

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE  
**COLOSSIANS**

DAY

1 - 7

# DAY 1 - Faith, Hope and Love

Paul writes to those in Colossae from Prison (probably in either Ephesus or Rome). He has heard the report that Epaphras has given him about the believers there and he is pleased to hear that the people are responding to the saving work of Jesus Christ and that it is bearing fruit in their lives.

In the opening few verses of Paul's letter to the believers in Colossae we see a number of important themes that will be important across the letter as a whole.

## Read Colossians 1:1-8

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, **2** To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

**3** We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, **4** because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— **5** the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel **6** that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. **7** You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, **8** and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Paul packs a lot into his greeting here, so we'll just pick out a few things.

Having established his authority as an Apostle, and rooting that authority entirely in God's will rather than anything to his own credit, Paul speaks of Faith, Hope and Love in his greeting here. These three feature elsewhere in Paul's writings:

In **1 Thessalonians 1:2-3** Paul writes:

**2** We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. **3** We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And most famously at the end of his great passage on love from **1 Corinthians 13:13** where he says:

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

These three are tightly bound up with each other in the life of a Christian. Faith in Christ here leads to a life of love and this is inspired by the future hope of Christ's return.

Paul will keep speaking of the importance of Jesus Christ throughout this letter as the centre of everything, from the Universe itself, to their salvation and right into the nitty gritty reality of day to day life.

As we shall see throughout the letter, Paul is passionate that their faith and hope in Christ must express itself in a transformed life that has love at its core. In his letter to the **Galatians** in **1:5-6** Paul wrote:

**5** For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Here at the start of Colossians he celebrates that this life of faith and love, built on hope, is present in the believers here as the gospel has transformed their lives. He will go on to encourage them in this as he seeks to help them continue in their faith and grow in maturity together as a community.

## Questions

Have I lost sight of how central **faith** in Jesus Christ is in my life?

Is my **hope** in Christ central to how I live my life?

Is **love** the experience that people get from being around me?

## Actions

Pray as Paul prayed in vs. 5. Grace and peace to you from God our Father. Pray grace and peace over your time in this letter. You could pray with someone else or pray this over others in your church community.

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and allow the Holy Spirit to stir us towards that kind of love in our friendships, families, workplaces and schools.

Share communion with friends or family because all of our lives together are built on Jesus and all he has done for us.

# DAY 2 - Paul's Prayer

We'll look at this same section in two parts across today and tomorrow.

## Read Colossians 1:9-14

**9** For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, **10** so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **11** being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, **12** and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. **13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We see here Paul's desires for the believers expressed in what he has been praying for them (he cannot visit as he is in prison). He prays for them to receive things in order that they can live a certain way.

Before we look at these things, it is helpful to see that just as Paul began with Christ at the centre, he says the reason for all of his prayers for them is the incredible saving work that Jesus Christ has done for them and for us.

**13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul will again and again remind the believers that from beginning to end, it's all because of Jesus Christ alone.

With that in mind let's look at his prayer.

Verses 9 and the first half of 11, show Paul's desire that they would be filled with 'the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives', and that they would be 'strengthened with all power according to his glorious might'.

Verses 10, the second half of 11, and verse 12 give us the reasons why Paul desires this for them, '...that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father...' We'll explore these more tomorrow, for today let's focus on what he prays for them to have.

He prays that they will have the knowledge of God's will, wisdom, understanding and power. Paul wants them to understand what God has done for them and to be growing in knowledge of God's will for them within their circumstances: learning to respond to the wisdom and understanding brought about by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives as a community.

Paul will later appear to address some false teaching that has emerged in the church, so as well as these things being important for them to grow as followers of Christ, he is also reminding them that everything listed here can *only* be found in Christ. There is no other philosophy or teaching or way of life that can help them grow or give them the power to live the way God has called them to live.

Earlier in verse 5 Paul spoke of the gospel as the 'true message of the gospel' or the 'word of truth'. There is no other "truth" that can help them grow or get them closer to God other than the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only through Christ that anyone can receive the power from the Holy Spirit to live this life in God's Kingdom.

## **Questions**

Who do you consistently pray for? Is there anyone you could commit to pray for?

Have I allowed anything other than Jesus Christ to have a place in my life?

How am I seeking to grow in knowledge, understanding, wisdom and strength?

How often do I ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen me with his power?

## **Actions**

Spend some time praying for some people by name.

Look at the rhythms of your day, and look for places where you could allow the Holy Spirit to work in you towards maturity.

Wherever you see other teachings or philosophies impacting your view of yourself or the world, submit these to God and invite him to shape your life exclusively around Jesus Christ.

Thank God that he has 'rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.'

# DAY 3 - A Life of Thanksgiving

## Read Colossians 1:9-14

**9** For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, **10** so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **11** being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, **12** and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. **13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We looked at these verses yesterday with our attention on verses 9 and the first half of 11, which show Paul's desire for them:

That they would be filled with 'the **knowledge** of his will through all the **wisdom** and **understanding** that the Spirit gives', and that they would be '**strengthened** with all power according to his glorious might'

Today we turn our attention to verses 10, the second half of 11, and verse 12 which give us the reasons why Paul desires this for them:

'...that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father...'



As we have seen already and will see again and again throughout this letter, Paul is always looking for the incredible reality of what Jesus has done to influence every part of their lives. Verses 12-13 says that he **'has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves...'**

There is not only a life that they have been rescued from, but there is a life that they have been rescued into. God has not rescued them just for them to continue in the same 'dominion of darkness': he loves them more than that. Of course this life has the Son (Jesus Christ) at its centre which makes it the most incredible life imaginable.

We see here that this extraordinary life is full of good work, but will at times require endurance and patience. These should not be obstacles to living as Christ teaches, but opportunities to live and respond in a different way than the rest of the world.

Through all of the good, the bad and the mundane parts of life, we are called to live according to a different pattern, strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

All of this is to be done with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, for Paul, is very important and is an integral part of life if we are to grow in maturity as Christians.

Thanksgiving can act as both a sign of maturity and a means to it. Thanksgiving shows that we understand what Christ has done for us. Thanksgiving reminds us of what Christ has done for us and how he is enabling us to live now.

This leads to greater revelation and application of Christ's work in our lives, which leads to more mature Christian life and a mature Christian life is full of thanksgiving to Christ...

Paul will many times come back to gratitude. What Christ has done for us is very real and the only way we can be saved and find true, fruitful life.

## **Questions**

What things do you think make up a life 'worthy of the Lord' and that is 'bearing fruit in every good work'? (Galatians 5:13-25)

Where could I grow in this kind of life?

How could I build thanksgiving into my daily rhythms?

## **Actions**

Read Galatians 5:13-25 and think about how you could grow in love and the fruit of the Spirit.

Based on Galatians 5:13-25, invite the Holy Spirit to show you where you have allowed the 'flesh' to guide your actions and thoughts. Confess these to God and maybe to a friend and invite the Holy Spirit to give you power to live according to the Spirit.

You could commit to praying the prayer Paul prays over a friend, or your children, or a church leader this week.

# DAY 4 - Jesus Christ the Creator

Today and tomorrow we'll be focusing on the same 6 verses about the nature of Jesus Christ: that he is the creator of the universe and the only means to salvation. We shall look at this hymn/poem in two parallel parts, looking at the first half today as we see Christ as creator.

## Read Colossians 1:15-20

**15** The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Paul has celebrated their faith and is continuing to pray for them to grow in maturity in the life that is given to them in Christ. Now he beautifully explains the magnitude of the one who is to be central in their lives: Jesus Christ.

Jesus is unlike anyone or anything in the history of the world. God has worked through people in extraordinary ways through the Old Testament, and is doing remarkable things through the Apostles and the believers as the gospel is spreading. Yet none of these people are anything like Jesus.

He does not simply stand head and shoulders above any other person, he is the one who made Heaven and Earth. He is God Himself. In verse 15, 'firstborn over all creation' does not mean that he is the first created being, but that he is above all of creation. We can also then see this clearly from what follows in verses 16-17.

He is not only above all creation, he is the one through whom, and for whom, it was all created. He stands before creation and is the one continuing to hold creation together.

In verse 16 Paul lists off a breadth of created things that reiterate this point. Anything that we can think of in creation was made **by, through and for Christ alone.**

If anyone is looking for (or importantly in Colossae, seeking to offer) truth, meaning, purpose, or knowledge, there is only one person in which all these things can be found. None of these things can be found in earthly teachings or philosophies, instead they are here only in **Jesus Christ.** He is the very image of God. Anything else should be cast aside in the face of the glorious truth of who Jesus Christ is.

Tomorrow we will see Christ's unique role in redemption, but before that, Paul has established Christ over the entire universe of Heaven and Earth.

There is no one like Jesus.

He is worthy of all glory and praise.

## **Questions**

What do I think of when I think of Jesus Christ?

Where do I look for wisdom? The Bible? The world? My own thoughts?

Have I begun to grasp the reality that Jesus is God, the creator of Heaven and Earth?

How often do I praise God for how incredible he is?

## **Actions**

Read this passage 5 times out loud as worship to God and invite the Holy Spirit to help you grow in your understanding. Ask him to reveal something deeper about Jesus as you read.

Take a few moments in stillness simply fixing your thoughts on Jesus Christ. He made you. He is worthy of our time and attention.

Read some of the miracles that Jesus did in Matthew chapter 8, these are just a glimpse of his immense power.

# DAY 5 - Reconciled to God

## Read Colossians 1:15-20

**15** The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. **16** For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. **17** He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. **19** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Having looked yesterday at how Christ created and sustains the whole of creation, today we look at the second, parallel half of this passage, which speaks of Christ's work in redemption.

It is through Christ's death and resurrection (which will be central in chapters 2 and 3), that we have the ability to understand not only his centrality to that redemption, but to creation itself.

Just as Christ was described as 'the firstborn over all creation' in verse 15, now in verse 18 he is described as 'the firstborn from among the dead'. This means that not only is he the one who began creation, he is also one who has begun the *new creation* through his death and resurrection. Which as Paul then immediately states, means he has supremacy over it all.

Paul then reiterates that Jesus Christ is God in verse 19 as he had done in verse 15 before describing the magnitude of the new creation. God's plan in coming to Earth was '*...through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*'

Reconciliation is a word Paul uses often across the New Testament, in **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** he even described his whole work in these terms:

**18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Reconciliation speaks to a rebuilding of a broken relationship. God in Christ has made the way for a restored relationship between himself and the whole human race. He has brought this reconciliation about by making peace through the horrendous and brutal reality of his crucifixion at the hands of the very people he came to be reconciled with.

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and so Christ is at the very heart of the entire created universe as the one who was before it, created it and holds it together. He is also at the very centre of the lives of every individual believer because he is the only one who has brought about reconciliation with God.

Here, and in his letter to the Philippians, we see that the more we fix our eyes on the reality of Jesus Christ, we see that not only is he more powerful than we could imagine, he is also more self-sacrificing and loving than we could imagine.

In **Philippians 2:6-11** Paul again speaks about Jesus Christ as God and as the one who came and died for us:

**5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
**7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.  
**8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!  
**9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,  
**10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
**11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

For Paul, there is no one and nothing that could be worthy of our thoughts, worship, devotion or life than Jesus Christ.

He is the one who has made us and saved us.



## **Questions**

How often do I take time to worship God?

Do I regularly thank God for what he did on the cross?

What does it mean to be reconciled to God?

Is Jesus and his teachings the most important thing in my life? Would my friends or family be able to see this?

## **Actions**

Read the passages from today a couple more times and worship Jesus Christ.

Share communion with someone, thanking God and remembering his great sacrifice for us.

Allow the Holy Spirit to show you if there are areas of your life where Jesus does not have supremacy. Invite him in to those areas as the only one worthy.

Think about where your life would be without the Cross, allow this to lead you to thanksgiving.

# DAY 6 - Life Built on the Rock

## Read Colossians 1:21-23

**21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23** if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Having given the most incredible overview of how Jesus Christ is supreme over all creation and redemption, Paul now brings us right down into the personal lives of those reading his letter. He shows them where they fit in this incredible reality of Jesus Christ.

Despite all that Jesus Christ has done in creation, their personal reality before they came to receive Christ was that they were separated from him because of their sin with no way of getting to God. But Christ has brought about a new creation which includes them.

There may have been some Jews in Colossae who understood how God had worked through his people in history, but it seems that most of those in Colossae were Gentiles who didn't have knowledge of God or any way of being reconciled to him before Christ's death and resurrection.

But we see in verse 22 the complete transformation that has happened to those who have received Christ. They have been personally reconciled to God (repeating this word we looked at yesterday, but now making the experience of reconciliation very personal), and the goal of that is to be made '*...holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation*'.

It's hard to describe the scale of that transformation!

Anyone who has received Christ has been transformed from being '*...alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour*' to '*holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation*'.

Not only is Jesus Christ the maker of heaven and earth, he is also the intimate and personal saviour of our lives. We have been personally reconciled to God through Christ who chose to make a way for us despite our sin.

Here, as elsewhere in Colossians, Paul does not shy away from the violence of the death Jesus died on the cross to bring this about. Christ sacrificed himself for us.

We then see, however, that this transformation is not finished in them at the moment they have put their faith in Christ. Paul immediately says in verse 23 '*if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.*' Just as Jesus had said, Paul consistently here in Colossians (and across the other letters of the New Testament), speaks of the reality that having received salvation, following Jesus then also involves us taking responsibility for our own **growth to maturity**.

Jesus used an example of a wise and a foolish builder, he said in **Matthew 7:24-26:**

**24** "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. **26** But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. **27** The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Paul is pointing to a similar idea here. Having received salvation through Christ, we are then to grow strong in our faith through all that life will bring. This growth will continue throughout our entire lives until we die and are raised with Christ, or until Christ returns and we see the ultimate fulfilment of our reconciliation to God through Christ.

He will continue across this letter to encourage them to stay true to Jesus Christ, not letting other teachings or worldviews lead them away from Jesus Christ and a life of following him. This is an encouragement for us in our lives too: there is nothing, and no one, who can offer salvation, purpose and a true foundation for life other than Jesus Christ, the maker of heaven and earth, and our personal saviour.

## **Questions**

Are there areas of your thoughts and actions that are being built on a different foundation than Jesus' teachings?

Do you take joy in everything Jesus has done for you personally in saving you?

What do you think God thinks of you? Do those thoughts agree with all he has done for you that we see in Colossians chapter 1?

## **Actions**

Read Colossians 1:15-23, pray and ask God to help you grasp his greatness, then read it again...and again! Pray and ask God to show you more of his heart for you personally, then read it again...and again!

Look for one thing in your life that you could choose to build on the Rock rather than on the sand. This could be a small change or a big decision that changes your whole life. Talk to someone and pray with someone about it, and then trust God as you follow him.

# DAY 7 - Growing up

## Read Colossians 1:24-29

**24** Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. **25** I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness — **26** the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. **27** To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

**28** He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. **29** To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Verse 24 is not simple to understand and has been the topic of long discussions among theologians. What Paul definitely is *not* saying is that there is something left undone by Jesus in his suffering on the cross. In his letter to the **Romans in 6:10** for example Paul says 'The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.' So Paul's sufferings are not finishing something Jesus didn't achieve.

It seems that what he is saying is that when he (or they, or we) suffer because of Christ. We are privileged in sharing in the sufferings he endured and, until Christ returns, there will be suffering for believers to endure. In verse 18 as part of the poem/hymn Paul had declared that 'he is the head of the body, the church'. Paul's sufferings are connected to Christ's sufferings because Paul is part of the body of Christ, the Church of which Jesus is the head. Paul, from prison here, is expressing his joy that his sufferings (in some way like Christ's), are for them and to their benefit.

Paul then speaks in verses 26-27 about his calling to this incredible Gospel of salvation and reconciliation which has now been revealed in Christ, through God's people (of which Paul is one), and is spreading out into all the Earth: 'the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'

He then explains what he wants for them from his teaching about Christ. In verse 28 he says it is 'so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.' Paul's desire throughout Colossians is for them to be **mature** both in their knowledge of Christ, and in the living out the life of faith, hope and love that he spoke on in verses 3-8.

This maturity is not exclusive to some religious or social elite, but to every single person who receives Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour. We can all grow if we are willing to respond to the wisdom and teaching of Jesus and his apostles (here Paul) in the Bible.

This gospel is just too good for Paul to keep to himself, he wants everyone to know about it. Yet he doesn't rely on his own strength, but he gives everything to sharing it, strengthened by Jesus Christ.

## **Questions**

How willing am I to grow in maturity in my faith?

How willing am I to let the Bible teach me how to live? Am I more likely to seek to ignore the Bible when it challenges my thoughts and lifestyle or change my life to how Jesus teaches us to live?

Does my life reflect the self-sacrificing life of Jesus Christ?

Are there areas of my life that don't yet look mature in Christ? Both in my understanding of him or in how I'm living my life?

## **Actions**

Ask God the Holy Spirit to help you to be humble before him so that we can be teachable people who grow into maturity.

Invite God to give you the strength to share your faith with others as he leads you.

Spend some time thanking God for what he has done for us through his death and resurrection.