

## Colossians 1:1-14

**How did Paul introduce himself to the Colossians (v. 1)?** Paul identified himself as an apostle in order to lend authority to what would follow. He was an apostle by "*the will of God*" (Acts 9:15; Galatians 1:1). It was not an occupation which he had chosen for himself or for which he had been trained by anyone. Neither was he officially ordained by any church. He was fully aware that God Himself had chosen him to be an apostle.

Here, right at the outset of the letter, is the whole doctrine of grace. A man is not what he has made himself, but what God has made him. There is no such thing as a self-made man; there are only two types of men -- men whom God has made, or men who have refused to allow God to make them.

**What do we know about Timothy?** He was not an official apostle, but simply a Christian brother who often traveled with Paul as Paul's companion, protégé and mentoree. Both were members of a common brotherhood, a relationship unique to Christianity and independent of any church hierarchy. Paul did not see Timothy in a superior way as a person beneath him. Paul spent much time discipling Timothy and wrote two of his last letters to him.<sup>1</sup>

**How does Paul describe the Colossians (v. 2)?** The Colossian believers were "holy" or "saints" which means they were set apart/separated by God from the world for God's purposes. And he referred to them as "*faithful brothers*." They were children (believing brothers and sisters) of a common Father through faith in the Lord Jesus. That's how Paul sees them and that's how God sees them.

**"In Christ"** speaks of their *spiritual* position. When they were saved, God placed them "*in Christ*." They were now spiritually united with Christ....one in heart, mind and spirit. From this point on, they had His life and they would no longer be seen by God as children of Adam or as unsaved men, but He would now embrace them like His own Son. The expression "*In Christ*" conveys more of intimacy, acceptance, and security than any human mind can understand.<sup>2</sup>

**"Grace and peace to you from God our Father" (and the Lord Jesus Christ).** Grace pictures God stooping down to sinful, lost humanity in loving and tender compassion. Peace summarizes all that results in the life of a person when he accepts God's grace as a free gift.<sup>3</sup> Paul wanted them to grasp the fulness of both God's grace and His peace.

**Why does Paul thank God for the Colossians (vv. 3-4)?** He was proud of them. He saw them as his spiritual children. He was commending them. He had heard of the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus and of their love which went out to all the "*saints*" --a New Testament word for any believer. There was nothing localized about their love. They did not love only those of their own fellowship, but reached out to true believers everywhere. Faith is the root of the Christian life, and love is the fruit.

**What are the three cardinal Christian virtues that Paul gives thanks for in the lives of the Colossians (v. 5)?** Faith, love and hope. Faith rests on the past work of Christ; love works in the present; hope looks to the future.

**What is the source of these three virtues?** Our hope.....which is founded on the truth of the Gospel. Hope for the Christian is not wishful thinking but a future certainty. That certainty will be realized as the final phase of our salvation when we will be taken to heaven and will receive our eternal inheritance.

**What does Paul have to say about the Gospel that had come to the Colossians (v. 6)?** The Gospel had not come only to them, but was spreading "*All over the world*." Wherever the Gospel was preached, it bore fruit and was growing. Which was precisely the effect that the Gospel had in the lives of the Colossians. Since the day they heard the Gospel they have come to appreciate God's grace which was bestowed on guilty men like themselves who deserve nothing but God's wrath!

**Who did they learn the Gospel from (vv. 7-8)?** Epaphras, whom Paul praised as a dear fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ on their behalf. Much like Paul's non-superior attitude toward Timothy, there was no bitterness or jealousy on the part of the Apostle Paul. It did not bother him to see another preacher receiving

recognition. A hallmark of Paul's writings was that he expressed his appreciation for other fellow servants of the Lord. He didn't see himself as a competitor with other ministers of the Gospel.

**Why did Paul pray for the Colossians (v. 9)?** Because Paul had heard this good report from Epaphras of their faith and love for all the saints. **For what did Paul pray (v. 9)?** That God would fill the Colossians with the knowledge of His will.....which would include wisdom and understanding.....so that they might apply it to bring about practical, godly living, worthy of the Lord (v. 10). To know God and what He requires of us is a primary responsibility of ours.

**What was the goal of fully understanding God's will (v. 10)?** So that the Colossians would be able to live a manner that would glorify and please ("*live a life worthy of*") their Lord (Ephesians 5:10).

**What are the four characteristics that distinguish this worthy life (vv. 10-12a)?**

1. *Bearing fruit in every good work* (Galatians 5:22-23). Here is a helpful reminder that although a person is not saved *by* good works, he most certainly is saved *for* good works (Ephesians 2:10).
2. *Growing in the knowledge of God.* **How is this done?** First of all, it is done through the diligent study of God's word. Then it is also found in obeying His teachings and serving Him faithfully. As we do these things, we enter into a deeper knowledge of the Lord.<sup>4</sup>
3. *Being strengthened with all power.* This God-given strength produces great endurance and patience and joy. The Christian life cannot be lived by mere human energy. It requires supernatural strength.
4. *Giving thanks to the Father.* Gratitude should characterize the heart and be on the lips of the believer.

**What are the reasons to have a thankful heart (vv. 12b-14)?**

1. Because God has "qualified" us to share the "inheritance" of all believers (1 Peter 1:4). The qualification to receive an inheritance took place at conversion, though actual possession of most of it is future (heaven) (Ephesians 1:13-14). The "*kingdom of light*" is the opposite of the "*dominion of darkness*."
2. Because God has rescued us from Satan's domain – "*the dominion of darkness*." This, too, took place at conversion. The impact of this delivery from Satan's domain will become increasingly evident/appreciated in this life and ultimately/fully, when we step into eternity.
3. Because God has ushered us into to Christ's kingdom. All who accept the Lord Jesus Christ during this present age acknowledge Him as their rightful Ruler, and thus they are subjects of His kingdom.<sup>5</sup>
4. Because Christ has redeemed us. His substitutionary death on the Cross provided for the forgiveness of our sins. They were washed away by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

**Redemption** describes the act whereby we were bought from the slave market of sin. The Lord Jesus, as it were, put a price tag on us. How highly did He value us? He said, in effect, "I value them so highly that I am willing to shed My blood to purchase them."<sup>6</sup>

Not only has He redeemed us; He has given us the forgiveness of sins. This means that God has cancelled the debt which our sins incurred. The Lord Jesus Christ paid the penalty – which we owed -- for our sins on the cross; it never needs to be paid again. The account is settled and closed, and God has not only forgiven us, but He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalms 103:12).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geisler, N. L. Colossians, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 669.

<sup>2</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1988). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1991). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 1992

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 1993

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.