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Read Colossians 1:1–14. I will print the NET–2 translation.

CHAPTER ONE: SALUTATION

1 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 to the saints, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, at Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father!

PAUL’S THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

3 We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints. 5 Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. Just as in the entire world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, so it has also been bearing fruit and growing among you from the first day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth. 7 You learned the gospel from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave—a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf— 8 who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

PAUL’S PRAYER FOR THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

9 For this reason we also, from the day we heard about you, have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects—bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light. 13 He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

COMMENTS:

You have the traditional letter opening in vs. 1–2. There are couple of interesting translation points in v. 2. The first is that the Greek has an “and” between saints and faithful. Since they seem to be used synonymously, we omit the “and” in English.

The second point has to do with the modern efforts to make translation gender friendly, they translate the Greek term “adelphos” (brother) as “brothers and sisters.” It is a plural form whereas the “brother” referring to Timothy in v. 1 is singular. Because of patriarchal structure of those days, the term was also used of groups with both male and female members.

Since the letter is written to the congregation at Colossae, it is reasonable to assume both males and females are in the congregation. I believe that in those instances where it is easy to see the mixed membership, it is okay to translate it in that way. Some want to require it always to be translated as male (brothers). I don’t agree with that.

It clearly says in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. In a few days we will come to a very similar saying in Colossians 3:11, “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul is always a great example to us in prayer. He begins with thanksgiving instead of “give me” or “I need.” It is not wrong to use such words in your prayers, but in you begin with thanksgiving your requests will more likely be in tune with God’s desires.

Notice how he continues by focusing on the spiritual gifts: faith, love, Christian hope, the gospel. The gospel is the heart and center of Christianity. Paul reminds them that in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing just as it did among them.

Then we are introduced to a new person: Epaphras. We know nothing about him beyond this letter. Paul calls him “a beloved fellow servant.” He is the source of information about this congregation. Some believe the name Epaphras is a shortened version of Epaphroditus. This is possible, but if so, he is a different Epaphroditus from the one who brought the offering from Philippi.

Notice how Paul continues to pray for these people. I believe it is evident that he believed that one of his most important tasks was to pray for these congregations. Do you encourage your pastor to spend time praying for the church or do you want him to be busy doing something? One of the main things he should be doing is praying for the people.

He is asking God to fill them with the knowledge of his will and being full of wisdom and understanding. This would enable them to live as God desires, bearing fruit in good works, and growing in the knowledge of God. We continue to try to find increased strength within ourselves. Our strength comes from God, not from ourselves.

We rejoice because we have a new country. We were transferred from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God’s Son. This kingdom is where we find redemption and the forgiveness of sins. It is so much better living in the light rather than in darkness.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Your prayers offer a good way for you to check which kingdom most excites you. Are your prayers focused on the stuff of earth or on your citizenship in the kingdom of light? Do you pray as fervently for your congregation as you pray for your parents or your child? What does Matthew 10:37 “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” say to you?