

COLOSSIANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greeting	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-2	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1-2
	1:2a	1:2a	1:2a	
	1:2b	1:2b	1:2b	
Paul Thanks God for the Colossians	Their Faith in Christ	Thanksgiving and Intercession	Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving and Prayer
1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8	1:3-8
The Person and Work of Christ	Preeminence of Christ			
1:9-20	1:9-18	1:9-14	1:9-14	1:9-12
				1:13-14
		The Supremacy of Christ	The Person and Work of Christ	Christ is the Head of all Creation
	Reconciled in Christ	1:15-20	1:15-20	1:15-20
	1:19-23			The Colossians Have Their Share in Salvation
1:21-23		1:21-23	1:21-23	1:21-23
Paul's Ministry to the Church	Sacrificial Service for Christ	Paul's Interest in the Colossians	Paul's Work as a Servant of the Church	Paul's Labors in the Service of the Gentiles
		(1:24-2:7)	(1:24-2:5)	
1:24-2:5	1:24-29	1:24-2:5	1:24-2:3	1:24-29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in the introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their lives and day.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

COLOSSIANS 1:1-29

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-2

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

1:1 “Paul” Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the “diaspora” had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul’s parents gave him this name but why, then, does “Paul” suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term “little” or “least.” The Greek name *Paulos* meant “little.” Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name: (1) the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thekla*; (2) passages where Paul calls himself the “the least of the saints” because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15). Some have seen this “leastness” as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this is somewhat unlikely (cf. II Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

▣ **“an apostle”** This came from the Greek word “to send” (*apostellō*). Jesus chose twelve men to be with Him in a special sense and called them “Apostles” (cf. Lk. 6:13). This term was often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mk. 9:37; Lk. 9:48; Jn. 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36, 37, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 40, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21). In Jewish sources, an apostle was someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20).

▣ **“Christ”** This was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term “*messiah*,” which meant “an anointed one.” It implied “one called and equipped by God for a specific task.” In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets, were anointed. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

▣ **“Jesus”** This Hebrew name meant “YHWH saves,” “YHWH is salvation,” “YHWH brings salvation.” It is the same as the OT name “Joshua.” “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, “*hosea*,” suffixed to the covenant name for God, “YHWH.” It was the name designated by God through an angel of the Lord (cf. Matt. 1:21).

▣ **“by God’s will”** This same introductory phrase is used in I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1 and II Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling started at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 23:3-16; 26:9-18). This opening phrase uses several words and concepts which emphasize Paul’s understanding of his God-given authority.

▣ **“Timothy our brother”** Timothy’s name meant “honored by God” or “honor of God.” He had a Jewish mother (cf. Acts 16:1; II Tim. 1:5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:1). He was converted on Paul’s first missionary journey to Derbe/Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1). Paul invited him to join the missionary team on the second missionary journey, possibly to replace John Mark (cf. Acts 15:36-41). Paul circumcised him to facilitate his work among the Jews (cf. Acts. 16:3). He became Paul’s faithful representative, disciple and trouble shooter (cf. Acts 16:1-17:14; 18:5-19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10; II Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil 1:2; 2:19; Gal. 1:1; Philem. v. 4; and I and II Timothy).

He is mentioned with Paul in several letters (cf. II Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; I Thes. 1:1; II Thes. 1:1 and Philemon). This does not imply co-authorship, but Timothy’s presence and greetings. Timothy may have functioned as Paul’s scribe, as did Silas and Tychicus.

1:2 “the saints” “Saints” (*hagioi*) is etymologically related to the OT term “holy” (*kadosh*) which meant “set apart for God’s service” (cf. I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). It is PLURAL in the NT except for one time in Philippians 4:21; even there, it is used in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, a family of believers.

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Rom. 4 and II Cor. 5:21). It is God's will that they live holy lives (cf. 1:22; 3:12; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:1; 5:27; I Pet. 1:16). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to a lifestyle of holiness (progressive sanctification).

■ **“faithful brethren”** In a book written to combat a heretical group of false teachers, this qualification is significant! Paul believed that the church was remaining faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, given to Paul, given to Epaphras, given to them!

The words, “faith,” “trust” and “believe” all have the same Greek root (*pistis*). The word's primary emphasis is on the trustworthiness of God, not the enthusiasm or sincerity of a human response. Believers must receive and trust in His trustworthy character and eternal promises. The key is the object of the believer's faith, not the intensity of that faith (cf. Matt. 17:20; Lk. 17:6). Christianity is both an initial, repentant/faith response followed by a lifestyle of faithfulness. Biblical faith is a series of human choices—repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. God's faithfulness is reproduced in His children. The image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) is restored!

■ **“in Christ”** This is a grammatical construction called a LOCATIVE (of sphere). This was Paul's favorite way to describe Christians. As believers we live and move and have our being in Him (cf. Acts 17:28)! He is the origin and source of all spiritual blessings. Paul uses this phrase 64 times (“in Christ,” “in Him,” “in the Beloved”).

■ **“Grace to you and peace”** The normal salutation was the Greek word “greeting” (*charein*). Paul characteristically changed this to a very similar sounding but Christian term, grace, (*charis*). Many have assumed that Paul was somehow combining the Greek greeting and the Hebrew greeting, peace (*shalom*). Although this is an attractive theory, it may be reading too much into this typically Pauline introductory phrase (cf. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; and Philemon 3).

“Grace” was the special word which characterized God for the authors of the NT. Humans are right with God because of who He is, not because of who they are. It is God's kind, generous, loving, forgiving, slow to anger, abounding in compassion mercy that forms the only hope for fallen mankind (cf. Ex. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-14; Joel 2:13; Mic. 6:18-20)! Christianity is rooted in the unchanging character of God (cf. Jas. 1:17), the finished work of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

“Peace” is the result of understanding the character of God and the promises of the gospel. Peace is an internal joy and stability apart from circumstances, disruptive false teachings or persecution!

■ **“God our Father”** This reading is found in ancient Greek uncial manuscripts B, D, K, the ancient Vulgate, Peshitta and Coptic translations and the Greek texts used by Origen and Chrysostom. The manuscripts $\aleph$, A, C, G add “and our Lord Jesus Christ.” The phrase is present in v. 3. It was Paul's normal phrasing in opening prayers (cf. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; II Thes. 1:2; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2 and Titus 1:4).

“Father” is not used in the sense of sexual generation or chronological sequence, but intimate family relationship. God chose family terms to reveal Himself to humanity (cf. Hosea 2-3, where God is shown as passionate, faithful lover, and 11 where He is shown as loving father and mother).

The Deity of revelation is not the Prime Mover or the First Cause of Greek philosophy, but the Father of Christ Jesus. The Bible is not a human-reasoned philosophy but a Divine self-disclosure, a revelation which cannot be discovered by human analysis.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:3-8

³We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

1:3-8 Verses 3-8 are one sentence in Greek which means they are one sustained prayer of thanksgiving.

1:3 “thanks” “Thanks” is a recurrent theme in this letter (cf. 1:12; 2:7; 3:15; 4:2), as “joy” is in the letter to the Philippians. Remember Paul was imprisoned at Rome and the church at Colossae was undergoing difficult times.

■ **“Lord”** The term “lord” (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a specific theological sense. It can mean “mister,” “sir,” “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “the full God-man.” The OT usage of this term (*adon*) came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, which was the CAUSATIVE FORM of the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Ex. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the commandment which said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (cf. Ex.

20:7, Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word, *adonai*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word, *Kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full Deity of Christ. The phrase “Jesus is Lord” was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

▣ **“praying always”** “Always” can relate grammatically to “pray” (NASB, NKJV, NJB) or “thank” (NRSV, TEV). Prayer and thanksgiving are inseparably linked in Paul’s theology and practice. Paul prayed for them (cf. 1:9; Eph. 1:16) and requested that they pray for him (cf. 4:3; Eph. 6:18; I Thes. 5:25).

1:4 “since we heard” The PLURAL PRONOUN referred to Paul and his mission team (cf. 1:7). They had heard about the problems of the false teachers and the faith of the believers from Epaphras (cf. 1:7,8) who founded this church.

1:4-5 “faith . . . love . . . hope” This was a favorite triad of Paul’s theology (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2-5; I Thes. 1:3; 5:8). It expresses the confidence that believers have both now and in a certain future consummation. This confidence is to be lived out daily in love.

1:4 “your faith” This term (*pistis*) may have three distinct connotations. Its OT background meant “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness,” therefore, it was used of believers living godly lives. It was used of believers accepting or receiving God’s free offer of forgiveness in Christ. Finally, it was used in the collective sense of the Christian doctrine or truths about Jesus (cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 3 & 20). In several passages it is difficult to determine which is meant (cf. II Thes. 3:3).

▣ **“in Christ Jesus”** The usual PREPOSITION Paul used for faith was “into” (*eis*) Christ, which spoke of Him as the object of one’s faith, but here the preposition is “in” (*en*) which referred to Jesus as the sphere of existence (cf. 1:2; Acts 17:28).

▣ **“the love which you have for all the saints”** Faith toward God is expressed in love toward others, especially those of the household of faith. The use of the word “all” is significant in a setting disrupted by the exclusivism of the false teachers. For “saints” see note at 1:2.

1:5 “the hope” Paul used this term in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer’s faith. This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. Hope was often associated with “faith” and “love” (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2-5; I Thes. 1:3; 5:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

A partial list of Paul’s uses:

1. the Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18
2. trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23
3. ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; I Thes. 4:13; 5:8
4. the glory of God, Rom. 5:2; II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
5. assurance of salvation, I Thes. 5:8
6. eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
7. redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20
8. faith, Rom. 8:23-25; 15:4
9. title for God, Rom. 13:13
10. Paul’s desire for believers, II Cor. 1:7

▣ **“laid up for you in heaven”** This was a metaphor for the divine protection of the believers’ hope (cf. II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 1:4). The false teachers could not affect the believers’ rewards.

▣ **“you previously heard”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE of a compound term, “to hear” and “before.” This referred to Epaphras’ preaching of the gospel, to which the Colossians had already personally responded by faith. Believers must hear, respond, obey, and persevere.

▣ **“in the word of truth, the gospel”** This phrase can be understood in several ways: (1) instrumentally they heard the truth by means of the gospel; (2) temporally they had heard the gospel; or (3) appositionally as a way of identifying the gospel as the truthful word.

1:6 “in all the world” This referred to the Greco-Roman world. This was a common NT overstatement (hyperbole).

The Greek term (*kosmos*) had several usages. It could refer to (1) this physical planet; (2) humanity that inhabits the surface of this planet; or (3) the philosophies, governmental structures, educational institutions and religious systems of fallen mankind which allow them to function in independence from God.

▣ **“constantly bearing fruit and increasing”** These are both PRESENT PARTICIPLES. The first is MIDDLE VOICE and the second PASSIVE but in this context there is no theological distinction implied. Bearing fruit is the sign of regeneration (cf. Matt. 13:1-23; John 15:16; Gal. 5:22-23; Jas. 2:14-26).

▣	
NASB	“understood”
NKJV	“knew”
NRSV	“comprehend”
TEV	“came to know”
NJB	“recognized”

This is an intensified AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE form of the Greek term *epignōskō* which implies “to fully and experientially know.” The Colossians received the gospel which is both a person and a truth (combining the meaning of “know” from Hebrew and Greek). This was Paul’s reaction to the heretics’ false emphasis on human knowledge (cf. 1:9, 10).

▣ **“the grace of God in truth”** This refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which finally and fully expresses the nature and character of deity to the human race.

The Greek word “grace” (*charis*) was used in Koine Greek (200 B.C.-A.D. 200) and the Septuagint (250-100 B.C.) in several different senses—charm, beauty, gracefulness, a matter of approval, a benefit, an act of favor, or a provision. In the NT it was primarily used of the undeserved, unmerited love and mercy of the triune God which gives righteousness and restores fellowship to fallen mankind (cf. Eph. 4:4-7). The emphasis was always on the worth of the giver (God), not the receiver (mankind). All that was needed God has provided! All that the individual can do is respond (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)!

1:7 “Epaphras” (cf. 4:12-13; Philemon 23). He was the founder of three of the churches (Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) in the Lycus River Valley and Paul’s representative (cf. v. 7). He was probably converted during Paul’s stay at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). His name was a shortened form of Epaphroditus which was etymologically related to the goddess Aphrodite. Another man by this same name is mentioned in Phil. 2:25; 4:18. However, he was from a different geographical area.

▣	
NASB	“a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf”
NKJV, NRSV	“of a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf”
TEV	“Christ’s faithful worker on our behalf”
NJB	“A trustworthy deputy for us as Christ’s servant”

The ancient Greek manuscripts vary on the PRONOUNS. Some have “our” and others have “your.” “Our” seems textually best because it is found in the early Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, N*, A, B, D*, F, and G. But the United Bible Society’s scholars felt “your” was original because of its place in the early church fathers’ and the early Latin, Aramaic and Coptic translations (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 619-620).

1:8 “your love in the Spirit” This is, surprisingly, the only specific reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter although He is, perhaps, alluded to in “filled” in 1:9 and “indwell” in 3:16. The object of the Spirit-engendered love may be (1) other believers; (2) Paul and his mission team; (3) Epaphras; or (4) all the above and even the lost.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-14

⁹For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. ¹³For He rescued us

from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1:9-20 This is one sentence in Greek. Verses 9-12 are Paul's prayer for these believers. Verses 15-18 are possibly a quote from an early Christian hymn or confessional statement (cf. Phil. 2:6-11, I Tim. 3:16, II Tim. 2:11-12). This is the greatest Christological confession in Paul's writings.

1:9 "heard of it" Paul did not start this church, nor did he know its members personally. He heard about their faith and love from its founder, Epaphras (cf. 1:7-8).

▣ **"that you may be filled"** This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Believers cannot fill themselves, but they must allow and co-operate with the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18). "Filled" is the main verb of vv. 9-12. It is the first of two requests that Paul made of God on behalf of the Colossians. The other is for their walk to be worthy (v. 10). Notice he links knowledge of God with a godly lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Faith without works is dead (cf. Jas. 2:14-26).

▣ **"knowledge of H is will"** The content of this knowledge (*epignōskō*, cf. v.6) is the gospel. The gospel is both a body of truth to be believed and a person to be received. God's will is that individuals personally respond to Christ who is the goal of all "spiritual wisdom and understanding." This verse is a play on the theology of the false teachers. This is confirmed by (1) Paul's use of "filled" (*plerōma*), one of the gnostics' favorite terms and (2) their emphasis on secret knowledge. For Paul, all fullness and knowledge was in Christ, who was God's wisdom (*sophia*, cf. 1:28; 2:3,23; 3:16; 4:5; Eph. 1:8,17; 3:10) and the convergence of all truth (*sunesis*, cf. 2:2).

1:10 "walk in a manner worthy" This is an AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVE. It is defined by four PRESENT PARTICIPLES (cf. vv. 10-12) which describes the worthy walk (cf. 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; Eph. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15; I Thes. 2:12; 4:1). God's will is that His children reflect His character daily.

▣ **"bearing fruit in every good work"** This is the first of four PRESENT PARTICIPLES (cf. vv. 10-12) which describe worthy lives.

God's will is that believers live godly lives. The moral transformation of believers is evidence that the image of God has been restored! It serves as a bridge to evangelism. It reflects the believer's new family characteristics and shows who our true father is—God.

Biblical salvation is a free gift, which must result in a new and different life (cf. Matt. 13; Eph. 2:8-9 and 10).

▣ **"increasing in the knowledge of God"** This is the second PRESENT PARTICIPLE. This is a strong compound term for knowledge (*epignōskō*, cf. vv. 9,10; 3:10; Eph. 1:17; 4:13). Believers are to continue to grasp the meaning of the gospel and continue to live out its implications.

1:11 "strengthened with all power" This is the third PRESENT PARTICIPLE meaning "with all power being empowered." Like salvation, the Christian life is a supernatural gift, not unaided, strenuous human effort or commitment (cf. Gal. 3:1-3). Believers must yield to the Spirit to produce effective, godly lives (cf. Eph. 5:18). This term is always used of supernatural strength (cf. Eph. 1:19; Phil. 4:13).

▣ **"according to His glorious might"** This phrase describes how believers are to be "strengthened with all power." They must yield to God's Spirit, and the energy, power and glory are His!

▣ **"steadfastness and patience"** One wonders if these were used synonymously. They had slightly different foci. Steadfastness (*hupomonē*) meant patient endurance and perseverance, while patience (*makrothumia*) meant patient endurance of evil or suffering. They were both frequent admonitions from Paul (cf. II Cor. 6:4,6; II Tim. 3:10). Believers are only capable of them in God's power. These terms were often used to describe how God treats fallen mankind (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Cor. 6:6) and how redeemed mankind should therefore treat one another (cf. Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12).

▣ **"joyously"** This can relate grammatically to v. 11 (NKJV) or v. 12 (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB).

1:12 "giving thanks" This is the last of the four PRESENT PARTICIPLES of vv. 10-12 which describe the worthy walk as constant thanksgiving (cf. 3:17; Eph. 5:20; I Thes. 5:18). Thanksgiving is a characteristic of the Spirit-filled life.

■ **“to the Father”** Christians need to be constantly reminded that the NT focus on the ministry of the Son should not diminish their praise of God the Father. He is the One whose character and grace are exhibited in Jesus. He was the sender and sustainer of the Son (cf. Eph. 1:3-14 and 15-23).

There are several Greek manuscript variations of this phrase. However, this reading is supported by the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁶¹, A, C, D, K and P as well as the Latin Vulgate translation. These variations, as is so often true, do not affect the sense, truth or trustworthiness of the text.



NASB, NKJV	“qualified”
NRSV	“enabled”
TEV	“has made you fit”
NJB	“has made you able”

This term is used only here and in II Cor. 3:5-6 (the adjective is used in II Cor. 2:16; 3:5 and II Tim. 2:2). God has qualified us (1) by declaring us to be righteous in Christ (justification and positional sanctification) and (2) by developing Christlikeness in us (progressive sanctification).

■ **“us”** The ancient Greek texts are equally divided between “us” and “you.” The “you” may have been written here by a copyist to match v. 13.

■ **“to share in the inheritance”** Inheritance is literally the term “lot.” In the OT God promised Abraham a land and a seed (cf. Gen. 12:12). The OT focuses on the land; the NT focuses on the seed. In the OT, the land of Palestine was given as a tribal inheritance to all the children of Jacob except the Levites because they served God in a unique role (cf. Num. 4:45). God Himself was said to be their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:24). In a sense all the OT people of God were priests (Ex. 19:4-6). They were a kingdom of priests to bring the whole world to God. The NT people of God are spoken of in OT terms as priests (I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). As the Levites had God as their inheritance, so now do the saints.

■ **“of the saints”** See note at verse 2.

■ **“in light”** This was either (1) an ethical statement (cf. Jn. 3:19), or (2) a statement about Christlikeness in opposition to the demonic (cf. Eph. 6:12; Acts 26:18).

1:13-14 These verses function as a transition to the wonderful Christological creed of vv. 15-20.

1:13 “He delivered us” This AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE is used in the sense of rescued (NRSV, TEV, NJB).

■ **“from the dominion of darkness”** Literally “authority (*exousia*) of darkness” (cf. 1:12; Luke 22:53). NJB has “ruling force of darkness.” Light and darkness were often used to represent the two spiritual realms of good and evil (cf. Jn. 3:19-21). Paul uses this term several times in Col. (cf. 1:13, 16; 2:10, 15).

■ **“transferred”** This is literally “resettled” or “relocated.” Both of the verbs in this verse are AORIST. These are things God has already accomplished for believers.

■ **“kingdom”** Jesus used this concept as a present reality with a future consummation. The context emphasized what believers already possess in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:5-6)!

Paul did not use Jesus’ exact phrase “the Kingdom of God” often, possibly because the Gentiles would not have understood this Jewish concept.

■ **“of His beloved Son”** God the Father gave this title to Jesus at His baptism and transfiguration (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Jesus is the unique Son (*monogenēs*, cf. Jn. 1:18, 3:16, 18; I Jn. 4:9). Believers are sons through Him.

1:14 “in whom we have” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. In Christ believers have and continue to have the family blessings of God.

■ **“redemption”** This may have been an allusion to the OT terms (*paduh*, “to free or redeem” and *gaal*, “to free through the agency of a relative [*go’el*]”). Jesus bought us back from slavery (cf. Isa. 53:11-12; Mk. 10:45; Eph. 1:7). Redemption is a present reality (cf. Eph. 1:7) and a future consummation (cf. Eph. 4:30).

▣ **“the forgiveness of sins”** There were several Greek terms for “forgiveness.” This one (*aphesis*) meant “to send away,” which was an allusion to the ritual of the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16). The scapegoat symbolically carried away the sins of the people.

We learn from Irenaeus’ *Heresies*, 1:21:2 that some gnostic teachers separated redemption from remission by a time and maturity factor. Paul may have been addressing this falsehood.

The King James Version adds the phrase “through His blood,” which later scribes added from the parallel in Eph. 1:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:15-20

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

1:15-20 This wonderful poetic passage may reflect an early church hymn or creed. It deals with the cosmic lordship of Jesus. It reflects several gnostic terms, “firstborn,” “fullness,” and concepts like the angelic levels of v. 16, and Jesus’ true humanity and death in v. 20.

Notice how often the term “all” is used seven times (cf. vv. 15,16[twice],17[twice],18,20). Jesus’ ministry is inclusive, all that is, is from Him. Notice how often the pronoun “Him” is presented with different prepositions: (1) “in Him,” vv. 16,17,19; (2) “through Him,” vv. 16,20; (3) “unto/into Him,” vv. 16,20 (notice this same thing in Eph. 1:3-14).

1:15 “He is the image of the invisible God” The same word (*eikōn*) is used of Jesus in 3:10 and II Cor. 4:4. A similar theological expression occurs in John 1:18; 14:9; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:3. The Hebrews 1:3 passage has the stronger Greek term (*charakter*, which means an exact representation, cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; I Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9). To see Jesus is to see God! The invisible God has become visible! Deity has become a man (cf. Jn. 14:9).

Jesus’ ministry was to restore the image of God in man. In one sense Eden had been restored through Jesus, the second Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; Phil. 2:6). It is even possible that heaven will be a restored Eden: (1) the Bible begins with God, mankind and the animals (cf. Gen. 1-2) and ends with God and mankind in a garden setting (with the animals by implication, cf. Rev. 21-22); (2) the prophecy of Isa. 11:6-9 describes children and animals together in the new age; and (3) new Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:2).

▣ **“the firstborn of all creation”** This was an OT metaphor for Jesus’ unique and exalted position: (1) The rabbis said it meant preeminence (cf. Ex.4:22); (2) in the OT it was used for the eldest son as heir and manager of the family; (3) in Ps. 89:27 it was used in a Messianic sense; (4) in Prov. 8:22 it referred to Wisdom as God’s first creation and agent of creation. In context options #1 and #2 combined seem best.

This phrase is not to be understood as Jesus being the first creation (#4). This would have played into the hands of the gnostic teachers, who taught that Jesus was the highest angelic level next to the high god. It must be interpreted in its Jewish OT setting. Jesus was deity’s unique son (cf. Jn. 1:18; 3:16,18; I Jn. 4:9), yet Jesus was always deity (cf. 1:17; Jn. 1:1; 5:18; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28). He became a human in time, at Bethlehem, so that fallen mankind could comprehend and understand Deity (cf. Jn. 1:14,18).

1:16 “by Him all things were created . . .” Jesus was God’s agent of creation, both of the visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly spheres (cf. John 1:3, 10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2; 2:10). This refuted the gnostics’ world view of the antithetical relationship between spirit (God) and matter (creation). It was Jesus who spoke the cosmos into existence (cf. Gen. 1). It was Jesus who formed man and breathed into him the breath of life (cf. Gen. 2).

The verb “created” is used twice in v. 16. The first is AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE and the second at the end of the verse (in Greek) is PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The thrust is that Jesus is the agent in creation but the Father is the primary cause. Creation was in (*en*) Jesus, through (*dia*) Jesus and for (*eis*) Jesus!

▣ **“thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”** These terms could refer to earthly governmental leaders (cf. Rom. 13), but in the context of Colossians they refer to the false teachers’ angelic levels (*eons*, cf. Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; I Pet. 3:22). The ancients saw the world not only in physical cause and effect relationships, but as a spiritual realm as well. It is impossible to have a biblical world-view and deny the spiritual realm.

■ **“and for Him”** Jesus was not only God the Father’s agent in creation, but the goal of creation as well (cf. Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10).

■ **1:17 “He is before all things”** There has never been a time when Jesus was not! Jesus is preexistent deity (cf. Jn. 1:1-2; 8:58; 17:5, 24; Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 10:5-7)! Notice the emphatic use of “He” (*autos*) in vv. 17 and 18, “He, Himself, is before all things” and “He, Himself, is head of the body”!

■

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “in Him all things hold together”

NKJV “in Him all things consist”

TEV “in union with him all things have their proper place”

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE of the “*syn*” compound “to stand with” (*sunistēmi*) which implies “to continue, to endure, or to exist.”

This is the doctrine of providence (cf. Heb. 1:3) and it is personal! “All things” refers to creation—material and spiritual. Jesus is the sustainer as well as creator of all things. In the OT these functions describe the work of *Elohim* (God).

1:18 “He is also the Head of the body, the church” As Jesus was preeminent in creation; so He is in the Church. This refers to the universal church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2:9). Believers are both individually (cf. I Cor. 6:19) and corporately (cf. I Cor. 3:16) the body of Christ. Paul often spoke of the church as the body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12:12-27) but it is only in Ephesians and Colossians that Jesus is said to be “the Head” of that body. In reality He is Head of all things, even the principalities and powers (cf. Eph. 1:22).

■ **“He is the beginning”** At first glance this looks like another allusion to creation (cf. Gen. 1:1), but the context has changed to the church. In this setting the term “beginning” probably relates to the Greek sense of origin or source. Jesus is the Head or source of life of the new people of God, Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female (cf. 3:11; Gal. 3:28). He is the new Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). The head of a new race, Christian (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

■ **“the firstborn from the dead”** The definitive NT passage on the resurrection is I Cor. 15. Jesus is preeminent, “the first born” in resurrection as He was in creation (cf. 1:15; Rom. 1:4; Rev. 1:5). His resurrection is a promise and a sign that all believers will be resurrected.

In I Cor. 15:20 and 23 Jesus is called the “first fruits.” This is a synonymous OT metaphor. Jesus is the forerunner in all areas. He is both “first born” (cf. Rev. 1:5) and “first fruits.”

■ **“so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything”** This summary statement is similar to Eph. 1:22-23. The Father has made the Son supreme and preeminent in all things (cf. I Cor. 15:27-28).

1:19 This starts with “for” (*hoti*). It states God’s will for the Messiah which is (1) the fullness of deity to be revealed in Him (cf. v. 19) and (2) the reconciliation of all things through Him (cf. v. 20).

■

NASB “for all the fullness to dwell in Him”

NKJV “that in Him all the fullness should dwell”

NRSV “For in him all the fullness of God. . .to dwell”

TEV “that the Son has in himself the full nature of God”

NJB “all fullness to be found in him”

This is a play on the word “full” (*plerōma*), which was used by the false teachers to describe the angelic levels between the good high god and sinful matter (cf. 2:9; Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13). This was a startling statement to describe a carpenter from Nazareth who was executed for treason! To see Jesus is to see God!

1:20 “and through Him to reconcile” The term meant “to change from hostility to peace” especially between persons. Sin has caused a separation between the creator and the created. God acted in Christ to restore the fellowship. This is a double compound word (*apokatallassō*) for theological emphasis (cf. v. 22). Paul used the same word in Eph. 2:16 and the same root in II Cor. 5:18-20.

■ **“all things”** This refers to all creation, visible and invisible (cf. Rom. 8:18ff; I Cor. 15:27-28; Eph. 1:22-23).

■ **“to Himself”** This could theologically refer to the Father or the Son. Context is the only guide. Here the Father seems best.

■ **“having made peace through the blood of His cross”** This referred to Jesus’ sacrificial death (cf. Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13,16). The reconciliation was not without great cost! The emphasis was possibly on His humanity (blood) as well as His vicarious atonement (sacrifice, cf. Isa. 53; II Cor. 5:21). The false teachers would have affirmed His deity but denied His humanity and death.

■ **“His cross”** Deuteronomy 21:23 asserted that anyone who hung on a tree was under a divine curse (cf. Phil. 2:8). Originally this referred to public impaling instead of a proper burial. However, by Jesus’ day the rabbis interpreted it as crucifixion. Jesus took sinful mankind’s curse, the curse of the Old Covenant, on Himself (cf. Gal. 3:13; Phi. 2:8).

■ **“whether things on earth or things in heaven”** This phrase is directed to the false antithesis between “spirit” (heaven) and “matter” (earth, cf. v. 16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:21-23

²¹And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged in evil deeds*, ²²yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

1:21 “you” This refers to Gentile believers.

■ **“were formerly alienated”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of a rare compound word for a stranger or foreigner which describes the Gentiles’ previous relationship to God. The theological description of this estrangement is found in Eph. 2:1,3,11-22. The moral description is in Eph. 4:18-19. It is possible that this term is used of slaves in the sense of “being transferred to another owner.” If so, 1:13 is the background.

■ **“hostile in mind”** Fallen mankind has a mind-set of independence (cf. Rom. 1:28; 5:8,10; 8:7; Jas. 4:4; I Jn. 2:15-16). Mankind, not God, becomes the measure of all things (atheistic humanism).

■	
NASB	<i>“engaged in evil deeds”</i>
NKJV	<i>“by wicked works”</i>
NRSV	<i>“doing evil deeds”</i>
TEV	<i>“the evil things you did”</i>
NJB	<i>“your evil behavior”</i>

The rabbis assert that as a person thinks, so he/she becomes. An evil heart and mind eventually reflects itself in acts of evil toward God and other humans (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; II Tim. 3:2-5; Titus 3:3).

1:22 “yet He has now reconciled you” “Reconciled” is the main verb of vv. 21-23. What a change has occurred because of God’s actions in Christ toward these fallen, alienated Gentiles (cf. v. 20)!

God’s promise to redeem mankind in Gen. 3:15 has been fulfilled. This promise was accomplished completely as an act of God (cf. the unconditional covenant of Gen. 15:12-21). Fallen mankind was unable to return to the Creator (cf. Isa. 53:6, quoted in I Pet. 2:25; and Rom. 3:9-18 for a series of OT quotes). What love is this that has pursued sinful, rebellious humanity through time and in time gave His only Son to die on our behalf!

■ **“in His fleshly body through death”** This may have related to the false teachers’ rejection of Jesus’ humanity (cf. v. 20). Jesus was fully God and fully human (cf. I Jn. 4:1-6). He had a physical body (cf. 2:11). He was really one of us.

■ **“in order to present you before Him”** This could refer to (1) the Second Coming (cf. v. 28; Eph. 5:27); or (2) the time of the believers’ death.

■ **“holy and blameless and beyond reproach”** These three ADJECTIVES are used as synonyms. This describes the purity of believers in Christ. They are not only forgiven, they are totally changed! This is very similar to the emphasis of Eph. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27. The goal of justification is not only heaven when we die, but holiness now (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48)!

Sanctification is a current reality for believers as a gift from Christ (cf. Acts. 26:18; I Cor. 1:2,30; 6:11; Heb. 10:10,14). It is also a progressive, Christlike living (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10; II Tim. 2:12; Jas. 1:4; II Pet. 3:14) and an eschatological goal (cf. II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27; I Thes. 3:13; 5:23; I Jn. 3:2).

1:23 “if indeed you continue in faith” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which was assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul assumed their continuance, which was an evidence of their true conversion (cf. I Jn. 2:19; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21).

Faith (a DATIVE) refers to either (1) personal trust in Jesus, or (2) faithfulness to Christ; or (3) Christian doctrine (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude vv. 3,20, also the Pastoral Epistles). Christian maturity involves (1) a personal faith; (2) a godly lifestyle; and (3) doctrinal correctness. In a context of false teachings, each of these is crucial!

▣ **“firmly established”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. “They have been and continue to be firmly established (implication, by God).” This was a construction metaphor for a sure foundation (cf. 2:7; Matt. 7:25; Eph. 3:17). It may have been a play on Colossae’s geographical location in an earthquake area.

▣

NASB	“and not moved away from”
NKJV	“and are not moved away”
NRSV	“without shifting from”
TEV	“and must not allow yourselves to be shaken from”
NJB	“never letting yourselves drift away”

This term is used only here in the NT. It is the negative expression of the previous positive statement. It can be PASSIVE VOICE (God keeps us, cf. NASB, NKJV) or MIDDLE VOICE (believers must exercise diligence, cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB).

▣ **“the hope of the gospel”** Paul often used this term in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer’s faith. This can be expressed as “glory,” “eternal life,” “ultimate salvation,” “Second Coming,” etc. The consummation is certain, but the time is unknown. For a full discussion see 1:5.

▣ **“which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven”** “All creation” is a hyperbole for the Roman Empire (cf. Col. 1:6). The grammatical form of this is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. However, this does not fit the context. It must be used in the sense of a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. It must be remembered that grammatical form is subservient to literary context, as is lexical definition of words. Context, not grammatical form or lexical meaning, is always priority! In Koine Greek the PASSIVE VOICE was replacing the MIDDLE VOICE.

▣ **“minister”** This was the general term for “servant” or “service” (*diakonos*, cf. Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; Eph. 3:7; 6:21). Jesus uses this term for Himself in Mk. 10:45. This became the title for local church servants—deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:24-2:5

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the *preaching* of the word of God, ²⁶that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. ³⁰For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ³¹that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*, ³²in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ³³I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

1:24 “I rejoice in my sufferings for you” Paul saw his imprisonment as benefitting the church (cf. Phil. 2:17 and II Cor. 1:5 and 12:15). Paul saw his life as an offering to God on behalf of the church. This is part of the Good News we don’t like (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3; 8:17; II Cor. 4:7-11; 6:3-10; Phil. 1:29, 2:17; II Tim. 3:12; Heb. 5:8; I Pet. 1:7-8; 4:12-16)! As Jesus suffered on behalf of others, so must His followers (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; I Jn. 3:16). Only the Spirit can turn persecution into joy!

▣ **“in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions”** This emphatic DOUBLE COMPOUND VERB (*anti, ana, plēroō*) is found only here in the NT. The PREPOSITIONS strongly affirm “on behalf of” or “and to fill completely.” This is a very

difficult sentence to interpret. Some theories about the meaning of this verse are (1) Christ's atonement was not sufficient without the church, i.e., Roman Catholicism's merits of the saints; (2) believers, as the church, share Christ's sufferings, (not vicariously), but by doing the Father's will in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Mk. 10:39; Jn. 16:1ff; II Cor. 4:10; Gal. 2:20; Phil 3:10); (3) Christ suffers with believers (cf. Acts 9:4-5; II Cor. 1:5; Isa. 63:9); (4) suffering is needed for maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8); (5) we must fulfill the "birth pains" for the new age (cf. Mk. 13:8); or (6) Paul was refuting a gnostic catch phrase. This term for "suffering" was never used in the NT for Christ's death on the cross. The context of verses 13-18 totally rules out #1! I like #5 best! It is even possible that Paul chose a term for "suffering" (*thlipis*) which later in Revelation will denote end-time persecutions of believers.

▣ **"the church"** *Ekklesia* was from two Greek words, "out of" and "to call." It is used in Koine Greek to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town meeting (cf. Acts 19:32). The Church chose this term because it was used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, written as early as 250 B.C. for the library at Alexandria, Egypt). This term translated the Hebrew term *qahal* which was used in the phrase "the assembly of Israel" (cf. Num. 20:4). The NT writers asserted that they were the "divinely called out ones" who were to be the People of God in their day. They saw no radical break between the OT People of God and themselves, the NT People of God. Believers must assert that the Church of Jesus Christ, not modern rabbinical Judaism, is the true heir of the OT Scriptures.

In Ephesians, a circular letter, the term "church" always has a universal meaning, but in Colossians it usually has a local meaning. The church is both corporate, referring to all of the people of God, and individual, referring to a local congregation of believers. In this text Paul is obviously referring to the universal aspect of the church.

1:25 "I was made a minister" Paul is referring to his Apostolic call to preach to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7; Eph. 3:1-2, 8; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17). However, Paul viewed his calling and giftedness as a servant, a slave, a steward! In the Bible leadership is servanthood (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).

▣ **"according to the stewardship from God"** Believers are all stewards or trustees of the gospel (cf. I Cor. 4:1-5; Eph. 3:2,9; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 4:10). Paul uses this term in several different senses: (1) an Apostolic commission to proclaim the gospel (cf. I Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25); (2) an eternal plan of redemption (cf. Eph. 1:10, 3:9; I Cor. 4:1) and (3) training in the plan of redemption and its accompanying lifestyle (cf. I Tim. 1:4).



NASB	"that I might fully carry out the <i>preaching</i> of the word of God"
NKJV	"to fulfill the word of God"
NRSV	"to make the word of God fully known"
TEV	"fully proclaiming his message"
NJB	"that of completing God's message"

This is the same root term "to fill" (*plēroō*) used in v. 24. Paul's imprisonment and preaching were accomplishing God's purpose for the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7; Eph. 3:2,8; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17).

1:26 "the mystery" See full note at 2:2.

▣ **"which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, it had been and continued to be hidden by God (implication) in the past. This mystery was kept secret from (1) the Gentiles, (2) the Jews, and (3) even the angels (cf. I Pet. 1:12). The prophets had glimpses of it, but never the full truth (cf. Heb. 1:1). The phrase "ages and generations" was used by the gnostics to refer to the angelic levels (*eons*).

▣ **"but has now been manifested to His saints"** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE of a verb that means "to clearly reveal" or "bring to light" (cf. 1:27; Rom. 3:21; 16:26). That which was hidden has now been fully revealed. The gospel is clear and open to all, not just a select few!

▣ **"the riches of the glory"** Paul often uses the term "riches" to describe the benefits of the gospel (cf. 1:27; 2:2; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19).

▣ **"Christ in you . . ."** It is grammatically possible that this could be translated "Christ among you," which would refer to the mystery of the gospel and not the indwelling Christ. The same Greek preposition, *en*, is translated "among" in the preceding phrase, "among the Gentiles." This seems to fit the context best.

There is a fluidity between the work of the Son and the Spirit. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is "the other Jesus." The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST - SPIRIT

1. The Spirit is called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 15:45; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).
2. Both are called by the same terms
 - a. “truth”
 - (1) Jesus - Jn. 14:6
 - (2) Spirit - Jn. 14:17; 16:13
 - b. “advocate”
 - (1) Jesus - I Jn. 2:1
 - (2) Spirit - Jn. 14:16; 16:7
2. Both indwell believers
 - a. Jesus - Mt. 28:20; Jn. 14:20, 23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
 - b. Spirit - Jn. 14:16-17; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14
 - c. Father - Jn. 14:23; II Cor. 6:16

1:27 “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles” Paul has used “riches” several times to describe God’s gracious acts and provision for fallen man (cf. 1:27; 2:2; Rom. 2:4; 9:23; 11:33; II Cor. 8:2; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:16).

God has always had a plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in salvation (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). The beginnings of this plan of redemption can be seen in (1) God’s promise in Gen. 3:15, which applies to all the children of Adam; (2) God’s call to Abraham which would bless all people (cf. Gen. 12:3); (3) God’s calling a kingdom of priests to reach the world (cf. Ex. 19:5); (4) even Solomon’s temple had implications for the Gentiles to repent and believe and be a part (cf. I Kgs. 8:43, 60); and (5) the numerous references in the prophets (especially Isaiah) to God’s universal reign and invitation to all mankind.

▣ **“the hope of glory”** This refers to Resurrection Day when the saints will receive their new glorified bodies (cf. I Jn 3:2). Election, justification, and sanctification will result in glorification (cf. Rom.8:29-30).

1:28 “We proclaim Him” Christianity is not primarily correct theology, ethical standards, or religious ritual, but a personal relationship with Jesus. Once this is established, the other aspects have their appropriate place (cf. II Tim. 3:15,16-17).

▣ **“admonishing”** This word is used of “child training” in the Septuagint (cf. Job 5:17). In the NT it is used of believers exhorting each other (cf. Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14). It often carried a negative connotation of warning about inappropriate Christian behavior (cf. I Thes. 5:14; II Thes. 3:15).

▣ **“every man”** This phrase is used three times in this verse for emphasis. This inclusiveness is so different from the exclusiveness of the false teachers. The gospel is for all humanity (cf. Jn. 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

▣ **“with all wisdom”** God’s wisdom is so different from the exclusivism and secrecy of the false teachers’ so-called knowledge.

▣ **“that we may present every man”** God’s goal for the church is that every believer be mature in Christ (cf. 4:12; Eph. 4:13; I Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Phil. 3:15). There are no special groups, ranks, gifts, knowledge, or privileges in Christ’s body, just servants!

▣

NASB	“complete”
NKJV, NJB	“perfect”
NRSV, TEV	“mature”

This is the Greek term *telos*, which meant “fully equipped for an assigned task” (cf. Eph. 4:12). It was used of (1) broken limbs being healed and becoming useful again; (2) fishing nets being mended and thereby being able to catch fish; (3) ships being fitted with ropes and sails for the sea and (4) chickens that had grown large enough to be taken to market. It does not imply sinlessness, but functional maturity.

1:29 “I labor, striving” These same two strong Greek terms are used together in I Tim. 4:10 to describe Paul’s ministry.

▣ **“struggling”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE. This is either an athletic term (cf. I Cor.9:25; I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7) or a military term (cf. 2:1; Jn. 18:36). We get the English term “agony” from this Greek root. Church work is not easy!

▣ **“His power, which mightily works within me”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. It is God’s power, not the believer’s, that “energizes” all ministry (cf. Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 20; Phil. 3:21; I Tim. 1:12) This NOUN and PARTICIPLE are from the same Greek root which means, “His energy, energizes me.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul use a standard introduction in his letters? How is this opening different?
2. Who started this church? What was the reason for Paul writing this letter?
3. List the reasons for Paul’s thanksgiving for these saints.
4. List three aspects of God’s will (1:9).
5. List four elements of Paul’s prayer as related to “worthy lives” (1:10-12).
6. List the things Paul says about Jesus (1:15-19; 2:9-10).
7. Why does Paul emphasize Jesus’ death so strongly?
8. Can one fall from a state of grace (1:23; 2:16-23)?
9. What does 1:24 mean?
10. Define “mystery.”