

Colossians (complete in Christ)

Week 1 (Background)-

-Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, likely in Rome while he was in prison, around 60 AD

-Colosse was a smaller town, one you'd pass to get to a more popular town, was 100 miles east of Ephesus -a part of modern day Turkey

-once thriving economically in the around 500 BC -it was at the junction of the main trade routes that ran N/S, E/W. -in Paul's day though, the roads to these spots had been re-routed & therefore bypassed Colosse, which led to its economic & population decline

-this young church soon came under attack from heretics in the area -mainly Gentiles populated the town, but some Jews -that resulted in various troubles the church there faced such as Jewish legalism, & some pagan mysticism from the Gentiles -several years into the church's history Gnosticism was trying to creep into the church, which is a teaching that God is good, but matter is evil, that Jesus was less than God, & also denied His humanity, also taught one had to be enlightened with a knowledge above what Scripture taught to attain salvation

The Colossian Heresy-

Paul never explicitly describes the false teaching he opposes in the Colossian letter. The nature of the heresy must be inferred from statements he made in opposition to the false teachers. An analysis of his refutation suggests that the heresy was diverse in nature. Some of the elements of its teachings were:

1. *Ceremonialism*. It held to strict rules about the kinds of permissible food and drink, religious festivals (2:16–17) and circumcision (2:11; 3:11).
2. *Asceticism*. “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” (2:21; cf. 2:23).
3. *Angel worship*. See 2:18.
4. *Depreciation of Christ*. This is implied in Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ (1:15–20; 2:2–3:9).
5. *Secret knowledge*. The Gnostics boasted of this (see 2:18 and Paul's emphasis in 2:2–3 on Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom”).
6. *Reliance on human wisdom and tradition*. See 2:4,8.

-Paul had never been there, but during Paul's 3 year ministry in Ephesus, Epaphras had gotten saved as he was visiting Ephesus & took the Gospel to Colosse, his home town (**Col.1:7&8**) -letter was likely written when Epaphras visited Paul in the Roman prison -he was concerned about the heresy getting into the church at Colosse.

Purpose, Historical & Theological Themes-

Paul's purpose is to refute the Colossian heresy. To accomplish this goal, he exalts Christ as the very image of God (**1:15**), the Creator (**1:16**), the pre-existent sustainer of all things (**1:17**), the head of the church (**1:18**), the first to be resurrected (**1:18**), the fullness of deity in bodily form (**1:19; 2:9**) and the reconciler (**1:20-22**). Thus Christ is completely adequate. We "have been given fullness in Christ" (**2:10**). On the other hand, the Colossian heresy was altogether inadequate. It was a hollow and deceptive philosophy (**2:8**), lacking any ability to restrain the old sinful nature (**2:23**).

The theme of Colossians is the complete adequacy of Christ as contrasted with the emptiness of mere human philosophy. ****For us in this study, knowing the complete adequacy of Christ translates into a knowledge that we ourselves are complete now in Christ, are to be satisfied in Him. We are accepted in Christ, & therefore don't have to go looking elsewhere for our completeness, our identity or sense of acceptance.****

Outline- Introduction (1:1-14)

- Greetings (**1:1-2**)
- Thanksgiving (**1:3-8**)
- Prayer (**1:9-14**)
- The Supremacy of Christ (**1:15-23**)
- Paul's Labor for the Church (**1:24-2:7**)
 - His Ministry for the Sake of the Church (**1:24-29**)
 - His Concern for the Spiritual Welfare of His Readers (**2:1-7**)
- Freedom from Human Regulations through Life with Christ (**2:8-23**)
 - Warning to Guard against the False Teachers (**2:8-15**)
 - Pleas to Reject the False Teachers (**2:16-19**)
 - An Analysis of the Heresy (**2:20-23**)
- Rules for Holy Living (**3:1-4:6**)
 - The Old Self and the New Self (**3:1-17**)
 - Rules for Christian Households (**3:18-4:1**)
 - Further Instructions (**4:2-6**)
- Final Greetings and Benediction (**4:7-18**)

Colossians 1:1-8- v.1- Paul & Timothy, Paul wrote, & Timothy was likely by his side in jail

v.2- “saints” if you’re a Christian, you are a saint -“faithful”- the church there are known for their faithfulness Q: *What are we known for?* -“brothers”- the Greek word here speaks to siblings, so it’s brothers & sisters in Christ -so this is to all the believers of the church in Colosse, & is for up today as well

-“grace to you...” -common greeting from Paul to those he’d write Q: *How to you greet others when you meeting them or write?*

v.3-8- “Their Faith in Christ”, “Thanksgiving & Prayer”

v.3- Paul was thankful for this group of Christians, though he had never met them or visited their town -there’s an instant connection with fellow believer even though you may have just met them Q: *Have any examples of that?*

-setting tone of this letter by speaking early of who Jesus is, referring to His deity -Q: *What are some opinions the world has of Christ? Why do you think they have these false thoughts of Christ?*

-though he couldn’t be with them, he was always praying for them -we too must pray for our brothers & sisters in Christ

v.4- known for a couple things here that Paul brings out- 1) “faith”- speaking of a saving faith here, a complete trust in Christ alone for salvation 2) “love for all the saints” Q: *Are our churches known for this? Are we known for this?* -this is a fruit of salvation & we have reason to doubt our salvation if we do not love our siblings in Christ (**John 13:34&35; 1Jn.2:10; 3:14&15***) -sign of true conversion

v.5- what do we put our hope in? -the temporal things of this world= frustration, disappointment, discontent, unsatisfied BUT the everlasting things above= contentment, satisfied, joy, etc.

-“truth of the Gospel” -we must get the Gospel right, know it, live it, share it-there are true & false gospels out there, be discerning -Q: *What are some false gospels we should be aware of?* -adding to the Gospel (works, legalism, etc.), or taking away from the Gospel (prosperity, easy believism, etc)

v.6- Paul reminds the believers that the Gospel had come to them, is spreading around the world & that it’s bearing fruit -know that the Gospel even today is doing the same, though it may feel like it’s in decline. (ex.- thinning out of nominal Christians= healthier church)

-the true Gospel bears lasting fruit -the true Gospel is a message of God’s grace

v.7&8- this is where Paul mentions how the church there received the Gospel Q: *How does the Gospel spread so those around us & the world receive it? What is our role in that?*

Week 2 | Colossians 1:9-29 “The Preeminence of Christ”

v.9&10- Paul’s prayer for the Colossians- that they’d be filled with the knowledge of God’s will Q: *Ever confused bout God’s will for your life? Decree, desire, direction (Bible, counsel, prayer, & just do something)*

Paul wants for the *spiritual wisdom & spiritual understanding*, so we need to look to God for these things, not within ourselves (Jer.- hearts wicked)

Prov.3:5-7- don’t be wise in your own eyes

1Cor.2:6&7- not a wisdom of this age, but one that comes from God -where do we find this? in His Word

Eph.1:17- *ask God for wisdom*

-our knowledge can be filled in Him -what were the Gnostics teaching? You’re to gain a higher knowledge above God & His Word. Q: *What does that say about God? That He’s not the One supreme in knowledge, there’s one wiser, His wisdom & knowledge is insufficient.*

v.10&11- Q: *What’s the result of spiritual wisdom & knowledge from God?* -we walk worthy of the LORD, please Him, are fruitful, increase our knowledge of God, are strengthened

v.12- Q: *What does it mean that God the Father has qualified us to be partakers of His inheritance?* -He’s the One who provided a way of salvation for us through Christ which grants us the eternal inheritance -we need to be more thankful for God’s work in saving us

v.13- maybe we’ve forgotten what He has done for us in salvation; taken us from the power of darkness & placed us in His kingdom. “power”- speaks to the authority sin had over our lives, no longer through if you’re in Christ

v.14- we’re redeemed by what? the blood of Christ alone

v.15-18- now Paul talks about who the Son is; image of God (God in the flesh), is the Creator of all things, before all things (eternal, uncreated Creator, Alpha) all things consist in Him (He sustains all), head of the body (the Church, we are to submit as members of the body) preeminent (meaning superior to or notably above all others; outstanding) -is He that in our lives?

“Reconciled in Christ” | 1:19-23

v.19- “all the fullness”, Gnostics would have taught that divine powers & attributes would have been divided amongst various sources -Paul is addressing that & assuring the Colossians that all divine power & authority is found in Christ

-this verse speaks to the deity of Christ as well

v.20- Christ is the greatest of reconcilers as He has brought the vilest of sinners into a relationship with the holiest of beings.
2Cor.5:18-21-now we have the ministry of reconciliation

“reconcile” here means to change or exchange, imputation, Christ got our sin & death, we get His righteousness & life

-the blood of Christ is what makes us at peace w/ God (**Rm.5:1**)

v.21-23 Paul reminds them of who they once were Q: *Ever think about that?* -it should lead to praise & thanks to God

-we see how we’ve been changed, how God sees us now (v.22)

-true Christians will persevere to the end (v.23)

“Sacrificial Service for Christ” | 1:24-29

v.24- Paul rejoiced in His sufferings as he knew what he was doing was benefitting the Church

v.25- he was a minister of the Gospel because of the good stewardship of God

v.26&27 “mystery” -speaks of the Gospel of Christ, now that Christ has come, died & resurrected, & left us with the message to repent & believe

v.28&29 be sure to preach Christ, some Christians & churches don’t, but preach their own opinions (need for exp.preaching)

-this was Paul’s goal & should be ours as well

Week 5 | 3:1-11

“Put off the Old, Put on Christ”

2:20- we have died with Christ (died from the things of this world), also symbolizes our union with Christ in His death & resurrection, we are a new creation

v.1- “raised with Christ” here means to be, “co-resurrected” with Him

-as He died, so our old selves died with Him, as He resurrected, so our new selves have been resurrected & brought to new life

v.2- now we’re to seek things above -the unsaved person is caught up in seeking the things of this world -we’re to be different, seeking heavenly things with last, which won’t fade away -sometimes we do get caught up in seeking worldly things though we’re believers, so let’s be mindful of that -why do this? (*good testimony, less disappointments, more joy*)

-*JMac quote about compass -keeps us focused

v.3- old self has died with Christ

-“your life is hidden with Christ in God” -speaks to our eternal security -Q: *Know anyone who doesn’t believe this?* -also says that all of God’s blessings are now ours to share in -I think it speaks to our new identity as well, our new selves are being renewed into the perfect image of God, how we were first created to be before the fall -to know who we really are now as Christians, to find life & identity, we must find that in Christ (we are complete in Him, **2:10**)

v.4- “Christ who is your life” -you’ve probably heard, all you need is Christ -we need to think that all we really have is Christ, at the end of it all, when we are gone to heaven, we have HIM -Q: What are you looking for most when you get to heaven?

-Jesus is coming back someday

v.5- “therefore”, because of your new life in Christ, put to DEATH your sinful flesh -there’s still this very real war with our flesh, the old self, the old sinful nature (*ex.- wanted to worry, doubt God’s plan, but had to in a real way live out my theology*)

-death to sin! We must not try to tame our sin, just engage in a little of it, but ruthlessly fight it, cut it off, kill it (*ex.-Lion tame*)

-Paul lists some of these things, these are sinful earthly, & go against the image of God we were originally created in;

-fornication (sexual immorality) -God’s design for sexual intimacy is meant for our good, when we misuse it, there’s confusion, hurt, frustration, & even death

-the further away we drift from God's design & purpose for sex the more unsatisfied & frustrated we will be, but the closer we follow His design & purpose the more satisfied & joyful we will be (know more? check out Keller series, "Sex, Singleness, & Marriage")

-uncleanness (impurity)- we must know Christ to know what is impure & what is pure -we need a reference point, a standard

-passion (lust)- passion & lust can be a good thing eh, what matters is the object of your passion & lust, what is it directed towards -article, fight lust with lust, lust after Christ & intimacy with Him -yes be passionate, but of the things above

-evil desire- the mental side of impure sexual desires -it's ok, good even to have desires, but what/who is it for

-covetousness, which is idolatry -when we covet, desiring something that is not ours, we are in return making an idol out of that which we covet -we end up following our own desires instead of God's -covetousness is about greed, wanting to have more, dissatisfaction in your current state

v.6- it's these things which brings upon the wrath of God, this is fair action for a holy & jealous God

v.7- a reminder of who we once were before God saved us

v.8&9- Paul gets practical here about what we need to now put off

v.10&11- the negative command is followed by a positive one, here's what we are to DO, what to PUT ON, the new person (ex.- changing a pair of dirty pants)

-this new version is actually about going back to our original very, when we were made in the image of God -"renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created us" -we are being renewed by the grace of God, & beginning to look more & more like Christ

-what are we to put on, how are we to image our lives, simply in the image of God, so pursue God, know Him & mirror your life after Him

Week 6 | 3:12-25

“Character of the New Man” (v.12-17)

v.12-14- in verses 5-9 we see what we’re to put off as Christians, what we are to put to death, but it can’t end there for us

-Paul lists here what Christians, God’s chosen ones, need to put on, what we need to replace sin with -here we have characteristics to strive for

-holy & beloved- this is our new identity, who we are now in Christ -“holy”= different, unique, set apart (positional & progressive) - “beloved”- we are dearly loved by God as one of His precious children

-we’re to be merciful (again, displays God as merciful as we seek to reflect His image. Any examples of mercy in your life?)

-kind, humble, meek, patient, bear with one another, forgive as Christ has forgiven us

-above all we are to put on love as it is the bond of perfection, it is what unifies us as believers *JMac quote -this is a supernatural love, in our flesh we don’t have the ability to love like this, it’s from God

v.15- what is at rule in your heart? Should be the peace of God -this peace is what comes along through salvation, no more wonder & striving for answers to life’s purpose/meaning

-called in one body, the Universal Church

Q: Which one of these sticks out to you, maybe we should just focus hard on putting on one of these in particular

v.16- allow (we have a responsibility here) Scripture to dwell, live in you, be at home in you, richly -don’t lock it outside, thinking your own wisdom is enough, your own authority will do -“God’s commands are not designed to rob you of life or to plunder your freedom, but to graciously protect you from harm.” (Paul Tripp)

-blatant sin is telling God you know better -the creature telling the Creator how things should be done

-teaching can be done through our praise songs Q: How do you feel about the state of Christian worship music today? (ex.-pop song or contemporary worship song?)

v.17- whatever we do must be for the LORD & His glory -work, school, play, all for Him

“Instructions for Christian Homes” (v.18-25)

v.18&19- here are some instruction from God, through Paul, on how things are best ordered in the house -here we get practical with what he heard in **v.16**, let's let the word of God dwell in us richly, let Him into the "home" of your life

-“submit”, an “s” word in our culture, put is a beautiful thing when lived out biblically & not abused my husbands -if husbands are loving their wives as Christ loves the Church (Eph.5), it would be easy for wives to submit to their husbands

-why? Paints a picture of Christ's submission to the Father, “*as is fitting to the Lord.*” -“submit”=willing put yourself under someone or something, yield, arrange under (Ex.- Kellers)

-“love”- the highest calling for love, “agape”, unconditional, sacrificial love -why? Paints a picture of Christ's love for the Church - living out these things are getting back to living according to the image of God which we created in

Q: What kind of picture of Christ are we painting?

-“bitter”, treat them harshly, trans.- stop being bitter, not to be angry are resentful towards loved one, if so, you're painting poor picture of Christ, failing to live in the image of God

v.20- children should obey their parents for this honours God Q: What does that look like for us in this season of life?

v.21- fathers shouldn't stir up your children or irritate them in any way

v.22-25- we can relate this to student or employee life

-WHATEVER we do, do it as unto God Q: Ever faced with doing something @ the workplace you'd really rather not? Attitude is everything & will help or hurt your witness.

-v.24&25- God sees your work, your heart, & will reward you accordingly

Week 7 | 4:1-18

“Encouragement for Prayer” (v.1-6)

v.1- finishing up thoughts from ch.3 -these thoughts were instructions on how the new man is to interact with others, in the home & in the workplace -addresses “masters” here, our modern parallel, “bosses” & speaks to employer/employee relations -how are those in management positions to treat those under them?

Justly= upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God

Fairly= equality

-when we live these things out in our work/home lives, we paint a better picture of God be a perfectly just & fair God

v.2- continue “earnestly” or “steadfastly”= means to be courageously persistent, or to hold fast & not let go -how often do we give up on praying for something/someone when we don’t see immediate results? Let’s strive to be patient in prayer, persistent & wait for God’s timing

-“being vigilant”, “watchful”, “alert in mind”= stay awake, be aware of what needs praying for, be focused on what we’re praying for
Q: Ever get distracted when you pray?

-be thankful in prayer -much of our prayers should be directing thankfulness to God, this leads to worship

v.3- Paul asks for prayer for them & that the Gospel to have further reach around the world through them, that they’d get more opportunities to share the Gospel -we should pray to this end as well, for ourselves & each other, especially those “in chains” for the sake of the Gospel

-“mystery of Christ”- speaks of the Gospel of Christ

v.4- Paul asks that they’d pray he be clear as he shares the Gospel

v.5- “walk in wisdom towards those who are outside”= must be smart in how we go about proclaiming the Gospel to those around us, should have a plan -“redeeming the time”= making the most of those opportunities God gives us

Q: How clear are we on the Gospel? Do we understand it? How should we go about sharing the Gospel?

1) Know that people are at different places in their “spiritual” journey, & have various barriers in their lives keeping them from Christ (*hand out P2C sheets)

-find out where they're at & go from there

2) Build a relationship, respect & credibility if possible

3) Know the Gospel well yourself (4 aspects of the Gospel)

4) Leave the convicting, regeneration & saving to God- that's His job only, it's not up to you (ex.- gardening)-pray, pray, pray

v.6- we need to be gracious in our speech, including when we're sharing the Gospel -ever heard of someone getting saved due to a theological argument?

-“seasoned with salt”-*read JMac's quote

“Final Greetings” (v.7-18)

v.7- Tychicus was a co-labourer with Paul, a Gentile convert

v.8- Paul always wanted to see the churches healthy & would try to send various people to these churches to help with that

-Paul wanted to see them encouraged as well Q: How important is it for us to be encouragers?

v.9- Paul also wants to send Onesimus to give a report of them

v.12&13- Paul encourages the Colossians as he mentions that Epaphras is praying for them Q: Been encouraged by someone like that before? -let's do that ourselves

v.17- take “heed”= to discern mentally, observe, perceive, discover, understand -to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, examine

“to the ministry”- Q: What kind of specific ministry do you believe the LORD has called you to?

“Be sure to carry out the ministry the Lord gave you.” NLT

Actively engaging in that?