

Colossians Bible Study

1:3-14

Questions will be posed and space will be allowed for a written response. Make every effort to answer the questions before looking below for the answer. **The answers will be in bold print.**

1. In verses 3-8, for what specific blessings does Paul thank God concerning the Colossians?
2. In verse 4, Paul says that he and Timothy “have heard” of the faith and love of the Colossians. What do these words, as well as verses 7-9 and 2:1, tell you concerning Paul’s relationship with the Colossian Christians?
3. Faith and love spring from hope (v. 5). Paul reminds the Colossians that the faith, hope, and love they have come from “the word of truth, the gospel.” The Gospel is the truth. It is all that is needed for salvation. Paul fears that the Colossians will lose their hope of heaven by trusting in false teachings instead of in the true Gospel. Read Titus 1-2. Describe the hope believers in Christ have.
4. The true Gospel is powerful. It “is bearing fruit and growing” (v. 6). What evidence of the Gospel’s power does Paul present to the Colossians?
5. What evidence of the Gospel’s power have you noticed lately in your own life, in the lives of other Christians in your congregation, and in the lives of Christians throughout the world?
6. The beautiful prayer in verses 9-14 is Paul’s prayer for the Christians of Colosse. What purpose do you think Paul had in telling the Colossians that they were constantly in his prayers?
7. How does knowing that you are included in the prayers of other Christians benefit you?
8. Whom do you know who could be benefited by your prayers? Think of someone you are not already praying for.
9. In verse 9-12, for what specific needs of the Colossians does Paul pray?
10. The opponents of the Gospel in Colosse boasted a great deal about their human knowledge. Great reliance on human knowledge was a characteristic of false teachings known as Gnosticism. Paul refutes these false teachings by asking God to fill the Colossians with “the knowledge of [God’s] will” (v. 9). Of what greater benefit is this true spiritual wisdom?

1 Corinthians 1:17-25

2 Timothy 3:15-17

11. The verbs in verses 10-11 (e.g., bearing, growing, being strengthened) indicate the ongoing growth process God works in the lives of Christians as they live on this earth. God's power and strength are dynamic. The tense of these verbs shows that we need God's active strength and power continually because many of the problems and challenges we face in this life are ongoing. Think about a problem or challenge in your own life that has plagued you for some time. In what ways has God's power strengthened you so that you have "great endurance and patience" (v. 11) to stand up under this challenge?
12. We can patiently endure the trials of this world and give thanks to God because He has "qualified [us] to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light" (v. 12). We know that no matter what happens to us in this world, Christ has rescued and redeemed us from the dark and evil power of sin and Satan.

"Light (v. 12) is the opposite of "darkness" (v. 13). What does Jesus, God's light, do for us?

Acts 26:18

2 Corinthians 4:6

1 John 2:9-10

John 1:4

13. In verses 13-14, we see ourselves, once hostages to sin, Satan, and darkness, now rescued by Jesus. Through Jesus' blood, the giving of His life for us, we are redeemed (brought back for God) and forgiven.

The false teachers at work in Colosse taught that all physical matter was evil. They believed that God could not possibly take a physical form and spill His blood to save us. Paul tells of Jesus' sacrifice in verse 13-14 to refute these false teachers. Why was Paul's statement concerning the redemptive work of Christ such an important reminder for the Colossians (and for us)?

Paul cares very much for these new Christians, and he knows that God cares for them even more. Unfortunately, false teachings that lead people to look to themselves instead of looking to God compete for the Colossians' attention. We have all been tempted to look to other things instead of Jesus for our salvation. God is the only one who can overcome this evil. In the background, Paul is praying fervently for them. In the foreground, Paul is boldly proclaiming the truth of salvation in Jesus. • Thank You, O God, for Your patience and persistence to save us through Your beloved Son. Amen. (TLSB)

Some Answers to the above Questions:

1. Paul thanks God for the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus (v. 4); for their love "for all the saints" (v. 4); for the faith and love God has given them that springs from the hope as found in the truth of the Gospel (v. 5); for their God-given understanding of the Gospel (v. 6); and for their "love in the Spirit" (v. 8).

2. Paul had not met the Colossians in person. He and Timothy learned about their faith from Epaphras, a native of Colosse and a faithful minister of Christ. Epaphras told Paul about the Colossians' faith and also about the heresies that threatened their faith. Also Paul loved and ministered to the Colossians even though he hadn't met them personally.

3. The hope Christians have is not wishful thinking. It is the assurance we have from God that glory in heaven awaits us. Because we know we have eternal life, this hope interacts with the faith and love God gives us and all three grow by the Holy Spirit.

4. Paul says that "all over the world" the Gospel is bearing fruit and growing. The same change the Gospel brought about in the hearts and lives of the Colossians was happening all over the world. From just apostles and several hundred believers in Jesus at the time of His ascension, historians estimate that by the time apostle John died, the number of Christians in the world had grown to half a million.

5. Answers will vary. Any examples of people growing in knowledge of the Lord through worship and Bible study, as well as examples of people showing and sharing Christ's love to resolve differences and to teach others about Jesus, are evidence of the Gospel's power.

6. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that he was concerned about their physical welfare and especially about their spiritual welfare. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that he and Timothy cared about them and that he and Timothy were asking God to provide for them in many ways. Knowing Paul's heartfelt concern for them, the Colossians would open their hearts and minds to all Paul had to say to them.

Having spoken of their status as Christians in the previous section, the apostle continues by noting the need (for which he prays) for his readers to grow in faith and godly living. Such growth, here expressed especially by the concepts of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (matters with which the heretics may have been enticing the Colossians), comes from the same source as their initial coming to the Christian faith: through the proclamation of what God has done in the person and work of Christ for their salvation (1:12-14). (CC p. 35)

7. Knowing others are keeping you in their prayers is a reminder that they are concerned about you. It lets you know that others are interested in and care about your needs and wants. It also shows you that others love you so much that they want God to care for you. Knowing that others are praying for you can encourage you to keep going and to keep praying to God yourself.

8. Group members need not share their answers. However, encourage participants to spend time praying for the individual(s) on their list.

9. Paul prays that God would fill the Colossians with the knowledge of His will through spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9). Paul prays that God would help the Colossians live lives worthy of the Lord so that they would please Him in every way, bearing fruit, and growing in knowledge (v. 10). Paul prays God would strengthen the Colossians with His power so that they would have endurance and patience. Paul also asks that the Colossians would joyfully give thanks to God for their inheritance of heaven as God's sons, which God has given them in Christ Jesus (v. 12).

10. God's wisdom is wiser than anything human beings know. In fact, God has "made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Earthly wisdom cannot save our souls. But God's Word, His wisdom, is "able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). God's wisdom also equips us to serve Him and others.

11. Answers will vary. Encourage individuals to share ways God has strengthened them by specific references in Holy Scripture and through the Christ-like words and actions of other Christians.

12. Jesus, God's light, turns us from Satan's darkness to God Himself so that we may receive forgiveness of sins and be sanctified (made holy) by faith (Acts 26:18). Jesus, God's light, makes us know God in His truth and glory in the face of Christ Himself (2 Corinthians 4:6). Jesus makes it possible for us to love others (1 John 2:9-10). In Jesus we have life because Jesus is the Light of men (John 1:4). Jesus is our only hope for salvation.

13. Christ's death on the cross is the heart of our faith. Only Christ Jesus, as perfect, sinless man, could have paid the price we owed God because of our sins. Without Jesus' death, we still would be bound like hostages to sin and Satan because we can't ever pay the ransom we owe to God for our sins. Christ's death on the cross rescued us and redeemed us once and for all. The false teachers in Colosse thought God's plan of salvation was too simple. They demanded that there be more to salvation than faith in Christ's redemption alone. The Colossians needed to rely fully on Christ and on His actions as the one true Savior in order to

defend themselves against the attacks of the errorists. We need to also rely fully on Christ so that we may combat the attacks of Satan that attempt to undermine our salvation.