

Colossians Adult Learning Center (ALC)
Winter 2018-2019

Course

Have you known anyone who's so heavenly minded, he's of no earthly good? Or have you known people whose idea of Christianity was "do not do this" but you sure better "do this"? Sometimes people's Christianity is a deep argument about certain truths rather than serving God with joy and with power. Other times, people see Christianity as nothing more than rules – things you must do, things you must avoid – and they end up trying to control people by fear and pride, rather than helping them grow in dependent faith in Christ.

Colossians demonstrates the sufficiency of Christ and His grace to live the Christian life.

Introduction to the book

Colossians was written between 60-62AD by the apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. He addressed it to a group of Christians he had never personally visited, located in present-day southeast Turkey in a city called Colossae, about 100 miles east of the better-known city of Ephesus. Paul wrote Colossians, Ephesians, the letter to Philemon and a letter we no longer have to the Laodiceans, a close-by city in the same Lycus Valley, at about the same time. They are referred to as his Prison Epistles. It has 96 verses.

The reason he wrote it was to correct a teaching error cropping up in the church, and about which Paul had likely made aware by his friend Epaphras. This error was an early form of what came to be called Gnosticism, a heresy that suggested that some people had deeper knowledge as a result of visions and greater spiritual insight which gave them authority. The early gnostics in Colossae tended to de-emphasize the sufficiency of faith in Christ as the means to sanctification, and instead suggested that ascetic self-denial was the key to pleasing God. Paul wants to correct that and desires to show that just as they were saved by faith in Christ, they will make in their practice what they already are in their position – sanctified – by faith.

Anticipated Schedule

| DATE | CLASS | SECTION | TITLE | MEMORY |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|---------------|
| December 2 | Week One | Colossians 1:1-12 | <i>Walk Worthy of Your Calling</i> | 1:10 |
| December 9 | Week Two | Colossians 1:13-23 | <i>First Place in Everything</i> | 1:17 |
| December 16 | Week Three | Colossians 1:24-29 | <i>Every Man Complete in Christ</i> | 1:29 |
| December 23 | Week Four | Colossians 2:1-7 | <i>In Whom All Wisdom Is Hidden</i> | 2:6 |
| January 6 | Week Five | Colossians 2:8-15 | <i>In Him You Are Made Complete</i> | 2:10 |
| January 13 | Week Six | Colossians 2:16-23 | <i>Holding Fast to the Head</i> | 2:20 |
| January 20 | Week Seven | Colossians 3:1-11 | <i>You Laid Aside Old and Put on New</i> | 3:3 |
| January 27 | Week Eight | Colossians 3:12-17 | <i>Put on Love</i> | 3:15 |
| February 3 | Week Nine | Colossians 3:18-25 | <i>From the Lord You Will Receive</i> | 3:23 |
| February 10 | Week Ten | Colossians 4:1-6 | <i>Making the Most of Opportunities</i> | 4:2 |
| February 17 | Week Eleven | Colossians 4:7-18 | <i>That He May Encourage Your Hearts</i> | 4:12 |
| February 24 | Week Twelve | Summary: Col. 1-4 | <i>Christ is Your Life</i> | 3:2 |

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Class One: December 2, 2019 // *Walk Worthy of Your Calling* // Colossians 1:1-14

- I. **Colossians 1:1-2 – Greeting and authority base**
 - A. *Paul and Timothy to the saints and faithful brethren at Colossae*
Look how he wants them to think of themselves, their identity
 - B. *Grace to you and peace from God our Father*
God's gift given to undeserving people
With His grace should come peace... does it for you?
 - C. *An apostle of Christ* → One sent
Authority vested in one who is sent is the authority of the sender
 - D. *By the will of God* – This wasn't my idea → It is God's (re-emphasis)

- II. **Colossians 1:3-8 – Gratitude for their faith in Christ**
 - A. *We give thanks to God for you and pray for you*
Notice that their faith gives him reason to give thanks and how it leads to prayer
 - B. *Your faith in Christ and your love for others impacts us*
Our faith is a source of encouragement to others.
When we grow in faith, it is only natural that our love grows.
 - C. *Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven which you heard of in the gospel*
One big reason our faith grows is because of what we heard about heaven
The gospel carries with it amazing promises about heaven... never forget them.
 - D. *The gospel is "bearing fruit and increasing"*
The natural result of us allowing the gospel to take root is that we are fruitful.
As we grow, we don't get to the end of godliness. It's normal to keep growing.
 - E. *Fruitfulness in you happened "since you understood the grace of God in truth"*
Fruitfulness in the Christian life (fruit of the Spirit and fruit in others' lives) is the natural result of a gospel of grace. Fruitfulness is the measure of a Christian life.
 - F. *As you learned it from Epaphras*
There is merit in remembering who brought us the gospel and remembering that we're all supposed to help someone else believe or grow like Epaphras did.

- III. **Colossians 1:9-12 – Paul's hope for the church (and the Holy Spirit's hope for us)**
 - A. Now we get to some of the goals of this book
 1. **That you would be filled with the knowledge of His will**
 2. **That you would be characterized by "all spiritual wisdom and understanding"**
 3. **That you would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord**
 4. **That you would please Him in every respect**
 5. **That you would bear fruit in every good work**
 6. **That you would increase in the knowledge of God**
 7. **That you would be strengthened with power for steadfastness & patience**
 8. **That you would joyously give thanks since we have been "qualified" to share in the inheritance of the saints.**

IV. Discussion

- When has someone else's faith encouraged you and why?
- How does increased faith result in increased love?
- How does the hope laid up in heaven increase our faith and our love?
- What can we do in order to strengthen that faith and love?
- What connection in your life has there been between understanding God's grace and bearing fruit?
- What does it mean in your life to "walk worthy of your calling"?
- What significance is it that Paul could point to a certain person who helped them understand and believe the gospel? Are there any implications for you and me?
- Are the goals of this book (see vv. 9-12) what you pray for yourself and others? How are Paul's prayers different from your normal prayers? Is there a lesson imbedded in that for you?

V. Homework

- A. Read the book two separate times (on different days) all the way through
- B. Memorize Colossians 1:10 in whatever version you use.*
- C. Use ONE of the discussion questions as a dinner time conversation starter.

*New American Standard (ver. 1995)

- *So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Sunday-Monday) +*
- *To please Him in all respects (Tuesday-Wednesday) +*
- *Bearing fruit in every good work (Thursday Friday) +*
- *Increasing in the knowledge of God (Saturday-Sunday)*