

*From the Garden to Glory*

# Colossians

**Author:** Paul the Apostle

**Written to:** The believers in Colosse

**Timeline:** c. 60 - 64 A.D. written from a Roman prison

**Category:** Epistle

**Theme:** The Preeminence of Christ

**Purpose of writing:** Paul wrote to correct heresies that had crept into the church and to show the supremacy of Christ.

## **Introduction:**

Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians while a prisoner in Rome. The book of Colossians along with Ephesians, Philemon and Philipians are known as the Prison Epistles.

Paul had never visited the church in Colosse. During Paul's years of ministry in Ephesus, it is believed that Epaphras was converted. Epaphras then took the gospel back to his home town of Colosse (1:6-8). The church may have met in the home of Philemon, for he lived in Colosse (Philemon 1-2, 23).

The heresy of Gnosticism, which denied the deity of Jesus Christ, had broken out in Colosse. Gnostic doctrine is a mix of some Christian truths, Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and eastern mysticism. The Gnostics professed to have superior knowledge of spiritual things.

In chapters one and two Paul presented Jesus Christ as the preeminent Creator, Savior and Lord. Chapters three and four are practical and taught the believers how to keep Christ preeminent in every day living.

As we begin our study of the book of Colossians consider the following questions and write your responses:

1. One of the purposes for the epistle to the Colossians was to correct a heresy that had come into the church. Look up the word *heresy* in a dictionary and write the definition. What is an example of heresy that has sprung up in the American church? How would you correct someone who followed this heretical doctrine?
2. As you read in the Introduction, one form of heresy that had invaded the church at Colosse was that of *Gnosticism*. Use a dictionary or other study tool and to find out more about the specific doctrines of Gnosticism. Based on what you have discovered, why would Gnosticism be so dangerous?
3. Although Paul had never visited Colosse (1:7, 2:1, and 4:12), he felt a great responsibility to the believers there. Is there a person or people group whom you have never met and yet to whom you feel responsible to minister? If so, how do you do this?

## **Paul's Greeting and Prayer**

Read Colossians 1:1-14

1. Paul addressed this epistle to the *saints* and *faithful brethren* (verse 2). The biblical definition of a saint is someone who has been separated from sin and set apart to God by faith in Jesus Christ; all Christians are saints. Make a list of synonyms for the word *faithful*. How does a Christian demonstrate faithfulness?

2. In verses 4-5 Paul spoke of three virtues by which the Colossians were expressing their Christianity. What are these virtues and how are you demonstrating them in your own life?

- faith in \_\_\_\_\_

- love for \_\_\_\_\_

- hope in \_\_\_\_\_

3. Consider Paul's prayer for the Colossians in verses 9-14 and answer the following questions.

- What did Paul ask for in verse 9?

- In what specific ways did Paul pray that this would be demonstrated in the lives of those for whom he prayed?

verse 10

verse 11

verse 12

- For whom will you pray this prayer?

## **Seven Superiorities of Christ**

Read Colossians 1:15-29

1. It has been said that this section of Scripture contains some of the most important verses in the entire New Testament for establishing the deity of Jesus Christ. What do you learn about our Lord from the

following verses? You may want to refer to the additional verses to further your understanding.

- verse 15a (John 14:9, Hebrews 1:3a)
  
- verse 15b (Psalm 89:27, Revelation 1:17b)
  
- verses 16-17 (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2)
  
- verse 18a (Ephesians 1:22-23)
  
- verse 18b (Romans 1:4, 1 Corinthians 15:20)
  
- verse 19 (Colossians 2:9)
  
- verse 20 (Romans 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

**2.** Review the previous question. Which aspect of Christ's deity is the most important to you today? Why?

**3.** In verses 21-23 Paul described the essence of the gospel. Re-write this in a form that you could share with a non-believer.

## **Complete in Christ**

Read Colossians 2:1-23

**1.** Look at verses 1-3. Where are *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* hidden? Where are other places that people look for

wisdom and knowledge? How do *you* gain access to this wisdom and knowledge on a daily basis?

2. Meditate on verses 8-10. What do you learn about Jesus Christ from these verses? What does it mean to you to know that you are *complete in Him*?
  
3. Read verses 16-23. Against what was Paul warning in these verses? What are some examples of these *commandments and doctrines of men* that are found in the church today? How do you avoid them? Write out verse 23.

## **Old and New Man**

Read Colossians 3:1-11

1. Read verses 1-2. List practical ways that you can do each of the following.
  - seek those things which are above
  
  - set your mind on things above
  
2. What are we to do with the sins listed in verse 5? Notice that Paul further defined covetousness as *idolatry*. How are these synonymous? How do you avoid covetousness in your own life?

3. Consider those behaviors which Paul said were to be *put off* in verses 8-9a. Look up each of these in a dictionary and write the definitions. What do verses 9b-11 say we are to do?

- anger
- wrath
- malice
- blasphemy
- filthy language
- lying

### **Christian Living**

Read Colossians 3:12-25

1. Define each characteristic to be *put on* by the *new man* from verses 12-14. Put an asterisk by the one you would like to grow most in your own life. Commit this area to the Lord in prayer this week; share with your group how the Lord answered your prayer.

- tender mercies
- humility
- meekness
- longsuffering
- bearing with one another
- forgiving one another
- love

2. Look at verse 15. What does it mean to *let the peace of God rule in your heart*? How do you do this?
  
3. Write out verses 23-24. How do you do something heartily? What are you doing today to serve the Lord Christ?

## **Christian Graces**

Read Colossians 4:1-18

1. In verse 2 Paul gave three instructions concerning prayer. What were they? Are you earnest in your prayer life? If not, what is one thing you could you do this week to make this important spiritual discipline a priority in your life?

2. Consider the instructions that Paul gave the Colossians in verses 5-6.

- verse 5

What conduct would be *unwise* toward non-Christians?

What opportunities is the Lord currently making available for you to *walk in wisdom* toward non-Christians? How have you responded?

- verse 6

How can your speech *always* be with grace and seasoned with salt?

3. Look at verses 7-8. To whom has the Lord called you to be a *fellow worker*? How can you be a comfort to that person this week?

## **Summary**

As you conclude your study of the book of Colossians consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. What is the most significant thing that you have learned from your study about the Lord, His character, or His attributes? How does this encourage you? Take a few moments to thank and praise the Lord for the things that you learned about Him.
2. What is the most important lesson or new insight that you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?