

Colossians: Jesus Our All In All

Colossians 1:1-2

I am so excited to begin our study in the Book of Colossians today. Sheri and I have been praying, studying, discussing, and teaching each other out of this book for awhile now. So, this will be, for you and me, another life-changing journey through God's Word. So, let's prepare our hearts and minds in prayer, in accordance with this verse:

2Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Oh holy God, we first present ourselves as living sacrifices before you, each of us redeemed through the shed blood of Your Son Jesus. We are approved, but we want our study in Your Word to be fitting for our status as Your children. God guard us from imposing our own opinions over Your Truth; guard us from shallow, cursory study of Your Word that would cause us shame. Grant us illumination of Your Word through our Helper, our Teacher the Holy Spirit that we would correctly handle and skillfully divide Your unchanging Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Paul's letter to the Colossians was written about the same time as the epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians - a.d. 62 - and composed at the same office and desk while he was a prisoner at Rome (not!). Far from being idle in his confinement, Paul was steadfast in prayer, and still able to exhort and teach the unbound Word of God through letters like this one to the Colossians.

Colossians 1:1

*(KJV) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
(NIV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*

Our beloved Paul begins by presenting his credentials, signed and sealed by God Himself. No Bible College diploma or Seminary Degree needed here - only God's calling, God's preparation (Acts 9:1-18), God's equipping (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:4-6) and God's anointing as an apostle. Apostle simply means *sent one*. From Webster's dictionary, here is a more detailed definition:

APOS'TLE, n. [L. apostalus; Gr. to send away, to sent.]

A person deputed to execute some important business; but appropriately, a disciple of Christ commissioned to preach the gospel. Twelve persons were selected by Christ for this purpose; and Judas, one of the number, proving an apostate, his place was supplied by Matthias. Acts 1. The title of apostle is applied to Christ himself, Heb 3. In the primitive ages of the church, other ministers were called apostles, Rom 16; as were persons sent to carry alms from one church to another, Phil 2. This title was also given to persons who first planted the Christian faith. Thus Dionysius of Corinth is called the apostle of France; and the Jesuit Missionaries are called apostles.

So, lest his opponents found cause to dismiss Paul, he presents up front his God-ordained qualifications. The Colossians church was experiencing their share of false teachers and teachings, so Paul's pronouncement as one called by God held weight indeed. These qualifications are important for us to understand - that no one can self-appoint themselves as apostles, or any spiritual calling for that matter. Education or self-study may *fortify* one's calling but it does not *authenticate* one's calling. Only God can do that. Jesus addresses this problem of hirelings sneaking their way into pews and pulpits, totally not called, totally not qualified of God:

John 10:1-21

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

So those Colossians recipients of Paul's letter had no cause for concern as to God's hand on Paul's life and ministry. A hireling he was not! Therefore, we can trust Paul's words were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

*STUDY POINT: Find all the instances/verses in the New Testament where the religious sect challenged Jesus and/or the disciples with their "knowledge" of the law. Recall an instance where *you* were challenged by a religious or educated person. How did that make you feel? What encouragement have you gained from this passage from John 10?

Timothy joined Paul in this opening greeting as well. No solitary confinement for Paul, folks, not on God's watch! Visitors were welcome to visit and bring Paul what he needed.

Colossians 1:2

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Beloved, there is a lot of joy in this verse! Paul is addressing saints, not sinners here. These Colossians believers were *physically pure* and *morally blameless* in Christ! They were saints, as are we, when we put our faith and trust in Jesus for salvation. (Romans 10:13) Epaphras and his converts would have taken much joy in each and every believer that gave their lives to Christ.

Let's remember that Paul writes this letter from his chains. Yes, Paul is a prisoner for the Gospel. From the confines of his Roman prison cell - although he has enough freedom to have visitors and write letters - Paul is not concerned about Paul here. Paul writes this as a response and a report to his beloved Colossians believers. He has never met them, but because they are bearing the fruit of faithfulness and advertise the love of Christ so boldly and comprehensively, well, Paul really does know them, and loves them sincerely. You see, the Holy Spirit within all born-again believers across the globe unites us all. We are God's household, when we bear fruit for him, whether we know each other in the physical realm or not. Hallelujah!

Oh, believer, GRACE BE UNTO YOU!

What is grace for? To give us spiritual space to fall down but not stay down. Grace gives us space!

Who is grace for? Simply, those who don't deserve it! You and me, His own children.

What grace is not:

Hebrews 10:26-27

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

*STUDY POINT: List ten ways that true Biblical grace is being abused in the North American church today.

Beloved, Paul mentions peace here also. Truly Christians are the only ones who experience the peace of God through the Holy Ghost. The Colossians needed peace no less than we do today.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

We thank you Jesus for your indwelling peace wherever we go and whatever we go through. All praise to you, our blessed Lord and Saviour...

From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...Beloved, what about the Holy Spirit, isn't He part of the gracious gift-giving Trinity? Yes, and more than that, the Holy Spirit is the gift. He has come to live in us forever, and impart the endless blessings and giftings of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen?

(Insert passionate applause here!)

- Reverend Darren McClelland