

Small Group Study

Endurance and Patience

From the sermon series, "Christ in You"



The first page of Colossians in a manuscript from the 12th century. It gives its title as **προς κολοσσαεις**, "to the Colossians".

SCRIPTURES

Have volunteers read the following scripture:

Colossians 1:1-14

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

2 To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. In what situations do you find yourself the most patient? The least patient?

2. Share a time when you demonstrated endurance, dealing with a particular person, situation, or trial.

3. Share two things you are thankful for from this past week.



9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR: The apostle Paul

THE CITY OF COLOSSE: The city was located about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Together with Hieropolis (4:13) and Laodicea (2:1; 4:13-16; Re 3:14-22), Colosse made up a tri-city area. Each city had its own distinction:

- Hierapolis, a place for health, pleasure, and relaxation
- Laodicea, known for its commercial trade and politics
- Colosse, known simply as a small town

Colosse was mostly a pagan town, with a strong intermingling of Jews (in 62 B.C., there were 11,000 Jewish freemen in the tri-city area). This may explain the nature of some of the problems that arose among the church in Colosse (problems with both pagan and Jewish origin).

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING: Colossians is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" (4:18; cf. Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). The general consensus is that these epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome (cf. Ac 28:16, 30-31). If such is the case, then Paul wrote Colossians around 61-63 A.D. from Rome. The indication is that the epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and the Ephesians were carried to their destination by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. 4:7-9; Phile 10-12; Ep 6:21-22).

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE: Paul had received a report of the situation at Colosse by way of Epaphras (1:7-8). This report was for the most part favorable (2:5). But the subject matter in the epistle strongly suggests that the church was facing a twofold danger:

- The danger of relapse into paganism with its gross immorality (cf. 1:21-23; 2:6; 3:5-11)
- The danger of accepting what has been come to known as "The Colossian heresy". This heresy was a syncretism (blending of religious influences) involving four elements of both pagan and Jewish origin:
 - Philosophies of men - which denied the all-sufficiency and preeminence of Christ (2:8)
 - Judaistic ceremonialism - which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (2:11,16-17)
 - Angel worship - which detracted from the uniqueness of Christ (2:18)
 - Asceticism - which called for harsh treatment of the body as the means to control its lusts (2:20-23)

To guard against these dangers, Paul writes to:

- Warn the Colossians against relapse (1:21-23)
- Warn them against the "solution" being urged upon them by those denying the all-sufficiency of Christ (2:8-23)
- Direct their attention to the "Beloved Son", the "All-Sufficient and Preeminent Savior" (1:13-18; 2:8-10)

QUESTIONS

1. Paul hasn't met these believers (2:1), yet he is attracted to them. Why? What types of people are you attracted to when you enter a new church group?
2. Why are faith and love the products of hope (v. 5)? Why must hope exist first?
3. When did you first come to know the hope offered through Christ in the gospel?
4. What does it mean to tell the whole truth about God's grace (v. 6)? Conversely, how might one betray grace? What truth about grace do you see in verses 12-14?
5. How does what Paul prays for (vv. 9-11) compare with what he thanks God for (vv. 12-14)?
6. How does your prayer for others compare with Paul's: (a) In intensity? (b) In thankfulness? (c) In clarity? (d) In faithfulness?
7. How is the fruit of hope, faith, and love growing in your life: Developing well? Suffering from drought? Destroyed by the last storm? Budding?
8. How will you help this "crop" develop?

God bless,

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