



Introduction to Colossians

What would you do if young Christians asked for help to grow in their new-found faith, especially after learning they had been influenced by all kinds of false ideas? Learn how to respond as we study Colossians, an ancient letter to learn timeless truths.

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* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

HISTORY OF COLOSSAE

Colossae is located in Asia Minor, near Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22), 1 of 7 real churches addressed in *Revelation* (see Rev. 2-3). Colossae had a thriving textile industry, known for a high-quality dark red wool known as "Colossian wool."¹ Before a devastating earthquake in the early 60s (1st century), Colossae was located at the crossroads of two well-traveled highways connecting the coastal cities of Ephesus and Sardis. These well traveled road systems brought a diverse mix of ethnic groups, including many Gentiles along with a large Jewish population.²



PURPOSE OF WRITING

We don't know *WHEN* the letter to the Colossians was written nor from *WHERE*, but we do know WHY. Many different people groups mixed many foreign & false ideas together, prompting the apostle Paul to pen this letter. Paul deeply desired to help the Colossian church firmly plant their feet on the foundation of the Christian Gospel - that is - **the Supremacy of Jesus**, to demonstrate **CHRIST OVER ALL** creation!

Paul didn't plant the church at Colossae (Paul has not yet visited Colossae - Col. 2:1), Paul's influence *had* impacted the church since one of his partners in ministry likely started the church there.

Letter to the Colossians

Colossians 1:1-2 ¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother: ² To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

❖ **"an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will"** Anyone who knows Paul's story understands that it wasn't Paul's will to be an **apostle** (meaning "sent out") by Jesus. Instead, he was persecuting those who followed Jesus, throwing them in prison and even affirming their executions (Acts 7:55-8:3). While on the way to arrest more Christians, Paul's plan was interrupted when the risen Jesus appeared to him, calling Paul as **an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will**.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 ¹⁵ This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"**—and I am the worst of them. ¹⁶ But **I received mercy for this reason**, so that in me, the worst of them, **Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life**.

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 26.

² Ibid, 27.

Sent by Jesus himself, Paul is an **apostle** (*like an ambassador sent by the President of the United States to speak on behalf of our nation*). Paul, along with his disciple, **Timothy**, are sent on behalf of the Supreme Commander, writing to encourage, protect, & correct the church in Colossae.

Colossians 1:1-2 ¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother: ² **To the saints in Christ at Colossae**, who are faithful brothers and sisters. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

❖ **"saints"** Paul used **saints** about 60 times in his writings. Never referring to the church as a bunch of 'sinners saved by grace', he instead calls them **hagios** (Greek), meaning **"holy ones"**. Believers should never say, *"I can't help myself; I'm just going to sin."* Those who have turned from sin and trusted Jesus can actually BELIEVE that they have been made HOLY! This is how Paul sees this church in Colossae - **saints (holy ones) in Christ, faithful brothers and sisters**, longing for them to know the **grace** and **peace** they have **from God our Father**.

❖ **"grace...and peace from God our Father"** Paul used this same phrase: *"grace and peace"* to open all 13 of his letters.³ God had extended His **grace** to Paul, an offer to forgive his sin through the death of Jesus. Receiving God's **grace** resulted in God's **peace**. The same is true for you and me.

➡ Have you recognized and received God's **grace**? When you do, you will know God's **peace**.

Paul's Prayer

Colossians 1:3-6a ³ We always thank 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 you have for all the saints ⁵ because of **the hope reserved for you in heaven**. You have already heard about this hope in **the word of truth, the gospel** ^{6a} that has come to you.

❖ **"faith in Christ...love for the saints"** Paul was thanking God for their genuine **faith in Christ Jesus** that was resulting in **love for all the saints!** People who love Jesus, love His family - the Church.

❖ **"the gospel"** The Colossians heard and responded to **the word of truth, the gospel** (good news). The Greek word for **gospel** [*euangelion*] is where we derive the English word **evangelize**, literally meaning, "good news"; a classical Greek term to report of victory brought back from a battle.⁴

➡ The gospel is the good news of Jesus' victory over sin and death as described in Rom. 1:1-6 & 1 Cor. 15:1-8.

❖ **"hope reserved for you in heaven"** The gospel message should impact how Christians live on earth, because of the **hope** of eternal life **reserved for you in heaven**. Followers of Jesus should work hard, love family and friends, appreciate every day, and attempt to impact others for the Kingdom.

Spiritual Fruit of Genuine Faith

Colossians 1:6b-7 ^{6b} It [the good news of Jesus] is **bearing fruit** and **growing all over the world**, just as it has among you since the day you heard it and came to truly appreciate God's grace. ⁷ You learned this from **Epaphras**, our dearly loved **fellow servant**. He is a **faithful minister of Christ** on your behalf, ⁸ and he has told us about your love in the Spirit.

❖ **"bearing fruit"** The good news message of Jesus is **bearing fruit**, just like Jesus said it would (Jn. 15:4-5, 16). One person hears the good news of Jesus, turns from sin and trusts Him, and grows with the help of other believers. Next, the growing believer starts sharing the good news of Jesus with others, developing disciples by spending time with them, teaching them the Scriptures, showing them how to live out the Christian life (by loving God, loving people, and developing more disciples of Jesus). His disciples begin to the same process of sharing Jesus and developing disciples.

❖ **"Epaphras"** The Colossian church had first **learned from Epaphras** the gospel. Epaphras likely heard the good news from Paul while in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Paul calls Epaphras a **fellow servant** and **faithful minister of Christ**. In Paul's letter to Philemon, Paul mentions that **Epaphras** is in prison with him (Phlm 23).⁵ And now Epaphras is excited to tell Paul about what is happening in his home town, about their **love in the spirit** - a love for God and one another.

YOUR NOTES

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 15.

⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁵ Derek R. Brown, *Colossians, ed. Douglas Mangum, Lexham Research Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Col 1:1-14.

Praying for Spiritual Maturity

Colossians 1:9a ⁹ For this reason also, since the day we heard this, **we haven't stopped praying for you.**

❖ **"we haven't stopped praying for you"** How encouraging would it be to know that genuine followers of Jesus are praying for you on a regular basis? Did you even know that is supposed to be happening? Look at what Paul writes the church in Ephesus, down the road from Colossae:

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT) Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and **be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.**

This is what Epaphras had been doing for his people in Colossae.

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. **He is always wrestling for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature** and fully assured in everything God wills.

How many of us make that our common practice, to pray for other believers to grow in maturity?

① **1) Who are YOU praying for?** Parents/grandparents - what are you praying for your kids/grandkids? Adults and teenagers - Do you PRAY for your friends? Do you pray for their growth and maturity in Jesus?

2) WHO is praying for YOU? You might need to ask someone to start praying for you. Give some specifics on how to pray for you.

Colossians 1:9b-12 We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: 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 great endurance and patience, joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.

Paul and his prayer partners are **asking** God to give **wisdom and spiritual understanding** so that the Colossians can know **His** [God's] **will**. Knowing God and His will then enables the Christian to **walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him, growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power**, people of **endurance, patience, and thankfulness**.

Christians should NEVER SETTLE for the false idea that 'we're just going to sin because we just can't help it' - FALSE!!! We **share in the saints' inheritance in the light!** **Saints** are those who are *set apart, holy ones, belonging to Jesus!*

A Reminder of Whose You Are

Colossians 1:13-14 ¹³ He has **rescued us** from the domain of darkness and **transferred us into the kingdom of the Son** he loves. ¹⁴ **In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

❖ **"transferred us into the kingdom"** Jewish people would no doubt think of being released from the **darkness** of slavery under Pharaoh and being **transferred into the kingdom** of Yahweh. The Jewish people were further familiar with how conquering kings would remove people from their homes and transfer them closer to the king (e.g. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego being transplanted from Israel to Babylon).

❖ **"redemption, the forgiveness of sins"** **Redemption** is a term used of captives who are either ransomed or released from slavery.⁶ The new master has bought the slave and brought the slave into his kingdom. Paul writes something similar to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 6:20 for **you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.**

And **in him** - the Lord Jesus - **we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.** For those who have turned from sin and are trusting Jesus - **we are forgiven and free, citizens of the Kingdom** of Jesus!

YOUR NOTES

FEET2FAITH

1. **Memorize & marinate on Colossians 1:13-14 this week.** Consider posting this passage on your social media along with why it is so significant to you.
2. **Get in the Scriptures and seek Jesus daily.** Stop putting everything else in front of Him. Find a plan and make it a priority. Read a gospel or ask another believer to help you find a plan.
3. **Pray for at least 2 people that they would GROW in knowledge and obedience to God.** (1 person in your family and 1 Christian friend)

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Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
Or call our **deacons & wives**: Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Fain & Linda Tippet, Jim & Derita Pinkard, or Boss & Amelia Mulkey.

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discussionquestions

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. What most challenged or surprised you from today's teaching? What do you need to do to apply God's Word to your life this week?
2. **Read Acts 7:55-8:3, 1 Timothy 1:15-16, and Colossians 1:1-2.** Why did God show such grace to Paul even though he had been such an enemy to Christ and His people?
3. How and why does Paul call Christians "**saints**". Why do you think most Christians are more likely to call themselves and other Christians as "sinners" instead of "saints"? Do you think we should change that vocabulary and why?
4. **Read Colossians 1:9-12, Ephesians 6:18, & Colossians 4:12.** After today's study, how might our prayer lives need some attention & redirection?
5. Who are YOU praying for to grow to spiritual maturity? Is anyone praying for you regularly to grow spiritually? Who could you ask to partner with you in prayer?
6. **Work on memorizing Colossians 1:13-14 together.** Then spend some time chewing on what that passage that really means.
7. Share what your plan is to read Scriptures this coming week or ask for some help on what to read.
8. Share other prayer needs and lift one another up right now.