English translations.

**1) Paul expresses Godward gratitude—1:3**

- a) Frequent, specific gratitude: <sup>3</sup> *We give thanks* [εὐχαριστέω] *to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- b) Frequent, general prayer: (while) *praying* [προσεύχομαι] *always for you,*
  - Some English versions attach “always” to “give thanks”
  - i) Paul was praying consistently for people whom he had never met.
  - ii) However, these are not the only people for whom he prayed.
- c) Paul recognizes that God is responsible for the transformation in the lives of the Colossian believers and the productivity of the gospel. (Curtis Vaughan)

**2) Paul expresses Godward gratitude based on what he heard—1:4**

- a) <sup>4</sup> *since we heard of ...*
  - i) Vertical faith: *your faith* in (the sphere of) *Christ Jesus*
    - (1) Two possible interpretations:
      - (a) Sees Christ as the object of their faith.
      - (b) Sees faith as operating in the sphere of Christ.
      - (c) Everyone has faith in something or someone. But faith is only as good as the object in which a person puts his or her trust.
    - ii) Horizontal love: *and the love* which you have for all the saints,
      - (1) The focus is not extensive—every single Christian everywhere—but intensive—every Christian that comes across their path. (Douglas Moo)
      - (2) This active concern for others is a natural result of genuine faith.
  - b) Since Epaphras arrived at the Roman prison and informed Paul and Timothy of the situation in Colosse.

**3) The basis for the faith and love of the Colossians—1:5-8**

- a) The future: <sup>5</sup> *because of* [διὰ] *the hope* laid up [ἀπόκειμαι] (stored up, reserved by God) *for you in heaven* (where God lives),
  - i) This is an **objective** fact (not a **subjective** feeling) which produces a confident expectation.
  - ii) Paul speaks of heaven more in Colossians than any other letter.

- iii) If they possess this hope, there is no need to listen to the empty promises of the false teacher.
- b) The past: *of which* (hope) *you previously heard in* (the sphere of) *the word of truth* [ἀλήθεια], *the gospel* <sup>6</sup> *which has come to you* (through Epaphras; the gospel was not native to Colosse),
  - i) **Globally, the gospel is productive:** *just as in all the* (inhabited) *world also it is* (the gospel) *constantly bearing fruit and multiplying*, (an echo of Gen. 1:28?)
  - ii) **Locally, their faith is genuine:** *just as it* (the gospel) *has been doing in you also since the day you heard and understood* [ἐπιγινώσκω] *the grace of God* (contained in the gospel) *in truth* [ἀλήθεια] (reality);
  - iii) **Personally, the messenger is accurate:** <sup>7</sup> *just as you learned* [μανθάνω] (were disciplined in) *it* (the gospel) *from Epaphras*,
    - (1) *our beloved fellow slave* (bondservant) [σύνδουλος],
    - (2) *who is a faithful servant* [διάκονος] *of Christ on our behalf*,
      - (a) Epaphras also served the congregations in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:12-13)
    - (3) <sup>8</sup> *who also informed* [δηλόω] *us of your love in* (the sphere of) *the Spirit*.
      - (a) Other probable references to the Spirit: 1:9; 3:16
      - (b) This highlights the Triunity of God. (1:3-4, 6-8)
      - (c) It was the recent news about the Colossian church that Epaphras had brought to Paul in prison in Rome—news of their faith and love (vv. 4, 8) as well as of the danger confronting them in the false teaching—that prompted the apostle to write the present letter. But it was Tychicus, not Epaphras, who delivered the letter to Colossae (4:7–9); Epaphras remained with Paul (4:12; Philemon 23). (Murray Harris)

#### 4) Things to remember:

- a) Note the triad of Christian maturity (faith, love, hope).
- b) Note the Triunity of God.
- c) Epaphras is NOT the source of the false teaching. He has communicated true Truth to them.
- d) The gospel we have heard is not unique to us; it has spread worldwide. The message of truth we have heard is not something strange.
- e) The good news (gospel) is truth, and the truth is good news. (John Kitchen)

Colossians 1:9-14  
Godward Prayer for Other Believers

**Introduction:** This section is one sentence in the original language.

**1) The importance, nature, and content of prayer—1:9**

- a) <sup>9</sup> *For this reason* (the gratitude in vv. 4-8) *also*,
  - i) *since the day we heard, we* (emphatic) *have not ceased ...*
  - ii) This refers to prayer that is regular and frequent rather than uninterrupted. (Murray Harris)
- b) Paul has not ceased do two things
  - i) Intercession: *to pray* [pres. mid. ptc. προσεύχομαι] *for* [ὑπέρ] *you*
  - ii) The nature of prayer: *and to ask* [pres. mid. ptc. αἰτέω]
- c) The content of Paul's prayer
  - i) *that* [ἵνα] *you may be filled* [aor. pass. sub. πληρώω] (by God) *with the full knowledge* [ἐπίγνωσις] (thorough knowledge) *of His will* [θέλημα]
    - Such knowledge is to pervade all of one's being—thoughts, affections, purposes, and plans. (Curtis Vaughan)
    - What does this focused knowledge look like?
      - (1) Generally: *in* [ἐν] (the sphere of) *all spiritual wisdom* [σοφία]
      - (2) Specifically: *and understanding* [σύνεσις],

**2) The purpose of genuine knowledge of God's will—1:10-12a**

- a) <sup>10</sup> *so that you may walk* [aor. act. inf. περιπατέω] *in a manner worthy of the Lord* (God the Son), *to* [εἰς] *please Him in all respects*,
  - i) Echoing a consistent biblical theme, Paul indicates that the Colossians' mental and attitudinal realignment is to produce behavioral transformation. (Douglas Moo)
- b) What does a worthy life that is pleasing to God look like?
  - i) Consistent good works: *bearing fruit* [pres. act. ptc. καρποφορέω] *in* [ἐν] *every good work*
    - (1) cf. Eph. 2:10; Titus 3:8
  - ii) Persistent growth: *and multiplying* [pres. pass. ptc. αὐξάνω] *in the full knowledge* [ἐπίγνωσις] (thorough knowledge) *of God*;
    - (1) God gives no awards for ignorance of His Word or His character.
  - iii) Glorious empowerment: <sup>11</sup> *being strengthened* [pres. pass. ptc. δυναμόω] *with* [ἐν] *all power* [δύναμις], *according to* [κατά] *His glorious might* [κράτος] (“the might of His glory”),
    - (1) This enablement produces what? *for* [εἰς] *the attaining of all steadfastness* [ὑπομονή] (no cowardice or despair with difficult

events) *and patience* [μακροθυμία] (that does not retaliate toward difficult people);

(2) God's glory is the external display of His internal character.

iv) Joyful gratitude: *joyously* <sup>12</sup> *giving thanks* [pres. act. ptc. εὐχαριστέω] *to the Father*,

(1) This is NOT the “thank you” of the small child made to say thank you by her parents. This is joyful, genuine gratitude.

### 3) What has the Father done for us?—1:12b-14

a) Gracious gift: *who has qualified* [aor. act. ptc. ἱκανόω] *us to* [εἰς] *share* (have a portion) *in the inheritance of the saints* (holy ones) *in* [ἐν] *light*.

i) God the Father has himself provided what sinners need to be considered worthy to join the people of God. (Douglas Moo)

b) Powerful liberation: <sup>13</sup> *Who rescued* [aor. mid. ind. ῥύομαι] *us from* [ἐκ] *the authority* [ἐξουσία] (jurisdiction) *of darkness*,

i) People who have not been rescued by God in Christ live in a power structure that is characterized by the forces of chaos, evil, and judgment. (Douglas Moo)

c) Victorious relocation: *and transferred us* [μεθίστημι] *to* [εἰς] *the kingdom* [βασιλεία] *of the Son of His love* [ἀγάπη],

- The point is that God has rescued believers from the gloomy domain and tyrannical rule of Satan and has transplanted them as free colonists into the kingdom and peaceable sovereignty of Christ, to become citizens in the realm of light. (Murray Harris)

i) <sup>14</sup> *in* [ἐν] *whom* (the Son) *we have redemption* [ἀπολύτρωσις],

- Some MSS contain “through His blood” (cf. Eph. 1:7)

(1) *Redemption* is freeing a person from the **bondage** of slavery now. It is a transfer of ownership. For a redeemed slave to then begin living the way he desires would be something akin to thievery. 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

ii) *the forgiveness* [ἄφεσις] *of sins*.

(1) *Forgiveness* is freeing a person from the **guilt** of their sin now.

(2) The barriers that separate us from God have been removed by Him!

### 4) Things we need to remember:

a) We would be wise to imitate Paul's prayer.

b) Is my life characterized by these four things? If not, why not?

## Colossians 1:15-20

### The Supremacy of Christ in Creation and Redemption (part **one**)

**Introduction:** Because of the false teaching in Colosse that was seeking to minimize Christ, Paul writes by the Spirit of God to say that the Colossian believers already have all they need in Christ, and that they do not need anything added to or subtracted from what they already possess. The other emphasis of Paul's is the eight uses of "all things/everything."

One you will notice, that although this is about Jesus Christ, His name is not mentioned in 1:15-20.

#### 1) Christ's exclusive relationship with God the Father—1:15

- a) The true, full visible manifestation of His likeness: <sup>15</sup> *Who* (the beloved Son) *is the image* [εἰκὼν] *of the invisible* [ἀόρατος] (has not and cannot be seen) *God* (the Father),
  - i) The Father is invisible (cf. Rom. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27)
  - ii) This is what Jesus told Thomas in John 14:9. (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3; John 1:18)
  - iii) But Jesus is no mere resemblance or reproduction of God but He shares the very essence of the one true deity. (John Kitchen)
    - (1) An image shares in the reality of what it represents. The essence of the thing appears in the image. (Kittel's NIDNTT)
  - iv) We are being conformed to this image. (cf. 3:10; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18)
- b) The supreme priority of rank: *the firstborn* [πρωτότοκος] *of* (over) **all (# 1) creation** [κτίσις].
  - i) There are three basic meanings of "firstborn" in the Bible.
    - (1) Literally/normally, in order of time—Luke 2:7; Heb. 11:28
    - (2) Metaphorically
      - (a) in order of place—Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9
      - (b) in order of rank—Ps. 89:27; Heb. 1:5-6
        - (i) In the Greco-Roman context, "firstborn" is also used as a legal term to refer to one who is the legal heir of his father's inheritance. As the heir, this person also inherits the power and authority of his father over his household. (David Pao)
  - ii) This does NOT teach that Jesus is a created being.

#### 2) The reasons for Christ's priority as Firstborn—1:16-20 <sup>16</sup> *For* [ὅτι] ...

- a) **Reason** # 1: Because of His exclusive relationship with CREATION—1:16-17
  - i) He is the Creator—1:16

- (1) Initially—1:16a *in* [ἐν] (association with) *Him all things (# 2)* (the universe) *were created* [aor. pass. ind. κτίζω], (earthly creatures and spirit beings)
    - He is the Sphere of creation
    - (a) Opposites of location: *both in* [ἐν] *the heavens and on* [ἐπί] *earth*,
    - (b) Opposites of experience: *visible* [ὄρατος] *and invisible* [ἀόρατος],
      - (i) The invisible: *whether thrones* [θρόνος] *or dominions* [κυριότης] *or rulers* [ἀρχή] *or authorities* [ἐξουσία]—
      - (ii) These are the created beings some people want the Colossians to worship. (cf. 2:18)
  - (2) Permanently—1:16b *all things (# 3)* *have been created* [pf. pass. ind. κτίζω]
    - (a) He is the Agent of creation: *through* [διὰ] *Him*
    - (b) He is the Goal of creation: *and for* [εἰς] *Him*.
  - (3) Nothing in all creation had existence prior to His work to bring it into being. (John Kitchen)
- b) **Reason # 2:** Because of His preexistent preeminence—1:17
- i) Eternal preexistence—1:17a <sup>17</sup> *And He* (emphatic) *is before* [πρό] *all things (# 4)*,
    - (1) Remember John 8:58.
- c) **Reason # 3:** Because of His all-inclusive cohesiveness—1:17b *and in* [ἐν] (association with) *Him all things (# 5)* (the universe) *hold together* [συνίστημι].
- d) Next time we will focus on 1:18-20 and the fourth reason, namely, Because of His exclusive relationship with the CHURCH.

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Let's substitute the word "reality" for "all things" or "creation". Listen as it is re-read. Does it lead you to worship this Christ? (suggested by John Kitchen)

## Colossians 1:15-20

### The Supremacy of Christ in Creation and Redemption (part **two**)

#### Introduction:

Last time we saw ....

#### 1) Christ's exclusive relationship with God the Father—1:15

- a) Perfect visible expression: <sup>15</sup> *Who* (the beloved Son) *is the image of the invisible* (has not and cannot be seen) *God*,
- b) Supreme priority of rank: *the firstborn of all (# 1) creation*.

#### 2) The reasons for Christ's priority—1:16-20 <sup>16</sup> *For* [ὅτι] ...

- a) **Reason** # 1: Because of His exclusive relationship with CREATION—1:16-17
  - i) Initially: *in* (association with) *Him all things (# 2)* (the universe) *were created*,
    - (1) *both in the heavens and on earth*,
    - (2) *visible and invisible*,
    - (a) *whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities* —
  - ii) Permanently: *all things (# 3) have been created through Him and for Him*.
- b) **Reason** # 2: Because of His preexistent preeminence: <sup>17</sup> *And He* (emphatic) *is before all things (# 4)*,
- c) **Reason** # 3: Because of His all-inclusive cohesiveness: *and in Him all things (# 5)* (the universe) *hold together*.

We will begin this reason # 4 today.

- d) **Reason** # 4: Because of His exclusive relationship with the CHURCH—1:18-20
  - i) <sup>18</sup> *And He* (emphatic; and no one else) *is the head* [κεφαλή] *of the body, the church* (the congregation, assembly) [ἐκκλησία];
    - (1) Person: *Who is* ...
      - (a) Source of origin: *the beginning* [ἀρχή] (of the church),
        - (i) Three possibilities: first in place (the corner of a cloth), in time (the beginning), or rank (authority).
        - (b) Supreme priority of rank: *the firstborn* [πρωτότοκος] *from* [ἐκ] *the dead* (ones),
      - (2) Purpose: *so that* [ἵνα] *He Himself* (emphatic) *will come to have first place* [πρωτεύω] *in* [ἐν] *everything (# 6)*.

- (a) In relation to the universe Christ is and always was supreme, but in relation to the Church he *became* supreme by his resurrection to immortality. (Murray Harris)
- (3) The basis for His universal sovereignty: <sup>19</sup> *For* [ὅτι] ...
- The basic reason that Christ is Lord of creation and has become Lord of the Church is that God in all his fullness was pleased to dwell in him and to reconcile the universe through him. (Murray Harris)
- (a) *in* [ἐν] *Him* **all (# 7)** *the fullness* [πλήρωμα] *of God was pleased* [εὐδοκέω] *to dwell* [aor. act. inf. κατοικέω],
- (i) It was by God the Father's choice and at his good pleasure that all divine attributes and powers resided in the person of Jesus. (Murray Harris)
1. We please the Father when we genuinely acknowledge Jesus as having first place in everything.
- (ii) Nothing is missing. He is no mere emanation of God. He is not a mere reflection. He is not merely a portrait of God. Jesus Christ is God and shares completely in the fullness of the divine essence. (John Kitchen)
- (b) <sup>20</sup> *and through* [διὰ] *Him to reconcile* [aor. act. inf. ἀποκαταλλάσσω] **all things (# 8)** (the universe) *to* [εἰς] *Himself* (God the Father),
- (i) How? *having made peace* [aor. act. ptc. εἰρηνοποιέω] *through* [διὰ] *the blood of His cross*
- (ii) What? *—through* [διὰ] *Him—whether things on* [ἐπί] *earth or things in* [ἐν] *heaven.*

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) As we did last time, let's substitute the word "reality" for "all things" or "creation". Listen as it is re-read. Does it lead you to worship this Christ? (suggested by John Kitchen)
- b) We order and submit our lives under Christ now in anticipation of the day when this chaotic, rebellious universe will join us in this glad act of worship. (Kitchen)

Colossians 1:21-23  
God's Reconciliation of the Colossians

**Introduction:** this is one sentence in Greek. As Douglas Moo summarizes: *you ... he reconciled ... to present you ... if you continue*. What is true of the future reconciliation universally (1:20) is also true of the Colossian believers specifically and individually.

**1) The problem: our PAST need for reconciliation—1:21**

- a) Their settled state—<sup>21</sup> *And although you were **formerly** ...*
  - i) Continually separated from God: *alienated* [pf. pass. ptc. ἀπαλλοτριώω]  
(1) We have never been in any other state.
  - ii) Actively hostile toward God: *and enemies* [ἐχθρός]  
(1) INTERNALLY, way of **thinking and desiring**: *in mind* [διάνοια]
    - (a) The habitual mindset and disposition.
    - (b) A. T. Robertson said: It is always a tragedy to see men use their minds actively against God.
  - (2) EXTERNALLY, way of **acting/behavior**: *and in evil* [πονηρός] *deeds*,
    - (a) This is the avenue of expressing the first.
- b) This is all because of the Fall in Adam. See also Eph. 4:18.
- c) Our sin is our lack of conformity to God's standard in our actions, attitudes, and/or nature.
- d) *Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought, or action, whether committed actively or passively. **The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self.** Always closely associated with sin are its products—pride, selfishness, idolatry, and lack of peace (shalom).*  
(MacArthur and Mayhue)

**2) God's solution: our PRESENT situation by God's grace—1:22a**

- <sup>22</sup> **but now** ...
  - a) The MEANING of reconciliation: *He* (God the Father) *reconciled* [aor. pass. ind. ἀποκαταλλάσσω] *you* (cf. 1:20)
    - i) To restore a relationship to harmony.
  - b) The genuine, physical SPHERE of reconciliation: *in* [ἐν] *the body of His* (God the Son's) *flesh*
    - i) The real incarnation of the eternal Son of God was susceptible to real suffering and death.
  - c) The INSTRUMENT of reconciliation: *through* [διὰ] (God the Son's) *death*,
    - i) Not merely His life. Cf. Rom. 5:10
    - ii) This is the crux of our difference with Covenant Theology. They argue for the benefit of His active righteousness (His life). The Bible always argues for the benefit of His passive righteousness (death).

d) We don't need to reconcile ourselves to God; indeed, we cannot do so.

### 3) Their FUTURE hope—1:22b

a) The goal of reconciliation: *in order to present/render*, make [aor. act. inf. *παρίστημι*] *you before* [κατενώπιον] *Him* (God the Father) ...

- Everyone one of us must give account of him or herself to God, the Judge of all, who alone possesses infinite knowledge and wisdom.
- This refers to the time when we stand before Him. Cf. Jude 1:24-25; Eph. 1:4

i) Stated POSITIVELY: *holy* [ἅγιος]

(1) Set apart for God's purpose

ii) Stated NEGATIVELY:

(1) Free from defect: *and blameless* [ἄμωμος]

(2) Free from valid accusation: *and beyond reproach* [ἀνέγκλητος]—

b) These three things are the work of God, not accomplished by us following someone's list of rules or traditions.

### 4) The present condition of this presentation—1:23 <sup>23</sup> *if indeed* [εἰ γέ] ...

- 1<sup>st</sup> class condition: Paul is confident (takes for granted that) these believers will actively persevere, not merely passively continue. It is something they must do, and it is something they will do, by God's grace.

a) Stated POSITIVELY: *you continue in* [pres. act. ind. ἐπιμένω] *the faith* (of trusting God)

i) Securely **established**, as a building: *firmly grounded* [pf. pass. ptc. θεμελιόω]

ii) Resolutely **immovable**, as a building: *and steadfast* [ἐδραῖος],

b) Stated NEGATIVELY: *and not moved away/dislodged* [pres. pass. ptc. μετακινέω] *from* [ἀπό] *the hope* [ἐλπίς] *of the gospel* [εὐαγγέλιον],

i) **Locally**: *which* (gospel) *you have heard* [aor. act. ind. ἀκούω],

(1) From Epaphras (cf. 1:7)

ii) **Universally**: *which* (gospel) *was proclaimed* [aor. pass. ptc. κηρύσσω] *in all creation under heaven*,

iii) **Individually**: *and of which* (gospel) *I, Paul, was made* [aor. mid. ind. γίνομαι] *a minister* [διάκονος].

(1) The gospel message they heard from Epaphras and that was proclaimed throughout the known world is the same gospel as that of Paul.

**5) Things we need to remember:**

- a) Without Christ, all people are alienated, hostile, and engaged in evil.
- b) Christ's death is the only means by which we can be properly related to God the Father.
- c) God the Father's goal is that those who have been reconciled to Him through Christ should be holy, blameless, and without reproach.
- d) Reconciliation with God requires faith.

Colossians 1:24-27  
God's Mystery

**Introduction:** Paul now switches to personal pronouns in the next two sentences.

**1) A balanced view of Paul's imprisonment—1:24** <sup>24</sup> *Now ...*

a) Joy: *I rejoice* [pres. act. ind. χαίρω] *in* (the sphere of) *my sufferings* [πάθημα] *for* [ὑπέρ] *your sake*,

i) It is Paul's joy to suffer for the sake of these believers he has never met. It did not cause him to be embarrassed or ashamed.

ii) These are **Paul's** sufferings, not Jesus'.

iii) Paul, a Jew, is willingly suffering in a general sense on behalf of those Gentile believers in Colosse and throughout the Lycus Valley. What grace!

(1) Here is a teacher who is willing to suffer to bring benefit to his learners. Most false teachers are not willing to suffer for anyone.

b) Suffering: *and I fill up* [pres. act. ind. ἀναπληρῶ] *what is lacking of Christ's afflictions* [θλίψεις] *in my flesh*,

i) *on behalf of* [ὑπέρ] *His body, which is the church*,

ii) Paul is not implying that somehow Jesus' suffering was inadequate or deficient in any way. Paul's suffering does not atone for any sin.

(1) And yet Jesus somehow suffers when believers suffer. (Acts 9:4)

iii) This seems to be referring to the suffering of the Christian community for their loyalty to Christ.

c) Paul does not deny the reality of physical or spiritual suffering.

**2) A balanced view of Paul's preaching ministry—1:25-27**

a) A God-ordained ministry: <sup>25</sup> *of which* (church) *I was made* [aor. mid. ind. γίνομαι] (became by God's grace) *a minister* [διάκονος] *according to* [κατά] *the stewardship* [οἰκονομία] *from* (delegated and established by) *God*

i) *given* [aor. pass. ptc. δίδωμι] *to me* (by God) *for* [εἰς] *you*,

ii) The gospel ministry is a sacred privilege and trust from God.

b) A purposeful ministry: *so that I might fully carry out* [aor. act. inf. πληρῶ] *the preaching of the word* (lit. "fulfill the word) *of God*, <sup>26</sup> *that is, the mystery* [μυστήριον] ...

i) To fulfill the mission of God's Word.

ii) The past: *which has been hidden* [pf. pass. ptc. ἀποκρύπτω] *from the past ages* (in eternity) *and generations* (in human history),

(1) Daniel uses the word "mystery" 7x in chapter 2.

- (2) This concept of a congregation composed of Gentiles and Jews together on equal spiritual standing by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was unknown to OT saints. (cf. Rom. 11:25; Eph. 3:1-9)
- (3) There was no church in the OT. It did not begin with Adam or Abraham but at Pentecost.
- iii) The present: *but has now been manifested* [aor. pass. ind. φανερώω] *to His saints*,
  - (1) Not every person on the planet is the recipient of this mystery. It is limited “to His saints”.
  - (2)<sup>27</sup> *to whom God willed* [aor. act. ind. θέλω] *to make known* [aor. act. inf. γνωρίζω] *what is the riches of the glory* (the glorious wealth) *of this mystery* [μυστήριον] *among the Gentiles*,
    - (a) The content of the mystery: *which is Christ in* (the sphere of) *you* (individual Gentiles), *the hope of glory*.
      - (i) “Hope” is not a vague possibility or mere wishful thinking, or even an expectation. It is a confident, assured anticipation that cannot be separated from Jesus Christ.
  - (3) What a truly amazing, awesome plan of God that includes both Jews and Gentiles!

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Suffering is a reality in the Christian life, to some degree or another.
- b) Willingness to suffer for other believers is a demonstration of God’s grace.
- c) The One who indwells each believer is described in 1:15-20. This should result in awe and submission to Him.

Colossians 1:28-29  
Godward Proclamation

**Introduction:**

**1) What are we to do?**

- a) <sup>28</sup> **Him** (Christ, emphatic) *we proclaim* [pres. act. ind. καταγγέλλω],
  - i) Announcing the news about Jesus Christ.

**2) How are we to proclaim Christ?**

- a) **Skillfully:** *with [ἐν] all (of God's) wisdom,*
  - i) As people need wisdom to know how to live out true knowledge of God, so the preacher needs wisdom to know how to teach and admonish the people. (Douglas Moo)
- b) **In a balanced manner:**
  - i) **Negative:** (while) *admonishing* [pres. act. ptc. νουθετέω] **every man** (without distinction)
    - (1) Something is wrong and needs to be corrected.
    - (2) This is wise counsel about avoiding and stopping a sinful course of action or thought.
  - ii) **Positive:** *and* (while) *teaching* [pres. act. ptc. διδάσκω] **every man** (without distinction)
    - (1) Communicating what is right to prevent going the wrong direction.
- c) There is no special teaching (deeper or higher life) reserved exclusively for a few spiritually or intellectually elite Christians.

**3) What is the goal as we proclaim Christ in this way?**

- a) *so that [ἵνα] we may present* [aor. act. sub. παρίστημι] (to God the Father) **every man** (without distinction) *complete* [τέλιος] (mature) *in [ἐν] Christ* (some MSS have “Christ Jesus”).
  - i) This is God's goal for believers. (Col. 1:22)
  - ii) This is what their pastor Epaphras is praying for. (Col. 4:12)
  - iii) Heb. 5:14 describes part of what maturity looks like.
- b) We must answer back to the One who gave us the ministry in the first place.
- c) Maturity (completeness, blamelessness) is a legitimate expectation. Every believer is expected to be moving in this direction.

**4) Further explanation of this ministry—1:29**

- a) It is exhausting but rewarding: <sup>29</sup> *For this purpose* [εἰς] *I also labor* [pres. act. ind. κοπιᾶω],
  - i) The ministry is no place for the lazy. Paul spent all the strength he had.
- b) It is strenuous (and at times intense) but rewarding: *striving* [pres. mid. ptc. ἀγωνίζομαι] *according to* [κατά] *His working* [ἐνέργεια],
  - i) *which* (working) *He works* [pres. mid. ptc. ἐνεργέω] *in* [ἐν] *me* *in* [ἐν] *power* [δύναμις].
  - ii) The ministry is no place for the self-reliant. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:10.
- c) Note the balance between God’s enabling and Paul’s effort. There is no place for simply “let go and let God.”

**5) Things we need to remember:**

- a) We are all incomplete, no matter how long we have been saved.
- b) We are all on the road to completeness, no matter how much we view ourselves as failures in comparison with other believers.
- c) The purpose of proclamation is to lead all persons to Christ, and once in Christ to full conformity with Christ’s image. (Ben Witherington)