

Colossians 1:1-18

Day 1

Greetings and Encouragement. Read Colossians 1:1-6

FYI: "Colosse was one of the 'tri-cities' of the Lycus Valley . This area was about 100 miles inland from Ephesus. Five centuries before Christ, Colosse was hailed as the great city of Phrygia.' By Paul's time, it was just a small town. A main reason for the change was the rise of the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, when the trade route between Ephesus and the Euphrates valley was diverted away from Colosse." - Irving Jensen (5)

"There were problems among the Christians in Colosse, but the doctrinal problem – sometimes described as "The Colossian Heresy" – is difficult to precisely describe. It probably was a corruption of Christianity with elements of mystical and legalistic Judaism perhaps combined with early Gnosticism. Whatever the problem was precisely, Paul dwelt on the solution: *a better understanding of Jesus*. Knowing the *real* Jesus helps us to stay away from the counterfeit. no matter how it comes packaged." - David Guzik

1. What authority did Paul give as he wrote his letter? 1:1

Digging Deeper

See Acts 16:1-4 for how Timothy became involved with Paul's ministry.

Apostle Strong's NT:652 *apostolos*; a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ "literally 'one sent forth'" - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

2. What titles did Paul give the Colossians and what would that communicate to them? 1:1a

- What two blessings did he want them to experience? 1:2b

FYI: "The Greek term translated saints means 'holy people.' The essence of 'holiness' is being set apart to God. All believers are saints, not because they are perfect, but because they belong to God." - Nelson Study Bible (2010)

"*In Christ*' is one of the deepest and most joyous of mysteries. In barest terms it means that that Colossians... partook of all that Christ had done, all that he was (and is), and all that He ever would be. There must be grace before we experiences the *shalom* of God. Grace (God's work) comes before peace (our new relationship)." - R. Kent Hughes (16)

3. Underline why or how we can have peace.

- Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, NIV
- Romans 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;
- Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. NIV

4. What attitude did Paul show in his prayer for the Colossians? 1:3 (See Ephesians 1:16)

FYI: *Pray for* (NT:4012 *peri*) "Its literal meaning is about, or around: i.e. his is praying around them. Used by the Lord when He told Peter...But I have prayed for (*peri*) you...Satan may have wanted to sift Peter, but the Lord had prayed around him , like a wall of protection." - Michael Penny (6)

5. For what attributes was Paul thankful? 1:4 (Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:2)

FYI: faith in Christ Jesus "The Colossian's faith did not exist by itself; it rested upon and was placed in Christ Jesus. Christ Himself is the only secure Foundation, the One Who is almighty, the same 'yesterday, today and forever, the immovable Rock of ages." - Stuart Allen (118)

Love/agape "is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will. It is the spirit which never seeks anything but the other person's good. It is not simply a wave of emotion; it is a deliberate conviction of the mind issuing in a deliberate policy of the life. It takes not only his heart; it takes his mind and his will as well." - William Barclay

"These believers had a vertical-horizontal connection : their faith in Christ (vertical) could intersect with the love for the saints (horizontal) because both came from the same hope that was waiting for them. The gospel not only offers the hope of eternal life but also rewards us in this life (1:5)." - The Tony Evans Study Bible (1414)

6. Underline the source of love:

- 1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. NIV
- 1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us. NAS
- 2 Timothy 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. NIV

7. What connection did Paul make between faith and love with hope? 1:4,5 (See 1 John 3:3)

- How did he describe this hope in 3:3,4?
- How secure was the Colossians' hope? 1:5 (Compare 2 Corinthians 1:22)

8. Underline other ways "the word of truth" (1:5) is described:

- Acts 8:25 When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. NIV
- Acts 14:3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, NAS
- Romans 10:8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: NIV
- Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. NIV
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. NAS

9. Underline what the gospel is called:

- Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. NIV
- Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. NIV
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. NIV
- Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. NIV
- Ephesians 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. NIV

10. What picture does Paul give you of the gospel's impact on the world? 1:6

Applying the Word: Who recognizes and encourages God's work in you? Who is someone you could encourage this week?

Day 2

Read Colossians 1:7-12

Epaphras

11. List the things you learn about Epaphras from the following:

- 1:7
- 1:8
- 4:12
- 4:13
- Philemon 23

FYI: "Epaphras, who may have been one of Paul's Ephesians converts (see Acts 19:10), could have been the founder of this church (1:7) as well as of the churches of Laodicea and Hierapolis (cf. 4:13). At any rate he was a key member of the Colossian congregation (4:12)." - Irving Jensen (6)

12. What do verses 1:4 and 1:8 indicate about Paul's acquaintance with the Colossians? See 2:1

Paul's Prayers

13. How did Paul respond to the Colossian's faith and love? 1:9a Cross-ref 1:3

FYI: "This letter – full of love and concern, written to a church Paul had neither planted nor visited – shows the power of Christian love. Paul didn't need to see or meet or directly know these Christians in order to love them and be concerned for them."
- David Guzik

14. What kind of "knowledge" did Paul pray the Colossians would have? 1:9b

- How did James describe this kind of wisdom? James 3:17,18

"**knowledge**" - Strong's NT:1922 *epignosis*; recognition, i.e. (by implication) full discernment, acknowledgement: "It is more intensive than gnosis, knowledge, because it expresses a more thorough participation in the acquiring of knowledge on the part of the learner...a knowledge laying claim to personal involvement.

"**wisdom**" - Strong's NT: 4678 *sophia* "In respect to divine things, wisdom, knowledge, insight, deep understanding, represented everywhere as a divine gift, and including the idea of practical application."

"**understanding**" - Strong's NT:4907 *sunesis* "Comprehend, reason out...perception...the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them."
- The Complete Word Study Dictionary

15. How do you think this knowledge (*epignosis*) (1:9) that Paul prayed for differs from just an intellectual grasp of facts about God? Compare 1 Corinthians 1:19-21

Digging Deeper

For what knowledge did Paul especially pray? Ephesians 3:18,19

16. What things does an acknowledgement of God's will for our lives lead to? ("so that") 1:10 (See Philipians 1:9-11)

What does God promise us?
James 1:5

FYI: "We only grow spiritually as we respond to the truth of God, and obedience to the knowledge of God that one has already received is the necessary condition for reception of further knowledge...Our heavenly Father will not give greater heavenly knowledge to us when we are not acting on what we already possess." - Stuart Allen

"Knowledge in both 1:9 and 1:10 is not *gnosis*, knowledge, but *epignosis*, a full knowledge or acknowledgement...this love is a love of action...Knowledge and acknowledgement are inter-related and both are needed for spiritual maturity. Some manuscripts have 'growing by the acknowledgment of God'. That is the only way we can grow...knowledge by itself puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1) There has to be acknowledgement. There has to be love."

- Michael Penny (9)

Worthy NT:516 *axios*; appropriately: KJV - as becometh, after a godly sort, worthily

17. Underline the phrases that describe what our walk or manner of life should be “worthy of”:
- Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, NAS
 - Philippians 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ NAS
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, NIV
18. How do you think the way the world judges the value of our work/career/status compares to God’s estimate?

19. For what else did Paul pray? 1:11a What does the phrase “*according to His glorious might*” (1:11) add to this idea? (Compare Ephesians 1:19-21)

- To what does this lead? 1:11b

Digging Deeper
Why would these traits be so important to early Christians? Acts 5:41; James 1:2-4

power - Strong’s NT:1411 *dunamis*, force (literally or figuratively); to be able

Endurance/patience/steadfastness hupomone NT:5281, to persevere, remain under. A bearing up under, patience, endurance as to things or circumstances.

“the steady persistence exhibited by a runner in a race, who continues right to the goal without giving up. “Long-suffering/patience will stand up to provocation without retaliation or bitterness.” - Stuart Allen (122)

20. What is the last attribute we should display and why? 1:12 (Cross-ref 2:7b; 3:17)

Qualified NT:2427 *hikanoo*; to enable, i.e. qualify “to render fit, meet, to make sufficient, worthy”
- Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words,

“It is the Father who qualifies us, not our own works. We gain this as an **inheritance**, instead of earning it as a wage.”
- David Guzik

21. What conditions was Paul under when he wrote this letter? 4:3,10,18 In spite of this, how would you describe his tone and his focus?

Applying the Word: Read through 1:9-12 substituting your name in each verse in place of "you and us". What touched your heart the most from reading the prayer that way?

Day 3

Read Colossians 1:13-15

Blessings in Christ

22. For what else should we be thankful? 1:13 (See Acts 26:18a)

"**transferred**" vs. 13 (NIV "brought") - Strong's NT:3179 *methistemi*; to transfer, i.e. carry away, depose or (figuratively) exchange

"According to Barclay, the word we translate **conveyed** had a special significance in the ancient world. When one empire conquered another, the custom was to take the population of the defeated empire and transfer it completely to the conqueror's land. It is in this sense that Paul says we have been **conveyed** into God's kingdom. Everything we have and everything we are now belongs to Him."
- David Guzik

23. What is associated with light in the following?

- Psalm 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. NIV
- John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." NIV
- 2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the **light of the gospel of the glory of Christ**, who is the image of God. NIV
- 1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. NIV

24. What have we been given in the Son? 1:14

FYI: Redemption Strong's NT:629; *apolutrosis* "To let go free for a ransom...The recalling of captives (sinners) from captivity (sin) through the payment of a ransom for them, i.e., Christ's death."
- The Complete Word Study Dictionary (232,233)

"A slave could be redeemed in the ancient world if a price was paid for his freedom. We were slaves to sin and Satan, but through his atoning death Christ purchased us off the slave block, granting us forgiveness of sins and transferring us into his glorious kingdom (1:14)"
- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1415)

"The word translated **forgiveness** is the ancient Greek word *aphesis*, most literally rendered "a sending away." Our sin and guilt is *sent away* because of what Jesus did on the cross for us."
- David Guzik

25. Underline how completely we are forgiven:

- Psalm 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. NIV
- Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. NIV
- Micah 7:19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. NIV
- Colossians 2:13 ...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us **all our sins**, NIV

26. Underline the actions of God toward us.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:3-8 NIV

Christ: The Image of God

27. What is the first descriptions that Paul gave Christ in 1:15a. (See John 1:18)

Digging Deeper

See what Jesus affirmed about Himself in John 8:58; 12:44-45; 14:7-10.

FYI: Image eikon NT:150 "The word translated **image** (*eikon*) expressed two ideas. **Likeness**, as in the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror. **Manifestation**, with the sense that God is fully revealed in Jesus. If Paul meant that Jesus was merely similar to the Father, he would have used the ancient Greek word *homoion*, which speaks merely of similar appearance... Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father." (Robertson)" - David Guzik

28. Underline Christ's titles or how His deity is expressed:

- John 1:1,14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory...NAS
- Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, NIV
- Hebrews 1:3a The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. NIV

29. Underline Christ's titles in the following.

- Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. NAS
- Matthew 1:23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"- which means, "God with us." NIV
- Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, NAS

Applying the Word: *What tends to make you feel inadequate or unworthy? What does Christ's rescue and redemption say about how important you are to Him?*

Day 4

Christ's Supremacy. Read Colossians 1:16-18

Christ: The Creator

30. What is the second description given of Christ in 1:15b?

FYI: First-begotten, firstborn *prototokos* Strong's NT:4416, "is used of Christ...expressing His priority to, and preeminence over creation, not in the sense of being the "first" to be born." - Vine's Expository Dictionary

"The meaning approximates that of the noun *arche*...which means either...the first effect...or the...first cause, the source of creation." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary

"While firstborn can mean first child, it very often is a term which means 'first in rank or honor.'" - Kent Hughes (31)

31. What is the first explanation for why Christ is the "image of God" and "*first-born*" (1:15b) of all creation? 1:16

- How is this expressed in Romans 11:36?

32. Who created in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-3? Since there is only one uncreated, eternal, pre-existent God, what does this say about who Jesus is?

FYI: "The Gnostics, 'people in the know'... held as their basic doctrine that matter was evil and that only the spirit was good. They reasoned, therefore, that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect He could not touch matter which was intrinsically evil. Therefore, [they argued] the world came into being through a complicated surrogate process as God put forth thousands of emanations (or lesser gods) each of which was a little more distant from Him, so that finally there was an emanation (a little god) so distant from God that it could touch matter - and it created the world."

"Jesus is the agent of creation *ex nihilo*, from nothing. The extent of His creation is dazzling. It includes even the things in the heavens and the invisible...The Gnostics taught that Christ was a spiritual emanation from the true God, but here Paul boldly said that He is the true God who created everything, even the invisible spirit-world. This is an astounding, combative proclamation!" - R. Kent Hughes (14,31)

33. What other work concerning creation does Christ perform? 1:17

FYI: "So, lest you miss the point, there is nothing that exists, there is no one who exists, there is nothing that continues to exist that does not have its life in Christ." - Marianne Meye Thompson <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu>

Consist/hold together "*sunistano*, from which we get 'sustain.' The things created by Christ are now being sustained, or conserved, or held together, by Him. He is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3)...The most basic of all scientific principles is implied in these two verses (Colossians 1:16-17), that is, the principle of conservation of mass/energy, or "all things." According to this principle, nothing is now being either created or annihilated—only conserved, as far as quantity is concerned...This law—also called the First Law of Thermodynamics — is the best-proved law of science, but science cannot tell us why it is true. The reason nothing is now being created is because Christ created all things in the past. The reason why nothing is now being annihilated is because all things are now being sustained by Him. If it were not so, the 'binding energy' of the atom, which holds its structure together, would collapse, and the whole universe would disintegrate into chaos."
- Henry Morris

"The perfect tense here tells us that He continues to hold all things together, and that apart from His continuous activity all would disintegrate. HE HOLDS EVERY SPECK OF MATTER AND EVERY INCORPOREAL SPIRIT TOGETHER. He IS NOT contained in matter, but simply holds it together by his word! The Gnostics never dreamed of a God like this!"
- R. Kent Hughes (156)

34. In the following verses, underline Christ's relationship to creation.

- Hebrews 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. NIV
- John 13:3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power...NIV
- Acts 10:36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. NIV
- Philippians 2:10-11 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NIV
- Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. NAS

Christ: Head of the Church

35. What is Christ's relationship to the church? 1:18a See also Ephesians 4:15-16

36. What other titles is Christ given in 1:18b?

- What position does this give Him? 1:18b (See Ephesians 1:20-23)

"beginning – Strong's NT:746 the origin, the active cause" - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"first place/preeminence/supremacy" – Strong's NT:4409 *proteua*; to be first (in rank or influence):

"When we study Paul's epistle we see that each has a dominant theme...In Colossians, it is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Head of all creation and of the Church. There is no book in the New Testament, including John's Gospel, which presents such a comprehensive picture of the fullness of Christ."
- R. Kent Hughes (13)

37. What do you think is meant by being the “*first-born from the dead*” (1:18)? (See 1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
38. Has anything you learned about Jesus Christ in these verses surprised you? How does it expand your concept of the baby born in Bethlehem?

Applying the Word: *How do these verses affect your ability to know, love, and trust Jesus Christ more?*

Food for Thought: “Christ is first-born and thus has the highest place. He is Creator of everything, every cosmic speck, every spirit. He is the goal, and all creation is moving toward Him and for Him. He is the sustainer. He is holding the very breath that falls on these pages. What a stunning revelation this is! It is meant to stretch our puny minds and dominate our thinking and change us. When we truly understand what is being said here, it is amazing that we should ever look anywhere else for meaning and purpose in life. Since He is the creator who holds all things together, He knows how to best fix and order our lives.”

- R. Kent Hughes (31)