

## Colossians 1:1-14

### Intro:

--Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were in the area of modern-day Turkey. Colosse had been a major city, but at the time of this epistle, it was described by one historian as “an outstation.” Basically, it was a country town that disappeared from history only a few generations after this epistle.

--Paul had never been to this church (**2:1**). Epaphras seems to be the one who began this particular work (**1:7+4:12**).

--The cause of this letter is the arrival of Epaphras to Paul while in prison. It seems he is looking for Paul’s wisdom to deal with certain false teachings currently entering the church. \*There is a lot of speculation as to the specific type of false teaching in Colosse (early Gnosticism, etc.), but we really don’t know the specifics—only a few details. We are meant to see Christ and truth, not the fine points of heresy.\*

### Verses 1-2:

--**(1)** It was common to begin a letter in those days by introducing yourself, addressing the person you are writing to, and then giving a formal greeting.

--***Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*** . . Paul knew it was important to establish his apostolic position with this letter. As an apostle he was a messenger of Jesus Christ sent to speak and act for His honor. \*Apostles were particularly important as the foundation of the church was being laid.\*

--Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles—not exclusively but especially. See: (**Acts 9:5-6, 15-16; 22:10-21; 26:15-18; Rom. 1:1, 5; Gal. 1:1; 2:9**).

--***by the will of God.*** . . meant his position in life was not self-chosen, or self-earned through personal ambition or human nomination. His place was God-given and God-sustained.

--***and Timothy our brother.*** . . This church may have known Timothy personally, as it is possible he traveled or ministered there (**Acts 19:22**)? Either way, Timothy is introduced because he shared Paul’s ministry in a unique way.

--**(2) To the saints and faithful brethren.** . . gives us a heavenly and earthly view.

--***Saints*** are those that are set apart and consecrated.

--***Faithful brethren*** describes the character of those consecrated ones in their interaction with God and one another. They are trustworthy in both directions.

--***in Christ who are in Colosse.*** . . Gives two locations. First, becoming a saint is a work of God that can only happen ***in Christ***. No man or church can confer sainthood. Only God can truly set apart a person for His own purposes. ***In Colosse*** was their particular “post” on earth.

--***Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*** The small little word ***our*** in that blessing is a testimony to the wonderful love in the family of God. Paul owned *all* saints in Christ.

### Verses 3-5:

--(3) Here again, we see Paul's heart with the little word *our*.

--When Epaphras comes to this apostle—in prison—and shares about this fellowship of believers, Paul's heart is moved to *give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul was constantly giving thanks to God for people.

**\*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.\***

--How does Paul express his love? *Praying always for you*. . . he begins earnest, and persistent prayer for churches he only *heard of*. \*Be a good steward and pray for what comes to you.\*

--(4-5) What did Paul hear about these believers? Only the bad stuff? No! Specifically, he heard about their *faith, love, and hope*.

--These three cardinal Christian graces are found in varying orders throughout the NT. (**Rom. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Eph. 4:2-5; 1 Thess. 1:3, 5:8; Heb. 6:10-12, 10:22-24; 1 Peter 1:3-8, 21-22**).

--Christian love feeds faith, which feeds hope, which feeds love and faith in return.

--Faith is trust in the character and Word—particularly beginning *in Christ Jesus*.

--Love is toward God and then *all the saints*.

--Hope is *laid up for you in heaven* and Biblically, always relates to heaven, resurrection, and eternal reward. Biblical hope is a surety and not a wish. *Laid up* gives us the idea of a secure reservation.

--Paul then establishes that their present faith, love, and hope came to them in the gospel—*of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*.

### Verse 6:

--*which has come to you*. . . The gospel, that is. Wonderful, is it not?! The gospel came to them—like a person, in the Person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Good news, come from heaven to earth. How did the gospel come to you? \*You didn't have to search for it in a temple, mountain, or faraway land!\*

--*as it has also in all the world*. . . Certainly, the advance of the gospel in those early days was rapid; particularly in that area (**Acts 19:10, 20; 1 Thess. 1:8-9**).

--Tertullian wrote: "*We are but of yesterday, and yet we already fill your cities, islands, camps, your palace, senate, and forum. We have left you only your temples.*"

--I think Paul is also making the point that these Colossians heard the same gospel—the true gospel, not a false one—that was being preached by the apostles in all the world. It was important that this church knew the gospel they heard had the apostles' stamp of approval.

--*and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth*. . . The truth of the gospel was personally evident in their lives. True gospel seed was producing true gospel fruit in them.

--The denial of the gospel's fruit-producing life is one of the marks of the last days!

**\*2 Timothy 3:1+5: But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves. . . having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!\***

--Paul says they *knew* the truth of this spiritual fruit and God's grace in a personal way. Do we know the power of God's grace in our lives personally? Or do we only know it intellectually or conceptually?

**\*Titus 2:11-14: For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.\***

--Does that describe our salvation? This reality doesn't mean we are perfect (the Colossians were certainly not), but the truth and grace of God made a noticeable difference in their lives.

#### **Verses 7-8:**

--(7) Here, Paul is helping to establish the trustworthy character of Epaphras. There are not enough faithful laborers to go around let alone ignore **(Phil. 3:17)**!

--Paul calls him a *fellow servant* and a *faithful minister of Christ*. The Colossians needed to trust this man who faithfully served, preached a true gospel, taught and shepherded, and labored for them in prayer.

--He is even mentioned by Paul in **Philemon 23** as *my fellow prisoner*. Paul's endorsement would also validate Epaphras but, more importantly, his gospel, doctrine, and manner of life in contrast to the false teachers.

--(8) Epaphras wasn't a tattletale. He was speaking well of this church but had true concerns. He told of their *love in the Spirit*—Christian love implanted and nurtured by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is supernatural life and a sign of their true conversion **(Rom. 5:5)**.

--Our love for one another should have a supernatural source and not merely a natural one.

#### **Verse 9:**

--***For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. . .*** Paul said he was praying for the church, and now we have the content of those prayers.

--There are numerous things we can learn from Paul's praying, but the most obvious is that Biblical prayers are recorded because they reveal literal words and themes that we know God is pleased to answer. *\*Make this prayer your own!\**

--It is also instructive to remember that Paul is writing this from prison, and his focus is on spiritual realities we so often forget the true value of!

--***that you may be filled. . .*** Seeing their spiritual fruit and life moved Paul to intercession. He always wanted to see believers grow and have more of God! Look at the words expressing increasing fullness in this prayer: ***filled, all, every, fully, fruitful, every, increasing...***

--God is the greatest Giver. We should pray to Him as such (**Rom. 8:32**)!

**\*Psalm 81:10: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.\***

--The word **filled** also means *fully equipped* and was used to describe a ship ready to set sail on a voyage. That being so, what does Paul pray they are fully equipped with?

--**with the knowledge of His will.** . . This being experiential knowledge—not merely intellectual, conceptual, theological, or factual. Something definitive and tried. \*Try cooking or homesteading with mere intellectual or factual knowledge!\*

--Paul also knew it was important the Colossians were confident in God's will because they were being confronted with false teachings twisting God and His will.

--The only way to grow in the knowledge of God's will is to find it in His Word and then walk in it through personal faith and obedience. Jesus was clear about this process:

**\*John 7:17: If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.\***

--Personal faith and obedience—doing His will—is the only way experiential knowledge of God's doctrine grows. \*Just think of the disciples following Jesus!\*

--God has a public will (think Great Commission and commandments) and personal will (think Paul's call to apostleship for the Gentiles and suffering) for all of us. We will grow in each as we learn what God desires for us publicly and personally, outwardly and inwardly, and then join Him on that path. \*Prayer, service, worship, evangelism, Bible study, etc.\*

--**in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.** . . Wisdom allows us to properly apply the knowledge of God's will to the circumstances of life. \*Knowing when to push spiritually and when not to/Answer a fool according to his folly or not answer a fool according to his folly.\*

--Understanding is knowing the value, weight, or connection of things. It is seeing the whole picture and how things fit together. \*The smell of a gas leak, A game tracker seeing signs in the jungle, David refusing to kill Saul, or the Roman Centurian who knew Jesus was a Man under authority, and only needed to speak the word.\*

#### **Verse 10:**

--**that you may walk worthy of the Lord.** . . This is why Paul is praying for increasing spiritual knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. The Scriptures regularly exhort Christians to live lives worthy of the One they are following (**Rom. 16:2; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12; 3 Jn. 6**).

--**Walk** always implies our normal, daily, unpoetic scenes of life. Our regular old step-by-step days, weeks, and years. People should recognize our lives are under new management.

--What does a worthy walk look like?

--1) **fully pleasing Him.** . . We are all learning to live to please God and not ourselves. This was the Father's testimony of Jesus Christ from heaven. It was also Jesus' testimony of Himself.

**\*John 8:29: And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.\***

--Pleasing Jesus Christ, therefore, becomes our personal example and aim as His followers.

**\*Galatians 1:10: *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For it I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.\****

**\*1 Thessalonians 4:1-2: *Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.\****

--As there are degrees of wickedness before God so there are also degrees of pleasing God.

May we be ever increasingly pleasing to Him! \*The more you know someone, the easier it is to please them.\*

--Why do we want to know God's will? To please Him or ourselves? To decide *if* we want to bow to His will, or *to* bow before Him in all things?

--2) ***being fruitful in every good work.*** . . A worthy walk will produce spiritual fruit. Spiritual fruit is a byproduct of the life of God working in us. We do not produce it—we bear it. He alone produces fruit through us as we abide in Him and His life works out what He has worked in.

--In this way, spiritual fruit becomes uniquely individual and properly *ours*. \*Think of how differently the life of God worked out in all the godly men and women through the Bible!\*

--Only the life of God can produce spiritual fruit.

**\*John 15:4: *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.\****

--Our flesh can produce works but can never bear spiritual fruit. Much of what is called "Christian" work for God today will not be owned by Him on the day we are judged because it will not have originated in His life.

--3) ***increasing in the knowledge of God.*** . . A worthy walk will never be a static walk. There will be enlargement, growth, another blossom, shoot, or branch. This increase in experiential knowledge of the Lord—not mere theology—is both inward and outward.

\*Pink (Gleanings From Paul): *"On the other hand, the more we truly seek God with the whole heart, the more our spiritual light will be increased, for by a closer walking with Him we obtain a clearer and fuller apprehension of His holiness; and that in turn makes us more conscious of our defects, for it is in His light that we see light."\**

--In fact, this process is the very basis of eternal life.

**\*John 17:3: *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.\****

--The joy of eternity is sourced in an eternal relationship with an eternal being. He ever infinite. We ever growing into His infinity.

#### **Verse 11:**

--***strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power.*** . . Paul knew we couldn't do this on our own! We need strength—the ability to withstand contrary forces.

--The more we please God, the more the world, the flesh, and the devil will press against us. The more pleasing we are to God the less pleasing we are to them.

--Fortunately, God gives strength and might **according to His glorious power!** That is an infinite pool of holy resource. God has might and strength to spare. Even so, of what type?

--**for all patience and longsuffering with joy.** . . The type of strength Jesus Christ had.

**\*Hebrews 12:2: Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.\***

--As the Body of Christ, we need the strength and might of endurance, longsuffering, and joy that Jesus was the perfect example of. We do not live in the time of the final blow—Christ will strike that blow Himself.

--We must not give up on doing good, must not leave our posts as His soldiers, must not quit the race when we are tired. No giving up—**patience**. No giving back in kind—**longsuffering**. No being miserable—**joy**.

--Instead of turning back to the world, the flesh, and the devil, or even just complaining about what we are called to submit to and endure in God's will, God will give us strength and joy like Jesus Christ had for us, like Paul was displaying as he wrote this epistle, and like Job, Stephen, and the apostles.

#### Verse 12:

--**giving thanks.** . . We can give thanks—and will do so—for all eternity.

**\*Revelation 7:11-12: All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."\***

--**who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.** . . Who? *He* has. When? Already. **Has**—not will do so. You and I are not sinless, but we are saints. We may not be tall mature oak trees, but even as seeds, our life is still that of true oaks!

--We must not forget our inheritance as we follow the Author and Finisher of our faith. We have a rich Father who will give to each a portion of His eternal kingdom!

**\*1 Kings 10:4-5+8: And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their appeal, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. . . Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!\***

#### Verse 13:

--We all needed to be **delivered** from powers beyond us—the power and enslavement of sin. We could not release ourselves. We needed rescue.

--Beyond even our own sin was **darkness**.

**\*Luke 22:53: *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*\***

--We may miss this in our culture, but then, and in many other places today, the question is not *If God?* but *Which God?* because idols, spirits, superstitions, and demons still hold sway.

--These Colossian believers, as all believers today, needed to know that they no longer had to fear that dark powers in the world would control their lives or destiny. They had fully changed kingdoms, and to take them back, the dark powers had to infiltrate their new kingdom and overthrow their new King—***the Son of His love***. \*Christian demon possession or demonization is crazy and unbiblical in light of this Scripture and many others!\*

**Verse 14:**

--***in whom we have redemption***. . . means that our redemption and forgiveness is knowingly possessed. ***Redemption*** implies former slavery and a ransom price paid for freedom.

--That price? ***Through His blood***. . .

**\*Ephesians 1:7: *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*\***

--Why was this prayer so very close to Paul's heart? It was His very call from God! This was his testimony before Agrippa:

**\*Acts 26:17-18: *I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 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.*\***