

# THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

## INTRODUCTION:

### A. Prison Epistles:

1. The Epistle to the Colossians is one of the four prison epistles that Paul had written while in his first Roman imprisonment around 60-63 A.D.
2. These four are companion epistles and together they give us a superstructure of the Body of Christ Church, to address our Christian faith as we sojourn through life's journey.
  - a. Ephesians - focuses on the Body of Christ as members of Jesus' body, our relationship with Christ, and with other believers.
  - b. Colossians - directs our attention to the Head of the Body - Who is Christ. It demonstrates the preeminence of Christ to confirm us in the Christian faith.
  - c. Philippians - shows the Church how the Christian is to live here on earth and to be Christ-like, as a servant.
  - d. Philemon - gives us how our faith operates in Christian love. It demonstrates Christianity in a pagan society.
3. These four letters have been recognized as the anatomy of the Body Church and complement each other in vocabulary.

### B. Writer:

1. The record shows that Paul was the writer of this letter of Colossians in verse 1. Paul always starts off with his name first in all of his 13 epistles - his signature mark.
2. Even though Paul never had visited the city of Colosse and did not know the people personally, he was acquainted with them through Epaphras - the leader of the church there.
3. Epaphras became an important figure in Paul's life. He either visited Paul in Rome or was imprisoned there with Paul.

Philemon 22-23 - But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. Phil. 1:23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;
4. Epaphras was chosen to be the messenger to bring Paul's letter to the church in Colosse, being the minister of the church there. He had led many Colossian Christians to Christ and the majority were Gentiles, who were progressing in their new faith.

### C. Informed:

1. Paul was informed by Epaphras that there was some dangerous doctrine circulating in the churches of Colosse and Laodicea. Asia Minor was a great cultural center. But, it was also a center for gnosticism, heathenism, paganism, and several religious cults.
2. Paul writes this epistle to the Colossians in an attempt to check on these heresies' influence on the churches. The pagan element they were embracing was false philosophy given by these heretics.

3. This movement denied the divine creation of the universe and said that man was the creator of all wisdom. Paul issues them a warning in the first chapter that man is not perfect.

Colossians 1:28 - Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

4. This letter's purpose was to refute the Colossian heresy and to demonstrate the preeminence of Christ.
5. Chapters 1 & 2 tell of the doctrine of the fullness of God - in Christ we are made full. Chapters 3 & 4 give us our practical living - Christ, the fullness of God, poured out in life through the believer.
6. Colossians and Ephesians are known as sister epistles. 75 of the 105 verses in Colossians can be found in Ephesians also. Colossians stresses Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body; while Ephesians draws attention to the Body of Christ church.

## COLOSSIANS 1:1-6

Colossians 1:1 - Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother,

1. Paul calls himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ" and he always says "by the will of God". Paul was in the will of God when he was made an apostle.
2. Paul qualified as an apostle in several ways:
  - Paul asserted that he had personally seen the Lord, being an eyewitness to Christ's resurrection. (I Cor. 9:1)
  - Paul's authority came directly from his commissioning by Christ Himself (Gal. 1:1, 12), and not by man's appointment.
  - Paul recognized his calling was unconventional, calling himself one "abnormally born" (I. Cor. 15:8) when compared to the original disciples.
  - Paul performed miracles and signs that would validate his apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12).
  - Paul was endorsed by the kingdom church leaders (Peter, James & John), approving his new ministry program.
3. We have Paul's apostleship given to him by Christ Himself. Paul had helped to mentor Timothy in the faith. Timothy was Paul's trusted co-laborer and a very close son in Christ. He became the minister to the churches in Ephesus for Paul.

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

1. A saint is a person who has been "set apart" from sin, from self, from the world, and from Satan. God is now in your life, having the Holy Spirit dwelling inside you in holiness.

2. This letter is addressed to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse. Two important names are given here: saints - the ones that have been separated to God and faithful brethren - indicating they are children of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Being in Christ speaks of their spiritual position. When they were saved, God placed them in Christ and now they are secure in the family of God.

I Corinthians 6:11 - And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

4. This was accomplished by the Holy Spirit choosing you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit.

II Thessalonians 2:13 - But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

5. Paul now greets the saints with his signature salutation: "*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"
  - a. Grace - means to bend or stoop in kindness from being blessed to a less fortunate one. God not only stooped down to man's level, but He also lifted up the believing man. (Ephesians 2:8-9 - *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Eph. 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*)
  - b. Peace - God has called a truce with sinful man by offering the shed blood of Christ to those who would believe in Him.

Colossians 1:20 - And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

6. Paul's message today is one of "grace and peace" in the Dispensation of the Gospel of Grace. The order of these words has a significant meaning. If God had not acted first, showing grace in love and mercy towards us, we would still be in our sins. But because God sent His Son to die for us, we can now have peace with God and in our souls.
7. So, when Paul says to the Colossian church "grace and peace", Paul wants them to have a deeper understanding of the Grace Dispensation - of which they are a part.

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

1. Here we see Paul's heart. In spite of all of his trials and hardships, he still maintained a spirit of heart gratitude that some in Colosse had been saved. Paul gives thanks to God, but he does something else which is very characteristic of him - praying always for them.
2. Like Paul, we have the choice to be negative, or we can concentrate on the good things with gratitude - even in the midst of difficulties and our trials.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 2Cor. 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

3. Paul could have been grumpy and negative. But he chose to keep his eyes on Jesus Christ, which gave him grace and a grateful mindset. Paul starts off this verse 3 by thanking God.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 - In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

4. We can go directly to God in prayer. Anyone who is in Jesus Christ has access to God the Father. This is one of the benefits of being justified by faith.

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

5. Paul was always in a mentality of thankfulness and prayer on behalf of his churches and individuals who had come to Christ. He knew that they would be attacked by Satan and his devices.

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

1. Paul had heard of the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus and their love to all the saints. Here, Paul gives the reason why he was constantly thanking God for their faith in Christ.
2. These Colossians had believed in Christ. They had trusted, had assurance, confidence, and were convinced that Christ and His finished work (D.B.R.) were true.

Romans 10:17 - So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

3. The next thing Paul says he has heard about them is the love they have towards other believers (saints). Love is not created necessarily, but it is given and produced by the Holy Spirit in believers.

Romans 5:5 - And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

4. Too many professing believers in a local church have a hard time developing loving relationships. They are too busy criticizing and finding fault with everybody and everything.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 - But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

5. Paul, by the way of Christ, had told all believers to be more Christ-like. Christ's love toward us, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

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;

1. Here Paul links the third thing that grace gives the believer - hope. Paul had thanked God for the Colossians' faith and love. Now he thanks the blessed hope awaiting them in guaranteeing their arrival in heaven.

Titus 2:13 - Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

2. People who do not possess a faith in Jesus Christ are hopeless. When a person without Christ loses a loved one, there is hopelessness and despair. But, not so with the believer. We are filled with hope, a steadfast hope that is anchored within our souls.
3. The message of truth is the gospel - because it is the truth. We know the gospel of truth message today (the D.B.R. of Christ) is biblical, accurate, and historically correct.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

4. The gospel of grace is the only truth of God that saves today.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 1Cor. 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

<p><u>Colossians 1:6</u> - Which is come unto you, as <i>it is</i> in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as <i>it doth</i> also in you, since the day ye heard <i>of it</i>, and knew the grace of God in truth:</p>
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1. Paul says the grace gospel has come to the Colossians and to "all the world". Paul says repeatedly that his gospel had made a worldwide impact, even in his day.
2. Paul went to all men and all nations, faithfully fulfilling his ministry. Paul took 3 missionary trips to proclaim this grace message.

Romans 16:25-26 - Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, Rom. 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

3. Paul reminds the Colossians of how widespread his gospel really had become (and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*) and that it was bearing fruit by increasing in the world.
4. The Colossians had correctly embraced this grace according to the Pauline epistles. When we rightly divide the Word of God, we are in position to produce spiritual fruit and be committed to Christ and His Word.

Romans 1:5 - By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: