

## Colossians 1:1-8 “For the love of Christ”

Good morning and thank you for joining us. You have many places to choose from to worship, and we're grateful you're here this morning. We finished our study in the book of Esther last week, so we now move back to the NT as we study the Bible in order, so would you please turn in your bibles to the book of Colossians?

It will come as no surprise to you when I say that we live in a biblically illiterate culture. Which means that tragically, a lot of people make their determination of who Jesus is based upon the actions of people they know or see. Which means as Christians you and I are constantly under evaluation from searching and skeptical eyes.

Of course the tragedy with this is that judging who Jesus is based upon the actions of people is misguided. Have you noticed even the most devoted follower of Jesus is still a sinner, and will disappoint you.

Everyone must make a determination about who Jesus is, by examining and studying Jesus alone.

This is why I'm so excited to go through the book of Colossians. Because it is an incredible picture of Jesus. I almost called the series “God's selfie’

Because this book gloriously shows us who Jesus is. And just like we did in Ephesians, even though there's only 4 chapters, it'll

take us a few months to study and unpack these incredible verses.

As we do when we begin any new study, we need to do an introduction to understand the setting of this book.

When you read the book of Acts, chapters 19-20 tell us that Paul was in the area of Ephesus, and it describes how the word of God spread throughout the surrounding regions.

Paul was ministering in Ephesus for 3 years, and most scholars believe it was at this time that the word of God spread and the church of Colossae was born out of that.

What's interesting is that Paul never seemed to visit Colosse  
**Colossians 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,**

It would seem that a man named Epaphrus was the pastor of the church of Colosse based on the grammar used to describe him.

And speaking of grammar, as we go through this book Paul uses 34 Greek words in this short epistle found nowhere else in the NT, as he talks of the magnificence and beauty and eternity and power of Christ.

The apostle Paul, under the inspiration and guidance of the HS probably wrote this epistle from Rome toward the middle or end of his first house arrest there, between A.D. 60 and 62.

You'll recall during that time Paul was a prisoner, but he enjoyed considerable freedom there for about two years. Many of Paul's fellow Christian workers were with him when he composed this epistle.

Now when you think of Paul's letters in the NT, you realize most of Paul's Letters were written to congregations in large or prominent cities: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus..

**SHOW PIC** Colosse was a city in the province of Phrygia, in the area now known as Asia Minor. It was located ten miles east of Laodicea. It was also located about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. **CLOSE PIC**

But Colosse was no booming metropolis. Colosse was a city that had seen better days. Even the assembly there didn't become well-known in early church history. All that to say, if it weren't for this inspired Epistle to the Christians there, Colosse would be a name known only to students of ancient history.

So if Colosse wasn't a booming city, not an influential city, and on top of that it was a city that Paul had never even been to, why did Paul take the time to write this letter? I mean this was Paul, didn't he have better things to do and more important things to deal with?

Well based on what's written we're about to see there was a very real danger facing the citizens of Colosse. But it wasn't the kind of danger you can see coming down the street. This is the kind of

danger that moves slowly, stealthily. The kind of danger that is heard more than it's seen.

We're talking about the danger of false teachings.

BTW have you ever noticed that false teachers always target newer believers, those who are young in the faith, and those who don't know them well?

False teaching was running rampant, and misguided views of who Jesus truly is was causing people to shipwreck their faith.

In Colossians, the HS through the Apostle Paul masterfully counteracts all these errors by displaying the glorious truths of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You'll notice that Paul doesn't address and debate each false teaching-no he dwelt on the solution to false teachings: a better understanding of Jesus. Knowing the real Jesus helps us to stay away from the counterfeits out there.

A few more notes by way of introduction...

As we go through this study for the next couple of months you'll notice this Epistle bears a striking resemblance to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. 54 of the 155 verses in Ephesians are similar to verses found in Colossians.

But make no mistake, the HS has seen to it that there are new truths to uncover and apply to our lives.

## SHOW PIC

Ephesians views believers as seated with Christ in heavenly places. Colossians, on the other hand, sees believers on earth, with Christ their glorified Head in heaven.

The emphasis in Ephesians is that the believer is in Christ. Colossians speaks of Christ in the believer, the hope of glory.

In Ephesians, the thrust is on the church as the “Body” of Christ, the unity of the Body of Christ is stressed.

In Colossians, the headship of Christ is clearly presented, with the necessity of our being submissive to Him.

## CLOSE PIC

One more thing before we start. This letter — full of love and concern, written to a church Paul had neither planted or visited — shows the power of Christian love. Paul didn't need to see or meet or directly know these Christians in order to love them and be concerned for them. He genuinely loved them from afar.

So with that all being said as our introduction, we're gonna study verses 1-8, and the title of our message is For the Love of Christ.

## LET'S PRAY

**1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,** Paul was an apostle not by a committee, or by a popular vote. No it was God's will for Paul to be an apostle, or sent one.

I've heard people say being a pastor or a missionary is the greatest call in life. But that's just not true. No, the greatest calling in life is simply doing that which God has called or willed you to do.

Not everyone is called to be a pastor. Not everyone is called to be a missionary. Not everyone is called to be a banker, or a maintenance worker. No, the greatest calling is doing that which God calls you to do .

And this is so freeing, because it means we don't need to try and be someone or do something the Lord hasn't called us to do. He's created you, to be you!

In Paul's greeting here in v1 he also mentions Timothy. Scholars believe that Timothy probably heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through the area of Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey.

Timothy was probably in his late teens/early twenties when he 1st joined Paul, but he had already distinguished himself as faithful by then.

We do know that Timothy served as Paul's representative to several churches, and later Timothy was a pastor in Ephesus. Timothy was a faithful servant alongside Paul as he wrote this letter.

**2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:**

Pause here...

When you hear the word saint, what comes to mind? **SHOW PIC**

Tragically over the years the word saint has been twisted. A saint isn't on your car dashboard, or some figurine in your house or your front lawn. **CLOSE PIC**

Today there are denominations that go through a whole process where the leaders of the church come together to vote if someone is a saint. And they look at the candidates life to make sure they had a godly life, good character and good behavior, and that there were at least one or 2 miracles that were done by the nominee for sainthood. If they meet this criteria, they can be called a saint.

Then the interesting thing is they have others who will oppose it just to make sure it's genuine. They call the person who opposes it the devil's advocate in this whole process of canonization to determine if someone is a saint or not.

But the New Testament knows nothing of this. In the Bible saints are those who are separated, those that are in Christ. That's you and me.

Take a moment and look at who you're sitting next to you. If they're a Christian, they're a saint! And listen, if you're sitting here this morning and you haven't trusted in Christ, then you're not a saint, you're an ain't.

It's one of 2 options-in Christ-saint. Not in Christ-you're an ain't.

One last thing-notice it says in Christ. Every one of us as Christians has 2 addresses. Our physical address, and our spiritual address. Brian Hill-in Fairfield, and in christ. Same for you. But have you noticed all our problems come from our physical address, not our spiritual?

...2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.[fn]Grace is the unmerited favor which God shows guilty sinners. This is perhaps the most crucial part of the gospel message: salvation is a gift from God separate from any human effort or achievement

And notice this-grace, instead of judgment or cursing!!! That's hard for us to accept sometimes isn't it!

How often do we get mad at God, and upset over circumstances, and we blame God foolishly! But we must remember this is God's posture to us-underserving sinners-He showers His grace upon us.

Now it is important to remember, sometimes when we're dealing with trials and afflictions, it is still God's grace, in His way, of putting to death parts of our flesh.

Paul said in **2 Corinthians 2:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in

persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong

God's grace is sufficient, no matter what we may be enduring.

After grace it says peace. And it's always in that order. If you're trying to be holier or more deserving of God's blessings, your Christian life will not be full of peace.

But if you understand grace—that God blesses and gives because of His love for us—you'll stop trying to earn His blessings, and you'll have peace.

It's wisely been said you cannot really know the peace of God until you have experienced the grace of God.

And please notice-Paul is describing what the Christian has already experienced. Grace and peace from God.

Now this word 'peace' is not Shalom, the Greek and the Hebrew greeting. But the word peace here in the Greek is Iray-nay, which means to bring things together. You're never at peace when things are broken and they're scattered. Peace has the idea of bringing things together and you can be settled.

**3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,** Although Paul had never been to Colosse, what he heard about the believers there caused his heart to rejoice and to respond by praying continually for them.

And this is a good practice for us to follow. Whenever we hear something good about someone, to pray for them.

See our tendency is to only pray for people who are hurting or backsliding. While prayer is of course needed, we should also pray for the folks who are doing well, because the enemy will inevitably launch an attack against them in order to destroy their witness and tear down their testimony.

So lets remember when we hear or see someone doing well to thank the Lord for them and intercede on their behalf.

4-5 are critical verses for us individuals and as a church...

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, The church at Colosse was characterized by three qualities that show spiritual maturity and closeness with Jesus.

The first mark of spiritual maturity is in v 4 and its faith. The Bible tells us in **Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

The second mark of Christian maturity is love. Remember as Christians we all share the same birthmark -it's love! **John 13:35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Finally, a mature Christian will have hope in their heart-we see it in verse 5. This hope is the absolute expectation of Jesus' return. Hope says, "Sure things are tough right now but this is the worst it

will ever be. Jesus is coming back. Life is short. We're going to heaven!"

Any church, family, or individual who is focused on faith, love, and hope will stand strong when the trials of life rear their ugly head.

Lets read verses 5-6

5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,  
6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit,[fn] as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; In the Bible, the word fruit is often used to describe a person's outward actions that result from the condition of the heart. Fruit is evidence of the Christian's walk with Christ. **John 15:5 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

Here's what's amazing. Paul was thankful that the gospel was bringing forth fruit all over the world, even while Paul was in a Roman prison.

7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, Look at the descriptions of Epaphras: "our dear fellow servant," "a faithful minister of Christ,"

Later he'll be described as "a servant of Christ Jesus," "always wrestling in prayer," and "working hard."

Epaphras isn't likely the first name that comes to mind when we think of the Bible, but he faithfully served Jesus, and his reward is sure. And as you faithfully serve Christ, your reward is also sure...

**Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

We'll finish in v8

**8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.** It was from Epaphras that Paul had heard of the Colossians' love in the Spirit. This was not a merely human affection, but it was that genuine love for the Lord and for His people which is created by the indwelling Spirit of God

And it's love for the Lord that draws a person to decide to be baptized. It's saying Jesus, I love you, I surrender my life to you, and I publicly declare I am your disciple.

It's important to know that baptism is NOT a requirement to be saved. Only faith in Jesus takes away sins.

But we do get baptized because Jesus commanded it. **Matthew 28 19 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** Getting baptized is being obedient to Jesus' instructions.

Water baptism symbolizes the death of our old sinful nature. What do you do with a dead body-you bury it. And that's what baptism symbolizes.

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality, signifying that you've buried all the guilt, all the sin, all the shame of the old life. And then coming up out of the water, you rise in the newness of life in Jesus as you identify with His resurrection.

As we get ready to do some baptisms here, we're going to ask the parents to go ahead and retrieve your kids from the children's ministry, so that the volunteers can also celebrate in this glorious moment.

I want to encourage you, even if you haven't signed up to be baptized, we have extra clothes here if you're ready to take that step of obedience.

Or if you have been baptized before, but you want to make a rededication in your life to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ you can get baptized too, right now.

Listen I understand it might feel embarrassing, and maybe part of you is just absolutely fighting yourself inside your body right now, trust me I've been there, I get it.

But I want to encourage you with 2 things. Number 1 we are family here. We're here to love you and support you and encourage you in your walk with Jesus Christ.

The second reminder is this. If you can't make a stand for Jesus Christ here, in this room, amongst family, you won't be able to make an effective stand for Him out in the world.

We have clothes in every size all the way up to 3XL, so there is no excuse for you-that's by design. Don't leave here today wishing you woulda done it.