



A Study in the Book of Colossians

Lesson #1: Teacher: Gerald Cumby

Why do letters impact their recipients so strongly?

Answers from class members:

- “It’s personal and hands-on.”
- “Time took to write a letter; emphasis on the recipient by the writer. The letter in one’s own words gives the recipient a sense of private and sincere commitment to the individual.”
- If the letter has a negative connotation or emphasis, then the hand-written information from the writer is taken in with a greater impact to the recipient than a casual rebuke.”
- Letters are more heartwarming and heart responsive than a verbal “thank you, you are such a delight to have around”, or “you are not liked in my circle of friends.”
- Words in letters tend to linger in one’s mind more than a quick, mouthy proclamation (whether it is truth or a matter of misunderstanding).

The letter to the Colossians is a profound expression of Christian faith. It was written by Paul while addressing the dedicated people of God in Colosse. Colossians emphasizes that Paul’s authority as an apostle does not come from human achievement, but from God alone. This sets the tone for the entire letter.

Key Themes

1. **The Preeminence of Christ:** Paul presents Christ as central to the Christian faith, emphasizing His role in creation and redemption. This theme is crucial for understanding the nature of God and the relationship believers have with Him.
2. **Paul's Ministry and Suffering:** In Colossians 1:24-29, Paul speaks of his sufferings for the sake of the Church; this shows a way of participating in Christ's own sufferings. This reflects the idea that serving the Church is a privilege, and through suffering, believers can share in the work of Christ.

3. The Gospel's Universality: Meaning, the gospel is not limited to a specific group but is intended for all humanity. This universal message is a significant aspect of Paul's mission, breaking down barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Contrary to many scholars thinking, universality does not mean Jews, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, etc. The world is of two kinds...Jews and Gentiles.

This has caused much chaos and enmity between the two groups over the generations past. Why?

Purpose of Writing: Paul wrote Colossians to warn the believers of doctrinal error and to spur them to continued growth in Christ. The first half of the Book of Colossians is a theological discourse that includes one of the most profound presentations of Christology anywhere in the New Testament. The second half is a mini-ethics course, addressing practically every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others. ***The theme of this book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His sufficiency in meeting our needs in every area.***

Key Verse: Colossians 1:15-16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him."

What do you get out of these two verses?

Location of the Ancient Colossae

100 miles east of Ephesus, 9.3 miles southeast of Laodicea, and a few miles from Hierapolis was the ancient city of Colossae (now in the country of Turkey). Even in today's world, the area is mountainous and scenic.

Colossae was in Phrygia, in Asia Minor (ancient location) on the road through the Lycus Valley near the Lycus River at the foot of Mt. Cadmus, the highest mountain in Turkey's western Aegean Region. The name derives from its manufacture of dyed wool.

The city was decimated by an earthquake in the 60s AD and was rebuilt independent of the support of Rome. Scholars agree that the letter to the church was written before the earthquake occurred. Today, we can't even tell exactly where Colossae was located (no foundation stones or pillars).



Important information before we start the letter.

1. **The church at Colossae was founded by Epaphras, not Paul.** Paul never visited Colossae, but had been instrumental in assuring the church was well established with its own pastor.
2. **The Apostolic Constitutions list Philemon as a bishop of Colossae.**
3. **It should be noted here that Philemon was the owner of slaves.**
4. **In the letter to the church at Colossae, Paul mentions slavery and the responsibilities for the slave and slave owner as to their conduct and the way they were to treat each other (provide and perform their job).** We will discuss this very important subject when we come to those Scriptures in the letter.

Colossians 1:1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and from Timothy, the brother, to the dedicated people of God and faithful brothers in Christ who are in Colosse.”

- Since Paul had never actually been to Colosse, he has to start his letter by making clear what right he has to send a letter to the Colossians. He does that in one word; he is an “apostle.”
- Apostolos literally means one who is sent out. Paul's right to speak is that he has been sent out by God to be his ambassador to the Gentiles.
- **Not only that he is an apostle by the will of God. That office is not something which he has earned or achieved; it is something which has been given him by God.** "You did not choose me," said Jesus, "but I chose you" (John 15:16).
- **At the outset of the letter, is the whole doctrine of grace.** A man is not what he has made himself, but what God has made him.
- **Paul associates Timothy as a brother;** the fundamental necessity for Christian service and for Christian office is brotherliness.

How important little words are in the Bible. Note: “to” and “from.” “...and from Timothy”...not, “and to Timothy.”

If, all, in, is...are so important in telling a story or confirming a truth in a letter; i.e. “I saw” in lieu of “I heard”; “Faith...and seen” are conducive to the salvation equation. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”

However...“Faith is always above see level.” More than we can comprehend (Our thinking can’t even bring us to that realm of truth.)

- ***Timothy is not described as the preacher, the teacher, the theologian, the administrator, but as the brother.*** The same Christian DNA. Blood brothers (washed in the blood of Christ Jesus).
- ***This opening address is to:***
 - ✓ ***God's dedicated people and to...***
 - ✓ ***The faithful brothers in Colosse.***

In the matter of opening addresses Paul's custom changed. In his earlier letters he always addressed the letter to the Church. I and 2 Thessalonians, I and 2 Corinthians and Galatians are all addressed to the Church of the district to which they are sent. But beginning with Romans his letters are all addressed to God's dedicated people in such and such a place. It is so in Romans, Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians. As Paul grew older, he came more and more to see what matters ***is individual people.*** The Church is not a kind of abstract entity; it is individual men and women and children. As the years went on, Paul began to see the Church in terms of ***individuals***, hence this style of greeting.

The openings, greeting closes with a most significant placing of two things side by side. He writes to the Christians who are in Colosse and who are in Christ. A Christian always moves in two spheres.

1. He is in a certain place in this world;
2. but he is also in Christ.

He (WE...You, Me) live(s) in two dimensions.

1. We live in this world whose duties we should not treat lightly;
2. Beyond that...we live in Christ Jesus.

Commentaries used: William Barclay, Colossians 1 - Barclay's Daily Study Bible - Bible Commentaries - StudyLight.org

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary> (David Duzik)