

## Correction in Colossae

Colossians 1:1-2

02/16/2020

Open your Bibles, please to Colossians chapter 1. I will read from verse 1 through 8, but we will devote most of our attention to verses 1 and 2

“ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

<sup>2</sup>To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

### **Thanksgiving and Prayer**

<sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, <sup>5</sup>because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, <sup>6</sup>which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, <sup>7</sup>just as you learned it from Epaphras, <sup>7</sup>our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf <sup>8</sup>and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. <sup>1</sup>”

Today, I want to give a bit of a background and over view of this epistle, since we are beginning a new series in this wonderful book.....And.....Since we are in a new book, let me encourage you to become familiar with it.....it is only 4 chapters, so please take the time to read through it a few times over the next several weeks.....the more familiar you are with this book, the greater benefit you will receive from it's weekly exposition.

I already mentioned when we worked our way through Philemon, that the letter to Philemon and the letter to the Colossians were delivered at the same time from the same location by the same people. We know from the book of Philemon that Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon who lived in Colossae and there was a church in his house;

and we know from Colossians 4:9 that Onesimus was delivering the letter to the Colossian church along with Tychicus. And, nearly every name in Philemon is mentioned in the book of Colossians..... So there is a link to these two epistles.

---

1 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 1:1–8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

As we move, now from the book of Philemon to the book of Colossians, we want to first look at why the book was written; Once we establish why, then we will dive into verses 1 and 2; and look at the author, the recipients, and Paul's standard greeting of grace and peace.....since this is an introduction, it will be more instructional than usual, and lay some of the ground work for the weeks ahead.....

Let me begin by saying that when you read through your New Testament, and the epistles in particular, you need to understand that all of them were written with a specific purpose or purposes in mind..... whether the letter was addressed to a church like the letter to the Ephesians..... or to a group or region like the letter of I Peter.....when you begin to familiarize yourself with the content of each epistle, you begin to see that the apostles wrote in order to instruct, , exhort, encourage..... but also to rebuke and correct faulty thinking, unholy living, and false teaching.

For instance, I have mentioned a number of times that in the letter to the church in Corinth Paul rebuked them for showing favoritism for becoming specific followers of Peter, or Apollos or even Paul..... He also rebuked them for their lack of dealing with a man living in an openly immoral relationship..... he corrected their behavior at the Lord's supper; and he corrected the chaos and lack of structure that was taken place during their church services, among many other things;

In his letter to the churches in Galatia, he sternly rebuked them for deserting Christ and turning to a different gospel, a gospel of works instead of the gospel of grace that they had heard and believed..... You see, there was a purpose in writing these letters..... problems arose in the church, and the apostles wrote to correct them....

The book of Colossians is no different..... Paul is writing a letter to these Colossian believers because he needs to correct their thinking... And, when you think of how quickly wrong thinking that will lead to false doctrine crept into the early church, it should not be a surprise to us that it happens just as rapidly today.....

We know that Christ died and rose again sometime in around 33 A.D. The gospel came to the city of Colossae sometime around 49 or 50 A.D. At that time the church was started, it quickly began to grow and bear fruit..... and what is so amazing is that we know that Paul is writing this letter from a Roman prison in about 60 to 62 A.D. So, this letter is written to correct the false teaching and the direction of the church within 10 years of them starting off walking faithfully

Is it possible for a church to begin to drift Just 10 years or so after believing the truth of the good news about salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Is it possible for a man centered, philosophical, moralistic, Christless belief system to infiltrate a church within a

decade of its inception? 10 years? Is that possible? Of course it is.....it doesn't always happen that fast, but the entire New Testament record indicates that false teaching is always lurking.....

Remember, in Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian Elders in Acts 20? Go ahead and turn there.....In verses 29 and 30, it is almost shocking that he tells the elders of the church "I know that after my departure fierce wolves **will come in among you**, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and **from among your own selves** will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>2</sup>"

I don't know about you, but if I were there, I would be looking at the other leaders in the church almost like the disciples looked at each other when Jesus said, "One of you will betray me....." I first would be wondering.... is it him? will it be him? then, I would think, "Will it be me?" Who will be the leaders that begin to speak twisted things and false things, untrue things?

At first, you wonder what Paul is talking about.... the false teachers will arise among the elders in the church? really? ..... but the truth is, the danger of false teaching isn't from the liberal religious wing that we don't interact with..... who are trying to deny the historical Jesus or deny miracles in the Bible.... Or who do not believe Jesus is God..... no! that is not the danger.....most of us view that as ridiculous..... No..... the danger of false teaching is here, among us..... in our churches among our own ranks.....

This is why Paul told Timothy in his first letter to him, "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, <sup>4</sup> nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. <sup>31</sup>"

Timothy is not out in the halls of greater religious academia contending for the faith..... NO..... he is in the church, correcting someone who might be teaching error in a home bible Study..... or correcting someone who is teaching error in an adult Sunday School class.... He is dealing with issues in the church.

Clearly the point throughout the New Testament is that the church needs to be protected from false teaching.....and when it either creeps in slowly..... or is invited to come in through the front door, there needs to be a corrective..... and we will see this in the book of Colossians.....

As we work our way through the book, it won't be hard to see that the one prevailing thought that had infiltrated this church was a diminished view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ac 20:29–30). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (1 Ti 1:3–4). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

seeing Christ as the divine creator, the redeemer, the only provision for our sin, and the One who aids us in our continuation of the faith, the Colossians began looking toward outside means to make them holy or righteous in their own effort.

They were trusting in outward regulations to make and keep themselves pure instead of God continuing to work through Christ. The corrective to these errant thoughts, these false ideas is biblical view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Which Paul declares over and over and over again in the book of Colossians.

One theologian says of the Epistle to the Colossians, "The doctrine of the Person of Christ is here stated with greater precision and fulness than in any other of St. Paul's epistles." <sup>4</sup>

The teaching that infiltrated the church in Colossae was a blending of Old Testament Jewish myth, Greek philosophy, spirituality, and a moralism that communicated that righteousness is based on self effort and self denial.....

In chapter 2 verse 8, he writes,

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, " Down to verse 16,

"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath." Verse 18, "<sup>18</sup> Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, " Then down to verse 20, " If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— <sup>21</sup> "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" <sup>22</sup> (referring to things that all perish as they are used)— according to human precepts and teachings? <sup>23</sup> These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. "

now, obviously, we are not going to explain these today..... but do you see the issues that this church is facing? Man made philosophy, human tradition, being judged for what you eat or drink, whether you should celebrate festivals, Sabbath keeping, angel worship, and even self denial in order to gain some sort of victory over fleshly indulgences.....

And once we walk through this, and we understand what these were in the first century, I know you will see that these same false ideas are either in the church or at it's door step even to this day. I remember reading John Newton's biography, he is the the former slave trader, who God

---

<sup>4</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Php 4:19). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

saved, called into the ministry, and the person who wrote Amazing Grace. He was a good and godly pastor a few hundred years ago.....

after he became a Christian, and after he was married..... when he was 25 years old, whenever he had to spend time away from his wife, he would purposely put himself on a strict diet of water and vegetables. He did this, he would say, "in order to control the sexual urges and temptations he would face when he and his wife were apart" ..... He thought that physical self denial of certain foods would keep him from temptation, would keep him pure.

By God's grace he remained faithful, but I don't think the diet had anything to do with it..... as Paul states in verse 23, this idea of self denial has the appearance of wisdom, asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. His lusts are internal heart issues, not issues that can be resolved through external means.

My point in bringing up this example in Newton's life is simply to show that these philosophies and false ideas were prevalent in Paul's day, were still alive several hundred years ago, and have continued to this day....

How do you counter act the false teaching? How does Paul correct their thinking? What is the answer to the church when the church slides down this slippery slope of man centered, philosophical, moralism? Remember that I said earlier that the book of Colossians is the most Christological epistle in the New Testament? What Paul is doing throughout this letter is first reminding them of what they heard when they first heard the gospel..... then he will give the most clear, most full, most powerful, most detailed explanation of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, what he has done, and why that matters to you..... and it is the most detailed description of the nature of Christ in the entire Word of God.....

Paul, in the book of Colossians, puts Christ at the very center.....by first reminding them of the fact that they learned the truth about the grace of God from Epaphras in verse 7 of chapter 1 ..... then, beginning in verse 15, he makes statement after statement after statement about who Christ is and what he has done.....In verse 15, he is the image of the invisible God; verse 16, he is the creator of all things; In verse 17, He is eternal; and he is the sustainer of all things; In verse 18, He is the head of the church; In verse 19, He is God; In Verse 20, He has reconciled all things to Himself, and he made peace for us by dying on the cross..

And even after all this, Paul is not done.....

In chapter 2 beginning with verse 6 through verse 15, there are 9 "in him's" or "with him's"..... all referring to Christ.....And what this entire epistle is saying is, "Christ brought you out of death to life, from darkness to light..... he created you, he sustains you, he has forgiven you, he has reconciled you to Himself, and you are in Him and He is in you and with you.....and, he

will give you the power by His spirit to live an obedient life without man made rules, traditions, and monk like self denial..... that actually take you away from Christ, not toward....."

So, there is the problem and they are many..... and there is the solution.... and there is only one..... the name that is above every name.....

This is such a reminder and conviction to me as a pastor to examine myself..... is my preaching Christ centered? Is my praying Christ centered? Are our songs Christ centered? Is He as the head of the church, the focus of our attention in all that we do?

Now that we have stated the reason for the letter, let's go back to chapter 1 verse 1 and begin the letter.....

In verse 1, Paul's greeting is a standard greeting for any first century letter, though it is a bit different than what you and I are used to.....It wasn't very long ago that if I wrote you a letter, your expectation would be to see at the top of the letter, "Dear George" or if it were more formal "Dear Mr. Johnson"..... today, we rarely write letters; and most of our personal e-mails have been so condensed and are so informal that we say Hey or Hi or we don't address the person at all. Some of you think, why state his name, I am one of his contacts, he knows it is me.....

In the first century, however, you never started with the recipient..... you always started with the writer or the sender..... this is why the first word is Paul..... and, I think, once we were used to this, we would probably like it..... you never had to look at the bottom of the page or turn the page over to see who it was from..... first word, first thing out of the box, we know who wrote it, "Paul."

Now, I don't want to assume that all of you know Paul's testimony and calling.....so, I don't want move from here without a little back ground about the author, though this might be review for some,....it could be new to others. So allow me to explain to you who Paul is..... He calls himself "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." In his greeting in the book of Galatians, he states this in an even stronger fashion, "Paul, an apostle, **not from men nor through man**, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—<sup>5</sup>

....If you recall, we pointed out that in the book of Philemon, that Paul did not use his apostolic title in his greeting..... he was not trying to put himself in a position of authority as he made the appeal to Philemon to receive Onesimus.....

Here, however, he describes himself as an apostle in order demonstrate his authority.... it is an authority because of his office.... And an authority that is not his own.... It is by the will of

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ga 1:1). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

God..... he is not speaking on behalf of Paul.....these are not his ideas..... he is one of the 13 apostles, 12 who were with Christ, and Paul was a late addition who is called an apostle to the Gentiles.

he refers himself when speaking to the Corinthians, as one, untimely born, since he was the only apostle who did not see Christ while He was on earth.

All the apostles were called by God to establish the church in and through Christ,..... Christ is the cornerstone of the church and the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets..... and that foundation continues to this day because of their words that are recorded in Holy Scripture.

....The apostolic office was temporary.....there were only 13, and once they died, their office died with them..... They had a divine authority, they wrote and spoke the Word of God, they performed miracles to authenticate their message, and all but John were martyred for their faith.....

And, the reason Paul begins by stating his apostolic office and calling is because he will be correcting false teaching in the church, so he is establishing His divine authority.....when he states that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.... that is an indisputable fact based on what happened to him on the road to Damascus.....that is recorded in Acts 9, go ahead and turn there.

For your homework, you can read the whole chapter.....let me quickly go over parts of the chapter.

At the end of chapter 7, we know that Paul was in complete agreement with the brutal stoning of Stephen..... In chapter 9 verse 1, follow along as I read:

“But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>

To put it mildly, Paul was a terrorist before the name or title was in existence..... he terrorized believing Christians.....hunting down, finding, and arresting those who claimed to follow Christ and he was bringing them to Jerusalem to stand trial.....

and what happened? If you were to continue to read the chapter, you would find that on his way to Damascus, on his way to find believers and put them in prison.....Paul was literally stopped in his tracks by a light shining around him,

---

6 [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 9:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

shaken by a voice speaking to him,  
and blinded by a God who was calling him.....

We will pick the story up in mid stream. After Paul was struck blind, God sent Annanais to go see him and lay hands on him. Annanis knew of Paul's reputation and did not want to go to Paul..... He argues with the Lord, beginning in verse 13..... please follow along....

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."<sup>7</sup>

Did you make a mental note of the fact that Paul did not volunteer to serve Christ..... He tells the Colossians that He was an apostle by **the will of God**..... Here, God calls him a "chosen instrument of mine." Paul woke up that morning, and went out to arrest and persecute Christians..... and by the end of the story, God called Him into His kingdom and into His service, through no merit of His own, no goodness of his own, through no desire of his own...

and he is a picture of all of us in the state we were in before God called us..... dead in sin..... enemies of God..... loving darkness rather than light..... Paul was not seeking God..... he was even persecuting God's people.....Yet, God sought Him.....God called Him, God elected Him, God chose him, God drafted Him into His service....which was confirmed by what Ananias told Paul that he was "a chosen instrument to carry my name..."..

And, if you are a believing Christian today, this is your testimony, too. You may have not been blinded by a light or heard an audible voice from heaven, but your believe in Christ is because of God's Sovereign Grace. He called you, He regenerated you, and He picked you..... and He brought you into His kingdom.....

So, when Paul states that he is in his apostolic office by the will of God, it is designed for the church to understand that Paul's words have the authority of Christ..... Paul's Words were God's Words.....and I am certain that when Paul faced difficulty, like he now is in prison, that it was a comfort and encouragement to know that even in his suffering, he was on a divine appointment.... Called by God, chosen by God,

Now, I think that Paul makes it clear that In this particular letter, unlike Philemon, establishing his office was critical to the letter because Paul had never been to Colossae.....He had never preached there..... and he did not plant this church.....there are at least 4 references in the

---

7 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 9:13–16). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

letter that show that apart from a few friends, he had never even met these believers..... in chapter 1 verse 3, he states that he had heard of their faith..... in chapter 2 verse 1 he makes reference to those who have not seen him face to face.... in 2:5, he states that he is absent from them in body.....and in chapter 1 verse 7, he makes it very clear that they had heard the gospel from Epaphras.....

In light of him never seeing or ministering to them.....it was very important that they knew that he was not making any claim to any authority except an authority that was given to him by God..... so as this letter was read to this church, they were to receive it as if God wrote it, which he did.....by the spirit of god and through the pen of Paul.....

Beloved, we are under the same apostolic authority, which is under Christ's authority to this day..... so we accept this book.... we accept the Bible.....not as the word of men, but what it really is, "The word of god." Remember that when you open it..... remember that when you read from it..... remember that when you hear it preached.....you did not come here to hear from me.....you came here this morning to hear from God..... and if the pulpit at Grace Fellowship church deviates at all from commitment to preach God's word..... then is time to move me out and get someone who opens the book and proclaims it.....

After Paul makes himself known as the one who is sending the letter, he includes Timothy who he describes as our brother..... Paul mentored Timothy..... Timothy is mentioned as a contributor to Paul's letters in over half of the ones Paul wrote, and he pastored in the church at Ephesus..... You may not know much about Timothy, so let me tell you that Timothy had a godly grandmother, a godly mother, and a pagan father....

Turn over a few pages to II Timothy chapter 1, and I will just read from verse 5..... Paul writes, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. <sup>8</sup>" You moms and grand mothers, and sisters in Christ....don't ever think that your life, conduct, faith, and prayers go unnoticed..... or that they don't matter.....

they do matter....what a blessing to see 3 generations of believers coming through the godly women in Timothy's life.....behind many, many men of God through the centuries there are mothers, Grand mothers, and Sunday School teachers, who pass their faith down to children..... and in the process have a greater impact on the church and culture than any of us will ever know until we arrive in heaven.... when I see Timothy's name here, it just makes me want to remind you to grandma's, aunts, sisters, and moms.... And those of you who have husbands who do not share your faith, it is reminder to press on.... **(pause)**

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (2 Ti 1:5). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

so we know why the letter was written..... we know who wrote the letter; let's move to notice who the letter is written to..... And, Paul addresses the letter to, "the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae."

Now, don't let the word Saint confuse you into thinking that Paul is referring to a group of perfect or near perfect people at a local church..... I mentioned this briefly when we were in Philemon, but it is worth mentioning again.....Paul certainly is not referring to dead people who lived reasonably good lives who are deemed saints by the Catholic church.....

The word saint simply means, " persons who belong to God,—‘God’s people.’ It means "set apart or consecrated." It does come from the root word for holy..... and though it can be translated "holy ones" we know that Paul is not talking about being perfect because we as saints are still commanded to be holy.....we are still imperfect works in progress.....

and if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, and you have trusted in his atoning death to pay for your sins..... and you have been justified by faith, or in other words, you have been counted righteous because his atoning death and resurrection was credited to your account, and therefore, you have been forgiven and reconciled to God, then you, too, are a saint..... It has more to do with our position than it does with perfectionism.....the point is..... that this letter, like all the letters in the New Testament is written to Christian believers.....

Which is another reminder that the church by and large is for believers, not unbelievers..... the church is for saints, those who are set apart or consecrated and are part of God's family.....i suppose you could almost say that every Sunday when we gather together as an assembly, we are participating in a weekly family reunion.....and the family aspect of this greeting is clear because Paul introduces Timothy as "our Brother," He Greets those in colossae as "Faithful Brothers," then he closes out verse two with the phrase "from God our father," and in the process, he is further declaring that we, live in a family and we are all siblings.....

Do you believe that? As you look around the building, do you see that those who are here are your brothers and sisters? I am not talking about those you are related to by blood. It is a tremendous encouragement to see multi generational families here at Grace Fellowship. When I see that some of you are here as grand parents, and your children and grand children are in the building, it is a wonderful testimony of God’s grace and mercy.

But I want to challenge you to get to know the rest of the family.

When we used to worship with our son and daughter in law and grand kids at the same church, we had to purpose to not spend too much time with each other after the service, because we saw them during the week, we texted, and we spoke during the week. We had to use Sunday’s to get to know our other brothers and sisters in Christ. Maybe you should try to do the same?

Once a month, we have a family, fellowship luncheon down stairs..... and so few come....I flat out don't understand it. If it is financial, come see me, and we will make sure you can come and will be fed...If it is not financial, then what is it? You can't spend an hour eating a meal with your brothers and sisters? Knowing that you have to have lunch somewhere?

Why can't a group of brothers and sisters in Christ determine to eat together once a month so we can better get to know each other.... And when you eat together, apart from the fact that some have small children, eat with someone you don't know as well....

I know some of us are more extroverted.....and some of us are more introverted..... Some thrive on meeting new people, others are frightened at even the suggestion..... but our adoption in Christ, our entrance into God's family should unite us to one another regardless of our personalities.....

What does it mean that we are family? How can you pray for each other if you do not know each other? How can someone bear your burdens if you will not get to know them and share them? How can we fulfill the one another commands if we only are with each other from 11 to 12:15 once a week..... and for some of you it is more like once or twice a month....

Staying for lunch is not the solution either. It is a start.....beloved, my earnest prayer is for all of us to see that we are part of the family of God and we need each other.....and should want to get to know each other.....

There he goes again, guilting us into obedience..... look at verse 4

since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,  
<sup>5</sup>because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.<sup>9</sup>

We will spend more time on this next week.....but Do you see the progression.... Faith in Christ and the love of brothers and sisters in Christ go hand in hand.... When you are brought into God's family by faith, then family interaction is a by product. It is a command..... it is a result..... and it should be something that you want to do because of new life in Christ.....

And if that is not enough proof, jump down to verse 8, Epaphras“Has made known to us your love in the Spirit....” Their love for one another was obvious enough for Epaphras to see it and point it out to Paul....

Many people here at Grace Fellowship Church have been hurt wounded and sinned against by other believers.....my daily prayer is that God would unite us, restore us, and reconcile us through Christ, so we do begin to look like a family again.... You are invited to our family fellowship luncheon after church on March 1st.....

---

9 [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Col 1:4–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The final part of the description of these believers is that they are both "in Christ," and "at Colassae." In Christ and at Colassae.....referring to their identity and their geographic location.....their position before God..... and their involvement with their fellow man.... demonstrating that though they meet as believers.....there is still a responsibility to live for Christ and be salt and light and represent Christ to those who don't know him after you leave the assembly.....yes, they meet together..... but once they meet, and then go home..... they live in the real world, with real jobs, in a real city, and real home.....with real neighbors, who have a real need for Christ.....

And, when they go into Colassae or into the world so to speak..... Paul is reminding them of this wonderful truth that they are in Christ..... What does it mean to be in Christ?

Being in Christ is one of the great and most profound mysteries of the Christian faith.....just a cursory reading of the new testament tells us that:

in Christ, we are redeemed, we are alive to God, we have received eternal life, in Christ, we have no condemnation.....if we are in Christ, nothing will separate us from the love of God....those who are in Christ are new creatures..... if you are in Christ, that means that Christ is in you..... living in you and through you by His Spirit.....In John 15, the apostle John describes this relationship with the metaphor of the vine and the branches..... those who are in Christ are the branches that abide in the vine.....the branch receives all of its nutrients, all of its strength, all of its life and vitality from the vine...the branch apart from the vine is useless and dead..... this is why Jesus could say later in this John 15 that apart from me, you can do nothing.....

Beloved, in light of the correction coming to these Colossian believers, Paul wisely reminds them of their relationship to Christ as he prepares them for the Christological doctrine that is coming.....He is establishing that they are in Him and He is in them..... when they begin to hear that He is the image of the invisible God..... all things were created through him and for him.....and that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him.....

And when they are reminded that when they were reconciled to God.... when they made peace with God through the blood of His cross that that was the entrance to being "**IN HIM**" and He is "**IN THEM**" and when they grasp this..... then all of this nonsense about philosophy, moralism, self denial to be more holy will go by the way side....

Christ is in us, through us, around us, and for us.....

Now, just a final word about the final two words in this greeting, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." This is a standard greeting for nearly every epistle in the New Testament. John used this type of greeting, as did Jude..... Peter used the phrase "May grace and peace be multiplied to you..." ..... Grace, we know is God's unmerited, undeserved favor..... and it is usually listed before peace because we cannot have peace with God until we receive grace from God.....

For Paul this is kind of a prayer, a blessing..... We are saved by grace, yet we need continued grace to live the Christian life..... we have peace with God through Christ, yet continue to need God's peace as we continue the Christian life..... I mentioned John Newton earlier, let me go back to him....

I think in one stanza of Amazing Grace he captures the idea of needing continued grace when he writes....

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
We have already come  
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far  
And grace will lead us home

Grace saves us; Grace helps us as we continue to grow in sanctification until we are glorified or safely home with Jesus..... grace grants us peace with God, peace with one another, and peace that passes understanding as we continue on in the Christian life, waiting for our final redemption....

In a real sense, Paul is giving sort of a benediction as he begins the letter..... May God's grace and His Peace be with you as you continue to live for Him..... and even as he is about to deliver a word of correction and admonition, he wants God's favor and God's peace to rule in their hearts as they receive and obey His Word.

Isn't that a wonderful balance? He is about to challenge their thinking and is about to correct their teaching.. He is about to expose the error of what they are beginning to believe. And prior to his laying out his case, he is asking God to provide His unmerited favor and to give his undeserved peace..... he wants to restore them and to bring them to full maturity in Christ and He knows that that cannot happen without God intervening and providing His grace and His peace.

Our lives are no different..... if we are honest, there are times we waver and don't fully believe that Christ is all sufficient.....we, too have allowed unbiblical thinking enter our minds..... and we are always in need of a bigger more biblical view of all God has done for us in Christ.....

Let's allow the Colossian correction to be our correction....

As we are mindful of our need for Him every hour

