

# Colossians 1

## Introduction:

1. It is almost impossible to do better than to take the inspired method of instruction and study it thoroughly.
2. Since we believe every word of God is pure (Pr 30:5), we can find good profit in every word of this epistle.
3. It was a city of southwestern Phrygia, of Asia Minor, near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (2:1; 4:13).
4. We are not told about this city or church by Luke, when Paul worked throughout Phrygia (Acts 16:6; 18:23).
5. Some of the men at Pentecost were from Phrygia, and we do not know how the church started (Acts 2:10).
6. This epistle was to be read in the church at Colosse and then exchanged with the epistle to Laodicea (4:16).
7. John wrote the church at Laodicea in the popular section of his revelation from Jesus Christ (Rev 3:14-22).
8. The sovereignty of God is again displayed, this time by its discriminating selection of the canon of Scripture.
9. Colossians and Ephesians have striking similarities, and both were delivered by Tychicus (4:7-9; Ep 6:21-22).
10. Epaphras and Archippus were ministers (1:7; 4:17); Philemon and Onesimus were members (4:9; Phile 1:2).
11. Jews were at work in this church clouding the preeminence of Jesus Christ, teaching a ritualistic asceticism, and introducing the worshipping of angels with a beguiling, philosophical presentation (2:3-9; 2:16-23).
12. Paul here teaches Jesus as high as in any epistle, complete salvation by Him, and true holiness from the heart.

## 1:1 Paul, an apostle, and Timothy, his brother, write a letter from prison to the Colosse church.

1. Paul was one of those specially gifted servants of Jesus Christ called apostles (I Cor 12:28).
2. But for God's sovereign will, Paul would have died a Pharisee (Gal 1:11-17; Acts 9:15; 22:14).
3. He, that once thought to do many things contrary to Jesus, now served Him (Acts 9:6; 26:9).
4. A man had to have seen the resurrected Christ to be an apostle, which Paul had (I Cor 15:3-10).
5. Paul handpicked Timothy: he was his choice ministerial understudy (Ac 16:1-3; Phil 2:19-22).
6. We know Paul wrote from prison by 4:18, but we cannot prove if from Rome or Caesarea.

## 1:2 Paul and Timothy salute the church at Colosse with their typical greeting of grace and peace.

1. The saints and faithful brethren are the same people – sanctified by God and obeying faithfully.
2. If not in Christ, we are condemned (Rom 8:1). If in Christ, we are new creatures (II Cor 5:17).
3. Our religion is in Christ. He is the Head, the Cornerstone, the Life, the Saviour, and the Glory!
4. Remember, that though we must be and are in Christ, He is also in us, the hope of glory (1:27)!
5. Colosse was in southwestern Phrygia, of Asia Minor, near Laodicea and Hierapolis (2:1; 4:13).
6. Paul saluted them with grace – the demerited favour of God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ.
7. Paul saluted them with peace – passing understanding and keeping hearts and minds (Phil 4:7).

## 1:3 Paul and Timothy were very thankful for these saints and always prayed for them as well.

1. The faith, love, and hope, which he commends and gives thanks for, are from God Himself.
2. Paul never ceased praying for the early churches, as Samuel prayed for Israel (I Sam 12:23).
3. Praying always for them was not a constant prayer, but a constant mention of them in prayers.

## 1:4 They commend their faith in Christ and love to the saints, which had been reported of them.

1. The faith, or confidence in God's word, we seek the most, is that focused in Jesus Christ.
2. We cannot, we must not, ever let our faith or focus be diverted to any other object whatsoever.
3. Love of the saints is the greatest grace, evidence, work, and fruit of true faith in Jesus Christ.
4. You cannot have one of these without the other, faith and love are mutually dependent graces.

## 1:5 They gave thanks for the eternal glory awaiting the saints, which they heard in the gospel.

1. It was not hope that was laid up for them in heaven, but the object of hope by metonymy.
2. Our eternal inheritance with everlasting glory and joy is what is laid up for us (1:12; I Pet 1:4).
3. Our patient waiting for these great future blessings is the true meaning of hope (Rom 8:23-25).
4. Hope is a gift by grace to God's elect, which they needed (Eph 2:12; II Thess 2:16; I Pet 1:3).

5. The Christian life should be one of hope – without fear, murmuring, discouragement, or defeat.
6. Our hope is in heaven – there is no solid hope for anything better in this world or in this life.
7. Satan has no hope, for his doom is certain; therefore you must strictly resist all hopelessness.
8. It is the true gospel that brings the news of the resurrection, eternal life, and a heavenly home.
9. Ministers had brought God’s gospel to these saints before this epistle, as they were a church.
10. We only want the preached word that is according to the truth of the gospel, nothing else!

1:6 **The true gospel of the grace of God had been taught in all the world with fruit everywhere.**

1. The word of the truth of the gospel had come to them and was still there, by the perfect tense.
2. But it had not only come to the Colossians, it had also been taught in the rest of the world.
3. The great commission had sent qualified men into all the world, and they went (Mark 16:20).
4. The gospel of grace was preached in all the world by Jerusalem’s end in 70 AD (Mat 24:14).
5. Paul confirmed this ignored fact later in the chapter, by mentioning every creature (Mark 1:23).
6. Many other references confirm this fact (Rom 1:8; 10:18; 15:17-19; Acts 17:6; 20:25-27; etc.).
7. The true gospel, preached and believed properly, brings forth fruit (I Thess 2:13). Look for it!
8. The true knowledge of the grace of God should change our lives (II Cor 5:14-15; Luke 8:18).
9. Fruitlessness is spiritual death at worst, and shortsighted forgetting of Christ at best (II Pet 1:9).
10. We only want the grace of God in truth, not the grace of God diluted for Arminian throats.
11. In two consecutive verses, Paul emphasized truth to oppose the false teachers (2:4,8,16,18).

1:7 **Epaphras, a faithful minister and fellowservant of the apostle, had also taught the gospel.**

1. This man must have been one of their first and principal ministers by which they believed.
2. Not every saint is blessed with a man like Epaphras, whom Paul would describe as faithful.
3. This man was imprisoned with Paul (Phile 1:23), but he was also a glorious minister (4:12-13).
4. There were many unfaithful ministers in Paul’s day (II Co 2:17; Phil 2:21; 3:18-19; Tit 1:11).

1:8 **Epaphras visited Paul in prison to tell him of the Colossians’ love in the Holy Spirit.**

1. We cannot prove whether Epaphras visited Paul in prison in Rome or in Caesarea (Acts 24:27).
2. It appears from Philemon 1:23 that Epaphras either at this time or other was also imprisoned.
3. The declared love of the Colossians here must be for Paul and Timothy by virtue of 1:4.
4. Love is the first and chief fruit of the Spirit; Paul would exhort them to even more (3:12-14).

1:9 **Paul and Timothy’s love for the Colossians caused them to pray continually for blessings.**

1. Here is the beginning of the most complex and glorious single sentences in the Word of God.
2. The moving cause here, modified by “also,” is their faith, love, hope, and love of Paul (1:3-8).
3. When Paul had heard of their faith, love, and hope, he gave thanks to God and prayed for them.
4. Paul and Timothy prayed always for these saints, making mention in every prayer (Eph 1:16).
5. More than just a ritualistic prayer, Paul and Timothy had great personal desire for this as well.
6. His holy goal was for them to know the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.
7. This is much more than seeking God’s will for a wife, job, house, car, or other carnal matter.
8. The lofty nature of this request and its objective are explained by the following verse.

1:10 **The purpose for wisdom is to please God, bring forth good works, and know God better.**

1. The goal of ministers is for saints to walk in a pleasing way before God, worthy of His name.
2. Fruitfulness, or the bearing of much fruit, is desired in every good work, not just a few.
3. The true knowledge of God is to walk ever more closely with Him and enjoy His fellowship.
4. Knowing God can be content with mere factual knowledge, or it can crave Him (Phil 3:10).

1:11 **Patience and longsuffering with joy are the goals of saints, but only His power can do it.**

1. Paul and Timothy prayed for them to be strengthened with all might toward these goals.
2. The power of God is gloriously great and able to fit us for such unnatural works of grace.
3. Adversity, trials, and afflictions are not pleasant, but His grace is sufficient (II Cor 12:9-10).

1:12 **Paul and Timothy gave thanks to the Father for preparing the saints for their inheritance.**

1. There are saints already in heaven's light, the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb 12:23).
2. But that inheritance is reserved for those made fit for it by the sanctification in Christ Jesus.
3. Where are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, and others?
4. Give thanks to God our Father, Who has made us fit, suitable, acceptable to be with them!
5. These ministers were thankful for God's grace in all their lives to accomplish this fitting.

1:13 **God the Father has translated His elect from the kingdom of Satan to that of His dear Son.**

1. We were once captives of the strong man, the devil; but Jesus rescued us (Luke 11:20-22).
2. This is describing our vital salvation in delivering us from our obedience to Satan (Eph 2:1-3).
3. God has translated us, similar to Enoch, from Satan's kingdom to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
4. Do you fully understand the glorious power put forth to translate you as described here?

1:14 **There is legal salvation in Christ, where we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.**

1. Having introduced vital salvation in the preceding verse, here Paul states our legal salvation.
2. Redemption is buying back our souls from the deserved condemnation of a holy and just God.
3. Our redemption, or our purchase price, our ransom amount, was the precious blood of Christ.
4. What is redemption? It is the forgiveness of our sins. It is declaring us righteous by His blood.
5. Rather than the forensic terms of justification and pardon, we have economic terms used here.

1:15 **Jesus Christ is no less than the manifestation of Jehovah and the highest of every creature.**

1. Jesus Christ is the visible representation of the invisible God, for He is the Word made flesh.
2. No man has or can see God, but men have and will see God made flesh in Jesus (John 1:14,18).
3. This is a great mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh as Immanuel (I Tim 3:16).
4. Jesus is not just a similarity or close image of God: as God, He is His express image (Heb 1:3).
5. Jesus Christ is a creature in his human nature, but He is highest of them by virtue of His divine.
6. He was made flesh, made of the seed of David, made a quickening spirit, made of a woman, made under the law, made himself of no reputation, made in the likeness of men, made so much better than angels, made lower than the angels, made like unto his brethren, made higher than the heavens (John 1:14; Rom 1:3; I Cor 15:45; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:7; Heb 1:4; 2:9,17; 7:26).
7. Firstborn describes the preeminent position, regardless of any birth order (1:18; Heb 11:17).
8. He is the heir, superior, with all the rights of every creature, for He created all creatures (1:16).
9. Whenever we consider Jesus Christ, we must see aspects of His human and His Divine natures.
10. Jesus Christ revealed or manifested God (John 1:14,18; I Tim 3:16; Heb 1:3).

1:16 **Jesus Christ created all things by and for Himself, that He might have absolute glory.**

1. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made (Jn 1:3).
2. Both things of this world and that which is to come were made by Him and for Him. Glory!
3. Principalities and powers of this world or the spirit world are mere creatures of the Lord Jesus, which certainly does preliminary damage to the heresy of worshipping angels (2:18).
4. He is the Source of all things, and He is the End or Purpose of all things. This includes Satan!
5. These terms are plainly used elsewhere to describe God Himself. Jesus Christ is truly Jehovah!

1:17 **Jesus Christ is Jehovah God; He is before all creatures and upholds them by His power.**

1. This text does not say “was” any more than Matthew 22:32. Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah!
2. This text does not say “was” any more than John 3:13, even if it is missing from other versions.
3. He is, was, and shall be before all creatures; He is Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM (Ex 3:14; 6:3).
4. He upholds all things by the word of His power, even all things large and small (Hebrews 1:3).
5. Whether you think of stars and planets, or molecules and nuclei, He binds them all together.
6. The language is similar to that of Romans 11:36, which describes God. Jesus is Jehovah God!
7. **Consist.** To have a settled existence, subsist, hold together, exist, be.

1:18 **Jesus Christ is the absolute Head of His church, which gives Him the place of preeminence.**

1. Take this any way you wish, He is the head of the general assembly and every local assembly.
2. This can easily be the local church at Colosse, by recognizing collective nouns for all churches.
3. We are to understand two things: Jesus Christ is the Head, and He is absolutely the only Head.
4. As Head, He is the glorious member, as Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold (Dan 2:37-38).
5. As Head, He controls and directs the body, and the body serves and obeys Him (Eph 5:23-24).
6. He is the beginning: the Source of salvation and the Author of our faith, the Alpha and Omega.
7. He is the firstborn from the dead, the beginning of the resurrection, for He alone is glorified.
8. Others may have been resurrected, but they died again. He alone is resurrected and glorified!
9. Others may have been resurrected by Him, but He raised up His Own body by His Own power.
10. He is the firstfruits of them that slept, which shows a whole harvest to follow (I Cor 15:20-23).
11. Everything in which He leads is designed to give Him the preeminence both here and above.
12. **Preeminence.** Surpassing or superior eminence. Higher rank or distinction; priority of place, precedence; superiority. **Eminence.** Distinguished superiority, elevated rank over all others.
13. For us to comply with this verse, we cheerfully and fully give Him preeminence in all things.
14. Paul determined not to anything but Christ crucified and to glory in Him (I Cor 2:2; Gal 6:14).
15. Both in our corporate worship and private lives, we fail without Jesus as the preeminent One.
16. It is folly to worship angels (2:18), for He is Head of all principalities and powers (2:10; 1:16).
17. We have no pope on earth or mother and saints in heaven to cheat Him of His preeminence.

1:19 **Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead, nothing less than Jehovah.**

1. If you foolishly think the Father begat Christ’s deity, Jesus is the Everlasting Father (Is 9:6)!
2. There is no begotten or generated god in the Bible; and there is no proceeding spirit either.
3. The object of this great mystery of godliness is the pleasure and glory of the infinite God.
4. Paul is declaring the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, as absolutely full deity.
5. The Lord Jesus Christ was united with the fullness of the Godhead in His incarnation (2:9).
6. God was manifest in the flesh, not a begotten god. There is not begotten god of any sort at all.
7. Great is the mystery of godliness; but it is not all mystery; much has been shown (I Tim 3:16).
8. We believe there is one God, and we believe there are three Persons (I John 5:7 is Scripture).
9. Seeing Jesus Christ was and is seeing the Father (John 1:14,18; 14:9; 15:24; Hebrews 1:3).

1:20 **Salvation of sinners is by the reconciling work of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross.**

1. By our condition as sinful men, we were the enemies of God and under His condemnation.
2. He made peace with God by offering Himself a bloody sacrifice of death on the cruel cross.
3. The justice of God demanded war and eternal judgment of sinners, but His death made peace.
4. He reconciled all things – obviously this does not include the devil, the wicked, or other things.
5. He reconciled all things – all us sinners in the election of God – by this same bloody death.
6. He reconciled all things – obviously this number is no greater than the number reconciled.
7. Some of these sinners were in heaven, and some yet to be born on earth (Cp Romans 3:25).
8. Reconciliation is the great work of putting two adversarial enemies at peace and agreement.

9. The doctrine of reconciliation of God and sinners is wonderful (Rom 5:10; II Cor 5:18-20).
10. The gospel is preached to announce His reconciliation and direct us to be reconciled to Him.
11. It was in the lesser temple built by Zerubbabel the Desire of all Nations made peace (Hag 2:9).

**1:21 The Colossians had been wicked enemies of God by sin, but they were reconciled by Christ.**

1. The text here is to take the general rule of 1:20 and apply it specifically to the Colossians.
2. Jesus reconciled us to God by His death, when we were His wicked enemies (Rom 5:6-10).
3. We were once legal aliens and enemies of God by wicked works in our minds (Eph 2:1-3).
4. Our legal status as aliens and enemies before God was not merely in our minds, but in His!
5. Our mind, willingly subject to the devil, led us to many wicked works, bringing God's enmity.
6. For the carnal mind, which is all we have by our first birth, is at war against God (Rom 8:7).
7. What stood between God and us? Our wicked works put us under condemnation (Ps 130:3).
8. Jesus Christ took the wrath and punishment due our wicked works and brought us unto God.

**1:22 They were now completely sanctified and justified before God by Christ's physical death.**

1. God prepared a body for the Lord Jesus Christ, so He could die a substitutionary death for us.
2. If we are presented holy, then we are absolutely, totally, and finally sanctified (Heb 10:10-14).
3. If we are unblameable, then we are absolutely, totally, and finally justified (Romans 8:33).
4. If we are unrepentable, then we are absolutely, totally, and finally reconciled (II Cor 5:18-20).
5. This is our legal position before the God of heaven – holy, unblameable, and unrepentable.
6. Christ's death was sufficient to put us in this fantastic condition in the very sight of God.
7. Our position as the sanctified, justified, and reconciled sons of God is most glorious! Rejoice!

**1:23 The assurance of salvation depends on faithfulness to the gospel that went to the whole earth.**

1. True discipleship and evidence of eternal life are based on continuing in obedience (John 8:31).
2. Continuing in the faith is the mark of God's elect (Acts 13:43; 14:22; Rom 11:22; I Tim 2:15; 4:16; II Tim 3:14; Heb 3:14; 10:38-39; James 1:25; II Pet 1:5-15; I John 2:19).
3. The true gospel is grounded and settled; it is not up for additions, subtractions, or revisions; it was once delivered to the saints and to be contended for (Jude 1:3), but that is not taught here.
4. Rather it is our continuing that is grounded and settled, opposite of being moved away from it.
5. Paul uses similar language – rooted and grounded – in exhorting the Ephesians (Eph 3:17).
6. Only fundamentalists limit the gospel and thereby gospel faith to a few "major doctrines."
7. They don't find assurance in continuing, for a momentary, emotional decision is good enough.
8. The hope of the gospel is the doctrine of the resurrection and living with both eyes to heaven.
9. The original and true gospel was widely preached by Paul and others, to every creature.
10. Apostles fulfilled Christ's command to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-20).
11. Reasons the Colossians should continue: they heard it, it was universal, and Paul preached it.

**1:24 Paul happily endured suffering for the churches to partake of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.**

1. Paul rejoiced to fulfill his role of suffering for the cause of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:16; Phil 3:10).
2. Jesus drank the full cup of God's wrath, but there was a cup of suffering for Paul (Matt 10:23).
3. The disciples were appointed to hard labor, shame, suffering, and even death (I Cor 4:9-13).
4. The winepress of the wrath of God was tread only by the Lord Jesus Christ alone (Is 63:1-6).
5. Any leftovers of suffering that pertained to Christ, Paul was willing to take them himself.
6. Jesus had called Paul to suffer for His sake, especially after causing so much suffering himself.
7. Paul, who had once persecuted the church, now suffered for the church, Jesus Christ's body.

1:25 **Paul was given a special dispensation of the word of God for the sake of the Colossians.**

1. Paul was a minister of the churches by the special calling of God, even for the Colossians.
2. To fulfil the Word of God was for Paul to fulfil God's word by preaching to the Gentiles.
3. Paul understood his special mission of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles (Rom 15:15-21).
4. He was the apostle to the Gentiles, and He magnified His office (Rom 11:13; II Tim 1:11).

1:26 **Paul revealed the hidden mystery to the saints of God's inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation.**

1. God chose Abraham, and the Hebrews for 1500 years believed they only were God's people.
2. John and Jesus had to deal with Jewish arrogance in their ministries (Matthew 3:9; John 8:39).
3. But Paul and others now preached the gospel to the Gentiles as heirs of Christ (I Tim 3:16).
4. It was no longer a mystery, as it was being fulfilled and explained to the Gentiles, as here.
5. Paul was declaring the true seed of Abraham to be those in Christ Jesus by faith (Gal 3:16,29).

1:27 **God choosing Gentiles to partake of the Lord Jesus Christ is glorious riches to wise believers.**

1. Paul opened the epistle by identifying them in Christ (1:2), now he identifies Christ in them.
2. Jesus Christ dwells in us by His Spirit, which is earnest of future glory in Him (Eph 1:13-14).
3. We are made partakers of the divine nature by the indwelling presence of Christ by His Spirit.
4. We are in Him by glorious election (Eph 1:3-6), but He is also in us by His Spirit (Gal 4:6).
5. The beautiful feet of ministers bring these glorious riches to our ears. How thankful are you?
6. We Gentiles, once the pagan worshippers of every sort of false god, are partakers of Christ!
7. Paul had the fantastic office of preaching the glory of Christ here and hereafter to the Gentiles.
8. Think whatever you wish of the aborigines of Australia, we Gentiles were once just as blind.

1:28 **Paul and Timothy's ministerial ambitions were to perfect every such man in Christ Jesus.**

1. If Jesus Christ has saved us Gentiles, we must be warned to turn from the world to Him alone.
2. If our only confidence of future glory is by continuing in the faith (1:23), we must be warned.
3. The goal is Christian perfection. It is your pastor's goal for the church: it should be your goal.
4. This was not every man without exception, or even close to all men. It was a few (I Cor 9:22).
5. For Paul's manner was to visit synagogues, and he sought to avoid many men (II Thess 3:1-2).
6. The "all wisdom" here is what was taught to the hearers, not how it was communicated (1:9).

1:29 **Paul's great abilities and diligence were by the power of God working in and through him.**

1. Paul burned himself out, spent himself without reservation, by God's grace (I Cor 15:10).
2. There are zealous men, and there are not so zealous men. God chose Paul for his great zeal.
3. The gospel ministry of truly called men is not a non-profit, retired-on-the-job profession.
4. God worked energetically in Paul, and he worked energetically with God, for the Gentiles.