Content Epistles Galatians-Ephesians-Philippians-Colossians

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Later I will edit my document as I gain insight from reading the Amplified version of these passages.

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This project started in 2023 as my attempt to create something like a Table of Contents for books (New Testament at least) of the Bible, but it expanded beyond a list of contents. This document rephrases the text in roughly paragraph blocks with some explanatory notes. This document should, in no way, replace your own reading of the Bible. You should read the Bible to get more of the original meaning and to get context. I plan to use this document as I make a shorter list of the topics or teaching for a set of verses.

I needed to decide whether to write in the past tense or write this document as a guide to what God wants us to know. A “report” of what Paul wrote makes it sound like it is Paul’s authority or thoughts all the way through. I don’t want that tone. This document is almost a paraphrase and a guide to what God wants us to know, rather than a “report.”

I wrote in the past tense for the historical comments made by Paul, and in the present tense for discussions that are somewhat separate from the historical viewpoint that present day, and future Christians, can learn from. …and, later I will insert (APPL…for applications I see) related to the text. This will be done in a separate Google Doc.

References that I may use in this document are listed below.

NET (NET) Bible. THE NET BIBLE, NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION, COPYRIGHT © 1996 BY BIBLICAL STUDIES PRESS, L.L.C. This Bible is a free download from [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org/). The First edition without notes is free from<https://netbible.com/download>. The second edition with notes is $4.95 download as of 2018. The NET 2nd edition can be read online for no cost at<https://netbible.org/bible/Romans+1> (starts at Romans Chapter 1).

(AMP) Amplified Bible (at biblegateway.com [1 Corinthians 1 AMP - Appeal to Unity - Paul, called as an - Bible Gateway](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%201&version=AMP) ) I wrote my “paraphrase” after reading the NET Bible verses. Then I read the Amplified Bible and edited my “paraphrase.”

(ESV) ESV Study Bible 2007 Crossway Bibles (I read the study notes for some verses as I wrote my paraphrase.)

(QUEST) The Quest Study Bible 1983 Zondervan (I read the study notes for some verses as I wrote my paraphrase.)

Some of the Bible studies I create are posted on [www.gpclements.com](http://www.gpclements.com/).

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Galatians

(QUEST Written by Paul to Christians living in Galatia…southern area of present-day Turkey. Probably written between 48 and 53 A.D. to refute false teachings that had entered the church)

(ESV Written by Paul to Christians in Galatia sometime near 48 A.D. This Galatia would be the Roman province in southern present-day Turkey.)

Gal 1:1-5 Paul identified himself as an apostle who was not sent under human authority but under the authority of Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead. Paul is also writing to the churches of Galatia on behalf of Christians who were with Paul. (glc Acts chapters 13 and 14 describe Paul’s travels in the Galatia area.) Paul starts the letter by sending greetings of grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself up to death on the cross for our sins to deliver us from this evil age according to the will of God the Father, to whom all glory is due forever, Amen.

Gal 1:6-10 Paul was astonished, in not a good way, that the Christians in Galatia were leaving the one set before them who had called them by the grace of Christ and they were now believing in a different message - not that there is another legitimate message, but some among them were disturbing them and distorting the gospel of Christ. Paul wrote that if he or his companions or an angel from heaven preached a message in conflict with the message Paul preached to the Galatians, that person should be condemned to hell. Paul and his companions had taught this in the past and now taught it again, that if anyone preached a message in conflict to what the Galatians had received, that person should be condemned to hell. Paul asked them to consider if he was trying to get the approval of people or of God. If he was trying to please people he would not be a slave of Christ.

Gal 1:11 - 24 Paul wanted the Christians in Galatia to know that the message he preached did not originate with a person. Paul did not get the message from any person and the message was not taught to him by anyone. Paul received the message as a revelation of Jesus Christ. (glc…see descriptions of Paul’s encounter with God on the road to Damascus..Acts 9:1-19; Acts 22:6-21; Acts 26:112-18) Paul reminded the readers of his reputation as a non-believing Jew, how he brutally persecuted Christians and tried to destroy the Christian movement. Paul was advancing in the Jewish religious circles faster than his contemporaries in Judea and was very motivated concerning the traditions of his ancestors. But God, who set him apart from birth and called him by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to him so he would preach about Jesus to the Gentiles, Paul did not seek advice from any person and did not go to Jerusalem to talk to those who were apostles before Paul, but instead, Paul went to the desert in Arabia and then returned to Damascus. Three years later Paul went to Jerusalem to visit Peter to get information (glc…concerning Jesus?) from him but only stayed with him for 15 days. Paul did not talk to any of the other apostles except for James, Jesus’ brother. Paul wrote his assurances that, before God, he was not lying about his statements about not being instructed about the gospel by people. After this, Paul traveled in Syria and Cilicia (ESV…Syria was north of Judea and Galilee; Cilicai was north and west). The churches of Christ in Judea had not seen Paul face to face. Those churches only heard the report that “The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the good news of the faith he once tried to destroy.”  
 The churches gave glory to God because of Paul.

Gal 2:1 - 10 After 14 years Paul traveled to Jerusalem again, with Barnabas and Titus. Paul made this trip due to a revelation and set before the Christian leaders in Jerusalem the message that Paul preached among the Gentiles (glc…non-Jewish). Paul talked in a private meeting with the leaders to make sure that his ministry was not misled. Even though Titus was a Greek he was not compelled by the Christian leaders in Jerusalem to be circumcised. Paul went to Jerusalem for this discussion because false brothers with bad motives had slipped into the church unnoticed (glc…these false brothers were among the true believers without being noticed at first) to look for matters regarding the freedom Christians have in Christ Jesus, in order to try to make them slaves to Jewish laws. Paul and his companions did not yield to their influence for even a short amount of time, so that the truth of the gospel message would remain with the church. The influential leadership of the Jerusalem church (Paul was not awed by their position since God does not show favoritism between people) - those leaders id not add anything to the message Paul had delivered to the Gentiles. Rather, when the leaders saw that Paul had been given the gospel message to deliver to the uncircumcised (glc…Gentiles) just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (glc…Jewish people) (for God empowered Peter to be an apostle to the Jewish people and empowered Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles), and when James, Peter, and John, who had a reputation of being influential, recognized the grace that had been given to Paul, they extended to Barnabas and Paul the right hand of fellowship and agreed that Barnabas and Paul would go to the Gentiles and they would go to the Jewish people. They only asked that Barnabas and Paul would remember the poor, which Paul was eager to do.

Gal 2:11 - 21 But when Peter came to Antioch (ESV…Antioch was Paul’s missionary base for many years … glc, Antioch is in NW Syria, north of Damascus) Paul opposed him face to face (glc…not talking behind his back) because he had been wrong in his actions. Before some people came from James (glc…from the Jerusalem church) Peter had been eating with the Gentiles. But when the Christians from Jerusalem arrived Peter stopped doing this and separated himself because he was afraid of those who were in favor of all Christians being circumcised. This caused the rest of the Jews in Antioch to join him in this hypocrisy and even Barnabas was led astray with them in this hypocrisy. (glc…the Jewish Christians were considering the Gentile Christians to be of less worth and to be avoided). When Paul saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel (glc.. that all who accept Jesus’ sacrifice for their sins are of equal worth in God’s sight) Paul told Peter in front of everyone, “If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (ESV….Peter was requiring Gentile Christians to follow Jewish rules for eating) Paul continued his confrontation by saying (glc…sarcastically ?) that they were Jews from birth and not sinners from the group of Gentiles, yet they knew that no one was justified by following the works of the law of Moses, but rather by the faithful sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Jesus so that we may be justified (glc…be judged by God to be in right standing with him) by the faithful sacrifice of Jesus and not by following the works of the law of Moses, because by the works of the law no person will be justified. But does Christ encourage sin if those who want to be justified in Christ are found to be sinners? NO! If a person builds up again what the person destroyed, the person demonstrates that God’s law is being broken. Through the law Paul died to the law so that he could live to God. Paul had been crucified with Christ, and it was no longer him who lived, but it was Christ living in him. So the life he lived in the body, he lived because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for Paul. Paul did not declare God’s grace to be invalid, because if righteousness (NET…justification) could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Gal 3:1 - 14 Paul let the Galatians know that they were not thinking clearly. He wondered who had deceived them. He reminded them that Jesus Christ was publicly declared as crucified. Paul wanted them to be clear in their mind and answer this question: Did they receive the Spirit by doing the works of the Mosaic law or by believing what they heard from him? They were being foolish. They began their spiritual journey with the Spirit but they were trying to finish through human effort. Paul asked them to think if they had suffered so many things for nothing - if it really was for nothing. Paul asked them to consider if God gave them the Spirit and worked miracles among them because they did the works of the Mosaic law or because they believed what they heard. As it is written in Genesis 15:6 Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” so they should understand that people who believe in Jesus are connected to Abraham. The Old Testament scriptures pointed to the future that God would justify the Gentiles through faith and declared the gospel to Abraham in the past as is written in Genesis 12:3; 18:18 “All nations will be blessed in you.” So those people who have faith in Jesus are blessed along with Abraham who believed. All who depend on doing the works of the Mosaic law are under a curse as written in Deuteronomy 27:26 “Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law.” It is plain that no one is justified before God by the Mosaic law because “the righteous one will live by faith.” (Habakuk 2:4) But the Mosaic law is not based on faith but “the one who does” the works of the Mosaic law “will live by them.” (Leviticus 18:5) Christ bought us and delivered us from the curse of the Mosaic law by becoming a curse for us (as it is written in Deuteronomy 21:23) “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”) so that through Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would be brought to the Gentiles, so we can obtain the promise of the Spirit by faith.

Gal 3:15 - 22 Paul wrote in a friendly tone to give an example of what he was speaking. When a covenant (glc…agreement) has been put into effect, even for contracts between people, no one person can cancel it or add something to it. The promises were spoken by God to Abraham and his descendant. The Old Testament does not say “to his descendants”, plural, but (Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 17:7; 24:7) “and to your descendant,” referring to one, who is Christ. Paul gave a short summary of his thoughts: The Mosaic law that originated 430 years after Abraham does not cancel the covenant earlier ratified by God, so as to make the promise invalid. If the inheritance is founded on the Mosaic law, it is not founded on the promise, but God, in his grace, gave it to Abraham through the promise. Paul asked the readers (listeners) to consider why the Mosaic law was given. The Mosaic law was put into place because of transgressions until the descendant arrived, about whom the promise had been made. The Mosaic law was put into effect through angels by an intermediary. (NET…Moses was not a mediator, but was God’s representative to the people) An intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one. Is the Mosaic law opposed to the promises of God? NO! If the Mosaic law that was given could give life, then righteousness would have been based on the Mosaic law. But the Old Testament instructions locked up everything under sin so the promise could be given, through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, to those who believe in him.

Gal 3:23 - 29 Before the faithfulness of Christ (NET) came we were locked up under the Mosaic law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed. The Mosaic law had become our guardian until Christ came, so that we could be counted to be righteous by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. In Christ Jesus you are all in God’s family through faith. All of you Christians who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Now, the labels of Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female are not spiritually important - for all Christians are one in Christ Jesus. And, if you belong to Christ, then you are a spiritual descendant of Abraham and an heir according to God’s promise.

Gal 4:1 - 7 An heir, while still a minor (glc…under 18 now) shares in a lack of authority as does a slave, even though he will be the owner of everything. He is subject to guardians and managers until the time set by the father of the family. Before we became Christians, we were like a minor in that we were controlled by the basic principles of the world. But when the right time came, God sent his Son to the world, born of a woman, and born under the Mosaic law, to redeem those who were under the control of the law, so that we could become adopted children with full rights of inheritance. Because, as a Christian, we are children of God and God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “Abba!” (NET … my Father!) You are not a slave any longer but are a child of God, and if you are a child of God, then you are also an heir because of God.

Gal 4:8 - 12 When you did not know God as you do now, you were locked up to things that are not gods at all. Now that you know God and are accepted by God, how can you return to useless and worldly basic principles? Consider if you want to be locked up to them as you were before. Reports came to Paul that they were giving value to Jewish days and months and seasons and years. Paul was concerned that his efforts among them had been wasted and of no lasting value. Paul pleaded with the men and women Christians to become like him (ESV…free from regulations of Mosaic Law), because he had become like them (ESV…free from Mosaic Law living as Gentiles). They had not mistreated Paul when he was with them.

Gal 4:13 - 20 Paul spent extra time in Galatia and had the opportunity to talk to them because of a bodily ailment (glc…perhaps eye problems). Paul’s physical condition was a trial for them but they did not look down on Paul or reject him. Rather, they welcomed him as if he was a messenger from God, as if he was Christ Jesus himself! Paul wondered where their feelings of happiness had gone. Paul could claim that if it had been possible, the Galatians would have pulled out their eyes and given them to Paul! Paul wondered if he had become their enemy by telling them the truth. The false teachers were zealous in seeking the favor of the Galatians, but it was not for a good purpose. They wanted to separate the Galatians from Paul so that the Galatians would be zealous for the false teachers. It is a good situation to be sought after with enthusiasm at all times, and not just when Paul was present with them. Paul addressed them as his spiritual children, telling them that he was having birth pains for them until Christ’s character was firmly in place in them. Paul wished he could be present with them now so he could change his tone of voice, because he was confused and upset by them.

Gal 4:21 - 31 Paul asked those who wanted to be under the Mosaic law to consider and comprehend the law. The Old Testament (Genesis 16, 17, 18, 21) records that Abraham had two sons, one by his servant, slave, woman, and the other by the free woman (glc…his wife). The son born by the slave woman was born just by fleshly actions and desires, while the other, the son born by the free woman, was born as a result of God’s promise. This situation may be used to provide a moral and spiritual lesson, for the women represent two covenants. One, Hagar, is from Mount Sinai (glc…where Moses received the law) bringing forth children for slavery. Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and can be taken to represent the present (glc…AD 50) Jerusalem, for Jerusalem is in spiritual slavery with the Jews. But the Jerusalem of heaven is free, and she is the mother of Christians. In the Old Testament it is written (Isaiah 54:1) “Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear children; break forth and shout, you who have no birth pains, because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband.” But you Christians of Galatia are children of the promise like Isaac. Just as in the past the one born of fleshly actions and desires (glc…Ishmael) persecuted the one (glc…Isaac) born according to the Spirit, so the same is happening now. What is written in the Old Testament? (Genesis 21:10) “Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the son” of the free woman (glc…Sarah). As spiritual children of God’s promise, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

Gal 5:1 - 12 Christ has set us free so we can have freedom. Maintain your freedom and don’t go back again to the yoke of slavery. Paul warned the Galatians that if they chose to be circumcised and depend on Mosaic laws and practices for their connection to God, Christ would be of no benefit to them (glc…if they were trusting Mosaic laws and practices for their spiritual standing then they were not trusting in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.) Paul warned them that men who let themselves be circumcised are required to carry out the whole law. Those who seek to have a right relationship with God through the Mosaic Law are cut off from Christ and have fallen from the benefit of God’s grace (glc…unmerited favor). With the help of the Holy Spirit, with faith, we wait in anticipation for the hope of righteousness (glc..Jesus ). Because of Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any importance - the only important thing is your faith working through love. Paul noted that the Galatians were doing well and he asked who prevented them from following the truth. This deflection from the truth did not come from the one who called them! A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise (glc…a little wrong influence affects many) Paul was confident through the Lord Jesus that the Galatians would not think otherwise. But the person who was introducing troubling thoughts would be judged, whoever that was. Paul appealed to the Christian men and women to consider that if he was teaching that men should be circumcised, why was he facing persecution? If that was true, the teaching of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was no longer in effect. Paul sarcastically commented that the false teachers should go further and castrate themselves.

Gal 5:13 - 26 Christians are called to freedom but they should not use their freedom (glc…from Mosaic law) as an excuse to indulge in sin, but rather, should serve each other through love. The whole Mosaic law can be summarized in one commandment, as written in Leviticus 19:18 “You must love your neighbor as yourself.” In contrast, if Christians harm and exploit each other it leads to destroying one another. Let the Holy Spirit guide your decisions and you will not act on the ungodly desires of your body. The body has desires that are not in line, and oppose, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit has desires that are not in line, and oppose, the desires of the body, for the two are hostile towards each other, so you cannot do what you want. If you are following the leading of the Spirit, you are not a slave to the Mosaic law. The works of the ungodly body are plain to see: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, following idols, witchcraft, showing hate, discord, jealousy, lashing out in anger, promoting yourself at the expense of others, discord among you, cliques, forms of envy, killing the spirit of others, getting drunk, uncontrolled revelings, and similar activities. Paul warned them, as he had previously warned them, that those who have these lifestyles will not inherit the kingdom of God! In contrast, the fruit and outcome produced by the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience with others, being kind, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law opposed to these actions and attitudes. Christians have crucified the ungodly body with its strong physical desires. If you are guided by the Spirit, then have actions in line with the Spriit. Do not become falsely proud and irritate each other or envy each other.

Gal 6:1 - 10 If a Christian man or woman is found to be sinning, those who are controlled and directed by the Holy Spirit should gently restore that person. But be careful for yourselves that this does not tempt you to sin. Help each other with their spiritual burdens and by doing this you will be following the example and law of Christ. If any person thinks they are very important when they are not, they deceive and mislead themselves. Each person should determine if their motives and deeds are genuine. Then that person can have a reason for feeling good about themselves and will not need to compare themselves with others. Each person should be responsible for themselves. Those who receive spiritual guidance must share all good things with the person who is teaching them. Don’t fool yourselves. God will not be ridiculed. A person will harvest what they sow, for a person who sows to please themself will harvest destruction in themself. But the person who sows with the Holy Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit. We must not become discouraged as we do good, for at the proper time we will harvest (glc…good), if we don’t give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, do good to all people, and especially to other Christians.

Gal 6:11 - 18 Paul wrote with large letters in the closing to this letter. (glc…Paul probably had an eye problem and used a scribe to write the letters as he dictated them.) Those false teachers who want to have external evidence of following God were trying to force the Galatians to be circumcised. They did this to avoid persecution by other Jews because of the message of the cross of Christ. It was true that those who were circumcised did not fully follow the Mosaic law, but they wanted the Galatians to be circumcised so they could boast of their influence on the Galatians for external matters. Paul only wanted to boast about the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world was crucified to Paul, and Paul to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has spiritual importance, the only thing that matters is a new person in Christ. Paul prays for peace and mercy for all who follow this rule, who are the Israel of God. Paul states that no one should give him trouble, for he has wounds on his body as a result of serving Jesus. Paul prays for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with the spirit of the Christians in Galatia. Amen

Ephesians

Eph 1:1 - 14 By God’s will, Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus. Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus. They were faithful in Christ Jesus. He sent grace and peace to them from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Blessed and praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has conferred blessing on us with all spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenly (glc…eternal) realms. God chose us in Christ before the formation of the world that Christians should be holy and unblemished in love in his sight. God did this by planning and providing our adoption as his children with full rights of inheritance through Jesus Christ, following the good pleasure of his will - and to the praise of his glorious grace that he has given us freely in his dearly loved Son. In Jesus we have redemption from sin through his sacrificial death on the cross, we have forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace that he abundantly poured on us in all wisdom and foresight. He did this when he made known to us the secret of his will, according to his good plan that he purposed in Christ, toward the working out of the fulfillment of times, to summarize all his plans in Christ - the things in eternal spiritual realms and the things on Earth. In Christ, we have been identified as God’s own possession, since we were a part of God’s plan and purpose and he accomplishes all things according to the wisdom of his will, so that we, who had already had confident hope in Christ would lead to the praise of his glory. When you heard the word of truth about salvation and you believed in Christ, you were sealed and labeled with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the down payment and pledge of our spiritual inheritance, until the redemption of God’s own possession (glc…Christians) to the praise of his glory.

Eph 1:15 - 23 Paul had received reports of the faith of the Ephesians in the Lord Jesus and their love for Christians so he was motivated to give thanks for the Ephesians continually and to include them in his prayers. Paul prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give them spiritual wisdom and understanding in their increasing knowledge of him, - because they see clearly now and understand - and can know the certain hope of which God had called them to, and know the wealth of his glorious inheritance for Christians, and know the immeasurable greatness of his power for those who believe in Jesus, as is displayed in the action of his immense strength. God exercised this power in Christ when God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms which are far above all earthly rule and authority and power and dominion and important people, not only at this time but also in the time to come. God placed all things under Christ’s feet (Psalm 8:6) and gave Christ to the church as head over all things. The church is Christ’s body and is the fullness of him who fills everything.

Eph 2:1 - 10 Christians were dead in their offenses and sins, in which they lived and practiced according to this world’s way of living, influenced by the authority of the air (glc…lower place than heaven), the guide of the spirit that is working in the people characterized by disobedience (glc…to God), including all of us as we formerly lived our lives in the desires of our bodies, taking part in the desires of the body and the mind, and were by our nature children destined for wrath even as the rest (glc….of humanity). But God, having an abundance of mercy because of his great love which he had for us, even though we were spiritually dead in offenses and sin, made us spiritually alive together with Christ - it is by God’s grace you are saved! - and he raised us up together with Christ and seated us together with Him in the spiritual, heavenly, realms in Christ Jesus, to show forth in the future the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. It is by God’s grace you are saved through faith, and this salvation is not accomplished by you, it is the gift of God; it is not a result of earthly works, so no person can boast in pride. For we are God’s creative work, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God planned and arranged beforehand so we can do them.

Eph 2:11 -22 As a consequence, remember that previously, you Gentiles in your bodies - who are being called “uncircumcision” by those so-called “circumcision” people who have this act done on their bodies by human hands - that you did not have Christ in your life and were excluded from the citizenship of Israel and had no connection to the covenants promised by God, and had no hope and were without God in the world. But now, as Christians, you who used to be separated from God have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. He brings us peace, and has made the uncircumcised and circumcised into one group, and has destroyed the cause for separation, and the hostility, when he made inoperative by his body (glc…sacrificed on the cross) the laws of commandments in decrees. He did this to make, in him, one new group out of two, and made peace and made them both acceptable, in one group, to God through his sacrifice on the cross, by which the hostility was killed. And he came and preached a message of peace to those who were far from God (glc…Gentiles) and peace to those who were near to God (glc…Jews - but they were not with God before believing in Jesus), for through Jesus both former groups have access in one Spirit to God the Father. As a result, you are no longer foreigners with no standing with God, but you are fellow citizens with the other believers in Jesus and members of God’s family, because you were built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (NET…New Testament prophets) with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone of the foundation. In Jesus the whole building of the church, being linked together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are being built with each other into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Eph 3:1 - 13 Because Jesus’ sacrifice has allowed Gentiles and Jews to be in God’s family, Paul was a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of the Gentiles and they should think about the administration of God’s grace that was given to Paul for the Gentiles, that he received the mystery by revelation as he wrote briefly (Ephesians 1:9). As we read this, we are able to understand Paul’s insight into the mystery (NET…secret) of Christ (which was hidden from people in past generations but is now revealed to Jesus’ holy apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit), that the gospel message is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and members of the body, and fellow participants in the promise in Christ Jesus. Paul became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace that was given to him according to the working of God’s power (Ephesians 1:19-20). To Paul - less than the least of all the saints - this grace was given so Paul would proclaim to the Gentiles the hard-to-know riches of Christ and to make all aware of God’s hidden plan - the mystery that was hidden in all past times in God who created all things. This revealing had the purpose that the church should reveal the rich variety of the wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the spiritual realms. This followed the eternal plans and purpose that God accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have encouragement and confident access to God because of Christ’s faithfulness. For this reason, Paul asked them not to give up or be discouraged because of what Paul was suffering for them, which was to their glory.

Eph 3:14 - 21 Because God has brought in believing Gentiles and Jews together, Paul worshipped God the Father, from whom all of heaven and those on Earth are named. Paul prayed that following the wealth of God’s glory he would grant them to be encouraged and strengthened with power through his Spirit in their inner persons, that Christ would reside in their hearts through faith, so that, because they have a foundation and security in love, they would have an understanding with all the Christians as to what is the full extent of the love of Christ that is beyond our full knowing, so that they would be filled up with all the fullness of God. Paul gave glory to God for his ability to work in Christians far beyond what they ask or think. Paul recognized that God received glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time.

Eph 4:1 - 22 Paul reminded the Ephesians that he was in prison for the Lord and counseled them to have a daily life that was in line with their calling to believe in Jesus. Their lives should be lived in humility and gentleness, with patience, making allowances for each other with love, and striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit with peace. There is one Christian body and one Spirit, and Christians are called to the one hope of our calling (glc…trusting in Jesus’ sacrifice to forgive us and release us from our sins). There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is ruler over all and is in all. Each Christian has received grace according to the working of Christ’s gift. This is similar to what is written in Psalm 68:18, “***When he ascended on high he captured*** ***captives****;* ***he gave gifts to men***.” Paul explains that the phrase “he ascended” means that he first descended to parts of the universe spiritually lower than heaven, namely to the Earth. Jesus, who descended, also ascended above the universe, in order to fill all things. Jesus assigned some people to be apostles, some to be prophets, some as evangelists, and some as teachers, with some of those being pastors, to get Christians ready for the work of ministry, that is, to grow the body of Christ, until all Christians reach the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God - a developed and mature person, reaching the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The result is that we will no longer be spiritual children, who may be bounced back and forth as on waves, and moved about by every wind of teaching by the deception of people who diligently and slyly carry out their deceitful plans. The solution is to practice, and be, truth in love, so we grow up into Christ, who is the head (glc…and our leader). From Christ the whole Christian body grows, formed and held together by each supporting person as ligaments. As each Christian fulfills their role, the body grows itself larger in love.

Eph 4:17 -32 Paul strongly told the Ephesians in his role in serving the Lord that they should no longer live as the non-Christian Gentiles lived, in the misguided way of thinking. Those people are darkened in their (glc…spiritual) understanding since they are separated from the life of God because of the unbelief that is in them due to the hardness and unyielding of their hearts. Because they have put up a wall to spiritual understanding, they have given themselves to impure living and practice all kinds of impurity with greed for more of the same. But you did not come to know Christ like this, if indeed you who are reading this letter heard about Christ and were instructed in him, because the truth is in Jesus. You were instructed about your past life to put away the old person who is being tarnished by following deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new person which has been created in God’s image - in righteousness and holiness that originated from truth. As a result, put aside falsehood, in line with Zechariah 8:16  *“****each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor***,“ because we are members with others (glc…in the body of Christ). Follow Psalm 4:4 “ ***Be angry and do not sin****;”* and do not go to sleep with unresolved anger. Do not give the devil an opening. The person who steals must stop stealing, but must work and do good with their labor, so that person will have something to share with the person who has needs. Do not let unwholesome words come out of your mouth, but only speak what is for the benefit of the one who needs to hear your message, that your speech would deliver grace to those who hear you. Do not go against the Holy Spirit of God, through whom you were sealed for redemption. You must separate yourself from bitterness, anger, wrath, arguing, and slander - separate from all wrong intents. Rather, be kind to each other, show compassion, forgive each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Eph 5:1 - 14 So think about the above discussion, become imitators of God as beloved children, and live your life in love, just as Christ loved us and poured himself out for us as a sacrificial and acceptable offering to God. Christians must not have sexual immorality, impurity in thoughts or actions, or greed, as these are not the characteristics of separated and holy people. Nor should there be unrefined speech that is lacking in good taste, foolish talking, or coarse and low joking - all of these don’t align with Christian character - but your speech should have thanksgiving. You can be certain of this: no one who is immoral, impure, or greedy (having the characteristics of an idolater) has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Don’t be misled by anyone who speaks words lacking truth, for God’s wrath comes to the people of disobedience due to their speech and actions. Think - do not share in their speech and actions, for you previously lived in darkness, but now you are in light in the Lord. Think and act like children of light - for the outcome of the light is goodness, righteousness, and truth - keep trying to learn what pleases the Lord. Do not take part in the deeds of darkness that have no true value and don’t produce good results, but instead expose them. The things they do behind closed doors in secret are shameful even to mention. All things exposed by the light can be seen. Everything made visible is light, and as a result we say “Rise up and be awake, o sleeper. Rise from the dead way of life, and Christ will shine on you.”

Eph 5:15 - 21 Think about the above discussion and think seriously about how you are living - live not as the unwise live, but as the wise live, make the most of all opportunities because there is evil in the world. Consequently, do not act foolishly, but with wisdom by comprehending what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk with alcoholic drinks, which is a waste of yourself, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Speak to each other using psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and creating music in your inner being to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to each other out of regard for Christ.

Eph 5:22 - 33 Wives should submit and value their husbands to honor the Lord, because the husband is the leader of the wife as Christ is the leader of the church ( Christ is the savior of the body ). Just as the church submits to Christ, wives should submit to their husbands in all things. Husbands must love their wives just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for the church to sanctify the church by cleansing it with the word which cleanses like water, so that Christ will present the glorious church to himself - the church will not have stains or crumpled clothes, or any other defect, but it will be holy and blameless. Likewise, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. The person who loves his wife loves himself. No one hates his own body, but he nourishes it and takes care of it, just as Christ takes care of the church, because we are members of Christ’s body (similar to Genesis 2:23a). As it is written in Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This mystery is important - but Paul was actually speaking about Christ and the church. However, each husband must love his own wife as he loves himself, and let the wife respect her husband.

Eph 6:1 - 9 Children should obey their Christian parents (glc…and other parents also ) as is written in the Old Testament Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16: “***Honor your father and mother*.**” Note that this is the first commandment that has an associated promise, Deuteronomy 5:16: “***that it will go*** ***well with you and that you will live*** ***a long time on the earth***.” Fathers should not make their children angry, but parent them and guide them with the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Slaves should obey their masters with respectful fear and trembling, with a sincere inner understanding, similar to obeying Christ, not being one who only works when they are being watched just to please people, but as slaves of Christ performing the will of God from their inner being. They should fully obey with the view they are serving the Lord, not people, because, as you understand, every person, both the slave and the free, will be rewarded by the Lord when they do something good. Masters should be responsible in treating their slaves and not use threats, because they should be aware that both the slave and the master have the same master in heaven, and he does not favor one over the other.

Eph 6:10 - 20 Be strong in the Lord and take on the strength of his power. Put on all of the armor that God provides, so that you can keep your place when facing the plans of the devil. Our true struggle is not with people, but our struggle is with the rulers and powers active in this world, our struggle is against the spirit-forces of evil that don’t belong to this world. Because of this struggle, use all of the armor of God so you can keep your place when evil is active, and having been active, stand. In order to keep your place equip yourself in these ways: wrap yourself with God’s word; protect yourself with righteousness; be prepared with a firm foundation by understanding the good news of God’s peace for people as provided by Jesus’ sacrifice; use your strong faith as a shield by which you can prevent the devil’s attacks from damaging you. Also, be firm in your decision to receive salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice so your thoughts are not led astray, and effectively understand and use the word of God to proactively deflect and repel attacks. In your prayers to implement the above tools, pray in agreement with and be led by the Holy Spirit as you keep alert and persevere in praying for other Christians. Paul requested prayer for himself that he would be helped by God in his speaking to others about Jesus, that he would speak strongly about the mystery of the gospel (that Jesus has provided a way to be in right relationship with God) as he served as an ambassador even though he was a prisoner. He asked for prayers that he would speak boldly as he knew he should.

Eph 6:21-24 Paul let his readers know that Tychicus, his dear fellow Christian and faithful servant of God, would explain Paul’s circumstances and his general condition to them. Paul sent Tychicus to them to give them a good explanation that would encourage the Christians who he spoke to. Paul sent greetings of peace to the Christian men and women, with love and faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He pronounced grace to be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with unending love.

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Philippians

(ESV … written to Christians in the Roman colony of Philippi. Paul was likely imprisoned in Rome when he wrote this around 62 A.D.)

(QUEST…written by Paul while he was under arrest in Rome in the time period of 60 to 62 A.D.)

Phil 1:1 - 11 Paul and Timothy, willing servants of Christ Jesus, sent this letter to the Christians living in Philippi, including the church leaders. (NET…the willing servant was an honored position, similar to Moses’, David’s, and Elijah’s description in the OT..Joshua 14:7; Psalm 89:3; 2 Samuel 7:5,8; 2 Kings 10:10) They sent grace and peace to those in Philippi from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Paul thanked God every time he remembered them. And his prayers for them were filled with joy because they helped him (NET…financially) in the spread of the gospel early in his ministry that continued until now. Paul was confident that God would continue and complete the good work he started in them until Christ Jesus returned to Earth. It was natural and easy for Paul to have these thoughts about the Philippians because they were dear to Paul, since during his imprisonment and confirmation of the gospel they were partners in God’s grace with Paul. God knows that Paul holds them close with the love of Christ Jesus. Paul prayed that their spiritual love would grow in knowledge and understanding do they could make good decisions and be sincere and blameless up to the day Christ returns, and that they would be filled with the harvest of righteousness that is provided by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Phil 1:12 - 18a Paul wanted the Christians in Philippi to know that his circumstances have actually helped the gospel to spread. All of the imperial guards and many more knew that Paul was in prison for the sake of Christ. And, most of the Christians had confidence in the Lord because of Paul’s imprisonment and were bold to speak the gospel without fear. Paul knew that some were preaching Christ because they envied Paul and were his rivals, but others preached with good intent. Those who preached with good intent did so out of love for Paul because they knew he was in prison for the defense of the gospel. Those who preached out of envy or rivalry had selfish ambitions and thought they would cause trouble for Paul while he was imprisoned. Paul knew that both preachings were proclaiming Christ so he rejoiced.

Phil 1:18b - 26 Paul rejoiced in confidence that he would be delivered from prison (NET…or life on Earth) because of the prayers of the Philippians and the help of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. He had a confident hope that he would not be ashamed but that, with boldness, Christ would be exalted in his body, whether he lived or died soon. Paul’s view was that living is being in Christ and he would have gain in dying. He knew that if he continued to live that would result in his spiritually productive work, but he did not know which was preferred: he was pulled both ways because he wanted to have an end to his life on Earth and be with Christ in Heaven, which would be best, but it would be better for the Philippians if he continued to live. He was confident of this last statement so he expected to keep on living and continue his teaching and leading the Philippians to grow, and have joy, in their faith, so that they could be encouraged more in Christ Jesus because of Paul’s situation, when he came back to them.

Phil 1:27 - 30 Paul instructed them to live in a manner that lines up with, and lives up to, the gospel of Christ, so that whether Paul returns to see them or whether he remains separated from them, he would receive reports that they were continuing to stand firm in one spirit, and one mind, engaged together for the faith of the gospel, without being intimidated at all by their opponents. This stance would be a sign from God to them of their destruction and of the Philippians’ salvation. Paul reminded the Philippians that they had been allowed to not only believe in Christ but also to suffer for him, as they were experiencing the same opposition that they saw Paul experience and now hear that he is facing opposition.

Phil 2:1 - 11 Paul asked the Philippians to think about the encouragement they have in Christ, the comfort they have in love together, the fellowship that is created by the Holy Spirit, close feelings or compassion, and thus complete his joy by having similar thoughts, by having the same love, being fellow souled with one common purpose. Instead of being guided by selfish goals or thinking too highly of themselves, Paul addressed each person to use humility and to value each other as more important than themselves. Each Christian should be thinking about more than their own interests and thus be concerned about the interests of others. Christians should have the same thinking about each other that Christ Jesus modeled: even though he existed before coming to Earth and was God he did not seek to maintain equal standing with God but rather gave up this equality when he came to look like other people and share in the human nature (glc..but without sin). He obeyed God’s plan in humility to, and beyond, the time of his death, the death on the cross. The fulfillment of God’s plan led to him being highly exalted and obtaining the name that is more valuable than any other name, so that at the name of Jesus everyone must yield - in the spiritual heavenly realms and on Earth and in the regions where evil dwells - and every person must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Phil 2:12 - 18 Paul asked his dear friends to think about these things, to remember how they have obeyed, both when he was with them and even when he was away from them, and to keep on pursuing the completion of their salvation with reverent awe, for God is bringing forth in them the desire and the actions - for the sake of his good pleasure. Do all things without complaining or arguing, so that you will be pure and cannot be assigned blame, be children of God who are not marred even though you live in a faulty and misled society, in which you stand out like stars in the sky by keeping firmly and openly the word of life so that when Christ returns Paul will have reason to feel good: that he did not live his life in vain and his work was not in vain. Even if Paul was poured out on the ground like a drink offering for the sacrifice and service of their faith, he was glad and rejoiced with all of them. The Philippians should follow Paul’s example and be glad and rejoice with him.

Phil 2:19 - 30 Paul hoped (trusting the Lord Jesus) to send Timothy to the Philippians soon, to talk with them and have news about the Philippians brought to Paul. Paul thought highly of Timothy’s profound concern for the Philippians and knew he would show that to the Philippians. Paul was aware that others were living their own lives instead of being active regarding the concerns of Jesus Christ. Paul was confident that the Philippians would remember Timothy’s qualifications for ministry, as he worked like a son with his father in spreading the gospel with Paul. Paul hoped to send Timothy soon, after he knew more about his legal situation, but Paul had confidence in the Lord that he also would come to see the Philippians soon. Paul decided to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians. He was valued by Paul as a coworker and soldier in the spiritual battle, and served as a messenger from the Philippians and ministered to Paul to help with his needs. Epaphroditus very much missed the Philippians and was concerned because the Philippians had learned that Epaphroditus had been sick. He had almost died. But God had mercy on him - and on Paul that Paul would not have more grief. This recovery made Paul eager to send him back, so the Philippians could rejoice and Paul would not have to be concerned about the Philippians' grief. Paul asked the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus in the Lord with great joy, and to give honor to others who serve Christ, since he almost died while doing the work of Christ. He put his life at risk in order to serve Paul when the Philippians were not able to do so.

Phil 3:1 - 11 As Paul concluded the letter he encouraged the Philippian Christians to rejoice in the Lord. His repeating this encouragement did not burden Paul, and it was a safeguard for them to get this reminder. Paul warned the Philippians to be on guard for evil workers, who mutilate the flesh (glc…Jews who demanded that Gentile Christians be circumcised…and follow Jewish laws). Those who believe in Jesus are the true circumcision God requires; those who worship by the Spirit of God, who rejoice in and proclaim Christ Jesus, and do not rely on human evaluation of credentials. Paul had more “credentials” than most people as he was circumcised in accordance with Jewish law on the 8th day after birth and his ancestors were Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin and he lived an exemplary Hebrew life. He obeyed Jewish law as a Pharisee (NET a strict and zealous adherent to the Jewish law). Before he accepted Christ Paul persecuted the church, being led by his zeal for God. By the measure of righteousness set forth in the law he was blameless. But Paul now viewed these standards and accomplishments as liabilities (glc…as negatives) because he now knew Christ. Even more, Paul regarded all worldly things as liabilities compared to the much greater value of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he suffered the loss of all worldly things - in fact he regarded them as human waste - that he would be in Christ and be found in him, not because he had human righteousness based on the Jewish law, but because he had the righteousness that was made available by Christ’s faithfulness - a righteousness from God that is correctly based on Christ’s faithfulness. Paul’s goal was to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to participate in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death (glc…faithful to God), and so, somehow (glc…God knows how this is accomplished) to also have a resurrection from the dead (glc…to be with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, in heaven).

Phil 3:12 - 21 Paul knew that he had not fully matured in Christ and he knew he was not completed in his spiritual development, but he was focused on the goals that Christ had planned for him. He told the Philippian Christians that he did not view himself as having attained these things. Instead of claiming these things Paul was focused on the goal by not being controlled by the past events and looking forward to the things that are to come for him. He had a firm goal and actively sought the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Thinking about this, those who consider themselves to be perfect should come to agree with Paul’s point of view. If you don’t agree with Paul, God will reveal the error of your ways when you don’t agree with Paul. In any case, live up to the standard you have already attained. Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians to follow his example (1 Corinthians 11:1 …as he followed Christ) and instructed them to observe carefully those who are living this way, as well as by watching Paul and his companions. Many that Paul knew, and whom he had told the Philippians, and again now with sadness told them that they were enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, they have let their belly (glc…and human feelings) be their god, they are openly happy about their shameful attitudes, and they focus on earthly things. But Christians have their citizenship in heaven - and should eagerly look forward to a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our humble, earthly, bodies into the likeness of his glorious body as he uses the power by which he is able to control all things to himself.

Phil 4:1 - 9 Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians - his dear friends whom he deeply wanted to see, as they were his joy and crown - to stand firm in the Lord in these ways. He implored Euodia and Syntyche (glc…in the mid-70s George Kenworthy, pastor of the Coralville Evangelical Free Church, referred to these two as Odious and SoonTouchee) to be in agreement in the Lord. Those who are Paul’s true companions should help them. They had worked together in the gospel ministry along with Paul and Clement (glc…I hope Clement is a distant relative of ours) and the other coworkers, whose names are written in the book of life (glc…having faith in Jesus). Rejoice in the Lord always. Paul repeated this direction to have the important attitude of rejoicing. He asked them to let everyone see their gentle way of life. The Lord is near (glc…human life is short, don’t have the outlook that your time of standing before God is a distant event.) Don’t be controlled by anxiety about anything. Instead, in all those situations, engage in prayer and petition with thanksgiving and tell your requests to God. Then the peace of God that goes beyond human understanding will protect your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. In conclusion, Paul instructed the Philippian Christians to think about whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, and whatever is excellent or praiseworthy. Paul instructed them to do what they had learned from Paul and had heard and seen him do. The God of peace will be with you.

Phil 4:10 - 20 The practical expression of concern that the Philippians showed to Paul gave him great joy. (He knew they were concerned for him and he knew they did not have an opportunity to do anything for him.) Paul told them this not because he was in need, for he had learned how to be content in any circumstance. He had experienced times of need and times of abundance of earthly items. Paul had learned the secret of contentment in all circumstances, whether he had enough to eat or was hungry, whether he had material things or had nothing. Paul was able to do everything through Christ who strengthened him. However, the Philippians did a good thing in sharing with him while he was in a difficult situation. The Philippians knew that as Paul began his ministry, when he left Macedonia (glc..northern Greece), no churches other than the Philippians shared with Paul in giving or receiving. Even when Paul was in Thessalonica (glc…relatively near Philippi) the Philippians sent donations to Paul for his needs on more than one occasion. Paul did not write this to prompt the Philippians for another gift. Rather, he desired that the Philippians' heavenly account would be credited. Paul had received much and had plenty. He had plenty because he received the donation brought to him by Epaphroditus - it was a worthy and acceptable offering and sacrifice that was pleasing to God. Paul was confident that God would supply their every need from the glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Glory be to God our Father forever and ever, let it be so.

Phil 4:21 - 23 Paul sent greetings to all the Christians in Christ Jesus. Paul’s companions also sent their greetings. All the Christians sent greetings, especially those who were part of Caesar’s household. Paul asked for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with their spirit.

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Colossians

(QUEST…Paul wrote this book while he was under house arrest in Rome. Colosse is located in what is now the southwest interior of Turkey. The letter dates from about 60 A.D. to 62 A.D. Pual wrote this to counter the Gnostics (and other false teachers) who claimed to have privileged information necessary for salvation. Paul’s disciple, Epaphras, founded the church in Colosse.)

(ESV…Paul probably dictated the letter for Timothy to write. The letter was probably written in 62 A.D., after Paul’s sea voyage…Acts 27 and 28. This is about the same time that Paul wrote Philemon and Ephesians. These three letters were carried by Tychicus and Onesimus (Ephesians 6:21). The false teachers probably were connected to Judaism and pagan beliefs rather than Gnosticism.)

Col 1:1 - 8 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s choice, and the Christian, Timothy, wrote to the Christians, the faithful men and women in Christ, at Colossae. They sent greetings of grace and peace to them from God the Father. Paul and his companions always gave thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they prayed for the Colossians because they heard of their faith in Christ Jesus and the love they had for all Christians. Their faith and love were a result of the certain hope reserved for them in heaven, which they heard about in the message of truth, the gospel that came to them. This gospel was bearing results throughout the world and spreading, just as it was bearing results and spreading among them from the first time they heard it and truly understood the grace of God. They learned the gospel from Epaphras, the dedicated companion and a faithful minister of Christ on behalf of Paul and his companions, who also told Paul and his companions of their love in the Holy Spirit.

Col 1:9 - 14 Because of this they have not stopped praying for the Colossians from the first time they heard of their faith and they are asking God to give them knowledge of his will with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that they could live lives worthy of the Lord and make him pleased in all things - bearing fruit in all good deeds and coming to have a better knowledge of God, as they are strengthened with power according to God’s glorious might for the showing of patience and steadfastness, giving thanks with joy to the Father who has made it possible for you to share in Christians’ inheritance in the light. God delivered us from the control of darkness and put us in the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption through the forgiveness of our sins.

Col 1:15 - 20 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the highest ranking over all creation, for all things in heaven and on Earth were created by him - this includes things visible and invisible, earthly authorities and other places of authority and powers - all things were created through him and for him. Christ is before all things and all things continue to exist in him. He is the head and beginning of the church as also he was the first to rise to heaven from the dead, so that he would be first in all things. God’s design was to have all of God’s fullness dwell in the Son and through the Son to restore all things ( on Earth and in heaven) to himself by making peace through the blood he shed on the cross.

Col 1:21 - 29 Before you were a Christian you were strangers and enemies with your minds that produced evil deeds, but now Christ has reconciled you by the death of his physical body to present you holy, without stain, and blameless before him - if you keep your firm and unwavering faith in Jesus, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard or read. This gospel has been preached throughout all creation under heaven, and Paul was a servant of the gospel. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians as he suffered in his physical body, to complete what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the benefit of Christ’s body, the church. Paul became a servant of the church when he was assigned a divine office from God - for your benefit - so the word of God would be preached in the world to inform about the mystery not understood by people for ages, but that is now revealed to the people set apart for God. God wanted to show them the glorious riches of this mystery among the Gentiles, the mystery of Christ in you, the certain hope of glory. Paul and his companions proclaimed him by warning and teaching all men and women using wisdom so that the people could be presented to God as mature in Christ. Paul labored toward this goal, using God’s power that powerfully worked in him.

Col 2: 1 - 5 Paul wanted the Christians at Colossae to know how hard he was working for them, and for those in Laodicea, and for those he has not met personally. His goal was that their hearts, having been united in love, would be encouraged, and that they would have all the benefits that assurance (glc…of their salvation) brings in their understanding of the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom is hidden all the valuable things of wisdom and knowledge. Paul wrote this so that no one would deceive the Christians by persuasive speech that sounded reasonable. Even though Paul was not with them in person, he was with them in spirit, and rejoiced to know of their morale and the firmness of their faith in Christ.

Col 2:6 - 15 Therefore, since you accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, keep on living your lives in Christ, depending on him and growing in him with an unwavering faith just as other Christians taught you, and being overfilled with thankfulness. Be on your guard to not let anyone take control of you with their worthless and misleading philosophy that is from human traditions and the evil spirits of this world, and not from or following Christ. In Christ, all the fullness of God permanently lives in bodily form, and when you accepted Christ you were filled in him, who is the ruler over every ruler and authority. In him you were spiritually circumcised - not with the physical circumcision done by human hands, but by the putting away and removal of the body of flesh through the spiritual circumcision done by Christ. Christians were spiritually buried with him in baptism and then raised with him because of their faith in the power of God who raised Christ from the dead. Even in your former condition of being spiritually dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your body (glc…they were not part of the Jewish family of God ???), Christ overlooked that and made Christians alive with him, by forgiving all their transgressions. He had victory over what opposed us, a sentence of indebtedness shown by decrees opposed to us. Christ took this away by nailing it to the cross. He removed influence from rulers and authorities and made a public disgrace of them by his triumph over them by his sacrifice on the cross.

Col 2:16 - 23 Don’t let people put restrictions on you or look down on you in matters of eating or drinking, or in how you feast, or in marking certain days as special - the new moon or Sabbath days - these matters are only weakly related to the things to come, but the important thing is Christ! Don’t let anyone who takes pride in false humility and the worship of angels influence you with their judgment. Those people talk a lot about what they claim to have seen, but they are misled in their evaluation of themselves by their non-spiritual mind. They have not kept connected to Jesus from whom the whole body, supported and bound together through its connections, grows with a God-given growth. Think about how you have died to the unspiritual influences of the world, so you should not submit to them as though you lived under their influence. You have heard the phrases: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” These will pass away since they are commands and instructions from men and women. These phrases may appear to be wise sayings with their self-created worship and humility achieved by trying to make the human body submit, but the sayings have no true value and in fact, lead to more fleshly indulgences.

Col 3:1 - 11 Because you have been spiritually raised with Christ (glc…if you have faith in Jesus Christ), keep pursuing the heavenly things, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Keep your thoughts on heavenly things, not Earthly things, for you have died (glc…to your unChristian past) and your spiritual life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ (who gives you life) appears, then you also will be revealed in glory with him. So put away those things in your nature that belong to the Earth: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed which is idolatry (glc…of Earthly things). These things bring the wrath of God upon those who have the character of disobedience (glc…to God). Remember that you as well had this Earthly conduct in your lives in the past, when you shared in their values and conduct. But now, don’t let those things such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and abusive language come out of your mouth. Do not tell lies to other people since you have taken off your old behavior (NET…sin as Adam had) with its practices and have put on the new man (NET…Christ, sinless is our goal) that is being regenerated in knowledge according to the image of the one (glc…Christ) who created it. In the family of regenerated people, there is neither the distinction of Gentile nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian (cbeinternational.org: “Scythians were those who lived along the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. In the first century, Scythians were considered the worst of barbarians by the Greeks.”), slave or free, but Christ is all important and is in all Christians.

Col 3:12 - 17 As a result of this, as the special chosen ones of God, holy and dearly loved, put on a heart of mercy and compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, getting along with each other and forgiving each other, if someone happens to possess a complaint against anyone. The Lord Jesus forgave you, so you should also forgive others. In addition to these virtues include love, which makes the perfect bond (glc…between people). Let Christ’s peace rule in your heart and control your thinking (for Christians are called to have unity in Christ’s peace), and have a thankful attitude. Let the word of Christ ( glc…Bible) have a prominent place inside you and teach, encourage, and motivate each other using wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, using grace in your hearts, to God. And all you do in your speaking and actions, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (glc…being consistent with his example on Earth), giving thanks to god the Father through Jesus.

Col 3:18 - 25 A wife should yield to the authority of her husband (ESV…respect and follow the leadership of the husband), in keeping with a Christian lifestyle. A husband should love his wife and not be harsh with her. Children should obey their parents in all things for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers (NET…parents) should not cause their children to be resentful, so they will not be discouraged. Slaves (ESV…the Bible does not commend slavery but regulates it…trafficking is condemned 1 Timothy 1:10, Rev 18:11-13) (glc…today this could refer to employees) should obey those in charge of them in every respect, not just when they are being watched - like those who just want to please people to get on their good side - but with an upright heart, with reverent fear of the Lord. Whatever you are doing, your actions should have your full effort, as if working for the Lord and not for those in charge, because you know that you will receive your heavenly gifts from the Lord as the reward. Be useful for the Lord Christ. The person who does wrong will be repaid for their wrong, and there is no unrighteous favoritism. (NET…God will discipline all equally with no partiality).

Col 4:1 - 6 Those who are in charge of other people should be just and fair because they also have one in heaven who is in charge of them. Be devoted and consistent in prayer, keeping vigilant with thanksgiving. Pray for those who are spreading the gospel, that God would give them opportunities to proclaim the message of the mystery of Christ, for which Paul was imprisoned. Pray that those who are persecuted would still make the gospel known as they should. Be guided by wisdom in your interactions with those who are not Christians, and make good use of the opportunities you have with them. Speak graciously with them and keep them interested so you can give good answers to everyone.

Col 4:7 - 18 Tychicus, a loved brother in Christ and faithful minister and servant of the Lord was sent to Colossae to tell them news about Paul. Paul sent him for this purpose so they would know the situation and circumstances for Paul and his companions, and that Tychicus would encourage the Colossians. Paul sent him with Onesimus, another faithful and loved Christian, who had a connection to the Colossians. Those two were sent to tell the Colossians all the details of Paul’s situation. Aristarchus, also a prisoner with Paul, sent greetings to the Colossians, along with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Paul sent instructions concerning Mark, that the Colossians would welcome him). Jesus (glc…not Jesus Christ) who used the name Justus sent greetings. Those who were just listed were the only Jewish converts with Paul who were working for the kingdom of God, and they were a comfort to Paul. Epaphras, who was from Colossae and a disciple of Christ sent greetings. He was continually praying hard for them so that the Colossians would be mature and filled with the will of God. Paul testified that he worked hard for the Colossians and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis (glc…towns near, within 12 miles, to Colossae). Paul’s dear friend Luke the physician and Demas (NET…probably the same as listed in Philemon 24 and 2 Timothy 4:10 who abandoned his faith because he loved the world) sent greetings. Paul sent greetings to the men and women Christians who were in Laodicea and to Nympha and the church that met at her house. The Colossians were directed that after reading this letter they were to have it read to the church in Laodicea. Also, they were to read the letter from Laodicea (NET…perhaps an unknown letter, or perhaps this the book of Ephesians). The Colossians were to tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you received in the Lord.” Paul finished the letter with a greeting in his own handwriting. He asked them to remember his chains. He pronounced grace to be with them.