



# COLOSSIANS

## Read Colossians 1:1–14

Faith, love, and hope appear frequently in the New Testament letters and will find fuller development in the letter to the Colossians. Whether or not this letter was written by Paul, these three virtues were unquestionably part of the teaching of Paul in the undisputed letters.

**Reflect:** Because of the faith of the Colossians, the author has not ceased from praying and giving thanks for them. Does your faith encourage others to give thanks?

**Pray:** In your prayer ask for what you need right now. Thank God for what you have already received.

## Salutation

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

**2** To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters<sup>a</sup> in Christ in Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

## Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

**3** In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **4** for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, **5** because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel **6** that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. **7** This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.<sup>b</sup> He is a faithful minister of Christ on your<sup>c</sup> behalf, **8** and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

**9** For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's<sup>d</sup> will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you

<sup>a</sup> Gk brothers

<sup>b</sup> Gk slave

<sup>c</sup> Other ancient authorities read *our*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *his*

**Act:** As you have thanked God for a blessing received, thank someone close to you for what they have given you.

**Read Colossians 1:15–20**

This appears to be an early Christian Christological hymn. Christ has a role in creation. All angelic beings are subordinate to Christ. Head of the cosmic body, Christ is also head of the church. Christ brings reconciliation and peace to all of creation

**Reflect:** Pay attention to each verse of the hymn. What does the author want to teach you about the preeminence of Christ? How does Christ continue to bring reconciliation and peace?

**Pray:** As you pray to God the Father, be conscious of the fact that you pray through Christ.

**Act:** Look at the world around you. See the handiwork of God and then imagine how the world will be perfected when Christ hands it all over to God.

**Read Colossians 1:21–29**

Faith and hope have brought holiness and blamelessness. Paul has proclaimed the word of God to the Gentiles, manifesting to them the glory of God in Christ. Christ can then present all to God.

**Reflect:** If you are a saint, then you are holy, close to God, and live without blame. You are called to live a holy life. How does a holy person live?

bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. <sup>11</sup> May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled<sup>a</sup> you<sup>b</sup> to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup> He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.<sup>c</sup>

**The Supremacy of Christ**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup> for in<sup>d</sup> him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He himself is before all things, and in<sup>d</sup> him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled<sup>e</sup> in his fleshly body<sup>f</sup> through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—<sup>23</sup> provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

**Paul’s Interest in the Colossians**

<sup>24</sup> I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. <sup>25</sup> I became its servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, <sup>26</sup> the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup> To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup> For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me.

<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities read *called*  
<sup>b</sup> Other ancient authorities read *us*  
<sup>c</sup> Other ancient authorities add *through his blood*  
<sup>d</sup> Or *by*  
<sup>e</sup> Other ancient authorities read *you have now been reconciled*  
<sup>f</sup> *Gk in the body of his flesh*

**Pray:** People have difficulty in seeing themselves as blameless. Pray that you may have the grace to accept the mercy and forgiveness of God through Jesus.

**Act:** Look to God, not to your own failings. Rely on God as you strive to live a holy life. Stop thinking about yourself.

## Read Colossians 2

Live according to what you have believed and let no one deceive you in thinking and living otherwise. Christ controls all things and he has delivered you from unknown forces by your baptism. Do not listen to anyone who teaches anything contrary to what you have already heard.

**Reflect:** Paganism often proscribed and proscribed certain actions. Christians are free from unknown forces and need not acknowledge any superstitions. Do you irrationally believe in any superstitions?

**Pray:** Prayer is not magic. Prayer is not uttering incantations to control human destiny. Prayer is lifting your mind and heart to God, asking for all you need and expressing praise and thanksgiving.

**Act:** Light a candle, not as if the candle is magic but that the candle might remind you of the presence of God.

**2** For I want you to know how much I am struggling for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me face to face. <sup>2</sup>I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself,<sup>a</sup> <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I rejoice to see your morale and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

## Fullness of Life in Christ

**6** As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives<sup>b</sup> in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**8** See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe,<sup>c</sup> and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup>and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. <sup>11</sup>In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision,<sup>d</sup> by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; <sup>12</sup>when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup>And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God<sup>e</sup> made you<sup>f</sup> alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed<sup>g</sup> the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

**16** Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. <sup>17</sup>These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup>Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling<sup>h</sup> on visions,<sup>i</sup> puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking,<sup>j</sup> <sup>19</sup>and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities read *of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ*

<sup>b</sup> Gk to walk

<sup>c</sup> Or *the rudiments of the world*

<sup>d</sup> Gk *a circumcision made without hands*

<sup>e</sup> Gk *he*

<sup>f</sup> Other ancient authorities read *made us*; others, *made*

<sup>g</sup> Or *divested himself of*

<sup>h</sup> Other ancient authorities read *not dwelling*

<sup>i</sup> Meaning of Gk uncertain

<sup>j</sup> Gk *by the mind of his flesh*

**Warnings against False Teachers**

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe,<sup>a</sup> why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations,<sup>21</sup> “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”?<sup>22</sup> All these regulations refer to

things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings.<sup>23</sup> These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.<sup>b</sup>

**Read Colossians 3:1–17**

Baptism has raised the believer, and thus the follower of Christ puts aside sins and failures and practices virtues. The author describes the sins and then lists the virtues.

**Reflect:** Pick out one vice and one virtue. Think about what you need to do to avoid the sin. What virtue will help you?

**Pray:** With the assistance of the Holy Spirit, acknowledge your sins and ask for forgiveness.

**Act:** Again, with the help of the Holy Spirit, resolve to practice the virtue that you know will help you in overcoming the vice.

**The New Life in Christ**

**3** So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.<sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth,<sup>3</sup> for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.<sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your<sup>c</sup> life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).<sup>6</sup> On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.<sup>d</sup> <sup>7</sup> These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.<sup>e</sup> <sup>8</sup> But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive<sup>f</sup> language from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices<sup>10</sup> and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.<sup>11</sup> In that renewal<sup>g</sup> there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord<sup>h</sup> has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ<sup>i</sup> dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.<sup>j</sup> <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Rules for Christian Households**

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

<sup>a</sup> Or the rudiments of the world  
<sup>b</sup> Or are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh  
<sup>c</sup> Other authorities read our  
<sup>d</sup> Other ancient authorities lack on those who are disobedient (Gk the children of disobedience)  
<sup>e</sup> Or living among such people  
<sup>f</sup> Or filthy  
<sup>g</sup> Gk its creator, <sup>11</sup> where  
<sup>h</sup> Other ancient authorities read just as Christ  
<sup>i</sup> Other ancient authorities read of God, or of the Lord  
<sup>j</sup> Other ancient authorities read to the Lord

### Read Colossians 3:18—4:1

The author returns to a theme already found in Ephesians: relationships—spousal, family, and master/slave.

**Reflect:** Compare these verses with Ephesians 5:21—6:9. What are the similarities and what are the differences?

**Pray:** Pray for those being married in the next month. Pray for abused children. Pray for those suffering the horrors of human trafficking.

**Act:** If you are married, volunteer to help with Cana conferences. Make a contribution to a women's shelter.

### Read Colossians 4:2–18

Paul, or an author writing in Paul's name, concludes with an exhortation to pray. He then presents a list of helpers and mutual friends to remind his readers of the breadth of the Christian community and the affection that characterizes it.

**Reflect:** Think of all the people you have met through your faith. Reflect on how important they have become in your life. What have they given to you and what have you given to them?

**Pray:** Pray for your friends, both living and dead.

**Act:** Call a friend and extend an invitation for a meal. Thank your friend for having helped you grow in your relationship with God.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.<sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters<sup>a</sup> in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.<sup>a</sup> <sup>23</sup> Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters,<sup>b</sup> <sup>24</sup> since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve<sup>c</sup> the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no **4** partiality. <sup>1</sup> Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

### Further Instructions

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, <sup>4</sup> so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

<sup>5</sup> Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.<sup>d</sup> <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

### Final Greetings and Benediction

<sup>7</sup> Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant<sup>e</sup> in the Lord. <sup>8</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are<sup>f</sup> and that he may encourage your hearts; <sup>9</sup> he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him. <sup>11</sup> And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant<sup>e</sup> of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. <sup>13</sup> For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup> Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. <sup>15</sup> Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters<sup>g</sup> in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. <sup>16</sup> And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter

<sup>a</sup> In Greek the same word is used for *master* and *Lord*

<sup>b</sup> *Gk not for men*

<sup>c</sup> *Or you are slaves of, or be slaves of*

<sup>d</sup> *Or opportunity*

<sup>e</sup> *Gk slave*

<sup>f</sup> *Other authorities read that I may know how you are*

<sup>g</sup> *Gk brothers*

from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup> And say to Archippus, “See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord.”

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities add *Amen*