

**Lesson #1 • Colossians 1:1-14****Introduction****• HANDOUT •**

► The book of Colossians is only four chapters long, but it contains one of the most profound Christology presentations in all of the New Testament, probing both the identity and mission of Christ. The book of Colossians also teaches Christian ethics, not only for the individual, but within the home, family life and work environment, making it an extremely practical book.

The theme of the book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His sufficiency to meet our every need no matter what life offers.

The stated author of Colossians is the Apostle Paul, but he gives additional credit to Timothy. Paul was under house arrest in Rome when he penned these words. The time frame is likely around A.D. 58 to A.D. 60. He wrote this letter in response to a visit from Epaphras, the founder of the Christian community of faith in Colossae. It was he who disclosed to Paul the spread of a heresy that was threatening the very existence of the church. Though the “Colossian Heresy” [as it has become known] is difficult to precisely describe, what we do know is that it was a serious error which had crept into the early Church. This heresy included the corruption of the pure Gospel message, along with added elements of mystical and legalistic Judaism, combined with early Gnosticism.

The text indicates that this is not one of the churches Paul planted, nor did he actually visit the City of Colossae itself. In fact, the city of Colossae is not even mentioned in the Book of Acts. All our Biblical information about the church in Colossae comes from this letter with some additional, but vague, concepts from the letter to Philemon.



Ancient Colossae was located 120 miles east of Ephesus in the Lycus River Valley in ancient Phrygia, situated at the base of Mt. Cadmus. It was part of the Roman territory of Asia Minor. Therefore, the believers in Colossae were predominantly Gentile. Colossae had been a prosperous city on the trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates River and was famous for its fine wool and fabric dyes. However, it was in an economic decline by Paul's time. It was destroyed by an earthquake around A.D. 60, which would have been shortly after this letter was written. Sadly, all that remains today of Colossae is an un-excavated “mound” where the city once stood. This “mound” can be seen in the foreground of the photograph on the left and in the upper right middle ground of the photograph on the right.

## The letter opens with Paul Greeting the Christians in Colossae ...

Colossians 1:1-2 • Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

- Q: Why does Paul add to his title of “Apostle” “*by the will of God?*”
- Q: What is meant by the term “Apostle?”
- Q: Why does Paul give credit to “Timothy, our brother?” Was he considered also to be an apostle?
- Q: If there were heresy problems within the community of faith at Colosse, why does Paul address them as “holy and faithful brothers?”
- Q: How would the community of faith in Colosse compare to the community of faith in our Christian churches today?

Colossians 1:3-5a • We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven.

- Q: Though this a typical greeting from Paul where he gives thanks and tells them he prays for them, what makes this special here in the epistle to the Colossians?
- Q: Why does Paul say he is thankful?
- Q: In this passage, Paul expresses what three concepts that are the basis of true Christianity?
- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.

Colossians 1:5b-8 • You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf. He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

Q: What expectation does Paul say the people had?

Q: Who is Epaphras?

Q: How was the Good News of the Gospel going out over all the world?

**We know the Church at Colosse was struggling to keep the message of the Gospel pure and transforming, but the next passage shows us how gentle and loving Paul goes about addressing their problem.**

Colossians 1:9-14 • So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of His will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, who live in the light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Q: What two things does Paul specifically pray, when he prays for the community of faith in Colosse?

- 1.
- 2.

Q: What causes such a failure within a community of believers?

Q: In order for the Lord to be pleased with these believers, what does Paul specifically pray for?

**The nature of Paul's prayer is supported with Jesus' words in the gospel of John ...**

John 15:5-8 • "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples.

This brings great glory to my Father.

Q: So that the people will have the endurance and patience to go the spiritual distance, what does Paul now pray for?

Q: What is significant about Paul ending his prayer list with; "may you be filled with joy?"

Q: What is the inheritance that belongs to those who live in the Light?

Q: How should we understand the statement: "*For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness?*" What is this "Dominion of Darkness?"

Q: How can this "Dominion of Darkness" be overcome?

**This will be followed next time by an in-depth look at who Christ is --  
in Eternity Past • in Present Time • in Eternity Future ...**

◆◆◆  
**Next Time ◆ Lesson #2**  
**"Christ Is, Was & Will Be ..."**