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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

Colossians

by Matthew Henry

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE

COLOSSIANS

Colosse was a considerable city of Phrygia, and probably not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis; we find these mentioned together, 4:13. It is now buried in ruins, and the memory of it chiefly preserved in this epistle. The design of the epistle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their stedfastness and constancy, and encourages them to perseverance. It was written about the same time with the epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, A.D. 62, and in the same place, while he was now a prisoner at Rome. He was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God was not bound.

This epistle, like that to the Romans, was written to those he had never seen, nor had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul's ministry, but by the ministry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; and yet,

I. There was a flourishing church at Colosse, and one which was eminent and famous among the churches. One would have thought none would have come to be flourishing churches but those which Paul himself had planted; but here was a flourishing church planted by Epaphras. God is sometimes pleased to make use of the ministry of those who are of less note, and lower gifts, for doing great service to his church. God uses what hands he pleases, and is not tied to those of note, that the *excellence of the power may appear to be of God and not of men*, ~~1~~ 2 Corinthians 4:7.

II. Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor, in writing his epistles, does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Colossians, who were converted by the ministry of Epaphras, were as dear to him, and he was as

much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians, or any others who were converted by his ministry. Thus he put an honour upon an inferior minister, and teaches us not to be selfish, nor think all that honour lost which goes beside ourselves. We learn, in his example, not to think it a disparagement to us to water what others have planted, or build upon the foundation which others have laid: as he himself, as a *wise master-builder*, *laid the foundation, and another built thereon,* ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 3:10.