

Introduction to Paul's letter to the Colossians

The Origin of the Church at Colossae

Colossae was situated in the southern part of Asia Minor in the fertile Lycus valley ten miles upstream from the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. The city had a substantial Jewish minority. Evidence concerning the collection of temple tax by the Jews in Colossae and the other cities of the Lycus valley suggests regular communication between these Jews of the diaspora and Jerusalem.

The church at Colossae appears to have been founded as a 'spin-off' of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. In Acts 19:8-10 we read of Paul's extended ministry at Ephesus, lasting some two and a half years. Luke records that as a result of Paul's ministry, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." In other words, Paul's ministry at Ephesus had an impact on the whole region as the message was taken from Ephesus to surrounding cities.

It would appear that one who heard the message of the Gospel was Epaphras, a native of Colossae (Col 4:12). He seems to have become one of Paul's ministry team (see the context in Col 4:10-15). He took the message back to his home town of Colossae and it would seem to be primarily through his ministry that a church was formed at Colossae (Col 1:7) – and probably also the church in Laodicea and perhaps Hierapolis (Col 4:13). Paul appears not to have ministered directly in any of these churches (Col 2:1), though he clearly viewed them as within the scope of his care.

A tradition recorded by Eusebius suggests that Philip settled in Hierapolis along with his daughters.

The Threat at Colossae

There is considerable discussion regarding the nature of the threat to the young church at Colossae, a threat addressed by Paul in 2:8-23. Does the threat come from Hellenistic sources, a form of early gnosticism, or is the source Jewish? Dunn argues for the latter, concluding:

Given the various factors outlined ... including the probable origin of the Colossian church from within synagogue circles, the likely presence of Israelite sectarianism within the diaspora, the lack of other evidence of Jewish syncretism in Asia Minor, and the readiness of some Jews to promote their distinctive religious practices in self-confident apology ... we need look no further than one or more of the Jewish synagogues in Colossae for the source of whatever influences were thought to threaten the young church there. The more relaxed style of polemic in Colossians and the absence there of anything quite like the fierceness of the reaction in Galatians further suggests that what was being confronted was not a sustained attempt to undermine or further convert the Colossians, but a synagogue apologetic promoting itself as a credible philosophy more capable of dealing with whatever heavenly powers might be thought to control or threaten human existence.

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Colossians

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|-----------------|---|
| Dunn, James D G | <i>The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996 |
| Eadie, John | <i>Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians</i> , Richard Griffin & Co, 1856 |

Colossians 1:1

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ
θελήματος θεοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος ὁ ἀδελφός
θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

Cf. 2 Cor 1:1. Dunn suggests that this letter may have been written by Timothy (so accounting for differences in style from other letters of Paul), but then signed by Paul, thus bearing his approval and authority.

Colossians 1:2

τοῖς ἐν Κολοσσαῖς ἀγίοις καὶ πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς
ἐν Χριστῷ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ
πατρὸς ἡμῶν.

Κολοσσαῖ, ὠν f Colossae
ἅγιος, α, ὠν; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

Cf. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1. "What is striking ... is that Paul felt able to incorporate into this distinctively Jewish self-description small gatherings of predominantly Gentile believers in Christ Jesus." Dunn. Cf. Pss 16:3; 34:9; Dan 7:18; 8:24.

πιστος, η, ὠν faithful, trustworthy, believing

"They complimented their addressees on their faithfulness, fearing that they might prove unfaithful... It was precisely the Colossians continued commitment as brothers, members of the new family gathered around Christ Jesus, that the writers wanted to encourage and sustain." Dunn

ἐν Χριστῷ "Their standing and persistence as brothers was 'in Christ.' Their brotherhood was not one of blood relationship, but rather the spiritual bond of the shared experience of believing in Christ Jesus and knowing that they were accepted by and through him. And this shared experience was itself a source of enabling for their persistence." Dunn

χάρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour
εἰρήνη, ης f peace

"As all commentators rightly note, Paul seems deliberately to have adapted the regular Greek greeting χαίρειν ('hail, greeting'), by replacing it with χάρις ('grace') and to have linked it with the characteristic Jewish greeting, *shalom* = εἰρήνη ('peace')." Dunn.

Many MSS, followed by TR, add καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Metzger comments, "The words, which are absent from a variety of witnesses, some of them early, have no doubt been added by copyists who assimilated the text to Pauline usage; certainly no reason for deliberate omission suggests itself."

Colossians 1:3-23

Paul's letters regularly move into thanksgiving and prayer after the salutation. However, the content always reflects the particular situation of the readers – they are never mere form, they are real prayers.

Colossians 1:3

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν
προσευχόμενοι,

εὐχαριστεῶ thank, give thanks

The plural implying Paul and Timothy, or Paul and his companions.

τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
"Contained in it is the implicit Christian claim that God, the one God made known to Israel, is now to be understood no longer simply as Father of Israel, but most clearly as the Father of Jesus Christ, and only as such 'our Father,' Father of Gentiles as well as Jews." Dunn

παντοτε always

προσευχομαι pray

"The unceasing nature of this prayer (παντοτε, 'always, at all times') is one of the most characteristic features of Paul's opening assurance of his prayers for his readers, whether attached to the εὐχαριστεῖν ('thank' – 1 Cor 1:4; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:3) or to the προσευχεσθαι ('pray,' as in Rom 1:10 and Phil 1:4)." Dunn

Colossians 1:4

ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς
ἀγίους

News of the churches reached Paul regularly.

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

"Perhaps more than any other word, 'faith' sums up the distinctive feature of the Christian gospel and life for Paul... sheer trust in the power and grace of God." Dunn

ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀγίους an active concern for one another. "and not just for one another, if the 'all the saints' is to be taken seriously. Here may be indicated a network of mutual support and encouragement as Christians moved among the different towns of Asia Minor." Dunn

Colossians 1:5

διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς
οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς
ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

For the linking of faith, hope and love, cf. 1 Cor 13:13; Gal 5:5-6; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8 also Rom 5:1-5. Faith and love are here described as a response to the hope contained in the gospel, cf. 1:23, 27.

ἀποκειμαι be stored away
οὐρανός, οὐ m heaven
προακουῶ hear before or previously

I.e. their first hearing of the gospel.

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality; ἐν ᾧ. truly
εὐαγγελιον, οὐ n good news, gospel

"It was this truth of the gospel (or the truth of *this* gospel) to which Paul dedicated his whole life as an apostle. At all events, there is probably a further implication (as in Galatians) that this is a truth that has to be stoutly maintained against teachings that (in this case) deny or diminish the eschatological thrust of the gospel's emphasis on hope." Dunn

Colossians 1:6

τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν καρποφοροῦμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.

παρόντος Verb, pres ptc, m gen s παρειμι be present

Maybe 'which has come to you'

καρποφοροῦμενον Verb, pres midd ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s καρποφορεῶ bear fruit, be productive

"In 1:10, as elsewhere, the fruit is thought of in terms of good moral character (the verb in Luke 8:15 and Rom 7:4; the noun in Paul: Rom 1:13; Gal 5:22; Phil 1:11). But here it could simply denote the success of the gospel in winning more and more to belief in Christ Jesus and in the hope offered." Dunn

αὐξανῶ and αὐξῶ grow, spread, increase, reach full growth

ἐπιγινώσκω perceive, understand

'recognised what God's grace truly is'

Colossians 1:7

καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

ἐμάθετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl μαθᾶνω learn, find out

Ἐπαφρας, α m Epaphras

"As a native of Colossae (4:12) he presumably first encountered Paul and was converted through his preaching during Paul's long stay in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10), some 120 miles distant on the coast and directly accessible by road from the Lycus and Meander valleys... Whether he became a regular member of Paul's mission team, as did so many others whose names are preserved for us in Paul's letters ... we cannot say. But it may have been Paul's missionary strategy to concentrate his own energies in the major cities, while sending out mission teams to towns in the region (... cf. Acts 19:10). It is not too fanciful to imagine Epaphras, anxious to share the good news with his own townsfolk, volunteering to evangelise Colossae and devoting himself to labouring for the gospel there and in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). In Paul's terms, therefore, Epaphras may be called 'apostle of Colossae' (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-2), though the fact that the letter to Colossae was then written by Paul and Timothy, without including Epaphras as fellow author, despite his recent (?) presence (1:8; cf. Phm 23), presumably implies that Epaphras saw himself simply as Paul's emissary." Dunn

ἀγαπητός, η, ον beloved

συνδoulos, οὐ m fellow-servant

πιστός, η, ον see v.2

ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν Some MSS, including p⁴⁶ & B D^{gr*} read ἡμῶν. Metzger writes, "Although on the basis of superior Greek evidence ἡμῶν might seem to be preferable, a majority of the Committee, impressed by the widespread currency of ὑμῶν in versional and patristic witnesses, considered it probable that copyists introduced the first person pronoun under the influence of the preceding ἡμῶν and the following ἡμῖν."

διάκονος, οὐ m & f servant, helper, minister

Colossians 1:8

ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.

δηλοῶ make clear, indicate, inform

ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι 'the love the Spirit has awakened in you'

Colossians 1:9

Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας
ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν
προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι ἵνα πληρωθῆτε
τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ
σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ,

Cf. 1:3b. "As they were fruitful from the very day they heard the gospel, so Paul and Timothy have been prayerful from the very day they heard of their response to the gospel." Dunn

παυω midd stop, cease, cease from
προσευχομαι see v.3

αἰτεω ask; midd ask for oneself, request
πληρωθῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl πληρωω
fill, make full

ἐπίγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition
θελημα, ατος n see v.1

σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence
συνεσις, εως f understanding, insight

The two nouns are distinguished by various commentators as either:

- i) theoretical wisdom and practical discernment;
 - ii) General wisdom and specific insight.
- Eadie argues that spiritual insight is a particular form of wisdom, wisdom imparted to the believer by the Holy Spirit.

πνευματικος, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

Colossians 1:10

περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν
ἀρεσκειαν ἐν παντί ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ
καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ
ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ,

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

A characteristically Jewish term for conduct, cf. Ex 18:20; Deut 13:4-5; Ps 86:11; Prov 28:18; Is 33:15, also Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 2:12; Eph 4:1.

ἀξίως adv (from ἀξιος) worthily
ἀρεσκεια, ας f desire to please

Here alone in the NT and only in Prov 31:30 in LXX. The verb is used by Paul in Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 7:32; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4,15; 4:1.

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting
καρποφορεω see v.6

αὐξανω and αὐξω see v.6
ἐπίγνωσις, εως f see v.9

Dunn thinks the dative is instrumental and that 'knowledge of God' is "the basis from which or means by which the fruitbearing and growth 'in every good work' is to come about."

Colossians 1:11

ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος
τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ
μακροθυμίαν μετὰ χαρᾶς,

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυναμις
δυναμούμενοι Verb, pres pass ptc, m nom pl
δυναμοω strengthen, make strong

A Semitic doubling, 'empowered with all power', cf. Eph 1:19.

κράτος, ους n might, strength, power,
dominion, mighty deed

δοξα, ης f glory

τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ another Semitism, 'his glorious might.' "Since transformation into heavenly splendour (glory) is part of the hope for heaven (see also 1:27 and 3:4), the prayer is in effect for that process to be forwarded already here on earth (cf. 2 Cor 4:16-5:5; see also 1:27." Dunn

ὑπομονη, ης f patience, endurance
μακροθυμια, ας f longsuffering, patience

Concerning the nouns 'patience' and 'longsuffering', Eadie states, "Both of them and their correspondent verbs are used not simply in reference to the pressure of present evil, but also to the prospect of coming deliverance, and as adjuncts or qualities of faith or the life of faith."

μακροθυμια is used sometimes of divine forbearance, Rom 3:4; 9:22; 1 Tim 1:16; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:15.

χαρα, ας f joy

Opinion is divided as to whether 'with joy' belongs with what precedes it or with what follows. Dunn follows the punctuation of the UBS text in taking the phrase with what follows. Joy was characteristic of NT Christianity – not least in the midst of hardship and suffering.

Colossians 1:12

εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς
εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ
φωτί,

εὐχαριστεω thank, give thanks

The unusual τῷ πατρὶ without some qualification has given rise to a number of textual variants.

ἱκανωσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s ικανωω
make capable, make fit

Here the sense is 'qualify'. It implies a lack of previous qualification to share in this inheritance, previously considered exclusive to Israel.

μερις, ιδος f part, portion, share
κληρος, ου m lot, share, part, place

An assigned portion. There is here an allusion to the division and allotment of the land of Canaan.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy
φως, φωτος n light

A reference to glory as a characteristic of the believer's inheritance. Cf. Lk 16:8; Jn 12:36; 1 Thess 5:15.

Colossians 1:13

ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκούτου καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ,

ἐρρύσατο Verb, aor mid/pass dep indic, 3 s
ῥυομαι save, rescue
ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power
σκοτος, ους n darkness, evil

On being brought out of darkness into light cf. Eph 5:8-14; 1 Peter 2:9.

μετέστησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s μεθιστημι
remove, bring (into)

Full sharing in the kingdom of God is in the future, cf. 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1,18. The language here is "the exaggerated expression of rich spiritual experience and full confidence (hope) that what had already been done (aorist tense) would be completed without fail (cf. Phil 1:6 with 3:20, and Eph 1:3 with 1:13-14)." Dunn

Colossians 1:14

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

"The focus switches directly to Christ, leading into the powerful 'Christ hymn' of 1:15-20." Dunn

ἀπολύτρωσις, εως f redemption,
deliverance, setting free

Cf. 1 Cor 1:30. "Given the clear echo of the settlement of the promised land in 1:12, the compound word would probably evoke thought of Israel's ransom from slavery in Egypt and from captivity in Babylon, which were usually described with the uncompounded verb λυτρον ('deliver, ransom,' e.g., Deut 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; Isa 43:1, 14; 44:22-24; 51:11; 52:3). In that case the great acts of Israel's redemption are being understood typologically as foreshadowing the eschatological redemption of Gentile as well as Jew to share in the new promised land ('the kingdom of God's beloved Son')." Dunn

ἄφεσις, εως f forgiveness, cancellation (of sins)
ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

Dunn stresses the fact that forgiveness of sins was central to Judaism and its sacrificial cult, but then comments "The one step clearly taken beyond Jewish thinking on forgiveness is the location of forgiveness no longer in the cult, or even simply in directness of prayer to God, but once again 'in Christ.' As particularly in Galatians, it is the possibility of Gentiles being 'in Christ' that brings them within the sphere of God's gracious forgiveness. 'In Christ' is the key to it all."

Colossians 1:15-20

These verses are thought by many to be a pre-Pauline hymn, taken up by Paul and adapted to his own use in this part of his letter (see particularly Ralph P. Martin's commentary on *Colossians and Philemon*) – though it is always possible that Paul was the author of the hymn. "That Christians at such an early stage should be willing to use such language of Christ tells us much of 'the intellectual vitality of the early Christian communities' (Houlden ...) and of their willingness to use categories fundamental to wider philosophical thought in their attempts to explicate the significance of Christ and to communicate it to a wider audience. The hymn is itself a sharp reminder that there were front-rank thinkers among the first Christians eager to engage with their contemporaries in the attempt to explain reality. It is also salutary to recall that such christological innovation came in the context of worship and through the medium of hymns." Dunn

Colossians 1:15

ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

The ideas of this verse reflect Jewish theology concerning Wisdom and, in Hellenistic Judaism, the logos. Some suggest that the hymn was originally a Jewish hymn regarding Wisdom, here taken up and Christianised by Paul.

εἰκὼν, ονος f likeness, image, form,
appearance

εἰκὼν means "Representation and manifestation" Lightfoot

ἀορατος, ον unseen, invisible

Cf. Jn 1:18. Christ is the one who makes God known. Paul's words repeat "the familiar conviction shared by all the biblical writers that God is spiritual and invisible (Jn 1:18; 4:24; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16) and unknown except for his self-revelation. That self-disclosure is seen supremely in his Son, Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:4-6) who 'embodies' the character of God." Martin

πρωτοτοκος, ον first-born, first
κτισις, εως f creation, what is created, act
of creation

The phrase reflects Proverbs 8:22 but does not imply that Christ was the first of created beings since verse 16 makes it clear that he is the source of all created things. Due weight should also be given to the notion of 'firstborn' as 'heir' – the one who inherits all from the Father.

Colossians 1:16

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται·

ἐν αὐτῷ Martin understands this to mean 'for Him'. Christ is creation's goal. The phrase is linked with the previous concerning Christ as firstborn. The idea is primacy over creation.

κτιζω create, make
γη, γης f earth
ὄρατος, η, ον visible
ἀόρατος, ον unseen, invisible
εἴτε if, whether

εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι thought to be a Pauline addition to the original hymn. "Sacrificing the balance of the hymn in order to add a further reference to Christ's superiority over all beings in heaven as well as on earth." Dunn

θρονος, ου m throne

Dunn argues 'heavenly thrones'.

κυριότης, ητος f (angelic) power (believed to have some control over human fate);
authority

Cf. Eph 1:20-21.

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, origin, power
ἐξουσία, ας f authority, power

Cf. 2:10,15 also 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12).

ἔκτισται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s κτιζω
create, make

Colossians 1:17

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν,

Again, the verse has parallels with Prov 8:20.

συνέστηκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
συνιστημι and συνιστανω intrans hold
together, have one's proper place

His lordship extends not only over the original act of creation but also over the continuance of all that is in being. "Paradoxical as it may seem, the wisdom which holds the universe together is most clearly to be recognised in its distinctive character by reference to Christ. This will mean, among other things, that the fundamental rationale of the world is 'caught' more in the generous outpouring of sacrificial, redemptive love (1:14) than in the greed and grasping more characteristic of the 'authority of darkness' (1:12)." Dunn

Colossians 1:18

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,

κεφαλη, ης f head
σωμα, τος n body
ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

Christ's headship over all of creation is for the sake of the church. Again, it is suggested that the image of the cosmos as a body was common in Greek thought and was reflected in Hellenistic Judaism (in such writers as Philo). The sense of the original hymn is transformed by the addition of the words 'the church'. Dunn adds, "to assert that Christ is head of the church does not narrow his cosmic mediatorial role; rather, it expands the significance of the claims made for the church."

The second half of the verse begins a second strophe of the 'hymn' which parallels the first, beginning with a deliberate repetition of ὅς ἐστιν. The first strophe speaks of Christ's preeminence with respect to creation, the second with respect to the new creation.

ἀρχη, ης f see v.16
πρωτοτοκος, ον see v.15
νεκρος, α, ον dead

Cf. Rev 1:5. The firstborn is the founder of a people, cf. Gen 49:3 and Rom 8:29. "The sense of a new beginning of creation could hardly be clearer, that with Christ's death and resurrection what had been expected as the end of all things and renewal of creation in a new age was already operative in and through this same Christ." Dunn

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι

πρωτεω have first place, be above all else

Here alone in the NT.

Colossians 1:19

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

εὐδοκεω be pleased, take delight/pleasure in

πλήρωμα, τος η fulness, completeness

I.e. 'all *his* fulness'

κατοικεω live, settle, inhabit

Paul is asserting that God was dwelling in Christ in all his fulness, perhaps against the background of false teachers who said that there were spiritual powers outside of his control. "The importance of the language is to indicate that the completeness of God's self-revelation was focussed in Christ, that the wholeness of God's interaction with the universe is summed up in Christ." Dunn

Colossians 1:20

καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, [δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·

ἀποκαταλλάσσω reconcile

This double compound only here and Eph 2:16. A term possibly coined by Paul.

εἰρηνοποιεω make peace

αἷμα, ατος f blood

σταυρος, ου m cross

The second δι' αὐτοῦ p⁴⁶ κ A *et al* is omitted by B D* G *et al*.

εἴτε see v.16

γη, γης f earth

Christ's victory on the cross effectively overcame every evil agent and rendered it powerless. "The implication is that the purpose, means and manner of (final) reconciliation have already been expressed by God, not that the reconciliation is already complete... What is being claimed is quite simply and profoundly that the divine purpose in the act of reconciliation and peacemaking was to restore the harmony of the original creation, to bring into renewed oneness and wholeness 'all things,' 'whether things on the earth or things in the heavens' (see on 1:16). That the church has a role in this is implied in the correlation of 1:18a with 1:20. And when we include the earlier talk of the gospel 'in all the world (κοσμος) bearing fruit and growing' (1:6), and the subsequent talk of the ages-old mystery being made known among all the nations (1:27), the implication becomes clear: it is by its gospel living (1:10) and by its gospel preaching (1:27) that the cosmic goal of reconciled perfection will be achieved (1:28...) ... [The church is] the community in which that reconciliation has already taken place (or begun to take place) and whose responsibility it is to live out (cf. particularly 3:8-15) as well as to proclaim its secret (cf. 4:2-6)." Dunn

Colossians 1:21

καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους καὶ ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς –

ποτέ enclitic particle once, formerly, at one time

ἀπηλλοτριωμένους Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc pl ἀπαλλοτριομαι be a stranger to, have no connection with

The verb 'to be' with the perfect participle expresses a persisting state of affairs (in the past, as made plain by ποτε). The alienation and reconciliation (v.22) both have God as their object.

ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy, one hated

διανοια mind, thought, understanding

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

The evil works are the outward evidences of a mind at enmity with God.

Colossians 1:22

νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατηλλάγητε ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου – παραστήσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ,

νυνι (originally an emphatic form of νυν) now

Cf. Rom 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; 11:30; 1 Cor 15:20; Philem 11, for Paul's expression of this moment of divine reversal.

ἀποκαταλασσω see v.20

σῶμα, τὸς n body

σαρξ, σαρκὸς f flesh, physical body, human nature

θανάτος, οὐ m death

Emphasises the physical death of Jesus as the means by which reconciliation has been achieved.

παριστήμι and παριστάνω present, bring into one's presence

Eadie refers to this as an 'infinitive of design'

ἅγιος, α, ον holy

ἄμωμος, ον faultless; without blemish

"Used most commonly in the LXX of the physical perfection required of the sacrificial animal (e.g., Exod 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10 etc., Num 6:14 etc.; Ezek 43:22-25; 45:18, 23; 46:4-6, 13), though naturally such perfection became a metaphor for blamelessness before God (2 Sam 22:24; Pss 15:2; 18:23; 19:13 etc.). The same overtone carries over into New Testament use (Eph 5:27; Phil 2:15; Jude 24; Rev 14:5; explicitly in Heb 9:14 and 1 Pet 1:19). The parallel is particularly close with Eph 1:4: ἅγιος και ἄμωμος κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ (κατενώπιον only in these two passages in the Pauline letters)." Dunn

ἀνεγκλητός, ον beyond reproach, without fault

A legal term meaning 'free from accusation or charge', hence 'irreproachable' cf. 1 Tim 3:10 and Titus 1:6-7.

κατενώπιον before, in the presence of

"There is an echo of the Pauline idea of sacrificial interchange, where the spotless sacrifice by dying as a sin offering is somehow interchanged with the blameworthy sinner and its spotlessness transferred to the sinner (so most explicitly in 2 Cor 5:21). This has been taken up in the formal imagery of formal presentation to judge or king or emperor, where it is the irreproachable character of those presented that guarantees their acceptance." Dunn

Colossians 1:23

εἰ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι και ἔδραϊοι και μὴ μετακινούμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε, τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν, οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος.

γε enclitic particle adding emphasis to the word with which it is associated

ἐπιμενω remain, stay, persist in

πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

Cf. Rom 8:13, 17; 11:22; 1 Cor 9:27; 10:11-12; Gal 5:4.

τεθεμελιωμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl θεμελιωω found; establish firmly

ἔδραϊος, α, ον firm, steadfast

μετακινεω shift, move, dislodge

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope, what is hoped for

εὐαγγελιον, ον n good news, gospel

"A life of faith is one of hope and leads to glory... The perseverance of the saints ... is not inconsistent with exhortation to permanence of faith, and warnings of the sad results of deviation and apostasy. He who stops short in the race, and does not reach the goal, cannot obtain the prize... For man is not acted upon mechanically by the grace of God, but his whole spiritual nature is excited to earnest prayer and anxious effort." Eadie

κηρυχθέντος Verb, aor pass ptc, m gen s κηρυσσω preach, proclaim

κτισις, εως f creation, what is created

διακονος, ον m & f servant, minister

Colossians 1:24

Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, και ἀναναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστιν ἡ ἐκκλησία,

χαίρω rejoice, be glad

παθημα, τος n suffering, passion, desire

"Paul accepted suffering on behalf of others (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν) – a reminder that the sufferings were not sought in anything like a masochistic spirit, but were accepted, indeed welcomed, as the unavoidable consequence of the all-important objective of preaching the gospel." Dunn. Cf. Rom 5:3; 8:18; 2 Cor 1:5-7; 4:17-18; 7:4.

ἀναναπληρωω complete

ὑστερημα, τος n what is lacking, need, absence

θλιψις, εως f trouble, suffering

σαρξ, σαρκὸς f flesh, physical body

Many mediaeval Catholic interpreters believed this text supported their view that the sufferings of the saints had atoning value. Dunn writes, "The words have caused bewilderment to generations of translators and commentators. But in fact they are simply the extension of Paul's complete eschatological schema. It contains several elements:

- i) Christ's sufferings and death as the eschatological tribulation expected as the antecedent to the new age – Paul's adaptation, reflected particularly in Rom 8:18-23, of the older Jewish theme;
- ii) Participation in the death of Christ as itself the means of transition from old age to new (Rom 6:3-11; 8:18-23 prefaced by 8:17; 2 Cor 4:10-12 leading into 4:16-5:5; Phil 3:10-11; Heb 2:9-10 offers a different model with equivalent effect); and consequently,
- iii) Christian existence as a lifelong process in which dying with Christ leads to a share of his final resurrection (Rom 6:5; Gal 2:19; 6:14 – still nailed to the cross with Christ [note the perfect tenses]; Rom 6:5; 8:11, 23; Phil 3:11 – resurrection still future...)

"But Paul here has also made a unique addition to the theme by adding the (implied) thought that Christ's afflictions lack something (ὕστερημα, 'lack, deficiency') and need to be completed in Paul's flesh (ἀνταναπληρω, literally, 'fill up in place of'; cf. the similar phrase in 1 Cor 16:17 and Phil 2:30...). This again is partly a reflection of the cosmic scope of the reconciliation envisaged and of Paul's awareness that it is not yet complete; therefore the decisive sufferings of the Christ cannot yet be complete... It was because Paul saw himself as a major actor in the final drama of God's reconciling purpose that he could also see his all too real sufferings as somehow bringing to completion what was still outstanding of the sufferings of Christ ('crucified with Christ') by which the world was redeemed and transformed."

There is perhaps also the thought that while Christ's atoning suffering is over and finished, he continues to suffer in and through the sufferings of his people, the body of which he is the head (cf Acts 9:4 and 2 Cor 1:5). "The apostle filled up what was wanting in the Saviour's sympathetic sorrows." Eadie

σωμα, τος n body

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

Colossians 1:25

ἧς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ,

διάκονος, ου m & f servant, helper, minister

οἰκονομία, ας f management of a household, responsibility, (divine) plan
δοθεῖσάν Verb, aor pass ptc, f acc s
διδωμι πληρω fill, fulfill, accomplish

May here mean, 'make fully known', cf. Rom 15:19. "As in the only close parallel use, in Rom 15:19, there is an eschatological overtone: Paul's commission as apostle (to the Gentiles) was intended as a decisive factor in completing the inbringing of the Gentiles and so facilitating the final climax of God's purpose (Rom 11:13-15, 25-32; cf. 2 Tim 4:17)." Dunn

Colossians 1:26

τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν, – νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ,

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery (of something formerly unknown but now revealed)

ἀποκεκρυμμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s
ἀποκρυπτω hide, keep secret

ἀπο could indicate those from whom the mystery had been hidden, though here it probably indicates time span.

αἰώνων Noun, gen pl αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order, eternity

γενεα, ας f generation, contemporaries, age, family, posterity

ἐφανερώθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
φανερω make known, reveal

An affirmation in line with Jewish apocalyptic thinking. "What has been 'revealed' to the apocalypticist is precisely the 'mystery' of how the cosmos functions and particularly of how God's purpose will achieve its predetermined end... The revelation to the saints took place particularly through Paul's preaching ... his gospel was itself an apocalypse (cf. Rom 16:25; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:3)." Dunn

ἄγιος, α, ον holy; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

Cf. Eph 3:3,6

Colossians 1:27

οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι τί τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὃ ἐστὶν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης·

θελω wish, will

γνωρίζω make known, disclose, know

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth

δοξα, ης f glory

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles

ἐλπίς, ιδος f hope, what is hoped for

δοξα, ης f glory

"In other Pauline writings the 'mystery' of God's purpose is primarily his intention from the first to include at the last Gentiles together with Jews as his people. In Rom 11:25-26 it is the mystery of Israel's partial hardening till the full number of the Gentiles has come in, leading in turn to the salvation of all Israel. In the addendum of Rom 16:25-26 it is 'the mystery concealed for long ages, but now made manifest and ... made known for the obedience of faith for all the nations.' In Eph 1:9-10 it is the divine purpose in Christ 'to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth, in him.' And again in Eph 3:3-6 it is 'the mystery of Christ ... that the Gentiles should be joint heirs and joint members of the body and joint participants in the promise in Christ Jesus.' Here there is a further variation, whose closest parallel is Rom 16:25-26: that the mystery is to be made known 'among the Gentiles.' And only then the mystery is identified, in a phrase similar to that in Eph 3:4 ('the mystery of Christ'), as the mystery 'which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'" Dunn Christ 'in you Gentiles' is therefore a manifestation of the glorious purpose of God to reconcile the world to himself. "The fact is that Paul saw the reconciliation of Gentile to Jew and both as one to God as an act of cosmic and eschatological significance. It was precisely this breaking down of one of the fundamental dividing lines in human society (between Jew and Gentile; see on 3:11) that Paul saw as the climax of the divine purpose for creation." Dunn. The Messiah in the Gentiles is therefore the manifestation and hope of the 'glory' yet to come in the consummation of God's purposes. While the phrase can be personalised, 'Christ in *me* is *my* hope of glory' we should not lose sight of the primarily corporate and cosmic dimensions. 'Christ in you' is to be made manifest not primarily in personal piety but in the corporate life of the people of God as the community of the age to come. It is this which makes future glory a present reality.

Colossians 1:28

ὄν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν νοουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ, ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ·

καταγγέλλω proclaim, make known, preach

Perhaps contains overtones that the time when the mystery was hidden is now past.

νοουθετεῶ instruct, teach, warn

διδασκῶ teach

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight

παραστήσωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl
παριστημι and παριστανῶ present,
bring into one's presence

Cf. 1:22. Dunn argues that the threefold repetition of 'everyone' is wider than the Colossians. Paul saw his work as serving God's purpose in Christ of reconciling *the world* to himself.

τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

Dunn writes, "In wider Greek usage this word could denote the quality of sacrificial victims, entire and without blemish ... and is so used of the Passover lamb in Exod 12:5. In view of the similar imagery in 1:22 such overtones are probably present here as well... By natural extension it can denote the equivalent quality of moral character, of which blameless Noah was a classic example (Gen 6:9)."

Of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Dunn adds, "Here again there may be a gentle reminder that any of the Colossian recipients tempted to look elsewhere for a 'fuller' experience and wisdom need to look, and should look, no further than Christ for their 'completion'."

Colossians 1:29

εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει.

κοπιῶ work, work hard, labour

ἀγωνίζομαι struggle, fight, compete

ἐνέργεια, ας f (supernatural) working, power, activity

ἐνεργεῶ work, be at work (in)

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

δυνάμει Noun, dat s δυνάμις

The certainty of the hope of glory does not lessen the need for much work to be done in preparing Christians for it. "As in 1:10-11, however, the balance between human effort and divine enabling is clearly struck... As in 1:11 no room for doubt is left as to Paul's own utter dependence on God's enabling for the exhausting schedule that he followed, or as to its effectiveness." Dunn

Colossians 2:1

Θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἠλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί,

θέλω wish, will

εἰδέναι Verb, perf act infin οἶδα (verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

ἠλίκος, η, ον how great, how large

ἀγῶν, ὄνος m struggle, fight

On ἀγωνα see Phil 1:30; 1 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7 also Heb 12:1. Eadie comments, "It points out that intense and powerful anxiety which preyed upon him, now in occasional terror, and now in reviving hope – that ceaseless conflict which filled his waking hours with effort and relieved with prayer the watches of the night."

ὅσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as;
pl. as many as,
ἐώρακαν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ὄραω trans
see, observe
προσωπον, ου n face, appearance
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

"Paul's depth of concern for his churches must have been well known. The ups and downs of his relations with the church at Corinth in particular would probably have been familiar to the churches of the Lycus valley, since so much of his time at Ephesus had been spent agonising over the problems of the Corinthian Christians and his relationships with them (1 Cor 4:17; 16:8, 10; 2 Cor 1:23-2:4; 7:8; 12:14). Lest it be inferred that Paul was concerned only for those churches founded by himself, the writer(s) hasten to assure the Colossians that Paul was equally concerned for those churches founded by his associates." Dunn

Colossians 2:2

ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν, συμβιβασθέντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ καὶ εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ,

παρακληθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl
παρακαλεω exhort, encourage
συμβιβασθέντες Verb, aor pass ptc, m nom pl
συμβιβάζω bring together, unite

Paul's concern is not simply for them as individuals but for them as a community. "Only a love which penetrates the heart and wells up from the heart can sustain the sort of unity that Paul sought (see also on 1:4)." Dunn

πλοῦτος, ου m & n riches, wealth
πληροφορια, ας f full assurance,
conviction
συνεσις, εως f understanding, insight

Cf. 1:9. "The full assurance of understanding is the fixed persuasion that you comprehend the truth, and that it is the truth which you comprehend." Eadie
"The integration between (as we would say) mind and heart is an important feature of Paul's understanding of how the salvation process works out in the individual and the group." Dunn

ἐπίγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition,
consciousness

μυστηριον, ου n see 1:26

τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ the abruptness has led to a large number of textual variants from the omission of Χριστοῦ to a variety of smoothing additions such as τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐστιν Χριστοῦ and many others. The reading given above is supported by early MSS and best explains the origins of the others.

Colossians 2:3

ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι.

ἐν ᾧ Most commentators take this as a reference to Christ. Eadie follows Bengel and others in understanding it to refer to the *mystery* – "in which mystery are hidden all ..." This would then refer to the Gospel which, in opposition to the false teaching being touted at Colossae, is the source of all that is worthy and precious.

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας
θησαυρος, ου m treasure store
σοφια, ας f wisdom, insight
γνωσις, εως f knowledge, understanding
ἀποκρυφος, ον secret, stored away

"It was this assurance that they, too, were 'in Christ,' together with *all* the treasures of divinely given insight into the mysteries of the cosmos and of human destiny (cf. Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 2:7: λαλουμεν θεου σοφian ἐν μυστηριω την ἀποκεκρυμμενην) and the riches of the experience of the wise in successful living, that was to give them the confidence they needed (see also 3:3)." Dunn

Colossians 2:4

τοῦτο λέγω ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζηται ἐν πιθανολογίᾳ.

τοῦτο λέγω "The abruptness of 'this I say' ... is a modest attempt to catch attention and to reinforce the importance of the point being made (cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 7:29; 15:50; Gal 3:17; 1 Thess 4:15), so much so that we might speak of 2:4 as a thematic statement of what follows, though the main thematic statement is more obviously 2:6-7." Dunn

μηδεὶς, μηδεμια, μηδεν no one, nothing
παραλογιζομαι deceive, lead astray

Only here and Jas 1:22 in the NT.

πιθανολογια, ας f attractive (but false)
argument

"This term and its cognates denote the persuasiveness and plausibility particularly of popular speakers... Thus the term easily gains, as here, the overtone of plausible (sounding) but actually 'specious arguments!'" Dunn

"As the first clear allusion to an alternative religious system confronting the Colossian believers, the verse need imply no more than the sort of popular religious teaching which must have often been heard in the marketplaces of that region, much of which might have been beguilingly attractive to truth-seeking young converts (cf. Hooker). It will become clearer that Paul and Timothy had in mind teaching and praxis particularly of the Colossian synagogue(s) (see ... Introduction, and on 2:16 and 18), so the implication here is that the Colossian Jewish community was not lacking in skilled apologists, but was well able to express the appeal of their worship and code of behaviour in beguiling terms (see also 2:8)." Dunn

Colossians 2:5

εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι
σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμι, χαίρων καὶ βλέπων ὑμῶν τὴν
τάξιν καὶ τὸ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν
πίστεως ὑμῶν.

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

ἀπειμι be away, be absent, go

χαίρω rejoice, be glad; imperat used as a
greeting

βλέπω see, look, be able to see, beware of
τάξις, εὐς f order, division

Paul's union with them, implied in the phrase 'present in spirit', is maintained through contact with them and news of them. Though Dunn thinks the phrase is "intended more as an expression of what he would hope to see if it were possible."

στερεωμα, τος n firmness, steadfastness

Both this and the previous term "could be used in military contexts: τάξις = rank and file of soldiers, drawn up in battle order ...; στερεωμα = the solid part, the strength of an army." Dunn

πιστις, εὐς f faith, trust, belief, the
Christian faith

"Thoroughly Pauline ... is the conviction that the whole Christian position (rank and solidity) stands or falls with faith in Christ, with the further implication, again characteristically Pauline, that anything which claims to be an advance upon that faith is in fact a retreat from it... This final recall to faith forms an inclusio with 1:4 and thus brackets the whole of the intervening thanksgiving and personal statement as an exposition of that faith (see also 2:6)." Dunn

Colossians 2:6

Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν
κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε,

παρελάβετε Verb, aor act ind, 2pl

παραλαμβάνω receive, accept

A term used of receiving a tradition or a body of teaching. "Paul refers his readers back to their experience of hearing and receiving the gospel (aorist tense), as he had in responding to the equivalent situation in Galatia (Gal 3:1-5). As in Galatians, this first decisive experience provides a norm and a starting point for what should follow: their ongoing life of faith should be in accord with the faith with which they began." Dunn

περιπατέω walk, walk about, live

The commencement of the Christian life is a once-for-all event which marks the beginning of a lifelong walk with Christ. Just as Christ is received *by faith*, so also, that daily walk with him must be marked and maintained by the same faith.

"Ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε here, then, is equivalent to the πνευματι περιπατεῖτε of Gal 5:16... This combination of 'receiving tradition of Christ Jesus as Lord' and 'walking in him' is thus a neat summary of the mutual check and balance between outward guideline and inward motivation which was a feature of the Pauline ethic (as in Gal 5:25-6:2)." Dunn

Colossians 2:7

ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομούμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ
καὶ βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε,
περισσεύοντες ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ.

ἐρριζωμένοι Verb, perf pass dep ptc, m nom
pl ρίζομαι be firmly rooted

Note the perfect participle, a once for all founding on this constant, unshakable ground. "The importance of deep roots was well understood in Jewish tradition (e.g. Jer 17:8; Ezek 31:7; Sir 40:15). Naturally the image is complementary to the 'fruit-bearing' metaphor of 1:10, which follows the same emphasis on a 'walk' determined by reference to 'the Lord'." Dunn

ἐποικοδομεῶ build on, build up

Note the present participle signifying a continuing activity. The prefix ἐπι emphasises the importance of the starting point: not only 'built up' but 'built upon'.

βεβαιῶω confirm, strengthen

"βεβαιος and βεβαιω were commonly used to denote the formal or legal guarantee required in the transfer of property or goods... This technical sense is probably also echoed in Paul's other uses of these words (Rom 4:16; 15:8; 1 Cor 1:6,8; 2 Cor 1:7,21). Here the guarantee or confirmation is τη πιστει, 'with reference to your faith'." Dunn

πίστει Noun, dat s πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

διδασκω teach

The teaching given to the new community of believers was foundational. They must grow on the basis of such teaching rather than growing out of it. They are not to depart from the apostolic instruction.

περισσεω increase, abound
εὐχαριστια, ας f thanksgiving

The result of this teaching and growth is thanksgiving. "The implication is that a characteristic and fundamental feature of their relation with Jesus as Christ and Lord should be gratitude for what God has done in and through him. As rootedness and foundation depends on the faith called forth by the gospel, so growing from the root and building up on the foundation can be successful only in an atmosphere of thankfulness to God (see also on 1:12)." Dunn

Colossians 2:8

Βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν·

βλεπω see, look, beware of

τις "Paul regularly refers to known opponents in a somewhat diminishing allusion as 'some certain people' (Rom 3:8; 1 Cor 4:18; 15:12, 34; 2 Cor 3:1; 10:2; Gal 1:7; 2:12; Phil 1:15), but here the singular (τις), followed by the future tense (ἔσται), suggests in contrast that a possibility is being envisaged rather than a current state of affairs described: 'take heed! Perhaps there will be someone who ...'" Dunn

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι
συλαγωγεω make a captive of

Here alone in Biblical Greek. "The thought is of some popular rhetorician (2:4) or philosopher captivating (so NJB; REB 'capture your minds') some in his audience by the power of his rhetoric or the impressiveness of his claims. The visual metaphor is of some marketplace preacher gathering together those impressed by his discourse and taking them off for a fuller exposition and induction." Dunn

φιλοσοφια, ας f philosophy (in a bad sense), human wisdom

Here alone in Biblical Greek. The thought behind these terms is *human* wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-31) – though the term itself is not derogatory.

κενος, η, ον empty, to no purpose, senseless

"without content, without any basis, without truth, without power" BAGD cf. 1 Cor 15:15; Jas 2:20.

ἀπατη, ης f deception

παραδοσις, εως f tradition

Eadie thinks that this may refer particularly to *Jewish* traditions. Cf. Mk 7:3-13/Matt 15:2-9.

στοιχεια, ον n elements (of which the world is made), basic principles

Dunn Comments, "It is particularly interesting that precisely the same phrase is used in Gal 4:3 and 9 (as again in Col 2:20). There it is clearly linked into the Jewish law, understood as itself a kind of power set in charge over Israel like a slave-custodian or guardian (Gal 3:23-25; 4:1-3, 9-10) and given 'through angels' (3:19). The close association of the thought here with talk of Jewish festivals (Col 2:16; cf. Gal 4:10) and 'worship of angels' (Col 2:18) strongly suggests that we are moving in the same realm of thought and association as with the same phrase in Galatians." He thinks that the reference is to essentially Jewish 'philosophy' which drew on astrological teaching as a way of commending their religious practices to their fellow citizens. He concludes, "The key test of such systems for the letter writer(s), however, was whether they accorded with Christ (κατα Χριστον)... It was precisely the failure of such speculation to grasp the significance of Christ and of his death that demonstrated their emptiness and deceitfulness."

Colossians 2:9-15

Some have suggested that behind 2:9-15, or at least the latter part of these verses, there may lie a Christian hymn or hymnic confession. The suggestion has not gained much support.

Colossians 2:9

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς,

"The force of *κατα Χριστον* is explained (ὅτι) by a sequence of 'in him' clauses (2:9-12) which build into a powerful exposition of the cross. Initially, however, these clauses pick up the theme of the hymn in praise of Christ, recalling first the hymn's second strophe (1:19) in very similar words ('in him,' 'all the fullness,' 'dwells'), and then (2:10) the thought of the first strophe (1:18a – 'head'; 1:16 – 'rule and authority')." Dunn

κατοικεω live, inhabit

πλήρωμα, τος n fullness, completeness

θεοτης, ητος f deity, godhead

Here alone in biblical Greek.

σωματικῶς adv in bodily form, in human form

Here alone in biblical Greek. "As the human *σωμα* is what enables a person to be in relationship with other persons, so the somatic character of this indwelling meant that God could be encountered directly in and through this particular human being, Christ." Dunn. But note the present tense which underscores the continuing humanity of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:10

καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας,

πεπληρωμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
πληρωω fill, make full

"It is because that fullness [all the fullness of the Godhead] dwells in Christ that they are filled up in Him. Being in Him, they are brought into contact with what is in Him." Eadie

"Any thought of seeking out higher or more fulfilling experiences is fanciful and self-delusive... The tense ('to be' + perfect passive participle) indicates a state of fullness accomplished in the past and sustained since then. The implication, therefore is that in receiving the tradition of Jesus as Christ and Lord and believing in(to) him (2:5-7), the Colossian Christians already had all that is necessary for fullness of life, unrestricted access to the divine power which will shape them, too, into the divine image (3:10)." Dunn

κεφαλὴ, ης f head

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, origin, power

ἐξουσια, ας f authority, power

The apostle seems to allude to false teaching being touted at Colossae which elevated angels or other heavenly beings.

Colossians 2:11

ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

"2:11-15 were probably intended as an elaborate attempt to describe the importance of what Christ accomplished on the cross and in his resurrection by means of a sequence of vivid metaphors (circumcision, burial and resurrection, death and giving life, forgiveness and cancellation of legal bond, public triumph)." Dunn

περιετμήθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl

περιτεμνω circumcise

περιτομη, ης f circumcision

ἀχειροποιητος, ον not made by human hands

Reinforces the suggestion that the threat was from *Jewish* teachers.

ἀπεκδύσεις, εως f putting off, setting (oneself) free from

σωμα, τος n body

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature

Dunn thinks the reference is to death and hence, in the light of the last phrase, the death of Christ. Believers have shared in Christ's death.

Colossians 2:12

συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτισμῷ, ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν·

The sequence of *συν* compounds is characteristically Pauline.

συνταφέντες Verb, 2 aor pass ptc, m nom pl
συνθαπτομαι be buried together with

Cf. Rom 6:4-6. "The imagery is forceful, of sinking below the waters of baptism as a kind of burial. Baptism, presumably by immersion, represented mimetically the commitment to enter the tomb with Jesus after he had been taken down from the cross. Since burial was understood as the conclusion of the event of dying, this commitment meant the enacted willingness to identify oneself with the complete event of Jesus' death." Dunn

βαπτισμος, ον n baptism

The less common term is replaced by the more usual *βαπτισμα* (*βαπτισματι*) in many MSS.

συνηγέρθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl

συνεγειρω raise together with

Dunn thinks this marks a development in Paul's theology and that previously he saw sharing in Christ's resurrection as belonging to the future, part of the 'eschatological not-yet'.

ἐνεργεια, ας f (supernatural) working, power

ἐγείραντος Verb, aor act ptc, m gen s ἐγείρω
raise

νεκρός, α, ον dead

"'God who raised him from the dead' is a piece of confessional formula regularly echoed in Paul (Rom 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10; Eph 1:20...). As such it reminds us how fundamental belief in the resurrection of Christ was to the first Christians." Dunn

Verses 11 & 12 deserve detailed comment, but here note simply the way in which circumcision is linked with Christ's death (his death was his circumcision?) and that this is the Christian's circumcision. All of this is set forth in Christian baptism.

Colossians 2:13

καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ· χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα,

On this verse, compare Ephesians 2:1,5

νεκρός, α, ον dead

The ὑμᾶς refers to Gentiles and their 'being dead' refers to their status outside the covenant made by God with Israel (cf. Eph 2:12), as the following phrase shows.

παραπτῶμα, τος n sin, wrongdoing
ἀκροβυστία, ας f uncircumcision
σαρξ, σαρκος f see v.11

The phrase simply refers to their Gentile status, cf. Gen 17:11-14.

συνζωοποιεῶ make alive together (with)

A number of MSS read ἡμᾶς rather than ὑμᾶς conforming the person to the following ἡμῖν. One or two MSS, followed by the TR change the latter to ὑμῖν.

χαρίζομαι be gracious to, forgive

"The awkward transition to 'us' ... is characteristically Pauline, betraying here (as in Eph 2:5) an element of self-correction: it constitutes not a denial that such transgressions are to be attributed to Gentiles but rather a recognition that all, Jews as well, are equally guilty of such transgressions and equally in need of forgiveness. The point is not developed here, but behind it we can see the fuller argument of Rom 1:18-3:20; 5:12-21 (where 'transgression' occurs six times); 7:7-12." Dunn

Colossians 2:14

ἐξάλειψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ·

ἐξάλειψας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
ἐξάλειψω wipe away or out, remove, cancel

Denotes erasure of an entry in a book, cf. Ex 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Rev 3:5.

χειρόγραφον, ον n record of one's debts

Here alone in the NT. "The metaphor is probably adapted to the earlier Jewish idea of a heavenly book of the living (Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Rev 3:5) as developed in apocalyptic circles into that of books wherein deeds of good and evil were recorded with a view to the final judgment (Dan 7:10?; 1 Enoch 89:61-64, 70-71; 108:7; *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 7:1-8; *Testament of Abraham* (A) 12:7-18; 13:9-14; (B) 10:7-11:2; 2 Enoch 53:2-3; Rev 20:12)... This is most obviously the background of thought here, with καθ' ἡμῶν ('against us') confirming that the document in question was one of condemnation, that is, presumably the record of their 'transgressions' (repeated for emphasis in the following relative clause), 'which was opposed, hostile (ὑπεναντίον, another Pauline *hapax*) to us.'" Dunn

δόγμα, τος n rule, law, decree

The decrees of the law giving the χειρόγραφον its condemnatory force, cf. Eph 2:15.

ὑπεναντίος, α, ον against, opposed to
ἤρκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s αἶρω take, take away

μεσος, η, ον middle

προσηλώσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
προσηλωῶ nail to

σταυρός, ον m cross

"There may be a play on the practice of attaching a crucified man's indictment to his cross to indicate to onlookers what his crime was (cf. Mark 15:26...). But that would hardly be described as 'removing' the indictment. The thought is rather of the indictment itself being destroyed by means of crucifixion, as though it was the indictment which was itself nailed to the cross in execution. The play, then, is rather with the thought of Christ as himself the condemnatory bond and his death as its destruction. The metaphor is convoluted, but presumably reflects again the idea of Christ's death as a sin offering and thus of Christ as embodying the sins of the offeror and destroying them in his death." Dunn

Colossians 2:15

ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας
ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, θριαμβεύσας
αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ.

"The fifth and final metaphor to describe the significance of the cross is a complete reversal of the imagery of the cross in the preceding verse. From the idea of the cross as a symbol of destruction, the thought is transformed into the image of public triumph." Dunn

ἀπεκδύομαι disarm

Dunn says that the sense 'disarm' or 'despoil' for this verb is not attested until the fourth century. The basic meaning of the verb is 'strip off'. He suggests that the picture may be of the elemental powers which once clothed the cosmos being stripped away. He concludes, "Perhaps we should not press the detail and simply allow the powerful imagery of old and wasted garments being discarded to work its effect. For the Colossians at any rate the point would be clear: the spiritual powers, including the elemental forces (2:8), should be counted as of no greater value and significance than a bunch of old rags." Dunn

ἀρχη, ἐξουσια see v.10

Eadie, and most other commentators, see here a reference to hostile spiritual powers.

δειγματίζω disgrace (δ. ἐν παρρησίᾳ make a public spectacle of)

Cf. Matt 1:19.

παρρησια, ας f openness

θριαμβεύω lead (someone) in a victory procession (either as prisoner or as a victorious soldier), triumph over

Cf. 2 Cor 2:14. The picture is that of the victorious general leading behind him his chained and defeated enemies. "The cross on which Christ died is compared to the chariot in which the victor rode in triumph" Scott

"It is clear ... that Paul and Timothy wanted to end the sequence of metaphors on a note of triumph and to build up to this climax as a way of preparing the ground for the practical advice to follow. The force of the sequence of images of what happened on the cross is powerful: a spiritual circumcision achieved and body of flesh stripped off, a burial with Christ and resurrection with Christ, a being made alive with Christ from a state of death and a wiping out of the record of transgression and destruction of that record. But the final one is boldest of all: a stripping off of the rulers and authorities as discarded rags, putting them to public shame and triumphing over them in him. This is a piece of theological audacity of the same order as deuterio-Isaiah's proclamation of the God of a small, devastated nation as the one and only God.

"To treat the cross as a moment of triumph was about as huge a reversal of normal values as could be imagined, since crucifixion was itself regarded as the most shameful of deaths... But in this letter it is simply of a piece with the theological audacity of seeing in a man, Jesus the Christ, the sum and embodiment of the divine wisdom by which the world was created and is sustained (1:15-20). The key can only be to recognise that for Paul, as for the first Christians generally, the cross and resurrection of Christ itself constituted such a turning upside down of all that had previously determined or been thought to determine life that only such imagery could suffice to express its significance. The unseen powers and invisible forces that dominated and determined so much of life need no longer be feared. A greater power and force was at work, which could rule and determine their lives more effectively – in a word 'Christ.' Triumph indeed!" Dunn

Colossians 2:16

Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει ἢ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων,

"Clearly what is envisaged is a situation where the Colossian believers were being (or might be) criticised for their conduct in respect of dietary rules and festival days. Equally clearly the line of reply is that a proper understanding of the significance of Christ's death would render such criticism unnecessary, irrelevant, or wrong. By implication those who made such criticism were themselves failing to grasp the significance of the cross." Dunn

κρινω pass judgement on, condemn

βρωσις, εως f food, eating

ποσις, εως f drinking, a drink

Jews were concerned to eat only food that was from *clean* animals, that had properly been slaughtered so that the blood was drained, and that had not been offered to idols. The concern over drink probably relates primarily to this last point, cf. Rom 14 and particularly vv. 17,21.

ἢ or

μερος, ους n part, piece, in part, partly

Eadie says μέρος here means 'particular matter'. "The phrase, ἐν μέρει, as in classic use, signifies not simply in respect of ... It gives a speciality to the theme or sphere of judgement, by individualizing the topic or occasion."

έορτη, ης f festival, feast

νεομηνια, ας f new moon festival

σαββατον, ου n (often in pl) the seventh day, Sabbath

For these three together cf. 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:3; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Isa 1:13-14; Ezek 45:17 and Hos 2:11. "We must conclude, therefore, that all the elements in this verse bear a characteristically and distinctively Jewish colour, that those who cherished them so critically must have been the (or some) Jews at Colossae, and that their criticism arose from Jewish suspicion of Gentiles making what they would regard as unacceptable claims to the distinctive Jewish heritage without taking on all that was most distinctive of that heritage."

Dunn

Eadie writes, "Sensations of spiritual joy are not to be restricted to holy days, for they thrill the spirit every moment, and need not wait for expression till there be a solemn gathering, for every instant awakes to the claims and raptures of religion."

Colossians 2:17

ἃ ἐστιν σκιά τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

σκια, ας f shadow, foreshadowing

Dunn writes, "The language is ultimately Platonic, but here is probably drawn from the Hellenistic Judaism which we find most clearly expressed in Philo." But the Platonic framework is subverted by:

i) The phrase τῶν μελλόντων which is "a reflection of Jewish eschatology ... An essentially static Platonic dualism (between heaven and earth) has been transferred into an expression of Jewish eschatological hope." cf. Heb 1:10.

ii) The christological focus. "In contrast to Platonic-Philonian thought, it is the Christ in all the concrete bloodiness of the cross who is the true reality. The amalgam thus echoes the christology of the earlier hymn (1:15-20): Christ embodies the heavenly reality which lies beyond and sustains the perceptible cosmos. But, as in Hebrews, it also confirms that Christ is the substance to the shadow of Jewish food laws and feasts: he is the reality which casts its shadow backward in time; they are the provisional, inferior copies whose inadequacy is now evident in the light of the real. The claim is again bold and, it should be noted, only makes sense as a response to and rebuttal of essentially Jewish claims. Only as a claim that Christ is the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological expectations, which provides a Jewish answer to a Jewish alternative, does the rebuttal make sense."

μελλω (ptc. without infin) coming, future

σωμα, τος n body

Colossians 2:18

μηδεις ὑμας καταβραβευετω θελων εν ταπεινοφροσυνη και θρησκεια των αγγελων, α εορακεν εμβατευων, εικη φυσιουμενος υπο του νοου της σαρκου αυτου,

μηδεις, μηδεμα, μηδεν no one, nothing
καταβραβευω cheat (lit. rule against)

"βραβευω has the primary meaning of 'award a prize (a βραβειον)' in a contest (see 3:15); hence καταβραβευω (only here in biblical Greek and not much attested elsewhere) means 'decide against' as an umpire, 'deprive of the prize' (BAGD), or simply 'disqualify'." Dunn

θελω wish, will

Eadie believes this should be understood as "wishing to do so by means of ..."

Dunn follows Lightfoot and Bruce in taking the verb to refer to the person who is seeking to influence the Colossian Christians, he is the one who 'delights in ...'

ταπεινοφροσυνη, ης f humility; false humility

The verb is used in the LXX of self-mortification (Lev 16:29,31; 23:27,29,32) or more particularly of fasting (Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3,5 also Ps 69:10). "This suggests a fair degree of ascetic practice as part of the Colossian 'philosophy' (see also 2:21,23; cf. 1 Tim 4:3)." Dunn

θρησκεια, ας f religion, worship

The 'worship of angels' could indicate either that the false teachers worshipped or venerated angels or that they enthused about the worship offered by angels. Dunn says it reflects "a desire particularly within apocalyptic and mystical circles of first-century Judaism to join in with the worship of angels in heaven." There is similar evidence from the Qumranic community. "It is possible, therefore, to envisage a Jewish (or Christian Jewish) synagogue in Colossae which was influenced by such ideas and which delighted in their worship sabbath by sabbath as a participation in the worship of the angels in heaven (cf. 1 Cor 11:10). In this case the 'humility' associated with this worship could very well denote the spiritual discipline and mortification (particularly, but not only, fasting; see above) regarded as essential to maintain the holiness required to participate with the holy ones and holy angels (see also 1:12)." Dunn adds, "It is not so much interest in angelic worship which Paul finds 'reprehensible' as the attitude of dismissive superiority which it evidently engendered among its practitioners (μηδεις υμας καταβραβευετω ...)."

έώρακεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s ώραω trans
see, observe

Textual sources are divided over whether or not to include μη before έώρακεν (compare AV and NIV). Either reading makes sense here.

έμβατευω (doubtful meaning) perhaps take one's stand on (what one has seen in a vision) or claim special powers because of (what one has seen in a vision)

Dunn says that the basic meaning of this term is 'to enter' and that it is used in the LXX of entry into possession of the promised land (Josh 19:49,51). He concludes, "When we add the echo of Josh 19:49,51 in Col 1:12, the inference becomes strong that there was a prominent strand among the Colossian Jews who thought of heaven either (or both) as a promised land into which they should aspire even now to enter, or particularly as the temple of God into which they could now enter by means of appropriate spiritual disciplines in order to share the worship of the angels in heaven. It was their delight thus to 'enter' sabbath by sabbath (note the present tense). This would also make the best sense of the other part of the phrase (ά έώρακεν) ... for it is precisely the characteristic of the apocalyptic and mystical Jewish traditions documented above to give prominence to 'the things seen'." Dunn links the reference back to the 'worship of angels' and translates 'which things he has seen on entering ...'

εικη adv. in vain, for nothing

φουσιω cause conceit/arrogance; pass be
conceited/arrogant
νους, νοος, νοι, νουν m mind, thought
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature

Here, as frequently the reference is to fallen human nature or to a merely human way of thinking.

"The most stinging part of the rebuke ... would have been the final phrase, 'by his mind of flesh.' For in a Hellenistic context, as Philo again well illustrates, it was precisely the 'mind' which would have been the medium by means of which the person could enter the higher realms, the *logos* of human rationality, itself part of the medium of the divine Logos that interpenetrated the cosmos... In such a scheme 'mind' and 'flesh' were quite antithetical since it was impossible for the divine substance to mingle with the material. To speak of the 'mind of flesh' was therefore in effect to deny that this Colossian worshiper with angels could ever have 'lifted off' from earth: even his mind was 'flesh', fast bound to earth." Dunn

Colossians 2:19

και ου κρατων την κεφαλην, εξ ου παν το σωμα δια των αφων και συνδεσμων επιχορηγουμενον και συμβιβαζομενον αυξει την αυξησιν του θεου.

κρατεω hold, hold fast, seize

Suggests that the one seeking to lead the Colossians astray considered himself a part of the Christian community.

κεφαλη, ης f head
σωμα, τος n body

On the following, cf. Eph 4:16

αφη, ης f ligament
συνδεσμος, ου m that which binds
together, ligament
επιχορηγεω supply
συμβιβαζω bring together, unite, hold
together
αυξανω and αυξω grow, increase, reach
full growth
αυξησις, εως f growth

"The church can enjoy neither life nor growth, if, misunderstanding Christ's person or undervaluing his work, it has no vital union with Him." Eadie

"It was presumably the failure of the individual who had let go of Christ that he had gone in for flights of individual mystical experience, glorying in the company of angels, without regard to the other members of the body. And his advocacy of such experiences, criticising and disqualifying those who saw their spirituality in more humdrum terms, must have been the very opposite of supportive of the Christian community." Dunn

Colossians 2:20-23

"The reversion in a single compact sentence to talk of 'dying with Christ' (cf. 2:12), 'elemental forces' (cf. 2:8), regulations (cf. 2:14), food taboos (cf. 2:16), human traditions (cf. 2:8), and 'self-chosen worship and humility' (cf. 2:18) indicates both that the teaching in view in Colossae was an integrated 'package' and that this sentence functions as a conclusion to the section 2:6-23. The double emphasis of 2:12 ('buried with him ... and raised with him') is now divided into two sections (2:20 – 'if you died with Christ ...'; 3:1 – 'if you were raised with Christ ...'); this suggests that the intention is to round off the critique of the Colossian 'philosophy' by emphasising what the Colossians have been rescued from (2:20-23) before going on to spell out what is involved in their new way of life (3:1-4:6)." Dunn

Colossians 2:20

Εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε·

ἀπεθάνετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl
ἀποθνήσκω die, face death

Cf. Rom 6:8.

στοιχεῖα, ὧν n elements (of which the world is made), basic principles

Eadie thinks that this refers to Jewish law.

ζῶ live, be alive
δογματίζομαι obey rules and regulations

Hooker suggests that the force is 'Why submit to regulations?' rather than 'Why do you submit to regulations?' – warning rather than rebuke.

Colossians 2:21

Μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης,

ἄψη Verb, aor midd subj, 2 s ἅπτω light;
midd. take hold of, touch

μηδε negative particle nor; μηδε ... μηδε
neither ... nor

γεύση Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 s γεύομαι
taste, eat, experience

θίγης Verb, aor act subj, 2 s θίγγανω touch

"These curt dogmas are not the apostle's own teaching, but the mottoes [sic], or prominent lessons, or watchwords of the false teachers." Eadie

There is considerable discussion concerning the distinction in meaning between the first and last of these terms. Some suggest the first refers to food and the latter to sexual relations. Eadie suggests that all refer to food, but the first is the handling necessary to eating (to feeding oneself), the last includes mere touching, casual contact. This is similar to Lightfoot's translation which has the sequence 'handle, taste, touch'. But Dunn thinks that 'touch' is more appropriate to ἀπτομαι and so prefers the sequence, 'touch, taste, handle.' The main concern however is clearly one of maintaining purity by not even coming into contact with what would defile. Cf. Isa 65:5.

Colossians 2:22

ἃ ἔστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει, κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων;

ἔστιν ... εἰς has the sense 'be destined for,' cf. Acts 8:20; 2 Peter 2:12.

φθορα, ας f decay, corruption, depravity
ἀποχρησις, εως f process of being used

Eadie thinks the phrase implies that these rules and regulations focus on things which perish with use (food destroyed by eating) and which can therefore have little connection with true spirituality. "The echo is of Mark 7:19/Matt 15:7: unclean food should not be a matter of great concern because it goes into the stomach only to be thence expelled into the latrine (cf. 1 Cor 6:13)." Dunn

ἐντάλμα, τος n commandment, rule
διδασκαλία, ας f what is taught, teaching,
doctrine

This latter phrase completes the thought of verse 20, particularly focussing on the added minutiae of Jewish interpretation. There is a close parallel with Mk 7:7/Matt 15:9 in which Jesus quotes from Isa 29:13. Given the unusual wording Dunn concludes, "Almost certainly, then, Paul and Timothy here were deliberately alluding to the rebuke of Isaiah. This at once provides a further confirmation of the essentially Jewish character of the threat to the Colossian Christians: the allusion to a rebuke to Israel would only be effective if it came as a rebuke to those who understood themselves as the people of Israel."

Colossians 2:23

ἄτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθησκία καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ ἀφειδία σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός.

The verse is made difficult by a sequence of unusual and obscure terms and by awkward syntax. Most assume that the terms and phrases used in the Colossian 'philosophy' are being cited. The difficulties have led to a number of textual variants.

ἄτινά pronoun, n nom & acc pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὁ
τι who, which
σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight

λογον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας 'have the appearance of wisdom' Dunn follows Lightfoot in thinking the sense is 'have a reputation of wisdom.'

ἐθελοθησκία, ας f self imposed piety or religion

A term not found anywhere else. Dunn says it could refer to 'delight in worship' cf. 2:18, or could mean 'wished-for-worship,' "implying that participation in angel worship was a figment of an overimaginative desire."

ταπεινοφροσύνη, ης f humility; false humility

Cf. v.18

ἀφειδία, ας f severe discipline

Not found elsewhere in the biblical writings. The sense is 'unsparing discipline.'

σώμα, τος n body

τιμῆ, ης f honour, price, value

πλησμονή, ης f satisfaction, gratification

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός either 'of no value in controlling physical passions' or 'of no value, except for gratifying physical passions.'

Dunn suggests that 'gratification of the flesh' could be taken "as referring to satisfaction felt by the Colossian Jews in their ethnic (fleshly, κατα σαρκα) identification as Jews, the people chosen by the one God to be his own elect...

What is being critiqued here is an assumption on the part of (many of) the Colossian Jews that rules for living and worship practices were ways of expressing (maintaining and marking out) their distinctiveness as Jews.

"In short, the line of criticism at this point is probably to acknowledge much that appears admirable in the religious praxis of the Colossian Jews here in view, but with the added final reminder that severity to the body can be just another form of pandering to the flesh (cf. 1 Cor 13:3)... Such a concern for Jewish identity and Jewish privilege as Jewish is at the end of the day just another form of self-indulgence or national indulgence."

Colossians 3:1

Εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε, οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος·

συνηγέρθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2 pl
συνεγειρω raise together with

Cf. 2:20 and the note on 2:20-23. Those who have died with Christ have also been raised with him. Identification with him brings the believer into a new sphere of existence – a new life, a new perspective. The language remains, however, in one sense metaphorical in that literal resurrection belongs still to the future.

ἄνω from above

I.e. heavenly things.

ζητεω seek, search for, look for, attempt, ask, investigate

Dunn thinks that the sense here is "'keep looking for' that which is of Christ or from heaven in the situations of daily living (cf. Matt 6:33; Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 10:24; Heb 11:4; 13:14; NIV's 'set your hearts on' is not quite right). What is in view is a complete reorientation of existence."

οὗ adv where

δεξιός, α, ον right, δεξια right hand; δεξιας ἔδωκαν they shook hands

καθημαι sit, sit down, live

Cf. Ps 110:1, the OT text most often alluded to in the New. The right hand of God is the position of power and authority. "The consequences for the Christian perspective are thus ... clear. If Jesus, the Christ, is so highly favoured and acknowledged to be God's 'right-hand man,' with all the power and authority to effect God's will and to protect his own which is implicit in that claim, then Christian life should be entirely oriented to this Christ."

Dunn

Colossians 3:2

τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

φρονεω think, have in mind

The present tense has the force 'keep your minds fixed.'

γη, γης f earth

The Christian is called to a practical heavenly mindedness. "What is commended is not an apocalyptic or mystical preoccupation with the future of heaven, as 3:1 could be taken to imply (that might have conceded the ground already contested in 2:18 and 23), but a cast of mind, a settled way of looking at things, a sustained devotion to and enactment of a life cause." Dunn. The key is union with the risen Christ and a life which centres in him. "It is this Christ-perspective which should mark out the Colossian Christians' heavenly spirituality and enable them to see through the alternative spirituality of the Colossian philosophy." Dunn

Colossians 3:3

ἀπεθάνετε γάρ, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ·

ἀπεθάνετε See 2:20

The aorist indicates "that the change of perspective marked by conversion-initiation is final and fixed. Nevertheless, throughout this section the balance between past act, ongoing outworking, and future completion is maintained." Dunn

ζωή, ης f life

κέκρυπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s κρυπτω
hide, conceal, cover

The true source of the Christian's life is hidden at present: it is in Christ and is from Christ. The imagery is apocalyptic: of something currently hidden in heaven which will be revealed (cf. v.4). "Paul and Timothy were evidently wholly confident that this perspective, this hidden resource, would provide all the wisdom needed to cope with the challenges and problems of daily living." Dunn. Cf. 2:2-3.

Colossians 3:4

ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῆ, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ.

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as
φανερωθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s φανερωω
make known, reveal

ζωή, ης f life

Some MSS read ἡμῶν, a reading preferred by Dunn, despite ὑμῶν being more strongly attested, on the grounds that the text was more likely to have been altered from ἡμῶν to ὑμῶν to conform with the consistent second person plural of the paragraph. Translators and commentators are fairly evenly divided.

τοτε then, at that time

φανερωθήσεσθε Verb, fut pass indic, 2 pl
φανερωω

He is our life in the sense that what he is we shall be. "The underlying motif ... is the thought of restoration of the divine image, as intended in the initial creation of humanity, and of the risen Christ as the 'firstborn' who gives the family image to the rest of the new humanity (see on 1:18 and 3:10)." Dunn

Colossians 3:5

Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν, πάθος, ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία,

νεκροω put to death

Cf. Rom 8:13. The call is to "forceful self-discipline," says Dunn who continues, "Paul and Timothy clearly did not harbour any illusions regarding their converts. They did not attempt to promote a Christian perspective which was unrelated to the hard realities of daily life. On the contrary, they were all too aware of the pressures which shaped people like the Colossian Christians and which still held a seductive attraction for them. They were concerned that the Colossian believers' death with Christ, the atrophy of old habits of evil, had not yet worked through the full extent of their bodily relationships."

μέλη Noun, nom/acc pl μελος, ους n
member, bodily part

γῆ, γης f earth

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality

Often linked with idolatry.

ἀκαθαρσία, ας f impurity, immorality,
uncleanness

πάθος, ους n lust, passion

ἐπιθυμία, ας f desire, longing, lust

κακός, η, ον evil, bad, wrong, harm

πλεονεξία, ας f greed, covetousness

ὅστις, ἣτις, ὅτι who, which

εἰδωλολατρία, ας f idol worship, idolatry

Cf. Eph 5:5.

Colossians 3:6

δι' ἧς ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας·

ὀργή, ης f wrath, anger

Cf. Rom 1:32; 1 Cor 5:9-13; 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; 1 Thess 4:3-6. "The verb (ἐργεταί) could denote a wrath already in operation – that is, presumably, as in Rom 1:18-32, in the consequences which follow from failure to acknowledge and worship God as God... In that case the wrath takes the form of God giving or allowing his human creatures what they want, leaving them to their own devices – the continuing avarice and abuse of sexual relations being its own reward. But the concept as taken over by the first Christians is more typically future oriented; so predominantly in Paul (Rom 2:5, 8; 3:5; 5:9; 9:22; 1 Thess 5:9). And the closest parallel (1 Thess 1:10: τῆς ὀργῆς τῆ ἐρχομένης; cf. Matt 3:7/Luke 3:7: 'the coming wrath') suggests that this is what is in view here – 'is going to come, is about to come.'" Dunn

The latter half of the verse is omitted by p⁴⁶ B and some versions. The phrase could have been added as an (unconscious) echo of Eph 5:6, but the opening of the following verse seems to require its inclusion. Translations and commentators are divided over whether to include the phrase.

ἀπειθεια, ας f disobedience

Colossians 3:7

ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιπατήσατέ ποτε ὅτε ἐζήτε ἐν τούτοις·

περιπατεω walk, walk about, live

ποτέ enclitic particle once, formerly, at one time

ὅτε conj when, at which time

ζωω live, be alive

"The point is that such behaviour used to characterise the Colossian Christians' way of life... Probably it was revulsion against such an ethos which attracted many Gentiles to the stronger morality of Judaism. But the pressures of the wider society were such that the temptation for Gentile Christians to relapse must have been fairly constant (cf. 1 Corinthians 5-6)." Dunn

Colossians 3:8

νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα, ὀργὴν, θυμόν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν·

νυνὶ (originally an emphatic form of νυν)
now

Cf. 1:22. The emphasis is upon the radical change which has occurred – ὅτε ... νυνὶ δε – a change in standing which calls for a corresponding change in behaviour.

ἀπόθεσθε Verb, 2 aor midd imperat, 2 pl
ἀποτιθημι throw off, be done with, take off (clothes)

ὀργη, ης f see v.6

"What is in view is such a powerful emotion that only God can be trusted to exercise it fairly. Hence such warnings as Rom 12:19." Dunn

θυμος, ου m anger, rage, fury

κακια, ας evil, wickedness

Here may mean 'ill-will.'

βλασφημία, ας f slander, blasphemy

αἰσχρολογία, ας f obscene speech

στομα, τος n mouth, utterance

Colossians 3:9

μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους· ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ,

ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth, deceive

ἀλλήλων, ος, ους reciprocal pronoun one another

Cf. Eph 4:25.

ἀπεκδυσάμενοι Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m
nom pl ἀπεκδυομαι disarm; put off, discard

παλαιος, α, ον old, former

πραξις, εως f what one does, deed, action, practice

Paul's reference to the 'old man' and 'new' is linked with his understanding of Adam and of Christ, the 'first man' and the 'last'. In his death, Jesus stood in Adam's place and bore the penalty for his sin. By his resurrection he has become the head of a new humanity (see v.11). Those who are in Christ have died to, or put off the old man, the life that was theirs in Adam. Note the force of the aorist, this putting off is a once for all past act effected through union in Christ (and perhaps set forth in baptism). This being so, they are to demonstrate the reality of new life in Christ.

Colossians 3:10

καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν,

ἐνδύω dress, clothe; midd put on, wear

"The complementary action to discarding old clothes is putting on new ones. Conversion was not simply a turning from an old way of life; it was also a positive embracing of a new way of life." Dunn

νεος, α, ον new, fresh, young

"Not simply individual virtues and graces are in view, but once again a whole personality and the social world and way of life that that implied (cf. the 'new creation' in 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15). The thought is equivalent to 'putting on Christ' in Rom 13:14, as Col 3:3-4 also implies. At its simplest, this means that the manner of Christ's living, as attested in the Jesus tradition, provided the pattern for this new self-life (2:6-7), as the enabling of the risen Christ provided its means (1:9-11)."

Dunn

ἀνακαινούμενον Verb, pres pass ptc, m acc & n nom/acc s ἀνακαινώ renew, remake

Cf. 2 Cor 4:16 and Rom 12:2 for the cognate noun.

ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge
εἰκων, ονος f likeness, image, form
κτίσαντος Verb, aor act ptc, m gen s κτιζω
create, make

There are echoes here of Gen 1:26f. It is in Christ that the image of God possessed at first by Adam, but lost or spoiled through sin, is now restored. "This has the effect of reminding the readers that Christian ethics is not a matter merely of individual resolve, but involves a corporate dimension; Adam christology leads directly into a theology of the body of Christ." Dunn. The new creation is corporate – a whole new world.

Colossians 3:11

ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἑλλήνι καὶ Ἰουδαίῳ, περιτομῇ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθη, δούλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός.

Cf. 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28.

ὅπου adv. where

The sphere in which that new life is to be lived out is the body of Christ, the church.

ἐνι there is (equivalent to ἐνεστιν)

Bears the sense 'it is possible' hence the negated form here, 'it is impossible for there to be ...' "Not simply particular ethnic distinctions have been abolished, but the very possibility of such distinctions having any continuing meaning has ceased to exist." Dunn

Ἕλλην, ηνος m a Greek, non-Jew
Ἰουδαίος, α, ον a Jew, Jewish, Judean

"Jew' (Ἰουδαίος) was originally used by foreigners for a person belonging to Judea (Ἰουδαία). But increasingly from the Maccabean period it had come to be accepted and used by Jews themselves as a self-designation, as a way of identifying themselves in relation to and in distinction from other nationalities... That this also involved a sense of distinctive religious identity is implied in the fact that the word became the basis of the new name for the religion of the Jews, 'Judaism' (Ἰουδαισμός), which also emerged at this time." Dunn

περιτομή, ης f circumcision, those circumcised, Jews
ἀκροβυστία, ας f uncircumcision, non-Jews
βάρβαρος, ον non-Greek, uncivilized, foreigner, native
Σκυθῆς, ον Scythian (regarded by the Roman world as the absolute example of paganism)

There is no room for any sense of ethnic superiority.

δούλος, ον m slave, servant
ἐλεύθερος, α, ον free, free person

"Apart from ethnic differences (and gender differences in Gal 3:28), the difference between slave and free was the other most fundamental division in society. Up to a third of those living in a city like Colossae may have been slaves... It was simply the means of providing labour at the bottom end of the economic spectrum (originally from the ranks of defeated enemies, but now mainly through birth to slaves). To sell oneself as a slave was a device of last resort for someone in debt, and slaves of important masters could exercise significant influence themselves... Christ has relativised all such distinctions, however fundamental to society, its structure, and its ongoing existence." Dunn

Colossians 3:12

Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραῦτητα, μακροθυμίαν,

ἐνδύσασθε Verb, aor midd imperat, 2 pl
ἐνδύω see v.10

The call of v.10 is repeated but is now detailed in terms of particular characteristics.

ἐκλεκτός, η, ον chosen
ἅγιος, α, ον holy, consecrated, set apart to/by God
ἡγαπημένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl
ἀγαπαω love, show love for

These three terms have their background in OT descriptions of Israel.

σπλαγγνον, ου n one's inmost self,
affections, heart

οικτιρισμος, ου m compassion, mercy

'heartfelt compassion' cf. Phil 2:1, also of
God's mercies in Rom 12:1 and 2 Cor 1:3.

χρηστοτης, ητος f kindness, goodness,
mercy

A reflection of God's goodness, cf. Rom 2:4.

ταπεινοφροσυνη, ης f humility

Cf. Phil 2:3; Eph 4:2; 1 Peter 5:5.

πραυτης, ητος f gentleness, humility

Cf. 2 Cor 10:1.

μακροθυμια, ας f longsuffering, patience

"Such virtues (or graces), particularly as in the combination here, can appear to encourage a 'milk-sop' weakness as in people whose calling in life is to be a doormat for others – at least as those caught up in the cut and thrust of the rat race count strength. But in fact to live out such a character calls for a strength which is rarely seen in the marketplace (as Jesus demonstrated). And without such an attitude towards others no group of individuals can become and grow as a community, with a proper care for others and willingness to submerge one's own personal interests." Dunn

Colossians 3:13

ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς
ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ
κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς·

ἀνεχομαι endure, be patient with

Cf. Mk 9:19; 2 Cor 11:1, 19; Eph 4:2.

ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὐς reciprocal pronoun one
another

χαριζομαι grant, give

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself

Used here with the same sense as the
reciprocal pronoun.

ἐάν if, even if

μομφη, ης f cause for complaint,
complaint

Here only in biblical Greek. The meaning is
'ground of offence' or 'complaint'
"Only such mutual respect and support, such
recognition of mutual vulnerability, such
valuing of each other beyond individual hurts
and faults, it is also implied, would retain
weaker or wavering members who otherwise
might find the old way of life or the more
traditional Jewish alternative too attractive."
Dunn. The life of the Christian community
should be marked by an incomparable
attractiveness.

οὕτως and οὕτω thus, in this way

Cf. Eph 4:32; 5:2,25,29; also Rom 15:7. On
the interdependence between forgiveness and
being forgiven cf. Matt 6:12, 14-15; 18:23-35.

Colossians 3:14

ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ὃ ἐστὶν
σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος.

συνδεσμος, ου m that which binds
together, bond

τελειοτης, ητος f completeness; maturity

συνδεσμος της τ. bond which unites everything
in complete harmony.

"Love is indeed like a 'fastening,' a συνδεσμος,
which holds them together in a single coherent
package (cf. *1 Clement* 49:2: τον δεσμον της
ἀγαπης του θεου). Nor is it accidental that
συνδεσμος was used already in 2:19 in the
more technical sense of 'sinews, ligaments' of
the body (see on 2:19). For the point is the
same, that at the end of the day it is this love
(and only this love) which is strong enough to
hold together a congregation of disparate
individuals." Dunn. Cf. Matt 5:43-48.

Colossians 3:15

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς
καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ
σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

Cf. Eph 2:2-3. "Here once more we should be
ready to recognise something of a more titular
force in the name 'Christ' ('the Christ'), since in
prophetic perspective the peace promised to
God's covenant people was a hope for the
future new age (Isa 9:6-7; 54:10; Ezek 34:25-
31; 37:26; Mic 5:4; Hag 2:9; Zech 8:12...).

The peace the Colossian believers could
experience in their hearts was further proof
that they belonged to the people of the Messiah
in the age of the Messiah already come." Dunn

βραβευω act as judge or umpire, rule

"The metaphor is an attractive one: of the
knowledge of what Christ has achieved and the
inward calm tranquillity which believers can
enjoy in consequence, determining what
courses should be followed in difficult
decisions and how the tensions of community
relations (cf. 3:13) may be resolved (cf. Rom
14:17, 19; 1 Cor 14:33)." Dunn

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
σωμα, τος n body

"The one body is also the arena within which
the peace of Christ comes to effect." Dunn

εὐχαριστος, ον thankful, grateful

Colossians 3:16

ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν
 πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ· διδάσκοντες καὶ
 νοουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς
 πνευματικαῖς ἐν χάριτι, ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς
 καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ·

Instead of the unusual expression 'the word of Christ,' which nowhere else occurs in the NT, several witnesses substitute the more customary 'the word of God' or 'the word of the Lord.'

At the heart of corporate worship is the 'word of Christ' – the gospel in all its fullness centring in Christ, who is himself the source of all teaching and instruction.

ἐνοικεῶ live in

"In this context the ἐν ὑμῖν may also signify 'among you,' indicating an element of preaching/teaching in the communal gatherings of the Colossian Christians for worship and instruction." Dunn

πλουσίως adv richly, in full measure
 σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence
 διδάσκω teach
 νοουθεῶ instruct, teach, warn

Cf. 1:28.

ἑαυτοῦ, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον see v.13

"It is a striking feature of the Pauline corpus how much Paul insisted that the members of the churches to which he wrote should recognise their mutual responsibility to instruct and admonish (JB/NJB's 'advise' is too weak) each other (Rom 12:7; 15:14; 1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:15; note also Gal 6:1-3)." Dunn

ψαλμος, ου m psalm, song
 ὕμνος, ου m hymn
 ᾠδή, ης f song, song of praise
 πνευματικός, η, ον spiritual, pertaining to the spirit

"Their relation to the preceding clause is unclear ... but the possibility that such hymns were vehicles of instruction cannot be ruled out. Prior to the invention of printing, hymns and songs were a necessary and invaluable means of implanting Christian teaching – and even after (it is often said that Methodism's distinctive theology is to be found primarily in the hymns of Charles Wesley)." Dunn

χάριτι Noun, dat s χάρις, ιτος f grace, gratitude
 ᾄδω sing

Colossians 3:17

καὶ πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ,
 πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ,
 εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.

ἐὰν if, even if

Here equivalent to ἂν particle indicating contingency and introducing subjunctive. ὃ τι ἐὰν 'whatever'. "There is no discontinuity envisaged between worship and daily living; on the contrary, the whole of daily life should be lived out in the same spirit – 'your spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1-2). The attitude is thoroughly Jewish." Dunn

ὄνομα, τος n name

"Both here and in Eph 5:20 the thought is of those who have put themselves under the name of Jesus as Lord and who seek to do everything in consciousness of his commissioning and enabling. In this way an effective *inclusio* with the thematic of 2:6-7 is achieved: to walk in Christ Jesus as Lord is to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is what should mark out the Colossian Christians, in life as in worship, not a hankering for worship with often unnamed angels (2:18)." Dunn

εὐχαριστέω thank, give thanks

πατήρ, πατρος m father

"The very unusual collocation τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ, which is widely supported was emended by copyists who inserted καὶ, thus imitating Eph 5:20 and similar passages." Metzger

Colossians 3:18-4:1

For similar sections of household rules cf. Eph 5:22-6:9; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7 and with less close parallels 1 Tim 2:8-15; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-10. The framework reflects traditional concern for 'household management' in the Greco-Roman world and has parallels particularly in Stoicism. At the same time, Dunn notes, "there are clearly Jewish features, particularly in the extent of the concern for the weaker members of the three pairings... There are also distinctively Christian features, most notably the sevenfold reference to 'the Lord,' that is, Christ (3:18,20,22-24; 4:1), not as a separate part of the code (duties towards God), but as providing the orientation of the whole, and even the possibility of some dependence on some tradition of Jesus' own teaching (see on 3:20)." He concludes, "To become a member of the new family of Jesus (cf., e.g., Rom 8:16-17,29) did not involve displacement or justify neglect of household responsibilities, whether the believer belonged to a Christian or non-Christian household; Christian discipleship was not disruptive of society's basic structure... Relationships within the family and household were themselves part of Christian vocation and the first place where responsibility to the Lord should come to expression and be put to the test."

Colossians 3:18

Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ.

γυνή, αἰκος f woman, wife

ὑποτάσσεσθε Verb, pres midd imperat, 2 pl
ὑποτασσω subordinate; pass. be
subject, submit to, obey

ἀνὴρ, ἀνδρος m man, husband

ἀνήκεν Verb, pres act ptc, n nom/acc s
ἀνηκει impers. it is proper, it is right

Colossians 3:19

οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς.

ἀγαπαω love, show love for

"The corresponding responsibility of the husband is to love his wife. The ideal of a husband being tenderly solicitous for his wife was not distinctively Christian... But again a distinctive Christian note comes through in the use of the verb ἀγαπαω, which, as elsewhere in the Paulines (Rom 8:37; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:4; 5:2,25), gains its characteristic emphasis from Christ's self-giving on the cross (see on 1:4 and 3:14). Thus ἀγαπαω plays the role in 3:19 of 'in the Lord' in 3:18 and 20 and is itself sufficient to refer the reader back to traditions of Jesus as the Christ and Lord (2:6-7)." Dunn

γυνή, αἰκος f woman, wife

πικραίνεσθε Verb, pres pass imperat, 2 pl

πικραίνω make bitter

"Most translate 'Do not be harsh with them' (RSV,NEB/REB,NIV,GNB). But the passive voice here presumably implies that the bitterness is experienced by the husbands. What is in view, therefore, is probably the feeling of the dominant partner who can legally enforce his will on his wife but who will not thereby win her love and respect and can thus feel cheated and embittered as not receiving what he regards as his due." Dunn.

Colossians 3:20

Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ.

τεκνον, ου n child

"The legal status of children under Roman law was still more disadvantaged. Technically speaking, they were the property of the father... The child under age in fact was no better off than a slave (a point Paul had been able to put to good effect in Gal 4:1-7)... In view of all this it is worth noting that children who presumably were still minors (cf. Eph 6:4) are directly addressed; evidently they are thought of as both present in the Christian meeting where the letter would be read out and as responsible agents despite their youth." Dunn

ὑπακουω obey, be subject to

γονευσ, εως m parent

εὐαρεστος, ον acceptable, pleasing

Cf. Eph 6:1-2 which makes the point explicitly by quoting the fifth commandment.

Colossians 3:21

οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἐρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμῶσιν.

πατήρ, πατρος m father

ἐρεθίζω stir up, make resentful, embitter

ἀθυμew become discouraged or
disheartened

"To belong to a strange sect, a religion without a cult centre, without priest and sacrifice, must have exposed the younger members of the Christian families at Colossae to some abuse from their fellows in the marketplace. Without strong parental encouragement they could easily become 'discouraged' (RSV). The psychological sensitivity displayed here is remarkably modern." Dunn

Colossians 3:22

οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις, μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλίαις, ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλότῃ καρδίᾳ, φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον.

δουλος, ου m slave, servant

Part of the household in the ancient world. Again they are part of the Christian congregation being addressed and treated as responsible individuals.

ὑπακουω see v.20

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature
ὀφθαλμοδουλια, ας f service rendered
merely to impress others

The Greek word is found only here and in Eph 6:6.

ἀνθρωπάρεσκος, ον one who acts merely to please men

ἀπλοτης, ητος f generosity, sincerity

"It indicates a singleness of intention, a focus of purpose, springing from the centre of motivation and concern (see on 2:2), so 'wholeheartedly and without reservation.'" Dunn

φοβεομαι trans fear, reverence

"The main motivation for such single-minded obedience is *not* the human relationship of slave to master (a servile fear, as in Rom 8:15), but the obligation that, whatever one's position in human society, one should live as before the Lord and for the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 7:17-24)." Dunn

Colossians 3:23

ὃ ἐὰν ποιῆτε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε, ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις,

ἐὰν if; often equivalent to ἂν

ὃ ἐὰν 'whatever' cf. v.18

ψυχη, ης f self, inmost being, 'soul'

'put every part of your being into the work you do,' 'put your whole heart into it.'

ἐργαζομαι work, do, perform

Colossians 3:24

εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπὸ κυρίου ἀπολήμψεσθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας· τῷ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ δουλεύετε·

εἰδότες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl οἶδα
(verb perf in form but with present meaning) know, understand

ἀπολήμψεσθε Verb, fut midd dep indic, 2 pl
ἀπολαμβάνω receive back, get back
ἀνταποδοσις, εως f compensation

Here alone in the NT.

κληρονομα, ας f inheritance, what is promised

"The paradox of slaves becoming heirs of God's kingdom would not be lost on the Colossians. Under Roman law slaves could not inherit anything." Dunn

δουλευω serve, be a slave

"The triple repetition suggests that slaves would need to keep reminding themselves that their loyalty to Christ transcended their loyalty to their masters, thus making it easier to bear the harsher features of their enslavement." Dunn

Colossians 3:25

ὁ γὰρ ἀδικῶν κομίζεται ὁ ἠδίκησεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσωπολημψία.

ἀδικεω wrong, treat unjustly, harm
κομιζω buy; midd receive, be paid back

Cf. 2 Peter 2:13. "The force of this warning or reassurance is twofold: it encouraged harshly treated slaves that their masters could not escape due judgment, in the final judgment if not in this life, and it warned the slaves themselves to maintain their own high standards of integrity so far as possible. The teaching is not antithetical to the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, but echoes Paul's own earlier teaching (Rom 2:6-11; 1 Cor 3:13-15; 2 Cor 5:10)." Dunn

προσωπολημψια, ας f favouritism, treating one person better than another

Cf. Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 16:19 and in respect of God Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 19:7.

Colossians 4:1

οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε, εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον ἐν οὐρανῷ.

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just

ἰσότης, ητος f equality, fairness

παρεχω act & midd cause, bring about, do, offer

Here, 'grant'

εἰδότες see 3:24

Colossians 4:2

Τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ,

προσκαρτερεω devote oneself to, continue in

"The note is of perseverance and tenaciousness... The thought is obviously of a piece with the idea of unceasing prayer (Rom 1:9-10; 1 Thess 5:17; Eph 6:18)." Dunn

γρηγορεω be or keep awake, be alert

Drawn from the imagery of guard duty. "It's metaphorical usage seems to be almost wholly Christian. The inspiration was almost certainly Christianity's sense of imminent expectation, which can be traced back to Jesus himself (Mark 13:35,37; Matt 24:42; 25:13; 1 Thess 5:6; Rev 3:3; 16:15) and which here still retains something of its earlier freshness. Moreover, the link with prayer may echo the scene in the garden of Gethsemane from the passion narrative, which would no doubt be familiar in all the early Christian churches (Mark 14:38/Matt 26:41)." Dunn

εὐχαριστία, ας f thanksgiving

Cf. 1:3,12; 2:7; 3:17.

Colossians 4:3

προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγου, λαλήσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' ὃ καὶ δέδεμαι,

προσευχομαι pray

ἅμα adv. at the same time, together

"Paul had no embarrassment in understanding prayer as asking for things on behalf of people (Jesus has so taught, e.g., Matt 7:7-11/Luke 11:9-13). Such prayer expressed not a selfishness or acquisitiveness, but a recognition of dependence on God for the opportunities to serve him and the enabling to do so. So Paul does not hesitate, rather is eager to ask for prayer for himself and his work (as in Rom 15:30-32; 2 Cor 1:11; Phil 1:19; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1-2; Phm 22; the parallel with Eph 6:19-20 becomes very close for these two verses)." Dunn

ἀνοίξῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἀνοίγω open

θύρα, ας f door, gate

λαλεω speak, talk

μυστήριον, ου n secret, mystery (of something formerly unknown but now revealed)

Cf. 1:26-27; 2:2.

δέδεμαι Verb, perf pass indic, 1 s δεω bind, tie

Colossians 4:4

ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δεῖ με λαλήσαι.

φανερωσω Verb, aor act subj, 1 s φανερωω make known, reveal, make evident

"This verse underlines Paul's own conviction that he has been given the primary privilege, as apostle to the Gentiles, to disclose the secret of God's overarching design in creation and salvation (Rom 11:25-26; 1 Cor 2:7; 4:1; Col 1:27-29; Eph 3:7-13)." Dunn

δεῖ impersonal verb it is necessary, should, ought

λαλεω speak, talk

Colossians 4:5

Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω, τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι.

σοφία, ας f wisdom, insight, intelligence

περιπατεω walk, live

Cf. 1:9-10.

ἔξω adv. outside; ὁ ἔξω outsider,

unbeliever

"To hold a balance between maintaining distinctive commitment and promoting genuine communication with others is never easy.

καιρος, ου m time

ἐξαγοραζω set free, redeem; mid make the most of

i.e. reclaim time that might otherwise be lost or slip away. The use of καιρος meaning 'significant time' adds a sense of eschatological urgency.

Colossians 4:6

ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἅλατι ἠρτυμένος, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι.

Envisages a church in communication with those around it, not cut off in a 'holy huddle.'

παντοτε always

χάριτι Noun, dat s χάρις, ιτος f grace; thanks, gratitude

ἅλας, ατος n salt

ἠρτυμένος Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom s

ἄρτυω season, restore flavour

Cf. Eph 5:29. "Christian speech is not to be insipid, far less to be corrupt, but it is to possess that hallowed pungency which shall excite interest in the enquirer, and that preservative flavour which may influence for good the mind and heart of those who, being without, are disposed to put questions to the members of the church." Eadie

εἰδέναι Verb, perf act infin οἶδα see 3:24

δεῖ see v.4

εἷς, μια, ἐν γεν ἑνός, μιας, ἑνός one
ἕκαστος, ἡ, ον each, every

ἐνὶ ἕκαστος 'one to another'

ἀποκρίνομαι answer, reply, say

"Here, evidently, was a church not on the defensive against powerful forces organised against it, but expected to hold its own in the social setting of marketplace, baths, and mealtable and to win attention by the attractiveness of its life and speech." Dunn

Colossians 4:7-18

Paul commonly rounds off his letters with personal messages such a travel plans, greetings, final instructions, a personal note and final benediction.

Verse 7

Τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ πάντα γνωρίζει ὑμῖν Τυχικὸς ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ,

ἐμὲ Pronoun, acc s ἐγὼ

γνωρίζω make known, disclose

ἀγαπητός, ἡ, ον beloved

πιστός, ἡ, ον faithful, trustworthy, reliable

διάκονος, ου m & f servant, helper,
minister

σύνδουλος, ου m fellow-slave, fellow-
servant

Tychicus was an Asian (perhaps from Ephesus) who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with the collection (Acts 20:4, cf. 1 Cor 16:1-4). He would have been a delegate from one of the churches. Now, perhaps 4 years later, he is sent as Paul's personal representative with the letter to the Colossians and the Ephesians (Eph 6:21,22) and Philemon.

Paul was ready to consider him a suitable substitute for Titus in Crete (Titus 3:12) and to send him to Ephesus (bearing the letter 2 Timothy?) just when Timothy was needed elsewhere (2 Tim 4:12).

Colossians 4:8

ὃν ἐπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέσῃ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν,

πεμπῶ send

A good example of an epistolary aorist.

γνῶτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl γινώσκω

παρακαλέσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s

παρακαλεῶ exhort, encourage, urge

Colossians 4:9

σὺν Ὀνησίμῳ τῷ πιστῷ καὶ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ, ὃς ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν· πάντα ὑμῖν γνωρίσουσιν τὰ ὧδε.

ὧδε adv here, in this place

Onesimus was a slave from Colossae who had run away from his master, Philemon (see letter to Philemon). He had become a Christian through Paul's influence. Once of little value to his master, he is now of great value and is to be recognised not only as a slave but also as a brother.

Colossians 4:10

Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναϊχμάλωτός μου, καὶ Μάρκος ὁ ἀνεψιὸς Βαρναβᾶ (περὶ οὗ ἐλάβετε ἐντολὰς, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς δέξασθε αὐτόν),

ἀσπάζομαι greet, welcome, say goodbye

Aristarchus seems to have been from Thessalonica. He was with Paul during the latter's lengthy ministry at Ephesus. He travelled with Paul to Jerusalem and seems to have accompanied him to Rome (Acts 20:4; 27:2).

It may be that Aristarchus and Epaphras (see Philemon 23) were not literally prisoners with Paul but had volunteered to stay with him during his house arrest.

συναϊχμάλωτος, ου m fellow-prisoner
ἀνεψιός, ου m cousin

This **Mark** was the same as wrote the second Gospel and had been a helper of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Mark had deserted his senior partners and had returned home. Paul had refused to take him on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41), and this had resulted in Paul and Barnabas going their separate ways.

Mark seems now to have redeemed himself and is valued by Paul (see also 2 Tim 4:11).

The encouragement of Barnabas had doubtless been an important factor in Mark's restoration, as, in all probability, had been the influence of Peter (see 1 Peter 5:13): Peter had known what it was to fail and to be restored.

ἐλάβετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl λαμβανω

ἐντολή, ἡς f command, instruction

ἐὰν if

δέξασθε Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 2 pl

δεχομαι receive, accept, welcome

Colossians 4:11

καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰουδστος, οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οὗτοι μόνου συνεργοὶ εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οἵτινες ἐγενήθησάν μοι παρηγορία.

περιτομη, ης f circumcision, those circumcised, Jews
μονος, η, ον only, alone

Implies a disappointment that so few Jews were helping Paul in his work.

συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker
οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὁ τι who, which, whoever, whichever, anyone, someone

ἐγενήθησάν Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 pl γινομαι

παρηγορια, ας f comfort

Colossians 4:12

ἀσπάζεταιται ὑμᾶς Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ, πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, ἵνα σταθῆτε τέλειοι καὶ πεπληροφορημένοι ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ.

ἀσπαζομαι see v.10

Ἐπαφρας, α m Eraphras

Eraphras, converted through the instrumentality of Paul, was, in all probability, the actual founder of the churches in the Lycus Valley (Col 1:7). He was from Colossae and was a hard worker in the three neighbouring churches. He seems, in some sense, also to have shared for a while in Paul's imprisonment (Phm 22).

δουλος, ου m slave, servant

παντοτε always

ἀγωνιζομαι struggle, fight, compete

προσευχη, ης f prayer

σταθῆτε Verb, 2 aor act subj, 2 pl ἰστημι and ἰστανω stand, stand firm

τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

πεπληροφορημένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl πληροφοροω convince fully, assure fully

θέλημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

Eraphras' concern for the Colossians mirrors Paul's own concern for the churches.

Colossians 4:13

μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτῷ ὅτι ἔχει πολὺν πόνον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱεραπόλει.

μαρτυρεω bear witness, testify

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου i) much, many

πονος, ου m pain, suffering; hard work

Cf. 2:1. Eraphras' concern again reflects that of Paul himself.

Colossians 4:14

ἀσπάζεταιται ὑμᾶς Λουκᾶς ὁ ἰατρός ὁ ἀγαπητὸς καὶ Δημᾶς.

ἀσπαζομαι see v.10

Luke was a Gentile Christian. Note that he was here in Rome with Mark: doubtless Luke learned and took much from Mark which he later incorporated into the third Gospel. Later, Luke is the only one remaining with Paul in Rome (2 Tim 4:11a).

ἰατρος, ου m physician, doctor

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

Demas was one who later deserted Paul and the work of the Gospel (see 2 Tim. 4:10).

Colossians 4:15

ἀσπασασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν.

There appear to have been close links between the churches of Colossians and Laodicea.

οἶκος, ου m house, home, household

"Νύμφαν can be accented Νύμφαν, from the feminine nominative Νύμφα, or Νύμφαν, from the masculine nominative Νύμφας. The uncertainty of the gender of the name led to a variation in the following possessive pronoun between αὐτῆς and αὐτοῦ. On the basis chiefly of the weight of mss evidence the Committee preferred Νύμφαν ... αὐτῆς." Metzger, *Textual Commentary*.

ἐκκλησια, ας f congregation, church

"Almost all churches met in private homes for the first two centuries of Christianity's existence (explicitly indicated in Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Phm 2, as well as here; see also Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12; 16:15, 40; 18:7-8; 20:8,20; Rom 16:14-15,23)." Dunn

Colossians 4:16

καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῆ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῆ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε.

ὅταν when

ἀναγνωσθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s

ἀναγινωσκω read, read in public worship

παρα preposition with dat with, in the presence of

ἐπιστολη, ης f letter

Λαοδικεως, εως m Laodicean

ἀναγνῶτε Verb, 2nd aor act subj, 2 pl ἀναγινωσκω

"The current letter would be read among the Colossians, that is, read aloud (by Tychicus or Onesimus) at meetings of each of the house churches in Colossae (cf. 1 Thess 5:27) or perhaps at a single (open-air?) meeting of the whole church called for the purpose... Without further delay, presumably (the cities were so close that any threat to the church in one would almost certainly be a threat to the other), it should be taken to Laodicea (again by Tychicus and Onesimus?), with the greetings of the Colossians (4:15), and read to a (single) gathering of the Laodicean church. Again, presumably on their return, the party from Colossae would bring back a different letter sent initially to the Laodiceans, to be read to the Colossians.

"How general was this practice with Paul's letters? We should hesitate to generalise too quickly from the case in point, since the cities of Colossae and Laodicea were so close. Nevertheless, it is significant that a letter written for a particular church should be regarded as of sufficiently wider relevance as to be read elsewhere. That suggests an awareness on the part of the author(s) that Paul's teaching, even in specific letters, was of not merely occasional or passing significance. In other words, we see here already that beginning of the sense of the letters' importance that thereafter developed over the decades into an acknowledgement of their canonical status. Moreover we begin to see something of the process by which, presumably, Paul's letters gained growing influence as a group; that is, by increasingly widespread circulation, different letters would not only gain wider recognition but also be put together with other letters." Dunn

Some think that the 'letter from Laodicia' is the letter we know as 'Ephesians' and that it had been intended by Paul to be a circular or general letter. Others are of the view that this letter (like some of those to Corinth – see 1 Cor. 5:9) has been lost.

Colossians 4:17

καὶ εἶπατε Ἀρχίππῳ· Βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν ἣν παρέλαβες ἐν κυρίῳ, ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς.

εἶπατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl λέγω

On Archippus cf. Phm 2, which suggests he was one of Paul's fellow workers and, in context, that he may have been a member of Philemon's family, perhaps a son.

βλεπω see, look, look to

διακονια, ας f ministry, service

παρέλαβες Verb, aor act indic, 2 s

παραλαμβάνω receive, accept

πληροῖς Verb, pres act subj, 2 s πληροω

fulfill, accomplish

The exact nature of this ministry or task cannot be known, but Dunn Comments, "That the whole community (all the recipients) have the responsibility of recalling Archippus to this task (particularly if he was a member of an important household in the community) conforms to Paul's concept of mutual responsibility and shared authority within the community, to which all, including the more important members, are to be subject (cf. particularly 3:16 and 1 Thess 5:20-21...)." Dunn

Colossians 4:18

Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου.

μνημονεύετε μου τῶν δεσμῶν. ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν.

ἀσπασμος, ου m greeting

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

Cf. 1 Cor 16:21; 2 Thess 3:17.

μνημονευω remember, keep in mind

δεσμος, ου m (& n) bond, chain,

imprisonment, prison

"Perhaps it was the fetters themselves which made it difficult for Paul to add more than this brief scrawl." Dunn

χαρις, ιος f grace, unmerited favour

Introduction to Philemon

"The letter to Philemon is unique within the New Testament. It is the only genuinely personal, that is, person-to-person, letter, even though the wider community is also in view (explicitly in vv. 2,22, and 25 and in the background throughout." Dunn.

The Recipient

Philemon was probably a successful businessman (vv. 17 & 18) who had been converted through Paul's ministry, perhaps while visiting Ephesus. His home in Colossae was the meeting place of the church (or one of the house churches) of which he was probably the leader. It seems he had also assisted Paul in his evangelistic work in more than the role of a patron (see v.17).

Purpose of the letter

The letter's primary purpose is to intercede with Philemon concerning his runaway slave Onesimus. It seems that Onesimus may have robbed Philemon as well as running away or perhaps had embezzled funds entrusted to him. How he came into contact with Paul is difficult to say. Dunn suggests that Onesimus may have left his master's household with the express purpose of contacting Paul. Having offended his master he seeks for Paul to plead with Philemon on his behalf. Dunn writes,

"This would create an interesting dynamic in the three-way relationship which makes this letter so intriguing... For it would mean that Onesimus, not yet a Christian, had sought out his master's Christian mentor to intercede for him... That tells us at once that it was Philemon's character as a Christian which Onesimus saw as likely to work most effectively in his favour. It also tells us that Philemon's regard for Paul would be well known within his household and that Philemon had not insisted that his whole household adopt his new faith, though conceivably Onesimus had been drawn into one or two of the meetings of the church in Philemon's house... That may suggest in turn, however, that Onesimus was ripe for conversion."

The converted Onesimus had become close to the imprisoned Paul and had proved useful to him. Paul commends Onesimus to Philemon, urging him to receive him back, "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" (v.16).

Place of Writing

Opinion is divided concerning the location of Paul's imprisonment when he wrote the letter. Some argue that it was written from Ephesus in the middle of the 50s since Ephesus is close to Colossae and also Paul seems to have been expecting imminent release (v.22). Others think it was written from Paul's imprisonment at Rome. Despite the far longer journey for Onesimus, the links between the letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, and the universal tradition of the early church, favour its origin in Rome.

Works referenced in these notes on Philemon

Dunn, James D G

The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996

Philemon 1

Παῦλος δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ Τιμόθεος
ὁ ἀδελφὸς Φιλήμονι τῷ ἀγαπητῷ καὶ συνεργῷ
ἡμῶν

δεσμιος, ου m prisoner

As with the letter to the Colossians, this personal letter also includes Timothy as an author.

ἀγαπητος, η, ου beloved
συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker

Philemon is mentioned here alone in the NT. Here he is "numbered in that select and important band whom Paul designates as 'fellow workers,' which includes Prisca and Aquila, Urbanus, Timothy (Rom 16:3,9,21; 1 Thess 3:2), Apollos (1 Cor 3:9), Silvanus (2 Cor 1:24), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (Phil 4:3), Aristachus, Mark, and Jesus Justus (Col 4:11), and Demas and Luke (Phm 24; see also on Col 4:11)." Dunn

Philemon 2

καὶ Ἀρφία τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ Ἀρχίππῳ τῷ
συστρατιώτῃ ἡμῶν καὶ τῇ κατ' οἶκόν σου
ἐκκλησίᾳ·

Arphia is probably Philemon's wife.

ἀδελφῆ, ἡς f sister, female believer

Archippus is commonly taken to be their son.

συστρατιωτῆς, οὐ m fellow soldier

Suggests that he was active in ministry in Colossae.

οἶκος, οὐ m house, home, household
ἐκκλησία, ἡς f congregation, church

Cf. Col 4:15 for a similar reference to a church in someone's home.

"The assumption is that the letter would be read openly at a meeting of the house church... Of course, this was a not altogether subtle way of bringing pressure on Philemon, but the very fact that it could be done indicates that Philemon was likely to recognise the church's right to take an interest in and even advise on the internal affairs of his own household...; this was the character of their shared faith (v.6). This is all the more striking since almost certainly slaves (Philemon's or others') would also be members of the house church (cf. Col 4:22-25)." Dunn

Philemon 3

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν
καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

εἰρήνη, ἡς f peace

Cf. Col 1:2.

Philemon 4

Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε μνησίαν σου
ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου,

Paul's common practice was to follow the greeting with an expression of thanksgiving which commonly follows the pattern exemplified here in vv 4-5: cf. Rom 1:8-9; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3-4; 1 Thess 1:2-3; 2 Thess 1:3.

εὐχαριστεῶ thank, give thanks

τῷ θεῷ μου "underlines the personal character of Paul's devotion." Dunn.

παντοτε always

μνησία, ἡς f remembrance, mention

προσευχῆ, ἡς f prayer

"We should not regard this as mere literary flourish...; Paul must have had an extensive prayer list and presumably spent some time each day naming before God all his churches, colleagues, and supporters. This would help maintain and strengthen the sense of a faith shared with 'all the saints' (5-6)." Dunn.

Philemon 5

ἀκούων σου τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἣν
ἔχεις πρὸς τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰς πάντας
τοὺς ἁγίους,

The present tense indicates a regular flow of news. The expression that follows suggests Onesimus must have spoken warmly of his master.

πιστις, εὐς f faith, trust, belief

ἅγιος, ἁ, ον holy, consecrated, set apart to/by God; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

The NIV apporitions the love and faith between the phrases which follow in the relative clause, 'your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of the saints', cf. Col 1:4. Dunn thinks this an attractive reading but says it is not demanded by the text.

Philemon 6

ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς
γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν
ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν·

"Slightly awkwardly the purpose clause follows from the subordinate clause of v.4." Dunn

ὅπως (ὅτι ὅπως ἂν) that, in order that
κοινωνία, ἡς f fellowship, sharing in, participation, contribution

Dunn comments, "The puzzle is whether κοινωνία is something objective (the fellowship brought about by faith) or subjective (the experience of shared faith), and likewise whether πιστις is objective (the fellowship of a shared confession) or subjective (the shared experience of believing)." Dunn thinks the subjective is most likely in both cases. He concludes, "The prayer is that this shared experience of a common trust in Christ might be or become (γενηται) ἐνεργης, 'effective, active, powerful' (cf. the other two New Testament instances: 1 Cor 16:9; Heb 4:12; also the verb in Gal 5:6) in the knowledge (ἐπιγνωσις, a term common in Colossians: 1:9-10; 2:2; 3:7; cf. also particularly Phil 1:9) of all the good which was their common lot as Christians... The corporate character of the shared faith is central to the thought; Paul had no desire to promote the idea of religious faith as something private, that which a person enjoys alone and practices as a separate individual. Moreover, the phrase underlines not only the bonding character of this faith, but also the fact that this shared faith was the basis and energy source of their common life and worship."

ἐνεργης, ες active, effective
 γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι
 ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition,
 consciousness
 ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting

Philemon 7

χαρὰν γὰρ πολλὴν ἔσχον καὶ παράκλησιν ἐπὶ
 τῇ ἀγάπῃ σου, ὅτι τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων
 ἀναπέπνυται διὰ σοῦ, ἀδελφέ.

χαρᾶ, ας f joy, gladness
 πολλυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου
 much, many
 ἔσχον Verb, aor act indic, 1 s & 3 pl ἔχω
 παρακλησις, εως f encouragement,
 comfort
 σπλάγγνον, ου n affections, heart
 ἀναπέπνυται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s
 ἀναπαυω give relief, refresh

"The tense of the verb (ἀναπέπνυται, perfect) indicates some past ministry of Philemon which had had enduring results (the parallel with 2 Cor 7:13 is thus particularly close). Possibly some particular visits were in mind which had brought a reinvigoration and refreshment to various churches, which would suggest that Philemon was a fine preacher. Or he had acted in such a way to set various churches on a secure foundation, perhaps by financial aid or legal advice..., thus removing anxieties and giving them peace of mind, which would strengthen the impression that Philemon was a figure of some power and influence in wider society as well as in the church. Whatever the precise circumstances, the more emotional note implicit in the use of σπλάγχνα (rather than the much more common καρδία) should be noted; the emotional bonds between Philemon and 'the saints' were strong. No doubt Paul hoped that this would be a factor in his favour when he came to make his appeal to Philemon in the next paragraph; hence also, presumably, the repeated mention of Philemon's love (vv. 6,7)." Dunn

Philemon 8

Διό, πολλὴν ἐν Χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων
 ἐπιτάσσειν σοὶ τὸ ἀνῆκον,

διο therefore, for this reason

On the ground of a common faith (v.6) and in knowledge of Philemon's character (v.7).

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ see v.7

"Literally 'I have much in Christ boldness.' Paul could be so confident because he would be speaking 'in Christ,' that is, as one who stood (with Philemon) in a higher or more important relationship ... which took precedence over earthly obligations of client to patron or of subordinate to superior. In other words, the appeal here is not to Paul's apostolic authority vis-à-vis Philemon; the reminder of Philemon's debt to Paul will come later (v.19). As one equally 'in Christ,' Philemon could be expected to acknowledge that an 'in Christ' obligation transcended all others." Dunn.

παρρησια, ας f boldness, assurance

The participle, ἔχων in context here has the force 'although I have' (it is concessive), corresponding to the μαλλον of the following verse.

ἐπιτασσω command, order

"But such an abrupt assertion of authority was not Paul's preferred way; he never uses the verb elsewhere and refuses in 1 Cor 7:6 and 2 Cor 8:8 to issue an ἐπιταγή." Dunn.

ἀνηκει impers vb. it is proper or right; το
 ἀνηκον the appropriate thing

Being a Christian introduces a new set of obligations and responsibilities – no longer simply those demanded by the mores of society.

Philemon 9

διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην μᾶλλον παρακαλῶ, τοιοῦτος ὢν ὡς Παῦλος πρεσβύτες νυνὶ δὲ καὶ δέσμιος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ –

μᾶλλον adv more; rather, instead
παρακαλεῶ exhort, encourage, urge

'yet rather, for love's sake, I appeal to you' Hendriksen. "παρακαλεῖν epitomises the quality of discourse which should characterise the church in its discussion and debate – that is, not the demand of rights or threat of sanctions (it here stands in antithesis to ἐπιτασσεῖν), but the exhortation, the appeal, the request within a community whose members trust and respect each other." Dunn.

τοιούτος, αὐτῆ, οὐτον correlative pronoun and adjective such, of such kind
πρεσβυτής, ου old man, elderly man

Though the Greek clearly reads πρεσβύτες 'an old man,' many have argued that πρεσβευτής, 'ambassador' should be read here. The conjecture is unnecessary. The appeal is for the respect a younger member of Christ's family should show towards one who is older.

νυνὶ (originally an emphatic form of νυν)
now

δέσμιος, ου m prisoner

Paul does not issue commands as an apostle but makes a simple appeal as an old man and now a prisoner.

Philemon 10

παρακαλῶ σε περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ τέκνου, ὃν ἐγέννησα ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς Ὀνήσιμον,

παρακαλεῶ see v.9

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

τέκνον, ου n child

Cf. 1 Cor 4:14,17; Gal 4:19; also Phil 2:22; 1 Thess 2:11; 1 Tim 1:2,18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; Tit 1:4.

γενναῶ be father of, bear, give birth
δέσμιος, ου m (& n) bond, chain,
imprisonment, prison

Philemon 11

τόν ποτέ σοι ἄχρηστον νυνὶ δὲ σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ εὐχρηστον,

ποτε enclitic particle once, formerly, at one time, ever, at any time

ἀχρηστος, ου of little value

νυνὶ see v.9

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

εὐχρηστος, ου useful, beneficial

The name 'Onesimus' literally means 'useful,' allowing Paul to make this pun.

Philemon 12

ὃν ἀπέπεμψά σοι αὐτόν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα:

ἀναπέμψω send, send back

Another epistolary aorist. Onesimus would have returned with Tychicus (Col 4:7-9) along with this letter and the one addressed to the Colossian church.

ἐμός, η, ου 1st pers possessive adj my, mine
σπλάγχνον, ου n see v.7

The awkwardness of the Greek has given rise to various 'improvements' in the course of transmission, particularly the addition of προσλαβόν, 'receive.'

Philemon 13

ὃν ἐγὼ ἐβουλόμην πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν κατέχειν, ἵνα ὑπὲρ σοῦ μοι διακονῇ ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,

βουλομαι want, desire, wish, intend, plan

"The imperfect tense ('I was wanting') implies a period during which Paul weighed the consequences of his action and during which the value of Onesimus's presence was a considerable factor in his deliberation." Dunn.

ἐμαυτὸν Pronoun, acc s ἐμαυτοῦ myself
κατέχω hold fast, keep

διακονεῶ serve, wait on, care for

δέσμιος, ου m (& n) see v.10

εὐαγγελιον, ου n good news, gospel

Philemon 14

χωρὶς δὲ τῆς σῆς γνώμης οὐδὲν ἠθέλησα ποιῆσαι, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κατὰ ἀνάγκην τὸ ἀγαθὸν σου ἢ ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἐκούσιον.

χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from
σος, ση, σον possessive adj. your, yours
γνώμη, ης f purpose, intent, decision

Here, 'consent.'

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμία, οὐδὲν no one, nothing
θελῶ wish, will

The aorist here in contrast with the imperfect of the previous verse – after a period of consideration Paul reached a decision.

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεῶ
ἀνάγκη, ης f necessity, compulsion
ἀγαθος, η, ου good, useful, fitting
ἢ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι
ἐκούσιος, α, ου willing

Philemon 15

τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχῃς,

ταχα adv perhaps, possibly
ἐχωρίσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s χωρίζω
separate; pass. separate oneself, be separated, be taken away

ώρα, ας f hour, moment, period of time
αἰώνιος, ον eternal, everlasting

"The ambiguity of the αἰώνιον is part of Paul's 'softly, softly' strategy. It is not clear whether he refers already to the new relation between Philemon and Onesimus, consequent upon the latter's conversion, as one that will last beyond death ('forever'...), or rather to the restored and henceforth assuredly permanent relation of master to now dutiful slave ('permanently')." Dunn. There may be an allusion to Ex 21:6 and Deut 15:17 which refer to 'a slave for life.'

ἀπέχῃς Verb, pres act subj, 2 s ἀπεχω
receive, have back

Paul sees the hand of God at work in the illicit flight of Onesimus.

Philemon 16

οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.

οὐκετι adv no longer, no more

There seems to be an element of ambiguity here. Is Paul hinting that Philemon should free Onesimus or is the meaning 'no longer *merely* a slave ...' The latter seems more likely in view of the possible allusion to Ex/Deut in v.15 and the final clause of this verse.

δουλος, ου m slave, servant
ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved
μαλιστα especially
ποσος, η, ον how much(?)
μαλλον adv more; rather, more than that
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body,
human nature

In both the 'fleshly' relationship of servant to master and in the spiritual one of brother in Christ, Philemon would find Onesimus now a blessing to him.

Philemon 17

Εἰ οὖν με ἔχεις κοινωνόν, προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ.

κοινωνος, ου m partner, sharer

Here perhaps more than a reference to being fellow Christians, perhaps also to them as fellow workers. So Dunn who says "The appeal, in other words, is to Philemon as a fellow evangelist or worker on behalf of the churches who looked to Paul for leadership. It is this further dimension of shared experience and shared ministry, with its evocation of mutual trust and collegiality between Paul and Philemon, and its implication that Philemon like Paul put the work of the gospel and care of the churches among his highest priorities, that gave Paul the stronger confidence that Philemon would know how to put the righting of Onesimus's wrong in its proper perspective."

προσλαβοῦ Verb, aor midd dep imperat, 2 s
προσλαμβάνομαι welcome, accept,
receive

Philemon 18

εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει, τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα·

"The 'if' has ... the force of 'whatever,' the rhetorical effect being to underline the comprehensiveness of Paul's guarantee: 'whatever wrong he has done or debt he has incurred ...' Dunn

ἀδικεω wrong, harm; be an offender

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

ἢ or

ὀφειλω owe

ἐμοὶ see v.11

ἐλογγεω and ἐλογγαω charge to one's
account

"Whatever justifiable claim Philemon had on Onesimus in financial terms, Paul would meet it in full. This is an astonishing guarantee for someone with as little independent means as Paul, not to mention that he was in prison at the time. It can only mean that he would be able to call on wealthy backers who presumably knew both Paul and Onesimus, should the IOU be called in. Alternatively, Paul could be so bold because, despite whatever misgivings he still had, he could not believe that Philemon would call in the debt. The issue is sharpened still further by the way Paul proceeds." Dunn

Philemon 19

ἐγὼ Παῦλος ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ, ἐγὼ ἀποτίσω· ἵνα μὴ λέγω σοὶ ὅτι καὶ σεαυτὸν μοι προσοφείλεις.

γράφω write

ἐμος, η, ον see v.12

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

ἀποτίσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s ἀποτινω
pay (someone) back

Paul's signed guarantee.

ἵνα μη λέγω σοι ὅτι 'not to mention that ...'

σεαυτου, ης reflexive pronoun yourself
προσοφειλω owe, owe besides

Dunn speaks of Paul's words here as a 'rhetorical trick,' adding that it "nonetheless evidences a certain hesitation on Paul's part to lean on Philemon too heavily. Its effect is to leave the main weight on the preceding legal guarantee, so that Philemon's hoped-for positive response would appear more as an act of graciousness on his part than as an unwilling repayment of a debt owed to Paul."

Philemon 20

ναί, ἀδελφέ, ἐγώ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ·
ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν Χριστῷ.

ναί yes, yes indeed, certainly

ὀναίμην Verb, 2 aor midd dep opt, 1 s
ὀνιναμαι benefit, profit, have joy

Dunn says this is a 'neat pun' on the name Onesimus. He points out that this is the only occurrence of the first person optative in the New Testament as well as the only instance of this verb. The sense is 'Yes, brother, I am asking a favour of you.'

ἀνάπαυσόν Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s
ἀναπαυω give relief, refresh
σπλάγγνον, ου n affections, heart

Philemon 21

πεποιθώς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου ἔγραψά σοι, εἰδώς ὅτι
καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις.

πεποιθώς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s πειθω
persuade; perf trust, rely on, have
confidence, be confident

Indicates a "settled trust resulting from previous experience of Philemon as one in whom confidence could be placed." Dunn

ὑπακοη, ης f obedience

The meaning is 'heedful hearing.'

γραφω see v.19

Again, an epistolary aorist.

εἰδώς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s οἶδα (verb
perf in form but with present meaning)
know

ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις suggests Philemon will do more than Paul had asked, "the most obvious alternatives being Philemon freeing Onesimus and/or sending Onesimus back to Paul to continue to serve Paul on Philemon's behalf (vv. 12-14). But it is left entirely to Philemon to decide what is appropriate." Dunn

Philemon 22

ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐτοιμάζε μοι ξενίαν, ἐλπίζω γὰρ ὅτι
διὰ τῶν προσευχῶν ὑμῶν χαρισθήσομαι ὑμῖν.

ἅμα at the same time, together
ἐτοιμαζω prepare, make ready
ξενια, ας f place of lodging

Dunn picks up on the lack of a definite article, suggesting that Philemon has more than one guest room: he is a man of means.

"There is a gentle compulsion in this mention of a personal visit to Colossae. The apostle would thus be able to see for himself that Philemon had not disappointed his expectations." Lightfoot

ἐλπίζω hope, hope for, expect
προσευχη, ης f prayer
χαρισθήσομαι Verb, fut pass indic, 1 s
χαρίζομαι grant, give, bestow

The use of χαρίζομαι implies that Paul's release would be a *gracious* act of God. "In other words, Paul's expectations were not high, and in the normal course of events he would have recognised the unlikelihood of his being able to come to Philemon; it would take an act of generosity of God's part, in which their (again plural) prayers would be important." Dunn

Philemon 23

Ἀσπάζεται σε Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,

ἀσπαζομαι greet

σε Pronoun, acc s συ

συναιχμαλωτος, ου m fellow-prisoner

See on Col. 4:10-12 for comment on the persons named here and in the following verse, also for the meaning of the term 'fellow-prisoner'. "There is, however, a curious interchange between Epaphras and Aristarchus at this point. In Col 4:10-13 it is Aristarchus who is given first mention, and he who is designated 'fellow prisoner,' with Epaphras following, commended for his 'great labour' (though not designated 'fellow worker'). Here, however, it is Epaphras who is named first and described as 'fellow prisoner,' and Aristarchus is mentioned merely as one, and not even the first, of the following group of 'fellow workers' (v.24)." Dunn

Philemon 24

Μάρκος, Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς, Λουκᾶς, οἱ
συνεργοί μου.

συνεργος, ου m fellow-worker

Cf. Col 4:10-14. The two letters were evidently written at much the same time.

Philemon 25

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ
πνεύματος ὑμῶν.

Many MSS include ἡμῶν after κυρίου.
Metzger comments, "If the pronoun were
present originally, it is difficult to account for
its omission, whereas copyists were prone to
introduce such natural expansions."

μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν cf. Gal 6:18 and Phil
4:23.