

Further Bible Study Questions

- A) In Colossians 1:3, Paul refers to Jesus Christ as “Lord.” This was a title exclusively used of God in the Bible, but is now used of Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 2:9-11). In the modern church, it is popular to think of Jesus Christ as our Savior, but not as our Lord. But in the Bible, the two are never separated. What are the implications of Jesus Christ being “Lord” over your life, family, job, etc.?
- B) Paul makes a dynamic connection between having faith in Christ (Colossians 1:4) and how we love one another (1:4). How is this working itself out in your own life? Are you loving “the saints” (fellow believers)? Paul seems to say that if you are having a love problem, it might be related to a faith problem. How is the dynamic connection between faith and love working itself out in your own relationships?
- C) Colossians 1:3-8 is a singular sentence in its original language of Koine Greek. As such, it gives a concise snapshot of what our experience of the Christian life ought to look like. This single sentence also has a “trinitarian” progression to it which can easily be missed in English. Can you find this progression? Paul seems to be making allusion that the Trinity has a functional role in our everyday lives. What can be applied in your life from this progression? What do you observe about the role of the Trinity in your life as you study Paul’s progression?
- D) Paul makes another dynamic connection between the progress of the gospel in our own lives, and the progress of the gospel around the world. In other words, wherever the gospel has come “in truth” (1:6), it produces repentance and obedience in an always-increasing manner. Is this the effect of the gospel in your life, family, and relationships? How can the gospel expand and grow in an increasing measure in your life and relationships?

Great News For The Whole World

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 1st, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**FOR OF HIS FULLNESS WE HAVE ALL
RECEIVED, AND GRACE UPON GRACE.
FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH
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REALIZED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.
~JOHN 1:16-17 (NASB)**

1) Giving Thanks & Prayer To God

- A) Paul, on behalf of Timothy also,* gives thanks to “God the Father” (Colossians 1:3). The same “God of Israel” was now to be known more clearly as the Father of Jesus Christ, and by implication as “our Father” (1:2, cf. Matthew 6:9ff.)
- B) Note that Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer are directed to “God the Father” (see also Colossians 3:17). Properly, prayer is to be directed to God. He is the ultimate source, even of Jesus’ Lordship (1:3, “Lord Jesus Christ”).

* Paul writes “we give thanks” rather than “I give thanks” (εὐχαριστοῦμεν). The plural is used (as in the Thessalonian correspondence: 1st Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13, 3:9; 2nd Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13), not as an epistolary plural, nor because Paul stood at a distance from the Colossians, but since he was writing on behalf of Timothy and perhaps others as well as himself. When later in the same chapter he wishes to emphasize his own ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles and its eschatological significance, he changes to the first person singular (vv. 23–27, οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος... νῦν χαίρω κτλ., “of which I, Paul, became a minister... now I rejoice...”) Excerpt from Peter T. O’Brien, *Word Biblical Commentary #44, Colossians & Philemon*, page #9.

- C) Paul's thanksgiving to God for the Colossians also manifests itself in continual prayer† for them, clearly a practice of the earliest disciples, probably as part of their (and our) Jewish heritage (cf. Daniel 6:11; Acts 3:1, 10:3; *Didache* 8:3).

2) Congratulatory Prayer For Faith, Love, And Hope

- A) Paul's thanks/prayers are directed toward God, but also have a congratulatory intent of lifting up the Colossian church for their Christlike nature (Colossians 1:4ff).
- B) As Paul lauds the church, there is a familiar triad of Christian character qualities which are extolled -- faith, love, and hope (1:4-5). This is a common element in Paul's writing (1st Corinthians 13:13; Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:5-6) and in other NT writings (Hebrews 10:22-24; 1st Peter 1:21-22).
- C) Note the degree to which the vertical element of "faith in Christ" was integrated with the horizontal "love... for all the saints" (Colossians 1:4). Those things we experience from Jesus Christ are to be shared intentionally with others.

† By means of the adverb "always" (πάντοτε... προσευχόμενοι) the apostle indicates the frequency with which he gave thanks. This should not be interpreted as 24-hours-a-day thanks/prayer, though. To speak of prayer as "always" and similar terms (eg. "continually," "at all times," "day and night") was part and parcel of the style of ancient letters. A measure of hyperbole should be noted in these expressions. When Paul states he gave thanks "always" or "continually" he means that he regularly remembered them in his times of prayer: morning, noon and evening (the customary three hours each day), and whenever else he prayed. Here the adverb πάντοτε is further explained by προσευχόμενοι ("when we pray for you"). In addition, the use of περί ("concerning") rather than ὑπέρ ("on behalf of") is sufficient to indicate that Paul saw his prayers not as a substitute for their own prayers but as a natural expression of Christian love and concern. Collected from various resources, notably James D. G. Dunn. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Colossians and Philemon*, page #56 & O'Brien, page #10.

- D) Unlike other references to hope in the Bible, Paul teaches that our faith and love are based on hope ("because of the hope"). Paul is not saying that the "act of hoping" is significant, but that the "object of your hope" (Jesus Christ) is significant.

- E) This kind of hope, in the words of Bible teacher John MacArthur, Jr, is the kind of hope which is "willing to sacrifice the present on the altar of the future."^Ω Rather, our hope in Christ leads to a deeper faith and greater love.

3) It's Alive!

- A) All of our faith, love, and hope is derived from "the gospel," the great news about Jesus Christ (1:4-5). Note that the "gospel" is pictured as being alive and growing (1:6)!
- B) The content of the gospel is both **repentance** (2nd Corinthians 7:10), and a purposeful decision to reject your old life and turn to God in **obedience** (1st Thessalonians 1:9). Anything else is dead, non-saving faith (James 2:14-26).
- C) This gospel has reached "all the world" (Colossians 1:6) and is expanding, but only as the content of the gospel (repentance & obedience) continues to grow in the lives of Jesus Christ's church (1:6). Is He alive in you?!

^Ω MacArthur notes that the future aspect of our hope, the concept that one day we will meet Jesus Christ for an eternal home which is quite a bit more significant than our temporary home here on earth, should help us to keep a future focus. "This runs contrary to human nature. Young children, for example, have a difficult time waiting for something they want. My father warned me repeatedly while I as growing up not to sacrifice the future on the altar of the immediate. The world wants what it wants now." . Excerpt from John MacArthur, Jr., *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary, Colossians & Philemon*, pages #19-20.