

Sample Study

Colossians

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Read - Colossians 1:1-23; other references as given.

The ancient city of Colossae was situated about 100 miles east of Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia (now Turkey). At the time of Paul's letter to the Colossians, the church was in the process of drifting away from Christ to a form of syncretism that combined Jewish ritualism, philosophical rationalism and pagan mysticism. (Note: These terms will be defined in the study.) The apostle Paul wrote these timeless words of exhortation from prison "...**ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power**" (Col. 2:10).

1. Paul introduced himself as ... **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God** (v. 1). He included Timothy, missionary companion and spiritual brother, in his initial greeting to the church. What words does he use to describe the Colossian Christians (v. 2)?

2. The recipients of the letter are called **saints** (v. 2). When the word saint is applied to the New Testament believer, it signifies God's dual calling in salvation (1 Cor. 1:2) and sanctification. Alexander Macleran, a famous Scottish preacher, said, "Saints are not an eminent sort of Christian, but all Christians are saints, and he who is not a saint is not a Christian." What are some other words the Bible uses to describe the believer's relationship to God (Jn. 1:12; Gal. 4:5, 7; 1 Pet. 2:9)?

3. Paul often expressed thankfulness for other believers (cf. Ro. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; etc.).
 - a. What specific spiritual qualities was he particularly thankful for in the lives of the Colossian believers (vv. 3, 4)?

 - b. In what way(s) did Paul express his gratitude for the Colossians?

 - c. In what way(s) have you recently expressed your appreciation for other Christians?

4. The Colossian church had love for **all the saints** (v. 4). The remarkable frequency of the word **all** (twenty-eight times in only ninety-five verses) is more than coincidence—it emphasizes an important spiritual truth.
 - a. Please list the remaining phrases that include the word **all** and their corresponding verse references in chapter one.

 - b. What important spiritual truth *do you think* is being taught by the frequent use of this word?

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5. The Christian graces of faith, love, and hope form a familiar triad (trio) in Scripture (e. g., Ro. 5:2-5; 1 Cor. 13:13, 1 Thess. 1:3, 5:8). In these passages, hope is coordinated with faith and love, but here hope represents the source from which faith and love spring (vv. 4, 5). What *do you think* is meant by the phrase **...the hope which is laid up for you in heaven** (v. 5)?

6. Paul said **... which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit** (v. 6). To what was he referring?

7. Most Biblical scholars believe God used Epaphras to start the church at Colossae (v. 7). (Note: Epaphras is a shortened form of Epaphroditus, but this man should not be identified with the man by the same name in Philippians 2:25 and 4:18.)
 - a. Paul was obviously impressed with Epaphras's spiritual character. How did Paul describe this man (v. 7)?

 - b. Would those who know you well say the same things about your spiritual character?

8. Paul thanked God for the Christians at Colosse (v. 3) and asked Him for a specific request on their behalf. What was it (v. 9)?

9. Some Christians are uncertain what God wants from their lives (i. e., God's will). They appear to wander aimlessly in their Christian lives, unsure about how to please God. What four specific things does God desire all Christians to do (vv. 10b-12)?

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1. Saints and faithful brethren (brothers) in Christ.
2. 1. Sons of God (Jn. 1:12). 2. Sons (Gal. 4:5). 3. Heirs (Gal. 4:7). 4. A chosen generation (1 Pet. 2:9). 5. A royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). 6. A holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). 7. A peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9).
3. a. He was thankful for their faith in Christ and their love for other Christians.
b. 1. He prayed for them regularly (v. 3).
2. He told them he was grateful for the letter.
c. Answers will vary.
4. a. 1. All the world (v. 6). 2. All wisdom (v. 9). 3. All pleasing (v. 10). 4. All might (v. 11). 5. All things (v. 16). 6. All things (v. 17). 7. All things (v. 17). 8. All things (v. 18). 9. All fullness (v. 19). 10. All things (v. 20). 11. All wisdom (v. 28).
b. The remarkable frequency of the word "all" is evidently directed toward the universality of the plan of God in this world. It is also a refutation of the Colossian errorists' claim of secret special enlightenment that trapped their naive followers into an addictive spiritual bondage. There is a powerful spiritual lesson here for believers of all ages. God's truth is universal, and He will give spiritual understanding to all who come to Him in faith.
5. Hope is viewed as a treasure that is being accumulated in heaven. This hope is credited to a specific account (for you) and the place of the deposit is heaven. It is interesting to notice that a clear perspective on eternity (the believer's hope) affects the present. Thus the future can be said to determine the present, for what is reserved in heaven for the believer now exercises a decisive influence upon his present conduct.
6. The word of truth, which is the gospel (v. 5).
7. a. As a dear fellow servant and a faithful servant of Christ.
b. Answers will vary.
8. He prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.
9. 1. They should bear fruit in everything they do (v. 10).
2. They should learn God's word (v. 10).
3. They should allow God's grace to strengthen them for every spiritual task (v. 11).
4. They should conduct their various duties in life with an attitude of grateful praise to God the Father (v. 12).