

Colossians 1:3-10

1. 1:3-23 is Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for the church
2. 1:1-8 is a long sentence in the Greek laced with modifiers. The verbs and pronouns are all plural "we" until verse 1:9.
3. Thanksgiving for the church in Colossae. Even if there are problems, Paul is thankful they have made it this far in the faith. (1 Cor., Romans).

Colossians 1:3 – **"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,"**

1. Words like "pray," "thanksgiving" and "asking" indicate Paul is praying as he writes these words.
2. Paul's prayer was:
 - a. continual and in non-typical settings, most likely referring to everytime Paul prayed for the Colossians he "always thanked God" for the following things
 - b. directed to God, meaning Paul is not thanking the Colossians for their commitment, but thanking God for his commitment to the Colossians
 - c. intercessory for others.
3. The main verb is "*eucharistoumen*" or "we are giving thanks" and then two reasons:
 - a. When we pray for you
 - b. Because we have heard of your faith

1:4 – **"since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints"**

1. Paul was thankful, encouraged by the Colossians Growth
2. The key modifier here is "because we have heard"...and the sentence continues
3. The nature of the Colossians Growth:
 - a. **Faith** – the beginning of the Christian experience. But, Paul is also referring to the practice of their faith. The phrase "faith in Christ Jesus" means Christ Jesus is the realm of where their faith is at, in contrast to "faith unto (into) Christ Jesus" which makes Christ the object of faith. Paul is addressing the sphere of the Colossians faith (it is inside Jesus) and not the object of their faith (faith in the person of Jesus). Obviously, Jesus is also the object of their faith, but Paul is emphasizing the sphere of their faith. "Faith" is more than academic or intellectual, but is alive "in Christ" which always will manifest in growing obedience. This ties in with the "faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae." Paul spoke of faith as:
 - i. "through faith" the means by which a relationship with God is achieved (the conduit, the highway, the means of getting to the relationship)... **The Conduit of faith...receive**
 - ii. "on faith" is faith directed to God or based "on" Christ...**The Object of the faith...belief**
 - iii. "in faith" is the sphere of the Christian experience...**The Sphere of the faith...works**
 - b. **Love** – this is "agape" but it also has an article ("the") so it is "the love" or a specific love. And, it has a target for "the love" which is "all the saints." This love cannot simply

be an abstract concept, but it must be an expression. For agape to exist there has to be a recipient (this may explain the reason for God's act of creation.) This is what Jesus spoke of as the identifying nature of Christians in John 17:20-26, "agape" is the basis for a community of Christians to coexist together. They are not like a pagan community that forms because everyone has needs and can benefit from the others (It-takes-a-village concept), but a community that needs the presence of others to express their nature of giving, of service, of self-less love. This is mature Christianity...

- i. "agape" speaks of the selfless love that considers others. It is the self-sacrificial love that was seen in Christ
 - ii. "all the saints" indicates this selfless, sacrificial love was active among the believers
- c. **Hope** – in 1:5
- i. Hebrews 11:1 – "Now faith is the assurance of things **hoped** for, the conviction of things not seen."
 - ii. Hebrews 6:19 – "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a **hope** that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,"
 - iii. 1 Peter 1:3 – "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"

1:5 – "**because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel**"

1. The Colossians Christians are demonstrating maturity – FAITH and LOVE, but the reason for the development of these two is HOPE. Hope is the basis for Christian growth. Because of hope Christians can be confident to:
 - a. Faith – "on", "in", "through" to please, receive and produce for the Lord. (The greatest command Matt. 22:36-40 and Mark 12:2-34) Relationship with God is primary. We must love God in order to love people. Many ministries get this turned around...they think it is all about loving people, and they start to serve, honor and worship people...which is a corruption of the principle.
 - i. Matthew 22:36-40 – "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." "
 - b. Love – selfless attention to others without hope there is no ability to produce divine faith or divine life in the heart of the common man.
 - c. Hope –
 - i. Hope is a present reality. Our word hope can be used scripturally as subjective such as an attitude, or objectively speaking of a reality that we trust. Here in Colossians hope is objective, a present reality. This word hope also has a modifier "in heaven." Heaven is the end game, not life here on earth. Thus,
 - ii. Hope comes from the proclamation of the Word, the Truth, the Gospel. The literal expression is "the word of the truth of the gospel" the NIV translates it "the word of the truth, the gospel." The stress is on "the truth" which is the Gospel that

came to the Colossians. The message is moving and has a life of its own. **Isaiah 55:8-11**.

1. Isaiah 55:10-11 – “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, **making it bring forth and sprout**, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, **so shall my word be** that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but **it shall accomplish** that which I purpose, and **shall succeed** in the thing for which I sent it.”
- iii. The Colossians were from a culture that worried about life after death and lived daily life under the constant influence of the fate-determining stars in the sky. The hope and peace they had received from the Truth of the Gospel provided them with a solid hope.
- iv. The fact that “hope is mentioned 3x in the first chapter may indicate the fact that Paul realized the people had gone from a place of hopeless fatalism to productive living empowering hope based on the knowledge of the Truth.

1. Plutarch from the first-century wrote an entire essay on the common fear of the gods among the common people of the roman empire It is called *Deisidaimonai* (“Dread of the Gods”). Plutarch describes the peoples terror of the gods and constant



Amulet gem of Artemis of Ephesus (side A) and Artemis of Sardis (side B)

- worry about potential attacks by evil spirits. They experience awful dreams and saw horrifying apparitions (or, ghostlike images of people). They feared descending into the abysmal underworld after death to face countless woes. Because of this Plutarch records it was common to seek protections by:
 - a. wearing protective amulets and magical charms
 - b. speaking incantations and spells
 - c. seeking assistance from magicians and conjurers
 - d. severely abusing their bodies as they confessed their errors
 - e. offering sacrifices
 - f. performing purifications rites
 - g. praying with quivering voices
- v. (Some of the “new teaching” involved in the Colosse heresy addressed in 2:8 was a threat to this “hope” available in knowing the Truth.

1:6 – **“which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing— as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,”**

1. Introduces the subject of “the Gospel” which redirects the sentence.

1:7 – **“just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf”**

1. in 1:7-8 “the Gospel” is modified and addresses the basis of their growth
2. Epaphras was the first to bring the Gospel to Colosse and the Lycus Valley
 - a. “learned” implies he continued to teach them the Word of God.
 - b. Epaphras is with Paul at the writing of this letter and has given Paul an update on the Colosse church which included the positive growth, but also the threat of the heresy.

1:8 – **“and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.”**

1. Again, sacrificial love towards others empowered by the Hope they have from knowing the Truth which only possible through union with the resurrected Jesus Christ (or, “in the Spirit”)

1:9 – **“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,”**

1. the verbs and pronouns become singular here. They have been plural in verse 1:3-8.

1:10 – **“so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”**

1. Literally, “that you walk worthily of the Lord”
 - a. Meaning conduct
 - b. This metaphor “walking” is used 3x in Colossians:
 - i. 2:6 –
 - ii. 3:7 –
 - iii. 4:5 –
 - c. This is a Jewish thought/metaphor (Ex. 18:20; Deut. 13:4-5) and was not common among the Greeks because their “gods”/religion was not an extension of their behavior. Pagan religions were focused on appeasing the gods with favors than about conforming their lifestyle to the holy image of their gods