

COLOSSIANS - Chapter 1

Introduction to the letter

Paul writes to proclaim the supremacy of Christ and the unique nature of Christ as God and man. He writes to oppose false teachers who would ensnare and spoil God's people.

Teamwork

Paul, though a tough uncompromising servant of God, did enjoy working with a team. Timothy is the key team member mentioned here. He also refers to Epaphras, a dear fellow servant and minister of the gospel.

Testimony

The testimony from the Christians that Paul highlights, is their faith in Christ and their love for each other. Simple basic truths but so important and so distinctive. He points out that the source of such qualities is confidence that ahead of us is heaven. This sure hope, transforms our lives and enables us to live now on a different plane.

A fruitful and worldwide gospel

Paul points out that the gospel they have believed, is fruitful and expanding all over the world. Following Jesus, means being part of a successful mission. It does not mean that there is no hardship or persecution but there is no doubt about the power of the gospel to change lives. This study is being received in many nations and, again and again, we hear the testimony that Jesus lives and Jesus reigns!

Prayer

Paul's prayer is very deep in its content. He prays fervently that believers will desire and have knowledge, wisdom, understanding and strength. In fact, everything which enables us to enjoy thoroughly, all that Jesus wants for us in our Christian life. Also, that we might please him by living lives that are worthy of his name.

Deliverance

Our deliverance is majestic! We are no longer in a kingdom of darkness, confusion and disorder. We are in God's kingdom; Satan has no rights over us, because the price of our forgiveness and freedom from slavery to sin is paid in full. Hallelujah!

Christ's supremacy

Paul then goes on to extol the supremacy of Christ. He is God, creator and he is before all things. Reconciliation is possible through his shed blood. Peace is achieved through his sacrifice. We were alienated, hostile, even enemies of God but now, we can be presented as clean and holy. We must believe this and teach this to God's people. So much information comes before people, which is discrediting and despising of us. We are new people in Christ! We proclaim Christ and, through correction, teaching, wisdom and hard work, we present him and him alone!

Action points for us:

**To what extent do we contribute as team members in our Christian lives and work?
How can we recognise and encourage the fruitfulness of our brothers and sisters in Christ?
How does our prayer life compare with that of Paul?
How should we pray for our fellow believers?**

Deliverance is available to all who call upon the Lord. Lift up the name of Jesus...!

Praise the Lord!

Rev Richard Brunton

COLOSSIANS - Chapter 2

Paul covers some vital themes in this chapter. He talks about the nature of Christian ministry, the simplicity of walking with Christ, the great victory our Lord Jesus has won and the importance of being free from legalism.

Christian ministry (verses 1–5)

Paul says that he struggles on behalf of the believers, to see them blessed and encouraged in Christ. It is not easy for Paul. It's a battle. Seeing a baby grow from a child, to a teenager, to an adult, requires a lot from parents. There are so many obstacles and so many temptations. But patient, loving care is rewarded by the Lord. So it is in ministry, seeing people and churches come to maturity, being woven together harmoniously, not deluded but strong in God's grace. This takes much patient and tender yet, firm care. Paul also says that he rejoices in the firm faith they have in Christ. Battles and joy mingled together are all part of our Christian service.

Walking with Christ (verses 6-8)

Paul reminds the believers that they began their Christian walk by receiving Christ Jesus as Lord. The simplicity of repentance, agreeing with God about our sin and need, trusting Jesus as Saviour and living under His Lordship are foundational truths. So we are rooted, built up and established by the same principles. We have a commitment to live in Christ, to keep ourselves free from sin and to rejoice in the wonderful forgiveness which Jesus offers. Submitting to his risen presence right now, every day, enables us to grow and move on in our faith.

Christ's great victory (verses 9-15)

Our baptism is a fantastic picture of being set apart for Christ alone. Circumcision has to do with the flesh but baptism speaks of the spiritual realm. We are Christ's and His alone! Our old life has died and is buried. The power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us. His death and resurrection has cancelled out the debt that our sins have accrued. No more do our sins weigh against us, crippling us with their power. God's law is satisfied and Satan's grip is removed. Satan has no power over us and no right to mess us up any more. Hallelujah! All of this has not been done in secret. The cross is there for all to see and Jesus alive today is a constant proof that he has won the great victory!

Freedom from legalism (Verses 16-23)

Some claiming to be Christians were trying to drag the believers back to rituals and regulations, which effectively deny the victory Christ has won. Those who judge others by rules about food, drink, festivals, fastings and rituals, were strangling the new life and freedom, which believers had begun to enjoy in Christ. Paul is not arguing for total carelessness about how we live and look after the bodies God has given us. However, he is strongly arguing that our acceptance, forgiveness and salvation do not come from observing rituals and regulations. It is Jesus who saves and Jesus alone!

Action points for us:

Sometimes, ministry is a struggle. Be encouraged! Paul found it the same. You are not alone. Remember to rejoice in what the Lord is doing.

What do you preach and teach regarding growth in Christ? Do not complicate matters. Keep things simple. Foundational principles need to be reinforced constantly.

Examine traditions, cultural habits and rituals. Are you in danger of suggesting that these are necessary for salvation?

Are our practices Biblical? We should reject legalism in any shape or form but always seek after righteousness and holiness in our own lives and in the lives of our fellow believers.

God bless you!

Rev Richard Brunton

COLOSSIANS - Chapter 3

Paul is very committed in this chapter to reminding us of our new position in Christ, the attitude we should have towards sin and the things we should do as Christians. The chapter concludes with helpful counsel for marriage, family life and our behaviour in the work place.

Risen with Christ

Just as Christ has been raised from the dead, so we have new life in Him. We have given our old, sinful lives to him and he has dealt with them through his cross. We do not just benefit through his death. Now the risen Christ offers new life. This new life means looking to a new source. We look to Christ and where he is now. He is exalted and lifted up in heaven; we do not look around us but upward to him. My new life is a life in the spirit. Yes I live in a body of flesh but my motivations and my future are in the realm of the Spirit and so, I can move on. Christ-centred life is victorious life!

Put to death

Paul exhorts us to put to death the old way of life and to treat it with contempt. If I keep watering and feeding a plant, it will live but if I offer it no sustenance, it will wither and die. Let us stop feeding lies, sinful habits and bad attitudes. Do not give them any encouragement to grow. Declare that these attitudes are no longer welcome in your life. They do not belong in you. You have a new life, which needs to be fed. Jesus is our model. The kind of life we should be living, is seen in him. Aim to live as Jesus lived, to talk as Jesus talked, to think as Jesus thought and to do as Jesus did.

Here are some practical steps that we can decide to take:

Be forgiving - be willing to let go of grudges, resentment and bitterness.

Be loving - put others before yourself. Love as Jesus loves, sacrificially and unselfishly.

Be peaceful - let God's peace be the referee in your heart. Rest in the Lord.

Be diligent - let God's word find a home in your life. Let it feed you and be part of you. For your part and with others in the family of God, keep basing what you do on scripture. Let your worship, teaching and correction of one another be sourced by the Bible and not by your own ideas.

Be faithful - let everything you do be endorsed by Jesus. Aim that he can put his signature to all you do in life.

Marriage, family life and the workplace:

Observe God's order in marriage. The husband is the head. Submission here is not slavish and lacking in self-respect. It is simply a recognition of God's way of doing things. Husbands must not be harsh, angry, insensitive bullies but gentle, loving, sacrificial leaders.

With children, fathers must encourage obedience by demonstrating Christ-like behaviour. Not by bossing, bullying and dictatorial behaviour.

Our attitude at work should be to do our best at all times, whether we are being observed or not. Sincere, honest workers, who are serving the Lord not men.

Action points for us:

Are there bad attitudes that I am feeding or ignoring?

Are their steps mentioned above that I need to take?

Am I contributing to problems in my home and/or work life by wrong attitudes?

Is my leadership style in line with the world or Colossians, Chapter 3?

God bless you at this Christmas time!

Rev Richard Brunton

Colossians - Chapter 4

Verse 1 is a comment upon our working relationships

Paul reminds us that we are accountable to God for how we handle others. God will require of us fairness and justice, because that is His character.

Verses 2-6 speak of prayer and wise living

Our prayer life should be steadfast and watchful always mingled with thanksgiving. Paul is conscious that it is easy to give up. It is easy for prayer to be ritualistic and routine and lacking life. The exhortation to have a fresh prayer life, invigorated by God's spirit, is always timely.

Paul is unafraid to ask for prayer for himself. He asks first for prayer for open doors to proclaim the word of God. He has experienced doors closing and knows how the devil can hinder. We take nothing for granted. An open door today for the gospel is no guarantee for tomorrow. We must work while we can. The door into some countries closes, we must redeem the time while we can.

Prayer is one of the key ways that we can battle Satan's efforts to shut down gospel opportunities. He knows that when the gospel has been preached throughout all the earth, then Jesus will come and it is all over for him. No wonder he fights so hard against the proclamation of Christ! The second issue for prayer, is the desire to express clearly, accurately and powerfully, the word of God. Even when the door is open to preach Christ, the devil would love to confuse and muddle peoples' understanding of truth. WE MUST PRAY!

Paul exhorts wise living and prudent speech, using our time very carefully. Those outside the body of Christ, need to see that we handle challenges well and that we listen to each person before giving an answer.

Verses 7-17 refer to team members

Paul, despite his very strong personality, was a team player and the remaining verses introduce us to a number of people that he works with. Some like Tychicus, a greatly loved, faithful and fellow servant, can be relied upon to give a good report of Paul's activities.

He values accurate reporting - no exaggeration but truthful accounts. Colosse is home area for Onesimus the converted slave. He is commended as a faithful brother. Mark the cousin of Barnabas had proved troublesome to Paul on the first missionary journey but Paul has not written him off for good. He urges that Mark is welcomed, perhaps because some knew of the past history between them.

At this moment Demas is accepted, sadly that will not always be true. Both he and Mark demonstrate we must not rely on reputations but on our current walk with God.

Aristarchus the fellow prisoner gets a mention, but let me highlight Epaphras and Archippus.

Epaphras is commended for struggling in prayer for the believers. Many Christians seem surprised that there is a struggle. So often the expectation is that God gives us an exemption certificate from difficult times. There are many, many, blessings in Christ and we do see the effect of the ravages of sin being reversed as God forgives, heals, delivers and restores us, from all the works of the enemy. However, in this world we will have tribulation. To live godly in Christ Jesus will result in strong opposition and to have an Epaphras struggling for you interceding; standing in the gap, urging you on is priceless.

Paul asks that Archippus be told to fulfil his ministry. Do not fail to do all God has planned for you. We may be tempted to give up or settle for less than God's perfect will, Let us resolve that, whatever the cost, we will follow Jesus in 2010 and always.

Verse 18 is a closing greeting and blessing

Action points for us:

Examine your prayer life. Are there some creative ways you could refresh and develop it this year.

Are there doors in your ministry that need to be opened by fervent prayer?

Reflect on those you work with in ministry? Do you value them like Paul? Are you building a team?

Are we lacking persistence in our ministry? Paul suffered not because of mistakes or carelessness but because he did not flinch from doing God's will.

May God help us all to have the same attitude in 2010.

Rev Richard Brunton