Lesson 1: Jesus Christ – Supreme Ruler of All

Colossians 1

***1****Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*

***2****To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ:*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father.*

***3****We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,****4****because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—****5****the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel****6****that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.*

1. Read Colossians 1:4-5. Why are faith and love the products of hope? Why must hope exist first?

2. When did you first come to experience the hope offered in the Gospel, and how has it affected your life? Explain.

***3****We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,****4****because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—****5****the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel****6****that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.****7****You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,****8****and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.*

3. According to verses 6-8, who first shared the Gospel with the Colossian Christians and how did they respond?

***9****For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,****10****so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,****11****being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience* ***12****and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified youto share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

4. Paul’s prayer for the Colossians is a great prayer for us to pray for ourselves and for other believers. List the six things Paul prays for in verses 9-11:

***15****The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.****16****For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.****17****He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.****18****And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.****19****For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him* ***20****and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

5. Christ’s supremacy over the visible and invisible realms is one of Paul’s main points in his letter to the Colossians. He poetically praises Christ as he celebrates his sovereignty. In which ways and areas is Christ supreme, according to verses 15-19?

6. Imagine yourself as a new believer, who’d grown up in Colosse in the first century. Like your family and neighbors, you had formerly believed in many gods. You’d been superstitious, and the fear of evil spirits had controlled many of your actions in the past. Write in the first person, as if in your diary, how Paul’s description of Christ’s supremacy in verses 15-19 makes you feel.

7. What “gods” (besides Jesus Christ) have you lived in fear of, or tried to appease? (ancestors, an overbearing parent, spouse or boss, money, “the Joneses” and trying to keep up with them, etc.). Explain. (Please remember that anything of a personal nature that is shared in your small group is to remain strictly confidential. No gossip please!)

***24****Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.****25****I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—****26****the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.*

*2 Corinthias 12:9-10* ***9****But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.****10****That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

8. Read verses 24-25. In what sense were Paul’s sufferings a continuation of the suffering of Jesus? Why would this lead him to rejoice? (Hint: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.)

***25****I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—****26****the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people.****27****To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

9. What is the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations, that Paul refers to in verses 26-27? How would you explain this mystery in your own words to someone who’d never heard of it?

10. Journal this passage using the “SOAP” method.

Lesson 2: Not Philosophy or Legalism, but Christ

Colossians 2

***2****I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.****2****My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,****3****in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.****4****I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.****5****For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

1. Read Colossians 2:1-5. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that if they had Jesus Christ, they had everything they needed. He said that in verse 3 that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What treasures have you uncovered in your relationship with Jesus?

2. According to verse 4, Paul was concerned that the Colossians might possibly be deceived by “fine sounding arguments”. Have any fine sounding arguments ever hindered you from following Jesus? Explain.

***6****So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,****7****rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

3. Read verses 6-7. Have you ever felt bound by human traditions or religious rules, or by hollow and deceptive philosophies or by the elemental spiritual forces of this world? Explain. What was the main problem you experienced? Explain the dangers of following these things rather than following Jesus Christ.

***9****For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,****10****and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.*

4. Write out verses 9-10 in your own words. What most impacts you about these verses?

***11****In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ,****12****having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

5. The Jews practiced circumcision as a sign that they were part of Abraham’s covenant with God. Paul said the Colossian Christians had been circumcised, but he wasn’t referring to physical circumcision, as practiced by the Jews. How and by whom, were they circumcised, according to verses 11-12?

***9****For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,****10****and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.*

***15****And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

6. What are the powers and authorities referred to in verses 10 and 15? How does Christ give us victory over these?

***16****Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.****17****These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.****18****Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.****19****They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.*

7. Read verses 16-19. Has anyone ever encouraged you to be “more spiritual” by adding certain things to your faith? If so, what were they and what was the result?

8. Paul wrote in verse 20 **“**Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules. . .”. What do you think he means by the “elemental spiritual forces of this world” and how do those forces lend to rule keeping?

9. Journal this passage using the “SOAP” method.

Lesson 3: - The Christians New Life

Colossians 3:1-17

***3****Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.****2****Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.****3****For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.****4****When Christ, who is yourlife, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

1. In the last chapter, Paul wrote about some things that might seem spiritual (religious rules about eating and drinking, festivals, etc.) but he said they do not lead to spiritual growth. By contrast, Paul lists some things in this chapter that help us to grow in our spiritual life. What does he tell us to do in verses 1-4? How can this help us grow spiritually?

***3****For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.****4****When Christ, who is yourlife, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

2. Write out verses 3-4 in your own words and then write what these verses means to you, practically speaking.

3. Can you think of someone (it could be you) whose life is completely different now than it was before meeting Jesus? Briefly describe the difference Jesus made in that person’s life and how their life is now all about loving and serving Jesus.

***5****Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.****6****Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.****7****You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.****8****But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.****9****Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices****10****and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.****11****Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

4. In verses 5-11, believers are instructed to “put to death” several behaviors and attitudes. List them. Which of these is/are most difficult for you to “put to death”?

***9****Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices****10****and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

5. Verses 9-10 talk about taking off your old self with its practices and putting on your new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator. Practically speaking how do you do this? Explain.

***11****Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.*

6. Verse 11 says “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all in all.”. Explain how this might have been a comforting verse for the first century Colossian Christians to read? Does it comfort you in any way? How?

***12****Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.****13****Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.****14****And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

7. What are we told to clothe ourselves in, in verse 12-14? Which of these feels most comfortable to you? Which is/are hardest to put on or keep wearing?

*Colossians 3:15**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”.*

*Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

8. Read verse 15 and also John 14:27 and Philippians 4:6-7. Would you say that the peace of Christ generally rules in your heart? What do you do to allow the peace of Christ to rule?

***15****Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.****16****Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.****17****And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

9. Read the instructions in verses 15-17. Which do you do most readily and frequently?

10. Journal this passage using the “SOAP” method.

Lesson 4: Practical Christianity

Colossians 3:18-4:18

***18****Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* ***19****Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.* ***20****Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* ***21****Fathers,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A18+-+4%3A18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29539a)*] do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.* ***22****Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.****23****Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,****24****since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.****25****Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*

***4****Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

1. In Colossians 3:18 - 4:1 Paul lists some instructions for various members of Christian households. Notice he frequently says “as is fitting in the Lord”. He’s not admonishing believers to conform to the prevailing cultural patterns, but rather to follow the pattern Jesus set and to do everything as unto the Lord. Which of these instructions do you find most difficult to practice?

***23****Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,****24****since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.****25****Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*

2. According to 3:23-24, what should motivate us in all our work?

***4****Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

3. In the Roman empire in the first century, it is estimated that about 20 percent of the population were slaves, so if there were 50 million people, about 10 million of them were enslaved. (Some estimates are even much higher.) Paul is not condoning slavery in Colossians 4:1, but he’s addressing a situation that was widespread in the culture. What specifically does he tell slave owners, so that they will treat their slaves as the Lord would have them treat them? What is He implying?

***2****Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.****3****And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.****4****Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.****5****Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.****6****Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

4. Read Paul’s instructions about advancing the Gospel in 4:2-6. Which of these do you need to work on? Explain.

*Colossians 2:7* ***6****So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him,****7****rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

*Colossians 3:15* **15**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

*Colossians 3:17* **17**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

*Colossians 4:2* **2**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

5. Why is thankfulness such an important trait in a Christian’s life? (See 2:7, 3:15, 3:17, 4:2)

6. Paul ministered with a team of fellow Christians. What does this imply to you, regarding your life and ministry?

7. What do you think Paul means by “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt”?

***2****Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.****3****And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.****4****Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.****5****Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.****6****Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

8. In verses 2-6, Paul singles out three ingredients that should characterize the Colossians’ (and our) relations and responsibilities toward non-believers. What are they?

9. What one or two truths from Colossians have most stood out to you, or most changed the way you will think and act? Explain.

10. Journal this passage, using the “SOAP” method.