



The Summit
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

Resources for Your Life

The Book of Colossians

11 Sessions

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Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at www.tomhogsed.com.

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to tomhogsed@gmail.com.

Introduction to Colossians

The book of Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Colosse and also meant to be passed to the church at Laodicea. This letter is closely related to Philemon and was written from a Roman prison somewhere around AD 60-62. The city of Colosse had a combination of Jews and Gentiles which presented some complications in the church. A marrying of Jewish legalism and pagan practices had combined for a dangerous theology in the church. Paul did not found this church, but a man named Epaphras. He was possibly saved under Paul's ministry in Ephesus and then returned to Colosse to plant a church. No doubt, the immaturity of the people and weak leadership in the church caused much confusion in its' teachings. It appears that Gnosticism (God is good and matter is evil) had taken root in the church resulting in a false view of Jesus Christ. Gnostics did not believe Jesus was God, but only one of His creations. This belief forfeits salvation through Jesus alone and provides other ways to salvation. Mainly, the Gnostics taught that salvation is found in having a greater knowledge which is superior to Scripture. Alongside these mystical, pagan beliefs of the Gentiles, the church also accepted forms of Jewish legalism. Circumcision, adherence to ceremonial and dietary laws, and external rituals were all necessary for salvation. As you can tell, the church at Colosse had an extreme mix of teachings. The founder of the Colossian church, Epaphras, became so alarmed at the decay of doctrine at Colosse that he journeyed to see Paul (4:12-13). His hope was that Paul could offer advice and guidance in this very complicated situation. It is with these things in mind that Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians. Sent by the hand of Tychicus (4:7-9), this letter serves as one of rebuke, correction, and encouragement. Although the church at Colosse had forsaken proper teachings, Paul believed that he could challenge them to turn from their wrong views and begin to become effective in their ministry once again.

Dear God, provide the understanding I need as I read Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 1:1-8

Paul begins his letter to the church at Colosse with a greeting "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ." Whenever the term *faithful* is used in the New Testament, it refers to genuine followers of Jesus Christ, so this letter is written to believers. This is an important observation to make at the beginning so we will have a better understanding throughout this letter to whom these words are addressed. As Paul often does in his letters, he expresses his thankfulness for their "faith in Christ Jesus and...love for all the saints...." Because of their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, Paul reminds them of the "hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel...and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth...." The Colossians had been given the gospel which is the good news of Jesus Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell through His sacrifice on the cross. Since man had been sentenced to die and spend an eternity in hell, God sent His only Son, Jesus, to earth in order to take man's punishment for him. In a subtle way, Paul was bringing their minds back to the truth which they had originally believed about Jesus Christ. Reminding them of this simple truth would allow Paul to guard their mind from false teachings about the gospel and what truly brings salvation. In Colossians 1:7, Paul mentions the possible founder of the church at Colosse, Epaphras. He mentions that Epaphras taught them the truth of the gospel and he had also accepted it from Paul in Ephesus. He refers to Epaphras as "our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit." Paul wanted the Colossians that Epaphras did not come to him to tell on them but because he loved them. Epaphras wanted the Colossians to guard themselves from false doctrine so that they could continue to be an effective church in spreading the gospel. It was out of concern that Epaphras sought out Paul. As we will soon discover, the church at Colosse had been distracted by many false teachings, but their leader never gave up hope that they could get back on track. Maybe you know someone who has gotten off track in what they believe. Commit today to pray for them and guide them in proper doctrine. Don't give up! Approach the person in a spirit of humility and love expressing your desire for them to return to a proper view of God's word.

Dear God, use me to restore those who may have strayed from a proper understanding of You and Your word.

Colossians 1:9-18

Having heard of their faith in Jesus Christ and love for others (1:4), Paul informs the church at Colosse that he often prays for them and then he reveals his prayers for them. First, Paul prays that they would "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Since the way God reveals Himself to us is through His written word, Paul is challenging them to allow Scripture to bring wisdom (knowledge of Scripture) and understanding (the application of that knowledge). Secondly, Paul prays they will "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." When a person understands God's will, it should lead to an outworking of His will through our actions and attitudes. Love for God and His word results in following His ways. James 2:26 declares that "faith without works is dead." Next, Paul prays they would be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy." Paul knew that people who choose to follow Jesus Christ are often met with trials and troubles. Because of this knowledge, Paul desires them to evidence patience and longsuffering during hardship. All of us will face difficult circumstances, but God provides patience for us to endure. Lastly, Paul prays that the Christians at Colosse would give "thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." The only way we are "qualified" is through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, where He took our punishment for sin. The "inheritance" we receive is eternal life in God's kingdom and salvation from death and hell. Paul expands on this thought by declaring that God has "delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin." What an incredible thing to realize! The fact that we have redemption means we were slaves to sin but the blood of Christ purchased our pardon from death and hell as well as the forgiveness of sin. In Colossians 1:15-18, Paul begins to combat the church's failure to believe that Jesus Christ was God. In the introduction to this book, I talked about the influences of Gnosticism on the church and the compromising effects it had on the deity of Jesus Christ. Paul unapologetically states that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." Jesus is a perfect image of God because He IS God in human flesh. The fact that He is the "firstborn over all creation" does not mean He was born, but rather superior over all creation. Verse 16 says that "all things were created through Him and for Him...He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Since Jesus is God, He created all things for His glory and He sustains it by His power. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and therefore provides direction for it. Paul also states that "He is the firstborn of the dead", meaning His resurrection was the first of those who would also be resurrected and never again die. Jesus' redemption of sinners (1:13-14), authority over all creation (1:15-17), headship of the church (1:18a), and resurrection (1:18b) exist so that "He may have the preeminence." Jesus Christ is truly God and therefore deserves all our worship!

Dear God, I realize Jesus is God and I desire to give Him first place in my life. Help me to realize that He alone deserves my worship so may I never give my attention to anyone else.

Colossians 1:19-23

Paul continues to combat the false teaching of Gnosticism in these verses where he had previously defended Jesus' deity and superiority over all the creation. Gnosticism questioned Jesus' divine attributes and taught He was one of God's created beings making Him inferior to God the Father. Paul had already made it clear that Jesus "is before all things, and in Him all things consist." So, why did God the Father send Jesus to earth? Submitting to God's will, Jesus took on human form so that He could "reconcile all things to Himself." Reconcile carries the idea of restoration and refers to a sinner being restored to life. Reconciliation took place "through the blood of His cross." All mankind is separated from God because of sin and God required blood to be shed to pay for sin. The only way to satisfy the wrath of God on sin was through death. God told Adam that he would die if he disobeyed Him. Adam was deceived and immediately death came on all who would be born. Romans 5:12 declares that "through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..." Now those "who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works...He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight." This act of making us holy and blameless is not about anything which we have done, but about the righteousness given to us through Jesus Christ in exchange for our sin. Bringing all of his teaching back into perspective, Paul reminds them that they should not move "away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister." These Gnostics had brought many false teachings into the church and Paul wanted them to understand the true gospel. If the deity of Jesus Christ is compromised, there is no salvation. Salvation is only found when a person places their faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and Him alone.

Dear God, thank You for providing salvation through Your Son, Jesus. Help people all over the world to look to Him for salvation and reject the things which they think will bring a relationship with You.

Colossians 1:24-29

Paul writes the next few verses on a personal note explaining to them his current circumstances and his attitude toward hardship. Remember that Paul was writing from a Roman jail where he was imprisoned for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. His message opposed Jewish legalism and Greek paganism ultimately upholding Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. Because preaching the gospel was Paul's passion, he viewed his persecution as God's will; in fact, Paul says "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church." The persecution, which brought Jesus to His death, was now being carried out on those who spread the same message...mainly that Jesus is the only way to God. The church had been entrusted to deliver the message of salvation to all people and Paul considered himself a "minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God." God has given all followers the command to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He promised that believers would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) The task of spreading the gospel had become even larger when God revealed a "mystery which has [had] been hidden from ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints." A *mystery* meant that something had been previously hidden and was now being made known. The particular mystery Paul was referring to was that Jews and Gentiles alike would receive salvation through Jesus Christ and be indwelt by His Spirit (1:27). The Old Testament indicated that Gentiles would receive salvation through the coming Messiah, but it did not say that the Spirit of Christ would actually dwell inside the church. What an amazing promise! Since the Spirit of Christ indwells us, He provides us with the power to spread the message of salvation to everyone. Paul says it like this: "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The task is simple - preach Christ, warn of sin, teach the truth, and present men mature before Christ. May this be our desire!

Dear God, thank You for entrusting Your message of salvation to me. Help me to be a good steward of truth and may many give their lives over to You!

Colossians 2:1-10

Keep in mind that one of Paul's primary objectives in writing this letter was to warn the Colossians about the dangers of false teachers, especially the Gnostics who taught that Jesus was not God. He spent most of chapter 1 defending the deity of Jesus Christ and the fact that salvation only comes through faith in His finished work on the cross. The Gnostics' underlying teaching was that there was some type of secret knowledge required to know God and knowing Jesus was not part of it. The Gnostic teachers sought to use persuasive words to convince the Colossians that only they held the true secrets to spirituality. In Colossians 2:1-3 Paul tells the church at Colosse that he was striving to bring them to "full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both to the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In a very blunt way, Paul was telling the Colossians that God the Father and God the Son held all the knowledge they needed. Contrary to what the Gnostics were saying, a higher knowledge or wisdom was not necessary to have a relationship with God. Pointing his readers back to the beginning of their faith in Jesus Christ, Paul hoped to remind them of the things they had first believed about Jesus Christ and salvation through Him (2:6-7). So far, the Colossians had maintained a "good order and the steadfastness" of their faith in Christ and Paul wanted to see them continue growing. Even in our world today there are many people using convincing and persuasive words to deceive those who are in Christ. It is very important for believers to spend much time in the word of God so they can guard themselves against false teaching. I believe the warning is still the same for the church today: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." Men do their best to place themselves above God by telling others that they hold the secrets to spirituality, but the "secret" has already been given. In Jesus "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Jesus Christ is God in human flesh and perfectly resembled how God would be if He was in a physical body. Since Gnostics believed matter was bad and spirit was good, it was impossible for them to also believe that God would exist in "matter." In His physical body, Jesus was fully man and fully God. Since He was fully man, He was able to be the perfect sacrifice for sin giving His righteousness to those who believe in Him.

Dear God, guard my mind from false teachings and protect Your church from giving in to deceitful doctrines. Help me to be personally involved in reading Your word and understanding the life I have in Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:11-15

In Colossians 2:1-10, Paul attacked the false teachings of the Gnostics who had infiltrated the church at Colosse with erroneous views of the deity of Jesus Christ. The Colossian church had been overrun with Jewish legalism and Greek philosophy and attempted to mix their teachings with the doctrines of Christianity. Epaphras, the founder of the church at Colosse, had traveled to see Paul in a Roman prison where he hoped that the apostle could provide some encouragement and direction in cleaning up the church's beliefs. Paul had many strong words of challenge to the readers of this letter: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught." (Colossians 2:6-7) Paul warned them not to stray from the principles which they were taught at the beginning of their faith; in other words, he did not want them to buy into some new teaching. Turning his attention from Gnosticism, Paul now deals with the Jewish legalism which had also become a problem in the church. At its' core, legalism is a man-made system of rules and regulations which supposedly bring salvation and favor from God. Legalism focuses on the external and places much emphasis on what I do, not who I am. The Pharisee of Jesus' time were the best documented legalists. Ultimately, those involved in legalism are more concerned with their outward actions than they are with their heart...Jesus was concerned with both! One of the major characteristics of those in a system of legalism was their belief in circumcision as necessary for salvation. Paul contests this immediately by saying that the Colossians "were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." Circumcision initially was exclusive to the Jews and really carried many health benefits, but God meant for it to be a symbol of the cleansing of the heart. Jews, over the course of time, viewed circumcision as a necessary action for salvation, but this was never God's plan. Just as the sacrifice of an innocent lamb could not take away sin, circumcision had no power to remove sin. Jesus Christ is the only one with the power to offer forgiveness of sin (2:13). In fact, through His death and resurrection Jesus "wiped out the handwriting of requirements...having nailed it to the cross." All of the rules and regulations were never meant to bring us victory over sin, but rather reveal our sinfulness and need for someone to bring forgiveness.

Dear God, thank You for not relying on me for salvation because I know I could never attain it on my own. Thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin!

Colossians 2:16-23

Legalism (a system of rules and regulations which are supposed to bring salvation and spirituality) had been brought into the church by Jews, endangering the very foundation of the Colossians' faith. False teachers promised salvation and power over sin by following a list of rules such as abstaining from certain foods and continuing to observe special days set forth in the Old Testament; however, Paul expressed that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ alone provided salvation and brings freedom from sin (2:16-17). Paul wrote "stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1) to the church at Galatia and I believe his words can also be applied in this situation. Man-made rules and regulations can never bring life, only bondage. True spiritual life stems from Jesus Christ. "If you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations - do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men?" Paul was reminding them that Jesus Christ died for our sins because He knew we could not attain salvation or spiritual growth on our own. Creating a list of man-made rules for spirituality cannot save. If following rules cannot save, they also do not have the power to bring holiness in everyday life; therefore, we must look outside ourselves for that ability. I believe legalism has carefully disguised itself in churches today because everyone looks good from the outside, but many are corrupt on the inside being filled with bitterness, hatred, selfishness, and greed. The churches' obsession with rules is their way of controlling people and Paul gets it right when he says "these things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body" but Paul declares that regulations "are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." Don't get me wrong...Paul was not sanctioning a "do whatever you want" spirituality, but he was giving permission for diversity within the body of Christ. Whenever the Bible is specific on an issue, we submit to God's authority and obey Him with all our heart. However, sinful man should not be in the business of speaking for God and creating additional lists of rules and regulations to gain favor with God. Paul was begging the church at Colosse to stay far away from these Jewish legalist and rely on God's word to provide guidance.

Dear God, protect people within the church from relying on a man-made list of rules to get God's attention and help believers to live according to Your word alone.

Colossians 3:1-11

Since nothing such as legalism or a higher knowledge can bring salvation, Paul upholds Jesus Christ alone as the way to salvation and sanctification. He begins Colossians 3 by saying "if then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." When Paul says "you were raised" he means that "because of their union with Christ, believers spiritually entered His death and resurrection at the moment of their conversion and have been and are now alive in Him so as to understand spiritual truths, realities, blessings, and the will of God." (MacArthur Study Bible notes on Colossians 3:1) Instead of being consumed with earthly wisdom and a man-made system of legalism, we should be consumed with God's truths, which are revealed in Scripture (3:2). It is very easy for a believer to slip into the old life when their focus is not right. Paul mentions that believers should "put to death" the old nature and he even goes on to list many sins which can sneak into our lives (3:5, 8). Keep in mind that sin is the reason why God had to send His only Son to die and continuing in sin is a failure to receive God's forgiveness and grow in Him (3:6-7). We should "put off the old man with his deeds and...put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." Yes, believers will still sin but we should make every effort through the power of Christ to abandon the old life. Spending time in God's word, submission in prayer, and fellowship with other believers will challenge us to live in the new man.

Dear God, help me to put off the ways of the old man and boldly live in the new man.

Colossians 3:12-4:1

So, what does the character of the new man look like? Paul has already commanded the Colossians to put off the works of the old man (anger, wrath, filthy language, etc.) and put on the new man (Colossian 3:8-10). In these verses he describes the attitudes and actions of the new man, who has been created in Christ Jesus. Here is the list:

Tender Mercies (compassion for the hurts of others)

Kindness (simply being nice to others)

Humility (putting others before self)

Meekness (a gentle response to wrongdoing)

Longsuffering (being patient even when you are treated unfairly)

Bearing with one another (willingly accepting those who are different from you)

Forgiving one another (not seeking revenge on someone who has done wrong to you)

Above all the things Paul has already mentioned, he commands believers to "put on love, which is the bond of perfection." Followers of Christ should genuinely care about others and therefore love them *no matter what*. When things seem to be falling apart, love is what can hold everything together (3:14). When our hearts are submitted to God, He provides peace even in the midst of trial (3:15). Another key factor in developing the character of the new man is letting "the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The results of allowing God's word to dwell in you are interesting since it yields the same results as being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-21). I believe that God's word works together with God's Spirit and results in singing to the Lord from our heart (3:16), seeking to please God in every action (3:17), and proper relationships with others (3:18-4:1). Wives will submit to husbands (3:18). A husband will love his wife (3:19). Children will obey their parents (3:20). Fathers will not establish harsh rules on their children which cause rebellion (3:21). Employees will work hard even when the boss is not around because they are representing God (3:22-25). Employers will treat their employees with respect (4:1). Paul has provided a big list of characteristics for the new man. Take some time and examine each one. Are you living in the new man or are you resorting to the works of your past?

Dear God, provide the power for me to represent You well through my attitudes and actions. Convict me of areas where I need to change.

Colossians 4:2-18

In Paul's closing words to the Colossians, he asks them to pray. He writes "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" meaning they should keep alert to any needs and immediately ask God for help in handling each situation. A follower of Christ should always keep alert to the needs around him and evidence dependence on God by praying to God for His will to be done. At its' core, prayer proves a person recognizes God as all-powerful and is aware that His help is needed in every circumstance. Some people ask why we should pray if God already knows everything anyway, but prayer has a way of humbling our heart and helping us realize that we desperately need God. Some people go through life thinking they can handle everything on their own, but a true follower of Christ consistently admits "I need God." Paul does give his readers one thing to make a matter of prayer - "that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ...that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." His passion was speaking the gospel in every situation and bringing those who were far from God close to Him through salvation in Jesus Christ (4:3-4). Along with prayer, Paul also commands them to "walk in wisdom toward those who are outside [unbelievers], redeeming the time." Christ- followers should use every opportunity to make a difference in the life of those who are far from God. One of the ways this can be done is to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." The words we speak to unbelievers should be gentle (grace), yet at the same time convicting (seasoned with salt). Salt not only brings flavor, but also preserves. Our words should carry the life-giving power of Jesus Christ who has saved us from sin and offers new life to anyone who will repent of sin and turn by faith to Him. So, Paul challenges his readers to be alert in prayer and speak the gospel in every situation. In verses 7-14 Paul mentions the names of many faithful followers of Christ and expresses his thankfulness to them for their work in the ministry. As this letter comes to a close, may we be challenged to live out our faith and stand against those who teach those things which are contrary to it.

Dear God, help my faith to be public and demonstrated in a way that would draw people to You.