

**Lesson 2**

**Colossians 1:1-2; 4:7-18**

**Opening: Colossians 1:1-2**

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother<sup>a</sup>,
- 2 To the saints<sup>b</sup> and faithful brothers<sup>c</sup> in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father<sup>d</sup>.

Notes a REB "colleague"  
b NJB "God's holy people"; REB "God's people"; NAB "holy ones"  
c NRSV, CEB, NIV adds "and sisters"  
d KJV adds "and the Lord Jesus Christ". In all Paul's other letters, when he says peace and grace is from God the Father, Paul always adds "and the Lord Jesus Christ." At some point, a copyist apparently added by reflex that phrase to this occurrence.

**Comments / Questions**

1. Apart from his letters to the Philippians and the Thessalonians, Paul's letters to the churches (and even his personal letters to Timothy and Titus) always include, as here, his description of himself as an "apostle" with the accompanying statement that his apostleship is from God. Why?
2. Often in writing Christians in a city, Paul addresses them as a "church" (e.g. 1 & 2 Cor., 1 & 2 Thess.). Since Paul does not mention the church, might that suggest there are multiple churches in Colossae? (refer to Question 1 in Lesson 1) Or, is it simply a variation without significance?
3. Notice how Paul speaks of the Christians in Colossae as being "in Christ." This is typical of how Paul thought. Christ is the reason we are related to each other, i.e., the bond of our relationship, or the realm of our co-existence.

**Closing: Colossians 4:7-18**

- 7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister<sup>a</sup> and fellow servant<sup>b</sup> in the Lord.
- 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are<sup>c</sup> and that he may encourage your hearts,
- 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful<sup>d</sup> and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.
- 10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas<sup>e</sup> (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome<sup>f</sup> him),
- 11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision<sup>g</sup> among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

- 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant<sup>h</sup> of Christ Jesus<sup>i</sup>, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature<sup>j</sup> and fully assured in all the will of God<sup>k</sup>.
- 13 For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you<sup>l</sup> and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.
- 14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.
- 15 Give my greetings to the brothers<sup>m</sup> at Laodicea, and to Nympha<sup>n</sup> and the church in her<sup>o</sup> house.
- 16 And when this letter<sup>p</sup> has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter<sup>q</sup> <sup>r</sup>from Laodicea<sup>r</sup>.
- 17 And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry<sup>s</sup> that you have received in the Lord."
- 18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand<sup>t</sup>. Remember my chains<sup>u</sup>. Grace be with you.<sup>v</sup>

- Notes
- a NJB, REB "trustworthy helper"
  - b NASU "bond-servant"; HCSB, NAB, CEB "slave"
  - c KJV "that he might know your estate"
  - d NJB, NAB "trustworthy"
  - e KJV "sister's son to Barnabas"; NASU "Barnabas' cousin Mark (about...)"
  - f KJV, ASV "receive"
  - g KJV, ASV sim. "Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only..."; REB "Jewish Christians"; CEB "Jewish converts"; NIV "Jews"
  - h NASU "bondslave"; HCSB, NAB "slave"
  - i NASU "Jesus Christ"; REB "Christ"; NAB "Christ [Jesus]"
  - j KJV, ASV, NJB sim., NAB "perfect"
  - k NRSV, HCSB "in everything that God wills"
  - l KJV "he hath a great zeal for you"; NASU "he has a great concern for you"
  - m NRSV, CEB, NIV adds "and sisters"; REB "Christians"
  - n KJV "Nymphas"
  - o KJV "his"; ASV "their"
  - p KJV, ASV "epistle"
  - q NASU inserts "that is coming"
  - r NJB "get the letter from Laodicea"; REB "my letter to Laodicea"
  - s NRSV "complete the task"
  - t CEB "personally"
  - u REB, CEB sim. "I am in prison"; NASU, HCSB "imprisonment"
  - v KJV adds "Amen."

### Comments / Questions

1. Note Paul's circumstances at the time of the writing of this letter.
  - a. Paul is in Roman custody. Twice in this letter, Paul mentions his being in custody: 4:3 ("on account of which I am in prison") and 4:18 ("Remember my chains").
  - b. Paul specifically sends Tychicus to inform the saints at Colossae and, also, those at Ephesus (in very similar words – Eph 6:21) of his condition and activities. Presumably, Tychicus is the bearer of the letters to both churches, and even possibly the letter to Philemon. As such, Tychicus would also be the one to read the letters to the congregations.

Tychicus is "of Asia" (Acts 20:4) and accompanied Paul from Macedonia to Asia on the return part of his 3rd Missionary Journey. Paul (presumably later) possibly intends to send Tychicus to Titus at Crete (Tit 3:12), and later sends him to Ephesus again (2 Tim 4:12).

- c. Paul also mentions Onesimus (= Philemon's slave, presumably) as one who can tell them of his affairs. Based on Paul's remark that Onesimus "is one of" the Colossians, it is generally concluded that Philemon lived in Colossae.

Does Paul seem to have considerable freedom while in custody?

2. The closing greetings in a letter are very useful to help understand the context of the letter. Paul typically sends greetings on behalf of his associates and extends greetings to those he personally knows among the recipients. In this case, Paul sends greetings on behalf of five of his associates, and only extends greetings to two people by name: Nympha and Archippus.
- a. Does Nympha (only mentioned here in the NT) live in Colossae or Laodicea? Is there more than one church in Laodicea?
- b. Where does Archippus live (cf. Phm 2)? Does Paul's command that he 'fulfill his ministry' suggest that Archippus may not be doing what he should?
3. For each of the following associates of Paul, review the information given in the NT concerning them.
- *Aristarchus* Acts 19:29 (a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul in Ephesus; dragged into the theater during Ephesian riot with Gaius); 20:4 (one of Paul's companions from Macedonia to Asia on the return part of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey); 27:2 (accompanies Paul to Rome – perhaps intending to debark in Asia or Macedonia); Phm 25 ('fellow worker' of Paul who sends greeting to Philemon).
  - *Mark* Acts 12:12 (John Mark – 'Marcus' is a Latin praenomen – son of Mary (otherwise unknown)); 12:25 (accompanies Barnabas and Paul from Jerusalem to Antioch); 15:37 (source of dispute between Paul and Barnabas); Phm 24 (with Paul and Sends greeting to Philemon); 2 Tim 4:11 (Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him when he visits); 1 Pet 5:13 (with Peter and sends greetings).
  - *Justus* Two other men named Justus in the NT (Acts 1:23; 18:7): one a Galilean Jew, the other a Corinthian Gentile.
  - *Epaphras* A Colossian, he is mentioned in the body of the letter as the one who took the gospel to Colossae (1:7). He is now with Paul in Rome (also, Phm 23).
  - *Luke* Author of Luke and Acts (by tradition) and, apparently, a regular traveling companion of Paul (the "we" sections of Acts). Only here is he identified as a "physician." He is now in Rome (also Phm 24). Later he will be with Paul when he writes 2 Timothy (4:11).
  - *Demas* 2 Tim 4:10 (Paul reports to Timothy that Demas left him due to his love of the world)
- Aristarchus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas are also mentioned in the letter to Philemon.
4. Laodicea was a nearby city (about 10 miles northwest of Colossae). Apparently, Paul wrote a letter to the saints there at the same time he wrote to the Colossians. Paul wanted both groups to read both letters.