

Colossians 1:1-8

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; ⁷ as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

Colossians written at about 60 A.D. is one of the four letters from Paul written while he was imprisoned in Rome (the others being Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). While Paul was living in Ephesus, the gospel was spread to all surrounding areas which included Colosse which was located 100 miles east. It is believed that Ephrahas was converted under Paul's ministry and took the gospel back to his native Colosse.

Paul states his purpose for writing this letter very clearly in Colossians 2:1-8. He wanted to make sure they had a full revelation of Christ and what He had accomplished for them, and at the same time warn them against false teaching. Paul believed that the best defense against false teaching was to have the Colossians fully aware of all they had in Christ. In the remainder of chapter 2 and into chapter 3, Paul expounds on the completeness we have in Christ.

-Living Commentary by Andrew Wommack

Colossians was written to correct false teachings that had entered the church. Although Paul does not mention them by name, the corrections that he gives lead to the conclusion that he was confronting two major errors.

- Beginnings of Gnosticism (Greek): JESUS + SUPERIOR KNOWLEDGE = PERFECTION; part of that superior knowledge being that while Jesus was a higher being, He was not God.
- Judaism: JESUS + RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES (rules about food, observance of Sabbath and festivals, circumcision) = PERFECTION

These types of heresies persist in the Christian world today in various forms.

1. The belief that Jesus was not God or that he was not human while on earth.
2. The belief that being increasingly knowledgeable will bring us closer to God.
3. The concept that certain apostles and prophets in the body of Christ have superior and special revelation and knowledge which the rest of the body needs to heed in order to be mature or spiritual.
4. The teaching that the written word of God is inferior to special revelation.
5. The belief that we need to have special mystical experiences in order to attain higher levels of spirituality.
6. The belief that religious practices such as so-called "spiritual disciplines" will bring someone into a closer relationship with God.

 **¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,**

1. a. Paul asserts his authority as being from Jesus by God's will. He was made an apostle by God, not by man.

Galatians 1:1-2

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).

- b. Paul includes Timothy as participating in the writing of this letter. Timothy was more than his right hand man; he was like a son to Paul. He had total confidence in him.

1 Corinthians 4:17

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Philippians 2:19-23

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰ For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. ²³ Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.

 **²To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.**

2. a. The word "saint" has nearly lost its meaning today.

- Some churches see "saints" as those who have lived virtuous lives, received divine assistance, and who have done miracles.¹
- In modern culture, the word "saint" is slang for someone who moral or helpful without a necessary religious connotation.

However, Paul refers to ALL believers as "saints". "Saint" means "holy one" and is the same word as "holy" in the Greek.

- Saints in the Greek is **hagios** which means *sacred* (physically *pure*, morally *blameless* or *religious*, ceremonially *consecrated*): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint².
- All believers, in the eyes of God are holy and sacred by grace through faith in Jesus. The word not only connotes purity, but a sense of being special to God, set apart unto Him. Holiness is a gift to us from God through Jesus.

Colossians 1:21-22

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.

- Bible translators choose to use the word "saints" instead of "holy ones". Imagine the impact in our thinking if every time we read the word "saint" we would hear "holy one"! This is what the reader of that day would have heard.
"To the holy ones and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae..."
 - You may freely say of yourself, "I am a saint!"

¹ <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-become-a-saint-in-the-catholic-church.html>

² *Definitions of Greek words come from the Strongs Exhaustive Concordance and/or the Greek Interlinear Bible.*

- “I am holy,” is a little more difficult for us to say out loud, but it is true. Think about that. God has made you holy, so holy you are.

It is important for us to make the connection between “holy” and “sanctified”.

- While “saint” is “holy” and holy is “hagios”, “sanctified” is “hagiazō” and means “to make holy”. The reason we are saints—are holy is because God has made us holy—has sanctified us. When you read the New Testament, and come upon the word “sanctified”, substitute it with “made holy”.

Acts 20:32

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (made holy).”

Acts 26:18

To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ (NOTICE: We are made holy BY FAITH in Jesus.)

1 Corinthians 1:2

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified (made holy) in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (holy ones), with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:11

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified (you were made holy), but you were justified (you were made righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (NOTICE: We are made holy and righteous in the same ways: in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God.)

Jude 1:1

Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.

(NOTICE: The whole Trinity is involved in our sanctification, by the Father through faith in the Son by the Spirit of God.)

Hebrews 10:10, 14

By this will we have been sanctified (have been made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (those who have been made holy).

What is our response to having been made holy?

- We must recognize that only God can make a human being holy. Apart from Him, we have no holiness. We have been set apart.
- We don’t live holy lives IN ORDER TO BECOME holy. We live holy lives BECAUSE we have been made holy by God Himself through the blood of Jesus. Holy living is a response to having been made holy.

1 Peter 1:13-16

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

What does the Scripture mean when it says that “without holiness, no one will see the Lord,”?

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

- It is important to recognize that the same person who wrote Hebrews 12:14 wrote Hebrews 11:10 and 14 which declare that we are made holy by the sacrifice of Jesus. We ARE holy.
- What the author is saying is that if a person has not received this sanctification, they need to pursue it, for without it, they will not see the Lord. In other words, if you are not a Christian, you need to become one; otherwise, you will not see the Lord.

The holiness spoken of here is defined in the context and by the historical background of the letter. Expositor's says: "The holiness which this epistle has explained is a drawing near to God with a cleansed conscience (10:14, 22), a true acceptance of Christ's sacrifice as bring the worshipper into fellowship with God." - Wuest Word Studies, Volume 2

*Without holiness
no one will see the Lord.
With holiness we WILL see the Lord.
We have been made holy
by faith in Jesus.
We will see the Lord.*

2. b. Paul addresses the “faithful” brethren.

- **Faithful** here in the Greek is *pistois* which means believing. Here Paul puts the emphasis on their faith/belief, not on their loyalty or hard work as we commonly think of as “being faithful”.
 - *Faith* and *belief* come from the same word in the Greek with *believe* more commonly being used as the verb form of *faith*. Therefore: ***faith* = *belief*** and ***having faith* = *believing***.
 - The emphasis here is to those who continue to believe in Jesus and don’t stray off into false doctrine.

Vs. 2 Lightfoot, commenting on the words “faithful brethren in Christ,” says: “This unusual addition is full of meaning. Some members of the Colossian church were shaken in their allegiance, even if they had not fallen from it... In this way he obliquely hints at the defection. -Wuest’s Word Studies

- **These more technically translated versions agree.**
Amplified:
We continually give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah), as we are praying for you.
Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament
We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

2. c. Grace and Peace: The New Testament writers referred to the ONE gospel using different terms such as the gospel, this gospel, my gospel (Paul), our gospel, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of Jesus, the gospel of Christ, the everlasting gospel, the

gospel of His Son, the gospel of God, the gospel of your salvation, the gospel of the kingdom. Besides these standard expressions of the gospel, three other words are used to describe the gospel: grace, peace, and the word of truth. These refer to the truth of the grace of God to us and the resulting peace with God.

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Romans 10:15

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”

2. d. **God Our Father:** (See the following comments.)

 **³We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,**

3. a. **God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**

God is OUR father as He is the Father of Jesus. Jesus said that He would give us a new way to relate to God.

John 17:3-26 (3, 6, 11, 25-26)

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

⁶ *“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.*

¹¹ *Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.*

²⁵ *“O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

- **Jesus wants us to relate to God as our personal Father, and also our ABBA.** The more we relate to God as our close Father, the more aware we will be of His love for us.
- **To cry out is krazō in the Greek.** It means to “croak” (as a raven) or scream, that is, (generally) to call aloud (shriek, exclaim, entreat): - cry (out).
 - **In times of crisis we will know God as our Abba, just as Jesus did.**

Mark 14:36

And Jesus said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

Romans 8:15

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

Galatians 4:6

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

3. b. **Always:** Lightfoot, Vincent, and Expositors concur in the opinion that “always” is to be construed with “give thanks” rather than “praying.” The translation therefore reads, “giving thanks always to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” -Wuest's Word Studies

 **⁴Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints;**

4. Faith in Jesus and the love for the saints is the core of Christianity.

1 John 3:23

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

2 Thessalonians 1:4

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

Ephesians 1:15

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints...

Colossians 1:4

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints...

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love.

1 Thessalonians 3:6

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love.

1 Timothy 1:5


Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.

2 Timothy 1:13

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Philemon 1:5

Hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints.

 ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

Concerning the words, "whereof ye heard before in the word of the gospel," Lightfoot says: "seems intended to contrast their earlier with their later lessons – the true gospel of Epaphras with the false gospel of their recent teachers." Epaphras was the saint who brought the gospel to Colossae, having heard it from the great apostle himself. - Wuest

The perfect participle gives, "the hope which has been laid away in times past with the present result that it is reserved for and awaiting you." Wuest

The gospel is essentially a reproductive organism, a plant whose 'seed is in itself' . . . The gospel is not like those plants which exhaust themselves bearing fruit and wither away. - Wuest

The idea is that the gospel has snuggled close up to the Colossian saints and they have taken it into their hearts. -Wuest

The expression, "the grace of God in truth," means "the grace of God in its genuine simplicity, without adulteration" (Lightfoot). -Wuest

5-6. These two verses contain a treasure of truth.

a. What is the hope that is laid up for us in heaven?

- It is a hope that we shall be resurrected with Jesus at His second coming.
1 Corinthians 15:19-23

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming³.

Titus 2:13

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

- It is the hope that at His second coming, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air or be raised from our graves, and that we shall forever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

- It is the hope that when He appears we shall be like Him.

1 John 3:1-3

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

b. It equates “the word of truth” and “the gospel” and “the grace of God in truth”.

- In Galatians Paul contrasts the grace of Christ with a different gospel, clearing implying that the grace of Christ is the true gospel.

Galatians 1:6

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.

- In Acts Paul defines “the gospel” as “the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- **This means the gospel which we are to preach is the good news of God's goodness (unmerited favor) toward us.**


- His death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4)
- Everlasting life (John 3:16)
- Eternal Redemption (Heb. 9:12)
- Eternal Salvation (Heb. 5:9)

³ Notice that verse 23 explains what is meant by “Even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” He is not saying that all of mankind will be resurrected with Jesus, but those “who are His at His coming”.

- *Forever forgiveness (Heb. 10:14)*
- *His abiding presence (Col. 1:27)*
- *Who we are and what we have in Him*
- **Anything short of the gospel of grace is “another” gospel.**
 - *If we ADD to the gospel.*
 - *If we SUBTRACT from the gospel.*
- **We need to be SURE we are teaching THE gospel of the grace of God because teaching “another” gospel comes with a curse (Gal. 1:8).**

➔•DON'T MESS WITH GOD'S GOSPEL•←

- c. The gospel of the grace of God constantly bears fruit.
- d. The gospel of the grace of God increases not just in all the world but in us. It isn't just for initial salvation, but for the rest of our lives.
- e. **We must hear and understand the gospel of the grace of God in truth.**
 - Many believers today are “hearing” what amounts to bad news of what we supposedly need to do to get God's favor instead of the good news of God's unmerited favor to us. They do not understand the gospel of the grace of God.
 - Understood epiginôskô to know exactly, to recognize.⁴
 - The Gospel constantly bears fruit and grows not just corporately but in us personally, as we hear and understand, to know exactly the grace of God in truth. The more we let mixture in, (another gospel), the more the exact knowledge gets diminished.

 ⁷just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, ⁸and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

- a. The “it” that the Colossians learned from Epaphras was the gospel.
 - Epaphras learned “it” from Paul.
- b. Paul refers to Epaphras as “beloved”.
 - This is a term used in the New Testament only of Jesus, Israel, and believers.
- c. Paul calls Epaphras a “fellow” bond-servant.
 - This not only reflects Paul's attitude of being a willing servant of the Lord, but of not seeing himself as superior to Epaphras. Paul must have emulated this attitude in the way he treated others, for Peter referred to Paul as “our beloved brother Paul”, and not “the great apostle Paul” (2 Pet. 3:15).
 - While Paul did acknowledge that he was an apostle, he NEVER called himself by the title, “Apostle Paul,” NOR DID ANYONE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REFER TO HIM AS “Apostle Paul”. The church has forgotten what Jesus said...that we are all equal and we are not to give each other titles (Matt. 23:1-12).
- d. Who is a faithful servant of Christ can also be translated, “who for your sake is a believing servant of Christ”.

⁴ *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*

e. We see that Epaphras had been in communication with Paul and Timothy about the progress of the Colossians. He told them of their belief in Jesus and of their “love in the Spirit”. Again, faith in Jesus, and love for each other are the true hallmarks of a believer.