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EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



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Rev. Stan Nussbaum is Director of the Interact Research Centre, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, UK. **p. 468**

African Bible Guides Series—Booklet 8: Colossians

Editor: Joshua Kudadjie

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COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 1

1:2 MAY GOD OUR FATHER GIVE YOU GRACE AND PEACE

Greetings are very important to Africans. When one person meets another or there is a family gathering, they exchange greetings, they ask about the welfare of the family members and wish each other well. This is exactly what Paul was doing at the beginning of this letter which he wrote to the church in a city called Colossae, which was in a region then known as Asia Minor, now Turkey. Paul had no relatives at Colossae but, because the Colossians had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, Paul regarded them as his brothers and he wished them God's grace and peace.

The greeting: 'May God our Father give you grace and peace', is the usual way in which Paul greeted Christians to whom he wrote. These 'greetings' are not mere words of greetings such as people commonly use these days when they say, 'Good Morning', for

example. They are a kind of prayer that God, who is the common father of both Paul and the Colossians, may bless the Colossians. When we greet each other or say the benediction, we should regard our words as prayers and take them seriously.

1:5 FAITH ... LOVE ... HOPE

When people hear some good news, it is natural for them to give thanks just as Paul does here. Epaphras, who started the Church in Colossae, had told Paul and Timothy that the church was doing well (v. [8](#)). When the Colossians first heard the Good News that they could be saved from their sins through Christ and that they would go to heaven, they had believed it. That hope of going to heaven made them accept Christ as their Saviour. Because of that hope, they also expressed their love to all their fellow Christians.

Paul, as a senior messenger of God, had real cause to thank God that the young church was showing all the three major qualities expected of Christians, namely, faith, hope and love ([1 Cor. 13:13](#)). In our prayers of thanksgiving, we must always remember to thank God [p. 469](#) for the good lives and testimonies of other Christians, not just for the good things that happen to them.

1:15 CHRIST IS ... SUPERIOR TO ALL CREATED THINGS

Some religious groups teach certain things to draw Christians away from their faith. Some of them teach that there is nothing special about Christ and that he is only one of many spiritual 'masters'. They also promise their own followers that they will receive more spiritual knowledge and power. Some even claim that certain spirits are more powerful than Christ.

Some of these teachings were being introduced into the Colossian church by false teachers. In Paul's letter to the Colossians, therefore, he took great pains to explain the true Christian teaching that Christ is supreme and superior to all created things. Here are the proofs that Paul used:

- (1) Christ has the full nature of God in himself and he has shown what God is like (v. [15.19](#)):
- (2) God created all things through Christ—including the spirits and all grades of rulers and authorities (v. [16](#)):
- (3) Christ existed before all things (v. [17](#)):
- (4) All things work properly only when they are in the right relationship with Christ (v. [18](#)):
- (5) He is the head and source of life of the Church (v. [18](#)):
- (6) He was the first to be raised from the dead (v. [18](#)):
- (7) It is through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross that the whole universe is saved and brought back to God (v. [20](#)):
- (8) Jesus Christ has the first place in all things (v. [18](#)).

From these facts about Christ, it is clear that he is superior to all other persons, or powers, or spirits. As the Shona proverb says, 'Even the highest rulers on earth still have Someone above them.' Christ is the one who can give us protection, life, salvation, knowledge and everything else that we need. As Christians we have no need to seek help from any other power, since we already have Christ who is supreme over all.

1:20 TO BRING THE WHOLE UNIVERSE BACK ... THROUGH HIS SON'S DEATH

In most African societies there are taboos. When a person disobeys the taboo of a god or ancestral spirit, that spirit power withdraws its favour or works against the offender or even sometimes against the whole **P. 470** community. In such societies it is believed that the offended spirit must be given something. Usually this is done by sacrificing some animal which people think will cleanse the offender and restore the lost relationship.

As Christians we don't need to sacrifice animals for our cleansing because Jesus Christ was offered as the peace-making sacrifice, to redeem the whole universe and restore it to God's favour. The sacrifice he made was once and for all and it was perfect, because he was the perfect Son of God. There is no other sacrifice we can add to his sacrifice of his own body and blood. (See [Hebrews 9:11-14](#) and [10:4](#)).

As Christians, we must always remember that Christ sacrificed everything to cleanse us and bring us back to God. We must, therefore, keep ourselves clean, holy, pure and blameless. Since Christ has made us God's friends, let's act like God's friends.

1:24 I AM HAPPY ABOUT MY SUFFERINGS

Some preachers give the impression that once a person becomes a Christian all his problems will be over and he will be protected from any kind of suffering. Because of this wrong impression, when some Christians suffer, they complain and some even give up their faith. But this must not be so because the Lord Jesus himself has told us to be happy if we suffer for his sake. Our reward in heaven will be great ([Matt. 5:11-12](#)). It is very encouraging that Paul testifies that he is happy about his sufferings, since through these sufferings he is able to advance the work of God. Christians should be prepared to suffer for the sake of the gospel and the Church. But we should note that Paul suffered for preaching the Good News of Christ and not for doing anything wrong. [1 Peter 4:12-16](#) encourages Christians to be happy, if they suffer because they are Christ's followers but warns that, if a Christian suffers, it must not be because he has committed a crime or other wrong.

1:26 THE SECRET ... HID THROUGH ALL PAST AGES

Most people have information or plans that they keep as secrets and which they reveal only to some loved or trusted person. Usually people feel excited and important when some such secret has been revealed to them. God also has a secret that he kept from all humankind throughout the ages until the time of Christ. Then the secret was out. All the followers of Jesus knew it and God gave Paul the task **P. 471** of revealing that secret to people from other countries. This secret is that people from all those countries could have Jesus Christ living within them if they would love him and live for him. This means that all such people will share in God's glory.

This is a great and exciting revelation. Like Paul, all Christians must preach Christ to everyone so that, if possible, all others will come to share in this glory. **p. 472**