

15.1 The Letter of Paul to the Church at Colosse

Introduction

The occasion of this letter is threat of false teaching that was a mixture of Jewish (cf. circumcision, 2.11) and Greek components (cf. plausible/philosophical arguments, 2.4, 8). We have little detail about the teaching; our perspective on it comes from the angle of refutation. This goal combines with the usual apostolic concern expressed in the apostle's prayers for the church.

... we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1.9-11).

1) Based on this text, how can we summarize the purpose of the letter by a) making a list of elements in that purpose, b) with prioritizing that reveals a typical Pauline/pastoral balance?

2) In turn, what lessons can we learn here about pastoral care that both pastors and members ought to pursue with due diligence?

Contents

We can try to summarize the purpose and theme of the book by gathering the contents in the flow of thought that unfolds as we read.

Greeting, 1.1-2

Prayer for the church, 1.3-14

The preeminence of Christ Jesus, 1.15-20 (see 1.1)

The reconciliation of the Colossians from alienation and hostility, 1.21-23

Paul's apostolic service to the church, 1.24-2.5

Exhortations, 2.6-4.6

Conclusion 4.7-18

Qs Based on contents

1) What is the nature of the largest section of the book?

2) What in context prevents us from applying 3.1-2 in an impractical and otherworldly (pie in the sky without earthly genuineness) way?

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (3.1-2).

3) What are sins that both Christians and non-Christians may commit per 3.5-9?

What is the difference between a true Christian and a mere professing Christian?

How might we state this difference combining 1.23 with 3.5-9 and 3.16-17?

How might we state this difference combining 3.7 and 3.8 in context?

4) How do sin lists aid personal self-discipline (3.5, 12) and church self-discipline (3.16)?