

Colossians Chapter 1

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v1-14: The saints of God, specifically those at Colosse

v15-22: The Son of God, the incomparable & indispensable Lord Jesus Christ

v23-29: The servant of God, the apostle Paul & his ministry

v1-2: Opening salutations

v1: Paul establishes his apostolic authority, and includes the younger brother Timothy.

v2: The people who comprise a NT assembly

1. *saints* - i.e. positional, holy ones, set apart by God to Himself.

2. *faithful brethren* - i.e. practical, marked by faith to God & brotherly love.

3. *in Christ* - i.e. positional, our spiritual & eternal location, a permanent place of immense privilege.

4. *at Colosse* - i.e. practical, as to physical & temporal location, our temporary place of responsibility & service.

v3-14: Paul's prayer

v3-8: Thanksgivings for the Colossians

Feelings connected with being part of the Body of Christ.

v3: Consistent prayer & thanksgivings for saints he had never met personally.

v4: *faith in Christ Jesus* linked with *love ... to all saints* (also Eph 1v15, Philemon v5).

v5: Our faith in Christ has brought us to enjoy a heavenly hope secure in Christ (1st Peter 1v3-4), giving assurance of eternal security & future glory, *the hope of the gospel* (v23), *the hope of glory* (v27), to *appear with Him in glory* (ch3v4).

They *heard ... the word of the truth of the gospel* (Rom 10v17); gospel preaching proclaims the truth of salvation, truth which will refute all forms of false teaching.

v6: The gospel *bringeth forth fruit*, the fruitfulness of Christian character, evidence from the day of conversion and onwards of the grace of God touching the lives of believers.

v7: Epaphras had faithfully laboured among them, as a *fellow bondservant*, and now a fellow prisoner of Paul (Philemon v23), and also a fellow supplicator (v9).

v8: Epaphras had testified of the grace of God & the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

v9-11: Specific desires for the Colossians

v9 - enlightenment, linked with my mind, **God's purpose & will for me.**

v10 - expression, linked with my body, **God's pleasure found in me.**

v11 - enablement, linked with my heart, **God's power to be with me.**

v9: We must not be content with knowing the grace of God only, but go on further in the school of God, exercise our minds in *knowledge, wisdom & spiritual understanding*, and *increasing in the knowledge of God* (v10).

Knowledge - the learning & acquisition of specific truths & principles

Wisdom & understanding - the appropriation & application of those truths & principles to our daily lives, to make correct judgements & wise decisions, to have spiritual discernment in the choices we face, and in the way we conduct ourselves in the assembly & among our fellow believers.

v10: Knowledge acquired will become knowledge expressed in our walk, the character of our life to be *worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*, pleasing to Him in all aspects of life, i.e. a doctrinal basis for practical Christian living (ch3v17).

Also, *fruitful in every good work*, not the basis for obtaining God's salvation, but the fruit of salvation, the evidence of the grace of God, the expression of Christ in our lives.

v11: We cannot live the Christian life in our own human strength alone, we need to be dependent upon divine enablement & strengthening, to draw upon infinite divine resources (Isaiah 40v31).

Strengthened with all might, according to the power of His glory, superlative language, but to what end? To cheer our hearts, *unto all patience & longsuffering & joyfulness*, i.e. for endurance in all the trials of the way, with longsuffering & even with joyfulness.

We need the enabling power connected with an appreciation of divine glory energising & renewing us day upon day (2 Corinthians 4v15-17).

v12-14: Thanksgivings unto the Father

v12 - What the Father has made us, fitted us to share in a heavenly inheritance.

v13 - Where the Father has brought us, to a kingdom ruled by divine love & affections.

v14 - What the Father has given to us, 2 specific blessings of redemption & forgiveness.

v12: The Father has fitted us for a heavenly inheritance, in Christ we are perfectly suited to the holiness of His Person and the light of His presence; God is light, and He has before Him the *saints in light*.

v13: He has delivered us from the authority of Satan, and translated us into *the kingdom of His dear Son*, a sphere where the Father's love toward the Son is manifest.

Israel will know Him again as Son of David; the world will see Him again as Son of man; but the Church will always know Him as the Son of the Father's love, as the sons of God we have entered into the intimacy of family relationship with divine Persons.

We are subjects in this kingdom, but in subjection to *the Son of His love*.

v14: He has redeemed us in Christ, *we have redemption*.

Redemption - the paying of a ransom price to effect our complete deliverance from slavery & from the bondage of my sin and my guilt. The price paid for our redemption was the precious blood of Christ shed at Calvary (1st Peter 1v18-19, Heb 9v12).

Purchase would indicate a change of ownership or master, but there may still be need for full deliverance, *the redemption of the purchased possession* (Eph 1v14).

Redemption is a change of state & condition, and the enjoyment of full deliverance, yet future for the body (Rom 8v23), but we have redemption as a present possession in relation to our souls and spirits.

v14: He has forgiven us in Christ, *the forgiveness of sins*.

Forgiveness - my past guilt has been dealt with, I have the certain knowledge of unqualified & unconditional forgiveness of sins as a present possession.

The basis for forgiveness; *even as God in Christ hath forgiven you* (Eph 4v32). When God forgave me, He was not looking upon me or feeding upon all the enormity of my sin, but He was gazing upon Christ and His precious blood, God forgave me in Christ.

Psalm 107v1-2: *O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*

v15-19: Pre-eminence of Christ

v15-17: His pre-eminence in creation; Firstborn of all creation

v15: Christ is the visible, audible & tangible representative of the unseen God to all of creation (Matthew 11v27, John 1v18, John 14v9, Hebrews 1v3, Isaiah 6v1).

As *firstborn of all creation*, Christ is supreme & pre-eminent over all creation.

Firstborn = 1st in rank, position, priority, dignity, honour & purpose (see Exodus 4v22).

The Lord Jesus as Firstborn:

1. Ps 89v27: the Firstborn among the kings of the earth, His pre-eminence as King.
2. Luke 2v7: He was Mary's firstborn Son, born of the virgin.
3. Rom 8v29: He will be pre-eminent as the Son among those conformed to His image.
4. Col 1v15: His pre-eminence over creation, elaborated upon in v16-17.
5. Col 1v18: His pre-eminence in resurrection, and as Head of the Church.
6. Heb 1v6: He will be pre-eminent in His kingdom glory & as the object of angelic worship.
7. Rev 1v5: His pre-eminence in resurrection as the Firstbegotten out from among the dead.

NB. Col 1v15 affirms the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

v16: The comprehensive scope of Christ's creation, *visible & invisible*.

1. *in Him ... all things created*, He is creation's architect & author (Revelation 3v14).
2. *all things ... created through Him*, He is the divine agent of creation (1 Cor 8v6).
3. *all things created ... for Him*, for His own pleasure & greater glory (Revelation 4v11).

v17: He is eternal & distinct from His creation.

His sustaining power upholds the creation & the order seen in the universe (Heb 1v3).

v18-19: His pre-eminence in new creation; Firstborn from the dead

v18: In the new creation (2 Cor 5v17), Christ is the Head, the Church is His Body.

1. Believers on earth are indivisibly united to one another, members of the one Body (Romans 12, 1st Corinthians 12)
2. All the believers as a Body are indivisibly united to Christ, the exalted Head in heaven (Ephesians & Colossians, **the mystery**, or **the mystery of the Christ**, Eph 5v32).

Ephesians - what the Church means to Christ; His fullness (ch1), His building (ch2), His bride (ch5).

Colossians - what Christ the Head means to the Church, His Body; emphasising His care, supply, support, succour, impulse & direction, all flowing from the Head to edify the Body, He is the source of any increase to the Body (ch2v19, Eph 4v15-16).

The Head expresses Himself through the Body (ch1v27).

In the local assembly, His Headship of the Church must be acknowledged.

The Church began with a risen & exalted & glorified Christ.

He is pre-eminent in His resurrection out from among the dead (Ps 16v10, Jhn 2v19, 10v18, Rom 6v4, Acts 2v24, Rev 1v18, Heb 7v16).

He is pre-eminent in all things, including in His Church.

v19: The greatness of Christ; *all fullness* of divine glory in Him (ch2v9, Heb 1v3).

No limitations can be placed upon Christ, or His death (John 1v29).

The Church is His fullness (Eph1v23) and He is our fullness (ch2v10).

v20-22: Reconciliation by Christ

v20: The future reconciliation of all things

God's divine purpose relevant to the future, a future reconciliation yet to be fulfilled. The *provision of reconciliation* is the cross of Christ and His shed blood.

The universal *scope of reconciliation*, this will restore creation to its original beauty, make *all things* compatible with & acceptable to divine Persons, and bring about a **universal peace** with all things in the heavens & on earth in harmony with God.

We must appreciate the largeness of the work of Christ at Calvary; what it will effect, not just for me, but for God & Christ, the reconciliation of *all things unto Himself*.

This universal peace will be fulfilled and manifested in the coming Millennial Kingdom of Christ, when all will be subject to Him (Matt 6v10, 19v28, Acts 3v21, Eph 1v10,v22).

No mention of things under the earth; they will be subdued, bow the knee & acknowledge He is Lord (Phil 2v10-11), but unrepentant sinners in hell will never be reconciled to God, there will be no restitution of the lost.

v21-22: The present reconciliation of believers

v21: The *background to reconciliation*, *alienated*, the great change wrought in the believer from a position of estrangement & alienation & enmity (Eph 4v18).

The *need for reconciliation* lies with us, *enemies in your minds on account of wicked works*, man has alienated himself from God (Genesis 3, Rom 8v7).

In God's mercy & grace, *yet now hath He reconciled*, by His divine *act of reconciliation* (2 Cor 5v19), the believer knows & enjoys presently the great truth of reconciliation, brought to a place of unity & fellowship & friendship & acceptance & peace & intimacy.

v22: The *basis of reconciliation*, Calvary's sacrifice, *In the body of His flesh through death*, the merit of Christ's death is applied to me by my identification with His death.

The underlying *aim of reconciliation*, made suitable for a coming day of presentation to God, only possible because of a perfect divinely accomplished work of reconciliation.

When God now looks upon those who are reconciled, He does not see our wicked works, but He sees us as:

holy, i.e. pure and clean in His sight, no evil upon me.

unblameable, God sees us as He sees His own Son, no evil within me.

unreprovable, nothing will ever be laid to our charge, no evil separating me from God.

v23-29: Paul's two-fold ministry of Christ

v23: A minister of the gospel of Christ

After all the prayers & thanksgivings & exposition, an exhortation for continuance.

The sure evidence of salvation, the *proof of reconciliation*, is continuance (Acts 2v42).

Need to be *grounded & settled* in the faith, to stand the test of time, not be *moved away*.

Based upon *the hope of the gospel*, the certain expectation of future glory, all that we have secure in our Lord Jesus (Heb 6v18-19), in Him there is no failure.

Paul's ministry in the gospel of Christ was not just about seeing believers saved and started on the road; but his great concern was how they would finish.

v24-29: A minister of the mystery of Christ

Paul's unique ministry, to reveal the mystery of Christ the Head & the Church His Body, to complete the Word of God (v25) and so fulfil divine revelation.

He desires all saints to be in the enjoyment of *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (v27).

He strives to *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus* (v28-29), see also ch4v3-4.