

LESSON 2

PAUL'S THANKSGIVING FOR THE COLOSSIANS

A PRAYER OF THANKS (1:3)

Following the greeting, Paul informed the Colossians that he was thankfully praying for them because of their faith, love, and hope. Having learned the truth of the gospel, they had begun to bear and continued to bear fruit for Jesus. The things for which Paul was thankful are listed in verses 4 through 8. He characteristically began the salutations in his letters with praise and thanksgiving and then mentioned traits or deeds he could commend.

1. What sort of relationship between Jesus and God does the word "Father" describe?
2. How are Jesus and God one while remaining separate beings?
3. What does Paul mean by the phrase "praying always"?

THEIR FAITH AND LOVE (1:4)

Paul and Timothy had learned of the lives of the Colossians through reports from Epaphras and perhaps others.

4. In what ways did Paul receive reports about the churches to whom he wrote?
5. Are reports concerning wrong living by Christians and churches in the category of gossip?
6. What does the phrase "faith in Christ Jesus" mean?
7. What should be the basis of Christian love?

THEIR HOPE OF HEAVEN (1:5)

Hope (*ἐλπίς*, *elpis*), “expectation,” is one of the great Christian virtues. Jesus’ resurrection gives us hope of a resurrection (Acts 23:6; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4). All Christians share the same hope—the one and only hope of salvation, which will make possible eternal life (Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:8; Tit. 1:2; 3:7).

8. What is the nature of hope for Christians?
9. What is the nature of heaven for which Christians hope?
10. What is “truth,” and what is the word’s significance in the New Testament?
11. What is included in the gospel beyond the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

THE FRUIT RESULTING FROM THEIR FAITH (1:6)

Christianity has been spread primarily by Christians’ taking the gospel into all the world, not by the world’s coming to learn Jesus’ teaching. Truth—thus the gospel—cannot be attained through human reason. Rather, it is available because God has revealed it (Gal. 1:10, 11).

12. Regardless of the context, what is the general significance of the word *eis* as it is used throughout the New Testament?
13. What conditions are necessary for spiritual seed to be continually productive, and how were these conditions present in the early church?
14. What are the two possible variations on the word “fruit” as used in the latter part of this verse?
15. When is the word *charis*, or grace, used in Acts’ account of the preaching of the gospel?
16. In what two ways did the Colossians “understand” this *charis*?

EPAPHRAS' REPORT (1:7, 8)

Epaphras was the messenger who taught the Colossians. This brother's understanding of the truth came either through being taught by Paul or by direct teaching from the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit could have been imparted to him by the laying on of Paul's hands.

17. How had the Colossians "learned" the truth of the gospel?
18. Who was the Epaphras Paul mentioned, and what role did he play in spreading the Christian faith in the first century?
19. What does the word "servant" mean in verse 7, and how does this differ from the term "bond-servant"?
20. In referring to the Colossians' "love in the Spirit," did Paul mean the Holy Spirit?