



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

COLOSSIANS LESSON 1

Welcome to our study of the Book of Colossians. Ephesians and Colossians are sometimes known as the "Twin Epistles." Some scholars describe Colossians as Paul's most profound writing, as well as being the most Christ centered book of the New Testament. Along with Philippians and Philemon, Paul writes them both from his prison in Rome. Like Ephesians, the first half of the book is doctrinal, while the last 2 chapters are practical. Young Timothy is also mentioned in each of the greetings.

Before we look at this book chapter by chapter, we need to understand the history behind its writings. When, where, and to whom this book was written will help us to discover the purpose and reason Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Colossae. Make sure you pray before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to everything the Lord wants to speak to your heart. This book reminds us that Jesus is in all and through all, completely exalting Jesus Christ as God and Savior. May the truths taught in this Epistle change your heart and your life forever.

First Day

Today we will begin our lesson by looking at some basic facts relating to this Epistle. Paul introduces himself as the author in 1:1 and 4:4, offering his credentials to remind them who he is. This letter was written to the believers in Colossae (1:2), and was also meant to be read to the church of Laodicea (4:16).

The City of Colossae

Colossae was located in the region of Phrygia, and was a Roman Province in Asia (modern-day Turkey). It was one of the "tri cities" of the Lycus valley, about 100 miles east of Ephesus. Colossae was once a very prosperous and busy city, located on a main and busy trade route. It was prone to earthquakes, and was actually destroyed by one in the 12th century,

later to be rebuilt. During the time of Paul's writing, Colossae was a simple and small city because they had rerouted the trade way. It remained an important center of wool industry because of all the sheep that grazed on the pasturelands. Colossae had a very large Gentile and Jewish population.

During Paul's third missionary journey, he visited the city of Ephesus, and remained there for three years. Acts 19:10 tells us that "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." This is most likely when the "tri- cities" of Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea heard the Gospel, although Paul himself had never visited there (2:1). Most likely, a man named Epaphras, a native Colossian (4:12), heard the Good News and took it back to his hometown where he began a church (1:5-7). Epaphras made the long journey to Rome to see Paul, which initiated this letter to the Colossians. Like the other prison Epistles, this letter was probably delivered by his friends Onesimus and Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9).

The Purpose of Colossians

This letter has been called by some Paul's "preventative" letter. Because of the mix of religions in Colossae, heresies were everywhere. Epaphras was worried the Colossians would embrace these false doctrines, so he came to see Paul for his advice and encouragement. Although it seems that the Colossians had not yet fallen to these heresies, they were probably being severely tempted. The heresies being taught can't be identified with any particular historical system. It was a combination of false Greek philosophy and Judaistic legalism and ceremonialism. Some believe it was a mix of Gnosticism and the beliefs of the Essenes. Because of the high population of Gentiles, the pagan worship of many gods was widespread. Also being taught was the worship of angels (2:18), the glorification and worship of human knowledge (2:8), legalism, involving circumcision, ordinances, foods, holidays, etc. (2:11,16), and rigid self-denial and harsh treatment of the body. The false teachers were denying the deity of Christ and the sufficiency of Christ for salvation. Paul attacks these teachings in many places in this letter (1:28, 2:3, 9-10).

The Theme of Colossians

The theme of this Epistle is the sufficiency of Christ for salvation (2:9). John MacArthur puts it this way: "The theme of the book can be summed up in the words of Colossians 3:11: 'Christ is all and in all.' He is God (2:9); Creator (1:16); Savior (1:20; 2:13-14); and head of the Church (1:18).

It was Paul's desire in writing Colossians that we would realize that Christ has come 'to have first place in everything.' (1:18)"

1. Read all four chapters of Colossians and title each chapter. Write your first thoughts and impressions of the book.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

General thoughts:

2. Describe the tone of the letter.
3. What is the key chapter in this book? Why?
4. What are some of the key verses that support the main theme, which is the sufficiency and preeminence of Christ in all things?
5. Do you find any key words or phrases that run throughout the book?

That's it for today. I know it's a lot of reading, but isn't it great? It is very simple, yet extremely profound. God bless you, ladies, as you learn more about the sufficiency of Christ.

Memory Verse of the Week: "And He is before all things and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1:17

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Do you believe He is before all things?

Paul begins this letter on a light note without immediately sharing the burden on his heart for them.

1. Read Colossians 1:1-29. Observe and list the facts you find, noting the key words and phrases.
2. How many times is the word "all" used in this chapter? Why is this significant?
3. What doctrines are taught in this chapter?

Paul begins this letter with his name, which was typical of the style of writing at the time. He calls himself an apostle by the will of God, establishing his authority with the Colossians. Paul begins his letter on a personal note before he begins the doctrinal points. Paul was thankful they

had heard the Gospel, and that it was bearing fruit. The word "Gospel" comes from the Greek word "evangelion," which literally means "good news." Real faith in the Gospel results in a changed life, which Paul saw in his friends in Colossae.

4. Read Colossians 1:1-8. Paul mentions 7 things that are accomplished by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Read each one and list the verse from this section that corresponds. Explain how the Gospel causes this these changes. (Other verses are given for support.)
 - a. Received by faith- (Hebrews 11:1)
 - b. Results in love - (John 13:34-35)
 - c. Rests in hope- (1 Peter 1:4, Hebrews 6:18-19)
 - d. Reaches the world- (Matthew 24:14)
 - e. Reproduces fruit (Matthew 13:3-8)
 - f. Rooted in grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
 - g. Reported by people (Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14)
5. Explain how the Gospel should result in love.
6. In what were the Colossians putting their faith?
7. In what other "things" do we often place our faith?
8. Paul was thankful for what was happening as a result of their faith. Are you thankful for what God is doing in the lives of other believers? Do you every let them know that you see God working in their lives and how thankful you are for them?

9. Reread the 7 things the Gospel accomplishes in our life. Are they present in your life?

- a. Have you received Him by faith?
- c. Has your faith resulted in love for others?
- c. Does your faith rest in hope?
- d. Is the Gospel reaching the world through you?
- e. Is it reproducing fruit in your life?
- f. Are you rooted in grace?
- g. Are you reporting it to others?

10. Read Colossians 1:9-12. What is Paul's prayer for them?

11. What is Paul thankful for in verse 12?

12. Explain what it means to "walk worthy" of the Lord? (Are you?)

13. Are you increasing in the knowledge of God? Are you teaching your children how to do that too?

That's it for today. I pray that each one of you will be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power. I'm thankful for you!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. How do all things consist in Him?

We need to remember that the false teachers at the time were denying the deity of Christ. They claimed that Jesus was "prominent" but not "preeminent." They believed that Jesus was but one of many "emanations" that proceeded from God, through which men could reach God. He was "one" way, not "the" way. In this section, Paul was setting out to prove that Jesus was preeminent. Paul points out that Jesus is the Savior, the Creator, and the Head of the Church. Paul wants to make sure the Colossians understand the true identity of Christ, in relation to God, the universe, the unseen world, and the church.

1. Read Colossians 1:12-20. What's the main point of this section?

Verse 12 tells us that we have been "qualified" to be partakers of the inheritance, which means "to make fit," "to empower," or to "authorize." God has qualified us through the finished work of Christ.

2. How long does our inheritance last? Read Hebrews 9:15.
3. The word "delivered" means "to draw to oneself or to rescue." "Translated" means removed or changed. How have we been delivered and translated?

Remember from our previous lessons that redemption means to deliver by payment of a ransom, and was used to describe the freeing of a slave from bondage.

4. From verses 15-20, how does Paul refute the teaching that Jesus was less than God? What arguments does he use?
5. How was Christ the "image" of God? Read Philippians 2:6, John 14:9, and John 1:14.

The word "image" means "an exact representation and revelation." In His essence, God is invisible, but Jesus Christ has revealed Him to us, according to John 1:18.

The phrase "first born" does not infer that Jesus was a created being, but refers to position and rank, or status. Jesus was not the first being created, since He Himself is the Creator of all things (John 1:3). He was the highest in rank, or of first importance. Jesus is also "prior" to all Creation.

6. How is Jesus "before" all things? Read John 1:1-2; 1 John 1:1; John 8:58; Micah 5:2; and Revelation 22:13.
7. What do we learn about the Creator as we study creation? How does that minister to you?
8. Explain how all things "consist" in Him. (Read Hebrews 1:3)
9. The false teachers were saying that Jesus was no higher than the angels. How does Paul refute that? (Read Hebrews 1:7-8, Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 2:10 and 1 Peter 3:22)

Irving Jensen makes a great point in his book, Jensen's Survey of the New Testament. He says, "A key phrase in this passage is 'in Him all things hold together.' The statement is sometimes referred to as the Colossian law. The phrase 'all things' no doubt refers to every realm, including the spiritual and physical. Concerning the latter, it is interesting that the physical scientist is baffled by his observation that the atoms of the universe remain intact, when all the physical laws say some of their parts

(electrons, protons) are mutually repellent. In one scientist's words, 'Some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together.' The Scripture of Colossians 1:17, by the hand of Paul, reveals that Christ is the binding force of all things."

According to verse 18, Jesus is the head of the church. The Greeks used this word to mean "source" and "origin" as well as "leader or ruler." He is the source and the leader.

10. In this verse, what four great truths about Christ's relation to the church does Paul point out?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

Jesus was not the first one that was raised from the dead, but He was the most important of all, because without His resurrection, there would be no resurrection for us (1 Corinthians 15:20).

11. What phrase in verse 18 sums up this entire section?

The term "fullness" was a word used by the Gnostics to refer to divine power and attributes, which, they believed, was divided among various gods. Paul most likely used this term to sum up his argument, stating that all the "fullness" dwells in Christ alone.

12. What are some practical ways that we can show Christ that He is preeminent in our life?

13. Search your heart on this one. Is Christ preeminent in your life? Have you given Him the highest place of honor? I've heard it said that "if Christ isn't Lord over all, He isn't Lord at all." Ladies, is He the Lord of your life, or is someone, or something else, reigning on the throne?

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to apply it today.

God's ultimate plan was to reconcile all things to Himself, through Jesus Christ. The word "reconcile" means "to change" or "exchange." In the New Testament, it refers to a change in a relationship. When people change from being at war with each other to being at peace, they are "reconciled." For a believer, reconciliation means that a right relationship has been restored between God and man. They have exchanged hostility for friendship with God. In this section, Paul now argues the preeminence of Christ by showing that in Jesus Christ, there is total and complete reconciliation between God and man.

1. Let's begin by reading Colossians 1:19-23. Discuss the plan of reconciliation. (Also read Ephesians 2:16 and Romans 5:9-11) Who made it possible? According to Romans 8:21, what else will be reconciled to God?

We must remember that although reconciliation has been made possible for all men (John 3:16. 1 John 2:2), only those who come to a saving faith in Christ will be redeemed. Paul reminds them that this reconciliation is only possible through the blood of Christ. Blood speaks of His atonement. John MacArthur writes, "Blood connects Christ's death with the Old Testament sacrificial system (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is also a term that graphically notes violent death, such as suffered by the sacrificial animals. The countless thousands of animals sacrificed under the Old Covenant pointed ahead to the violent, blood-shedding death the final sacrificial lamb would suffer. The writer of Hebrews informs us that 'the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate (Hebrews 13:11-12). Unlike those animals, Jesus did not bleed to death (John 19:34). No man took His life. He was not a helpless victim, but

willingly offered up His life to God (John 10:17-18). Jesus chose the moment of His death (John 19:30).

2. How does Paul describe the Colossians before they were reconciled?
3. Before you were saved, you were alienated, or "estranged" from God. Although you are no longer estranged, is there anything in your life that is breaking your fellowship with Him? Examine your heart today. Are you grieving or pleasing Him?
4. According to verse 22, what is the aim of reconciliation?

The word "holy" mean to be separated from sin and set apart to God. Blameless means "without blemish." Irreproachable means "free from accusation," meaning that no one can bring a charge against you. Once we are reconciled to God, God will not accept the accusations that satan tries to throw at us (Romans 8:31-34). Isn't it amazing that God sees us as we will be in Heaven? We have a holy standing before God that no one can change. God sees us as clean, washed by the blood of the Lamb. In God's sight, we are beautiful!

5. In verse 23, Paul gives us some evidences of those who are truly reconciled. If someone is really saved, what will be the result?

This verse has been translated by some to prove that you can lose your salvation if this condition is not met. This would mean that our salvation is never really assured. Others believe that Paul is giving the Colossians some signs of one who is truly saved. If they have been reconciled to God, they will continue in the faith and not move away from the hope of the Gospel. There are many that claim to know Christ, but Jesus Himself said that many of those He never knew (Matthew 7:22-23). By falling away, they are simply proving that they never really knew Him. In 1 John 2:19, John writes, "They

went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." I believe that we continue in the faith if we are saved. We must examine our own heart, making sure that we really have a relationship with Him.

6. Would you consider yourself "grounded and steadfast"? How can we become "more grounded" as Christians?
7. Paul sees himself as a minister of this Gospel of reconciliation (23). Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. As ambassadors for Christ, what is our responsibility? (Look up the word "ambassador" to get a better understanding of what Paul is saying.)
8. 2 Corinthians 5:20 shows us the burden of Paul's heart. Do you have the same burden? If not, what should you do?

Before you end, spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord to give you a burden to share the Gospel of reconciliation with a dying world. Ask Him to put specific people on your heart. Ask Him to give you a burden for a specific country or people group and start praying for them. God wants to use us as ambassadors and it begins with a burden for the lost. Most burdens are a bummer, but this burden reflects the heart of God Himself. See you tomorrow!

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory. I pray that the truth of it changed your life in some way this week.

Paul now spends some time describing the source and the aim of his own personal ministry. His enemies were trying to capitalize on the fact that the great apostle Paul was in prison. Paul just turned the table and used his circumstance to bring glory to God. Jesus was sufficient, even in Paul's sufferings.

1. Read Colossians 1:24-29. Did Paul see suffering as a penalty or a privilege? Why?

Not only was Paul suffering for Christ, he was suffering for the Gentiles, and for Christ's body, the church.

2. How was he suffering for the Gentiles? Read Ephesians 3:1-13.

3. How was he suffering for the body? (Before Paul was saved, what was his attitude toward the body of Christ?)

Paul knew that it was possible to rejoice, no matter what was happening in his life. Joy did not depend on his circumstances. At that time, believers rejoiced "that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). Paul mentions this a few times in the book of Philippians (1:29, 3:10). Jesus Himself said "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 10:10). Paul was suffering for the sake of Christ, to glorify Him and spread the Good News. He was suffering for the Gentiles, being the vessel chosen by God to bring them the Gospel. In fact, he was in prison because of it. And thirdly, he was suffering for the body, devoting his life to minister to them.

4. The New Testament gives us at least 4 reasons why suffering is a cause for joy. Read the following Scriptures and list the reasons given.

- A. Philippians 3:10
- B. 1 Peter 4:14 and 2 Timothy 3:12
- C. Romans 8:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:17
- D. Philippians 1:14

Verse 24 is a little puzzling and has created much controversy. The simplest explanation seems to be that Paul was saying he was taking his turn in sharing in the afflictions of Christ as his way to build up the church. The persecution he was receiving was meant for Christ, but had now been turned on Paul and those who were preaching the Gospel (2 Corinthians 1:5).

The "mystery" that Paul is referring to in verse 26 was the fact that God was uniting Jews and Gentiles in the church (Ephesians 2:11-22). The word mystery is not referring to secret teachings that only the privileged receive. Paul used this word to describe truth that was once hidden but is now revealed in the New Testament. Warren Wiersbe said, "When the church is completed, then Jesus Christ will return and take His people to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then He will again deal with Israel as a nation and establish the promised Kingdom (Acts 15:12-18)." The Gentiles are no longer excluded from God's blessings and graces. Jews and Gentiles alike are now both saved by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:12-13).

5. How is Christ in you the "hope of glory"?

6. What did Paul see as part of his ministry, according to verse 28? What was the purpose?

"The goal of ministry is the maturity of the saints." (John MacArthur). "Perfect" in Jesus Christ means to be complete, mature, or "like Christ."

7. What are some signs of "growth" in Christ?
8. Are you growing in Christ? Look back over this year. Have you matured "in Christ"? How do you know?
9. What was Paul laboring and striving for? Was he striving in his own strength? (Also read 1 Corinthians 5:10)

Paul was expending all his strength, agonizing and working hard in order to see their growth. Although Paul did his part, he knew his power to minister came from God. The word "labor" is a strong word, denoting toil to the point of weariness or exhaustion.

10. What are you striving for? Are you laboring in ministry toward others? To "what end" are you laboring? At the end of the day, are you exhausted because you lived for Christ or for self?
11. Let's end today by writing a prayer, poem, or song, expressing your heart to the Lord. Are you thankful that you have been reconciled by the blood of Christ? Are you thankful that He made you a new creation? Tell Him so.

Ephesians	Colossians
Jesus Christ: Lord of the church	Jesus Christ: Lord of the cosmos
Emphasis on the church as the body of Christ but also affirms Christ as Head of the church.	Emphasis on Christ as the Head of the cosmos and the church.
Less personal and probably a <i>circular epistle</i> .	More personal and <i>local-church-oriented</i> .
Addresses the errors of false teaching less directly (heresy is not yet a major danger).	Speaks to the errors of false doctrine directly (heresy is more threatening).
Common themes treated extensively.	Common themes treated briefly.

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

Part One: The Supremacy of Christ in the Church (1:1—2:23)

- I. Introduction** 1:1-14
 - A. Paul's Greeting to the Colossians 1:1, 2
 - B. Paul's Thanksgiving for the Colossians 1:3-8
 - C. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians 1:9-14
- II. The Preeminence of Christ** 1:15—2:3
 - A. Christ Is Preeminent in Creation 1:15-18
 - B. Christ Is Preeminent in Redemption 1:19-23
 - C. Christ Is Preeminent in the Church 1:24—2:3
- III. The Freedom in Christ** 2:4-23
 - A. Freedom from Enticing Words 2:4-7
 - B. Freedom from Vain Philosophy 2:8-10
 - C. Freedom from the Judgment of Men 2:11-17
 - D. Freedom from Improper Worship 2:18, 19
 - E. Freedom from the Doctrine of Men 2:20-23

Part Two: The Submission to Christ in the Church (3:1—4:18)

- I. The Position of the Believer** 3:1-4
- II. The Practice of the Believer** 3:5—4:6
 - A. Put Off the Old Man 3:5-11
 - B. Put On the New Man 3:12-17
 - C. Personal Commands for Holiness 3:18—4:6
- III. Conclusion** 4:7-18
 - A. Commendation of Tychicus 4:7-9
 - B. Greetings from Paul's Friends 4:10-14
 - C. Introductions Regarding This Letter 4:15-18