

# COLOSSIANS

## ALIVE IN CHRIST

H

### (1) "Paul's Prayer for the Church" HIGHLIGHT: Colossians 1:1-14 NLT

*Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.*

#### Colossians 1 (NLT)

vv. 1-14

**1** This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy.

**2** We are writing to God's holy people in the city of Colosse, who are faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

May God our Father give you grace and peace.

**3** We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **4** For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, **5** which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

**6** This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

**7** You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf. **8** He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

**9** So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. **10** Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

**11** We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, **12** always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. **13** For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, **14** who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

## EXPLAIN

*The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.*

Paul sent two letters to Colosse at the same time. One was sent to an individual (Philemon) and dealt with a personal issue of living out his faith. The other was sent to a church (Colossians) encouraging them to live in a way that honors and pleases the Lord (1:10). Paul communicates that it is *Christ in you* that gives life as opposed to the self-life that brings death (see *Romans 8:5-6; Galatians 6:7-8*). The message of Colossians is "alive in Christ."

### Colossians 1

**vv.1-2** Paul does not use his apostolic position to be a tyrant (see *Philemon 9-10*). He is very much aware of who he is. He is an apostle not by his own merit (see *1 Timothy 1:15-16*), but because he was **chosen by the will of God**. It was God's grace that saved him; it was God's grace that delivered him from a dark heart of persecuting the church and gave him a new heart for sharing the gospel with the church. His life in Christ was nothing but **grace—and the peace** that comes from being right with God (see *Romans 5:1*). For Paul, the church was a family (**brothers and sisters**). In healthy families the well-being of every member is important; members of the family are willing to sacrifice themselves on behalf of the other members (see *Colossians 4:7-9; 12-13*).

**vv.3-5** What a blessing it must have been to know that Paul—even while he was in prison—would **always pray** for them. Paul showed daily "concern for all the churches" (*2 Corinthians 11:28*), AND he always **gave thanks to God the Father** for the wonderful way God was "changing lives" (v.6). His heart burst with joy at the Colossians' **faith in Christ Jesus** and **their love for all of God's people**. All this sprouted from a **confident hope of what God had reserved for them in heaven**. The Gospel, when it is presented in its fullness and understood, gives us courage to not only live well here, but also to fix our gaze heavenward where life is truly life (see *Philippians 1:21*).

**vv.6-8** These verses demonstrate the power of the Gospel and its witnesses (you and me). Look first at the witness (7-8). The Gospel doesn't move across the world by the zeal, passion, and commitment of high-powered superstars like Paul. To be sure there have been witnesses who stand out like bright novae. Paul recognized he could not do the job by himself (see *chapter 4*). The great movements of Christianity are the results of thousands upon thousands of "lesser" stars like **Epaphras** from whom the Colossians **learned about the Good News**. It's people like Epaphras, Tychicus (4:7), Ned Gable, Edith Baskin, Marvin Blackwell, Aunt Nell, Ted Cord, Guy Lewis, Doug and Shelby Sams who have been lights to put us on the path to a close walk with Jesus (or to keep us there). These are the lights that have brightened the for Christian centuries. And you can extend the list with the names of those who have led you to a lively experience with Jesus. The power of the Gospel **bears fruit all over the world by changing lives**. God has put you and me at a certain place for a certain number of days to make a difference. But we must be willing to be planted. Then there will be a harvest of life.

**v.9** Paul begins by **praying** for the church. Even though in prison, his prayers are others-focused. Maybe we should say *kingdom-focused* because he is praying for the people who belong to the Lord's church in Colossae. There is nothing wrong with praying for ourselves and asking others to pray for us. But here we see a man who is so in love with Jesus that he wants everyone to experience what Jesus can do in their

lives. So he prays **God will give [a] complete knowledge of his will (“fill you” [ESV])**. Filled carries the idea of being fully equipped—like a cruise ship ready for a voyage, or an athletic team that has done everything they can to be ready for the championship game. God is ready to provide us with **everything** needed for the voyage/game of life—if we are not so impressed with our own wisdom that we say no thanks (see *Proverbs 3:5-6*). When we are filled with knowledge of His will, we still need **spiritual wisdom and understanding** to know what to do with it.

**v.10** Paul then prayed for practical obedience. True spiritual wisdom affects daily life. It is not a commodity about which we boast (see *1 Corinthians 8:1c*). It is a tool that allows us to **live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way (NIV)—producing every kind of good fruit**. The Christ-follower is exactly that—one who follows Jesus, not his own desires (see *Luke 9:23; James 2:26*). As we follow the Lord we **grow**, and God works in us (see *Philippians 2:12-13*).

**vv.11-12** Paul now prays for what we so desperately need—power. **You will be strengthened with all [God’s] glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need**. Staying power is what we need. G. B. Caird breaks down endurance and patience like this: Endurance is “the refusal to be daunted by hard times”; patience is “the refusal to be upset by perverse people.” The result of endurance and patience is **joy** (see *James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5*). Notice the qualification of this power: all God’s glorious power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead; the same power that created the universe; the same power that Jesus used to nullify the wilderness temptations is available to us because God has already **qualified (NIV and ESV)** us to be **His people who live in the light**. God has left nothing to chance when it comes to our “walking in manner worthy of the Lord” (v.10).

**vv.13-14** The Bible is so practical. **[God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His dear Son**. When a swimmer is drowning he doesn’t need instructions from the shore; he doesn’t need someone to swim out to him and hold his head above the water and then let him go. He needs to be rescued. He needs someone to swim to him, lift his head above the water, and then to bring him out of the danger and taken to safety. Sinners don’t need good advice; they need a Savior. Just like a drowning person needs a rescuer. And the Lord Jesus is the Rescuer. He has brought us to shore. He is also the Redeemer (**purchased our freedom**). The One who secures a prisoner’s freedom by paying a ransom. And He **forgave** us—cancelled our debt with His life (see *2:14*). We must not think our Great God would go to all the trouble of rescuing us and then leave us in the deep water of our own weakness. No, He finishes the job. We are His children. And He is a Good, Good, Father.

## APPLY

A

*Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don’t have to answer every question.*

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. Why is it important to pray for the church the way Paul prays for the Christians here?

3. In Paul's day, the Gospel was going forth, changing lives, and bearing fruit. How is it still doing so, today?
4. What does it mean in v. 13, that we were, "rescued from the kingdom of darkness"?
5. At the end of v. 10, Paul says ". . . you will grow as you learn to know God better and better". How do we learn to know God more?

## R

## RESPOND

*The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.*

1. Like Paul, we should be passionate about how God is using churches in our own community as well as around our nation and the world to further the gospel.

Think about a church in our community or a church you personally know somewhere else, take the time to pray for them this week. You can pray Colossians 1:9-14 specifically for that church.

2. Consider in your own life how the gospel has moved you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

Meditate on how God has changed your life, take the time to thank him for rescuing you, and pray that he would continue to strengthen you with the power of the Holy Spirit.