

Colossians 1

Once a bustling, Turkish city, Colossae was under imperial Rome's rule. For three years

Paul hangs out in Ephesus to start his paradigm church. His Gentile friend, Epaphras, began following Jesus there, then returned to his home in Colossae where he apparently assisted in planting the church there. Major obstacles faced by the new Colossian believers included false teachers who denied Jesus' deity. Also, Jews who had embraced the gospel which Peter preached insisted that converts to Jesus must temple laws. Their elitist stance was religious baggage which produced an inner-circle air of faux superiority. Jailed in Rome, Paul writes this **HOPE**-filled letter to rebut these heresies, emphasizing that Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior in whom God's fulness dwells, and that the message he had delivered to them via Epaphras is the true Gospel. **(Acts 4:12)**

Paul is passionate about urging these new believers to know the difference between religious activity driven by manmade, human traditions and an essential relationship with the one true God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Pious self-justification breeds false humility and division. Basing our unity on the Word of God is revelation, not religion.

Sects in the City

Have you detected a growing sense of hopelessness in the world? Refugee caravans, pandemics, panic, mass graves, millions quarantined, longtime values under assault. What was once deemed to be wrong is now said to be right. Even old-line religious nominations are going wobbly on their non-negotiables. Shades of "Everyone did as they pleased." **(Judges 21:25; Proverbs 21:2)**

"So's Yer Ol' Man!"

Nothing in us is heaven-worthy. When God saved you, your *old man* died with Christ, and His Spirit moved in with your spirit as the down payment on your spiritual inheritance. **(2 Corinthians 4:5-12, 5:5)** Sin no longer *controls* you. **(Romans 5:5, 17-19)** Now you have new life. **Let's read Galatians 2:19-21.**

Discouragement, fear and guilt have no place in our spirit where God's Spirit lives. As our soul (i.e., our mind, emotions and will) spends time in our spirit with the Holy Spirit, we *really* start to "get it," and this raises our **HOPE** (Psalm 42:5, 121:1-8). **Let's read Colossians 1:1-29.**

1-2 I, Paul, have been sent on special assignment by Christ as part of God's master plan. Together with my friend Timothy, I greet the Christians and stalwart followers of Christ who live in Colossae. May everything good from God our Father be yours!

3-5 Our prayers for you are always spilling over into thanksgivings. We can't quit thanking God our Father and Jesus our Messiah for you! We keep getting reports on your steady faith in Christ, our Jesus, and the love you continuously extend to all Christians. The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by hope.

5-8 The Message is as true among you today as when you first heard it. It doesn't diminish or weaken over time. It's the same all over the world. The Message bears fruit and gets larger and stronger, just as it has in you. From the very first day you heard and recognized the truth of what God is doing, you've been hungry for more. It's as vigorous in you now as when you learned it from our friend and close associate Epaphras. He is one reliable worker for Christ!

I could always depend on him. He's the one who told us how thoroughly love had been worked into your lives by the Spirit.

9-12 Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven't stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to His will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you'll live well for the Master, making Him proud of you as you work hard in His orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory- strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that He has for us.

13-14 God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son He loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating.

15-18 We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, He organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

18-20 He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end He's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is He, so expansive, that everything of God finds its proper place in Him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms— get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of His death, His blood that poured down from the cross.

21-23 You yourselves are a case study of what He does. At one time you all had your backs turned to God, thinking rebellious thoughts of Him, giving Him trouble every chance you got. But now, by giving Himself completely at the cross, actually dying for you, Christ brought you

over to God's side and put your lives together, whole and holy in His presence. You don't walk away from a gift like that! You stay grounded and steady in that bond of trust, constantly tuned in to the Message, careful not to be distracted or diverted. There is no other Message just this one. Every creature under heaven gets this same Message. I, Paul, am a messenger of this Message.

²⁴⁻²⁵ I want you to know how glad I am that it's me sitting here in this jail and not you. There's a lot of suffering to be entered into in this world—the kind of suffering Christ takes on. I welcome the chance to take my share in the church's part of that suffering. When I became a servant in this church, I experienced this suffering as a sheer gift, God's way of helping me serve you, laying out the whole truth.

²⁶⁻²⁹ This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time, but now it's out in the open. God wanted everyone, not just Jews, to know this rich and glorious secret inside and out, regardless of their background, regardless of their religious standing. The mystery in a nutshell is just this: Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory. It's that simple. That is the substance of our Message. We preach Christ, warning people not to add to the Message. We teach in a spirit of profound common sense so that we can bring each person to maturity. To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less. That's what I'm working so hard at day after day, year after year, doing my best with the energy God so generously gives me.

Good News Colossians 1:1-8

When the Colossians heard Paul's gospel, they were smitten by its tone of **HOPE**. Paul's customary greeting of "Grace and peace to you" is beautifully reframed by the late Eugene Peterson to read, "The lines of purpose in your lives never grow slack, tightly tied as they are to your future in heaven, kept taut by **HOPE**."

God freely offers forgiveness and salvation to all. Paul learned direct from Christ that now, after the crucifixion, **all believers are complete in Christ** who Himself contains all of the Father.

DISCUSS: Describe your reaction when you first heard the Gospel.

We live with **HOPE** anchored in God's unchangeable promises. (**Titus 2:11-14**) The Greek word for **HOPE** in the original manuscript used does not convey wishful thinking. It means "we can be confident and secure in our expectation" (**Romans 8:28**). Christ's resurrection is the basis of our salvation, without which we have no **HOPE**. (**1 Corinthians 15:12-19**) The apostle is **HOPE**'s poster child, never discouraged by circumstances. He pressed ahead with patient endurance, anticipating Christ's return, "the Rapture," which is our "blessed **HOPE**." (**Philippians 3:13-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**)

DISCUSS: How can one man in Seattle spread HOPE in his world?

The Colossian believers' faith in Jesus and their love for people was very *personal*, not *private*. They could not keep quiet! **Let's read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20.**

“Let Us Pray” Colossians 1:9-14

To fuel our **HOPE** Paul asks the Father to fill us with His perspective and with *epignosis*, a super knowledge of God’s will that’s gained through first-hand encounters with God (Job 28:28). Paul desires that God’s Spirit within us strengthen our inner man, giving us patience, love and all “the fruit of the Spirit.” (**Romans 8:20-25; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 5:5**)

Paul’s urges us to ...

- Live based on who God says we are, not on how we think or feel
- Rely on God’s strength to repel Satan’s overtures
- Thank God for making us co-heirs with Christ of all He owns!

Paul asks God to give us:

- An intimate **wisdom** grounded in the Scriptures
- **Conduct** befitting one who knows Jesus as Lord and Savior
- **Dedication** to what God’s called you to do
- A passion for **excellence** in serving God and man
- **Perseverance** to run life’s race with **HOPE** and joy
- **Gratitude** to God for all that comes your way

DISCUSS: Let’s take 8 minutes and get crazy. Pair up in two’s. Each man will have 4 minutes to describe the role HOPE plays in your life. I’ll announce the time remaining. OK, pair up and start now!

Jesus LinkedIn Colossians 1:15-19

Jesus became a man so we could see what His Father is like. God’s eternal purpose is for all creation to worship His Son (John 3:35).

DISCUSS: “Everything comes *from* Him, happens *through* Him and ends up *in* Him” (Romans 11:33-36).

“But Now” Colossians 1:20-23

Jesus declares those who receive Him in faith have eternal life and are *right* with His Father (**Romans 5:1-11, p. 1019**). Those who spend eternity in hell will be there because they rejected His offer.

DISCUSS: What can we say about heaven and hell and what’s really fair?

“I’ve Got a Secret!” Colossians 1:24-29

Paul was sent by God to “make the Word of God fully known,” ushering in the Age of Grace. The risen Lord taught Paul that we are “*in Christ*” and have *Christ in us*.” This is “the mystery,” “the secret” (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

DISCUSS: How can we take advantage of having Christ in us?

Faith is God’s gift to equip us to trust Him. Love is who He is! **HOPE** is the confident expectation that He’ll keep *all* His promises. (1 Corinthians 13) If you haven’t closed your deal with God yet, do it today. (1 Timothy 2:3-5; 2 Peter 3:9)

The Bible ends on a **HOPEful** note as Jesus texts us from heaven, “*Yes indeed! I am coming soon!*” (Revelation 22:20) Are you ready? The invitation is clear. Whoever calls on the Lord will be saved!

Whoever doesn’t, won’t.

His Deal

www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

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