

Colossians

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Introduction



We see that Colossae is located in what is now Turkey about 100 miles east of Ephesus and near Laodicea and Hierapolis (not on the map), which are mentioned in this book as having communities of believers. The city was a great city during the Persian and Greek empires of the fourth and fifth centuries BC. However the road system was changed and, like some towns in the U.S. that became isolated because of the interstate road system, in Paul's time the city was an insignificant market town. It was not visited by Paul and is not mentioned in Acts so the only information about it that we have is from this book. It seems that it was established by Epaphras, a native of Colossae who probably also started the church at Hierapolis. It was probably from Paul's sermons at Ephesus that the Lord redeemed Epaphras since Luke reports that all the residents of Asia heard of Jesus through Paul's teachings in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-20). In this letter Paul complements Epaphras as being a hard worker:

Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

Col 4:13 For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

It seems that Epaphras started the church at Colossae and at Hierapolis and Paul thought highly of him:

Col 1:7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,

Paul probably wrote this epistle from his first stay in prison at Rome in about AD 62. We know that Luke was with Paul when he wrote the letter (4:14) and that Luke was with Paul at this time

in Rome. Epaphras sought the council of Paul over some situations at the church and this prompted the writing of the letter. Since Paul did not elucidate the specific nature of the problems at the church, we can only infer some details from the epistle. We know that it professed to be a philosophy but Paul called it deceptive (2:8). It placed an emphasis on ritual circumcision, dietary laws and the observance of holy days (2:11, 14, 16, 17). It also placed emphasis on some supernatural powers involved in creation and salvation and insisted that such be worshiped (2:15, 18, 19). It also taught about the evil of the body that must be contained (2:23). Thus we see that this philosophy contained several elements common during this time period. From the circumcision and dietary laws we see the Jewish influence. We also see a pagan influence and what some say is the beginning of Gnosticism that became very important in the second century. Since they viewed matter as evil they could not accept the actual physical incarnation of Jesus Christ. They believed that his body was an illusion that fooled all those with him. This aversion to matter led to two extremes. One was that the body must be tamed by beatings and self-mutilation (2:20) and is termed asceticism. The other was that, since the body was evil, it did not matter what it did (3:5) and this is termed libertinism. The word “gnosis” means knowledge and, as the name implies, followers taught that salvation was to be obtained by knowledge and not from faith. There was also a bit of Christian element in this philosophy for the people did not deny Christ but they took away His supreme place and this aspect of the teaching made it especially dangerous since it claims to be Christian. We can see this same pretense of Christianity in Mormonism and other religions.

Paul wrote the letter then to let them know of his love for them and to help steer them away from the horrible philosophy that was invading their church. This letter is very important for the church today for we are constantly being bombarded by similar philosophies that attacked this church. The problem arose from within the church and such problems are always worse than attacks from outside of the church that can usually be more easily refuted.

Chapter One

**Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,
Col 1:2 to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and
peace from God our Father.**

Paul begins the letter with the establishment of his authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ and, not by his own actions, but by the direct will of God (Acts 9). He also recognizes the presence of Timothy who seems to not be involved in the writing of the epistle. The recipients are quickly identified as saints and faithful brothers in Jesus Christ so that he assures them that he recognizes them as fellow Christians. He then asks for the grace and peace of God our Father to be with them. Saying that God is **our** Father is another indication of his recognition of them as true believers. Some translations will use the word “holy” instead of “saints” as above. The meaning

is the same since “holy” means to be set apart for God and “saints” are people declared holy before God because of the double imputation (our sins put into the account of Jesus who paid the penalty for them and the holiness of Jesus is put into our accounts as stated in 2 Cor 5:21). Faithful implies the loyalty of these people to Jesus and the obeying of His commandments:

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

The use of the word “brethren” or “brothers” is a statement of the adoption of Christians into the family of God and is a term of affection often used by Paul in reference to fellow Christians. All Christians are “in Christ” because we are united with Him. The Greek word translated “grace” is “charis” and means having the favor of God. It is often used by Paul in his writings and is always used in a very serious sense. The Greek word translated “peace” is “eirene” and does not have the worldly meaning but it means spiritual prosperity:

Matt 10:34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

Col 1:3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Col 1:4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;

Col 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel,

Col 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

Col 1:7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf,

Col 1:8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

Paul then gives them more assurances of his belief that they are true followers of the “real” Jesus Christ. I have to put the word “real” in front of Jesus Christ because then and now there are people proclaiming a false Jesus Christ:

2Cor 11:4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

We should note that he begins by giving thanks to God because He is the one responsible for the redemption of these people. He also is clear about who God is in that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He also makes it known to them that he prays for them continually so that they are always in his mind and heart. In verses four through eight he explains why he is thankful for the work of God in them. He mentions four reasons for his thanksgiving: their faith in Christ Jesus, the love they have for all of the saints, the hope that is stored for them in heaven, and the fruit that they are bearing. Paul heard of all these marvelous attributes from Epaphras who also told Paul and his fellow workers (probably Timothy and Luke, at least) of their love in the Spirit. These verses then also speak of the influence of the entire Trinity. Faith is a gift of God:

*Rom 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as **God has allotted to each a measure of faith.***

Paul uses the Greek word “agape” for “love” and that means a love that is not reduced regardless of any sacrifice required to maintain the action. It is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit and is again a statement of Paul’s knowledge that they are true Christians. The Greek word of hope is “elpis” and in this context means not an emotion or joyful expectation, but it denotes the thing that is hoped for (note he says “that is laid up for you in heaven”) as stated in the following:

Gal 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The reference is to the glorious heavenly reward awaiting the people of God. He states that the faith, love, and hope was revealed to them by the preaching of the Gospel message by Epaphras and is probably spoken in contrast to the false messages they have been receiving lately. He then states how the bearing of fruit is in all the world and increasing. He is exaggerating about the territory involved but he is also stating that such will occur. They had been bearing this fruit ever since they had heard **and** understood the truthful grace of God. Anyone can hear the Gospel message but only those whom God has redeemed can understand that grace.

Matt 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Paul then gives some characteristics of Epaphras. This name is probably the shortened form of the name Epaphroditus who is mentioned also in Col 4:12, 13 and Philemon 23. This is not the same person mentioned in Phil 2:23; 4:18 because he was a resident of the province of Macedonia and this Epaphras is a resident of the province of Asia. Paul makes three wonderful

statements about this person: he is a beloved fellow bond-servant, he is a faithful servant of Jesus Christ for the sake of Paul and his fellow workers in the faith, and he informed them of the love in the Spirit of the Christians at Colossae. This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in this book.

Col 1:9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Col 1:10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col 1:11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

Col 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Col 1:13 For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

Col 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul asserts the previous verses for the reason that he has prayed for them. His prayers have two focuses: the *first* is that they might be filled with the knowledge of His will and the *second* is that their walk would reflect that true knowledge. To be filled with knowledge means that our entire being is permeated with that knowledge. The Greek word for “knowledge” used here is “epignosis” and we note that it is a compound of the word “gnosis” that he probably is using in reference to the false truth being given to these people by the pre-Gnostic teachers as referred to in the introduction. The word Paul used probably refers to the deep and accurate, or thorough, knowledge of the will of God as he goes on to state that it is in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. *His second prayer* is for their use of this knowledge in all that they do and say. The knowledge of God is not just an intellectual pursuit but is to form the basis for our total walk in the world. Every profession of a Christian is to be lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and every thing we do, say, and think should be immersed in that knowledge. It is only in living life in this manner that we can “please God in all respects”. To walk worthy of the Lord is to be pleasing to Him in all that we do. We represent Christ to the world and so our walk must be in harmony with Him and the church must show that unity to the world:

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

John 17:22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

He then states some attributes of a life that pleases God. It will bear fruit, grow in the knowledge, be strengthened for service, and joyfully giving thanks to God. As said earlier, bearing fruit is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the children of God and that fruit will be a witness to the world of the works of Jesus Christ. As children of God, we should have an insatiable appetite for the Word of God. The more “real” knowledge we obtain and use in our walk in the world the more of that knowledge we desire so that we can continuously grow in our representation of Him to the world. Knowledge without application can be hypocritical but knowledge that makes us act more like Him is the goal of the Christian. The strengthening with the power of God is to make our service to the Kingdom more effective in our lives and in the lives of those to whom we witness and disciple. The result in the life of the child of God is to attain steadfastness and patience as we walk according to His vision for our life:

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

According to all of this mercy from God we certainly give thanks joyously. When we look at what we are thankful for, we certainly should be full of joy: qualified us for inheritance, delivered us from darkness, and transferred us to Jesus’ kingdom. It is in Jesus we have redemption in the forgiveness of our sins. Our qualification for inheritance refers to that already given to those saints who are already in the light:

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

We are then in the same light as that of all of God’s children of all time. God delivered us from the darkness of the realm of Satan who we had followed:

Eph 2:1-5 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Darkness relates to sin, falsehood, and ignorance and is the domain of Satan and his servants. God then transferred us to the kingdom of Jesus:

Eph 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

The kingdom of Jesus began at His resurrection and does not imply some specific geographic region but the hearts of people everywhere who belong to Him. It is important to note the present tense of all of the above so that it is all available to us now and here! He follows this wonderful message with the affirmation that all of the above is for us through the work of Jesus Christ who provided our redemption, our forgiveness of sins that we have now and forever. Wow!

Col 1:15 And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.

Col 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Col 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.

The word “and” means that what follows is a continuation of what preceded. The major heresy of the false teachers at Colossae was the declaration of a Jesus other than that of the Gospel. I will repeat another statement of Paul because it is applicable here:

2Cor 11:4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

Remember that Jesus Christ had died and been resurrected just about 30 years prior to the writing of this letter and people were already twisting the truth because Satan had lost big time at the resurrection. People continue to teach another Jesus as do the Mormons and the Muslims. It is amazing that some teach that Jesus was just a great teacher when, if we carefully examine His teachings, He must be declared either as a mad man or an evil man. The Jews thought Him evil and others think He was insane because He said that He was one with the Father. Paul began his refutation of the false teachings by stating the truth about Jesus Christ. In these four verses, Paul relates Jesus to deity, to creation, and to the church. In the false teachings, such actions were given to angels. In Galatians and Romans Paul had to defend the importance of Jesus in salvation and here he has to defend the cosmic significance of Jesus.

The Greek word translated “image” is “eikon” and relates the concepts of likeness and manifestation. So Jesus is the image of the invisible God in that His incarnation brings Him within our sensory perception but with God being perfectly revealed in Him:

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

We Christians are also being transformed into this image in our sanctification process that will only be completed at our glorification:

2Cor 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

1John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

That Jesus is the first-born of all creation has to be carefully interpreted. The Greek word translated first-born is “prototokos” and is also used in Rom 8:29 and Heb 1:6:

Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

Heb 1:6 And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

The word “first-born” may mean priority in time and supremacy in rank. From the other three verses Paul affirms that Jesus was involved in the creation of the universe and that He is involved in the maintenance of the universe. Thus Paul is not saying that Jesus as God was created but that He was given a body that, after His resurrection, was glorified in the form that will be the same for us after our glorification (1John 3:2). We see that Jesus then was before all things and still became like a man so that He could suffer the penalty for our sins. The word “for” in verse 16 is in explanation of verse 15 to yield the interpretation just given. God established the first-born concept among humans in that such a man would be the main inheritor of all owned by the father and he would be in charge of the estate. This human setting helped to understand that Jesus is the Father’s heir and is in charge of all creation.

In verses 16 and 17 we see that Jesus created all things and that the creation was for Him, that He existed before any created thing, and that He holds creation intact. Carol and I have verse 17 as our marriage verse! The Father then mediated the creation of the universe and all in that universe both through Jesus and for Him. Since the heresy consisted of supernatural beings, it may be that Paul is saying that whatever beings exist they were made by Jesus. That Jesus is holding all creation together is fascinating as we see that He is responsible for the existing order of creation instead of what could have been chaos. Since Paul said “all things” are held together, he is including the visible and the invisible.

In verse 18, Paul states that Jesus, and Him alone, is sovereign over the church. The word “church” translates the Greek word “ekklesia” and means the assembly or congregation. Paul also calls it the “body”. The meaning of the combination is that the church is the body of Christ in that it is an organic whole consisting of the living parts of each child of God. Jesus had previously prayed for the unity of believers:

John 17:20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

Paul further states that Jesus is “the beginning” and by such he means the source of the creative beginning so that He is the origin and source of the church. He again uses the word “first-born”, but in this context (and the following words) he means the first person to be resurrected from the dead, never to die again. This statement further places Him as Head of the church. He ends these powerful verses by saying that Jesus alone has preeminence over all creation and especially the church. Paul has thus established an argument to counter the false teachers who proclaimed other spiritual forces were involved in the church.

**Col 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him,
Col 1:20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
Col 1:21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,**

Col 1:22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--

Col 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

These five verses continue the crescendo of this chapter to establish the fact that Jesus is the Gospel message. Col 2:9 helps us understand the meaning of the word “fulness” in Col 1:19:

Col 2:9 For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

This verse is critical in defeating the concepts of Gnosticism either in its elementary form in Paul’s time or as it flourished in the second century and today in various forms. Paul is saying that God the Father, by His good pleasure, placed all attributes of Deity upon Jesus in His incarnation. The word “dwell” means that the full Deity is in Jesus forever. The early Gnostics taught that there were a series of angelic beings between material man and God and that Jesus

was one of them but all of them were needed for man to communicate with God. They thought of all material as evil so God could not dwell in a human form. Paul is telling them that Jesus was and is totally God and totally human although after His resurrection He exists in a glorified human form in heaven with the Father.

Beginning with verse 20, Paul begins to give us the Gospel message. It was through Jesus Christ that God reconciled all things to Himself. God worked through Jesus to change everything from an enmity to a friendship relationship to Him. The word “reconcile” means also to change for all time with no possibility of genuine friendship reverting to enmity. He then tells us the detail that this reconciliation was done through the death of Jesus on the cross. He then makes us know that this change affects all of creation, both the material things and the immaterial things. However we must be clear that Paul is not teaching universalism for justice will come to all creation either from the work of Jesus for His people or for the eternal punishment of those not included in the work of Jesus.

Matt 25:46 "And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Paul also states in the Scripture below that all of creation will be affected ultimately by the work of Jesus Christ as everything will be subdued and subject directly to the purposes of God:

Rom 8:19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

Rom 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

Rom 8:21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

In verse 21 Paul states the original state of all people before an application of the work of Jesus to us by the Holy Spirit. Paul also wrote such a state for us in verses I already quoted:

Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

In verse 22 Paul gives the “but God” although he uses the word “yet”:

*Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,
Eph 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by
grace you have been saved),*

It is remarkable to me that, although I was an enemy of God, He had mercy on me and reconciled me with Him through the blood of Jesus. He did that so that I and all the chosen ones could be presented to Him in a pure state because of the double imputation of my sins paid for totally by Jesus and the righteousness of Jesus being placed on my account:

*2Cor 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the
righteousness of God in Him.*

There is an “if” in verse 23, but it does not depend upon our works that will keep us in the faith. Those who have really been redeemed are kept in faith forever by the works of God. We continue in our walk in the world as we waffle from righteous to sinful behavior but, if we have really been redeemed, we will persevere. Some verses of assurance of salvation include:

*Phil 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect
it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

John 3:15 that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

*John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever
believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

*John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall
not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

*John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has
eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*

*John 6:40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in
Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."*

John 6:47 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Many of you know that I have a high view of the meaning of the word “faith”. There is a legitimate usage of the word to mean “church doctrine” as when one talks about the Roman Catholic faith. However here it means what I usually mean when I use the word. It means our personal faith that was given to us by God:

*Rom 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more
highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has
allotted to each a measure of faith.*

Paul next states that the gospel message was not hidden from the world and only available to those with some special insights into the hidden things of the spirit world as proclaimed by the pseudo-Gnostics. He also clearly lets them know that he was made a minister of that gospel message and not that he is self-proclaimed, as were the false teachers.

Col 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

This verse has received considerable discussion over many years. One thing this verse cannot mean is that Paul thinks the efficacy of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ was in any way insufficient for the redemption of God's chosen people. Some of the Roman Catholic Church and other religions have taught that more personal works are required by people in addition to the work of Jesus Christ. The word "now" is almost like a "therefore" in that the full efficacy of the work of Jesus has previously been clearly stated and so he can now rejoice in his sufferings for their sake since the redemption work for them was done by Jesus. Since he says "in my flesh", we know that he is talking about physical trauma that was done to him in opposition to his proclamation of the gospel. From other uses of the Greek word translated "afflictions", we also know that word refers to physical trauma rather than the spiritual trauma of the Cross. At the Cross, Jesus paid the spiritual penalty for all of the sins of all of God's chosen people. Jesus also suffered much physical trauma in His life here but that trauma has been continued in the lives of all the saints of all time. The oneness of the church with Christ is so complete that He suffers when the church suffers as exemplified by what He told Paul:

Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

What Paul is then fulfilling regarding this trauma is the suffering of Christ through Paul. This completion of the lacking of affliction has then been continuing throughout time and will continue until the end.

Col 1:25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,

Col 1:26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but has now been manifested to His saints,

Col 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Col 1:28 And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.

Col 1:29 And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Paul is clear that his suffering is for the church of Jesus Christ and for that purpose he was made a minister (the word simply means “one who serves”.) He then makes it clear that his being a minister was assigned by God. The word “oikonomian” is probably best translated as “stewardship” as in the NAS used above and means that he thought of his work as a high privilege and a sacred trust from God for a very specific charge such as how he phrased it in his letter to the Ephesians:

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

In this instance, the stewardship is to preach the Word to this church at Colossae. He next makes clear what the message contains. The Greek word translated mystery is “mysterion” and it always is used in the NT for truth that is only discoverable by divine revelation and is otherwise a secret from the world. However it also denotes a truth that has been fully revealed by God in the gospel, but only to the saints. Being hidden from past ages and generations means all those who lived prior to the time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The mystery is that redemption had been planned since before creation for the Gentiles to be included in God’s plan as well as the Jews. The revelation is now complete and Paul is rejoicing at this news he is conveying to the church at Colossae. He proclaims the mystery to include “Christ in you” rather than Christ with you, so he is here making this indwelling presence of Jesus Christ to be the hope of glory to come to all God’s chosen people.

Paul then in verse 28 proclaims that he is proclaiming this Jesus Christ to them in a way to prepare them for their judgment day for their works (not for their salvation). “Proclaiming” Jesus is much stronger than “preaching” Him and carries with it the idea of authority. He will admonish every man regarding their need for repentance and this may include both saved and unsaved people. “Teaching” involves imparting the knowledge of the works of Jesus and the responsibility of the people to apply the works in their lives and would be suitable for the redeemed. That he will admonish and teach with all wisdom means with the wisdom of God rather than the wisdom of men. The false teachers were teaching only from the wisdom of men so he is probably making this statement to augment the difference in his message from that of the false teachers. His goal is that every person chosen by God would be made complete in Christ. “Complete” or “perfect” does not mean done to the absolute standards of Jesus Christ but done in regard to the mission of each child of God. Such perfection is only possible if the person is “in Christ”. “Labor” translates a Greek word meaning a strenuous toiling or using all of his strength as done by an athlete striving for an excellent performance. However this labor is not just in his strength but according to the power of God working in him. Each child of God can do so also.