

# To The Saints At Colosse<sup>1</sup>

Colossians 1:1-4

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Over the next few weeks we will use our Sunday nights to do a verse by verse study of the Book of Colossians. I pray that you will come, bring your Bibles, notebooks and pens, and be prepared to be blessed of God.

Let's read the first two verses of Chapter One together:

**FOCAL** Colossians 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy 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.

The Book of Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit during his first Roman imprisonment. This is supported by the *last verse* of this book:

**Colossians 4:18** The salutation by the hand of me Paul. **Remember my bonds.** Grace be with you. Amen. (see also Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philipians 1:7-9)

Though Paul was called of God to be the *Apostle to the Gentiles* by Jesus Christ our Lord:

**Acts 9:15-16** ... the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for {Paul} is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: (16) For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

<sup>1</sup> based on my studies, posted at <http://www.bibleteacher.org/Dm042.htm>

he nevertheless still had a great burden to carry the Gospel of Christ to his kinsmen the Jews. Though Paul had been warned by the Prophet Agabus not to enter Jerusalem:

**Acts 21:11 {Agabus} took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.**

Paul went to Jerusalem anyway. The Apostle, from the moment of his conversion, was willing to go anywhere, no matter how dangerous, to preach the Gospel of salvation. The Apostle was imprisoned *for two years* in Caesarea, and *another two years* at Rome.

The *epistle* or *Letter to the Church* of Colossians was written sometime between **60-62 AD**. The recipients of the letter were in the words of **Easton's Bible Dictionary**:

**"Or Colosse, a city of Phrygia, on the Lycus, which is a tributary of the Maeander. It was about 12 miles above Laodicea, and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates, and was consequently of some mercantile importance. It does not appear that Paul had visited this city when he wrote his letter to the church there (Colossians 1:2)."**

The Holy Spirit wrote this letter to combat various

religious perversions that were common to this area - particularly the doctrines of *Gnosticism* and *Philosophy*. The Gnostics (their name means "To know") had a strange belief that Jesus never actually came in the flesh, but came to earth as spirit-man. The conservative Gnostics taught that salvation was only accomplished when you *worked your way to God*. The liberal Gnostics taught that there was no such thing as "sin" for the Christian. Once saved, you were free to sin without any accountability from God.

**FOCAL** Paul, an apostle<sup>2</sup> of Jesus Christ by the will of God....

Paul said that he was **an apostle of Jesus Christ**. The word **apostle**, the Greek *ἀπόστολος*, *apostolos*, *ap-os'-tol-os*), is a word that comes from the *Athenian or Greek Navy*. The *apostolos* was, in the Navy, similar to the rank of "Admiral" in our Navy today. Just as the "Admiral" of the American Navy relays the orders of his government to the ships under his control, the Apostle relays the directions of God to the Church. In the sense that *apostolos* means *messenger*, I suppose it is possible that we are all apostles or messengers in the Church today. We have been given the **Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)**, and are supposed to tell others about Jesus. *However* in the sense that **Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ** - this office *no longer exists in the Church today*.

2 G652, *ἀπόστολος*, *apostolos*, *ap-os'-tol-os*, From G649; a *delegate*; specifically an *ambassador* of the Gospel; officially a *commissioner* of Christ ("apostle"), (with miraculous powers): - apostle, messenger, he that is sent.

## Doctrine Of The Apostle

1. The Apostles (like Paul was an Apostle) filled a *specific office* in the early Church. The Apostles were used of God to:

a) Go into new areas preaching the Gospel. We read in:

**1 Corinthians 9:16-17 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! (17) For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.**

b) Write Scripture, as God so decreed

c) Establish new local Churches in areas they visited

2. Apostles were *sovereignly chosen by God* to fulfill the duties given them. Our focal text says

**"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God .."**

We also read in

**Ephesians 4:11-12 And {God} gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the**

## body of Christ

3. All of the Apostles were *eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ*. When Paul proved his Apostleship to the Corinthians he said in

**1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?**

4. The Apostles all had special giftings to help them do their work for Jesus Christ. The Scripture tells us:

**Acts 5:12-15 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. (13) And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. (14) And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) (15) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.**

5. These *sign gifts - like Speaking In Tongues* - were given to the Apostles so they could approach the

<sup>3</sup> Perfect Active Indicative of G3708, ὁράω, horaō, hor-ah'-o, Properly to stare at (compare G3700), that is, (by implication) to discern clearly (physically or mentally); by extension to attend to; by Hebraism to experience; passively to appear: - behold, perceive, see, take heed.

unbeliever and win them to Christ. These specialized sign gifts are clearly defined in:

**1 Corinthians 14:21-22** In the law it is written, **With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. (22) Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.**

**FOCAL** Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and **Timothy our brother,**

Timothy or *Timotheus* was a spiritual leader in the Church, and was, at one time, the *pastor of the Ephesian Church*.

Colossians 1:2 **To the saints<sup>4</sup> and faithful brethren in Christ** which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word **saints** is the Greek ἅγιος, *hagios*, (pronounced

<sup>4</sup> G40, ἅγιος, *hagios*, *hag'-ee-os*, From ἅγιος *hagos* (an *awful* thing) compare G53, [H2282]; *sacred* (physically *pure*, morally *blameless* or *religious*, ceremonially *consecrated*): - (most) holy (one, thing), saint.

*hag'-ee-os*) , meaning someone who *is set apart for specific use by God*, someone who is *sanctified*. The word **saints** or **set apart ones** is used frequently in the New Testament (**Matthew 27:52; Acts 9:13; Acts 9:32; Acts 9:41; Acts 26:10; Romans 1:7; Romans 8:27; Romans 12:13; Romans 15:25; Romans 15:26; Romans 15:31; Romans 16:2; Romans 16:15; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Timothy 5:10; Philemon 1:5** to name just a few instances). The Apostle Paul frequently started his letters by acknowledging they were **for the saints of the Church** that he was addressing. Though the word **saints** or **hagios** is usually in the *plural*, it is also found in **Philippians 4:21** in the *singular*.

Every Christian is a **saint of God, set apart by God for God's specific use**. We who are saved are *saints* - not because we are perfect in our own right - but because we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and, because of that faith, have been *set apart by God*. This brings us to the ...

### **Doctrine of Sanctification**

1. Sanctification (the Greek *hagios*) means to be "set apart for God's use". Whenever you find the words "holy, sanctify, saint, or sanctification" in your King James Bible, these words are usually always derived from *hagios*.
2. Three types of sanctification are recognized in the

## Holy Scripture

- a) **Positional** When we were saved by faith in Jesus Christ we were *sanctified* or *set apart* in the eyes of God. Theologically we call this **Positional Sanctification**, that is, you are set apart and identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Positional Sanctification means that when God looks at you, the believer, He sees you as a son of God because of your relationship to Jesus Christ. Positional Sanctification is best seen in texts like:

**(1 Corinthians 1:2) Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:**

**(1 Corinthians 6:11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.**

The Corinthian believers were *exceptionally carnal*, but nonetheless they were still recognized by God as **saints**. Positional Sanctification happens *once and for all* when the believer trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior:

**(Hebrews 10:10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

- b) **Progressive** Christians who are *positionally set apart* also *grow daily to be more like Jesus*. This is called **Progressive Sanctification**, and can be seen in passages like:

**(2 Thessalonians 2:13) But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:**

**(John 17:17) Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**

As you study the Word of Truth, the Word of God, you will grow more and more to be like Jesus. The great Bible teacher **Dr. Louis Berkhof** said:<sup>5</sup>

**"Sanctification may be defined as that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which, He purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of**

God, and enables him to perform good works. It differs from justification in that it takes place in the inner life of man, is not a legal but a recreative act, is usually a lengthy process, and never reaches perfection in this life. While it is very decidedly a supernatural work of God, the believer can and should cooperate in it by a diligent use of the means which God has placed at his disposal

The person in **Progressive Sanctification** is a believer who, because God the Holy Spirit now lives in him, has become a *partner with God*. The following Scripture emphasize that we work with God in our sanctification:

**Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)**

**Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: (1 Peter 1:22)**

Progressive Sanctification *strengthens, increases, and fortifies* the Christian way of life.

**Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; (Romans 6:6)**

**And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof. (Galatians 5:24)**

c) **Prospective or Ultimate** Finally, when the believer enters the presence of God in Heaven, he is *glorified* or **Ultimately Sanctified**. All traces of sin, sickness, corruption are removed.

**1 John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**

**Philippians 3:20-21** For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: (21) Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

**Romans 8:29** For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

### 3. Who accomplishes the acts of Sanctification?

- a) The Agent of **Positional Sanctification** is Jesus Christ. It is His Blood and His Sacrifice that sets us apart in the eyes of God.

**Hebrews 10:10-14** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away

sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

- b) The Agents of **Progressive Sanctification** are The Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible:

**Romans 15:16** That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

**1 Peter 2:2-3** As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (3) If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is

gracious.

**John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**

**Ephesians 5:25-27 ... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

**FOCAL** Colossians 1:3-4 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<sup>6</sup> which ye have<sup>7</sup> to all the saints.**

True saving faith *always* produces an output of love. The Apostle praised God for this Church because they didn't just profess to know God. They professed to know God through faith in Christ - and their lives showed it by the output of love they exhibited one to another. The Bible testifies, over and over again, that those who are saved

6 G26, ἀγάπη, agapē, ag-ah'-pay, From G25; love, that is, affection or benevolence; specifically (plural) a love feast: - (feast of) charity ([-ably]), dear, love.

7 echo, Present Active Indicative, "Keep on having and holding"

will exhibit **Godly love** or ἀγάπη, agapē, (ag-ah'-pay). The Bible tells us that the very *first flavor* of the **Fruit of the Spirit**:

**Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,**

is LOVE. If we do not as Christians **walk in love one toward another ..**

**Ephesians 4:1-2 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love;**

putting up with one another's shortcomings, then we are not walking the worthy Christian walk. The standard that we are commanded to follow is to

**Ephesians 5:2 ... walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.**

The Apostle John is even more brutally direct when he states:

**1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the**

## brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

If we do not love our brothers in Christ, then we yet **abide in death**. God is love, and once you are saved the God Who is love indwells you.

### Love Of God In The Believer

1. The most important thing to God is *that we love*. A certain person asked Jesus one day what the most important commandment of the Law was. Our Lord replied:

**Matthew 22:37-40** Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang<sup>8</sup> all the law and the prophets.

Jesus said that the **Law and the Prophets** - the entirety of God's Word - *keeps on hanging* (Present Passive Indicative of, κρεμάννυμι, kremannumi, (pronounced *krem-an'-noo-mee*) on Love! If you will not love as God has shown you

<sup>8</sup> Present Passive Indicative of G2910, κρεμάννυμι, kremannumi, (*krem-an'-noo-mee*), A prolonged form of a primary verb; to *hang*: - hang.

in Christ then you can *never* fulfill the Word of God in your life! What in the world is God doing in the world today? He is doing what He has always done, shown love to man, and continually shows love by encouraging people to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Love is the fulfilling of God's Law, of God's Word, and of God's Will.

2. We are all *commanded by God* to love:

**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. (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The Commandment to love is not new, for as we've seen in point number 1, the *whole of the Word of God* is based on love. However the Lord God commands that we **love as He has loved us**. This brings the Christian way of life into sharper focus.

3. The Christian is commanded to *love without hypocrisy*. The Scripture says:

**Romans 12:9-10** Let love be without dissimulation<sup>9</sup>. Abhor that which is evil;

<sup>9</sup> G505, ἀνυπόκριτος, anupokritos, *an-oo-pok'-ree-tos*, From G1 (as a

**cleave to that which is good. (10) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;**

The Greek word for **dissimulation** is **ὑπόκριτος**, *anupokritos*, (pronounced *an-oo-pok'-ree-tos*), which means **without hypocrisy** or **with all sincerity**. The Christian is to love with all genuineness at all times.

4. Our enemies must be loved. The Scripture says:

**Matthew 5:43-45** **Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.**

The unbeliever can love in the *half-baked way* that most Christians practice love today. The Lord

challenges us to love as if God *were* our Heavenly Father. If He is, you can love even the unlovable. He does, doesn't He?

5. The fruit of the Spirit is Love:

**Galatians 5:22** **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,**

6. Since we who are believers are *indwelt by God the Holy Spirit* we should be able to love. God is love, God is in us, we should love. This is simple common sense and well applied Bible Doctrine:

**1 John 4:7-8** **Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**

We will continue with our Colossians study next week. May God bless and keep you.

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negative particle) and a presumed derivative of G5271; *undissembled*, that is, *sincere*: - without dissimulation (hypocrisy), unfeigned.