

# Colossians

## The Spiritual Walk [1:3-14]

### Thanksgiving [1:3-8]

- We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always about you,  
Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι,
  - The verb εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteō) is a pres-act-ind here describing continuous action.
  - Paul and Timothy continually gave thanks for the saints in Colossae.
  - The plurals “we” and “our” here and in verses 4, 7 and 9 could be referring to Paul and Timothy only, but might also include all of the people in Paul’s “inner circle” of like-minded believers.
  - Although the two are very similar, thanksgiving is our response to God because of what He has done, whereas praise is our response to God because of who He is.
  - Paul often gives thanks to God in his letters [Rom 1:8; 7:25; 1 Cor 1:4; 2 Cor 2:14; Phil 1:3; Gal 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2:13; 2 Thess 1:3; 2:13; Phlm 4].
  - Paul directed his thanks to θεός (theos), but Paul makes it clear he is talking about God the Father.
  - The Greek word θεός is often used to specifically refer to God the Father [Phil 2:9].
  - However, there are also times when θεός is used to refer to all members of the Trinity [Col 1:10].
  - The context must be used to determine which way θεός is being used.
  - The construction of this phrase in the Greek is unusual and emphasizes the relationship between the Father and the Son.
  - This relationship forms the basis for this letter.
  - As part of Paul’s thanksgiving, Paul prays all the time for the Colossian believers.
  - The preposition περὶ (peri) means “about” or “concerning” and indicates the focus of prayer.
- since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;  
ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους
  - The participle ἀκούσαντες (akousantes) literally means “having heard of” and could be understood here in the temporal sense (since) or in the causal sense (because).
  - Most importantly, it is used to acknowledge that Paul is aware of their faith and love [Eph 1:15].
  - The context lends itself naturally to the temporal usage, so the NASB translation is good.

- Paul had already referred to the Colossians as saints and faithful brethren [1:2], but here he specifically highlights that their faith is properly placed in Jesus Christ.
- This description of their faith includes not only their initial faith in Christ, but also their ongoing faith.
- Paul was thankful that the Colossians were believers who were walking by faith [2 Cor 5:7].
- Paul had also noticed the love that God was manifesting in the Colossian believers.
- This is ἀγάπη (agapē) love which is sacrificial, integrity love.
- Paul often links faith and love together [1 Cor 13:13; 2 Cor 8:7; Gal 5:6; Eph 1:15; 3:17; 6:23; 1 Th 1:3; 3:6; 5:8; 2 Th 1:3; 1 Tim 1:5, 14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:10-11; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:22; 3:10; Titus 2:2; 3:15].
- The love which the Colossians had was for all the saints, not just their favorites.
- The use of εἰς (eis) here describes love “toward” others which is language of love being expressed.
- because of the hope laid up for you in heaven,  
διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,
  - The preposition διὰ (dia) here begins a description of the reason behind the Colossians faith and love.
  - The Christian life often involves cause and effect and spiritual growth is no exception.
  - The reason these believers were growing spiritually was because of hope.
  - The word for “hope” is ἐλπίς (elpis) which means “confident expectation”, not wishful thinking.
  - Their confident expectation is based upon all that has been laid up for them in heaven.
  - This would include Christ Himself, seated at the right hand of the Father [Mark 16:19; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2].
  - The word translated “heaven” is the plural of οὐρανός (euranos).
  - Though this technically means “heavens”, it is often used to refer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven where God resides [Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Pet 1:4].
- of which you heard beforehand in the word of truth, the gospel  
ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου
  - The phrase “of which” is the feminine singular pronoun ἣν (hē).
  - This is a clear reference to the word hope which is the nearest matching antecedent.
  - The phrase “you previously heard” is from προακούω (proakouō) which is the verb ακούω (akouō) meaning “hear” with the prefix προ (pro) which means “beforehand”.
  - The end of this verse could be translated “in the word of the truth of the gospel”.
  - The question is with the phrase τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (tou euaggeliou) which means “of the gospel”.
  - If the phrase “of the gospel” modifies “truth”, then the alternate translation makes sense.
  - I believe the phrase “of the gospel” modifies “word” which puts it in apposition to the phrase “of the truth” making the NASB translation correct.

- which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and causing spiritual growth

τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον

- The phrase “which has come to you” involves a neuter participle which refers back to the neuter noun “gospel”.
  - The underlying verb *παρεῖμι* (*pareimi*) actually means “be present”, but is also used as an idiom meaning “have come” [Mt 26:50; Acts 10:21; 17:6].
  - The phrase “just as in all the world also” is a recognition by Paul that the gospel was spreading throughout the known world [Rom 10:18].
  - The description of the gospel “bearing fruit” and “increasing” is exactly the same language we will see in verse 10 referring to the Colossians.
  - The word “constantly” is included here because both “bearing fruit” and “increasing” are present tense verbs in the Greek.
  - The word for “bearing fruit” is *καρποφορέω* (*karpophoreō*) which means to be productive [Mark 4:20, 28; Luke 8:15; Rom 7:4-5].
  - The word for “increasing” is *αὐξάνω* (*auxanō*) which means to grow [Luke 12:27; 13:19; 2 Cor 10:15; Eph 4:15; 1 Pet 2:2; 2 Pet 3:18].
  - Here it is a passive participle meaning “causing growth” and describes the spiritual growth the gospel produces in those who believe.
- even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard *it*  
καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε
  - The phrase “even as it has been doing in you also” actually reads “just as in you also”, but it is in parallel with the phrase “just as in all the world” indicating that the gospel has been “bearing fruit” and “causing growth” in them as well.
  - The phrase “since the day you heard of it” is temporal in nature and tells us that the Colossians responded to the gospel upon first hearing.
  - The added words “of it” are misleading and should have been only the word “it”.
- and came to fully know the grace of God in truth;  
καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ·
  - The word “understand” can mean basic comprehension of a concept or really getting a grasp of what something means.
  - Here it is the word *ἐπιγινώσκω* (*epiginōskō*) which means to come to know something fully.
  - The true message of the gospel is a message about the grace of God.
  - The Colossian believers, fully knowing the true grace gospel, should have been able to recognize the false gospels when they heard them.

- just as you learned *it* from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant,  
καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν,
  - The Colossians had come to fully know the grace gospel because they had learned it from Epaphras.
  - The name Epaphras is likely a shortened form of the name Epaphroditus [Phil 2:25; 4:18].
  - Epaphras was beloved by Paul because he had brought the message of salvation to Colossae.
  - Epaphras and Paul were servants of the same Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,  
ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
  - Paul had identified the Colossians as faithful brethren in Christ and now describes Epaphras as a faithful servant of Christ.
  - The word διάκονος (diakonos) describes someone who ministers on another's behalf [vv. 23, 25].
  - There is a text question here as to whether this should be ὑμῶν (humōn = your) as is shown here or ἡμῶν (hēmōn = our).
  - The context best supports ἡμῶν (hēmōn), but “on your behalf” would be just as meaningful.
- and he also clearly explained your love in the Spirit to us.  
ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.
  - The phrase “informed us of” is literally “made clear to us” and indicates that a detailed description of their love was given by Epaphras [2 Pet 1:14].
  - The phrase “your love in the Spirit” makes it clear that this love is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in these believers [Rom 15:30].
  - Interestingly, this is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the book of Colossians.

## Prayer [1:9-12]

- For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray on your behalf

Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι

- The phrase “For this reason also” is literally “Because of this also” in the Greek and refers back to the content of the entire section we just studied in verses 3-8.
  - The phrase “since the day we heard of it” tells us that as soon as Paul and his closest spiritual allies heard about the faith, hope and love of the Colossian believers they started praying for them.
  - The phrase “we have not ceased” is οὐ (ou) plus the present, middle, indicative of the verb παύω (pauō) which literally means “we are not ceasing” and describes prayers that are still ongoing.
  - The phrase “to pray for you” is literally “praying on your behalf”.
  - This is more than simply praying about someone because this involves being an intercessor.
- and to ask that you may be filled up spiritually with the full knowledge of His will

καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ

- The phrase “and to ask that” tells us that Paul’s prayers included a specific request of God on behalf of the Colossian believers.
  - The phrase “you may be filled with” is a single passive, subjunctive verb in the Greek.
  - The verb πληρώω (plēroō) means “to make full” and is talking about spiritual maturity.
  - This verb is in the subjunctive mood which describes possibility, not necessarily reality.
  - The passive tense means that their “fullness” would need to be brought about by God.
  - The word knowledge here is ἐπίγνωσις (epignōsis) which describes “full knowledge” rather than basic understanding.
  - This full knowledge would be of God’s will which is the word θέλημα (thelēma) meaning will [Eph 1:11; 1 Pet 3:17; Rev 4:11] or desire [1 Tim 2:3-4].
- in all spiritual wisdom and all spiritual understanding  
ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ,
- The words “all” and “spiritual” bracket the words “wisdom” and “understanding” in the original text for the sake of emphasis.
  - This structure also means that “all” and “spiritual” apply to both wisdom and understanding.
  - The word “wisdom” is σοφία (sophia) which means knowledge that is useful for function.
  - This describes truth that has been learned and is ready to be applied to experience.

- The word “understanding” is σύνεσις (sunesis) which means comprehension.
- This can mean the initial grasp of a concept or the greater insight that comes from accumulating knowledge and connecting ideas together.
- The word “spiritual” is πνευματικός (pneumatikos) which refers to things of the spiritual realm.
- This specifies wisdom and understanding which comes to the believer through the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit [John 14:26; 16:13].
- This entire phrase is used to explain the mechanism by which the believer is filled with the full knowledge of God’s will.
- so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, desiring to please *Him* in every way,

περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκειάν,

- The phrase “so that you will walk” is the infinitive of περιπατέω (peripateō) which is used here to describe the purpose of knowing God’s will.
  - This word “walk” is used here to describe the way one conducts his life.
  - The phrase “in a manner worthy of” is ἀξίως (axiōs) which means “suitably” or “worthily”.
  - The NASB uses this verbose translation every time [Rom 16:2; Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; 1 Th 2:12; 3 Jn 6].
  - The word “please” is ἀρεσκεία (areskeia) which means “desire to do that which pleases”.
  - This is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T., but extra-biblical texts use this word to describe someone who is devoted.
  - The phrase “in all respects” is εἰς πᾶσαν (eis pasan) which means “to all” or “in all”.
  - In this context it would imply “in all things” or “in every way”.
  - bearing fruit in every good work and being *spiritually* matured by the full knowledge of God;
- ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπίγνωσει τοῦ θεοῦ,
- The verb “bearing fruit” is καρποφορέω (karpophoreō) which is the same word we saw in verse 6 meaning spiritual productivity.
  - The phrase “in every good work” refers to the full complement of good works which God prepared beforehand for each one of us [Eph 2:10].
  - The word “increasing” is αὐξάνω (auxanō) which is the same word we saw in verse 6 meaning growth.
  - It is in the passive here meaning “being grown”.
  - The phrase “in the knowledge of God” involves a dative clause and should be translated “by the knowledge of God”.
  - The word “knowledge” is ἐπίγνωσις (epignōsis) which we have seen describes “full knowledge” rather than basic understanding.

- empowered with all capability, in accordance with His glorious might,  
 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ
  - The word “strengthened” is δυναμῶ (dunamoō) which means “enable” or “empower”.
  - This participle is in the passive voice meaning that the strength/power comes from God.
  - The word “power” is δύναμις (dunamis) meaning “power”, “strength” or “capability”.
  - The granting of “all power” is in the context of being filled with the full knowledge of God’s will.
  - The phrase “according to” is the preposition κατὰ (kata) plus the accusative which means “according to” or “in accordance with”.
  - This tells us the extent of God’s empowerment.
  - The word “might” is κράτος (kratos) which describes the ability to exhibit power.
  - This word is often translated “dominion” because it includes the idea of sovereignty [1 Pt 4:11; Ju 25].
  - The word “glorious” is δόξα (doxa) which describes God’s greatness and splendor.
  - This word here indicates that the power given to the believer is divine in nature.
- resulting in all steadfastness and joyful patience;  
 εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. Μετὰ χαρᾶς
  - The phrase “for the attaining of” is the preposition εἰς (eis) which means “to” or “unto”.
  - This word is used here to describe a result of the believer’s empowerment by Almighty God.
  - The word “steadfastness” is ὑπομονή (hupomonē) which means to “bear up in the face of difficulty”.
  - This word can be translated “perseverance” or “endurance” as well [Rom 5:3-4; Heb 12:1].
  - The word “patience” is μακροθυμία (makrothumia) which means to “remain tranquil while waiting for an outcome”.
  - The word “joyously” is μετὰ χαρά (meta chara) which means “with joy”.
  - This could be the beginning of the next sentence or a modifier for the word “patience”.
  - Either way would work grammatically and contextually.
  - I believe the phrase is intended to describe the joyful patience only believers can experience.
- giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Light.  
 εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί.
  - The phrase “giving thanks to the Father” is εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ (eucharistountes tō patri) which means to express great appreciation to the Father – our heavenly Father.
  - The word “qualified” is ἱκανῶ (hikanoō) which means “make sufficient” or “cause to be adequate”.

- The idea here is that God has caused us to meet the eligibility requirements for this inheritance.
- The phrase “to share in” is εἰς τὴν μερίδα (eis tēn merida) which means “to/for the portion of”.
- This does not mean the inheritance is divided up, but rather that we are able to be partakers of it.
- The word “inheritance” is κληῖρος (klēros) which means “that which has been allotted” [1 Pt 5:3].
- Jesus spoke of this inheritance when He spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus [Acts 26:18].
- The phrase “in Light” is ἐν τῷ φωτί (en tō phōti) which means “in the Light”.
- This is a reference to Christ Himself and means that this inheritance is spiritual and positional.



## Rescue and Redemption [1:13-14]

- Who rescued us out of the dominion of *spiritual* darkness  
ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκοτός
  - The phrase “For He” is the pronoun ὃς (hos) which means “who”.
  - This is a masculine pronoun and refers all the way back to the Father at the beginning of verse 12.
  - The word “rescued” is ῥύομαι (rhuomai) which means “rescue” or “deliver”.
  - This is an aorist verb describing a singular event that occurred at the moment of our salvation.
  - The word “from” is the preposition ἐκ (ek) which means “out of”.
  - This describes being lifted out of a place as part of being rescued.
  - The word “domain” is ἐξουσία (exousia) which means “authority”.
  - This word can also be used to describe the sphere in which authority is exercised [Lk 4:6; Acts 26:18].
  - The word “darkness” is σκοτός (skotos) which means “darkness” or “gloom”.
  - This word is used here as a reference to the spiritual darkness known by unbelievers.
- and transferred us to the *royal* kingdom of the Son He loves  
καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ
  - The word “transferred” is μεθίστημι (methistēmi) which means “move from one place to another”.
  - Once again, this is an aorist verb describing a singular event occurring at salvation.
  - The word “kingdom” is βασιλεία (basileia) which means “territory ruled by a king”.
  - This describes a royal kingdom and is in stark contrast to the dominion of darkness.
  - The phrase “of His beloved Son” is literally “of the Son of His love”.
  - “His love” is subjective, not qualitative, identifying the love the Father has for the Son.
- in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins  
ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·
  - The phrase “in whom” is a reference back to the Father’s beloved Son, Jesus Christ.
  - The redemption we have is integral with our position “in Christ”.
  - The word “redemption” is ἀπολύτρωσις (apolutrōsis) which means to be released from a captive position by the payment of a ransom.
  - This word is a very strong word for being set free.
  - Some manuscripts include the phrase “through His blood” after “redemption”.
  - This is most likely due to scribes incorporating the text from Eph 1:7 because it is so similar.
  - The phrase “the forgiveness of sins” is placed in apposition to the word “redemption”.
  - This means that the forgiveness of sins came through the ransom paid with the blood of Christ.