

Colossians Chapter 1

Colossians 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy [our] brother,"

“Timothy”:

This is Paul’s co-laborer and true child in the faith, who was able to be with him because, although Paul was a prisoner, he had personal living quarters (Acts 28:16-31).

In this very first verse, we see that Paul wrote the letter.

Timothy was with Paul at the time of the writing and agreed with what was said.

We have mentioned several times the qualifications of an apostle, and Paul fit every one of them. We do not question that Paul was in fact, an apostle.

We also agreed that Paul was chosen by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in particular, and unto all mankind as opportunity arose.

Timothy is spoken of as brother of Paul, when in fact; he was not related to Paul in the physical.

He was a brother in the sense that all believers in Christ are brothers.

Colossians 1:2 "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

“Saints”:

Those who have been separated from sin and set apart to God, the believers in Colossae.

“Faithful”:

A word used in the New Testament exclusively for believers.

“Colossae”:

One of 3 cities in the Lycus River valley in the region of Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), about 100 miles East of Ephesus.

“Grace ... peace”:

Paul’s greeting in all 13 of his epistles.

“Grace”:

This is used in several different ways in the New Testament.

It can refer to;

- (1) God's unmerited kindness on Calvary, which brings about man's salvation (Eph. 2:8);
- (2) The state of grace in which the believer stands, that is, his being in God's favor (Rom. 5:2);
- (3) An unusual blessing produced by divine grace (Eph. 3:8);
- (4) Graciousness or attractiveness (4:6); and
- (5) "Grace" can as here, mean God's "stored-up help", dispensed to His people in times of need.

"Peace": is also employed in a variety of ways in Scripture: It can signify;

- (1) The opposite of war (Rev. 6:4);
- (2) Harmony and concord with others (Eph. 4:3);
- (3) Health and welfare (1 Cor. 16:11);
- (4) Salvation in that one is at peace with God (Rom. 5:1); and
- (5) As in this verse, "peace" sometimes denotes tranquility of mind that frees the Christian from fear and anxiety.

This letter was addressed to the people of the church in Colossae who had believed Jesus Christ to be their Savior.

Here, again, we see that all believers are brothers in Christ.

Paul's letters always start with grace.

Grace is a free gift from God, which brings the peace spoken of here.

The saints spoken of here, have received this as a gift after believing in Jesus.

"Colossae":

This was located in the Roman province of Asia, 11 miles from Laodicea in the Lycus Valley.

It lay on the main road from Ephesus heading east.

Both Herodotus and Xenophon regarded it as a great city in the fifth century B.C., but during the first century Strabo described it as a third-rate town.

That Paul wrote an epistle to such a small community suggests the problem at Colossae must have been great.

Colossae is mentioned only once (verse 2), in the New Testament.

Paul seemingly had never seen the church (verse 4; 2:1), but it probably was established by one of his coworkers during his extensive ministry at Ephesus (Acts. 19:1).

We see honor given to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ here.

The name Lord Jesus Christ tells us who, and what, Jesus really is.

He is our King, our Savior, the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Colossians 1:3 "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,"

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”:

This designation was often used to show that Jesus was one in nature with God, as any true son is with his father.

It was an affirmation of Christ’s deity (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1; 11:13; Eph. 1:3; 3:14; 1 Pet. 1).

Paul always starts his letters on a positive note.

This is no exception.

They are in the constant prayers of Paul.

Colossians 1:4 "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love [which ye have] to all the saints,"

“Faith in Christ Jesus”:

This is saving faith (see notes on Rom. 1:16; 10:4-17; James 2:14-26).

“Love ... to all the saints”: (verse 8).

One of the visible fruits of true saving faith is love for fellow believers (John 13:34-35; Gal. 5:22 1 John 2:10; 3:14-16).

“Love ... to all the saints”:

Evidence of a person’s faith in Christ Jesus is his love.

More than anything in the letter, this indicates that Paul might not have founded the church here.

It is as if he is saying, all that he knows about this church is what he has heard others saying.

The things Paul mentions here that he has heard are good things.

The very first thing is that they have set their faith in Jesus Christ.

It appears also, that this is a church of great love for God and for all of the believers.

Colossians 1:5 "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;"

“Hope”:

This is salvation, as it refers to the object for which one hopes.

The believer’s hope is inseparable from his faith (see notes on Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

“The gospel”:

See note on Rom. 1:1.

The Greek word literally means “good news,” and was used in classical Greek to express the good news of victory in a battle.

The gospel is the good news of Christ’s victory over Satan, sin, and death.

“Word of the truth of the gospel”:

This could be rendered as “the message of the gospel which is true.”

This is meant to contradict the Colossian heresy: unlike its false teaching or “vain deceit” (2:8), the gospel is true indeed.

The hope is of the resurrection to eternal life in heaven.

Paul says here, you have been taught the truth of the gospel and you believed.

Paul has commented on their faith and love, and both are things that will get them to heaven.

Colossians 1:6 "Which is come unto you, as [it is] in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as [it doth] also in you, since the day ye heard [of it], and knew the grace of God in truth:"

“In all the world”:

The gospel was never intended for an exclusive group of people; it is good news for the whole world (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:8, 14, 16; 1 Thess. 1:8).

It transcends all ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries.

“Fruit”:

This refers to the saving effect of gospel preaching and to the growth of the church (see notes on Rom. 1:13; Phil. 1:22; Matt. 13:3-8, 31-32).

The universal spread and effectiveness of the gospel verify the assertion (in verse 5), that this is the truth.

The Colossian heresy is merely local; while the gospel has come to the Colossians, it has gone beyond them “in all the world”.

And it bringeth forth fruit: that is, when embraced by faith, the gospel produces Godly character and noble conduct in its converts.

This same gospel had been taught in all the known world of that time.

Actually, love is a fruit that was brought forth by their faith in Jesus.

Wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, it produces fruit.

Galatians 1:11 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man."

The good news of the gospel is not a man-made belief, but comes from God Himself.

Christianity is contagious.

In the beginning, it spread very rapidly.

This happened in part because of the many eyewitnesses to Jesus.

We see that many times thousands were saved in one day.

Acts 2:41 "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls."

Paul is saying, these people at Colossae have been very productive in bringing in new Christians ever since they heard the gospel themselves.

Colossians 1:7 "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;"

“Epaphras” evangelized the Colossians with the gospel and planted the church in their city.

In describing Epaphras here in such glowing terms as “our dear fellow servant”, and “for you a faithful minister of Christ,” Paul puts his apostolic stamp of approval on this saint’s life, ministry, and gospel.

The implication to the readers: Surely you will not forsake Epaphras’ gospel and pastoral care in exchange for the doctrine of the local heretics, will you?

Now we see that Epaphras was one of the ministers who had brought the truth of the gospel to the church here.

Paul speaks highly of Epaphras, who had served with Paul on some of his missionary journeys.

He had ministered here being sent by Paul.

He had worked with Paul, and the message was the same as Paul’s.

Paul is saying that Epaphras brings a true message of the gospel of Christ.

Colossians 1:8 "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

“Your love in the Spirit”:

Or, your love by the Spirit: that is, the Holy Spirit instilled and nurtured in the Colossian Christians an affection for others.

It seems as though it was Epaphras who had told Paul of the great love of these people.

Spirit here, is speaking of the Holy Spirit.

None of us know how to truly love, until the Spirit comes and teaches us how to love.

Man’s love is because.

God’s love is in spite of.

Colossians 1:9 "For this cause we also, since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"

“Wisdom”:

This is an accurate perception into the true nature of things.

“Understanding”:

This is the skillful application of this wisdom in practical situations.

“The knowledge of his will”:

The Greek word for “knowledge” is the usual one, with an added preposition that intensifies its very meaning.

This is not an inner impression or feeling, but a deep and thorough knowledge of the will of God that is finally and completely revealed in the Word of God (3:16; Eph. 5:17; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Pet. 2:13, 15; 4:19).

“Wisdom and understanding”:

“Spiritual” modifies both “wisdom” (the ability to accumulate and organize principles from Scripture), and “understanding” (the application of those principles to daily living).

We have mentioned so many times in these lessons, that wisdom is a gift from God and knowledge is accumulated learning.

The way we can learn of God's will, is to study His Holy Word.

Then, Paul is saying, he had prayed that they would study God's Word and find out what God's will for their lives is.

This spiritual understanding here, is speaking of being guided into all truth, which is by the Holy Spirit of God.

Colossians 1:10 "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

“Walk ... worthy”:

This is a key New Testament concept which calls the believer to live in a way that is consistent with his identification with the Lord who saved him.

“Being fruitful in every good work”:

See notes on Rom. 1:13; Phil. 4:17.

Spiritual fruit is the by-product of a righteous life.

The Bible identifies spiritual fruit as leading people to Christ (1 Cor. 16:15), praising God (Heb. 13:15), giving money (Rom. 15:26-28); living a godly life (Heb. 12:11), and displaying holy attitudes (Gal. 5:22-23).

“Increasing in the knowledge of God”:

Spiritual growth cannot occur apart from this knowledge (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

The evidences of spiritual growth include a deeper love for God's Word (Psalm 119:97), a more perfect obedience (1 John 2:3-5), a strong doctrinal foundation (1 John 2:12-14), and expanding faith (2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Cor. 10:5), and a greater love for others (Phil. 1:9).

This verse expresses the reason that (in verse 9), Paul wants the Colossians to obtain a knowledge of God's will.

It is that they may "walk" (live), properly and fully please God.

In Greek, the four explanatory participles (of verses 10b-12), spell out and precisely define what a "worthy" walk entails: the believer is:

- (1) "Fruitful in every good work," productive in Christian service;
- (2) Constantly "increasing in the knowledge of God," ever coming to know the Lord better;
- (3) Always "strengthened with all might," becoming spiritually stronger and stronger; and
- (4) In the habit of giving thanks, sincerely expressing gratitude to God in both the pleasant and unpleasant experiences in his life.

To obey God's will in our life pleases God.

When we become a new creature in Christ through accepting Jesus as Savior, we are expected of God to walk in that newness of life.

The only way we can walk worthy is to allow Jesus to live and walk in us.

We must be fruit bearers.

God expects every Christian to produce other Christians.

The best way to do all of this is to stay in the study of God's Word and accumulate His knowledge in us.

Colossians 1:11 "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;"

"Strengthened with all might":

See notes on Eph. 3:16-20.

"Patience and longsuffering":

These terms are closely related and refer to the attitude one has during trials.

“Patience” looks more at enduring difficult circumstance and persevering through problems, trails, tribulations, and so forth.

While “longsuffering” looks at enduring difficult people and forbearing the faults and offenses of others.

It is the power of God within which strengthens the inner man.

The power of the Holy Spirit within produces the patience, longsuffering, and joyfulness.

Colossians 1:12 "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:"

“Made us”:

This means “qualified us to”.

The Greek word for “qualified” means “to make sufficient,” “to empower,” or “to authorize.”

God qualifies us only through the finished work of the Savior.

Apart from God’s grace through Jesus Christ, all the people would be qualified only to receive His wrath.

“Inheritance”:

Literally “for the portion of the lot.”

Each believer will receive his own individual portion of the total divine inheritance (see the note on Romans 8:17), an allusion to the partitioning of Israel’s inheritance in Canaan (Num. 26:52-56; 33:1-54; Joshua. 14:1-2; see notes on 1 Peter 1:3-5).

“In light”:

Scripture represents “light” intellectually as divine truth (Psalm 119:130), and morally as divine purity (Eph. 5:8-14; 1 John 1:5).

The saint’s inheritance exists in the spiritual realm of truth and purity where God Himself dwells (1 Tim. 6:16).

Light then, is a synonym for God’s kingdom (John 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

This verse also might be translated “thanking the Father, for He made us fit to share in the salvation belonging to the saints who are in the light.”

“Light”:

This is the ethical condition in which God's children live.

Namely, that of spiritual understanding, with its accompanying morality and happiness.

It is the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord which makes us acceptable unto Him.

The righteousness of Christ puts us in right standing with the Father.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

Acts 26:18 "To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Our inheritance is in Jesus.

We receive the inheritance because of our faith.

Hebrews 9:15 "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

John 8:12 "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

We are in Light, if we are Christians, because we are in Jesus and He is the Light.

Colossians Chapter 1 Questions

1. Who was the letter written to?
2. Where was Paul when he wrote this book?
3. Approximately when was it written?
4. The people in this area were caught up in what?
5. What is the main message in Colossians?
6. What does Paul call himself in verse 1?
7. Why did Paul become an apostle?
8. In what sense was Timothy Paul's brother?

9. Who was the letter addressed to?
10. What do Paul's letters always start with?
11. What does the name, Lord Jesus Christ, tell us?
12. What had Paul heard about them?
13. What is the hope of the believer?
14. Wherever in the world this gospel is preached it produces _____.
15. In Acts chapter 2 verse 41, how many souls are added in one day?
16. Paul names _____ who is a faithful minister to them?
17. Who had told Paul of the great love of these people?
18. Paul was praying that they be filled with what?
19. How do wisdom and knowledge differ?
20. That ye might walk _____ of the Lord.
21. How can we walk worthy?
22. What strengthens the inner man?
23. What puts us in right standing with the Father?
24. Who is the mediator of the New Testament?
25. We receive an inheritance, because of our _____.