

## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 173

### Colossians ~ Part 1

We begin to examine **Sha'ul's** remaining in the **Brit Hadashah**, which we haven't studied to date. We start with his letter to the **Colossians**.

The purpose of **Sha'ul's** prayer was that the **Believers** at **Colossae** might **walk worthy of the Lord** so that all their conduct would please Him. **Messianic** behavior that pleases the **Lord** involves the performance of good deeds, continuous spiritual growth, dependence on His power resulting in endurance, patience, and joy, and expressing gratitude for all things because **God** enables **Believers** to share in the saints' inheritance.

During his two years under house arrest, as we learned about in the last post, he was generally believed to have been in 61-63 CE; **Sha'ul** wrote four letters that have become known as the **Prison Letters**. Two of them, the **Letter to the Colossians** and the **Letter to Philemon**, are probably written at the same time. Although **Sha'ul** has never been to **Colosse**, one of his **talmid**, **Epaphras**, had been preaching there and the surrounding communities. **Epaphras** informed **Sha'ul** that pagan secularism was rampant in the area. To **Sha'ul**, **Messianic** life is more than giving up bad habits. It is acquiring a newness of mind that comes from setting our hearts on **Yeshua**. <sup>1</sup>

### Salutation

**1<sup>1</sup> From: Sha'ul, by God's will an emissary of the Messiah Yeshua, and Brother Timothy. 2 To: God's people in Colosse, faithful brothers in the Messiah: Grace to you and shalom from God our Father.**

As he often does, **Sha'ul** divides this letter into what **God** has done (chapters 1–2) and what **Believers** are obligated to do in gratitude (chapters 3–4). **Colossae** is a town in Asia Minor whose **brothers** (**Believers**) came to faith in **Yeshua** through the evangelizing efforts of someone other than **Sha'ul** (2:1), namely, **Epaphras** in verse 4.

### Thanks for Your Faith

**Sha'ul** offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the **Colossian Believers**. In the original **Greek**, the prayer consists of a single sentence modifying the phrase, *"We always thank God."*

**3 Whenever we pray, we always give thanks for you to God, the Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.**

**Sha'ul's** use of **we** probably included **Timothy** (v. 1) and possibly others (4:7–14). **Sha'ul** expressed the frequency of his thanksgiving with the adverb **always**.

**4 For we have heard of your trust in the Messiah Yeshua and of the love you have for all God's people.**

The reason for **Sha'ul's** thanksgiving is rooted in reports he had heard about the **Colossians' faith in Yeshua** and **love ... for all the saints**, which are the hallmarks of genuine **Messianic Believer**.

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<sup>1</sup> F. LaGard Smith, The Narrated Bible in Chronological Order.

<sup>25</sup> *Both spring from the confident hope that you will receive what is stored up for you in heaven. You heard of this earlier in the message about the truth. This Good News<sup>6</sup> has made its presence felt among you, just as it is also being fruitful and multiplying throughout the world in the same way as it has among you since the day you heard and understood the grace of God as it really is.*

The basis of the **Colossian Believers'** faith and love is that they had a **hope** reserved for them in heaven. The triad of faith, love, and hope is a familiar **Sha'ul's** formula (Romans 5:1–5; Galatians 5:5–6; Ephesians 1:15; 4:2–5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Philemon 5). This hope was the result of having heard and received *the message of truth* or, more specifically, *the gospel*. **Sha'ul** emphasized the power and effectiveness of the **Gospel** by tracking its expansion, twice mentioning how the **Colossians** accepted the truth of the **Gospel**.

<sup>7</sup> *You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave and a faithful worker for the Messiah on your behalf;* <sup>8</sup> *and he has told us about the love which the Spirit has given you.*

### Pray For The Colossians

<sup>9</sup> *Therefore, from the day we heard of it, we have not stopped praying for you, asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all the wisdom and understanding which the Spirit gives;*

The opening phrase *from the day we heard of it* harks back to **Epaphras'** good report about the **Colossian Believers'** faith in **Yeshua**. The word **filled** (the passive verb indicates **God** as a causal agent) typically conveys the sense of “completeness” in **Colossians** (vv. 9, 19, 25; 2:9–10; 4:17). **Sha'ul** asked that they receive full *knowledge of His will*. The phrase **in all wisdom and spiritual understanding** expresses the means through which this knowledge comes. This wisdom (v. 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5) and understanding are spiritual.

<sup>10</sup> *so that you may live lives worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him, being fruitful in every good work and multiplying in the full knowledge of God.* <sup>11</sup> *We pray that you will be continually strengthened with all the power that comes from his glorious might; so that you will be able to persevere and be patient in any situation, joyfully* <sup>12</sup> *giving thanks to the Father for having made you fit to share in the inheritance of his people in the light.* <sup>13</sup> *He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.*

<sup>14</sup> *It is through His Son that we have redemption—that is, our sins have been forgiven.*<sup>2</sup>

Although in **Jewish** understanding, **redemption** (see Ephesians 1:7) has a national dimension dating from the **Exodus** and extending to the **Messianic Age**, it also has an application to the individual defined by this verse. By implication, the individual was enslaved to sin (compare Romans 6:16–23) but has now been redeemed from that slavery: *our sins have been forgiven*. This redemption is available from **God** but only *through His Son, Yeshua*.

In our next post, we will examine **Sha'ul's Letters to the Saints**, continuing in **Colossians**.

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<sup>2</sup> Colossians 1:1-14.