

Colossians Introduction

Colossians 1:1-6

Intro: Today we are embarking on an in-depth study this very important and unique little book.

A) If you thumb through this epistle, you will see that it is only 4 chapters long, 95 verses in totality

B) Way less information than what you find in the average **Sport or Home magazine article**. **But what those 95 verses contain will blow your mind.**

C) The Information from this little Book has kept Churches on track, and **false prophets and teachers** running scared for Centuries .

D) It's also the Book that Exalts Jesus Christ more than any other.

It has been said that if you want to understand the true nature of Jesus Christ, you should study the first chapter of John's Gospel, the 19th chapter of Revelation, and the Book of Colossians. If you have those three under your belt, you will have a solid understand of who Jesus is and what He desires to do in our world today.

Now Most of you are aware that all of Paul's Epistles have a dominant theme.

A) In Romans, it's justification by faith, in Ephesians it's the Mystery of Christ and His Church. In Philippians it's the Joy that Jesus brings.

B) In Colossians, it is the **supremacy and sufficiency** of Jesus Christ.

1) The Epistle to the Colossians presents Jesus as the **Absolute Head of all creation and the Absolute Head of the Church.**

C) See One of the ways that false teachers worm their way into the Church is by attaching **their false doctrine and weirdness onto Jesus.**

1) It's Jesus plus this **emphasis of ministry**, it's Jesus plus **this false doctrine**,

it's Jesus plus this **hyper spirituality**, it's Jesus plus **this move of the Spirit**.

c) Jesus isn't enough – it always – you need this understanding /experience

D) What Paul is trying to teach us in this Book is that it is Jesus plus nothing.

1) If you have Jesus you have it all because in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

E) There should be one pursuit for the Believer, **more and more of Jesus.**

That brings us to consider the purpose of this letter, why was it written?

A) There is a good story here. In Acts 19, Dr. Luke devotes a whole chapter to Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

B) In that Chapter Luke tells us that Paul was teaching daily in the School of Tyrannus and here was the result.

Acts 19:10 **And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

C) Paul's ministry in **Ephesus was powerful and effective**, so much so that people from all over Asia Minor were coming to hear him.

1) Two of the people that heard Paul in Ephesus were **Epaphras & Philemon**, these guys not only heard the Gospel, but they were greatly impacted by it.

D) Both of these men were from Colossae/ so what do you think they did after they were **SAVED?**

1) They went back to Colossae & began to tell all of their friends about Jesus,

2) and before long, there was a church meeting in Philemon's house and his son, **Arch cippus became the pastor.**

E) This Church was a going well/ Epaphras was the evangelist and the discipler, **Philemon was in charge of hospitality,**

1) And Archcippus did the week by week teaching.

God was doing a great work in this little city.

To understand what happens next, you have understand a little bit about the city of Colossae itself.

Colossae was about 100 miles inland from Ephesus on what was at one time, a major trade route to India and China.

A) As the trade route was growing – 2 other cities sprung up on that route

Laodicea & Hierapolis,

B) All 3 cities (Laod/Hierop/Col.) started out w/equal importance then: But Laod – Became a Political Center/ Hierop. – Became a Trade center.

1) And Col. – **A small town that never made it.**/// Colossae was now living in the shadow of those two other cities

Lightfoot, “*Colossae was the most unimportant town to which Paul ever wrote a letter.*”

C) See It may have been an unimportant “Town”, but surely not an unimportant “**People**”!

1) Here is a good example for **small town missions!** Baja’s / Mt Pleasant

Colossae was also a very spiritual city, being on that trade route opened the door for many religious systems to pass thru over the yrs

A) Every major religion and spirituality had representation in this city.

B) Greek gods and goddesses were worshipped, Eastern mysticism was in vogue, many hard core cults were there as well,

1) asceticism was in fashion/ **Spiritually, it was all going on in Colossae.**

C) **But the Church was thriving in the midst of it all.** That became a problem 1) See Because the Church was thriving, all of these other religious groups wanted a piece of it, and so false teachers began to come into the Church.

D) **The one that was having the greatest impact were the Gnostics.**

1) Now it is important that we understand the Gnostics because the Spirit of Gnosticism is still

very much alive today & a problem in the Christian church

E) The Gnostics considered themselves to be people of superior knowledge who could help “**lesser**” Christians attain a deeper spirituality.

The word Gnostic comes from the Greek word gnosis which means “to know”

A) Now an Agnostic is one who does not know/ they would say that there could be a God who is behind the purpose and design of the Universe,

1) **but that is something that we can’t know.**

B) **It’s knowledge that it beyond us.** The Gnostic were just the opposite, they would say **we do know!!** In fact **we know WHAT you don’t know.**

1) If you just took your relationship with Jesus, and added to that our superior spiritual knowledge, you would really have something.

C) Part of their goal was to merge certain philosophical views with the Christian faith.

1) The motive for **this merger was to obtain the favor of the intellectual community and to produce a superior Christianity**

D) A Christianity in which knowledge is the ultimate and redemption is from ignorance, not from sin.

Gnosticism simplified believed: “the spirit alone was good/matter was essentially evil!”

A) This came against many biblical doctrines – for instance **The Doctrine of Creation : See If matter is evil...God could not have created it!**

B) They reasoned, therefore, that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect he could not touch **matter which was intrinsically evil.** 1) Therefore, the world came into being through a complicated surrogate process as God put forth thousands of emanations (**or lesser gods**),

C) each of which was a little more distant from him, so that finally there was an emanation (**a little god**) so distant from God that it could touch matter—**and it created the world.**

This line reasoning also led to HERESY concerning Jesus Christ,

A) They said that if he really was the Son of God, could not have taken on a human body because matter is evil.

B) So they surmised that Jesus really didn't take on flesh & blood but was a **ghost-like phantom**. Which in turn meant he couldn't be our redeemer

1) So To the Gnostics, Christ was *not* Creator, the Incarnation was *not* real, and Christ was *not* enough!

C) Now their thinking about all "matter" being evil also affected their **ethical approach to life**/ but there they were divided into 2 camps

1) One camp suggested: If our bodies were evil then: practice a rigid **Asceticism** (self denial – starve, beat, & deny the body)

D) The other camp took the opposite view: They said practice a "loose life" of **Antinomianism** (Living apart from the law)

1) Because If the body was evil, it didn't matter what you did to it, the spirit was all that mattered. { So live it up !!!!

E) So these were some of the false ideas that had infiltrated the Church of Colossae / which sparked Paul to write this letter – **refuting these ideas**

Now what is the modern day relevance to Gnosticism?

A) As I said before the spirit of Gnosticism is still alive in the Church today – seen in 2 fashions

B) First just like in those days – there are those in the church today who claim to have a superior spiritual Knowledge – **Know "secret truths"**

1) There are those who believe that they possess a spirituality that far beyond anything that the average Christian can comprehend.

C) Those who like to claim that if you just study with them – then you too can learn about the **"SECRET & DEEP THINGS OF GOD"**

Now To counter act that, Paul is going to tell us in this Book that there is no such thing as secret information in Christianity,

A) Everything that God wants us to know is available to all. & Everything that God has for us is bound up in Jesus Christ.

B) So the way to get all that God has for you, is not by going through some person, but by going straight to the source, Jesus Himself.

C) Now this doesn't mean that there is not a depth to what God wants us to know, there is a depth to it that **none of us will ever REACH**, 1) but that depth can be mined by all – We get to spend the rest of our lives mining out the treasures & nuggets concerning truth about JESUS

2 Peter 1:3 *His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of JESUS*

The 2nd way that the spirit of Gnosticism is alive in the Church today is thru the infiltration of Philosophy

A) What I mean by philosophy is this: human reason & speculation in spiritual matters, that ignores the divine revelation found in the Bible

B) Human reasoning concerning things like the origin of man, the purpose of **man's existence**, the **destiny of man**/how man is to **behave himself in this life**

C) See It is not uncommon today to hear pastors and professors calling into question the validity of the Genesis account of creation.

D) It's not uncommon to hear pastors or professors criticizing the Apostle Paul for being sexist or narrow minded .. *writings on Homosexuality*

1) Questioning the validity of **some of the teachings of Jesus**

E) Whenever we begin to question the inerrancy of the word of God we open a Pandora's box –

concerning what we will Chose to believe or not believe.

1) The Bible is either God's word and all true – or none of it is true – a person can't pick and Choose what they will & will not believe

Now With that as our back drop, let's begin our study of this book . V.1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A) Now Paul has never met these folks, he had never been to Colossae/

1) So Paul starts off this letter by introducing himself to them, **Paul, and Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.**

B) One of the things that I love about Paul is that he was confident in his calling, he was an Apostle of JC

1) Apostle means to be a **sent one, a messenger of Jesus.**

C) He was confident in his calling for one reason, he knew **that he was what he was, BY THE WILL OF GOD!!!!**

D) QUESTION: **What are you by the will of God?** Do you see yourself as being a **Welder** by the will of God, or a **contractor** by the will of God,

1) or an **engineer** by the will of God, or a **housewife** by the will of God?

Some people HAVE THE MENTALITY that's what you do if you can't get into the ministry.

A) That couldn't be further from the truth/ See what you do is your ministry, if you are there by the will of God.

B) What I love to see is people who are out there in the world and they know that they doing what they are doing by the will of God,

1) they know that **God has given them those skills and put them in those positions** to touch the lives of those around them.

C) If you understand that it gives you a divine confidence. I am right where I am supposed to be { This is God's Will = CONFIDENTLY That is what Paul had, he was an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.

Then we learn who this letter was written to, it was written to the Saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae.

A) the Greek word that Paul uses here for saint is hagios, (hag'-ee-os) ;

it means consecrated ones, set apart ones.

B) That what a Christian is, they are someone who has been snatched out of this world, **and set apart from the world & for God's purpose.**

1) **Do you think of yourself that way?** You should, because if you are a Believer here TODAY that is exactly what has happened to you,

C) God has snatched you out of this world and set you a part for His OWN purposes.

1) Your life is no longer your own, it belongs to God, He has consecrated you for His purpose. **That makes you a saint**

D). Story: PEOPLE THE LIGHT SHINES THRU

I also like Paul's other description of these Believers, he calls them faithful brethren.

A) I take this to mean **two things**, first that they were **trustworthy and dependable and available** to those around them,

1) secondly that they were **trustworthy & dependable & available to God.**

B) I love people like this, people that **you can count on, people that God can count on.**

1) There are many like this in our Church, faithful people who know when there is a need and they are all over it.

C) Those are the kind of people that I want to be around, those are the kind of people who **bring Glory to the Kingdom God.** { IMPACT

Now at the end of V. 2 Paul lays out what has become his hallmark greeting : *Grace & peace to you* : Siamese twins of NT { Also order

A) Grace – Charis – Grk – Hello / peace – Shalom – Hebrew

Bigger reason: *Grace is who God is Peace result of knowing Him*

B) Unfortunately there are so many people who are seeking peace today thru so many different Pursuits / material/ Intellectual / pleasure / relig

C) But people need to understand that true and lasting peace only come to those who are at Peace w/ God – { *Only thru Christ*

1) God in his Grace sent his son – Grace = undeserved Favor

D) All the blessings of God come to us thru the conduit of Grace –

1) First is Salvation that results in Peace – opens door for many other blessings – *Abundant life* – not problem free – But living in relationship w/ ..

With that Paul launches into a section of thanks giving that focuses on the incredible work that God has done in the life of this Church RD v 3-6

A)The Church at Colossae was characterized by three qualities — and it is my personal persuasion that these are the **three marks** of any solid church.

B) These **Three Key Ingredients** will always be present in a vibrant Church and in a vibrant Christian life. Here they are, **Faith, Love, and Hope.**

1) A true move of God will always produce these three things.

C) Consider these 3 things before we leave today:

First there will be Faith. Faith is in vogue today, faith is in , it's cool to have faith. You gotta have faith people say. George Michael -

A)It is considered to be *a component of a balanced life— another charm on the bracelet of one's well-being.* **Having faith means you're okay.**

B) But the truth is, faith has no intrinsic value in itself. It must derive its value from the object ones Faith !!

1) See A persons Faith is only as strong as **the object of that persons faith**

It is what Faith connects you to that is important

C) Faith is like an anchor on boat, See it's not the anchor itself that holds the boat, it's what the anchor is hooked up to that holds the boat.

Some people are in 60 feet of water and their anchor line is only 30 feet long, so when they throw their anchor out, there is no connection,

A) It never hooks up with anything. The exercise of throwing the anchor out is great, *but the result is worthless.*

B) Other people have the *right length of rope on their anchor*, but they have hooked it in the sand, it might feel solid on the first tug,

1) but ultimately *the sand is not going to hold*, the anchor will drag.

C) **What are some of the sandy things that people can hook up to?** False religious systems, self help programs, other people, even Church itself

1) These are all sand, they will not hold the anchor of your soul.

D) A true water person knows that the anchor has to be hooked up to something solid on the bottom.. *hooked up to something of substance.*

E) So what was the substance that the Saints in Colossae had hooked into? **Check it out, their faith was in Christ.**

1) That is the only sure anchor for your soul, you have to be hooked up with Him.

F) Their faith had great value because it connected them with Jesus Christ *who died & rose again from the dead* – which gave their Faith substance

The second mark of a strong church is love — defined nowhere more clearly than by Jesus when He said, in John 13:35 *'By this shall all*

men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another,'

A) It is a beautiful thing when you see in the Church love for all the saints—not just for some, not just for the lovable, but *all*.

B) This is what made the early church so amazing and so enticing to the ancient world. *Barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, male and female, Jew and Greek, learned and ignorant* joined hands and sat down at one table.

C) They knew themselves to ALL be one in Christ Jesus.

Some of you remember the early days at CCCM – Hippies in Blue Jeans sitting next to arm & arm w/ People in suits / dresses in 50's

A) It didn't matter – they were all brought together by their Love for Jesus

B) And when the Hippies started bringing their drums & electric guitars into the Church – replacing Hymns –

1) It didn't matter the older saints were just excited to see these young people using their gift for the Lord

C) The Love of Jesus Christ was THICK in that Place / People were not there to play Church – Exciting & Impacting – Simple

My heart for this fellowship: God would grow us together in Love & Simplicity { People come together Love the Lord / His Word

A) People who want to be together – who see the value in Fellowship

People who want to experience God together

B) For that reason: **Keep it simple on Sundays** – { Desire to see people come out and be refreshed on Wed.(Oasis) Break from the Hustle

1) For those who see the Value in being w/ the body..... fed refreshed

C) **Why we started the Home groups** – Help build a Better sense of Community & Connection

1) For people who see – the Church is not just a place that I go to once a week – but a family that I belong to { Summer beach / picnics etc

D) And it is one of the reasons that we are designing our new Facility with plenty of room – **For fellowship – Sitting areas**

1) **Barbecue stations** – Grass / kids play / parents fellowship / talk about the word / pray – make a day of it – if they want to.

D) For those of you who see the value in that Pray & support what is happening

So the 2nd key mark that Paul Points out is Love – Lord help us grow!!!

Finally, a solid Fellowship will have hope in its heart which is constantly focused on the eternal.

A) Hope = The absolute expectation of coming good! Hope says, *'Sure it's tough down here, but this is the worst it's ever gonna be.*

B) The coming of Jesus Christ is near- Life is short. We're going to heaven!

C) Note that Paul said This Hope is “Laid up” = stored away, to put up, to put away for one's use.

1) This referred to a **Royal Persian custom**. Hellenistic Rulers would lay up treasures for faithful servants. { God has rewards laid up for us in Heaven

Our treasure, our reward is not going to come during our life time on this earth, the treasure for the Believer is laid up for them in heaven.

A) That does not mean that we will not be blessed here and have some great times here, or even accomplish some eternal things here.

B) It simply means that we know that what the world offers is nothing compared to what awaits us in glory.

1) It means that we are willing to sacrifice here, because whatever we give up here will come back to us 100 times over in heaven.

C) The world wants to buy now, pay latter. But The Christian is willing to pay now, and reap the rewards latter.

1) He lives his life w/ the understanding there is a hope laid of for him in Heaven !!!!!

Look back at Paul's greeting in v. 2 these Saints have two addresses, did you catch that. *These faithful brethren are in Colossae, but they are also in Christ.*

A) They have an earthly address, but they also have a heavenly address.

Same is true of us / In OCSD / VISTA / FALL/ CLSBD/ SM/ ESCD/ IC

B) The question then is this , Which place are we going to THE MOST OCCUPIED WITH ? Here's Paul's suggestion in chapter 3. 2

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

C) The idea here is that we don't have to be earth bound, we don't have to be locked into the things of the world.

1) No we can set our minds on the things above, we can be caught up in the things of heaven where our life is hidden in Christ.

D) What makes me really sad are the people who's only taste of the heavenlies is in Church on Sunday mornings.

1) It's like they spend 180 hours grinding it out in the world, and a couple of hours with their minds in the heavenlies.

E) And then they wonder why they are so thrashed, so discouraged, so spiritually out of it. Joseph Stowel Eternity

Earthbound Christians live the most important segments of their lives only in the context of this world. Their expectations dreams hopes & plans all relate to what they can acquire & Experience Now We are Content to Sing about Heaven & to hear sermons about the authority of Christ & the values of His Kingdom but we fail to live here in light of there .And when it is all said & done we look back upon our lives and see that we have poured into the Bottomless bucket of this world & the Bucket is still empty

Listen Everyday, all day, you have a choice as to where you are going to live, are you going to live in the world, or In Christ.

A) Live like a person who's Hope is laid up in Heaven or live like someone who's Hope is in something else! { Better Job/ Car/ house/ Wife / Experience

B) Listen This world is a far better place when you walk through it with your mind is set on the things above

1) Answer to the Hopelessness in our World today – Peace w/ God - Heaven

C) So Faith / Hope and Love – 3 key ingredients that mark the Church

1) I firmly believe that a church, family, or individual who is focused on faith, love, and hope will be stable, solid, seasoned.