

## Colossians #2

### Our Heavenly Hope

"We give thanks to God" Paul wrote in Colossians 1:3. This is a customary expression with him. Eight of his letters have this expression, although sometimes slightly modified. Paul was a praying man and his habit surfaces in his life and speech. He wrote churches and brethren, praying for them, asking them to pray for him and, when he was with brethren, prayed with them.

Because Paul said "having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which ye have toward all the saints" some conclude Paul never had been to Colossae; that the church had been begun by someone else. Paul said essentially the same in the Roman letter and we know he had not been to Rome when he wrote the letter (Rm. 1:8). However, there are certain facts which suggest Paul had been to Colossae, notably his letter to Philemon. Philemon was converted by Paul; the letter indicates Paul had been to Philemon's home and expected to visit his home again and Philemon did live in Colossae. Both Colossians and Philemon mention Archippus who was in Colossae and Archippus seemed to live with Philemon. It is true that Acts records no visit of Paul to Colossae but Acts does not purport to record all the places and journeys he made. Because Colossae was near Ephesus and during Paul's three year tenure there "all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word" (Acts 19:10), Colossae could have been evangelized by Paul while he was there. At any rate, Paul personally knew and had converts among some of the brethren at Colossae whether he had actually visited the city or not.

Paul thanked God for their faith and the love they had toward all the saints. He also thanked God for the hope they had (Col. 1:3). It is common for Paul to link faith, hope and love together. He mentions "hope" in his Ephesian letter when he declared "there is one hope" (Eph. 4:4). The treasured text from Corinthians "and now abideth faith, hope and love..." is familiar to all. Hope is the combination of desire and expectation and our hope is reckoned to be the resurrection from the dead, or eternal life, which is the equivalent of it (Acts 26:7f; Tit.1:2f).

Here Paul says our hope is "laid up for us in the heavens" an indication that future blessings to God's children at the advent of Christ, do not embrace this world. When Christ comes again, the heavens and earth will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat and the earth and the works therein shall all be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

Such will fulfill Jesus' prediction "Heaven and earth shall pass away..." (Mt. 24:35). Paul told the Philippians "our citizenship is in heaven, whence also we wait for a Savior" and the Hebrew writer assured us that worthies of old sought a better country, a heavenly one (Phil. 3:20; Hb. 11:13-16). They err greatly who look for an earthly sojourn with Christ. We must lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven; we are to seek the things which are above, where Christ is (Mt. 6:19f; Col. 3:1f).

Where is our hope?

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