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Structural Analysis of Colossians via Outline

- I. INTRODUCTION: 1:1-8
 - A. Greeting 1:1-2
 - B. Thankful for the Colossian's faith 1:3-8

Paul often begins with a word of encouragement in his epistles, thanking God for whatever positive attributes the church he is addressing may have.
- II. PRAYER WITH A PURPOSE 1:9-12
 - A. Apostles are in prayer for the Colossians
 - 1. That they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will and wisdom and spiritual understanding. 1:9
 - 2. That they walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him 1:10
 - 3. That they might be strengthened through God's power 1:11
(for patience and suffering with joy)
 - 4. In thankfulness to God for qualifying them to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints 1:12

Paul reminds the Colossians that they are joined together in prayer. In this way, the Apostles and other saints are sharing in their burdens and lifting up their requests and needs to God.
- III. CHRIST: WHO HE IS, WHAT HE'S DONE 1:13-23
 - Paul leaves no room for misunderstanding to Christ's deity and purpose in the following passages. His goal appears to be to combat those who may desire to reduce the role of Jesus or to rob Him of his deity. Having read Paul's letter, even the craftiest wordsmith would find it hard to explain away the following points.
 - A. God delivered us from darkness, into the kingdom of His Son (Jesus) 1:13
 - B. We have forgiveness of sins and redemption through Christ's sacrifice 1:14
(His blood on the cross)
 - C. Christ is the image of the invisible God 1:15
 - D. Christ is firstborn over all creation
 - E. By Christ all things were created through Him and for Him 1:16
 - F. Christ is before all things and in Him all things consist 1:17
 - G. Christ is the head of the church 1:18
 - 1. Firstborn from the dead
 - H. It pleased God to reconcile all things to Himself through Christ. 1:19-20
 - 1. In Him all the fulness dwells
 - I. The Colossians are partakers in this reconciliation if they continue in faith 1:21-23
 - 1. Faith in Christ, no longer alienated from God
- IV. EXHORTATION AND WARNINGS FOR THE COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:23
 - A. I rejoice in my sufferings for you, Christ's church 1:24-25
 - B. The Church was a mystery to past ages but is being made clear to you 1:26-27
 - C. We preach Christ, this is our labor 1:28-29
 - 1. So that man might be presented in Him in perfection
 - D. Not having seen me in person, know that I have conflict for you 2:1-4
 - 1. That you may be encouraged
 - 2. That you may be knit together in love
 - 3. That you may attain full understanding
 - i. In both God the Father and Christ
 - ii. To avoid being deceived 2:4

- E. I am with you in Spirit (although absent in person) 2:5
- F. Walk in the Lord 2:6
 - 1. Rooted in Christ 2:7
 - 2. Established in the faith
 - 3. Thankful
- Paul again reminds them of their foundation, namely Christ, in no other foundation can their hope be set.
- G. Caution against worldly philosophy and reasoning 2:8
 - 1. Empty deceit
 - 2. Based on man's tradition, not God
 - 3. Based on principles of the world, not God
- Greek/Roman/Man's philosophy is the antithesis to the above statement about being rooted in Christ, Paul starts out by saying be rooted in Christ, then makes it plain that they should not be rooted in the philosophy of the day.
- H. Christ is fully God 2:9
- Again, Paul snuffs out the idea that Christ could be anything other than fully God.
- I. You are also fully complete in Christ 2:10
- Paul speaks to the false teaching that salvation requires Christ plus works or the Law. He then spells it out, contrasted with the specific false teachings that some of the Jewish legalists were pushing "You must be circumcised" is met with "You are circumcised in Christ" etc.
 - 1. You are Circumcised in Him 2:11
 - 2. You are Baptized in Him 2:12
- To clarify, this is not speaking against baptism as legalism. Baptism is a command set forth by Christ. Perhaps it was also being viewed as a requirement for salvation, which is different than simply being obedient to His command. The difference is plain to see. If baptism were required for salvation, those not baptized would not be saved. Since Christ did not list this as a requirement, it cannot be combined as a required work for salvation (there CAN be those who may die prior to baptism that were saved through faith, etc.)
 - 3. You are raised in Him/Alive together with Him 2:13
- It is Christ who gives you life, not works
 - 4. You no longer require the Law 2:14
 - i. Christ completely fulfilled the requirements
- You don't have to do the works of the Law because they've all been done by Christ.
 - 5. You are no longer condemned by other men 2:15-16
 - i. Rulers or authorities
 - ii. Other men who sit in judgement on your freedom
- A reminder that no one can condemn believers any longer once saved.
 - 6. You are complete in Christ 2:17
 - i. The substance of your faith is of Christ
- Paul is saying that Christ is the sum of your faith, it is not faith and some other requirement. It is never Christ + as some were teaching.
- J. Do not worship angels or things thought up 2:18-19
 - 1. Intruding into things...
 - 2. Not holding fast to the Head (Christ and what He taught)
- False doctrines were creeping in, seemingly from the surrounding cultures and/or Jewish influence. They became preoccupied with spiritual beings such as angels and getting into speculations beyond what they were knowledgeable in.
- K. Avoid adding to Christ's work 2:20-23
 - 1. Refraining from certain things does not increase the holiness Christ has given you.

2. This is a pagan practice, do not bring in man-made rituals of “sacrifice” or “abstinence” as if they were a means of earning advanced standing with God, they seem wise to man, but are foolish.

This is akin to a monk-like lifestyle or some of the Greek philosophies which saw the material world as evil, shunning material things was then a way to be holy or to transcend, this was an entry of worldly religious thought entering into Christianity.

V. HOW CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO LIVE 3:1-4:6

A. Since we are raised with Christ set your mind on things above 3:1-5

1. Christ is seated above
2. Set your mind above (on things more than of this world and its distractions)
3. You no longer live for the things and desires of the earth
4. You will be caught up with Christ in glory (make that your focus)

Paul’s clear charge here is to stop looking at things with a world-perspective, Christians future home and perspective needs to shift to a heavenly one. The balance is to live within this world, but not to live for this world.

B. Put to death sinful ways 3:6-9

1. Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness (idolatry).
 - i. These lead to God’s wrath
2. You once walked in these.
3. Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, lies.

Paul spells out the things that are to be ceased, leaving no room for ambiguity in their new freedom. They have freedom in Christ, but need to stop improper lifestyles – not for salvation, but as a matter of spiritual understanding and maturity.

C. Put on the new man 3:10-17

1. Renewed in knowledge according to God
2. No longer divided (neither Jew or Greek, circumcised or otherwise)
3. Christ is all and in all.
4. The elect of God 3:12
 - i. Holy beloved
5. Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, patience, forgiveness

Having provided a list of “do-nots”, Paul provides a replacement list of “put-ons”

6. Practice the same forgiveness towards one another that Christ gave to you 3:13

This is a reminder of what each person has been forgiven of by Christ, which should contrast greatly with whatever wrongs have been suffered at the hand of other men. The point is to put forgiveness in perspective, it should be a little thing to forgive another person’s trespass on us, since we have been forgiven such a multitude of sin by Christ.

7. Put on love above all, which is the bond of perfection. 3:14
8. Let the peace of God rule your hearts. 3:15

Ruling is not a passive relationship, it runs things, orders things, and drives behavior.

9. Be united in one body and thankful
10. Let the Word of God dwell in you 3:16

Life, dwelling, the Word of God should live within the believer, not sit idle and not collect dust on the shelf of the mind. It is to be active.

11. Teach and admonish one another
 - i. In psalms, hymns, spiritual songs with grace in your hearts to the Lord
12. Do all (word or deed) in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thankfulness to God 3:17

To capstone this “how to live” section, Paul brings it home – whatever you do, in speech, in action, all of it is to be done in the Lord Jesus, and all of it is to be done in thankfulness to God.

This phases out the random gray areas anyone may have had. Should I do this? Are you doing it in the name of Jesus? Is it shameful in that context, then don't do it.

D. Family/Household/Business Dealings 3:18-25

This section contains practical exhortations as it relates to the family/household

1. Wives submit to your husbands, as fitting to the Lord 3:18
2. Husbands love your wives and do not be bitter 3:19
3. Children obey your parents 3:20
 - i. This is pleasing to the Lord
4. Fathers do not provoke your children (some translations – exasperate) 3:21
 - i. Leads to discouragement

5. Bondservants (part of the households of the time) serve in sincerity of heart 3:22-25

This is applicable to all Christians when the fact that we are bondservants of Christ is considered. Paul repeats this charge throughout his epistles, often modeling it in his greetings and concluding thoughts.

6. Masters, be just and fair to your bondservants 4:1

Paul reminds those in authority not to rule over those under them harshly, but in honor and fairness.

E. Continued Instruction

1. Continue in prayer 4:2-6

Prayer seems to be an underlying theme in this epistle as it is repeated.

- i. Earnest, vigilant, in thanksgiving
 - ii. For others, the Apostles, the spread of the Gospel
2. Walk in wisdom using time wisely to reach the lost 4:5-6
 - i. Those outside the church
 - ii. Speech seasoned with salt, prepared to give an answer for faith

VI. CONCLUSION 4:7-18

A. Tychicus being sent 4:7-9

1. Will bring news of Paul
2. Will bring comfort
3. Will bring Onesimus
4. Will share all the things happening where Paul is

B. Additional greetings (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas) 4:10-14

- i. Epaphras is laboring for you in prayers (fervently, zealously)

C. Greet those in Laodicea and the church in Nymphas' house 4:15-16

1. Make sure the letter is read in Laodicea and read theirs

D. Encourage Archippus to take heed in the ministry that he may fulfill it 4:17

E. Personal salutation from Paul in his own writing. 4:18