

Lesson 2 Commentary

The People of Christ

Colossians 1:1-14

In his introduction to the Colossian believers, Paul first identified himself. He knew exactly who and whose he was: an apostle, a messenger for Jesus. Then he identified his audience: “saints . . . in Christ.” It seems he wanted them to know who and whose they were too. They were people who had placed their faith in Jesus and had understood God’s grace. Paul wanted them to live out their identity as citizens of the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.

Paul’s Greeting

Paul said he had been chosen “by the will of God.” He wanted his readers to know that they were reading God’s words. There were many false teachers and deceptive teachings in Colossae at this time. But the Colossians could know that Paul’s words were true because they were given to Paul by God and they lined up with God’s truth.

Paul was sending a man named Epaphras to bring his letter to the Christians at Colossae. He could not go himself because he was imprisoned. Epaphras had proved that he was committed to God and cared about the needs of God’s people. He had visited Paul while he was a prisoner and told him about what was going on in the Colossian church. Epaphras had reported several positive things about the Colossians, and Paul referred to these things as he wrote.

Paul was writing to people he cared about, and his concern for them is evident in the letter he wrote. Soon, he would be giving them correction and warning. But he was careful to begin by pointing out the ways they were already pleasing God. He encouraged and affirmed them because he had heard good things about them. They had shown that their commitment to Jesus was genuine. Their faith and love were making a difference in the world around them, and Paul thanked God for this.

Although the Colossian believers seemed to be doing well spiritually, Paul knew God wanted even more for them. Paul had a close relationship with God and constantly depended on Him as he fulfilled his ministry. So he prayed a bold prayer for his friends in Colossae, trusting that God would help them in the same way. God is the source of all we need. When we know His will, we are able to act with wisdom and understanding.



Think about Paul’s prayer for his friends. Paul had already heard positive news about the Colossian believers. But he didn’t hesitate to ask God to keep helping and equipping them even more. God cares about our spiritual well-being. He offers us wisdom, knowledge, and understanding to know Him more. He gives us hope and strength to endure patiently and joyfully. He welcomes us to ask Him for these things when we need them. And we can pray for Him to give these gifts to people we love.

Lives That Bring God Joy

It seems that Epaphras had heard Paul’s gospel message in Ephesus and then returned home to share it with his fellow Colossians. After having heard the gospel from Epaphras, the Colossians “understood the grace of God in truth.” The gospel is “the word of the truth,” the good news about Jesus Christ—who is the Truth (see John 14:6). God’s plan for spreading the gospel is to entrust the gospel to faithful pastors and other believers who will be able to teach others (see 2 Timothy 2:2). In this way, the gospel literally can spread across the whole world.

Paul said that he always thanked God for the hope the Colossians had in heaven. These Christians knew that heaven was their true home. Because of this, they lived by different values. They could forgive instead of retaliating, knowing that God would make everything right (see Romans 12:19). They could give and serve sacrificially, knowing that God saw and would reward them (see Galatians 6:9; Colossians 3:23-24). They could endure hardships knowing that God was with them and would work things out eventually (see Romans 8:28).

Paul was thankful for the Colossians’ faith, but he knew that their understanding was being confused by false “knowledge.” So he prayed first of all that they would have true knowledge—the knowledge of God’s will. And

not just that they would know God’s will in their minds, but that they would live it out in their lives. He prayed that knowing God’s will would motivate them to walk closely with Jesus and make wise choices.

Living this way is walking worthy of the Lord. It leads us to make real and lasting changes. It produces God’s good fruit in our lives, which is part of our purpose. God created us with this in mind—before we were even born, He planned good works for us to do (see Ephesians 2:10).

And when we are accomplishing God’s will and purpose, we are “fully pleasing” to Him. In Greece during Paul’s time, this phrase described a servant who anticipated his master’s desires. Even before his master asked, he was already doing things his master wanted. The servant could do this because he knew his master very well from living with him, listening to him, and watching him. We can grow in knowing how to please God the same way—by building our relationship with Him and learning about who He is. He transforms us and renews our minds so we can discern His good and perfect will (see Romans 12:2).



Think about walking in a worthy way. One aspect of the Christian life is to be ambassadors for Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:18). We are citizens of God’s heavenly kingdom. We represent Jesus to people in the world around us, and our words and actions matter. What we say and do affects others’ impression of Jesus, for good or bad. That’s why Paul urged the Colossians to behave in a way that made them good ambassadors of Jesus.

Another way to bring God joy is by going through difficulties in His strength. Endurance is the ability to continue without quitting. Patience, a trait that usually is tested by difficult people or circumstances, is the ability to go on with grace and peace when you cannot change a situation. In our own strength, it is impossible to face hardships with joy. But if we rely on God’s power, He will help us.

Two Kingdoms

Paul gave the Colossians good news—because of Jesus’s sacrifice, they were forgiven and free. They did not have to live in the dark and futile ways of Satan’s kingdom.

Paul also reminded the Colossians that God is a rescuer, saving us from sin and from the death it brings. Satan wants to keep us blind to truth, enslaved in sin, and trapped in hopelessness. He does everything he can to prevent us from living in the freedom God offers. But God transfers us from Satan’s kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light. When we trust Jesus for redemption, our sins are forgiven and our souls are saved.

And God doesn’t simply stop with saving us from sin. He continues to walk alongside us after we are saved. He does not ask us to follow Him without showing us how. In an ongoing learning process, He helps us learn His ways and live in His light day by day.

God is light—there is no darkness in Him at all (see 1 John 1:5). When we are growing in our relationship with Him, our lives reflect this light. We cannot live in both kingdoms at once. If we say we are in God’s kingdom of light, but keep choosing to live in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves and everyone around us (see 1 John 1:6). God is willing and eager to grow His good fruit in us, but He doesn’t force us to obey. Every day, we have the choice to walk and live in His light. As we do this, Jesus’s blood cleanses us from sin. Our harmony with other believers grows. And God gives us full and abundant life (see John 10:10).



Personalize the TRUTH!

Think about something hard that’s happening in your life right now. Would you like for God to strengthen you with His power so that you can not only endure and be patient, but even experience joy? He wants to! So tell Him about the situation. Invite a spiritually mature friend to pray for you about it. Think of how pleased God is with you when you depend on Him for His power, patience, and joy. Watch to see how He answers your prayer and helps you live this situation in a “manner worthy of the Lord.”