

## COLOSSIANS SESSION 1

**Background:** This epistle is one of Paul's "prison epistles" because it was written while he was imprisoned in Rome between 60-62 AD. Colossae was a city located in the Lycus River Valley in Phrygia-a part of what is now modern Turkey. Colossae was about 9.3 miles southeast of Laodicea and they were told to share this epistle with them. The church in Colossae was not established by Paul but by his coworker Epaphras. Paul had most likely never seen these people before yet when he heard of their salvation, he prayed consistently for them.

**Theme:** Paul wrote this letter both to encourage these people that are young in faith and to instruct them against heresies that had been introduced to them by Gnostics. The Gnostics were a mixture of Jewish legalism and Greek hidden knowledge seekers with a dab of Christianity on top. They majored in hidden knowledge for salvation that was only made known to a few. They didn't believe that Jesus had a physical body but was an emanation that appeared to his disciples to reveal hidden knowledge. They also did not believe in the physical resurrection of Christ but saw it as a spiritual event. Some saw him as a divine revealer, others as an enlightened human, and some even considered him a false messiah. They believed in communication with and worshiping of angels as well as observing Jewish ceremonial rituals and dietary laws for higher spiritual knowledge. Paul combats all of this by driving the point home that Jesus Christ is God in flesh, that he is eternal and supreme and everything we need is in him alone.

**The Greeting - Colossians 1:1-2** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Thanksgiving - Colossians 1:3-6** We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth: *We take from these verses that Paul had not personally won these people to Christ nevertheless he was thankful for their faith in Christ and he consistently prayed for these people he didn't know by face. The gospel is the seed that brings forth fruit. The gospel must be sown in the heart producing repentance and faith in Christ which is the entrance into God's grace which produces good works.*

**Colossians 1:7-11** As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; *Epaphras was the laborer that preached the gospel to these people and brought back word to Paul of their conversion. From that time Paul prayed earnestly that these people grow in Christ. More specifically that they the will of God is revealed to them in both wisdom and understanding. That they please the Lord by their conduct and that they increase in their personal knowledge of God. The Greek word for knowledge in that verse is epignosis which means contact-knowledge or first-hand through experience knowledge. He prays for them to be strengthened by the power of God so they may endure hardships and trials without losing joy.*

**Colossians 1:12-15** Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: *God has made us suitable to inherit with the saints by delivering us out of Satan's kingdom which is darkness and translating us into Christ's kingdom which is light. Translation has to do with changing realms – Enoch was translated from Earth to glory without dying. Here's how we've been made suitable for all of this – redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. The removal of our sins gave us entrance into the kingdom of Christ and God. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God...meaning that Jesus was and is God that you could look at. The phrase "firstborn of every creature" has been used by many who believe that Christ was a created being like an angel. The term "firstborn" has to do with superior in order and birthright in inheritance. Many examples in scripture of sons that were not born first yet they became the firstborn in their family giving them headship and inheritance – Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, so it is with Adam and Christ...Adam was born first but he lost his headship and inheritance through sin so Jesus Christ became the firstborn(the head and inheritor of the creation).*

**Colossians 1:16-19** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; *Everything that has been created whether it is in*

*heaven or on earth, things seen and unseen, powers and positions, thrones and realms... all of it was created by and for Jesus Christ. He is eternal and was before everything and by him all things exist and stand. He is the head of the church, meaning everything should flow from him and in cooperation with him. He is the firstborn from the dead...meaning that he is the first to return from the dead to never die again. Some people in scripture experienced resurrection but they all died again. Christ is the first ever to get up by his own power to live forever. The Father has made Christ preeminent in all things meaning that he is superior in all that he is and does. It pleased God that all the fullness of God live in Christ.*

**Colossians 1:20-22** And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: *Christ is the great reconciler and peacemaker because of the sacrifice of himself on the cross. His blood is the cleansing agent for all sins. The believer has been reconciled to God and has peace with God because the blood. The living Christ presents us to God without blemish or fault because we are in him.*

**Colossians 1:23** If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; *The goal for every Christian is to become a mature believer that glorifies God on earth but maturity requires responsibility on our part. It is important that we grow inwardly(grounded) as well as outwardly. The enemy wants to stifle our growth and move us away from the hope of the gospel -which is us being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.*

**Colossians 1:24-26** Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: Paul's motivation for his sufferings was that they would benefit the church. He wanted believers to be filled with what was necessary for their spiritual development, and that includes suffering. Paul wanted the church to know and do the will of God, reflect the character of Jesus Christ in the world, be ready for the judgment seat of Christ, and to understand that the church was a mystery hid in God from the foundation of the world. The mystery of the church is that it is a joint body of both Jew and Gentile with no difference between the two.*

**Colossians 1:27-29** To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. *The jewel of the mystery is that Christ is in you and will one day deliver you from your natural body into a spiritual body like his. Paul's concern is that all believers come to maturity and he labored fervently because of the grace of God working in him.*