

The Book of Colossians

Colossians 1:1-14

DAY 1: Colossians 1:1-2

1. We begin a summer series on the book of Colossians. Paul wrote this letter from prison between the years 52-55 A.D.
2. We don't know if Paul ever visited Colossae. He was in Ephesus for three years, which is only one hundred and fifty miles from Colossae. Paul did know a lot about the church, but we don't know if it was from firsthand knowledge or through reports from trusted compatriots.
3. The letter was written as a result of a growing theological problem that was making its way into the church, what we call, the "Colossian heresy." This heresy appeared to be a mixture of Gnosticism and Judaism. False teachers were undermining the ministry and teachings of Paul and his missionary band.
4. The false teachers were telling the Christians that there was a "special knowledge" that Paul and his team had not taught. The effect was to minimize the central gospel message, which Paul found abhorrent.
5. As a result, Paul finds it necessary to do the following in this letter:
 - a. To show the true meaning of the gospel message, that there is no "special knowledge" for "spiritual elites" that the rest of us don't have.
 - b. To show that the gospel, when properly understood is the essence of what we need, not just for salvation, but also for future growth in Christ.
 - c. To show his "credentials" as a teacher of the gospel.

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

7. What credentials does Paul point to, as a legitimate bible instructor?

8. Paul addresses the believers in Colossae as "holy and faithful." It is his opening statement as to the believers' complete adequacy in Christ because of the gospel. How would you have responded when these words were read about you?

9. He gives them a blessing of "grace and peace." Of all the things he could have said, why do you think Paul chose these two?

10. "Grace and peace" is written by Paul, but from whom does grace and peace come?

DAY 2: Colossians 1:3-5

Colossians 1:3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--

⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ that has come to you....

1. Paul's opening encouragement to the believers tells them what is most important about their new life in Christ. What items are most important to Paul?

2. What things does Paul say about "faith?"

3. What things does Paul say about "love?"

4. To what does Paul attribute their faith and love?

5. It's been said of some Christians that "they are so heavenly-minded that they are of no earthly good." Would Paul ascribe to that criticism?

6. To what does Paul attribute their faith, hope and love?

7. How does Paul equate "truth" and "the gospel?"

8. If you had been a young Christian at Colossae and heard these opening words, how would you have responded?

9. What strikes you most about Paul's opening encouragement?

DAY 3: Colossians 1:6-9

Colossians 1:6 ...All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

⁷You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

1. Paul has already equated the gospel with “truth.” Now, he tells what the gospel is doing!
2. Where does Paul say the gospel is spreading? (v. 6).
3. Paul illustrates the effect of the gospel to farming and gardening. It is “bearing fruit” and “growing.” In this sense, the gospel is “alive!” When it is planted, it springs up and grows to the people around it, and bears fruit in the lives of people.
4. When did this process begin for the Colossians? (v. 6).
5. Was there anything the Colossians had to “do” in order for the effects of the gospel to begin? (v.6)
6. Paul turns his attention back to ministerial credentials. What does Paul say about Epaphras?
7. If you had been in Colossae, what would have been the effects on you of Paul’s words about Epaphras?
8. The false teachers were undermining Paul and Epaphras, and their ministry to the believers. When Paul tells them of the glowing report he heard from Epaphras about the Colossian believers would this have struck you as surprising, or even amazing?

Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

9. Have you ever had someone praying for you, non-stop?
10. Of all the things Paul could have prayed for them, why do you think he chose these items?

DAY 4: Colossians 1:10-11a

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, 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, ...

1. As a Christian, it is easy to feel unworthy of the gospel. Sometimes we mistake this for humility, or sometimes we think this is the way it's supposed to be.
2. But Paul is not calling us "downward," to think less of ourselves. He is calling us to look up to the Lord, and to aspire to be more than we've been, to grow in the grace of God.
3. There are two kinds of "fruit" from the gospel. The first is Christlikeness, or Christ-like character and Christ-like deeds. The second is the effects of the gospel, bringing non-Christians to faith.
4. The effect of fruit is to bring pleasure to God. Yes, in spite of still dealing with our sin nature, each time we turn our attention to demonstrating the character of Christ to others, God is pleased ... with you!
5. Is this how you normally think, that you can please God, or do you tend to focus on the ways you don't please God?
6. The false teachers promised a "deeper knowledge" of the gospel than what the Colossians had been told. They were promised that with deeper knowledge would come an easier life. But notice what Paul prays for the Colossians in v. 11.
7. What kind of life does Paul expect the Colossians (and all God's people) to experience?
8. Another of the ways we can see the effects of the gospel on our lives is the power to endure difficulty and suffering.
9. Finish today by praying these verses for yourself or for a friend.

DAY 5: Colossians 1:11b-14

Colossians 1:11b ... and joyfully¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1. Yesterday we saw how endurance and patience were important virtues, but the verse continues with”and joyfully giving thanks...”

2. How does this change the nature of endurance and patience?

3. Why do you think being thankful is so important?

4. Earlier we looked at living a life “worthy of the gospel.” The issue is not feeling “bad” about ourselves, as if we’ll never “measure up.” Verse 12 carries a truth that runs parallel to this. What is it that qualifies us for heaven? (v. 12)

5. There is nothing we did to qualify us for heaven. He did it! He qualified us!!! How did that happen? (vv. 13-14)

6. We were formerly in the “dominion of darkness.” The idea is the devil’s fortress or dungeon. We were helpless to free ourselves from our slavery to sin. Our doom was certain.

7. God instituted a rescue operation. Notice how Paul describes the rescue in vv. 13-14.

8. Write these two verses in your own words (vv. 13-14)

9. As we finish this passage, what strikes you the most?