

Colossians Study – Part 2

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 the second lesson in the series on Colossians. We see that Epaphras was a minister unto Colossae and we see in chapter 1 that he has come back to Paul in Rome, who is in prison, and has expressed some concern about the doctrine that is being taught back in Colossae. There was a Gnostic teaching at that time that Jesus was a continuation of a long string of angels that came down from God. Epaphras wanted help in refuting this in Colossae and we see Paul's comment about Christ in Col. 1:15

Colossians 1:15 (KJV)

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

Paul also warned those in Colossae that this belief would spoil them as to the reward they were to receive... Look at Col. 2:8-10; and Col. 2:18

Colossians 2:8-10 (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.
- 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
- 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Colossians 2:18 (KJV)

- 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

And then Paul starts talking in chapter 3 & 4 of Colossians about the practical leaning of a believer, which included the walk that should accompany the belief of the believer. The walk that is necessary to acknowledge the unique calling that they had.

Colossians Study – Part 2

Epaphras had probably heard Paul's message to the Ephesians and he wanted more information on this special ministry that Paul had received and was now revealing in detail to the Christian following he was responsible for in Colossae. We know it was unique because of what was said in Col. 1:9-10, and Col. 1:25-26.

Colossians 1:9-10 (KJV)

- 9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the (full) knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
- 10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

In verse 10, we see that this walk is unique because at the close of Acts (Acts 28:28), this calling was established as a heavenly calling and we are to be a reflection of that. We have a calling to make other Christians see this body of truth called "The Mystery".

Colossians 1:25-28 (KJV)

- 25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
- 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:
- 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
- 28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

There is a distinct difference between the Acts period and the Ephesians period and our walk should be in relation to the doctrine of the Ephesians message which is when The Mystery was revealed.

The important distinction here is this calling is made to other Christians. This separates the issue of Salvation and Inheritance. Our place is not to judge whether or not people attending churches are saved, but rather, if they have indicated they are saved, to provide the proper doctrine to them so that they will be able to walk worthy of what they have been called to do. This is a "perfecting" ministry found in Col. 1:28 recognizing the calling from above.

The walk that is worthy for a Christian today is defined with proper doctrine and that doctrine is called "The Mystery". It's just like the U.S. Constitution is for Americans. This document establishes what we believe and how we should walk. The Mystery doctrine establishes how Christians should walk. (Leland Maples has a good lesson on ministers who follow the wrong doctrine today. It's entitled: "Why Faith Healers Don't Need Glasses". You may listen to this lesson here)

http://www.rightdivision.com/mp3/Maples/Maples-Why_Faith_Healers_Need_Glasses.mp3

Colossians Study – Part 2

Epaphras, Onesimus, Tychicus, are all mentioned in this book and they are good examples of believers at that time. It is debatable whether or not Paul ever went to Colossae because we see his comments in Col. 2:1 saying that many have not seen his face. We think they may have seen his face at Ephesus when Paul preached over there for 3.5 years.

Colossians 1:1-2 (KJV)

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

In the first lesson, we learned what it meant when Paul said he was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. This actually meant the desire of God not the fiat of God.

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.

He starts to address two types of people in verse 2, being the “saints” and the “faithful”. Some may argue that these are one and the same, but we see the “saints” are people that have been called, redeemed, sanctified, and glorified. The “faithful” people are the saints that are obedient to their calling. Consequently, there are saints, and there are faithful saints.

An example of this is in 2 Timothy 2:19-20:

2 Timothy 2:19-20 (KJV)

19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

In this passage, we learn that there are many vessels in the house of God, but here the faithful would be the vessels unto honor due to their obedience in the call of God.

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.

Another aspect of verse 2 is when Paul says grace and peace. We think peace specifically follows grace because you don't find peace until you receive the grace of God. By grace, we mean it's not enough to know that you've been forgiven of your sins, past, present, and future but rather your understanding of the full grace you have received in Christ. Grace leads to peace.

Colossians Study – Part 2

Colossians 1:3 (KJV)

- 3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

We are to do all things with thankfulness. Paul addresses this in Philippians 4:4-6:

Philippians 4:6-7 (KJV)

- 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

We are to be thankful even when we are challenged by things in our life.

Colossians 1:3 (KJV)

- 3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Paul says that he was praying always for those Christians in Colossae. The thought of prayer here reminds us that we should pray for others. We should pray for those who are going through difficult times.

The other side of prayer is that we should pray for ourselves. Paul demonstrated this in Col 4:2-5:

Colossians 4:2-5 (KJV)

- 2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:
4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Christ himself understood this because how many times did you see Him in the gospels having to separate himself and go pray unto the Father. Christ was faced with everything but he did not sin. He knows what we are going through when we face the flesh.

Paul talks about this in Romans 7:15-25 where he showed the struggle he had in the flesh with his old nature.

Romans 7:15-25 (KJV)

- 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.
16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.
17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Colossians Study – Part 2

- 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.
- 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.
- 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
- 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
- 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
- 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.
- 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
- 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

The apostle Paul was a faithful saint. He is not talking about salvation here, but rather his walk as a Christian after he was saved. Paul is battling the flesh and Christ understands the battle we have with the flesh for He's been through every temptation we have been through and committed no sin. Paul continues his declaration in Romans 8:1-4:

Romans 8:1-2 (KJV)

- 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.
- 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
- 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This statement describes the perfect humanity of Christ, and that is how we enjoy that victory over the flesh.

Colossians 1:4-5 (KJV)

- 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;

We need to pray for others, especially when we hear of any issue other Christians have in their lives. We also need to understand our hope, as it says in verse 5, being laid up in heaven.

Man needs hope. There have been studies of prisoners having hope and they found hope is what gets them through their incarceration. Hope of knowing who they will see when they get out of jail, hope of what they can do when they get out. The studies show that when individuals have their hope taken away from them, they die because they have nothing to hang on to.

Colossians Study – Part 2

Paul is telling the Colossians that he has heard of their difficult times... which is probably more difficult than what we have experienced here in America. Perhaps missionaries in India, Sudan, or the Philippines have had it as rough as the Colossian Christians in their walk.

Paul is praying in verse 5 that the Colossians understand what is the hope that is laid up in heaven for them. We covered some scriptures in Ephesians in a previous lesson and we spent time differentiating different levels of heaven. (Our hope is in the heavens (plural), not the heaven (singular) which is where the hope of New Jerusalem coming down for Israel. Our hope is with Christ where he sits in the heavens far above all.)

Colossians 1:6-7 (KJV)

- 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.

Verse 6 shows that Paul is reminding them that the “hope” we have in the heavenlies has not only been sent to them but to all that is in the world! The Mystery that was revealed to the apostle Paul after Acts 28:28 is now sent to everyone who will hear it.

The grace of God mentioned in verse 6 is the grace of God in the dispensation of grace. This is not the message that was sent unto the Jew first, then also to the Greek. This is the body of truth called the Mystery that ushered in the dispensation of grace that the body of Christ is enjoying today.

In verse 7 and 8, we learn of work that Epaphras had done for Paul in spreading this truth throughout Colossae. He was a faithful steward of Paul in helping spread the Mystery and was important in the communication between the apostle Paul and the Colossians.

In verse 8, we find that much of what Paul does in the ministry of the Mystery is “in the Spirit.” Our growth and our learning is in the Spirit. Now today, when people take this and mix it in with the witness of the spirit during the Acts period, it causes much confusion because the witness of the Spirit during the Acts was different that what we have in the dispensation of Grace.

Jesus told his disciples in John 16:13 that the Spirit would come and guide them into all truth. Further, Christ said that the Spirit would not speak of himself, but he would glorify Christ.

John 16:13-14 (KJV)

- 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Colossians Study – Part 2

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The spirit movement we see today in the charismatic ministries is not this work spoken of in John 16. The “name it and claim it” groups are perpetuating something that does not have a place in the dispensation of grace in the Mystery. They try to “profess it and possess it” but this authority has not been given to them.

What Paul is talking about in Col. 1:8 regarding the “love in the Spirit” is not the Holy Spirit himself but rather the gift of God that has been given to you. That spirit of God that is the new creation we received when we were saved. This is the new man that God has given you that does not sin (this is not the new man that Paul talks about in bringing the Jew and Gentile together). You still have the old man in the flesh that wrestles with sin, but the new man you have is sinless and that was the gift of God in Christ.

Paul had an understanding of this because in Galatians 2:20

Galatians 2:20 (KJV)

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This gift of God in you is the new man that can communicate with God. This is the one that responds with a faithful walk. This is the one that is exercised through all of life’s difficulties. That is the spirit that Paul is talking about in verse 8. That is the evidence that is called out in obedience to the calling and is what Epaphras was witnessing in Colossae.