

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

The EPISTLE *to the*
COLOSSIANS

A NEW RENDITION

(prepublication version)

PHILIP ABBOTT



The Epistle to the Colossians

BYU New Testament Commentary Translation

(prepublication version)

Philip Abbott

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About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary, a project by a group of Latter-day Saint specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to Latter-day Saint general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of Latter-day Saint scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers.

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these features

distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefited from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisers, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series contains a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling this a new “rendition” clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the LDS Church as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the New Rendition in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956 that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

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The Epistle to the Colossians

“An Apostle of Jesus Christ by the Will of God” (1:1–2)

1 Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 to the saints in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

“Laid up for You in Heaven” (1:3–8)

3 We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. 4 For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints. 5 Your faith and love spring from the hoped-for reward laid up for you in the heavens, and you heard about this hope before in the true word of the gospel 6 that came to you. Just as the gospel is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it also has been bearing fruit and growing among you from the day you heard it and came to know God’s grace in truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

“We Have Redemption” (1:9–14)

9 For this reason, from the day we heard about you, we also have not stopped praying for you and asking God that you be filled with the knowledge of his will through complete wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord and please him in every way—bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have endurance and patience, with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a portion of the saints’ inheritance in the light. 13 He rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the dismissal of sins.

Hymn to Christ (1:15–20)

- 15 He is the image of the unseen God,
the firstborn of all creation,
16 for all things in the heavens and on the earth
were created in him—
things seen and unseen—
whether thrones, dominions,
rulers, or authorities;
all things are created through him and for him.
17 And he himself is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
18 And he himself is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that he himself may be first in everything.
19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
20 and through him God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself—
whether things on the earth or things in the heavens—
by making peace through the blood of his cross.

“To Present You Holy” (1:21–23)

21 And you were once alienated and hostile in your mental attitude, doing grievous deeds. 22 But now he has reconciled you in his fleshly body through his death, to raise you up holy, blameless, and irreproachable before him— 23 provided that you continue in faith, grounded and firm, and not being moved from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become its servant.

“I Am Made a Minister” (1:24–29)

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I complete in my flesh what remains of Christ’s afflictions for his body—that is, the Church. 25 I became a servant of the Church according to the administration of God, given to me for you to fulfill the word of God— 26 that is, the mystery that has been hidden from the ages and the generations but has now been revealed to his Saints. 27 God wanted to make known to them the glorious wealth of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim him by admonishing

and teaching everyone in all wisdom, that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, striving with his energy powerfully acting in me.

“Yet Am I with You in the Spirit” (2:1–5)

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for those who have not personally seen my face. 2 My goal is that their hearts may be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have the whole wealth of a full understanding resulting from knowing the mystery of God, namely Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I say this so that no one may deceive you with persuasive arguments. 5 For even if I am absent from you in the flesh, I am present with you in the spirit and rejoice to see your orderliness and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

“Rooted and Built up in Him” (2:6–7)

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him— 7 being rooted and built up in him, establishing yourselves in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.

“Beware Lest Any Man Spoil You” (2:8–15)

8 See to it that no one leads you away captive through the empty, deceitful philosophy that is according to human tradition and elemental spirits of the universe and not according to Christ. 9 For in him all the fullness of deity dwells in a bodily form, 10 and you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not done with human hands, by putting off the fleshly body in the circumcision of Christ. 12 You were buried with him in baptism, wherein you were also raised with him through faith in the act of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in your trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him, having forgiven all our trespasses. 14 He erased what was against us: a document of indebtedness with decrees opposed to us. He took it away when he nailed it to the cross. 15 And when he disarmed the rulers and the authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, having triumphed over them by the cross.

“Let No Man Beguile You” (2:16–23)

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you concerning food and drink, or in the matter of a festival, new moon, or Sabbath days. 17 These are a shadow of things to come—the body of Christ. 18 Let no one pass judgment on you; such a person delights in false humility and the worship of angels (which he has seen at his initiation). He is puffed up with vain notions by his fleshly mind 19 and does not hold fast to the Head, from whom the whole body—nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments—grows with a growth that is from God. 20 If you died with Christ from the control of the elemental spirits of the world, why, as though you live in the world, submit to the decrees: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22 All these stipulations perish with use and are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations lead—even though they have a reputation for wisdom in the areas of self-willed piety, humility, and unsparing treatment of the body (but do not have any value)—to the indulgence of the flesh.

“Seek Those Things Which Are Above” (3:1–4)

1 Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, having been seated at the right hand of God. 2 Keep thinking about the things above, not the things on the earth, 3 for you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ—who is your life—is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

“Put on The New Man” (3:5–17)

5 Therefore, put to death that which belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and covetousness (which is idolatry). 6 Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. 7 You too once walked in these ways, in the life you used to live. 8 But now rid yourselves of all these: wrath, anger, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another since you have stripped off the old person who practiced such things 10 and have put on the new person, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created him. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all.

“Ye Serve The Lord Christ” (3:18–25)

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and forgive each other if one has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which is the perfect bond. 15 And let the peace of Christ direct your hearts (since you were called as one body to this peace) and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly: Teach and educate each other in all wisdom, and sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God, with grace in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, so that they won’t be discouraged. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything—not only while being watched, like people-pleasers, but in the sincerity of your heart—fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it wholeheartedly, as if you were working for the Lord and not for people, 24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as a reward. Serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

“Walk in Wisdom” (4:1–6)

1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, for you know that you also have a Lord in heaven.

2 Persist in prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time, pray for us too, that God may open to us a door for the word, that we may speak the mystery of Christ (for which I am bound) 4 in order that I may reveal it as I should. 5 Be wise in your behavior toward outsiders, making the most of your time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer everyone.

**“Take Heed to the Ministry
Which Thou Hast Received in the Lord” (4:7–17)**

7 Tychicus—the beloved brother, faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord—will make everything about my circumstances known to you. 8 I am sending him to you for this very purpose: that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 I am sending him with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you everything that is happening here. 10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you have received commandments: if he comes to you, receive him). 11 Also, Jesus who is called Justus sends his greetings. Among those of the circumcision, these are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a slave of Christ, sends you his greetings. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I testify about him that he has gone to great pains for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved doctor, sends you his greetings, as does Demas. 15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha, and the church in her house. 16 And after this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and be sure that you also read the one sent to Laodicea. 17 And tell Archippus, “See to it that you fulfill the ministry you have received in the Lord.”

“Remember My Bonds” (4:18)

18 This greeting is by my hand—Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.