

# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

Exposition: English  
Storyboard

Volume 15, Pericope 3

Colossians 1:9-11a



## BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY



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### INTRODUCTION

#### WELCOME

to this summary video of the exegesis of Colossians 1:9-11a. This video covers the third pericope thus far in the Greek text of Colossians. This video summarizes the historical interpretation of the Greek text, and is [Part One](#) of the study of Colossians 1:9-11a. These documents are available online at [cranfordville.com](http://cranfordville.com) in the *Biblical Insights Commentary* series. Click on volume 15 of the revised BIC commentary series.



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In order to reconstruct the history of this text, several angles of analysis must be completed. These are grouped around both the historical and the literary aspects of the text.<sup>1</sup> This interpretive methodology is set forth in [Guidelines for Exegeting a Text](#) from the Greek New Testament, found under "[Study Aids for New Testament Studies](#)" at [cranfordville.com](http://cranfordville.com).

<sup>1</sup>The method to be followed in outline presentation:

#### 1.0 HISTORICAL

##### 1.1 External Aspects

- 1.1.1 Compositional Aspects
- 1.1.2 Transcriptional Aspects

##### 1.2 Internal Aspects

- 1.2.1 People
- 1.2.2 Places
- 1.2.3 Times
- 1.2.4 Events

#### 2.0 LITERARY

##### 2.1 External: Literary Forms

- 2.1.1 Identify the literary forms
- 2.1.2 Analyze the role of the literary forms

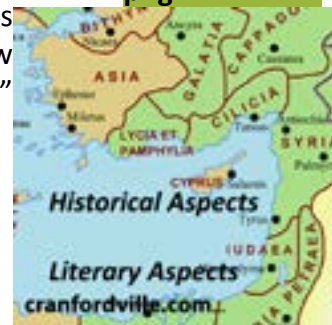
##### 2.2 Internal: Literary Structure

- 2.2.1 Develop an understanding of the wording.
- 2.2.2 Assess the literary arrangement of the text.

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But, first we need to see the original Greek text that we are analyzing. And also, it is good to hear the sounds of this original Greek text as it is being read aloud.

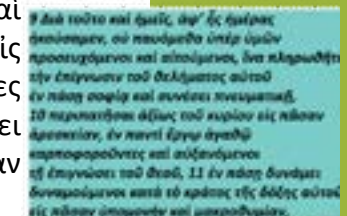
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9 Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ, 10 περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ, 11 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν.

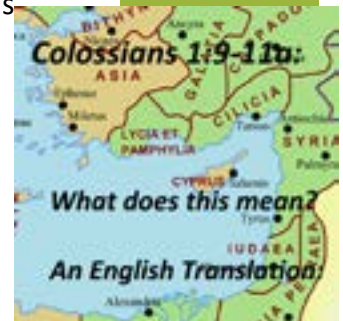
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Colossians 1:9-11a  
Original Greek Text:



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Now what is being said? Here is a very literal translation of this original text in English:

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GEg05.png\*



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9 Because of this, we also, from the day that we heard, do not cease praying for you and asking so that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 in order to walk

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worthy of the Lord in every pleasing, in every good deed bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, 11a in full power being enabled according to the might of His Glory for complete endurance and long-suffering,

This study will build on the foundation of the previous two pericopes in Colossians 1:1-2 and 1:3-8. In these studies we concluded that this document is in the form of an ancient Greek letter. It closely conforms in structure to the other letters in the New Testament traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. This letter was dictated to Timothy as the writing secretary while Paul was being held by the Romans in Caesarea (AD 57-60). The motivation for the writing of this letter came from the report brought to Paul while in prison from Epaphras. This servant of Christ had proclaimed the Apostolic Gospel to folks in the Lycus River Valley on the eastern side of the Roman province of Asia. The intent of the letter was to affirm the validity of this message by providing more details about it. Paul hoped that the Colossians would continue their allegiance to this Gospel and not be swayed by the alternative message being promoted by false teachers at work there.

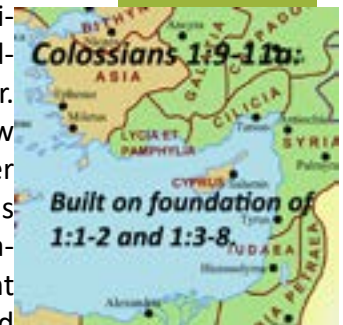
Now, let's take a close look at the various interpretive aspects that will enable us to develop a historical understanding of this passage in 1:9-11a. This will constitute our "then" understanding of the text. This will provide us with a solid basis for developing possible "now" applications of the text to our world. These applications we will explore in [Part Two: Exposition of the Text](#), which follows this study.

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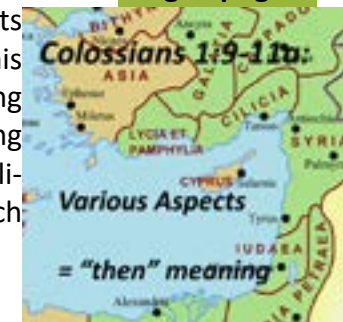
Colossians 1:9-11a  
English Translation:

9 Because of this, we also, from the day that we heard, do not cease praying for you and asking so that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 in order to walk worthy of the Lord in every pleasing, in every good deed bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, 11a in full power being enabled according to the might of His Glory for complete endurance and long-suffering.

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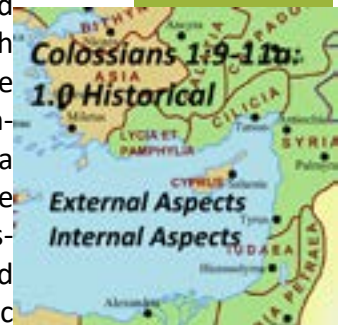
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### 1.0 HISTORICAL

The historical aspects revolve around the External Aspects and the Internal Aspects. The External Aspects then focus on both the creation of the document (Compositional Aspects) and the preservation of the document in subsequent centuries (Transcriptional Aspects). This is the history of the text itself as a document. The Internal Aspects focus on the history inside the text. Four perspectives will be examined to determine this history. There are the people, the places, the time references, and the events mentioned in the text. This will provide the basic factual data for a historical understanding of the text.

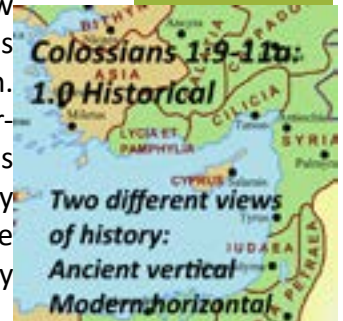
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One of the ongoing challenges here is the dilemma of working with two very different views of history. The dominant ancient view of history was vertical in its orientation. That is, history was the account of how the gods dealt with humans on the earth. Their interaction with one another became the basis for understanding the divine. Since the Renaissance, Western culture has viewed history primarily from a horizontal angle. That is, history is the story of human interaction with one another. The divine perspective doesn't properly belong to history, but to theology or religion.

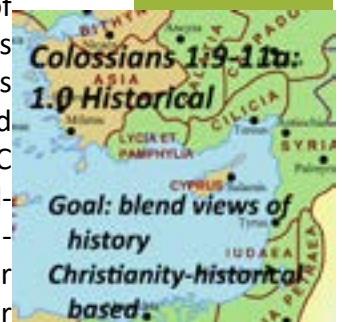
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In order to do biblical exegesis of a scripture text, these two approaches to history have to be blended together in a modified view of history. The sacred scripture nature of the ancient text makes such necessary for understanding the scripture text. Various approaches to doing this will be found in commentaries and journal articles. The approach that I have adopted in the BIC commentary project seeks diligently to find a workable blending of these two approaches to history. Christianity is a historically based religion, unlike most of the other religions in either the ancient or the modern world. With self-awareness of our religious starting point, we look at history as it relates to the text under consideration.

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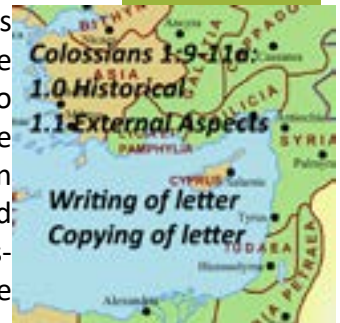
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### 1.1 External Aspects

Here we look closely at the history of the text, i.e., How it was created and then how well it was preserved? At this point, we work off of [the previously concluded perspectives](#) in the first two studies of this document. The ancient letter functioned in the first Christian century as the primary means of communication outside of face-to-face encounters. The letter largely functioned as the authoritative voice of the sender, who could not be physically present to speak to the recipients of the letter. When the letter sender identified himself by title in the Praescriptio rather than merely using his name, this title provided the basis for making demands to the letter sender. Thus, the more we can learn about the letter sender, the better our understanding will be. And also this applies to the letter recipient or recipients.

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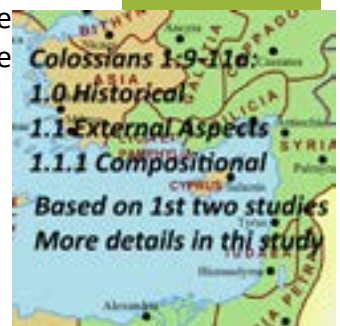


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#### 1.1.1 Compositional Aspects

Beyond what was concluded in the first two studies about the creation of this letter, let me flesh out some more details of the circumstances surrounding the creation of this letter.

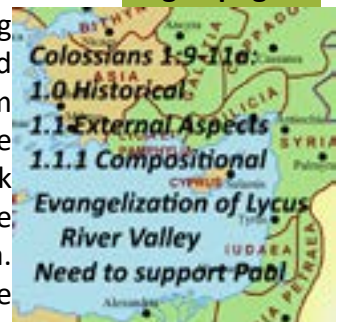
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When word reached the Lycus River Valley Christian groups that the Apostle Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and was now being held in custody by the Romans in Caesarea, they decided to send Epaphras -- and probably others also -- to Caesarea to give him support and assurances of their love for him. After making the rather short trip from Colossae to Caesarea within a three-week period, Epaphras arrived in Caesarea. Most likely this took place during the first of the two-plus years that Paul was in Caesarea. Local believers helped arrange permission for Epaphras to see Paul in the prison located in the governor's palace. What a meeting that must have been! Epaphras explained how God had blessed the

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preaching of the Apostolic Gospel he had learned from Paul years earlier while Paul was in Ephesus. Thriving groups of Christians had been formed in the three principle cities of the valley, Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae.

Sometime after Epaphras arrived in Caesarea, word reached Paul about the situation of Christianity in Ephesus. Also, the situation with Onesimus, the runaway slave who came to know Christ under Paul's ministry, developed to the point that he needed to be sent back home to Colossae and his owner Philemon. So decisions were made to create three separate letters that would be sent to Asia together. The Letter to the Ephesians was to be the "cover" letter that would lay background understanding for the other two letters to the Colossians and to Philemon. Timothy served as the writing secretary, and then as the leader of the group dispatched by Paul to carry these letters to Asia where all three would be read together in the assembled groups in the province of Asia. Epaphras should have been in that group going back to Asia, but, as is noted in Philemon 23, he had been taken into custody by the Romans at the time of the writing of this letter. Additionally, a fourth letter was also included in this group (cf. Col. 4:16). This Letter to the Laodiceans was not preserved along with the others, and has become one of the so-called lost letters of Paul. So, once all four letters were in finalized form, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, and others left for Asia in order to deliver these letters.

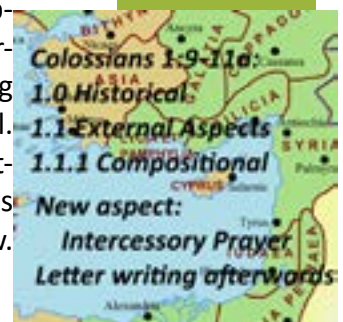
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The new aspect from 1:9-11a is the affirmation of an ongoing prayer ministry of intercession for the Colossians that began when Epaphras first made his report to Paul after he arrived in Caesarea. This report convinced Paul that God was genuinely moving among the Colossians, as it was based on the Apostolic Gospel. Also, in the wording of 1:9-11a, it becomes clear that the writing of Colossians took place sometime after Epaphras made his initial report to Paul. How much time elapsed we don't know. Probably it was a reasonably short period of time.

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### 1.1.2 Transcriptional Aspects

Once the group arrived at the destinations in Asia and presented the letters to the respective communities of faith, copies of each letter would be made for taking to the other groups across the province. Subsequently, copies would be made of the copies and so on over the coming centuries of time. By the first part of the second century collections of Paul's letters began to be made and were circulated to other communities of faith.

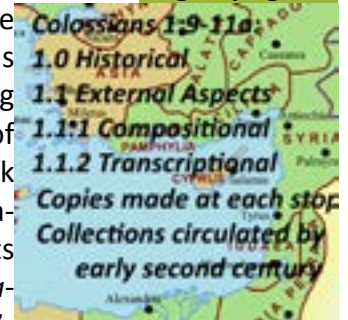
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Largely through the scholarly discipline of Form Criticism, we can trace the history of the copying of this text. Centrally, this is done by analyzing the relevant copies of Col. 1:9-11a among the some 5,600 plus currently available ancient Greek texts of the New Testament. The two presently dominant print Greek New Testaments contain a section called the "Critical Apparatus" that details the content of the relevant Greek manuscripts to this passage. The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* is currently in the fifth revised edition (UBS 5th rev). Its Critical Apparatus targets those working on translations of the New Testament into some modern language. Thus fewer variant readings are posted, but more details for each posting are given. On the other hand, the Critical Apparatus of the Nestle-Aland 28th revised edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* gives a complete listing of all variant readings, but with less details (NA 28th rev). It targets the scholarly community which is writing commentaries and doing in depth analysis of the text. The highly coded nature of both apparatuses requires specialized training in order to read them. Consequently, two publications seek to untangle this code in simplified explanations. First is Bruce Metzger, editor, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Second Edition, 1994). The second is based on the first and is Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006). This second publication especially targets Bible translators who have no training in Textual Criticism. Some of the commentary series, such as the *Word Biblical Commentary* series, also treat the variant readings

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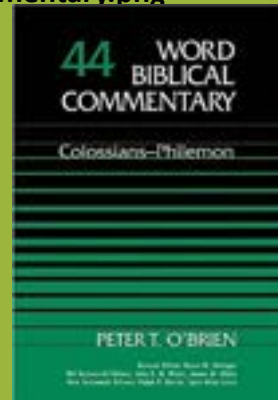
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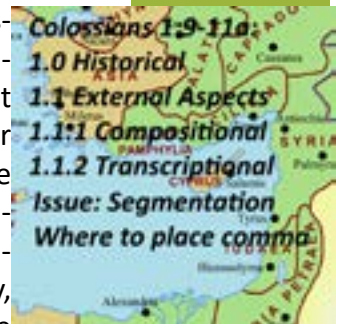
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as they surface in individual pericopes of text.

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We will lean heavily on these two textual commentaries for assessments of the variant readings. They will provide very simplified explanations of some highly technical materials. Note that the UBS 5th revised edition does not list any text variations for 1:9-11. It does, however, list a “Segmentation” issue. Since the original manuscript of this letter did not contain any punctuation marks or divisions of spacing between words, modern editors of printed Greek texts do include such insertions. Usually, no issue arises regarding how to do this properly. But here the issue arises over whether the prepositional phrase Μετὰ χαρᾶς, “with joy,” modifies either the preceding participle δυναμούμενοι, “being enabled.” Or, the subsequent participle εὐχαριστοῦντες, “giving thanks.”<sup>2</sup> An analysis of several printed Greek texts and modern translations reveals a very divided view over whether a period should be inserted after μακροθυμίαν, “long-suffering,” or not.<sup>3</sup> Its use in Phil. 1:4 (μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος, “with joy making mention in prayer,” favors the second option. Added to that is its closeness to the second participle. Thus we will treat the prepositional phrase Μετὰ χαρᾶς as connected to εὐχαριστοῦντες. The Critical Apparatus in the NA28th rev. edition also only notes this same issue.



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With this analysis, we have “established the text,” in the sense <sup>2</sup>“If a break is made before the words μετὰ χαρᾶς (with joy), as in the text, the words μετὰ χαρᾶς go with what follows and indicate the attitude one is to have when giving thanks, as in NRSV, ‘while joyfully giving thanks.’ If, however, the break is made after these words, μετὰ χαρᾶς go with what precedes and indicate the attitude one is to have while enduring and having patience, as in RSV, ‘for all endurance and patience with joy ...’ ”.

[Roger Omason, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 202]



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<sup>3</sup>Even when the discussion concerns the insertion of a period or not, such analysis fails to recognize the actual sentence which begins in verse nine and ends with verse twenty. In the Greek thought structure all of the material in these verses comprise a single expression of idea. This is clear with the main clause verb οὐ παύομεθα, “we do not stop,” in verse nine. The next main clause verse shows up in verse twenty-two, ἀποκατήλλαξεν, “he reconciled.



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of affirming the precise wording of this passage in the original Koine Greek. It is this text that we now can exegete with confidence that it represents the exact wording that was originally written.

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### 1.2 Internal Aspects

In distinction to the External Aspects, which examine the history of the text, the Internal Aspects probe the historical markers related to history embedded in the text itself. To be sure, at times the two perspectives will overlap one another. And Col. 1:9-11a is one such instance. But the two angles are sufficiently distinct so as to merit separate treatment.



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The internal history elements concluded in the first two studies provide the foundation upon which to add any historical allusions in 1:9-11a. In the Praescriptio, the letter senders are identified as Paul and Timothy. The letter was sent to the Christian community at Colossae. As soon as Paul learned about the situation in Colossae from the report given to him by Epaphras, he began expressing thanksgiving to God for them. This we learn from the Proem in 1:3-8. Now in the Intercession found in 1:9-11a, we learn that continual intercession for the Colossians by Paul and Timothy began at the same time as the prayers of thanksgiving. Let's explore this further.

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### 1.2.1 People

No mention by name of any individual or group surfaces in the text. But the personal pronoun ἡμεῖς, "we," stands close to the beginning of the sentence in a position of emphasis, as well as inherently emphasizing by being stated. This refers back to Paul and Timothy named in verse one. The resulting impact is very difficult to express in a modern language, but moves somewhat along the lines of "personally do not ourselves stop." Additionally, another personal pronoun ὑμῶν, "you," surfaces in the plural form and goes back to the reference to the Colossian brothers in verse two. Finally, the personal pronoun αὐτοῦ, "His," goes back to θεοῦ, "God's," in verse one. And then θεοῦ, "of God," is directly stated in verse ten. Within the essential

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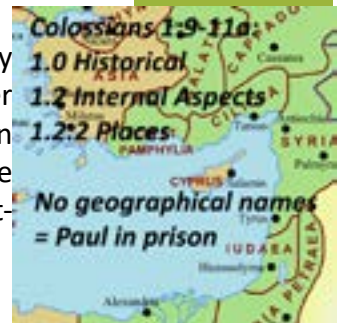
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structure of intercessory prayer, there are three individuals or groups involved: the one praying, the God being prayed to, and the individual or group being prayed for. All three of those are referenced in this prayer in 1:9-20.

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#### 1.2.2 Places

No geographical names are mentioned in this passage. But by implication, the location of these words as a part of the letter was where Paul was in prison at the time of its composition. In the first study, we identified this as most likely Caesarea in the Roman province of Judea on the eastern Mediterranean coastline.



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#### 1.2.3 Times

The temporal markers in this passage play off the Koine Greek present and aorist tense verbal expressions. The present tense verb παύομεθα es ongoing movement of time. Also the three present tense Greek παροπροσευχόμενοι, “praying,” αἰτούμενοι, “asking,” and δυναμούμενοι “enabled,” likewise emphasize continuous action. This same stretch captured in the aorist verb in the subjunctive mood, πληρωθῆτε, “may be filled.” The same specialized use of the aorist tense is present in the infinitive περιπατήσαι, “to walk.” This use is labeled the Culminative function of the aorist tense. It captures the entirety of a stretch of time and views it as a single event. But the more normal use of the aorist to reference a simple past event -- the Constative function -- is seen in the verb ἠκούσαμεν, “we heard.” It marks the starting point of the stretch of time affirmed in the passage. This period of time extends at least into the time of the writing of the letter and beyond into an indefinite future time.

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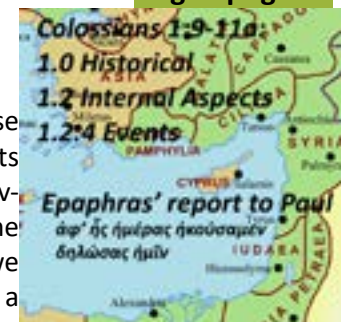


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#### 1.2.4 Events

The one event referenced in this text surfaces in the relative clause ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, “from the day that we heard.” It repeats ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην, “having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love,” in verse four. The simple Constative function of both the Aorist verb ἠκούσαμεν, “we heard,” and the aorist participle ἀκούσαντες, “having heard,” marks a previous moment of hearing something for the first time. This event

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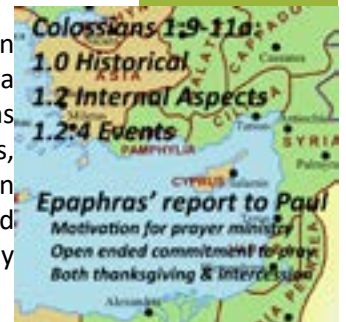
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is defined by the aorist participle δηλώσας ἡμῖν, “having shown us,” in verse eight. This event was the report made by Epaphras to Paul when he arrived in Caesarea to visit the apostle.

Based on that report, Paul and Timothy were motivated to begin an intercessory prayer ministry for the Colossians. And this was a serious, continuing pattern of praying for the Colossians that was continuing regularly at the time of the writing of the letter. Plus, the tense patterns make it clear that this prayer ministry was open ended and had no time limit imposed on it. Both thanksgiving and intercession for the Colossians by Paul and Timothy are especially highlighted in verses three through eleven.

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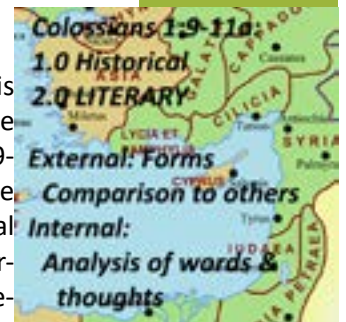


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### 2.0 LITERARY

Now we take a close look at the literary aspects of this passage. This supplements the historical aspects. With the External Aspects, we will compare detected literary forms and patterns in Colossians 1:9-11a with similar forms elsewhere in Paul's letters, as well as in the wider body of ancient Greek and Latin literature. With the Internal Aspects, we examined each Greek word and also how they are arranged grammatically. The end result will be increased data for developing a detailed historical picture of this letter.

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### 2.1 External: Literary Forms

Having already established that this document is in the form of an ancient Greek letter, we would expect to see some, if not all, of the sub-forms of such ancient letters: Praescriptio, Proem, Letter Body, and Conclusio. Indeed, these do surface in Colossians as follows: Praescriptio (1:1-2); Proem (1:3-8); Letter Body (1:9-4:6); and Conclusio (4:7-18).

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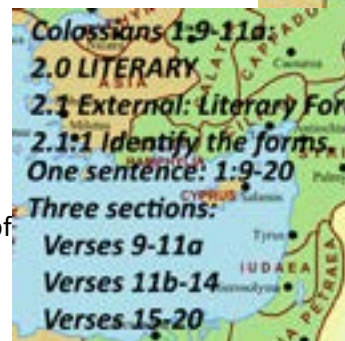


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### 2.1.1 Identify the literary forms

Thus Colossians 1:9-11a falls at the beginning of

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# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

Exposition: English  
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## Volume 15, Pericope 3

### Colossians 1:9-11a



# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY



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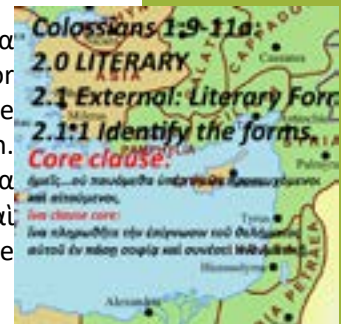
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the letter body. But as already determined, it is only the beginning section of the long sentence found in 1:9-20. Yet, this one sentence has three distinguishable sections in verses 9-11a; 11b-14, and 15-20. Its main clause is found in the first section. This establishes the basic theme of the sentence as an intercessory prayer.

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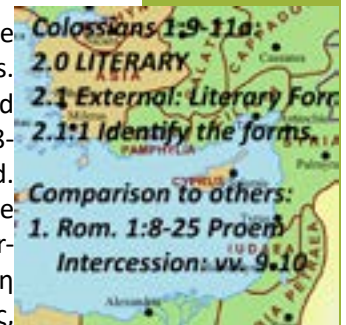
Note the core expression of the sentence: ἡμεῖς...οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, “we...do not cease for you praying and asking...”. The lengthy ἵνα clause both defines the content of this intercession as well as the goal of his intercession. It runs from the middle of verse 9 through verse 20. Its core is ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ, “so that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in full wisdom and spiritual understanding.”



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A careful search of the other letters in the New Testament that are attributed to Paul reveals several additional intercessory prayers. These include Romans 1:9-10 where Paul's intercession is that God might allow him to come to Rome. This is a part of the Proem in 1:8-25. Verses 11 through 20 amplify the nature of this request to God. Verse eight establishes this unit as a prayer of thanksgiving with the intercessory prayer inserted in verses nine and ten. The core intercession is πάντοτε ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου δεόμενος εἴ πως ἤδη ποτὲ εὐοδωθήσομαι ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, “always in my prayers asking if in some way I may now, at last, be blessed by God's will to come to you.”

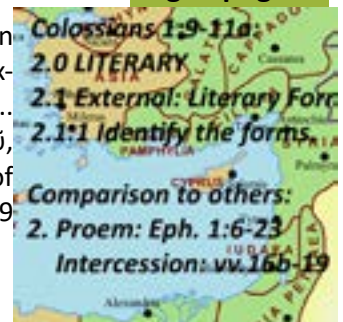
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In the lengthy Proem of Eph. 1:6-23, the prayer of thanksgiving in verse 15 merges into an intercessory prayer in 16b-19. Its core expression is μείαν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, ἵνα ὁ θεός... δώῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπίγνωσει αὐτοῦ, “making mention in my prayers, that God...may give you a spirit of wisdom and of disclosure in the knowledge of Him.” Verses 18 and 19 provide defining details of this core request made to God.

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# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

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## Volume 15, Pericope 3

### Colossians 1:9-11a



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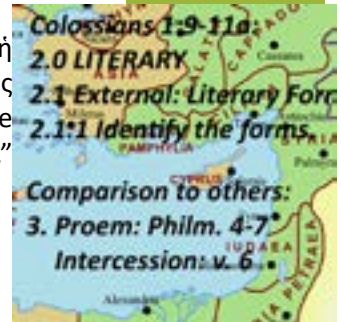
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In the Proem of Philemon 4-7, the intercession is verse six: ὅπως ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου ἐνεργῆς γένηται ἐν ἐπιγνώσει παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν εἰς Χριστόν, “that the sharing of your faith may be energized in the knowledge of every good deed that in us is for Christ.”

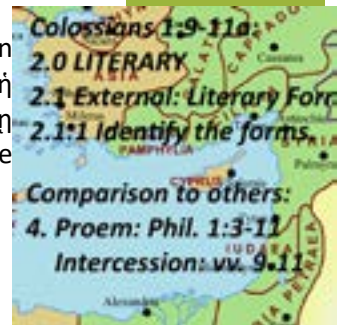
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In the Proem of Phil 1:3-11, the intercessory prayer is contained in verses nine through eleven. The core is Καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει, “And this I pray, that your love may yet more and more abound in knowledge and full insight.”

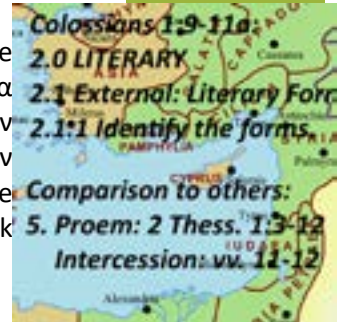
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In the Proem of 2 Thess 1:3-12, the intercessory prayer is found in the last two verses. Its core is in verse eleven: Εἰς ὃ καὶ προσευχόμεθα πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πληρώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει, “to this end, we always pray for you that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every good resolve and work of faith by His power.”

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### Colossians 1:9-11a



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What emerges from this analysis? Several insights surface. Some of them are as follows:

- (1) All of the intercessory prayers, except for Colossians, are a part of the Proem of the letters. Often they are a subsection of a sentence inside the Proem.
- (2) The content of the intercessory prayer is normally introduced by a ἵνα-clause.
- (3) The content of the intercessory prayers is customized to suit the particular situation of the targeted audience for each letter.

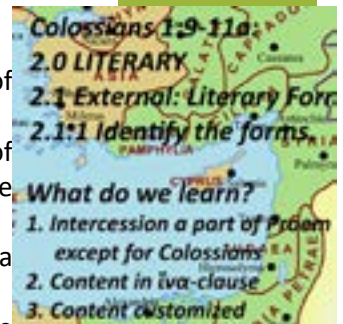
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How does Colossians compare to these other letters of Paul? Both similarities and differences exist in the comparison. The very long Greek sentence in verses nine through twenty sets off the Colossians material from the other Pauline letters. It stands distinct from the previous single sentence in verses 3 through 8, which stands as the Proem of the letter. Yet through repetition of phrases and words, the intercessory prayer in 9 through 20 maintains connections to the first to pericopes in verses 1-2 and 3-8. Note that these are largely relational concepts, like “for you praying,” in verse three (περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι) and in verse nine (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι). Also note this in ἀκούσαντες, “having heard” (verse 4), and ἠκούσαμεν, “we heard” (verse nine). In a letter from one who did not know its targeted audience personally, one would naturally expect efforts to develop a strong bond of friendship. It is important to note that most of the repetition occurs in the first section (vv. 9-11a) of this long sentence. In the second and third units, very little repetition takes place. Instead, new conceptual thrusts are being set forth.

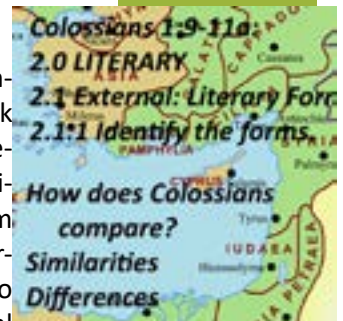
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In relation to the other intercessory prayers in Paul’s letters, there exists a basically common way to introduce the prayer. The subordinate conjunction ἵνα, “in order that,” is used dominantly to set up the intercessory prayer. Only in Romans and Philemon do we find alternative ways of setting up the prayer. But this is understandable since the nature of the petition to God in Romans is focused on Paul himself. And the personal nature of Philemon is reflected in an alternative construction setting up the intercession. Although these similarities in

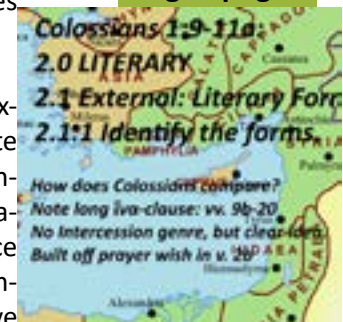
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## Volume 15, Pericope 3

### Colossians 1:9-11a



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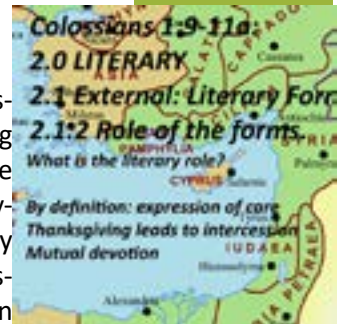
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grammatical structure exist, it is doubtful that enough commonality exists to label this a separate genre. Yet, the concept of an intercessory prayer is certainly present not just in Paul's letters but elsewhere in the New Testament. The root idea is embedded in the prayer wish in the Greeting (v. 2, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν, "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father."). And is then repeated in the Benedictio at the end of the letter, ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν, "Grace be with you" (4:18). This mimicked early Christian patterns of worship in invoking the blessings of God upon the worshipers, both at the beginning and end of their meetings.

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#### 2.1.2 Analyze the role of the literary forms

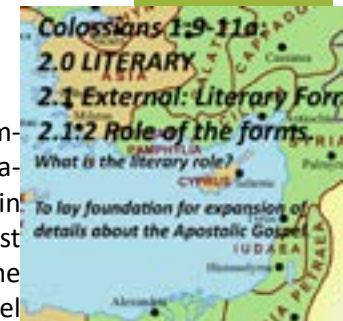
What is the literary role of Colossians 1:9-20? By definition, intercessory prayer is an expression of concern and care for the one being prayed for. When the situation is like the one in Colossians, where Paul and Timothy did not personally know the congregation of believers at Colossae, the very strong affirmation of ongoing intercessory prayers reflects a level of concern well above the normal. The expression of thanksgiving lays a foundation for the intercession. And then the devotion to Paul by the Colossians provides motivation for this ongoing ministry, as well as for the action of composing the letter in order to encourage them.



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A lot of the literary function of this intercessory prayer beyond affirming Paul and Timothy's concern for the Colossians is to lay a foundation for the Apostolic Gospel that would be expanded substantially in the letter body. The concepts of both God the Father and Jesus Christ as Redeemer will be developed in greater detail. Also, throughout the letter body Paul's contention for the message of the Apostolic Gospel will be developed either in direct contrast to that of the false teachers in Colossae or else in indirect allusion to aspects of this false teaching. His intercession in 1:9-20 that God would fill the Colossians with knowledge of the divine will signals his hope that they will come to full recognition of the Apostolic Gospel as the exclusive path to salvation.

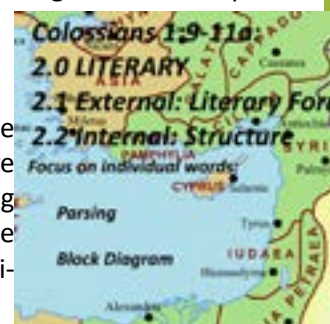


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#### 2.2 Internal: Literary Structure

Now we turn our focus to the individual words of the text. To parse each word will help unfold the picture of how the words are arranged together in expressing the ideas found in the text. Then we can grasp the thought flow of ideas in the passage. This will be vi-



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sually presented via a Block Diagram of the text. Note that on [the homepage for pericope three](#) in volume 15 of the BIC Commentary, separate files of the Parsing and Block Diagramming of this text are available.

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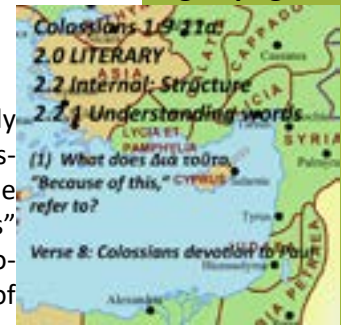


### 2.2.1 Develop an understanding of the words.

In this video we will focus on observations that emerge from the parsing of each word. Some issues arise.

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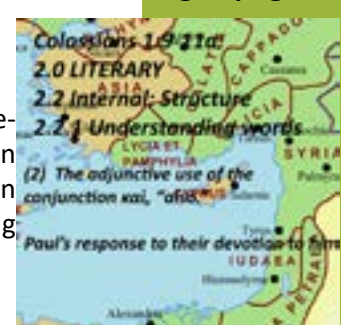
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(1) What does  $\Delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$  τοῦτο, “Because of this,” refer to? Most likely the antecedent of this demonstrative pronoun is verse 8 and the assertion that Epaphras had shown Paul and Timothy how much the Colossians loved and appreciated the apostle. It is “because of this” that motivates Paul and Timothy to pray without ceasing for the Colossians. The alternative, less likely antecedent is the thanksgiving of Paul and Timothy (verses 3-8).

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(2) The adjunctive use of the conjunction  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ , “also,” links this statement back to Paul’s discovery of the devotion of the Colossians in verse eight. His praying for them is his response to their appreciation of him. It carries the sense of “just as you pray for me, I am praying for you.”



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(3) The relative clause ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, "from the day that we heard," marks the beginning point of this ongoing prayer ministry for the Colossians. It echoes ἀκούσαντες, "having heard," in verse four. And also it links to δηλώσας ἡμῖν, "he showed us," in verse 8. This adds another detail to the impact of the report that Epaphras gave to Paul upon his arrival in Caesarea.



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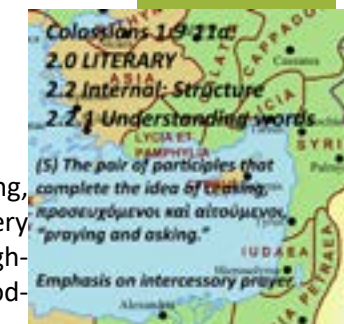
(4) The verb παύω, with the general meaning of pause, cease, or stop, is here used in the intensive function of the middle voice to place special emphasis on the subject of the verse ἡμεῖς. This is in addition to the emphasis inherent in stating the subject with ἡμεῖς. Paul emphatically stresses this ongoing intercessory prayer ministry to the Colossians.



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(5) The pair of participles that complete the idea of ceasing, προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, "praying and asking," set up the very focused emphasis on intercessory prayer. Note the unusually highlighted emphasis here. This is not easily communicated in most modern languages.



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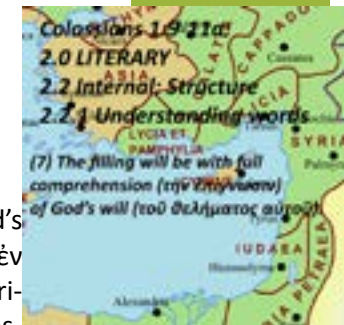


(6) The ἵνα-clause in verses 9b-20 states both the objective of his intercessory prayers as well as the content of them. It follows a common way of grammatically introducing an intercessory prayer in the letters of Paul. But the specification of the core content is unique to

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Colossians: ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, “so that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will.” The passive voice verb assumes that God will do the filling.

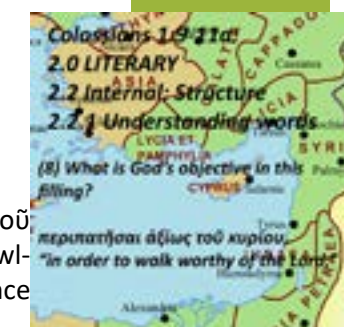
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(7) The filling will be with full comprehension (τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν) of God's will (τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). The context of this filling is stated as ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ, “in full understanding and spiritual insight.” How does each filling deepen our knowledge? By increasing our wisdom and insight.

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(8) What is God's objective in this filling? περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου, “in order to walk worthy of the Lord.” Our increased knowledge produces a higher quality lifestyle that reflects God's presence and activity in our lives. Knowledge leads to action.

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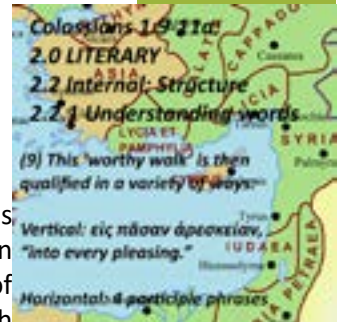
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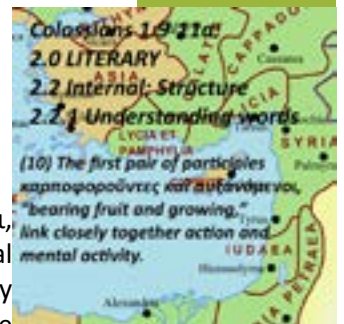
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(9) This 'worthy walk' is then qualified in a variety of ways. Its extent is *εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν*, "into every pleasing." This unusual expression defines a lifestyle that makes God happy with us. The parameters of this filling are defined by four participle phrases that extend through verse twenty: *καρποφοροῦντες*, "bearing fruit," *αὐξανόμενοι*, "growing," *δυναμούμενοι*, "being enabled," and *εὐχαριστοῦντες*, "giving thanks." In this study, we will cover the first three of these participles.



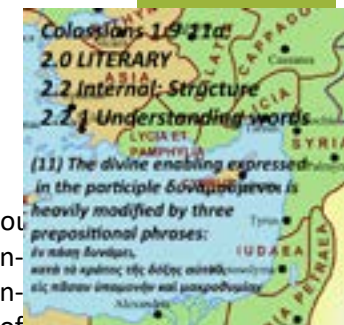
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(10) The first pair of participles *καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι*, "bearing fruit and growing," link closely together action and mental activity. We become fruit producers *ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ*, "in every good deed." We also grow *τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ*, "in our knowledge of God." This text is woven closely together grammatically in a chiasmic pattern: AB//CA' modifier|participle||participle|modifier.



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(11) The divine enabling expressed in the participle *δυναμούμενοι* is heavily modified by three prepositional phrases. Extent of the enabling: *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει*, "with full power." The measure of the enabling: *κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*, "according to the strength of His glory." The purpose of the enabling: *εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν*, "for full endurance and long-suffering."



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### Colossians 1:9-11a



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In this portrait of the Christian life painted here by Paul, we gain deeper insight into what it means to be a Christian as defined in the Apostolic Gospel. This was the kind of Christianity that the Colossians were becoming, based on this Gospel message. It was not the picture of Christianity being set forth by the false teachers at Colossae. Epaphras in his preaching of this Apostolic Gospel to them had helped the Colossians make a good beginning in authentic Christian experience. Paul and Timothy's passionate intercessory prayer for them was that God would fill them with the understanding of how He wanted them to live day by day within the parameters of this Gospel message. In order to help them achieve this, Paul was motivated to write the letter to them as an amplification of more details about this kind of Christianity. This letter, he hoped, would strengthen their resolve to stay committed to this Gospel message.

#### 2.2.2 Assess the literary arrangement of the text.

From the above analysis of words and phrases in the text, we begin to see the development of thought in this passage. That picture can be presented in a clear, direct manner through a Block Diagram of the passage. This will visually present the relationship between the primary and secondary ideas found in the grammar of the Greek text. Two diagrams will be presented. First, that of the original Greek text. And then of a literal translation of this Greek text. This second diagram will maintain the grammar structure of the original Greek, even if in violation of the grammar of the translation language. Note also that these diagrams are available on the BIC1503 homepage at cranfordville.com.

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Observations about the Greek diagram:

1. The #2 designates the second sentence so far in the letter. The sentence extends through verse twenty. The core expression is very emphatic with the stated subject and the intensive middle voice form of the verb.

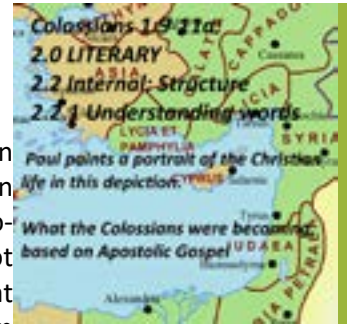
1:9

Διὰ τοῦτο  
καὶ  
ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν,

2

ἡμεῖς...οὐ παυόμεθα

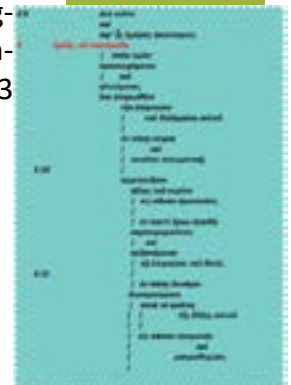
| ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν  
προσευχόμενοι  
| καὶ  
αἰτούμενοι,



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2. Note that the first three modifiers refer to past events prior to the beginning of the prayer ministry. Or else up to the beginning point of this prayer ministry.

3. The modifiers following the main clause verb παύομεθα refer to actions growing out of the beginning of this prayer ministry.

4. Note how the various modifiers are grouped together.

**BIC1503EAEg58.mp3\***

Observations about the English diagram.

1. The presentation of primary and secondary ideas is based on the syntax of the Greek text.

2. The ἵνα-clause (“so that”) is the most qualified secondary idea in the entire sentence.

3. Note the use of modifiers to enclose units of thought together.

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ἵνα πληρωθῆτε  
 τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν  
 | τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ  
 |  
 ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ  
 | καὶ  
 | συνέσει πνευματικῆ,  
 |  
 περιπατῆσαι  
 ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου  
 | εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν,  
 |  
 | ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ  
 καρποφοροῦντες  
 | καὶ  
 αὐξανόμενοι  
 | τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ,  
 |  
 | ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει  
 δυναμούμενοι  
 | κατὰ τὸ κράτος  
 | | τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ  
 | |  
 | εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν  
 | καὶ

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μακροθυμίαν,

1:9

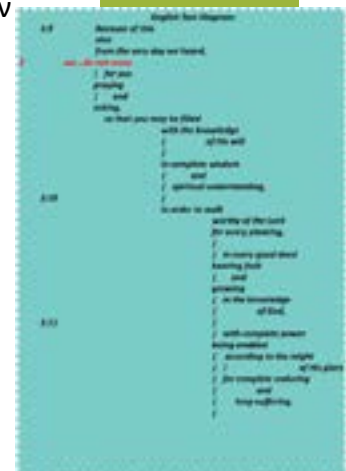
Because of this  
also

2

**we...do not cease**

| for you  
praying  
| and  
asking,

### English Text Diagram:



# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

Exposition: English  
Storyboard

## Volume 15, Pericope 3

### Colossians 1:9-11a



# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY



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For example, “complete” and “spiritual.” In Greek they function as ‘book ends’ to bracket off unitary ideas. Also the two prepositional phrases with “in” surrounding the pair of participles.

4. When taken together the elements of the “so that” clause paint a portrait of what it means to be a Christian.

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1:10

so that you may be filled  
with the knowledge  
| of His will  
in complete wisdom  
| and  
| spiritual understanding,  
|  
in order to walk

worthy of the Lord  
for every pleasing,

|  
| in every good deed  
bearing fruit  
| and  
growing

| in the knowledge  
| of God,

| with complete power  
being enabled

| according to the might BIC1503E-  
| of His glory GEg59.png\*

| for complete

enduring

| and  
| long-suf-

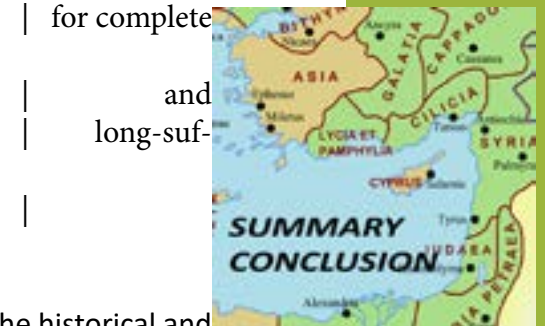
fering,

|

#### SUMMARY CONCLUSION

In recapping our study, let me highlight both the historical and the literary aspects of the passage.

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# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY

Exposition: English  
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## Volume 15, Pericope 3

### Colossians 1:9-11a



# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS COMMENTARY



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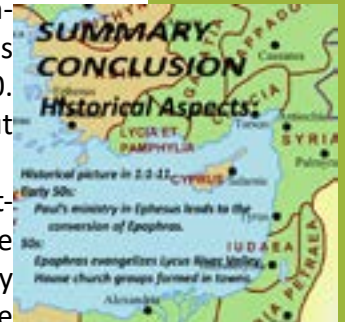
Historical Aspects:

The historical picture emerges step by step in the letter, beginning with the Praescriptio in 1:1-2. The Proem in 1:3-8 adds more details, and so does the Intercessory Prayer in 1:9-20. And it will continue to develop with added details throughout the letter body in 1:9-4:6, and in the Conclusio (4:7-18).

Here's the picture thus far in the first eleven verses of the letter. In the early 50s of the first Christian century, the apostle Paul spent over two years at Ephesus on the third missionary journey. This capital of the Roman province of Asia became the home base for the spread of the Gospel message over the entire province. Sometime during that period, Epaphras, a native son of Colossae, came under the influence of the Apostolic Gospel proclaimed by the apostle Paul. He was converted to Christianity, and returned home to the Lycus River Valley on the eastern side of the province, some 100 or so miles east of Ephesus. He began evangelizing the towns in the valley with considerable success. Christian communities were established in Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colossae. House church groups were formed including the one that met in the home of Philemon, who lived in Colossae. This ministry of Epaphras continued on for several years.

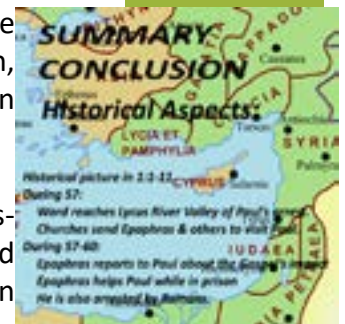
Sometime around 57 AD, word reached Colossae that the apostle Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and was now being held in custody by the Romans at Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. The Christian groups in the Lycus River Valley decided to send Epaphras and others to Caesarea in order to affirm their devotion and support of him. The group traveled the rather short distance (about three weeks at most) from the valley to where Paul was being held in custody. With the help of local Christians, Epaphras gained permission to visit Paul in the prison located in the governor's palace in Caesarea. In the initial visit, Epaphras gave a detailed report of how God was moving in the Lycus River Valley. He also stressed how much the believers there loved the apostle and wanted to support him in his battle with his accusers. Epaphras would be

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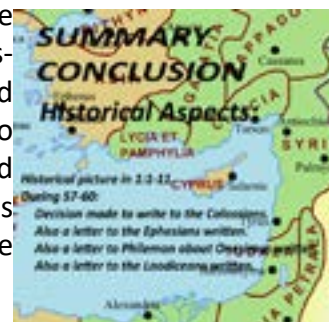
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### Colossians 1:9-11a



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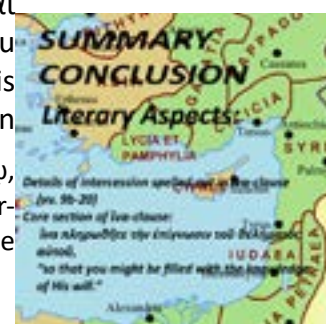
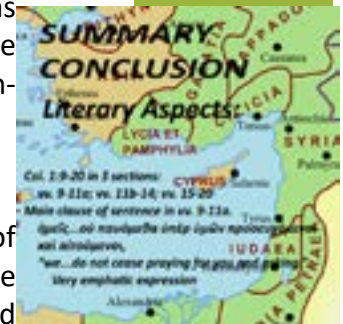
available to Paul for whatever he needed.

Sometime after this initial visit, the decision was made to compose a letter to the church at Colossae. Timothy served as Paul's writing secretary and took down Paul's dictation of the letter. During this same general time, word also reached Paul from Ephesus about needs in that congregation. Additionally, the situation with the runaway slave Onesimus who had been converted under Paul's limited ministry came to a head with the decision that he needed to return back to his owner, Philemon, in Colossae. So three letters were composed during the same period of time to be carried back to Asia together. Unfortunately, Ephras had attracted the suspicions of the Romans and was taken into custody along with Paul. Additionally, a fourth letter was composed to the church at Laodicea and was included in the group of letters. It stands now as one of the lost letters of Paul that did not make it into the New Testament. Ephesians was designed to serve as the "cover letter" for the other three letters. As each was read in the various assembled groups, the designation of recipients in Ephesians had been left blank and would be filled in orally by the one reading the letters to the particular assembly of Christians.<sup>4</sup> In all likelihood, Timothy was the leader of this group sent out by Paul to these churches. He clearly would have been in the best position to explain the contents of the letters to the different groups in Asia.

#### Literary Aspects:

From the comparison of the parsing and the block diagram of 1:9-11a, some insights emerge about the thought structure and the flow of ideas in the passage. This text is the first third of a long Greek sentence extending from verse nine through verse twenty. This beginning section in verses nine through eleven contains the foundational declaration of the entire sentence: ἡμεῖς... οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, "we...do not cease praying for you and asking." Everything else in the sentence is built off this grammatical foundation. This main

<sup>4</sup>The designation in Eph. 1:1, τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, "to those in Ephesus," does not show up in the earlier manuscript copies of this letter. This signals the original 'cover letter' status of the document.



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Colossians 1:9-11a



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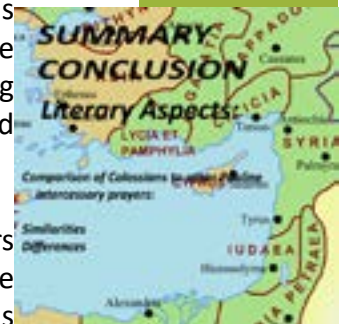
clause is structured as a very emphatic assertion of the intercessory prayer ministry by Paul and Timothy for the Colossians. It began with the hearing of Epaphras' report to Paul (ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν), and was in part a response to their devotion to him (καὶ).

The details of what they were asking God to do at Colossae are spelled out in the lengthy ἵνα-clause, beginning in the middle of verse nine and continuing through verse twenty. The core structure of this clause is ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, "so that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will." A divine filling of the believers with a greater understanding of God's will is the main prayer request for the Colossians. The subsequent details fill in what this request is about. Very crucial is the larger goal of this filling as stated in the purpose infinitive phrase περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου, "in order to walk worthy of the Lord." Everything else in the ἵνα-clause through verse twenty plays off this infinitive phrase in verse ten. In ancient literature, "to walk" is a figure of speech referring to living day by day. The amplification of this walk is developed from two angles. First is the vertical dimension: εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, "in full pleasing" of God. Then four participle phrases define the boundaries of this walk: καρποφοροῦντες, "bearing fruit"; αὐξανόμενοι, "growing"; δυναμούμενοι, "being enabled"; and εὐχαριστοῦντες, "giving thanks." This fourth qualifier of our walk covers verses twelve through twenty, and will be the focus of our next study in Colossians. What Paul paints here in the ἵνα-clause is a portrait of a true Christian. This understanding comes out of the Apostolic Gospel that Epaphras had preached to the Colossians.

A comparison of Colossian 1:1-20 to the other existing letters in the package produced for the churches in Asia reveals some interesting insights. Both Paul and Timothy are identified as senders of the two letters destined for Colossae, while only Paul is listed in Ephesians. In the two letters intended for groups of people, Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will. But in the personal letter to Philemon, the title identified Paul as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. The greetings in all three letters are almost identical. All contain "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." Ephesians and Philemon add "and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Proems in Colossians and Philemon center on thanksgiving to God for the re-

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Colossians 1:9-11a



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ipients, while Ephesians emphasizes praise to God. In Ephesians and Philemon, the intercessory prayer is embedded in the Proem, while in Colossians it transitions to the letter body in a separate and much longer expression. Thus both similarities and distinctives surface in such a comparison.

Can we find something to preach and teach in Colossians 1:9-11a? I suspect that our dilemma will be in finding too much to share in this passage for a single sermon or teaching moment.

The idea of intercessory prayer, which dominates this text, should be a good starting point for application. This first section of the Greek sentence in verses nine through eleven is loaded with a variety of rich ideas that a modern audience needs to hear. In Part Two: Exposition of this text, our next study, we will explore ways of applying this text in a modern setting.

*The End*

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