

Colossians – Chapter 1
“How to Become a Saint of God”
Colossians 1:1-3

Introduction:

1. This letter was written by the apostle Paul to the people of Colosse. Paul was in prison at the time, so the dating of it is probably around 60 A.D.
2. Colosse was a city in the Roman province of Asia (western Turkey), situated in the Lycus River Valley (10-mile-long valley), about 100 miles east of Ephesus.
3. Colosse, along with Laodicea and Hierapolis, formed a tri-city area (4:13). Colosse was, at one time, a prosperous city, but by the time Paul penned this letter it had become overshadowed by its two neighboring towns, and was relegated to the status of a small town.
4. How did the church at Colosse get its start? It was not started directly by the apostle Paul. Paul had heard of these believers (1:4, 9), but had never visited the city of Colosse. 2:1
5. The church at Colosse was very likely an outgrowth of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Paul had a Bible Institute for two years in Ephesus. It was called the school of Tyrannus. Acts 19:9, 10
6. Epaphras, most likely, was one of Paul's eager young Bible students. Epaphras then carried the gospel back to his hometown and neighboring cities, planting churches in all three (1:7, 4:12-13). The church was predominantly Gentile in its membership.
7. Why did Paul write this letter? Some serious false teaching had crept into the church. This false teaching was a combination of Jewish legalism, pagan astrology, worshipping of angels, asceticism (abusing the body for the spirit's sake), Eastern philosophy, and false mysticism.
 - There is nothing new under the sun. These same false teachings are still prevalent today in religious systems all over the world.
 - People claim to have deep insight into spiritual things and into the spirit world. They claim to be able to help people reach a deeper spiritual utopia, but it is all built on man-made rules, man-made philosophy, and satanic practices that the Bible calls an “*abomination*.”
 - When we believe that we can attain spiritual perfection through the use of disciplines, rituals, religious exercises, spirit beings, dietary rules and laws, or anything else, we have denied the all-sufficiency of Christ's work.
8. Here is what must have happened: Epaphras (unable to deal with all these issues) made the long trip to Rome to visit Paul in prison and seek his advice. In his absence, Archippus assumed the pastorate. 4:17
9. But, it appears that while in Rome, Epaphras was also imprisoned (Philemon 23), or simply chose to remain and assist Paul. So, Paul writes this letter and sends it to Colosse by the hands of Tychicus, one of Paul's faithful co-workers. 4:7
10. This book is one of the most awesome and incredible passages in all of God's Word concerning Jesus Christ and the believer's position in Him.

11. The theme of this book is rather simple: Christ! - not as He was on earth, but as He is today, now glorified in the heavens as risen Head of the church, His body.
12. It is extremely profound and emphasizes the wonderful truth that Christ is the answer to every need, and the total futility of looking anywhere else but Christ. Paul's theme is the preeminence of Jesus Christ.
 - These false teachers did not believe that Christ was God in the flesh. They believed that He was one of God's many "emanations."
 - False religions always believe this about Christ. They believe He is one of many great religious teachers and orators. He is one of many philosophers. They believe He holds no more authority than any of the others.
 - Some religious systems may even make Christ **prominent**, but He isn't **preeminent**.
 - They may not completely deny Christ, but they demean Christ by failing to recognize that He was Emmanuel, God with us!
13. Colossians 2:10 is the bedrock verse of this book. We are complete in Christ!
 - Why do I need angelic mediation? Christ is my mediator!
 - Why do I need a spiritual emanation from God? I have Christ, Himself, in me!
 - Why do I need a list of religious rules and rituals to make me holy? Christ has imputed His righteousness and holiness to me!
 - Why do I need man-made philosophies and traditions? I have God's living Word resident in my heart, and His written Word to read and study!

Verse 1

1. There are 13 books of the New Testament that begin with the word "*Paul*." In all of these but four, Paul affirms the fact that He is an apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - An apostle was a person who had actually seen the risen Christ and was specially commissioned by Him. An apostle was a person with authority to carry out a divine calling.
2. Paul's apostleship was constantly questioned by others. This was because Paul was not one of the twelve.
3. Paul was not appointed by the twelve, did not travel or preach with the twelve, did not learn the truths of grace for this church age from the twelve, and had a completely different mission than the twelve. Paul was an apostle by the will of God. vs. 1
4. We all know that Christ chose twelve to be apostles during His earthly ministry to Israel. Judas fell and was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1.
 - They were all filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and evangelized the nation of Israel, basing themselves out of Jerusalem. Acts 8:1
 - Their ministry was, by and large, confined to Israel, seeking to bring the nation and its leaders to repentance.
5. In Acts 9, Jesus appeared to Paul (then known as Saul) on the road to Damascus, and Paul was gloriously saved. God made it clear from the beginning that he had a unique message and mission for Paul to fulfill. Acts 26:15-18, 22:17-18, 21

6. Paul would be the one to take the gospel of grace to the Gentile nations, and would later refer to himself as the apostle of the Gentiles. Romans 11:13
 - Paul's apostleship and ministry were separate and unique from the twelve's. 1 Corinthians 15:4-10
 - The twelve had a Jewish ministry, and Paul's was primarily a Gentile ministry (Romans 11:13; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 4:17) Paul is said to be our apostle, our minister, our teacher, and a pattern for other believers in this age of grace. 1 Timothy 1:16
7. Paul also mentions his brother, Timothy. Timothy was not Paul's biological brother, but his spiritual brother in Christ. Paul also refers to Timothy as his son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). Timothy truly was like Paul's own son. Philippians 2:19-22

Verse 2

1. Paul calls these Colossians "*saints*."
 - A saint is a person who has been set apart from this world unto God.
2. Notice that their status as saints didn't come hundreds of years after they were dead and gone, after some religious group canonized them as saints.
 - No, their status as saints was present tense. How did they receive this status as saints?
3. Notice the next phrase, "*and faithful brethren in Christ*."
 - Faithful means that they were trusting and full of faith. But, what was the content of their faith? Their faith was resting in Jesus Christ. Notice it says, "*faithful brethren **in Christ***." cf. vs. 4
4. This is how a person becomes a saint. It is through placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2
5. The moment you trust Christ, you are sanctified in Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to you. You are now consecrated (set apart) in Christ. You are a saint **in Christ!** 1 Corinthians 1:30
6. Paul then says, "*Grace be unto you, and peace...*"
 - Today, this is what God is offering to the world through the cross-work of His Son. Instead of bringing wrath and judgment on this world, God is offering grace and peace.
 - One day, the wrath of God **will** come on this world. It is long overdue. But, God is extending to the world a grace period. Any person can experience the grace **of** God, and peace **with** God, by simply turning in faith to God's provision for sin, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1
7. Notice that these believers were **in Christ**, but **at Colosse**.
 - Our physical address may be Daytona Beach, Florida. But, the most important question is not "**Where** do you live?" but "**Who** are you in?"
 - Your physical address may be Daytona Beach, but you'd better have a spiritual address in the heavenlies.

Verse 3

1. Although Paul had never been to Colosse, he had heard about these people and their salvation.
2. When Paul heard about it, he had two immediate responses:
 - He thanked God for them coming to Christ.
 - He prayed for these new believers.
3. Sometimes our thanksgiving to God and our prayer lives can become very self-consumed. We are thankful for the material things that we have in our possession, and our prayers center on the things we **don't** have, but that we want.
4. We don't see this in Paul. Paul's prayers were concerned with his thankfulness to God for people (changed lives), and his prayers were focused on others and their spiritual needs. 1 Corinthians 1:4-6; Ephesians 1:15-16; Philippians 1:3-5, 9-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4-6
5. I'm afraid that the average 21st century American prayer life tends to be materialistic and very shallow. We are very prone to pray for material things and physical health, while ignoring the weightier matters of people's spiritual growth and spiritual well being.
6. Paul knew that when people came to Christ, the adversary would be stirred to fight against them. So, on his knees, praying for believers, Paul waged war against Satan.