

# *Introduction*

Why study this tiny book of the Bible called Colossians? Because, like many of Paul's writings, they are just as relevant to Christians today as they were in the first century. Colossians is one of the prison letters along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. They were written in either his imprisonment in Rome or Ephesus. Although Paul had never met any of the members of the church in Colossae, he had a deep love for them and a paternal heart of protection. This stems from the church being founded by one of Paul's proteges named Epaphras. Evidently, while Paul was languishing in prison, Epaphras either visited him or was imprisoned with him. Either way, he reports to Paul about the spiritual well-being of the church.

Like many of Paul's writings, he works to express his devotion to them and to correct any doctrinal misconceptions. In the infant first century Christian church that was growing like wildfire, false beliefs were seeping in and diluting the message of the Gospel. Paul emphasizes that Jesus is all one needs in their faith walk. He is the all-sufficient one.

We will also look at the letter to Philemon. To me it is a tiny letter packed with the truths of the teachings of Jesus. As we have now completed the study of The Lord's Prayer, we will see how that prayer coincides with the words of Paul.

If I had to put one word to Paul's letters, it is hope. Colossians 1:3-5a "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints – the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven."

Notice the words faith, hope, and love. In a world where our faith is compromised and diluted, don't we need Paul's words to the Colossians? Where teen suicide, drugs, anxiety, and depression plague us, don't we need Paul's words of hope? In a world that needs the love of Christ more than ever, don't we need the spiritual maturity to make that happen? Paul's words will propel us into that increased spiritual maturity.

Join us as we dive into Paul's letters to the Colossians and Philemon and see what words of encouragement and hope he has for you.

—Meg Rice