

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Prison Letters
Colossians 1:1-8

Last time...we finished the Epistle to the Ephesians

This week...we move on to the next prison letter, the Epistle to the Colossians

Overview

This letter was written at the same time as Ephesians and delivered by the same letter carrier, Tychicus

This church was not planted by Paul and we have no record the he ever visited Colosse

- On his 2nd missionary journey, Paul traveled well north of Colosse
- On his 3rd missionary journey, Paul was eager to get to Ephesus and passed right thru the Tri City area (Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colosse)

100 miles east of Ephesus, it is quite possible that the church at Colosse was an outreach from the church at Ephesus, perhaps by Epaphras (Col 1:7-8, Col 4:12-13)

This epistle sounds much like the Epistle to the Ephesians, with a notable difference
Ephesians:

- The riches we (the Church) have in Christ and the responsibilities we have in Christ (Christian living)
- How we (the Church) sit, walk, and stand with Jesus
- Mostly about the Body of Christ

Colossians:

- Christian living
- Primarily about the Head of the Body, Jesus Christ
 - the Preeminence of Jesus Christ
 - the Supremacy of Jesus Christ
 - the Centrality of Jesus Christ
 - the Sufficiency of Jesus Christ

Why the difference?

The Church at Colosse was battling false doctrines, mostly involving the deity of Jesus Christ

- Gnosticism
- Eastern mysticism
- Philosophies of men
- Jewish legalism

This is a contemporary and timely study

In these days before the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ

- days of Noah (violence)
- days of Lot (sexual perversion, attacks on the image of God)
- days of deception (“beginning of sorrows”)

Christianity is embattled and compromised

- spiritual confusion
 - New Age/Eastern mysticism
 - New Apostolic Reformation
 - spiritual elitism (Gnosticism)
 - humanism
 - legalism (self-righteousness)
 - false gospels, false doctrines, and false teachers
- attacks on the image of God
 - “normalization” of the sexual perversion of LGBTQ+
 - Transgenderism
- “losing ground” (in Western Civilization)
 - Generation X – born 1965-1980
 - Millennials – born 1981-1996
 - Generation Z – born 1996-2012
 - Generation Alpha – born 2013-2025

In the midst of that turbulence, this study of the Epistle to the Colossians will

- keep our eyes on Jesus Christ as we labor to finish well our course
- help us know that we know what we know...to share boldly and to stand!

Col 1:1-8

Greeting (v1-2)

Thanksgiving (v3-8)

v1 (From) Paul

- an apostle of Jesus Christ
 - one of 12 and only 12
 - chosen by the Father
 - given to Jesus Christ by the Father
 - 3 years intense training at the feet of Jesus Personally
 - eyewitnesses of the Risen Lord
 - Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
- by the will of God...a calling of God
 - not seminary-trained in the doctrines of man in his chosen career
 - not by submitting a “job application” and a resume
 - a ministry, not a self-promoting, enterprise-building venture

Acts 9:15-16 **he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.**

Timothy

- Paul's son in the faith
- brother in Christ
- sent by Paul to Ephesus during Paul's leg back to Jerusalem on his 3rd missionary journey (Acts 20)
- sender of Epaphras to Colosse?

v2 To: the saints

- those who have been made (vs attained) holy/separate, pure, and blameless faithful brethren
- those standing on the Rock of Jesus Christ
- of the spiritual family of God

John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

in Christ

- their position before the Living God, the God of the living
- having been reconciled to God the Father
- standing in His righteousness (Phil 3:7-14, the next prison letter)

Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

- consistent greeting of Paul and Peter in their letters
- priceless gifts from God

Grace

Eph 2:8-9 to whosoever believes/trusts/leans on Jesus Christ
Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Peace

Rom 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Notice:

- **our** Father; **we** saints are now in a right relationship with **our** Father
- and NOT from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:
condemnation or deception or confusion

v3-4 The proper response of the recipients of God's amazing grace and peace: thanksgiving... even if one is in prison as Paul is

Notice: Paul gives thanks to God and **the** Father **of our** Lord Jesus Christ
The relationship we saints enjoy with God **our** Father (v2) is the same
relationship our Lord Jesus Christ has with God **His** Father!

John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Heb 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren

We give thanks to God the Father in prayer, communication with our Father

- direct thru Jesus (in His name) alone, NOT Mary or "saints" (1 Tim 2:5)
- 1:1 (intimately personal) and 1:many ("Family meeting")
- 2-way (talking and listening, listening being more difficult and important)
- open channel
 - pour out our hearts
 - receive from His heart
 - always, any time

Paul prayed always, without ceasing, for the church at Colosse and all the churches

2 Cor 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

(in his defense of his apostleship for not all are apostles, 1 Cor 12:29)

Paul had prayed for this church since he heard,

because he is not an eyewitness but heard the testimony of an eyewitness,
of their

1. faith in Jesus Christ...the only rightly-place measure of faith/trust/belief

Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

2. love for the brethren...evidence of their faith, separates saints from "aints"

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (vs disciples of Satan or men!)

John 8:31-32 If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (from the wages of sin, death after physical death).

Rom 13:10 love is the fulfilling of the Law

1 John 3:14-16

1 John 4:10-12, 19-21

btw, since Scripture interprets Scripture and given the purpose and theme of this letter, it makes sense that the Holy Spirit frequently directs us to

- the Gospel of John – Jesus Christ as the Son of God, written to the Church
- the 1st Epistle of John – to combat Gnosticism so we know that we know what we know
- Hebrews – the preeminence of Jesus Christ (“better”) written to Jewish Christians

Why Paul is thankful, why he prays with thanksgiving for them is v5-8;
his prayer for them is v9-14

v5 Paul is thankful and prayerful for the Colossians because of

the hope...the confident expectation of good – resurrection unto life

John 5:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death (after physical death) unto life (after physical death).*

John 6:39-40 *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

which is laid up for you...reserved for you

1 Peter 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

in heaven...the home of God the Father

John 14:1-3 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.*

Our hope of eternal life is in heaven and the next world, NOT in this world

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

The world is NOT our

- friend, Jesus is our Friend

John 15:18-19 *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

1 John 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

- home, the kingdom of God is our home

v13

Phil 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...

We are in the world but not of the world...NOTW

Heb 11:13 we are strangers and pilgrims in this world!

How can we rationally expect (hope for) anything good or easy or fair in the world that is not our friend and not our home?

Our eyes and hearts and minds are focused up, and thru time to eternity as we “pass thru” inviting all others to join us, just as someone invited us

The hope reserved for them in heaven came when they

heard...because someone loved them enough to tell them and invite them before...already, before Paul recorded this letter

just like the Samaritans in John 4:42 who “said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

in the word of the truth...the absolute and unchanging truth of the Word of God that exposes lies and deception

of the gospel...1 Cor 15:3-4

Rom 1:16-17 For I (in their case, Epaphras) am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live (eternally, after physical death) by faith.

Rom 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

v6 The Good News of the Gospel which is come to them because
 someone was sent to them

John 20:21 *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

Matt 28:19-20 *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

Rom 10:13-15 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

and someone obeyed the calling to Go

as in all the world...The Roman Empire

Jesus Christ the Savior came in the fulness of time

Roman Empire

- one common language – Greek (Alexander the Great)
- roads – for military and commerce...and “beautiful feet”
- *Pax Romana* – peace, even if motivated by fear

The Gospel was preached to them and it bore fruit, the fruit of the True Vine
(John 15:1-8) bringing many children unto glory (Heb 2:10)

The Seed of the Word of God found good soil in their hearts (Soil #4) and it bore
the fruit unto eternal life (John 4:36)

just as God was pleased it would accomplish

Is 55:10-11 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and
maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the
sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that
goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me
void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall
prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

since the day...an appointed day (2 Cor 6:2)...they

- heard...because someone lovingly and boldly dared to speak it
- knew experientially/acknowledged the grace of God...the gift of God and not of their works
- in truth...the very words of God and not the doctrines or philosophies of man

And who was the follower of Jesus Christ that

- was sent
- was obedient to the calling to Go
- lovingly and boldly proclaimed the Good News of the Gospel to them?

v7-8 Epaphras

- dear fellowservant of Paul and Timothy
- faithful and zealous minister of Jesus Christ
Col 4:12-13
- witness to them of Jesus Christ in word and in deed and in power (Acts 1:8)
- witness to Paul and Timothy of what the Holy Spirit had done and was doing in Colosse in troubling times:

Rom 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Application

In our troublesome times

- violence of a swelling Jew-hatred, the spirit of antichrist
- relentless attacks on the image of God
- the Church embattled by spiritual confusion and deception

may we followers of Jesus Christ

- love each other
 - fulfilling the Law (Matt 22:36-40)
 - so all people will know we are disciples of Jesus Christ
- hold fast to the faith of Jesus Christ while that faith is being both subtly and viciously attacked
- bear fruit pleasing to our Father, being Christ-like to the un-Christ-like, looking and sounding and smelling like Jesus in the darkness and stench of this world
- be faithful to the command of Jesus to “Go” as the work He began to do and teach continues to this day by His Body
- submit to the strong yet gentle hands of our Father as He conforms us into the image of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- pray without ceasing to be strengthened in His fellowship
- grow in grace

If you are listening...this day live or some other day to a recording...and you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, please hear the words of the Living God being spoken directly to you

John 3:15-18

God sees you, knows you, and loves you

John 3:34-36

The Father in heaven is offering you a priceless gift...

Eph 2:8-9...and with it a choice to take it or leave it

John 5:24-29

but chose wisely!

Simply stated, the choice presented to you is:

Death after physical death...continuing to not believe/trust in Jesus Christ

or

Life after physical death...changing course, confessing your sin, and calling on the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God who came to take away your sins

God has done EVERYTHING He could possibly do to save you from death after physical death

Now, it is up to you

Choose life, today is the appointed day of salvation

Pray something like this and we will join you...