

In this lesson Paul greets the Christians at Colossae, offers thanks for their faith, and prays for their further strengthening. Paul has apparently not visited this city in the country today known as Turkey, but he praises his fellow servant Epaphras, who brought the gospel to the new converts. The apostle asks that they maybe filled with spiritual understanding and be fruitful in good works. So will they give thanks to the God who has rescued them from the power of darkness and evil and brought them into the kingdom of the Son of God. Hear now these words from Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people - the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you.

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world - just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The gospel is the lawyer's question and the parable of the Good Samaritan. While testing Jesus, this expert in the law asks a question at the heart of human longing: how can life's true meaning and purpose be realized? Jesus causes him to answer for himself with the summary of the law.

Recognizing how hard it is to put such lofty commandments into practice, the lawyer next asks, who is the neighbor that I am to love? Jesus hears his real question (who is *not* my neighbor?) and tells him the story of a man who could help another without requiring the law's definition. Hear now these words from the Gospel of Luke.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

This is the word of the Lord. **May the reading and the hearing of your word inform our minds, comfort our souls and guide our feet.**