

C6 - Studies in the Epistles Colossians

Study 1 - The Supremacy of Christ

BIBLE READING: Colossians 1: 1-29

KEY VERSE:
“For in Him all the fullness of God
was pleased to dwell.”

Colossians 1: 19

BACKGROUND

Colosse was about 100 miles from Ephesus. It appears that, as a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, new Christians moved to Colosse and commenced a church there. One of these new Christians was Epaphras. It was he who brought to Paul in prison the news of all that was happening in Colosse. (**Colossians 1: 7; and 4: 12, 13**) Paul had a great care for the Christians there, especially when he heard that various learned people were influencing them and teaching error.

PAUL'S PRAISE AND PRAYER (VERSES 1-14)

Paul was delighted with the report which Epaphras brought, and he thanked God (**verse 3**) for what he heard about the Christians in Colosse:

1. Their **'faith in Christ Jesus'**. (**verse 4**)
2. Their **'love... for all the saints'**. (**verse 4**)
3. Their **'hope... in Heaven'**. (**verse 5**)

All of us, who have trusted the Lord Jesus, should not only show these qualities but we should continue to develop them in our lives. (**verse 6**)

Paul now enlarges upon his constant prayer for them. He prays that they may be able to know God's will for their lives, and that they may **"walk in a manner worthy of the Lord"** in accordance with His will. His main desire is that they may be **"bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"**. (**verses 9, 10**)

PAUL'S 'PORTRAIT' OF CHRIST (VERSES 15-23)

It would appear that in Colosse there were some very legalistic Jews who were teaching that Jewish Christians should continue the ceremonies of the Old Testament. Also there were philosophers, who suggested that faith in Christ and His work on the cross were not sufficient. They taught that additional doctrines and experiences were needed. However, Paul completely rejects such false ideas by showing the complete supremacy and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus.

He gives a wonderful description of who He is and what He has done!

1. The LORD OF SALVATION – **"in Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."** (**verse 14**)
2. The SON OF GOD - **"He is the image of the invisible God..."** (**verse 15**)
3. The LORD OF CREATION - **"For by Him all things were created..."** (**verse 16**)
4. The LORD IN CONTROL - **"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."** (**verse 17**)
5. The LORD OF THE CHURCH - **"He is the head of the body, the Church."** (**verse 18**)
6. The LORD SUPREME- **"In everything He might be pre-eminent."** (**verse 18**)
7. The LORD OF THE CROSS - **"...making peace by the blood of His cross."** (**verse 20**)

These seven remarkable statements about Christ will help us to increase **"in the knowledge of God"**. Our best defence against false teachings is a clear understanding of who Christ is!

PAUL'S PASSION TO PREACH CHRIST (VERSES 24-29)

Paul's special service for God was to make Christ known to non-Jews, (or Gentiles). Because of who Christ is and what He has done, Gentiles can also come into the blessing of **"Christ in you, the hope of glory"**. No wonder Paul did all he could to bring this message to everyone, as he explains in **verses 28-29**.



Ancient ruins at Colosse (Source: Wikipedia)

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Study 2 - The Believer's Position "in Christ"

BIBLE READING:

Colossians 2: 1-23

KEY VERSE:

"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

Colossians 2: 6

THE REASON FOR THE EPISTLE (VERSES 1-4)

Verse 4 suggests that there were some argumentative people with persuasive words who may have caused some Christians to be discouraged. Others were being confused about the truth. (**verse 8**) To counteract these things, Paul again emphasises that he is writing in order that:

- a) **"their hearts may be encouraged."** (**verse 2**)
- b) they may be **"knit together in love"**. (**verse 2**)
- c) they may **"reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding..."**. (**verse 2**)

THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN CHRIST (VERSES 5-15)

In this section Paul outlines some of the principles of the Christian life.

- Confidence in Christ - **Verse 5** refers to their **"faith in Christ"**. This is both the beginning and the basis of true Christian life.
- Conduct in Christ - **Verse 6** calls upon them to **"walk in Him"**. This means changed behaviour because He is their Lord.
- Continuing in Christ - **Verse 7** encourages them to be **"rooted and built up in Him"**. This emphasises the unseen stability that they have in their relationship with Christ.
- Complete in Christ - **Verse 10** teaches them that they are complete in Him. This assures them that they need no one else, and nothing more, for their salvation!

Before we believed in the Lord Jesus our nature was sinful. We disobeyed, rebelled and ignored God. The Christian, however, has a new nature. The Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sin on the cross and God has **"forgiven us all our trespasses"** (**verse 13**). We have new life in Christ.



Painting of St Paul by Rubens (Source: Wikipedia)

THE REALITY OF THE NEW LIFE (VERSES 16-23)

Paul is now giving answers to some of the wrong theories and practices which were being taught to the Christians in Colosse.

- Some were saying they should still keep the Jewish ceremonies of the past, like festivals and Sabbaths. Paul says NO! These celebrations were just a picture, or shadow, of all that the Lord Jesus would do and are no longer necessary. (**verses 16, 17**)
- Others were suggesting that angels should be given a prominent place in worship. Again he says NO! Christ is the Head of the Church and all our worship should be focused on Him. (**verses 18, 19**)
- Others were following regulations which men had made up and which were linked with dead religions. Even though some of these commandments may have been good, they should not have any part in a Christian's life. We are dead to all that, from the moment we trusted in the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross for us. (**verse 20**)

We need to constantly remind ourselves that we could never earn our salvation by trying to live a good life, however hard we try. It is not what we try to DO! It is what He has DONE for us that is important!

Answer Sheet

C6 - Studies in the Epistles

Colossians

Study 1 - The Supremacy of Christ

Return address on back of answer sheet

Name: _____

Address: _____

1. Write three things that Paul tells us about Epaphras, in this letter.

 /3

2. What had Paul heard about the church at Colosse?

 /3

3. Read verses 9-11 again and answer the following questions:

a) What does Paul pray for the Colossians? (**verse 9**) _____

b) What does it mean to "**walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him**"? (**verse 10**)

c) What is the source of strength to live such a life? (**verse 11**) _____

 /5

4. According to verses 12-14, what reasons do we have for giving thanks?

 /3

5. Explain in your own words four things that we learn about the Lord Jesus as we look at Paul's portrait of Him in verses 15 -19.

 /4

6. "**And you... He has now reconciled.**" (1: 21, 22)

a) What does this mean? _____

b) According to **verse 21** what was their condition before being reconciled? _____

c) What happened to make reconciliation possible? _____

d) What are the results of being reconciled to God? _____

 /7

THINK: "**Christ in you the hope of glory.**" (1: 27) What an amazing thought! What impact should this have upon our lives?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

C6 - Studies in the Epistles

Colossians

Study 2 - The Believer's Position "in Christ"

1. What does Paul say are "*hidden*" in Christ?

 /2

2. Answer the following questions:

a) According to **verse 4**, against what danger was Paul warning the Colossian believers? _____

b) What additional dangers are referred to in **verse 8**? _____

 /4

3. "*Rooted and built up in Him.*" (2: 7) This suggests the ideas of a tree and a building, both of which stand firm. How can a Christian today withstand the 'storms' of false teachings and evil practices? _____

 /4

4. "*In Him the whole fullness of Deity dwells bodily.*" (2: 9) Answer TRUE or FALSE:

This means that: - in the Lord Jesus there is an incomplete revelation of God. _____

- every feature of the person of God abides perfectly in Christ. _____

- Jesus was truly human but not divine. _____

 /3

5. Answer the following:

a) Which verse teaches that Christians:

"*died with Christ*"? _____ verse _____

are "*buried with Him*"? _____ verse _____

are "*raised with Him*"? _____ verse _____

b) In what way is Christian baptism, by immersion, an expression of these truths? (see also **Romans 6: 4**)

 /5

6. In the New Testament, Christ is "*the head*" and His church is "*the body*". Read **verse 19** and explain what it means. _____

 /4

7. From **verses 13, 14** explain in your own words three things that the Lord Jesus has done for us. _____

 /3

THINK: Thank God for your new life in Christ. Pray that God will help you be "*rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith*". (verse 7)

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

C6 - Studies in the Epistles

Colossians

Study 3 - Living for Christ (1)

1. Read *Colossians 3: 1*.

- a) Why should a Christian “**seek the things which are above**”? _____

- b) How do you suggest this can be accomplished? _____

□ /4

2. Paul mentions the sins of the past lives of his readers.

- a) List six of them. _____ / _____ / _____
 _____ / _____ / _____
- b) Briefly describe what Paul instructs them to do with these evil things. _____

□ /5

3. In contrast, Paul encourages them to ‘*put on*’ certain qualities or virtues.

- a) List four of them. _____ / _____
 _____ / _____
- b) What changes should be seen in the life of a person who puts this into practice? _____

□ /5

4. Paul refers in verse 16 to the fact that Christians should sing.

- a) Suggest some reasons why Christian singing was important then and still is. _____

- b) What do you think is meant by singing “**with thankfulness in your hearts to God**”? _____

□ /4

5. Christians should also be “*thankful*”!

- a) Give the numbers of two verses from **chapter 3** in which this is mentioned. _____ / _____
- b) Write the phrase from **Colossians 2: 7** which relates to being thankful. _____

- c) Give an example of teaching in this letter which makes you thankful to God. _____

□ /3

6. The Key Verse tells us to “*do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus*”. Explain what this means. Give examples of how it might be worked out in your own life.

□ /4

THINK: Make the Key Verse a matter of prayer each day this week. Place the verse somewhere so that you are reminded of it frequently and can review how you are living it out.

TOTAL = □ /25

Answer Sheet

C6 - Studies in the Epistles

Colossians

Study 4 - Living for Christ (2)

1. Summarise in your own words, Paul's teaching for husbands and wives.

/2

2. Read *Exodus 20:12*.

a) Explain how the instruction in *Colossians 3: 20* agrees with *Exodus 20: 12*. _____

b) Suggest two specific ways in which a Christian could do this. _____

/4

3. Read the instructions Paul gives to both employees and employers. (3: 22; 4: 1)

a) Add phrases to summarise them in the table below:

	Employees (Bond-servants)	Employers (Masters)
What are they to do?		
How are they to do it?		

/4

b) Give two examples of how "*fearing the Lord*" (3: 22) would impact the way you work.

/2

4. Read 4: 3, 4 and then answer:

a) What does Paul mean when he asks the believers to pray "*that God may open to us a door...*"?

/2

b) What do you think he means by "*the mystery of Christ*", bearing in mind that in the Bible a mystery is something previously hidden but now revealed? (See *Colossians 1: 24-26*) _____

/3

5. In *Colossians 4: 5* Paul writes about making the best use of the time. How can we fulfil this Scripture effectively in our lives? _____

/3

6. Answer TRUE or FALSE to the following:

a) Tychicus was Paul's fellow prisoner. _____

b) Epaphras was going to take the letter to Colossae. _____

c) Luke was a well-loved doctor. _____

d) The church in Laodicea was to read the letter also. _____

e) If Mark came to Colosse, they were to reject him. _____

/5

THINK: about how Paul commends his fellow workers and reflect on the Christians whom you serve with. What characteristics stand out in their lives? Give thanks to God for them.

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = /25 UNIT TOTAL = /100

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C6 - Studies in the Epistles Colossians

Study 3 - Living for Christ (1)

BIBLE READING:

Colossians 3: 1-17

KEY VERSE:

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Colossians 3: 17

Having warned the Colossians about various errors and shown them the all-sufficiency of Christ and their position in Him, Paul now addresses the implications of this for daily living in the remainder of the letter, **Chapter 3** is very practical. It is a challenge to us to put Christ at the centre of our lives.

THE GOALS OF THE CHRISTIAN (VERSES 1-11)

“Seek the things that are above...” (verse 1)

From God’s viewpoint, we have been raised with Christ (2: 12) and since Christ is **“seated at the right hand of God”**, we should set our hearts on things above.

“Set your minds on things that are above...” (verses 2-3)
We should endeavour to concentrate our minds on heavenly things, rather than be distracted by the things of the world.

Strengthen your hope in Christ’s future coming. (verse 4)
We should set our hearts and minds on heavenly things because we shall one day be there with Christ and share His glory.

Separate yourselves from your past. (verses 5-9)
Paul reminds them of many evil things which had been part of their lives in the past, sins which deserved the wrath of God, and which should never have a place in the Christian’s life. Note how he emphasises being finished with all these things - **“put to death” (verse 5)**, **“put them all away” (verse 8)** and **“put off the old self” (verse 9)**.

Strive for Christlikeness. (verses 10-11)
Gradually, as the Holy Spirit works in our lives, we become more and more like the One who created us!

THE CHRISTIAN AND CHRIST (VERSES 12-17)

Aim for the Character of Christ. (verse 12)
We have been challenged to ‘put off’. Now we have a call to ‘put on’. Here are five virtues of Christian character which are very similar to the **“fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5: 22)** They are qualities that were so clearly displayed in the life of the Lord Jesus and should be evident also in every believer.

Follow the Example of Christ. (verse 13)
The result of this will be that these qualities will be seen in our lives. Then, as Christ has forgiven us, we shall forgive others.

Consider the Love of Christ. (verse 14)
True love is always evident in actions. The greatest display of love ever, was in the life of the Lord Jesus, and in His willingness to go to the cross for us. It is His love that we should endeavour to ‘put on’.

Submit to the Peace of Christ. (verse 15)
It seems that the unity among the Christians at Colosse was being disturbed by ‘teachers’ with wrong doctrines, causing restlessness and division. Therefore, Paul says, **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”**.

Receive the Word of Christ. (verse 16)
All genuine teaching, admonishing, worship and thanksgiving are based upon the Word of God. Therefore, it should “dwell in you richly”. Why should we be guided by worldly advice and reasoning when we have such a treasure in the Word of God?

Endeavour to serve Christ. (verse 17)
The Key Verse reminds us that everything we do, at home, school, university, work or wherever we are, should be done for Him, and in such a way that honours His Name.

What an influence for good Christians would be if they increasingly put these ‘Rules for Holy Living’ into practice!



C6 - Studies in the Epistles Colossians

Study 4 - Living for Christ (2)

BIBLE READING:

Colossians 3: 18-25 and 4: 1-18

KEY VERSES:

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Colossians 3: 23, 24

RELATIONSHIPS (3: 18-25 and 4: 1)

Paul is continuing his teaching about ‘Holy Living’ but is now applying it to specific situations.

- a) In the marriage bond (**verses 18,19**)
- b) In the family setting (**verses 20, 21**)
- c) In the workplace (**verses 22-25, 4: 1**)

He is no doubt conscious of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Now, guided by the Holy Spirit, he applies these principles to the Christians to whom he is writing. Note that in each of the relationships which he covers, he emphasises the importance of the Lord - **“as is fitting in the Lord” (verse 18)**, **“for this pleases the Lord” (verse 20)** and **“whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (verse 23)**.



PRAYER (VERSES 2-4)

Paul is emphasising the importance of prayer as a key to the practical living about which he has been teaching. Note

how he combines prayer with thanksgiving. We should always look for answers to our prayers and give Him thanks. Despite being in prison, Paul has, in each chapter, written of the importance of thankfulness, in every situation. He also asks for personal prayer that he might be used by God in prison.

WITNESS TO OTHERS (VERSES 5, 6)

Having mentioned his own efforts to proclaim his faith, Paul now gives his final challenge to the church, in relation to witnessing to others.

- Our Conduct - **“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders.”** Our lives should be a witness.
- Our Availability - **“Making the best use of the time.”** We should use every opportunity that presents itself to tell of our faith.
- Our Speech - **“Let your speech always be gracious...”** What we say and how we say it is very important when we witness.
- Our Answers - **“That you may know how you ought to answer each person.”** All Christians should be able to explain what the Lord Jesus has done for them in their lives.

Paul wants them to understand that unless their lives match their faith, their witness is useless!

Paul now makes some introductions and greetings. The people mentioned are different, but they are all part of the Christian family. Each one is loved by Paul and is involved with him.

- a) Tychicus, who was to deliver the letter, would explain to the church all about Paul and his circumstances. (**verses 7, 8**)
- b) Onesimus was his travelling companion. He was a converted slave. (**See Philemon 10-16**)
- c) Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus (Justus) were three of Paul's fellow workers. They had been a great comfort and support to him. (**verses 10, 11**)
- d) Epaphras had brought the news about Colosse to Paul. He was not returning to them but was **“always struggling”** on their behalf in his prayers. Paul commends him for his great zeal and concern for the church. (**verses 12, 13**)
- e) He concludes by sending greetings from Luke and Demas (**verse 14**)

When Paul comes to the end of his life he is almost alone (**2 Timothy 4: 11, 16**) but at the time of writing this letter he is supported and helped by others. Paul wants to acknowledge their faithful service. Eventually all service for Christ will be evaluated by the Lord Himself. Are you living in such a way that He will say to you, **“Well done, good and faithful servant”?** (**Matthew 25: 21**)

The letter was also to be read at Laodicea. (**verse 16**) Now, two thousand years later, churches are still reading it, and finding it such a challenge! We need to pay attention to its message and do all we can to put it into practice.

This is the third of three units on Paul's Letters to Churches.

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