

# Hyperlinks to Topics

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# Volume 15 Colossians 1.3-8 Exposition



English Edition

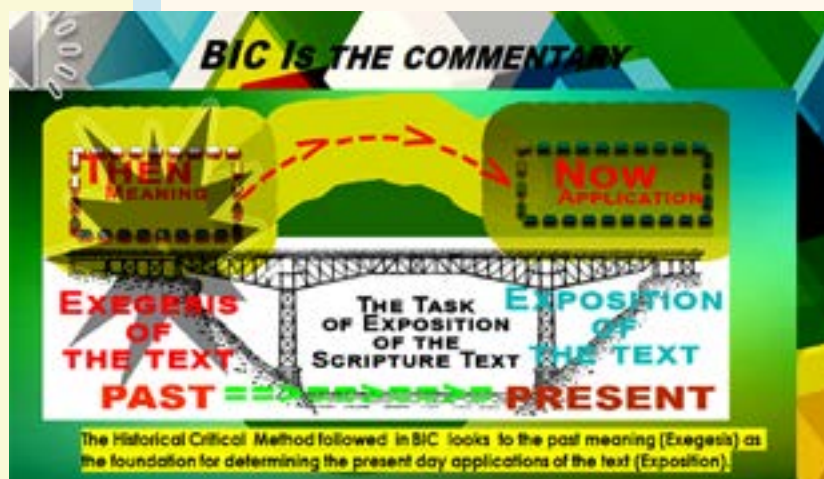
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## INTRODUCTION

The term 'exposition' is used in the BIC commentary project to refer to the contemporary application(s) of the scripture text to the life of the targeted listeners as this scripture passage is being explained. It is built exclusively upon the foundation of the prior exegesis of the passage. The historical meaning of the text establishes the boundaries of potential applications of the scripture passage. Within these established limits, the range of relevant applications of the passage are rather extensive. But finding legitimate applications is not the easiest aspect of the process.

A central hermeneutical principle is important to follow here. A commonly used label for this is 'analogy of scripture.'<sup>1</sup> In simple terms, the more alike the modern 'A major bridge across the historical-cultural gap is provided by analogies between the church Paul addressed and the church today. These analogies are not figments of our imagination, for they exist by virtue of the fact that there is basically but one church and but one Word of God. Preachers, therefore, need not construct analogies but uncover existing ones. This search requires a thorough understanding of both the church addressed by Paul and the church today. It requires cognizance of the question behind the text—the question to which Paul responded. [Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching from Paul Today," ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,



situation, being addressed, is to the ancient historical situation in the scripture text, the simpler and more direct the application. Conversely, the greater the distance between the 'then' and the 'now' meanings, the less applicational certainty there is. If no logical connection between the scripture text and some modern problem can be found, then the passage should never be used to address this particular modern situation.

The modern interpreter of the text must be aware of both his world and that of the text. The text must not be 'bent into shape' in order to force it to address the modern issues. Success in making legitimate connections comes about both with a lot of training and a lot of artistic skills. The guidance

1993), 741.]



of the Holy Spirit here is very important.<sup>2</sup>

Now, let's seek to find legitimate applications of Col. 1:3-8 to our religious life today. The nature of the proposed actions listed below are not designed to generate a long listing of potential applications. Instead, they are intended to immerse the interpreter in several creative actions which can produce understood applications. Such conclusions then need to be carefully validated against the exegetical boundaries established in the part one exegesis.

### **1.0 Identify the Central Idea of the Text**

Here the goal is to state in a concise, grammatical sentence the perceived core idea of the scripture text.<sup>3</sup> The initial C.I.T. Statement should reflect clearly the derived historical meaning of the scripture passage. The part one exegesis of the text provides the boundaries for this perception. It also establishes the boundaries for potential applications of the passage to a modern audience.

But the second C.I.T. statement will shift emphasis to the perceived spiritual needs of the modern audience. Careful reflection of those needs comes out of thorough understanding of both individual needs and the collective needs of the group being addressed. Find

<sup>2</sup>For more detailed guidelines on these analytical steps, see "Appendix 5: Steps to a Literary Structural Analysis of the Greek Text," *Learning Biblical Koine Greek*, volume 35 of the Biblical Insights Commentary at cranfordville.com: <https://cranfordville.com/gkgrma05.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>The starting point, as well a summary point, for understanding the ideas in a text is the block diagram of the passage. Start with [the original Greek text](#) diagram, and then convert it [into your language](#).

one or more of these needs that fall within the general limits of the first C.I.T. statement. Be careful to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit especially close at this point. Your second C.I.T. statement will stand as the connecting bridge between the 'then' and the 'now' meanings of the text. It should establish the direct biblical authority for your sermon or teaching plan that enables the voice of God to be heard out of the passage addressing real needs in the lives of the audience. If you're off target here, your message will end up being just your voice rather than God's voice being heard. You will discover over time that such preaching or teaching quickly degenerates into preoccupation with the delivery of the message far more than with the content of the message. That's a recipe for squeezing the spiritual life out of a group, rather for healthy nourishing of it. A risky but important question to ask yourself: At the end of the message will the audience be more impressed with my delivery? Or, will they be meditating on the challenge to move forward in their spiritual journey?

Now, what about the Proem of Col. 1.3-8? First, how can the core historical meaning of the passage be summarized effectively in a C.I.T. statement? Here is one approach.

**Paul and Timothy affirmed regularly to God their profound gratitude for the Colossian believers in how they are living out their conversion commitment to God through Christ.**

Remember several important conclusions from the part one exegesis of this text. The single sentence



in Greek is in the form of a prayer of thanksgiving. The prayer was being consistently prayed to God since Epaphras first reported to Paul the circumstances at Colossae. Their thanksgiving was focused upon the genuine spiritual commitment made during Epaphras' initial ministry among them. The emerging Christian communities in the Lycus River Valley had a true apostolic Gospel foundation. Their commitment was being reflected in their faith and love which led to growing hope for eternity. From that conversion beginning some two to five years prior to Epaphras' report to the apostle Paul, they consistently developed and matured in their Christian faith. Paul and Timothy were profoundly grateful to God to hear such good news about the impact of the Gospel there.

Now what about possible connecting links of this to a modern audience? Even more clearly than in the Prae-scriptio, the theme of salvation is central to the Proem of Colossians. Via the report of Epaphras that Paul utilizes here in verses 3b-8, we note two aspects that the apostle felt crucial. The Colossians made a solid beginning in receiving the Gospel message as the Word of divine Truth. This acceptance revolved around their faith, love, and hope. This triad defines their acceptance.

But the second part centers on a life changing transformation which has continued over the several years from beginning to the time of Epaphras' report to the apostle Paul. That acceptance is further defined as deep understanding of God's grace: ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 6). The use of the Greek present tense with an emphasis on continuing action to characterize this in between period from start to the moment of Epaphras' report underscores a legitimate

Christian commitment that continues to develop over time. Note τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, "is being laid up for you in Heaven," (v. 5). Also τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς "which is present in you," ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον, "is bearing fruit and growing," (v.6).

This perspective suggests some possible connecting links between the 'then' and the 'now' meanings. Topics such as a strong beginning, how to know whether the Gospel is real, the critical role of living the Christian life, etc. -- such ideas possess clear relevancy to Christianity in the modern world. Additionally, the necessity of a Gospel preaching having the right message comes to mind from this passage. Such themes could be developed from either a doctrinal or an ethical vantage point. All depends upon the anticipated audience for your message. What do they most need to hear from this text?

For the sake of illustration, let's assume a modern seminary chapel service as the intended audience. Here you are preaching to a gathered assembly of young people preparing to become leaders in church life as pastors and church staff members. Let's assume they don't need to be informed as they need to be motivated to make their leadership roles conform to the model found in this passage. Now we are ready to write out the second C.I.T. statement defining the connection of this text to our audience. Here is one possibility.

**Genuine Christian leadership exemplifies the model of leadership given by Paul and Epaphras to the Colossians.**



## 2.0 Develop an Exegetical Outline of the Text<sup>4</sup>

This outline is based on the block diagram of the scripture text.<sup>5</sup> [Col. 1:3-8](#), is highlighted with the core elements in bold black print, and the expansion elements in regular black print. The singular core statement in this one sentence of vv. 3-8 is the first three Greek word: Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ, “we thank God.” Everything else represents expansions attached in some way to these beginning words.

First, God is qualified by πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> This is a rel-

<sup>3</sup>For more detailed guidelines on these analytical steps, see “Appendix 5: Steps to a Literary Structural Analysis of the Greek Text,” *Learning Biblical Koine Greek*, volume 35 of the Biblical Insights Commentary at cranfordville.com: <https://cranfordville.com/gkgrma05.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>For the diagram of the Greek text see [Diagram of the Proem](#). For the English language version, see [Diagram of Col. 1.3-8](#). A slight difference exists between the two that illustrates a dual function of one of the relative clauses in the sentence.

<sup>6</sup>The reading in the text has rather narrow manuscript support, but it appears to account best for the origin of the other readings. In order to avoid the very unusual joining of these two nouns, some copyists inserted the definite article τῷ (the) before the noun πατρί and others inserted the conjunction καί (and) between these two nouns. (See also the comments on vv. 12 and 3:17). For reasons of style or grammar in the receptor language, it may be necessary to add the definite article with the noun “Father.” For example, “we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (NRSV).

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of*

actively common expression in the Pauline documents of the New Testament, as well as elsewhere in the NT.<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere in Colossians, God as Father is addressed as “our Father” (1.2), or as “the Father” (3.17). As the Father of Christ, a special relationship is affirmed within the Trinity.

*Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 410.]

<sup>7</sup>πατήρ as Father of Jesus Christ

α. in Jesus’ witness concerning himself ὁ πατήρ μου Mt 11:27a; 20:23; 25:34; 26:29, 39, 42, 53; Lk 2:49 (see ὁ ἄγος and Goodsp., Probs. 81–83); 10:22a; 22:29; 24:49; J 2:16; 5:17, 43; 6:40 and oft. in J; Rv 2:28; 3:5, 21. ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρός μου 2 Cl 12:6 in an apocryphal saying of Jesus. ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν (τοῖς) οὐρανοῖς Mt 7:21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19. ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ οὐράνιος 15:13; 18:35 (Just., A I, 15, 8). Jesus calls himself the Human One (Son of Man), who will come ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρός αὐτοῦ 16:27; Mk 8:38. Abs. ὁ πατήρ, πάτερ Mt 11:25, 26; Mk 14:36 (s. GSchelbert, FZPhT 40, ’93, 259–81; response ERuckstuhl, *ibid.* 41, ’94, 515–25; response Schelbert, *ibid.* 526–31); Lk 10:21ab; 22:42; 23:34, 46 (all voc.); J 4:21, 23ab; 5:36ab, 37, 45; 6:27, 37, 45, 46a, 65 and oft. in J. Father and Son stand side by side or in contrast Mt 11:27bc; 24:36; 28:19; Mk 13:32; Lk 10:22bc; J 5:19–23, 26; 1J 1:3; 2:22–24; 2J 9; B 12:8. WLoftthouse, Vater u. Sohn im J: ThBl 11, ’32, 290–300.

β. in the confession of the Christians π. τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Ro 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3a; Eph 1:3; **Col 1:3**; 1 Pt 1:3. π. τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ 2 Cor 11:31. Cp. 1 Cor 15:24; Hb 1:5 (2 Km 7:14); Rv 1:6; 1 Cl 7:4; IEph 2:1; ITr ins 12:2; MPol 14:1; AcPl Ha 2, 33; 6, 34; AcPlCor 2:7 (cp. Just., D. 30, 3; 129, 1 al.).

[William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 788.]



Next comes three temporal modifiers attached to the verb Εὐχαριστοῦμεν. These are πάντοτε, “always,” προσευχόμενοι, “praying,” and ἀκούσαντες, “having heard.” The adverb πάντοτε defines giving thanks as something done consistently. It is closely connected to προσευχόμενοι, “praying.” As Paul prays for them he consistently gives thanks for the Colossians, περὶ ὑμῶν. The starting point of giving thanks came with Paul hearing a report from Epaphras about the Colossians and is noted by the Aorist adverbial temporal participle ἀκούσαντες, “after having heard.” This becomes elaborated in verses 4-8 in greater detail. Some see this unit as a digression to the emphasis upon praying, which Paul returns to beginning in verse nine. But the emphasis upon praying in vv. 9-11 is upon intercessory prayer rather than on thanksgiving. This represents a step forward to a new emphasis, rather than a return to the earlier emphasis on thanksgiving.

Off of the block diagram can then come the following exegetical outline. This is not an exclusive outline. Instead, it represents but one way of summarizing the text.

- I. Paul regularly gave thanks to God through Jesus Christ, v. 3**
  - A. His praying affirmed Christ as God's Son.**
  - B. His praying took place consistently.**
  - C. His praying centered on the Colossians.**
- II. Paul regularly gave thanks to God for what was happening among the Colossians, vv. 4-8.**
  - A. His thanksgiving began with hearing of the faith, love, and hope of the Colossians, vv. 4-5a.**
  - B. His thanksgiving centered on their continuing acceptance of the true Gospel, vv. 5b-6**

**C. His thanksgiving came out of Epaphras' report to Paul, vv. 7-8.**

This outline seeks to capture the essence of the historical meaning of Col. 1.3-8. The twofold structure with the same core expression, “Paul regularly gave thanks to God,” is divided between whom Paul prayed to and why he felt thanksgiving. God as Father of Christ is a unique qualification of whom the prayers were addressed to. The why he felt such thankfulness centers on the marvelous work of God in the Lycus River Valley.

The exegetical outline stands in harmony with the initial Central Idea of the Text statement given above. Further, it takes into careful consideration the syntactical structure of this lengthy Greek sentence. “Giving thanks” is the universal theme and thus is the core aspect of both basic outline headings. The distinction of each basic heading zeros on the sequence of modifiers related to the object of thanksgiving and to the reason for thanksgiving. The threefold subdivisions under each heading seek to pick up the expansion elements off this core idea of giving thanks with its twofold thrust of God and the Colossians.

As noted above, no Western-mindset-based outline can precisely reproduce the thought structure of an ancient Jewish Christian writing in Koine Greek. The two worlds are very different from one another, and especially in religious thinking. But the above exegetical outline does reflect from a modern western way of thinking a reasonably close expression of the historical meaning of this Proem text.



### 3.0 *Develop a Semantic Diagram/Outline of the Text*

The leap across time from 'then' to 'now' comes at this point in the interpretive process. The semantic diagram is in reality an applicational outline focusing on the relevancy of the scripture text to some point of concern in our modern day. The simplest way of approaching it is merely to shift the past time headers in the exegetical outline into a present time header for the semantic outline. But often this approach won't work correctly. It is most feasible with a very direct applicational possibility for the scripture text.

But we are working toward applying this text to the specific modern applicational setting of a seminary chapel service. This contemporary setting imposes constraints on how best to preach this passage. We must probe a little deeper into the nature of the text if we make it significantly relevant to our audience.

As the letter Proem coming after the Praescriptio and before the letter body, this passage has a role of setting an example by Paul in showing concern for this group of Christians at Colossae. The larger motifs of both leadership and pastoral examples come into the picture. It is precisely at this point that connecting links between the scripture text and our anticipated audience surface. Our audience is in training to be leaders and pastors in churches. Knowing how this was done in the beginning apostolic era of Christianity is vitally important to them. Thus the exemplary nature of Paul's prayer life as reflected in this Proem provides the clue to developing a sermon plan for our modern audience. It has enough similarity to many of the other Proems in his letters that one can safely read rather

universal spiritual guidelines from this one Proem. Here is one possible semantic outline:

- I. *Leaders should regularly gave thanks to God through Jesus Christ, v. 3***
  - A. *Their praying must affirm Christ as God's Son.***
  - B. *Their praying should take place consistently.***
  - C. *Their praying should center on the congregation that they serve.***
- II. *Leaders should regularly gave thanks to God for what is happening in their group, vv. 4-8.***
  - A. *Their thanksgiving should be based on knowing of the faith, love, and hope of the group, vv. 4-5a.***
  - B. *Their thanksgiving should highlight the continuing acceptance of the true Gospel, vv. 5b-6***
  - C. *Their thanksgiving should be motivated by direct understanding of the situation, vv. 7-8.***

Now we are ready to start working on a sermon from this passage of scripture.

### 4.0 *Develop a Sermon Brief of the Text*

By definition a Sermon Brief is the beginnings of a full fledged sermon based on the chosen scripture passage.<sup>8</sup> The label 'Sermon Starter' could just as easily be attached. It is not a complete sermon manuscript. But it represents the skeleton of what can <sup>4</sup>For a more detailed discussion of Sermon Brief see "Sermon Report Form" for Greek 202/302 at cranfordville.com: <http://cranfordville.com/Ser-rpt.html>. The required reports described in this page go into more detail than we will here. What I am proposing here is an abbreviated form of the above Sermon Brief.



be developed into a complete sermon ready to be preached. It would normally bear close resemblance to the wording in the Semantic Diagram above.

The elements of a sermon brief include the following:

1) *A statement of the central idea of the text.*

This should be relatively easy to develop after the first CIT has been written out. Remember that the more you wrestle with this in preparation, the clearer will be your presentation of these ideas to your audience.

From the above second C.I.T. statement we can summarize our intended application of this passage:

Second C.I.T statement:

**Genuine Christian leadership exemplifies the model of leadership given by Paul and Ephras to the Colossians.**

Sermon C.I.T. Statement:

**I want to inspire my audience to deeper determination on becoming the same kind of leaders as Paul, Timothy, and Ephras were to the Colossians.**

This statement pushes me as the preacher to not just inform the audience about good leadership, but to go beyond in convincing them to commit themselves to follow this model.

2) *Here is a sermon outline based on the semantic outline above, as well as the sermon C.I.T statement. The title could well be, "Being a good Leader."*

### ***Introduction***

What does it take to be a good leader? During your seminary days, I hope you raise this question

many times. The answers you come up with will profoundly shape your style of leadership as a pastor or church staff member.

In seeking an answer, what sources do you turn to? Right now you're living in Texas during your seminary studies. Is Texas culture a good source? Especially Texas secular culture? As a native Texan with family roots reaching all the way back to the Alamo, I must emphatically say, "No, Texas culture is a horrible source for determining good leadership values." Predominately, its answer equates good leadership with bloated egotism producing an authoritarian model of leadership. By and large it stands in favor of most everything Jesus and the apostles condemned and labeled as heresy.

What about other sources? Such as friends, relatives, or influential people in your life? My answer: "It all depends." If these sources grow out of biblical values, then they can be helpful. But, if not, they will hurt you rather than help you.

As a Bible centered group of people, we Baptists claim the supreme authority of scripture for faith and practice. But there's a sharp difference between claiming it and immersing ourselves in its values. My hope in this message today is to nudge you toward immersing yourself in its values related to leadership.

Our scripture text is Colossians 1.3-8, which stands as the Proem in this ancient letter of the apostle Paul. [[Read the text.](#)] You don't get the complete biblical picture of leadership from this



prayer of thanksgiving in the text. But you can find some important insights about how to provide leadership to God's people which will bless and nurture your own calling to ministry. The two primary insights from this text focus on the importance of prayer in leadership and the focus on God's people as a leader. Let's take a look at them.

### ***I. Good leadership makes prayer crucial, v. 3.***

#### ***Explanation:***

Explanation of the thought structure based on the diagram of the Greek text should be presented in very simple terms. The foundation is 'giving thanks,' which is then qualified by Father attached to God. Then the adverbial modifiers 'always,' 'praying for you,' 'after having heard,' are attached to the verb "giving thanks."

Then the placing of this concept at the beginning of the letter as the Proem only highlights the important role of prayer in Paul's ministry.

#### ***Illustration:***

What is a prayer time? The apostle Paul seems to have retained the praying three times daily that he inherited from the Jewish practice of prayer in his day. This may or may not be workable for you. But do endeavor to find specific times during each day to offer up prayers of thanksgiving to people around you.

#### ***Application:***

The haunting question here is "Are you praying regularly for people now?" Even as students you have leadership roles in part-time church positions, Sunday School classes you attend, etc.

Now is the best time to establish this pattern of praying for others. And the starting point is thanksgiving for them. You will discover something very important. Thanksgiving for others has a powerful impact on your attitudes toward them.

### ***II. Good leadership centers on God's people, vv. 4-8.***

#### ***Explanation:***

Good leadership depends on other people's attitudes toward you. If they like you, they will listen to what you have to say. If they don't, you have little opportunity to communicate to them anything.

One of the major goals of the ancient letter Proem was to foster positive connections of the sender to the recipients. Paul's prayer of thanksgiving as the core element here certainly encouraged a positive attitude from the Colossians toward him. In fact, he notes their love for him in v. 8.

What affection that Paul felt for these folks at Colossae, most of whom he had never seen before, was predicated on their enthusiastic response to Epaphras' preaching of the Gospel to them. It had nothing to do with physical appearance, nor possession of wealth, or anything else other than their spiritual life. The powerful dynamic of the Gospel message had changed them profoundly. And that caught Paul's attention and affection for them.

#### ***Illustration:***

The ancient world of Paul categorized love into







ερος, φιλια, and αγαπη. The image for each was based on contemporary perceptions of the individual god represented by these names. Eros, by the first century, was the god of sensual love, Philo of formal friendship, and Agape of self-sacrificing devotion. Early Christian writers picked up mainly on αγαπη as the most appropriate reference to God due to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This latter understanding of love characterizes the mutual affection between Paul and the Colossians. Its sole source is God.

#### **Application:**

What you and I need most is the agape love for others. During these student days, I challenge you to reach out to people around you with agape love. Focus on their spiritual needs to come to Christ and to begin the life transformation which is possible through the Gospel.

#### **Conclusion**

What can Paul teach us from Col. 1.3-8? A whole lot! But also just two basic truths. Ministry in authentic Christianity puts prayer, and especially thanksgiving prayers for others, into the forefront of responsibility for Christian leaders. We are called by God to serve other people in the name of Christ. Praying for them is critically important. Preaching the authentic Gospel is equally important. Helping others come to life changing commitment to God through Christ is at the heart of that calling. The examples of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras in our text affirm this.

During these student days at seminary, you have the marvelous opportunity to instill these values into your life and ministry both in the present and

for the rest of your life. So do it! If you haven't already, make a commitment today for follow the example of these ancient Christian leaders. May God bless you!

The above sermon brief sketches out a strong biblical based sermon that takes seriously both the biblical texts and the needs of its audience. Such preaching as this can be blessed and annointed by the Spirit of God.

#### **5.0 Develop a Teaching Outline of the Text**

What is the difference between preaching a text and teaching a text? In Judea of the first Christian century, the answer would be not much difference at all. In the beginning days of Christianity, the influence of the Friday evening Jewish Sabbath meeting over the shape and contour of Christian meetings was profound. The worship patterns, along with the meeting structures of Christianity, were little more than a mirror of the synagogue Sabbath service. After prayers and the reading of pre-determined passages from the Hebrew Bible, the rabbi, especially as a visiting guest of the synagogue, would be given the opportunity to make comments on the scriptures that had been read to the assembled group. His comments largely were drawing teachable principles and lessons from the sacred texts. The focus was on contemporary application, and not on establishing a historical meaning of the texts. These ideas would be presented to the group and then followed by a question and answer discussion period. Quite typically, differing interpretive views on the scripture texts would be offered for discussion. The quoting of authority sources centered on citing a well



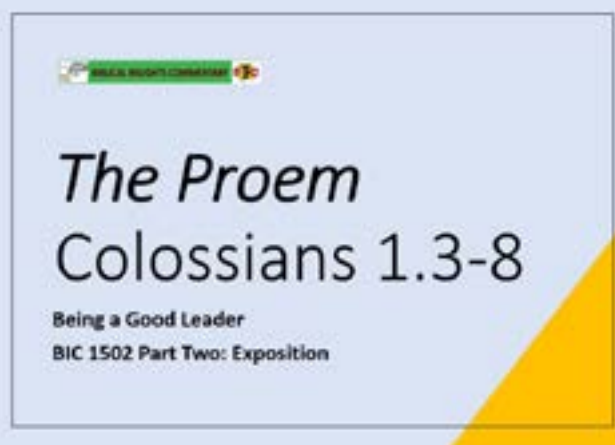
known and highly respected rabbi either currently living or else one who had passed away sometime previously. John 1:38 defines the Hebrew 'rabbi' as teacher **ῥαββί**, ὁ λέγεται μεθερμηνευόμενον **διδάσκαλε**, **rabbi**, which being translated means **teacher**. Mark 1:22 quite typically labels what Jesus said to groups as τῆ διδαχῆ αὐτοῦ, His teaching. But in 1:39, Jesus ἦλθεν κηρύσσων εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν, came preaching in their synagogues. Several Koine Greek words are usually translated as preach or proclaim: κηρύσσω, εὐαγγελίζω, παρρησιάζομαι, λαλέω, καταγγέλλω, ἀποδείκνυμι. Both Hebrews and James stand as examples of Jewish Christian teaching, or sometimes labeled as sermons. In fact, the writer of Hebrews labels the document itself (in Heb. 13:22) as τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, the word of exhortation.

But in modern Christian circles today, often a sharp distinction between preaching and teaching, sermon and teaching is made. Frequently one is viewed positive and the other negative. If what the pastor says from the pulpit seeks to inform the congregation about some Christian idea, he is teaching. But if he passionately raises his voice admonishing the group to take some kind of action, he is preaching. In both instances he might be speaking on the same subject, and even from the same scripture text. Thus the labels preaching and teaching have rather fluid definitions. And what the pastor does in the pulpit can be labeled either as preaching or teaching by different individuals.

But in more recent trends in public school and university settings, teaching entails much more than delivering a lecture on a specific topic. This thinking then drifts over into church life as well. The older, more tra-

ditional understanding of a teacher as being a lecturer is being replaced by the newer view of a teacher doing much more than just talking to an audience. They must create learning aids such as power point digital presentations, printed handouts to be distributed to the listeners et als. In church Sunday School settings, a good teacher needs to push the listeners into verbal contribution to the 'discussion' of the lesson. All of these things together comprise teaching the scripture text in a modern view.

From this latter understanding, a teaching plan for Col. 1:3-8 will be offered as an example. The example is created as a MS Power Point Presentation. The presentation is closely related to the Sermon Brief, except that the setting has shifted from the seminary chapel to the seminary classroom. Now the setting for the Teaching Plan is an academic class of



students studying concepts of pastoral ministry.

#### Slide One:

The slides are available online at the BIC1502 home-



page at [cranfordville.com](http://cranfordville.com). There are seven slides that may be downloaded and used for teaching this passage of scripture. Proper acknowledgement of the

The Proem  
Colossians 1:3-8  
"Being a Good Leader"



- 3 Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι, 4 ἀκούσαντες τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους 5 διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου 6 τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς, καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπέγνωτε τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ· 7 καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὃς ἐστὶν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 8 ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι.

source is all that is requested.

### Slide Two:

This is the original Greek text of Col. 1.3-8. It may be of value to your class members to visually see the text, and also hear it read verbally in Koine Greek. The teaching emphasis should be on the reality that we are reaching into the ancient thought world of the apostle Paul as a letter is written to them in a language they

The Proem  
Colossians 1:3-8  
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- 3 We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ always as we pray for you, 4 after having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope being stored up for you in Heaven, which you heard about beforehand in the Word of Truth, the Gospel, 6 which exists in you, just as both in all the world it is bearing fruit and growing just as also in you, from the very day you heard and grasped the grace of God in Truth; 7 just as you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful in your behalf servant of Christ, 8 and the one who made known to us your love in the Spirit.

knew and understood.

### Slide Three:

This slide is a very literal translation of the original Greek text over into English expression. Always remember that translation always means the loss of significant portions of the thoughts contained in the original writing. A translation from Koine Greek to modern American English always means the loss of a lot of the original meaning.

Recovering this lost meaning ultimately is possible only with skills in reading ancient Greek and the application of proper interpretive methodology to the text. If the latter is done thoroughly, it can overcome some of the deficiencies in not being able to read the original Greek text.



## Introduction

Let's take a close look at this scripture text.

Our goal is to discover relevant application to our lives today.

The assumed setting for this teaching plan: a seminary class on Pastoral Education.

The focus is on one biblical setting: The Letter to the Colossians & its Proem (1:3-8)  
A biblical study rather than a systematic theology or biblical theology study.

The central idea to be developed focuses on "Being a Good Leader: A Biblical Perspective."

Derived from the examples here of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras  
This theme is but one of several possible applications of the text.

From a block diagram of the text, two main ideas emerge:

- 1) Prayers of thanksgiving are central to good leadership, vv. 3.
- 2) Focusing on the needs of others is critical to good leadership, vv. 4-8.

### Slide Four:

This is the introductory slide to the presentation via Power Point. Note carefully the suggestions to follow in introducing the Bible study.





Slide Five:

Being a Good Leader means:

### I. Prayers of thanksgiving central, v. 3

Let's take a close look at this scripture text.

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε καὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι.

We give thanks to God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always, as we pray for you.

**We give thanks to God**  
 |  
 Father  
 |  
 always  
 |  
 of our Lord Jesus Christ  
 |  
 as we pray for you.

- Note to whom the thanks is directed: τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ, God, the Father
- Note how often thanks are expressed: πάντοτε, always
- Note the context of thanks: καὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι, for you praying

This is the example of Paul and Timothy toward the Colossians  
 How important is praying for those you lead as pastor or church staff member?  
 Does thanksgiving for them and their spiritual progress dominate your prayers?

This slide covers the first point of a two part teaching outline of the passage. It centers on verse three, and understanding the thought connections of the major point to secondary ideas that modify the Greek main clause in the first three words: Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ. It is important to explain how this core idea is then modified by a succession of modifiers grammatically in the Greek from 3b through 8.

Slide Six:

Being a Good Leader means:

### II. Focusing on others is central, v. 4-8

Let's take a close look at this scripture text.

Three perspectives are present in vs. 4-8:  
 That of Paul and Timothy: v. 4 ἡκούσαντες, after we heard of  
 & v. 8, ὁ εὐεργετήσας ἡμᾶς, "the one having made known to us."  
 That of Epaphras, v. 7-8, ἐπιθεὶς καὶ τρυφῶν, ὁ εὐεργετήσας ἡμᾶς.  
 Just as you learned from Epaphras... and the one who informed us (cf. 4:12-13) about  
 That of the Colossians from the depiction given here based on Epaphras report to Paul, vs. 4b-6,  
 ἡκούσαντες τῆς χάριτος ἡμῶν ἐκ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐν ἧμεν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἄγιους,  
 & ἵνα τὴν ἐπιθεὶα τῆς ἀποκαλύψεως ἡμῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,  
 ἢ ἀποκαλύψετε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου  
 & τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς ἡμέρας,  
 καὶ ἵνα ἡμεῖς τῷ κυρίῳ πάντα ἀποδοῦμεν ὡς ἰσχυροὺς καὶ ἐν ἡμῶν,  
 καὶ ἵνα ὑμεῖς ἀποκαταστήσῃτε καὶ ἡμεῖς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

- Note the Colossians' faith and love
- Note the Colossians' hope in the outgrowth of faith and love
- Note their hearing the Word of Truth, which is the Gospel
- Note their ongoing commitment as bearing fruit and growing

Their conversion was based on a correct presentation of the Gospel by Epaphras.  
 Their pattern of growth was constant and consistent.  
 This should be the kind of ministry you seek to have in service to Christ.

Slide six centers on part two of the teaching outline of the passage. It covers verses four through eight in a threefold treatment. The perspectives of Paul and Timothy, of Epaphras, and of the Colossians is the organizing focus of these verses. The examples of these three first century Christian leaders in relation to what was accomplished at Colossae provides the insight for application to a modern setting. The related Greek expressions to each perspective is highlighted and needs some explanation to your class members. This will give a conceptual foundation to the application to your class members. Also, note a couple of side comments with audio hyperlinks are attached to this slide. You can either read them to you class or click on the audio hyperlinks for the class to hear the text being read.

Slide Seven:

Being a Good Leader means:

### Conclusion

What can we say about good leadership from this passage?

- It must be people centered, rather than power oriented.
- It must be deeply grateful to God for the people being served.
- It must be based on the true apostolic Gospel, rather than on human derived understandings.

A ministry based on these values can and will be blessed of God.  
 It will have life changing impact on the people being served.  
 God will be glorified by such ministry.

This slide contains the outline of an approach for finishing up the study. Look closely at them. You may decide to go a different direction, depending upon the circumstances of your class members.





Not just the preaching but also the teaching of God's Word to His people is one of the most satisfying experiences imaginable. If nothing else is achieved by this study, my fervent hope is that you find inspiration and excitement as you prepare to use this text in ministry.

### ***Summary Conclusion***

This scripture text is a very interesting part of the letter sent to the Colossians. Its standardized form as the letter Proem tells us much about what the text is seeking to accomplish for those hearing these words for the first time at Colossae. It was a concrete effort by the senders, Paul and Timothy, to deepen relationships with the Colossians. Although they had never personally traveled to Colossae, through Epaphras' reporting to them, they felt a love for and devotion to this community of believers. They desired deeply to help the Colossian believing community to continue growing in their religious commitment to God through Christ.

A part of Epaphras' report revealed the presence of false teachers who were advocating an alternative approach to God in the name of being Christian. Chapter two of the letter deals in detail with this issue. But the emphasis on the apostolic Gospel that Epaphras brought them being the Truth of God, emphasized here in the Proem, signals a concern by Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras that the Colossians might be influenced by these teachers. Thusly motivated by this concern, these servants of Christ sought through the letter to strengthen the Colossian community so as to reject these corrupting influences on the Gospel of Christ. When carried to Colossae and read to the various house-church groups, Timothy could add his personal encouragement to stay put in the apostolic Gospel.

When God provides you with a community of believers to serve, minister to them out of a similar devotion exhibited by Paul, Timothy, and Epaphras to the Colossians. Love them in concrete ways. Give thanks to God for them. Out of devotion to them, seek passionately to guide them into biblical Truth.

Then, you indeed can become a "Good Leader" to God's people. May God richly bless you in ministry to His people!

