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May memory verse Romans 6:8 (NKJV)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

Commentary on Colossians Chapter 1 by Chuck Smith 5.5.24

With John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - Colossians

The city of Colosse, was in the area known as Perga, a part of Asia Minor. A couple of other churches are greeted by Paul in this epistle, and the epistle was told to be read also to those churches and that was the Laodicean church. And also the one in Hierapolis. Paul had never personally been to these churches. They had never seen his face. However, the churches were probably started as a bi-product of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, for as Paul was in Ephesus for two years and Ephesus is not that far from Laodicea and from Colosse. There were those who came from these areas, heard Paul, and the word of God was spreading through that area as the result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

So, they probably went back to these areas and just began fellowships which grew into churches. Epaphras was the minister of the church in Colosse, and Epaphras had come to Paul while he was in Rome in prison and had related unto Paul some of the dangerous heresies that had begun to be spread there in Colosse. And so Paul is writing the epistle to correct these heresies that were becoming popularized in that community. One of the heresies was that of Gnosticism, which denies the deity of Jesus Christ. Another heresy was that of Judaism, which of course was the mixture of the works along with faith for salvation. The letter was written at the same time that he wrote his letter to the Ephesians and was carried by the same messenger Tychicus, who carried the Ephesian epistle, carried also this epistle to the Colossians, written about 64 A.D. during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus, our brother (Col 1:1).

And so, the introduction in greeting is so typically *Pauline*, that in studying these epistles of Paul to the churches, we have covered this same introduction in various forms. Again, because he is going to be addressing things of doctrinal error, he again takes his title as the apostle of Jesus Christ. And he's speaking with his apostolic authority, "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."

Now, it is interesting as Paul is praying for the Colossians here, his first request for them is that they might be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. How many of you think that's an important prayer? I pray that for myself all the time; "God help me to know your

will in each situation." But I believe that it is important that each day we commit our lives unto God and unto the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And if we will do that, I believe that our lives then become the progressive revelation of God's will. I think that if in the morning I say, "Lord, my life is Yours. I want to be Your servant today. I want You to lead me by Your Spirit. I want You to over rule any wrong decisions that I might be making. Lord, just take control of my life." And I yield myself thus to the Lord, I believe that as the day unfolds, it becomes a progressive revelation of that which God has purposed and planned for me.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus of Christ by the will of God. Timothy: Paul calls him his brother, a companion of Paul. Probably no one understood and was so in harmony with Paul as was Timothy. To the Philippians, he said, "I'm sending Timothy to learn of your safety, because there is no one who is as like-minded in the things of the Gospel as I am, as is Timothy." He had really caught the heart of Paul in his commitment unto the things of the Lord. Somehow, it is extremely difficult to find those who have the same vision, the same commitment to the things of the Lord. He's writing to the saints, those who'd been set apart, and the faithful brethren in Christ, which were at Colosse. Now, remember, heresy is creeping up in the church. He's going to be writing to correct some of these heretical ideas. But he writes to them as, first of all, saints, secondly, as faithful brethren, and thirdly, in Christ. The typical, Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you (Col 1:2-3),

And Paul, it seems, mentions in almost each of his epistles his prayers for those people, "God is my witness," he writes to the Romans, and "I bow my knee before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, making mention of you in my prayers." He offers a couple of prayers in the epistle to the Ephesians, and he mentions his prayers in so many of the epistles. Paul was a man of prayer, as is true of any man who is used mightily of God; they are men of prayer.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven (Col 1:4-5),

Again, these three are so often coupled together: the faith, the hope, the love. Remember in Corinthians thirteen, "Now abide these three: faith, hope, love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Characteristics that mark the believer: the faith of the believer, the love of the believer, and the hope that is in the believer. These are the characteristics that are the continuing mark of the child of God. And so, "The faith in Jesus Christ, the love for the saints, and the hope which is laid up for you in heaven whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

One of Paul's prayers for the Ephesian church is that they might know what is the hope of their calling. If you only knew what awaits you, if you only knew this hope laid up for you in heaven. Peter said, "Thank God we've been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, fades not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of

God" (1 Peter 1:3,4,5). This hope of that glorious kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And so, the hope laid up for you in heaven which is come unto you, the word of the truth of the gospel 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 you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth (Col 1:6):

And Paul's emphasis here, "You heard and knew the grace of God in truth." How important that we know the grace of God in truth.

As you also learned from Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 1:7-9);

So, the first petition that Paul is praying for the church is that they be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Secondly,

That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col 1:10),

Paul wrote to the Ephesians and told them all that God was and had done for them, and then he said, "Now, walk worthy of the calling, wherewith you were called." You're a child of God. Walk like it, live like it; walk worthy of that which God has called you to be, His child. Walk in a manner that is befitting that of a child of God. You might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. How important that we be increasing in our knowledge of God. And that's what these Sunday night services are dedicated to. For you can only really know God in truth as He is revealed Himself to us through His word. Your only real source of the knowledge of God is here in the Bible. And so, to know God we must know the word of God, whereby He has revealed Himself to man. Increasing in the knowledge of God. And we, week by week, should be increasing in our knowledge of God. That you might be,

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power [that you might begin to experience more of that power of God's spirit working in your life], unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (Col 1:11);

Now, so often, our patience and long-suffering is not with joyfulness. It's with sort of complaining and whining and griping, "I've been waiting so long!" And we just sort of wail when God makes us wait. But that we might wait with joyfulness.

Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us meet [worthy] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col 1:12):

Paul again wrote of the saints in light to the Ephesians here. And there is a great parallel, of course, both the epistles were written at the same time, and so a lot of parallel thoughts in the two. But we give thanks to God, who has made us worthy to be partakers of this inheritance. Again, Paul prayed for the Ephesians that they might know what is His inheritance. Something different, but he did refer also as one of the blessings of God, that inheritance that is ours of the saints in light.

Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1:13):

That's what conversion is all about. Being delivered from the power of darkness from our bondage in sin: that power of Satan that once held us. And translated into the kingdom of His dear Son.

We read so much in the scriptures of the kingdom of God, and so often we think of that as something totally future. For many people it is. But for you, it should be a present experience. You see, you become a part of that kingdom the moment you bow your knee to Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him as your King and your Lord. I am in the kingdom of God. I have yielded my life as a faithful subject and servant to that kingdom. He is my King, therefore, I am in His kingdom. And so, I have been delivered from the power of darkness, been translated into that kingdom.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:14):

Again, one of the glorious blessings of Colossians chapter one, the "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Who is the image [talking now of Jesus Christ] of the invisible God (Col 1:15),

And he's going to tell us several things now concerning Jesus. Remember, the Gnostics and their heresy that was creeping into Colosse were denying the deity of Jesus. So Paul, here, is going to now tell of the supremacy of Jesus. He is the image of the invisible God. John, chapter one, "No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared Him, or manifested Him, made Him known" (John 1:18). "For the word was made flesh and He dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He was the image of the invisible God. In Hebrews one, He is "the brightness of His glory" or the effulgence of the glory of God, the express image of Himself. Jesus is the express image of God, the image of the invisible God. He is the first born of every creature, or as the word means in the Greek, *precedence above*, first in, not first, second, third, forth, but first as the above all. And so here, He is above all of the creatures or creation,

For by him were all things created (Col 1:16),

Genesis one tells us, "In the beginning, God created." The word *God* there in Hebrew is *Elohiym*, which is plural. The Hebrew singular for God is *El*. The dual tense is *Eloi*. And *Elohiym* is the plural tense for God. "In the beginning God," *Elohiym*, plural. And I believe that that is a hint of the Trinity, right in the very first verse of the Bible, the fact that they would use God in a plural form. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

And when it came to man and God said, "Let us make man in our likeness and after our image" (Genesis 1:26), not, "I will make man after My likeness, after My image." But "Let us," in the divine counsels of the Father, Son and the Spirit, man was created in the likeness and the image of God. So in John, chapter one, "In the beginning was (the Logos) the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the same was in the beginning with God. And all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). Jesus, the active agent in creation, "For by Him were all things created." The "all things," it does mean just that, to be taken literally for things that are in heaven and things that are in the earth, the whole universe, created by Him. Things that are visible and things that are invisible. So, the visible material universe that you can see, plus the invisible universe that you don't see: the spirit beings, the angels, the various rankings and orders of spirit beings, here referred to as "thrones or dominions or principalities or powers." All things were made by Him and for Him. So, not only is He the creator, but here, He is the object of creation. They were made by Him, and they were made for Him; all of the angles, all of the universe, all of the things within the universe, were made for Him, and that includes you.

You were made for His good pleasure and purpose. People don't like that sometimes. They rebel against that which He has given you the capacity to do. Because, when He created you, He created you with a free will or a choice. You were created in His image, and God is the self-determinate being, and thus He created you, self-determinate, the power of choice. And that was necessary in order that He might have meaningful fellowship with you.

And he is the head of the body, the church (Col 1:18):

We need to remember that. There are always those men who are trying to take that position as the head of the body of the church. I think that that is one of the weaknesses of denominations, is that it does sort of carry that power struggle. And men driven by the desire for power seek to gain the control over the denomination. A truly godly minister could care less about being the president of the denomination, or even the Pope. He only wants to be what God wants him to be, if he's truly a godly man. He has no real ambitions to be anything other than what God has called him to be.

But there are men who are driven by the desire for power, and they strive to gain that preeminence and position of the head of the church. And it's always rather sad to see it, for Christ is...

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead (Col 1:18);

Now, others rose from the dead before He did, but He is "the first-born" in that He is never to die again. Those that were raised from the dead before, died again, but His is unto eternal life.

that in all things he might have the preeminence (Col 1:18).

Now that is the purpose of God and the plan of God, is that in everything Jesus has the preeminence. All things, again, includes you. And so, the question, does Christ reign preeminently in your life? Does He have the preeminence? You see, that's the purpose and the plan of God for Jesus Christ, that He has the place of preeminence in each of our lives. That He is above everything else in our lives, that nothing supersedes the place of Jesus Christ in my life.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell (Col 1:19);

Our minds cannot really grasp that particular phrase. It's pleased the Father that in Him, in Christ, should all of the fullness of God, that God had dwelt, the fullness of the Godhead bodily dwells in our Lord. We get that in chapter two, we are complete in Him.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by the wicked works, yet now has he reconciled (Col 1:20-21)

And so, Jesus has made peace with God possible for man. Man was at war with God. Man was rebelling against God. We all were in that rebellion against God, as we walked our own path, as we went our own way. As we were following after the desires of our flesh and of our mind, we were at war with God, rebelling against the law of God and the commandments of God. But Jesus, through the blood of His cross providing a righteous basis for God's forgiving us of our sins has made peace with God possible. As He reconciles all things unto Himself. So we are told, "Be ye therefore reconciled unto God." Don't be at war with God; be reconciled unto God. And all things have been reconciled through Jesus Christ, whether they are things in earth or in heaven. And you, that at one time were alienated from God; you were enemies of God in your mind and by your wicked works, you've now been reconciled.

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unprovable in his sight (Col 1:22):

Now, you see, through my faith in Jesus Christ, I have been forgiven all of my sins and transgressions. So that when Jesus presents me to the Father, He's going to present me blameless, unprovable, holy. In Jude we read, "Now, unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with

exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24). Oh, do you realize what Jesus Christ has provided for you? The total pardon and forgiveness of your sins and your transgressions. He has, as you are in Christ. God sees you as holy and pure and righteous, for the righteousness of Christ has been accounted or imputed unto you through your faith in Jesus Christ. Not through your efforts, not through your great commitment. Not through your tremendous sacrifices, but through your simple faith in Jesus Christ, God has accounted you righteous. God looks at me tonight as righteous. Now, I don't even look at myself that way. I look at myself and I see all my flaws. I see all my failures; I see my weaknesses. But God sees me in Jesus. And as He looks at me in Christ, He sees me without blame, holy, unreprouvable. Oh, I love that. How thankful I am for that place I have in Christ tonight. Because of Him, God sees me as perfect.

If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col 1:23);

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you [and Paul's talking about himself: I now rejoice in my sufferings for you], and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church (Col 1:24):

Now, this is a very difficult scripture to understand. Then I will frankly confess to you, I am not certain that I do understand the full implications of it. Does seem that Paul is saying that, in some way, he is completing the afflictions of Christ in his own body, for Christ's body sake, the church. Now, it can only be understood if we understand the relationship of Jesus to His church or the relationship of Jesus to you. Whatever reproach you bear for your faith in Jesus Christ is really reproach that is being directed at Jesus. Whatever suffering you bear for Jesus Christ's sake, that suffering is being directed at Jesus. And so, Paul recognized that these beatings that he received, the stonings that he received, the suffering that he was subject to, and the imprisonment and all, were because of man's animosities against Jesus Christ. So that he was suffering for Christ's sake; he was in prison for Christ's sake. He was actually taking the sufferings of Jesus Christ, or the reproaches of Christ, the feelings that man had in his natural heart against Jesus. The hatred that man had against Jesus, Paul was privileged to bear it. "I rejoice that I can bear these things that are directed at Jesus, that I have this privilege of filling up the afflictions of Jesus. That is, that the feelings that man have of antagonism towards Jesus are directed at me, and I'm able to take them for Him." And Jesus so identifies with us, that He shares with us in this suffering. He said, "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, trials" (James 1:2). "Don't count it a strange thing concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing has happened to you. Rejoice!" (1 Peter 4:12) "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake and for the gospel's, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). So, filling up of the sufferings of Christ.

Man, the natural man, still hates Jesus, and as you stand there before Him as His representative, you receive his abuse that he is really directing in his heart towards Jesus. Now, they counted it a privilege that they were able to do that. They rejoiced that they were able to take that suffering for Christ's sake. Don't take it personally. A lot of times we are so sensitive. Someone says something and we take it personally, as though they're directing it at us. No, it's being directed at Christ. And it's because that I'm Christ's representative that I'm standing there and receiving it. And if I look at it that way, then I can rejoice, Lord, that you've counted me worthy to suffer for Your sake as did the apostles in Acts, chapter four. Lord, oh my, You counted us worthy to suffer for You. So, I...

now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of [in that I am receiving the afflictions that are directed at] Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God (Col 1:24-25);

So, Paul is been made a minister, according to God's plan to fulfill the word of God.

Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 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 (Col 1:26-27):

The glorious mystery of God is that Christ will come and indwell you.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect [complete] in Christ Jesus (Col 1:28):

And so, that is the purpose of the ministry, is to bring you into the full maturity in Christ Jesus. And what did God... all of the churches were dedicated to this. For years my ministry was dedicated to bringing people to Christ Jesus, but never to bringing them to the full maturity in Christ Jesus. Evangelism was my bag, the big thing. And the church was weak. Paul's desire is teaching. His purpose was to bring them into the full maturity in Christ.

Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily (Col 1:29).

John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - Colossians

Title

Colossians is named for the city of Colosse, where the church it was addressed to was located. It was also to be read in the neighboring church at Laodicea (4:16).

Author and Date

Paul is identified as author at the beginning (1:1; cf. v. 23; 4:18), as customarily in his epistles. The testimony of the early church, including such key figures as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius, confirms that the opening claim is genuine. Additional evidence for Paul's authorship comes from the book's close parallels with Philemon, which is universally accepted as having been written by Paul. Both were written (ca. A.D. 60–62) while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (4:3, 10, 18; Philem. 9, 10, 13, 23); plus the names of the same people (e.g., Timothy, Aristarchus, Archippus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, Onesimus, and Demas) appear in both epistles, showing that both were written by the same author at about the same time. For biographical information on Paul see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date.

Background and Setting

Colosse was a city in Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), about 100 mi. E of Ephesus in the region of the 7 churches of Rev. 1–3. The city lay alongside the Lycus River, not far from where it flowed into the Maender River. The Lycus Valley narrowed at Colosse to a width of about two mi., and Mt. Cadmus rose 8,000 feet above the city.

Colosse was a thriving city in the fifth century B.C. when the Persian king Xerxes (Ahasuerus, cf. Esth. 1:1) marched through the region. Black wool and dyes (made from the nearby chalk deposits) were important products. In addition, the city was situated at the junction of the main north-south and east-west trade routes. By Paul's day, however, the main road had been rerouted through nearby Laodicea, thus bypassing Colosse and leading to its decline and the rise of the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Although Colosse's population was mainly Gentile, there was a large Jewish settlement dating from the days of Antiochus the Great (223–187 B.C.). Colosse's mixed population of Jews and Gentiles manifested itself both in the composition of the church and in the heresy that plagued it, which contained elements of both Jewish legalism and pagan mysticism.

The church at Colosse began during Paul's 3-year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19). Its founder was not Paul, who had never been there (2:1); but Epaphras (1:5–7), who apparently was saved during a visit to Ephesus, then likely started the church in Colosse when he returned home. Several years after the Colossian church was founded, a dangerous heresy arose to threaten it—one not identified with any particular historical system. It contained elements of what later became known as Gnosticism: that God is good, but matter is evil, that Jesus Christ was merely one of a series of emanations descending from God and being less than God (a belief that led them to deny His true humanity), and that a secret, higher knowledge above Scripture was necessary for enlightenment and salvation. The Colossian heresy also embraced aspects of Jewish legalism, e.g., the necessity of circumcision for salvation, observance

of the ceremonial rituals of the OT law (dietary laws, festivals, Sabbaths), and rigid asceticism. It also called for the worship of angels and mystical experience. Epaphras was so concerned about this heresy that he made the long journey from Colosse to Rome ([4:12](#), [13](#)), where Paul was a prisoner.

This letter was written from prison in Rome ([Acts 28:16–31](#)) sometime between A.D. 60–62 and is, therefore, referred to as a Prison Epistle (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). It may have been composed almost contemporaneously with Ephesians and initially sent with that epistle and Philemon by Tychicus ([Eph. 6:21, 22](#); [Col. 4:7, 8](#)). See [Introduction to Philippians: Author and Date](#) for a discussion of the city from which Paul wrote. He wrote this letter to warn the Colossians against the heresy they faced, and sent the letter to them with Tychicus, who was accompanying the runaway slave Onesimus back to his master, Philemon, a member of the Colossian church ([4:7–9](#); see [Introduction to Philemon: Background and Setting](#)). Epaphras remained behind in Rome (cf. [Philem. 23](#)), perhaps to receive further instruction from Paul.

Historical and Theological Themes

Colossians contains teaching on several key areas of theology, including the deity of Christ ([1:15–20](#); [2:2–10](#)), reconciliation ([1:20–23](#)), redemption ([1:13, 14](#); [2:13, 14](#); [3:9–11](#)), election ([3:12](#)), forgiveness ([3:13](#)), and the nature of the church ([1:18, 24, 25](#); [2:19](#); [3:11, 15](#)). Also, as noted above, it refutes the heretical teaching that threatened the Colossian church ([chap. 2](#)).