

Colossians - J B Lightfoot

COLOSSIANS 1

1:1-2: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by no personal merit but by God's gracious will alone, and Timothy, our brother in the faith, to the consecrated people of God in Colosse, the brethren who are steadfast in their allegiance and faithful in Christ. May grace—the well-spring of all mercies—and peace—the crown of all blessings—be bestowed upon you from God our Father.

1:3-8: We never cease to pour forth our thanksgiving to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, on your account whenever we pray to him. We are full of thankfulness for the tidings of the faith which you have in Christ Jesus and the love which you show towards all God's people while you look forward to the hope which is stored up for you in heaven as a treasure for the life to come. This hope was communicated to you in those earlier lessons, when the Gospel was preached to you in its purity and integrity—the one universal unchangeable Gospel which was made known to you, even as it was carried throughout the world, approving itself by its fruits wherever it is planted. For, as elsewhere, so also in you, these fruits were manifested from the first day when you received your lessons in, and apprehended the power of, the genuine Gospel, which is not a law of ordinances but a dispensation of grace, not a device of men but a truth of God. Such was the word preached to you by Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant in our Master's household, who in our absence and on our behalf has ministered to you the Gospel of Christ and who now brings back to us the welcome tidings of the love which you show in the Spirit

1:9-14: Hearing then that you thus abound in works of faith and love, we on our part have not ceased, from the day when we received the happy tidings, to pray on your behalf. And this is the purport of our petitions; that you may grow more and more in knowledge, until you attain to the perfect understanding of God's will, being endowed with all wisdom to apprehend his verities and all intelligence to follow his processes, living in the mind of the Spirit—to the end that knowledge may manifest itself in practice, that your conduct in life may be worthy of your profession in the Lord, so as in all ways to win for you the gracious favor of God your King. Thus, while you bear fruit in every good work, you will also grow as the tree grows, being watered and refreshed by this knowledge, as by the dew of heaven: thus you will be strengthened in all strength, according to that power which enters in and spreads from his glorious manifestation of himself, and nerved to all endurance under affliction and all long-suffering under provocation, not only without complaining, but even with joy: thus finally (for this is the crown of all), so rejoicing you will pour out your thanksgiving to the universal Father, who prepared and fitted us all—you and us alike—to take possession of the portion which his goodness has allotted to us among the saints in the kingdom of his light. Yes, by a strong arm he rescued us from the lawless tyranny of darkness, removed us from the land of our bondage, and settled us as free citizens in our new and glorious home, where his Son, the offspring and the representative of his love, is King; even the same who paid our ransom and thus procured our redemption from captivity—our redemption, which (be assured) is nothing else than the remission of our sins

1:15-17: He is the perfect image, the visible representation, of the unseen God. He is the Firstborn, the absolute Heir of the Father, begotten before the ages; the Lord of the universe by virtue of primogeniture, and by virtue also of creative agency. For in and through him the whole world was created, things in heaven and things on earth, things visible to the outward eye and things cognizable by the inward perception. His supremacy is absolute and universal. All powers in heaven and earth are subject to him. This subjection extends even to the most exalted and most potent of angelic beings, whether they are called thrones or dominations or principedoms or powers, or whatever title of dignity men may confer on them. Yes: he is the first and he is the last. Through him, as the mediatorial Word, the universe has been created; and unto him, as the final goal, it is tending. In him is no before or after. He is preexistent and self-existent before all the worlds. And in him, as the binding and sustaining power, universal nature coheres and consists

1:18-19 Not Available

1:20-23... because he willed through him to reconcile the universe once more to himself. It was God's purpose to effect peace and harmony through the blood of Christ's cross, and so to restore all things, whatsoever and wheresoever they be, whether on the earth or in the heavens. And you too—you Gentiles—are included in the terms of this peace. In times past you had estranged yourselves from God. Your hearts were hostile to him while you lived on in your evil deeds. But now, in Christ's body, in Christ's flesh which died on the cross for your atonement, you are reconciled to him again. He will present you a living sacrifice, an acceptable offering to himself, free from blemish and free even from censure, that you may stand the piercing glance of him whose scrutiny no defect can escape. But this can only be if you remain true to your old allegiance, if you hold fast (as I trust you are holding fast) by the teaching of Epaphras, if the edifice of your faith is built on solid foundations and not reared carelessly on the sands, if you suffer not yourselves to be shifted or shaken but rest firmly on the hope which you have found in the Gospel—the one universal unchangeable Gospel which was proclaimed to every creature under heaven, of which I Paul, unworthy as I am, was called to be a minister

1:24-27: Now when I see the full extent of God's mercy, now when I ponder over his mighty work of reconciliation, I cannot choose

but rejoice in my sufferings. Yes, I Paul the persecutor, I Paul the feeble and sinful, am permitted to supplement—I do not shrink from the word—to supplement the afflictions of Christ. Despite all that he underwent, the Master has left something for me the servant to undergo. And so my flesh is privileged to suffer for his body—his spiritual body, the church. I was appointed a minister of the church, a steward in God's household, for this very purpose, that I might administer my office on your behalf, might dispense to you Gentiles the stores which his bountiful grace has provided. Thus I was charged to preach without reserve the whole Gospel of God, to proclaim the great mystery which had remained a secret through all the ages and all the generations, but which now in these last times was revealed to his holy people. For such was his good pleasure. God willed to make known to them, in all its inexhaustible wealth thus displayed through the call of the Gentiles, the glorious revelation of this mystery—Christ not the Saviour of the Jews only, but Christ dwelling in you, Christ become to you the hope of glory.

1:28-29: This Christ we, the apostles and evangelists, proclaim without distinction and without reserve. We know no restriction either of people or of topics. We admonish every man and instruct every man. We initiate every man in all the mysteries of wisdom. It is our single aim to present every man fully and perfectly taught in Christ. For this end I train myself in the discipline of self-denial; for this end I commit myself to the arena of suffering and toil, putting forth in the conflict all that energy which he inspires, and which works in me so powerfully

COLOSSIANS 2

2:1-3 I spoke of an arena and a conflict in describing my apostolic labors. The image was not lightly chosen. I would have you know that my care is not confined to my own direct and personal disciples. I wish you to understand the magnitude of the struggle which my anxiety for you costs me—for you and for your neighbors of Laodicea, and for all who, like yourselves, have never met me face to face in the flesh. I am constantly wrestling in spirit, that the hearts of all such may be confirmed and strengthened in the faith; that they may be united in love; that they may attain to all the unspeakable wealth which comes from the firm conviction of an understanding mind, may be brought to the perfect knowledge of God's mystery, which is nothing else than Christ—Christ containing in himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden away

2:4-8 I do not say this without a purpose. I wish to warn you against anyone who wants to lead you astray by specious argument and persuasive rhetoric. For I am not an indifferent spectator of your doings. I am absent from you in my body, but I am present with you in my spirit. I rejoice to behold the orderly array and the solid phalanx which your faith toward Christ presents against the assaults of the foe. I entreat you therefore not to abandon the Christ, as you learnt from Epaphras to know him, even Jesus the Lord, but to continue to walk in him as you have done so far. I want you to be firmly rooted, once for all, in him. I desire to see you built up higher in him day by day, to see you growing even stronger and stronger through your faith, while you remain true to the lessons you have been taught, so that you may abound in it, and thus abounding may pour out your heart in gratitude to God, the giver of everything. Be on your guard; do not suffer yourselves to fall prey to certain people who would lead you captive by a hollow and deceitful system, which they call philosophy. They substitute the traditions of men for the truth of God. They enforce an elementary discipline of mundane ordinances fit only for children. Theirs is not the gospel of Christ.

2:9-15 In Christ the entire fullness of the Godhead abides forever, having united itself with man by taking a human body. And so in him—not in any inferior mediators—you have your life, your being, for you are filled from his fullness. He, I say, is the head over all spiritual beings—call them principalities or powers or what you will. In him too you have the true circumcision—the circumcision which is not made with hands but wrought by the Spirit—the circumcision which divests not of a part only but of the whole carnal body—the circumcision which is not of Moses but of Christ. This circumcision you have because you were buried with Christ to your old selves beneath the baptismal waters and were raised with him from those same waters to a new and regenerate life through your faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. Yes, you—you Gentiles who before were dead, when you walked in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your unchastened carnal heathen heart—even you did God bring alive together with Christ, then and there freely forgiving all of us—Jews and Gentiles alike—all our transgressions, then and there canceling the bond which stood valid against us (for it bore our own signature), the bond which engaged us to fulfill all the law of ordinances, which was our stern pitiless tyrant. Yes, this very bond Christ has put out of sight forever, nailing it to his cross and rending it with his body and killing it in his death. Taking on him our human nature, he stripped off and cast aside all the powers of evil which clung to it like a poisonous garment. As a mighty conqueror he displayed these his fallen enemies to an astonished world, leading them in triumph on his cross.

2:16-19 Seeing then that the bond is canceled, that the law of ordinances is repealed, beware of subjecting yourselves to its tyranny again. Suffer no man to call you to account in the matter of eating or drinking, or again over the observance of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are only shadows thrown in advance, only types of things to come. The substance, the reality, in every case belongs to the Gospel of Christ. The prize is now fairly within your reach. Do not suffer yourselves to be robbed of it by any stratagem of the false teachers. Their religion is an officious humility which displays itself in the worship of angels. They make a parade of their visions, but they are following an empty phantom. They profess humility, but they are puffed up with their vaunted wisdom, which is after all only the mind of the flesh. Meanwhile, they have substituted inferior spiritual agencies for the One true

Mediator, the Eternal Word. Clinging to these lower intelligences, they have lost their hold on the Head; they have severed their link with him on whom the whole body depends, from whom it derives its vitality, and to whom it owes its unity, being supplied with nourishment and knit together in one by means of the several joints and attachments, so that it grows with a growth which comes from God himself.

2:20-23 You died with Christ to your old life. All mundane relations have ceased for you. Why then do you—you who have attained your spiritual manhood—submit still to the rudimentary discipline of children? Why do you—you who are citizens of heaven—bow your necks afresh to the tyranny of material ordinances as though you were still living in the world? It is the same old story again; the same round of hard, meaningless, vexatious prohibitions, “Handle not,” “Taste not,” “Touch not.” What folly! All these things—these meats and drinks and the like—are earthly, perishable, wholly trivial and unimportant! They have already been used, and there is an end of them. What is this but to draw down on yourselves the denunciations uttered by the prophet of old? What is this but to abandon God’s word for precepts which are issued by human authority and inculcated by human teachers? All such things have a show of wisdom, I grant. There is an officious parade of religious devotion, an eager affectation of humility; there is a stern ascetic rigor which ill-treats the body. But there is nothing of any real value to check indulgence of the flesh.

COLOSSIANS 3

3:1-4 If this be so, if you were raised with Christ, if you were translated into heaven, what follows? Why, you must realize the change. All your aims must center in heaven, where reigns the Christ who has thus exalted you, enthroned on God’s right hand. All your thoughts must abide in heaven, not on the earth. For, I say it once again, you have nothing to do with mundane things: you died once for all to the world: you are living another life. This life indeed is hidden now: it has no outward splendor as men count splendor; for it is a life with Christ, a life in God. But the veil will not always shroud it. Christ, our life, will be manifested hereafter; then you also will be manifested with him and the world will see your glory.

3:5-11 So then realize this death to the world; kill all your earthly members. Is it fornication, impurity of whatever kind, passion, evil desire? Or again, is it that covetousness which makes a religion, an idolatry of greed? Do not deceive yourselves. For all these things God’s wrath will surely come. In these sins you, like other Gentiles, indulged in times past, when your life was spent among them. But now everything is changed. Now you also must put away not this or that desire, but all sins, whatever they are. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, filthy abuse; banish it from your lips. Be not false to each other in word or deed; but throw off forever the old man with his actions, and put on the new, who is renewed from day to day, growing to perfect knowledge and refashioned after the image of his Creator. In this new life, in this regenerate man, there is not, there cannot be, any distinction between Greek or Jew, between circumcision or uncircumcision; there is no room for barbarian, for Scythian, for slave or free. Christ has displaced, has annihilated, all these; Christ is himself all things and in all things

3:12-15 Therefore, as the elect of God, as a people consecrated to his service and specially endowed with his love, array yourselves in hearts of compassion, in kindness and humility, in a gentle and yielding spirit. Bear with one another; forgive freely among yourselves. As your Master forgave you his servants, so ought you to forgive your fellow servants. And over all these robe yourselves in love; for this is the garment which binds together all the graces of perfection. And let the one supreme umpire in your hearts, the one referee in the middle of your difficulties, be the peace of Christ, which is the destined goal of your Christian calling, in which is realized the unity belonging to members of one body. Lastly, show your gratitude by your thanksgiving.

3:16-17 Let the inspiring word of Christ dwell in your hearts, enriching you with its boundless wealth and endowing you with all wisdom. Teach and admonish one another with psalms, with hymns of praise, with spiritual songs of all kinds. Only let them be pervaded with grace from heaven. Sing to God in your hearts and not with your lips only. And generally, whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, let everything be done in the name of Jesus Christ. And (again I repeat it) pour out your thanksgiving to God the Father through him

3:18-21 You wives, be subject to your husbands, for so it becomes you in Christ. You husbands, love and cherish your wives, and use no harshness toward them. You children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is commendable and lovely in Christ. You parents, vex not your children, lest they lose heart and grow sullen.

3:23-25 You slaves, be obedient in all things to the masters set over you in the flesh, not rendering them service only when their eyes are upon you, as aiming merely to please men, but serving in all sincerity of heart, as living in the sight of your heavenly Master and standing in awe of him. And in everything that you do, work faithfully and with all your soul, as laboring not for men, but for the great Lord and Master himself, knowing that you have a Master from whom you will receive the glorious inheritance as your recompense, whether or not you may be defrauded of your due by men. Yes, Christ is your Master, and you are his slaves. He that does a wrong shall be requited for his wrongdoing

COLOSSIANS 4

4:1 Therefore, you masters, do you also on your part deal justly and equitably by your slaves, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

4:2-6 Be earnest and unceasing in prayer; keep your hearts and minds awake while praying; remember also (as I have so often told you) that thanksgiving is the goal and crown of prayer. Meanwhile, in your petitions forget not us—myself Paul—my fellow laborer Timothy—your evangelist Epaphras—all the teachers of the Gospel. Pray that God may open a door for the preaching of the Word, to the end that we may proclaim the free offer of grace to the Gentiles—that great mystery of Christ for which I am now a prisoner in bonds. So shall I declare it fearlessly, as I am bound to proclaim it. Walk wisely and discreetly in all your dealings with unbelievers; allow no opportunity to slip through your hands, but buy up every passing moment. Let your language be always pervaded with grace and seasoned with salt. So will you know how to give a fit answer to each man, as the occasion demand

4:7-9 You will learn everything about me from Tychicus, the beloved brother who has ministered to me and served with me faithfully in the Lord. This indeed was my purpose in sending him to you: that you might be informed how matters stand with me, and that he might cheer your hearts and strengthen your resolves by those tidings. Onesimus will accompany him—a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of yourselves, a Colossian. Those two will inform you of all that is going on here.

4:10-14 I send you greeting from Aristarchus who is a fellow prisoner with me; from Marcus, Barnabas' cousin, concerning whom I have already sent you directions, that you welcome him heartily if he pays you a visit; and from Jesus, surnamed Justus; all three Hebrew converts. They alone of their fellow countrymen have worked loyally with me in spreading the kingdom of God; and their steadfastness has indeed been a comfort to me in the hour of trial. Greeting also from Epaphras, your fellow townsman, a true servant of Christ, who is ever wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, that you may stand firm in the faith, perfectly instructed and fully convinced in every will and purpose of God. I bear testimony to the earnestness with which he labors for you and the brethren of Laodicea and those of Hierapolis. Greeting also from Luke the physician, my very dear friend, and from Demas

4:15-17 Greet from me the brethren who are in Laodicea, especially Nympha and the church which assembles in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, take care that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and be sure that you also read the letter which I have sent to Laodicea and which you will get from them. Moreover, give this message from me to Archippus: Take heed to the ministry which you have received from me in Christ, and discharge it fully and faithfully

4:18 I add this salutation with my own hand, signing it with my name Paul. Be mindful of my bonds. God's grace be with you