

# #1 Colossians

Tom Tillman

In Paul's letter to Philemon we saw that he was in prison in Rome and Timothy was with him. It appears that he sent these two letters to Colossae at the same time by the same couriers, Tychicus with Philemon.

His letter to the Colossians begins almost identically to that addressed to Philemon and remember, his letter to Philemon was a personal note to his friend while this letter was the one meant to be read to all those meeting together in Philemon's home and perhaps other home Churches as well, in that city. It was also meant to be traded, with the Church at Laodicea, for Paul's letter to that church. He also mentions the church in Hierapolis. It's too bad we don't have a copy of Paul's letters to the Laodiceans and Hierapolis. We can only assume that God did not see fit to have them preserved for us and that Paul must have addressed in other letters the things he wrote to Laodicea and Hierapolis. See how similarly this one is to his letter to Philemon:

**To Philemon:** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother, to Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer... and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,

**To the Colossians:** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, <sup>4</sup> since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;

Paul is always reminding the saints, born again believers, that God's grace and peace is always poured out without measure to every believer. This is also meant for us: God's grace, peace and mercy are never endingly poured out, without measure, for us, now.

As we watch the whole World seeming to implode right before our eyes, our only hope of peace is if we, like David, draw into God, Himself, as our hiding place, our constant place of refuge, David wrote, 'You *are* my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Psa 32:7 'Show Your marvelous loving kindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust *in You* From those who rise up *against them*. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings' Psa 17 'Oh, how great *is* Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, *which* You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men! <sup>20</sup> You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence From the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Psa 31 'Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the rebellion of the workers of iniquity' Psa 64:1

There are many more verses like these; we must know them, digest them and make them our own if we are to remain strong during the difficult times coming for us, sooner than we ever imagined. A very dark storm is on the horizon. Persecution is coming, in this country, for Christians, for true believers. Lukewarm and apostate 'christians' will be ok; they will bend their beliefs to fit the World's system; even turning against true believers.

We are watching the slow motion train wreck that is the destruction and dismantling of this, once, the greatest nation since human government began, except possibly a very short time in the life of the Nation of Israel under David and Solomon. No one knows how difficult it will become for us, before the Rapture... He may come for us today but He might also tarry for some time still. We must be stilled and fully settled, in our minds and hearts, exactly what we will answer when the time of persecution comes.

It might begin with taxation, it might begin with vaccinations, it might begin with the command to bend our knees and say certain words but it will begin; it has already begun.

Our only hope is to know God and to know His Word.

Paul's letters to the different churches are meant to comfort and strengthen believers during fiery trials and persecutions within the Roman Empire. Terrible times are coming for those left in the Antichrist's empire. If the Left gains ascendancy in November... all that we are watching now, around the country, will grow and metastasize here and around the World. Right now, the US is the only thing standing in the way of the coming

One World Government of the Antichrist. True, it is the Holy Spirit that is restraining evil but the United States and our President are the tools the Holy Spirit is using. This final bulwark against evil will disappear if the Left has its way.

Paul had not been to these Churches, Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis; he says they had not seen his face. Paul had been in Ephesus for two years and since it is not far from these three churches, probably Christians from Ephesus had gone out, telling others the Gospel.

Paul also sent, at this same time with his letter to the Colossians, with Tychicus, his letter to Philemon.

Epaphrus was the pastor or an elder in Colossae and had gone to Rome and reported to Paul some of the dangerous heresies beginning to take root there. This letter is meant to correct them.

Paul was always praying for all the saints in all the churches and always thanking God for them and their continued faithfulness; he was comforting them even though his letters are also always seeking to correct any and all heresies creeping into the Churches.

Paul calls himself an Apostle, chosen by Jesus, Himself; he has the authority, from Jesus Christ, to address and correct heresies and to set them straight with the truth of correct doctrine.

Paul spends two years in Ephesus. He preaches in the synagogue and leads people to faith in Jesus Christ. They tell others or others from other cities have come to hear him and also were led to Salvation. They then went home, led others to Christ and a little church was begun in their home. They didn't have the New Testament. In fact, many, being Gentiles, knew little or nothing of the Old Testament so it's easy to see how false teachers could come along and introduce heresies. These are what Paul is correcting in his letters which were copied and sent around to different churches. That is why Paul is always careful to include, in every letter, his own name, his apostolic authority and then his signature at the end. We see, in Galatians, that his eyesight is bad, perhaps as the result of his blindness when he was confronted by Jesus Christ Himself while he was on the road to Damascus. He probably dictates his letters to a '*secretary*' like Timothy or Luke or others who were with him.

It really is amazing that the 'Church' was able to begin in the first place but it was Jesus Christ who said, 'I will build My Church...' not Paul, not Timothy and not you or me.

Like he did to Philemon, Paul commends these Colossians for their love for all the Saints. This is the number one proof that a person or group are true, born again believers: they love each other as Christ has loved us and they love other believers as soon as they meet them, no matter where they are or where they come from. Love is patient, love is kind and long suffering... always patient, always kind, etc. That is how the World knows and that is how we know... we are genuine born again children of God.

**Verse 5:** 'because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven,'

In chapter 3 Paul will write, 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.'

Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself' John 14

'We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ' Rom 8:17

He will come for us one day soon; in an instant we will be changed so that our sinful, dying bodies will become eternal, glorified bodies that will be like His own. We will stand before Him and He will reward us for all we have done for His glory. We will rule and reign with Him for 1000 years, and then forever, over a New Heavens and New Earth. He owns everything: all things were created by Him and for Him and we are heirs of ALL things with Him; all things are and will be ours forever.

What awaits us is beyond our abilities to even imagine. Anything we can think or say about it is but a mere shadow of the reality.

That is our blessed hope; that is the reality that causes us to be able to patiently wait for His coming and to patiently endure afflictions and persecutions.

'Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise ... (that we) might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge **to lay hold of the hope set before us**. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,' Heb 6

Our hope is the thing that anchors us to the reality of the spiritual, both present and future. We believe what we have not seen because God's Holy Spirit has revealed to us that it is, in fact, the truer reality.

'But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." <sup>10</sup> **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.**' 1 Cor 2:9

But He cannot reveal to us that which we will not contemplate. That is why we are commanded to set our minds on things above and not on the things of the Earth. We are commanded to imagine: 'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, <sup>18</sup> the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.' Eph 1:17 If He is to reveal to us what we have not seen or ever heard of, then it must be by our imagination that we first see them.

'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>21</sup> to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.' Eph 3:20

Anything we can think or imagine... the reality is far above, mountainously above... as far above as the Heavens are of the Earth. 'For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.' Isa 55:8

Our highest and deepest imaginings are almost nothing compared to the reality. That is our hope; that is what anchors us to Him and to eternity. We are children of God and as such, some day, soon, we will live, work and play... as children of God... princes and princesses unto Him forever.

Not only will we share in all of Creation, as fellow heirs with Him but we will also share in Jesus Christ's glory. He loves us so much and is so unselfish, He is willing to glorify us, we for whose sin He was crucified.

We see that glory displayed especially when Jesus Christ takes Peter, James and John up on the Mount of Transfiguration where He meets with Moses and Elijah; the Lord Jesus Christ shines like the sun; that is His glory shining forth. 'His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.' Matt 17

Our hope includes our future glory. 'Oh! What manner of love the Father has poured out on us, that we should be called the children of God.' 1 John 3

**Verse 5b-6a:** ' of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel, <sup>6</sup> which has come to you, as it *has* also in all the world,'

There are believers in Colossae because someone went there and began preaching the Gospel or, at least, someone from Colossae had heard and believed the Gospel and then took it back and told their friends. That person seems to have been Epaphras who may have been a friend of Philemon whom Paul had led to Christ at some time previously. They then began meeting with others in Philemon's home, the beginning of the First Baptist Church of Colossae.

Here, only about 30 years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul says that the Gospel has already gone out to all the World. The Disciples and their converts have taken the Gospel everywhere... into all the known World. Some of them got on a ship or a donkey or a wagon and just took off in every direction, going as far as the road or sea could take them. For example, Thomas went all the way to India. Then his converts took the Gospel even farther and at each place, a small church was begun. And wherever the Gospel took root, Satan was sure to bring a false teacher and a false prophet to introduce false teachings and heresy. It was only by the restraint and protection of the Holy Spirit that churches grew by the working of their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, by the way, the phenomenal growth of the Church throughout the World in such a short time was accomplished by just regular people being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. What did Jesus tell them;

just before He left... they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:6

There were no evangelistic ministries or TV preachers or college and university graduates with master's degrees going on to expensive seminaries to each begin their own special money making scheme. All the while, they were being persecuted on all sides; they were being imprisoned and killed for their faith. And what kept them going... it was their blessed hope.

**Verse 6b:** 'and is bringing forth fruit, as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;'

People write of, or ask about, what about dreams and visions... aren't people being led to salvation in dreams and visions... aren't they, in Muslim countries? ... yes, sort of, but no. The Bible is clear that only through the Gospel and understanding the Gospel can a person come to true saving faith. No one is saved by having a dream or seeing a vision... no matter what someone may report.

Jesus Christ is now, as then, building His Church through, and only through, the Gospel, either by its being told or read: 'For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup>And how shall they preach unless they are sent?' Rom 10:13

We are saved now, during this time that Jesus Christ is building His Church, His Body and Bride, through the Gospel of Grace which Paul refers to as, 'my Gospel.' The Gospel as presented in 'the Gospels,' Matt, Mark, Luke and John are actually what Jesus Christ preached which was the '*Gospel of the Kingdom*.' 'The Kingdom is at hand and here is your King.' It was rejected and Israel was 'put on the shelf' for the next nearly 2000 years while God inserted His hinted at gap of time between Daniels' prophetic 69th and 70th weeks of years. That gap of time, during which He would create and build His Church, was not revealed in the Old Testament. The coming Church was hidden from Satan or he would never have instigated the Crucifixion.

Paul is the one who was given the full Gospel of Grace, to be preached throughout the World before the Lord Jesus Christ would return to remove all whom the Gospel of Grace had produced, His Bride, and then, after the Rapture, the Gospel of the Kingdom will go back into force. Then, the message will once again be: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, coming in seven years, and the rightful King is coming to set up His Kingdom for 1000 years and to destroy all His enemies. 'Choose whom you will serve. If the rightful King, the true Christ, you will live within His glorious Kingdom. If you choose the false usurper king, the Antichrist, you will be destroyed to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.' 'Choose this day, whom you will serve.'

Verse 7: 'as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, <sup>8</sup>who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.'

This church, meeting in the home of Philemon, is there because of the faithfulness of Epaphras in telling the Gospel to his friends. He apparently has gone back and forth between Colossae and Rome, where Paul is imprisoned and writing this letter. Paul told Epaphras and Philemon who had not told Onesimus who had to run away from Philemon, unto Paul from whom he would hear and believe the Gospel. What if Onesimus had, instead, run away to Athens or Sparta or Crete and never come to faith, dying and ending up in Hell?

Philemon would have had to answer for that; 'He was your slave, Philemon... you, a Christian, and you never told him the Gospel... Paul told you and led you to Christ... why didn't you do the same? I'm not very happy about that, Philemon... but come on in, anyway.'

'(If you do not) warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.' Ezek 33:8

We are so blessed to be His children and that He is the God of love, grace and mercy.

Thankfully, we are not saved by our works or else none of us would ever be saved.