

Colossians Study – Part 1

Colossians 1:1-8 (KJV)

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
- 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
- 4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,
- 5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;
- 6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:
- 7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;
- 8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

This is a new series that covers the book of Colossians. This is an important book because it is a prison epistle that is written to us. All scripture is for our learning but all scripture is not written to you.

An example of this is in Matthew 23:1-3 where Jesus was giving his disciples and a multitude instruction on how to walk:

Matthew 23:1-3 (KJV)

- 1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
- 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
- 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

We don't obey the scribes and Pharisees that sit in Moses' seat... This instruction is not to us but to Jesus' disciples at that time in scripture.

Paul is an apostle to the Gentiles. He didn't start out this way... when he was called on the road to Damascus; the first place he went to go and tell of Christ was in the Synagogue to the Jews. Paul changed during the Acts period from going to the Synagogue and the Jews to going to the Gentiles. We see in Galatians that Paul's ministry becomes one that was unto the uncircumcision

Galatians 2:7 (KJV)

- 7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

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Paul's journey to Galatians was during the Acts period and is an example of the seven books Paul wrote during this time (those books being Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Romans, and Hebrews).

The subject matter of the Acts period is the same in the books that Paul wrote during that time... We see that in the book of Acts, from Acts 1 through Acts 28... Israel is the primary focus.

Acts 1:6 (KJV)

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 28:20 (KJV)

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

Then when the Jewish elders could not come to agreement with what Paul was saying... they departed... and that is when the salvation was sent (authorized apart from Abraham) to the Gentiles.

Acts 28:23-28 (KJV)

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

Up until this point, salvation was in the hands of Israel (remember it was said that salvation was out of the Jews) as it said in John 4:21-22

John 4:21-22 (KJV)

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

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22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

After Acts 28:28, the Gentiles have been the depository of the salvation message for over 2000 years. At the close of Acts, Paul sets aside his ministry to the Jews (circumcision) and completely dedicates himself to the ministry of the Gentles (uncircumcision).

The first book he wrote after Acts was Ephesians, where he declares this special ministry to the Gentiles. The seven books Paul wrote after Acts 28 are the ones written specifically to us, and contain our appropriate doctrine which is what we should follow today (these seven books are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, 1 & 2 Timothy). Look at Ephesians 3:1.

Ephesians 3:1 (KJV)

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Now, coming back to the book of Colossians, which Paul wrote in prison to those believers in Colossae, which was a town 90-100 miles east of Ephesus. It is part of that area in Asia Minor where Paul went on his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys.



It is debated whether or not Paul ever visited Colossae... but we think so because he mentions later in Colossians 4:13 a couple of cities nearby, which were Laodicea and Hierapolis. He also mentions a letter he wrote to these folks in verse 16:

Colossians 4:16 (KJV)

16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Some people think that this letter is the book of Ephesians... but it is left open because it doesn't tell us what the letter is but Colossians does tell us that Colossians is written to those believers at Colossae which is specified in verse 2:

Colossians 1:2 (KJV)

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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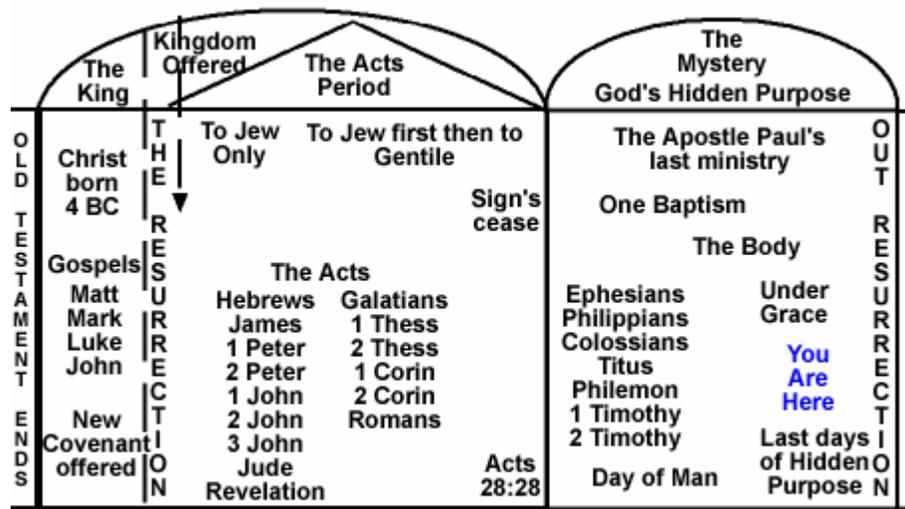
Paul sent this letter by two individuals named Tychicus and Onesimus. Onesimus used to be a slave who was under his master Philemon (which was another letter Paul wrote after the close of Acts).

Remember, the 14 books that Paul wrote, 7 were written during the Acts Period, 7 were written after the close of Acts and are uniquely written to us.

Acts Period Books		Post Acts Period Books
Hebrews	Galatians	Ephesians
James	1 Thessalonians	Colossians
1 Peter	2 Thessalonians	Philemon
2 Peter	1 Corinthians	Philippians
1 John	2 Corinthians	Titus
2 John	Romans	1 Timothy
3 John	Acts	2 Timothy
Jude		
Revelation		

(The seven books Paul wrote during the Acts Period were Hebrews, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Romans).

Colossians can be divided into two main categories: The Deity of Christ, and the doctrinal error



that comes against Him. He begins with the Deity of Christ in Col 1:15

Colossians 1:15 (KJV)

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

And we see him address the doctrinal error in Col. 2:8

Colossians 2:8 (KJV)

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Error had crept into this church at Colossae and Epaphras is a Colossian and he visits Paul and tells him we may have a problem in the church at Colossae. Epaphras may have been the one that established the church at Colossae instead of Paul himself. We know that Paul did establish the church at Ephesus and the word was spread throughout all of Asia coming from Ephesus. (see Acts 19).

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After the doctrinal error is identified in Col. 2:8, he starts telling us how we should walk in Col. 3:1

Colossians 3:1-2 (KJV)

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Then in Col. 3:18 he addresses Wives, Husbands, Children, and Fathers.

Colossians 3:18-21 (KJV)

- 18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.
- 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
- 20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
- 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Colossians is not long on practical application... he covers these groups in four quick verses. Colossians is more focused on doctrine. What is the underlying root? Once you get the underlying root established, you will know what the fruit is supposed to be.

In Ephesians, we get the first three chapters on doctrine and the last three chapters on practical application but in Colossians, it is long on doctrine and short on practical application, but right to the point.

Colossians 1:1-8 (KJV)

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

Wouldn't you like to know what the will of God is? Paul knew it. God has two wills. One will that is irresistible: God said it, and that settles it. God is going to accomplish certain things because that is His resolve. The second will of God involves the desire that He has for us... but that involves our free will.

Free will is important to understand because God is sovereign but not without the freedom he gave us to make a choice.

An example of this sovereign will of God is in Daniel 4:13-17 when Nebuchadnezzar was given the interpretation by Daniel of the dream he had:

Daniel 4:13-17 (KJV)

- 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;
- 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

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- 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth:
- 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.
- 17 This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

Verse 17 shows the sovereign will of God, despite whatever man ruleth in the kingdom of men. God will accomplish His purpose no matter who is in charge here on earth.

What we are looking at in Col. 1:1 “by the will of God” is the desire that He has for us that involves our own free will. An example of this is from Mark 3:31-35

Mark 3:31-35 (KJV)

- 31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.
- 32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.
- 33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?
- 34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!
- 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

In verse 35, Jesus is not talking about the sovereign will of God, for nobody can perform God's resolve, only God can do that. But rather Jesus is talking about the desire that God has for the believers of that time. For us, this might be the good works that we were before ordained that we should walk in. To be accessible and available to do that is what God's desire is for us today.

There is only one English word that is used to translate two Greek words. That word in English is “will” and it is used to describe God's sovereign will and it is also used to describe God's desired will. For example, look in 1 Timothy 2:3-4

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV)

- 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
- 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

If we say that God's sovereign has made everyone saved that would not be true. But if we say that it is God's desire that everyone become saved, that statement would be true!

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There is that will of God that He has for your life for those good works that He wants us to walk in. He is not going to overstep that boundary of giving us the free will to do what we are supposed to do.

Paul was an apostle by the will of God in that he is distinguishing that it is not by any human agency that he has been given this but rather it is what God intended for him. Paul had the choice to follow what God called him to do out of free will.

Many have had that choice in scripture:

Cain – God gave Cain an opportunity in that He told him sin lies before his door. Cain went ahead and opened the door and welcomed sin in and lived with it the rest of his life (Genesis 4:3-12)

Pharaoh – He had the same opportunity. Paul wrote about this in Romans 9:17-23.

King Saul – He had that responsibility to choose how he would be used, and he chose the wrong way and he disobeyed.

Judas – He had that opportunity, but he chose wrong and turned against Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Paul - He had that opportunity to choose when he was blinded on the road to Damascus. He could have said in his heart “I don’t know who you are, but when I get to Damascus, you are going to be number one on my hit list”. But instead he said in Acts 9:6 said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

You might say Paul made his decision under unusual circumstances but isn’t that how we all make life changing decisions when we are under duress? When we are under the thumb of God, when He is pressing and pressing until we pop so God can make good wine out of your works. It’s always in the crucible that we are tried and then how are we going to respond to it? That’s the will of God. He wants you to respond in the way He has set out for you.

We see that in Colossians 1:4

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

This is the kind of response we are supposed to have... but how am I going to do that? The first thing would be to obey his word. We see an example of this in Ephesians 6:5-6

Ephesians 6:5-6 (KJV)

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

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- 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

We always try to do things from the mind first instead of coming from the heart. When we do this we are exercising our own will instead of walking in what God wants us to do. God's will comes from the heart. It should be a heart desire to obey what God has called you to do. The love of God is worth that!

Epaphras is just like one of us. He is a minister to the church at Colossae and he is constantly in prayer that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Colossians 4:12 (KJV)

- 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

It's a calling from the heart and we are called to be just like Epaphras was to the church at Colossae. Where ever you are, you should have a heart knowledge with Christ and that should be feed daily so when God calls you into action, you will be ready!