

The Iron Men of Fellowship of Champions

Colossians 1:7-10

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Opening Prayer

Colossians 1:7 (NOTES)

- “just as you learned it” - "the word of truth, the Gospel" (vs. 5), "the grace of God in truth" (vs. 6).
- “Epaphras” - Contracted from the Greek word, “Epaphroditos,” which means [lovely.] Feminine form of the word is "Aphrodite" (Venus Roman), the Greek goddess of love. Epaphras was the pastor of the church at Colossae who was visiting Paul in prison with the report of the church and the heresy (Gnosticism) that was being spread there.
- “fellow bond-servant” - (Gr. - sun-doulos = [associate slave]).
- “faithful servant of Christ” - (Gr. - diakonos), the word for [deacon.] In this context it means "minister." Epaphras is the pastor at Colossae. Paul writes that Epaphras is faithful to Christ in his ministry.
- “on our behalf” - As our proxy (agent), under our leadership and authority. Epaphras’ ministry, authority, and teaching comes from Paul. The Gnostics and their followers cannot dismiss Epaphras as an unimportant minister of some distant outpost, but rather he "is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf." He carries the authority of Paul in his teaching and actions to defend the truth.
- “Doulos” (translated as “bond-servant”) is the Greek word for [slave] as physical property (chattel). Not as a temporary indentured servant who sold himself, or was forced, into slavery for money or to work off a debt, and who is scheduled to be released at some future date (i.e. - every sabbath year, or Jubilee). Rather, this is a voluntary but permanent form of slavery.
- For example, if an indentured servant married a fellow doulos during his servanthood and later worked off his debt, he would be freed from his obligation, but his wife would still have her obligation. The freed doulos could go, but alone. If he chose to remain as a doulos to be with his wife and children, or simply because he loved his master, his servanthood became permanent, lifelong slavery. To mark the change from temporary servanthood to permanent, lifelong slavery, the doulos’s ear was pierced with an awl (He. - "martzayah"), permanently marking the flesh of the slave.
 - Ex 21:1-6 "21 *Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them: 2 If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall leave as a free man without a payment to you. 3 If he comes alone, he shall leave alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall leave with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and*

her children shall belong to her master, and he shall leave alone. 5 But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not leave as a free man,' 6 then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently."

- Ps 40:6-9 *"6 You have not desired sacrifice and meal offering; You have opened my ears; You have not required burnt offering and sin offering. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; It is written of me in the scroll of the book. 8 I delight to do Your will, my God; Your Law is within my heart.'"*
- Ps 40:6-9 is a messianic passage, quoted in the NT (He 10:7) and attributed to Christ. The word "opened" in "You have opened my ears" (vs. 6) (Gr. [kawraw] = "pierced"). The pre-incarnate Christ David is prophesying of was saying, "You have pierced my ear because I have voluntarily submitted myself to be your permanent, dedicated doulos, because of my great love for You.
- John MacArthur's book, [Slave,] does an excellent job of working through the doctrine of the believer's slavery to Christ on Paul's regular use of the Greek word [doulos.] Essentially, MacArthur's work redeems the word from earlier English translators, who with the best of intentions sought to soften the meaning of the word in the face of the evil inhumaneness and brutality of European and American slavery in the 17th - 19th centuries. But, it is never okay to try to change the meaning of the text of Scripture in translation. The result of this little mistake has left the Western Church bereft of the true understanding of the depth of one's commitment to Christ and the pains we must take daily to surrender our will to His and live for Him.
- Paul spoke of the marks on his body that showed him to be the slave of Christ for what he had endured in Christ's service.
 - Ga 6:17 *"From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus."*
- Circumcision was tantamount to the pierced ears of a slave, as a mark in the flesh showing one's permanent, lifelong commitment and devotion to God.
- **Discussion:** With this understanding of our relationship to Christ, how important are our personal comforts? Our career plans? Our disappointments? The toys we accumulate? Our other relationships? The rest we feel we deserve, when we are neglecting time with our Master, or His will, or His commands, or the needs of others that He brings across our paths?
- Mt 25:40 *"The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"*

- Could anyone say about us what Paul said about Epaphras, “our beloved fellow slave”? What do you and I need to lay down in order to faithfully follow and serve our Master?
- Mt 16:24-26 *"24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"*

Colossians 1:8 (NOTES)

- “your love in the Spirit” - This is the only direct reference to the Holy Spirit in this epistle. Love (Gr. - agape) is not possible apart from God and is awakened in the heart of believers by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s point is that the Spirit of God is, in fact, active in the lives of the brethren, as evidenced by their love of the brethren.

Colossians 1:9 (NOTES)

- Paul moves from affirmation to encouragement. He prays that they be filled with the knowledge of God’s will rather than what is "falsely called knowledge" by the Gnostics. "Knowledge" (Gr. - epignosis) The "super knowledge" of God’s will in contrast to the false knowledge of the Gnostics, which some of them had mistakenly pursued.
 - 1Ti 6:20-21 *"Timothy, protect what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly, empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge" which some have professed and [thereby] have gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you."*
- There are all sorts of Gnostic movements in the church today. These appeal to a man’s pride wherein he wishes to know something new, something others don’t. In this way he is puffed up/lifted up in pride in his "special and exclusive" knowledge. In our pride, we want to be the insiders, in the know, in the inner circle, better than everyone else, special. These Gnostic ideas always divide, rather than unite. They tear down, rather than build up. Such ideas include: worshipping on a certain day of the week (Adventists), angelolatry (Mormons), hyper-patriarchy, themed worship (family, messianic, hyper-Calvinism, deliverance ministries, prophecy ministries, etc.), and asceticism (the Amish).
- "knowledge"- The apprehension of truth.
- "wisdom"- The skillful application of knowledge.
- "understanding" To know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and sin and righteousness, and to be able to see things as they really are. Understanding is discernment.

- Why is it important to be filled with the knowledge of God's will?
 - Col 1:10 *"so 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;"*

Colossians 1:10 (NOTES)

- "so that" - The ultimate aim of knowing the will of God is to please Him in every respect (even to anticipate His every wish) - both is what we do (spiritual fruit) and what we become (spiritual growth).
- "increasing in the knowledge of God" - Spiritual growth comes through the knowledge of God (His Word) and the application of that knowledge in one's own life (wisdom).
 - Joh 17:17 *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."*
 - 1Th 2:13 *"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted [it] not [as] the word of [mere] men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe."*
 - Heb 5:11 *"Concerning him we have much to say, and [it is] difficult to explain, since you have become poor listeners. Heb 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the actual words of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. Heb 5:13 For everyone who partakes [only] of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to distinguish between good and evil."* Heb 6:1 *"Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, Heb 6:2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment."*
 - 2Ti 3:16 *"All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; 2Ti 3:17 so that the man of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work."*

Application Discussion

Closing Prayer

Small Groups

- Discuss current Scripture reading assignment.

- Prayer:
 - Anything praiseworthy.
 - Areas of accountability.
 - Other prayer requests.