

Exploring Colossians

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PREFACE

Colossians is an encouraging letter written by the Apostle Paul for the Colossian Christians. Paul begins his letter by stating their new identity in Christ. Christ has saved us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to his kingdom. Paul also describes the preeminence of Christ and how our lives should be rooted and built up in him. We need to grow in godliness and spiritual wisdom that enable us to discern the teachings of this world, including those in our culture and traditions, which ones are of God and which ones are not. As Christians, we need to put off our old way of life and put on the new life we have in Christ. Whatever we do, we should do it in and for Christ. All our thoughts, words, and actions are to be Christ-centered. Whatever our role is, either as a husband, a wife, a child, an employee, or an employer, we are to carry out our responsibilities out of reverence for Christ. As a community of believers, we are to encourage and pray for one another. We are to impact this world together for Christ, our Savior.

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Introduction

The book of Colossians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in the city of Colosse. Colosse is in present day Turkey. Apostle means messenger of God. Paul was specifically chosen by Jesus Christ to be his messenger to the international world, bringing the good news of salvation and the message of hope that people can have in him. Paul wrote this letter during his imprisonment in Rome about 60 A.D. Paul encouraged the Colossian Christians to live faithfully to Christ. He also gave them practical instructions for Christian living.

Lesson 1 – Bearing Fruit in Every Good Work

Read Colossians 1:1-2

What is the significance of Paul’s explanation that his calling is by the will of God (v.1)?

Why are Christians called “saints” (v.2)?

All true followers of Jesus Christ are saints. A saint is someone who is set apart by God. 1 Peter 2:9 describes who true Christians (saints) are, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

In chapter 4, Paul also addressed this letter to children. Children of Christians are also *saints*. They are holy before God (see also 1 Corinthians 7:14).

Why are grace and peace important in our lives (v.2)?

Who is the source of spiritual grace and peace (v.2)?

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesian Christians, he wrote “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:2).

Why is it important to say that both God the Father and Jesus Christ are the sources of spiritual grace and peace?

Read Colossians 1:3-8

What did Paul thank God for when praying for the Colossian Christians (v.3-4)?

Besides thanking God for their faith in Christ and for their love for other Christians, Paul also thanked God for the hope that was laid up for them in heaven (v.5).

What hope is laid up for us in heaven?

Why is “the gospel” called “the word of the truth” (v.5)?

The gospel brings the message of “the grace of God in truth.” Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, it always bears fruit, and the fruit of the gospel always grows (v.6).

What does this mean?

The Colossian Christians learned about the gospel from Epaphras, who was more likely the founder of the Colossian church. He might have become a Christian through hearing the gospel from Paul. Epaphras gave a report to Paul about the faith and the love of these Colossian Christians (v.7-8).

Read Colossians 1:9-14

What did Paul ask of God for the Colossian Christians (v.9)?

How can we be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding?

Being filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding will empower us to walk in a manner worthy of Christ, our Lord (v.10). It means living a life of: (1) fully pleasing him, (2) bearing fruit in every good work, and (3) increasing in the knowledge of God.

Consuming the word of God as our daily spiritual food is necessary, in order for us to grow spiritually healthy and be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

What else did Paul ask of God for the Colossian Christians (v.11-12)?

Being strengthened by God’s power will empower us to: (1) endure struggles and persecutions we face, (2) be patient and have a joyful heart regardless of our circumstances, and (3) always give thanks to God, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

What has God done for us (v.13-14)?

Christ has come from heaven to be a man so that he could redeem us, by sacrificing himself to die on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. By believing in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we receive the forgiveness of our sins from God. Christ has set us free from the power and domain of darkness and transferred us to his kingdom of light.

Memorize Colossians 1:13-14

Lesson 2 – The Preeminence of Christ

Read Colossians 1:1-14 for review

Read Colossians 1:15-20

What does verse 15 say about Christ?

God is invisible to us, but Christ has made God visible to us. Christ is God who became a man. This is the meaning of the phrase “he is the image of the invisible God.” Christ is also “the firstborn of all creation.” This does not mean that Christ was the first creation as it is explained in the next few verses. In ancient culture, the firstborn means the heir of a family estate. This means that Christ is the heir of all creation.

What does verse 16 say about Christ?

God the Father has created all things through Christ. Christ is the agent and the purpose of creation. All creation is for him. He is the heir of all creation.

What does verse 17 say about Christ?

Christ exists eternally with God the Father, before they created all things. Christ also holds together and sustains the universe and all creation.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4).

What does verse 18 say about Christ?

Spiritually speaking, the church is all Christians in the world as one unit, which is the body of Christ. Christ is the head and we are together his body.

Christ is “the firstborn from the dead” which means he is the first human being to experience bodily resurrection, raising from the dead, and living eternally with a human body. However, his new human body is not the same as his previous human body. His new human body is a holy, heavenly, and imperishable body, without any corruption. His new body is the first and the model of our future bodily resurrection.

What does verse 19 say about Christ?

Jesus Christ is God who became a man. He is completely God and completely man. He is God the Son, the same in substance and equal in power and glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

What was the purpose of Jesus coming to earth to be a man (v.20)?

Jesus took the punishment of our sin and died on the cross as our substitute. He sacrificed himself to bear the wrath and justice of God against our sin, so that by believing in him, we can be forgiven by God. He is our *mediator*, making peace between God the Father and us.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Read Colossians 1:21-23

What was our condition and what did we do when we were unbelievers (v.21)?

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:1-5).

How did Jesus reconcile us with God (v.22)?

What is the purpose of Jesus reconciling us with God (v.22)?

When Christ returns, he will complete his salvation work for us by giving and glorifying us with a new body and presenting us in complete holiness and beauty without any corruption.

Since Christ has saved us from sin and darkness, what should we do as Christians—Christ’s people (v.23)?

Memorize Colossians 1:19-20

Lesson 3 – Being Knit Together in Love

Read Colossians 1:15-23 for review

Read Colossians 1:24-29

While engaging in the gospel ministry, Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for the growth of the church, the body of Christ.

Have you ever suffered sacrificially for the benefit of other Christians?

Jesus' ministry was marked with suffering. All Christians will suffer for their faith in Jesus. Jesus says to all his followers, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). We can experience persecution verbally, emotionally, physically, or a combination of these. Paul said to the Roman Christians "... we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

Because of our covenant union with Jesus, our persecution is his persecution as well. Paul was once persecuting Christians. When Jesus appeared from heaven to Paul, Jesus said to him, "Why are you persecuting me?"

The spiritual church, which is a collective group of all Christians from all nations, is the body of Christ. The devil will continue to persecute Christ by persecuting us, his church. It is in this sense we fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. As his spiritual body, we will complete his afflictions (v.24).

According to what did Paul become a minister of the word of God (v.25)?

What does "to make the word of God fully known" mean (v.25)?

The word of God in the Old Testament does not explain clearly about the plan of God to bring non-Jewish people to saving faith in Christ. This was still a mystery for the Jewish people for ages and generations (v.26).

To whom has God now revealed this mystery (v.26)?

What has God made known to us about this mystery (v.27)?

"This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).

Jesus Christ has come to save the Jews and the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) from sin and darkness. He has come to save people from all nations. He has brought us together to be his body, the church.

What does “mature in Christ” mean (v.28)?

Did Paul work hard for the sake of Christ’s people? Did he work with his own strength alone (v.29)?

Christ’s power was at work in Paul’s life. Likewise, Christ’s power is presence with us when we do his ministry. Christ has given privileges for us to be his agents to share his gospel, the good news of salvation in him. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Read Colossians 2:1-5

The city of Laodicea was near the city of Colosse. False teachings might have been spread in the church of Laodicea and in the church of Colosse. Paul cared so much for the well-being of the Christians in both churches. He struggled to do all he could to warn, encourage, and equip them in the word of God.

What should Christians be and do (v.2)?

How can we encourage one another?

What does “being knit together in love” mean and what does it look like in our daily lives?

Together, we can reach “all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of Christ.” A Christian will not be able to reach a deep understanding and knowledge of Christ on his or her own. This can only be accomplished in a covenant community of believers.

What does “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” mean (v.2-3)?

Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). To know Jesus and to have a personal and close relationship with him is to have access to all divine wisdom and knowledge. With the wisdom and knowledge of Christ, we will see the world with a different perspective. We will see all things through *the lenses of God*.

What should we be careful of (v.4)?

False teachings always have plausible arguments. There are false teachings in every area of our lives. They are contrary to the truth of Christ. We need to support one another, stay united, be in good order, and stay firm in our faith in Christ (v.5).

Memorize Colossians 2:2-3

Lesson 4 – Being Rooted and Built Up in Christ

Read Colossians 1:24—2:5 for review

Read Colossians 2:6-8

Christians are those who have believed and received Jesus Christ into their hearts as their Lord and Savior, trusting and surrendering their lives to him.

What should we do as Christians and what does it look like in our daily lives (v.6)?

What else should we do (v.7)?

The roots of a tree absorb nutrition for the tree to grow. The roots also anchor the tree to the ground.

Why should our lives be “rooted in Christ?”

When we build a building, we need to have a strong foundation, so that the building will not collapse.

Why should our lives be *built up in Christ* and no other foundations?

How can our faith be established strong?

What does it mean to be “abounding in thanksgiving?” Should we thank God for the bad things we experience in life, as well as the good things we have? Why?

What should we protect ourselves from (v.8)?

We should be careful of falling captive to false teachings. False teachings are “not according to Christ.” Jesus says, “I am the truth” (John 14:6). False teachings are contrary to the truth of God in the Bible. False teachings are in every area of our lives, including in our traditions, cultures, and academic fields. False teachings are the work of the devil and his demons—the evil spirits. They lead people away from God and his truth. They mix truths and lies and deceive people. As Christians, we need to be very careful of false teachings. Christ should be our only foundation for our beliefs and source of our spiritual food.

What are some of the false teachings that you have learned in your family tradition or culture?

What are some of the false teachings that you have learned in the society or school?

Read Colossians 2:9-15

What does “in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” mean (v.9)?

When we believe in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we are united with him in a covenant relationship. Because of our union with Christ, what he has, we have in him as well. We “have been filled in him” (v.10).

What else does it say about Christ and what does it mean (v.10)?

Circumcision was a religious ritual that God commanded the people of Israel to do as a sign of the covenant they had with God. The cutting off the skin reminded them that they had cut off their sinful life and dedicate themselves to live for God. In Christ, we have spiritual circumcision, which is much better than physical circumcision. While the physical circumcision was applied to males only, spiritual circumcision in Christ is applied to male and female. Spiritual circumcision is also not done by hands, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual circumcision in Christ symbolizes that we have “put off the body of flesh”—our old way of sinful life—and dedicate our new lives in Christ to him alone (v.11).

Jesus instituted baptism as the new sign of the covenant between God and his people—those who would put their faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the outward sign of the inward spiritual circumcision that we have in Christ. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ, in which, along with all our sins, we have been crucified in his crucifixion, buried in his burial, and receive a new life in his resurrection (v.12).

What was our condition before we were in Christ? What has God done for us by his grace (v.13)?

How did God forgive our sins (v.14)?

Jesus died on the cross to bear the punishment of our sins. When we believe in him and are united with him, his death becomes our death, as if we were the ones who were crucified. This is how God cancel the record of our debts (sins) against him, along with its legal demands—our death penalty. Being in union with Christ means his death, life, and righteousness become our death, life, and righteousness. God justifies—declares righteous—those who are united with Christ. Before we are united with Christ, our legal status before God is guilty and condemned. In Christ, our legal status is righteous and justified. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

What else has God done for us in Christ (v.15)?

The rulers and authorities refer to the evil spirits—the devil and his demons. They lose their power to control us when Christ saves us. In union with Christ, we do not live under the power of darkness anymore, but under Christ in his righteousness and holiness (see also 1:13-14).

Memorize Colossians 2:6-7

Lesson 5 – Be Careful of False Teachings

Read Colossians 2:6-15 for review

Read Colossians 2:16-19

On the one hand, Christians come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. We have freedom to celebrate our cultural festivals, as long as we do everything in honor of God and for his glory. Our freedom is in Christ, who has set us free from sin and its slavery. On the other hand, observing these practices and thinking that we can earn a credit or a blessing from God is a false understanding. Therefore, we should not fall into this deception.

What should we prevent people from doing to us? Why (v.16)?

God gave religious laws to the Jews in the Old Testament time. All those religious laws point to Jesus Christ. Those laws “are a shadow of the things to come.” Christ is the substance or the reality of the shadow. He came to fulfill the laws (v.17).

What are other forms of false teachings that false teachers may pressure Christians to do (v.18)?

Asceticism is a belief that by practicing extreme self-denial and abstinence, people can gain a high spiritual and moral state. In essence, asceticism teaches that salvation is by works, instead of grace. Many Jewish religious leaders fell into this false idea. We should not let people disqualify or consider us not good enough for not doing certain things which they think we should do, but are not aligned with the word of God. Our qualification is in our union with Christ. In Christ, we are holy and perfect.

Some Jews also fell into the false idea of worshipping angels, thinking that angels could help them to be received by God. In the Ten Commandments, God has warned his people not to worship anything but him alone.

Visions are also common false ideas. Some people claim to receive a direct vision from God revealing certain things. When we carefully analyze and compare those visions with the truth of the Bible, we find the contradictions. We should be careful when we hear people claim to receive a vision or a revelation from God concerning a new teaching. Be careful of anything *new*. However, there are true visions from God for certain people, in which Christ is revealing himself and showing them that he is the true God and Savior, whom they need to follow.

What is one truth we know about false teachers’ relationship with Christ (v.19)?

False teachers do not belong to the body of Christ—the church. They are not in union with Christ. Their mission is to pull us away from Christ. We should be very careful of them.

Read Colossians 2:20-23

What does it mean to die with Christ (v.20)?

When Jesus died on the cross to save us, he disarmed the power of the evil spirits over us (see 1:13 and 2:15). The evil spirits work behind all the false teachings in this world, including all beliefs and philosophies contrary to the truth of God in the Bible. The evil spirits use false teachings to corrupt people. If Christ has freed us from their control, it is foolish if we still want to follow their teachings.

In the Old Testament, the Jews had religious ceremonial laws forbidding them to touch, handle, or eat certain things that would make them unclean for religious rituals. The Jewish religious leaders constantly added more and more religious regulations for what the Jewish people could and could not do. The pagan beliefs among the Colossians, might have similar regulations. All these are man-made regulations—“according to human precepts and teachings” (v.21-22).

Why do man-made regulations have “an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism” (v.23)?

What does it mean by “indulgence of the flesh” (v.23)?

What values do man-made regulations have in stopping the indulgence of the flesh?

Why?

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Christ has freed us from the slavery of sin. Therefore, we should not let ourselves be deceived by man-made false teachings. All false teachings in the world are the works of evil spirits attempting to corrupt and deceive people from understanding the truth of God and his will for our lives. False teachings may appear to be wise, but in fact they are destructive for us. We should let the word of God saturate and transform our minds. We should use the word of God as our spiritual lenses, through which we see all things in this sinful world.

Memorize Colossians 2:8

Lesson 6 – Putting on the New Self

Read Colossians 2:16-23 for review

Read Colossians 3:1-11

What does “we have been raised with Christ” mean (v.1)?

In our union with Christ, we are united with him in his crucifixion and death on the cross, in his burial, in his resurrection, in his ascension, and in his glorification. All Christ has done for us is credited to us. All he has, we have it all in him.

Since we have been united with Christ, what should we do (v.1)?

How do we do that (v.2)?

What are the “things that are above and of God” and what are the “things that are on earth?”

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8).

What does “we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in God” mean (v.3)?

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because of our union with Christ, we have died with him along with all our sins. We have a new life in Christ now. Our lives with Christ and our union with him will go on for eternity. There is an eternal significance and there are many things we have not yet experienced.

What will happen to us when Christ returns (v.4)?

What does it mean?

“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive,

who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

What should we do (v.5)?

Each of us was born with a sinful nature. Our sinful nature always tempts us to do earthly and sinful behaviors, as opposed to heavenly and holy behaviors.

What are the examples of earthly and sinful behaviors (v.5)?

Spiritual idolatry in essence is anything we consider more important than God. The lust of the flesh and the love of the world are the two major categories of spiritual idolatry. The wrath and judgment of God will certainly fall upon all sinful idolaters. All Christians once lived in sinful idolatry, condemned to death. But in Christ, we have been forgiven and are no longer condemned (v.6-7).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

What should we put away (v.8)?

What else should we put away (v.9)?

What should we do instead (v.10)?

Our new life in Christ is sanctified daily by the Holy Spirit. We are renewed after the image of God, our Creator, and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. God uses his word to sanctify us. Jesus prays to God to sanctify his people, “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17). The word of God is the means for us to know God and be sanctified.

What is the difference between *knowing God* and *knowing about God*?

The Greeks considered those who did not speak Greek as uncivilized people or barbarian (v.11). Scythians were a group of people considered to be the most barbarous of the barbarians.

What does “Christ is all, and in all” mean (v.11)?

We are all members of the body of Christ. He is the head. We are all united with and to him. He is all things to us and is in all of us. “And because of him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Memorize Colossians 3:2

Lesson 7 – Put on Love above All Else

Read Colossians 3:1-11 for review

Read Colossians 3:12-17

Why are Christians described as “God’s chosen ones, holy, and beloved” (v.12)?

We should *put on* or clothe ourselves with the characteristics of Christ. The Holy Spirit is working inside of us to produce these Christ-like characteristics in us. The more we obey him, the more spiritually mature and Christ-like we become.

What should we put on (v.12)?

What else should we put on (v.13)?

What does “bearing with one another” look like in our lives?

Why should we forgive one another?

Those who have experienced much forgiveness can forgive others much as well. Those who do not have a heart-felt experience of much forgiveness will find it difficult to forgive others much. God has forgiven all our sins when we put our faith in Christ, trusting and surrendering our lives to him. God has enabled us to forgive others much as well.

What else should we put on above all else (v.14)?

Loving Christ our Savior is the foundation of loving others. We love others because it pleases Christ and glorifies him. Our love for Christ empowers us to love others much. In the life of the church, as a covenant community of believers, we need to pursue harmony and be forgiving and loving to one another. People will know that we are Christians because of our love for one another. Our love for one another should attract them to Christ.

Because of self-centeredness that is still in us, there will be difficult times when we are dealing with one another. God wants us to keep loving and forgiving one another and to pursue harmony. Christ will grant us his peace to rule in our hearts when we have anxiety ruling in our hearts. We need to remember to always be thankful to him for all things in our lives (v.15).

What does “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” mean and how should we do that (v.16)?

What does “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” mean (v.17)?

Read Colossians 3:18-21

What is God’s command for Christian wives? Why (v.18)?

When our actions are *fitting in the Lord*, it means our actions are done in honor of the Lord as spiritual worship to him. Everything we do should be done in honor of the Lord and for his glory.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” (Ephesians 5:22-24).

What is God’s command for Christian husbands (v.19)?

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

Christian husbands are to follow the example of Christ—to love (*agape*) their wives just as Christ loved (*agape*) the church and sacrifice himself for her. *Agape* is a Greek word which means unconditional and sacrificial love.

What is God’s command for children of Christians (v.20)?

Obedience to parents is an act of spiritual worship to the Lord. Children should obey their parents out of their love for the Lord.

What is God’s command for fathers (v.21)?

Parents are sinners and full of weaknesses. They can lose self-control when disciplining their children. They can misuse their authority and fall into sinful pride. Parents are not to simply force their children to be what they want them to be. Parents are to bring them up according to God’s Word. Children are not the objects of exercising authority and punishment. Parents must ask God for wisdom, humility, and guidance in parenting their children. Biblical parenting is Christ-centered and child-oriented. Parents must be careful not to fall to their own self-centeredness and provoke their children to anger. Parents need to know how to instruct, discipline, and punish wisely. Parents are to bring their children up with much love, humility, wisdom, and reverence for Christ.

Memorize Colossians 3:17

Lesson 8 – Do Everything in and for Christ

Read Colossians 3:12-21 for review

Read Colossians 3:22—4:1

Paul did not support nor condemn slavery in this passage. He simply tells Christians how they should live their lives in the society with a Christ-centered mindset. He gives practical help for slaves as Christian workers in particular, but the principles are applied to all Christian employees in general.

What is God’s command for Christian employees and how to do that (v.22)?

Who is our ultimate employer (v.23-24)?

What does “you will receive the inheritance as your reward” mean (v.24)?

As employees, whatever we do at work, we do ultimately for the Lord—to honor him and give him glory. We obey our bosses with a heart of sincerity and fearing the Lord. Fearing the Lord means not wanting to offend him, who loves us so much. It means acting out of reverence for him. We try to please Christ by being good employees for our bosses. Our outward acts of service must come from our inward heart of reverence for Christ.

Because Christ is our ultimate Boss, this brings significant implications.

1. Whatever our job position is, we have dignity in him. Whether we work as managers or janitors, we have dignity in Christ. Christ himself worked as a servant.
2. We always have comfort in Christ, even if we have bad bosses. Because everything we do at work is ultimately for Christ, nothing will be in vain (see also 1 Corinthians 15:58).
3. We must try to be good and diligent employees. Our bosses cannot watch us all the time, but Christ does. Because we ultimately work for Christ, we want to do our best for him, who loves us and has sacrificed himself for us.

With a Christ-centered mindset, Christians can be very productive employees. We are empowered to work well for our employers with a heart that has been changed by Christ.

How does Christ judge people (v.25)?

What is God’s command for Christian employers (4:1)?

Christian employers also need to treat their employees with a heart of fearing Christ. They need to treat their employees justly and fairly, and know how to use their authority properly out of reverence for Christ. Christian employers also have a Boss—Christ—who is also their employees’ Boss. Christ shows no partiality. He treats all people equally, regardless of their job positions or social status.

Read Colossians 4:2-6

What should we do as Christians? Why (v.2)?

There are three things regarding how we should pray:

1. Steadfastly, meaning pray continuously and persistently.
2. Watchfully, meaning concentrate, focus, and do not get distracted when praying.
3. Thankfully, meaning giving thanks to God for all things in our lives.

Daily prayer and Bible reading are the means of our communication and development of a personal and close relationship with Christ. We are nourished by Christ through prayer and consuming his word.

What is one of the things we should we pray for (v.3)?

What else should we do? Why (v.5)?

What else should we do? Why (v.6)?

Read Colossians 4:7-18

What can we learn from Tychicus (v.7-8)?

What can we learn from Onesimus (v.9)?

What can we learn from Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus (v.10-11)?

What can we learn from Epaphras (v.12-13)?

The Colossian Christians learned about the gospel from Epaphras, who was most likely the founder of the Colossian church. He might have become a Christian through hearing the gospel from Paul. Epaphras gave a report to Paul about the faith and the love of the Colossian Christians (1:7-8).

Luke was one of Paul's missionary team members (v.14). Luke wrote the book of Luke and Acts.

Why did Paul ask to circulate his letters to other churches in other cities (v.16)?

Memorize Colossians 4:2

Resources

Acts to Revelation. Matthew Henry's Commentary, vol. 6. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 2000.

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The Westminster Standards. Suwanee, GA: Great Commission Publications, 2011.