



## **Colossians: Jesus Over Everything**

July 23 – Colossians 1:1-8

### **Section 1: Introduction**

Welcome to Colossae—a small, and mostly insignificant, town in the Roman empire. One could understand the apostle Paul’s letters to the church in Rome, Philippi, Corinth, or Ephesus. They were major cities with large churches. Colossae? Not so much. So, what was it that Paul wanted to share with the Colossian church? It seems the church in Colossae and the issues they were facing were very important to Paul, and he wanted a chance to address them. It’s important to remember that Paul was in prison as he—through a scribe—wrote this letter.

Paul starts his letter by encouraging the church, telling them he is constantly praying for them, commending them for the way they love and care for God’s people, and strengthening them by reminding them of the difference the Gospel made in their lives and the difference it’s making in the world. Paul also mentions Epaphras in his opening (verse 7), which indicates that Epaphras (a convert of Paul’s during his ministry in Ephesus) might have been the one to plant the church in Colossae and was most likely the one who brought Paul the reports of God’s work and the concerns about the Colossian church.

**Read Colossians 1:1-8.**

## Section 2: Walk slowly through your passage

- Verse 1: What does Paul refer to himself as? How did that designation come about? If you're not familiar with the story, read Acts 9 and remember that Saul and Paul are the same person.
- Verse 2: What two words does Paul use to describe the people of Colossae? When Paul says, "Grace and peace to you...", he is referring to the favor of God (grace) and the wholeness, tranquility of the soul assured of salvation in Jesus (peace). What does this tell you about Paul's demeanor toward and desire for the Church, not just in Colossae, but around the world?
- Verse 3: How often are Paul and Timothy praying for the church? What is the content of their prayers?
- Verse 4: What two characteristics of the Colossian church are prompting the prayers of Paul?
- Verse 5: Where are those two characteristics in verse 4 coming from? What is it that gives the church hope? Read Romans 5:2-5; 1 Corinthians 13:13; and 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:8. What do you notice about the importance of the triad of faith, hope, and love?
- Verse 6: What two things is the Gospel doing in Colossae and in the world? What do "bearing fruit" and "growing" imply about the nature of the Gospel?
- Verses 7-8: What three things do we learn about Epaphras? The word for minister here is the Greek word *diakonos*, which means, "one who serves." Whose authority is Epaphras serving under? Why is it important to distinguish that Epaphras is a minister of Christ and not merely a messenger of Paul?

### Section 3: Reflection questions

- Where in your own life have you seen the living Gospel growing and bearing fruit?
- Whose faith, hope, and love are you grateful for? Can you share your gratitude with them?
- In what ways are you a “faithful minister of Christ?”

### Section 4: Pray the Scriptures

Using Colossians 1:1-8, write out a prayer in response to what you’ve read OR use the prayer already constructed below to pray this passage.

#### [Sample prayer]

Gracious and Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the grace and peace you have given me through Jesus Christ. By your will, you have called me to serve you in your Kingdom at a particular time in a particular way. Grant me trust to follow you closely as I serve you and love others. Thank you, God, for putting people in my life that have encouraged me, loved me, and modeled you to me. It is because they said yes to you that I am here, following you. May their choice to love others be an inspiration to me to also love more.

Most of all, God, I thank you for Jesus and for his good news that bears fruit and continues to grow. I praise you, Jesus, for saving your people and for calling us all into new life with you. As my own new life continues to grow, may I abide nearer to you, seeing the world the way you see it, and loving others the way you love them. Grow in me faith, hope, and love that lead to life – for me and for others.

I pray this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Amen

## Section 5: Memorize Scripture

Throughout this series, we want to be memorizing Scripture. Use the prompts below to help you get Colossians 1:1-8 into your heart and mind.

1. Write out the passage Colossians 1:1-8 in your journal or on a notecard.
2. Memorize Colossians 1:3-4. Try various techniques to memorize the passage, such as repeating it out loud, creating visual associations, or setting it to a melody or rhythm. Take time to commit these verses to memory.
3. Review and practice: Regularly review the passage throughout the week. Recite it from memory and reflect on its meaning and significance.