

Colossians Ch 1 Vs 1-2

Grace to You

Written in about 62-63 A.D. Colossians is 1 of the 4 prison epistles of Paul along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. and Though Paul had never personally been to Colosse it's believed that the church birthed out of the work that he was doing while in Ephesus. Paul had spent 3yrs in Ephesus and Colosse is about 75-100 away from there and so it's believed that while he was ministering there, this man by the name of Epaphras (who as we'll see came to Paul regarding the situation at Colosse for instruction) was converted under his ministry and then took the gospel back with him to this little city of Colosse.

Now that there's a few issues, Epaphras travels over 1,000 miles to visit Paul in Rome to seek instruction as to how to deal with these issues. and So when we read in vs 7 of his faithfulness to the body of Christ there in Colosse you can begin to understand what Paul's referring to. He didn't have a jet to hop in, or a car to drive; he took the sole train (by foot) nearly 1300 miles because of his love for, and dedication to the body of Christ there where God had called him. and The issues that he was up against were unfortunately semi-common in the 1st century church, he was facing a heretical intellectual philosophy based in mysticism known as Gnosticism, but in one respect it kind of took a new twist because they'd sought to adapt this Gnostic philosophy to the legalism of the Judaizers.

Now we've spoken about Gnosticism before and so I won't spend a lot of time on it today but to keep it fairly simple, again Gnosticism was sort of a mystical philosophy that catered to the intellect. The word Gnostic comes from the Greek word "Gnosis" or "Gnosko" (miss-spelled) which simply means, "to know" so they were "in the know" now you put a little letter "a" in front of that word and you get "agnostic" which means you *don't* know, so when someone claims to be agnostic, they're simply saying they're ignorant, or clueless, they don't know.

Many times they'll make that statement like it means they're real intelligent, "I'm agnostic" but what they're saying is, "I'm a person who doesn't know." But their philosophy stemmed from the question "Why is there evil in this world if creation was made by a Holy God?" and They came to the false conclusion that matter was evil, and in drawing that conclusion, saying that matter is evil, they denied the humanity of Christ, because flesh is matter so He couldn't have come in the flesh.

Then they assumed that a Holy God couldn't come into contact with evil matter therefore there had to be a series of "emanations" from God to His creation. Jesus being one of the higher emanations, they taught that Jesus was a spirit and when He walked He didn't leave footprints, they believed that angels mediated between God and man and so they would practice the worship of angels. and They believed in this powerful spirit world, which would use material things to attack mankind, just all kinds of heretical doctrines that stemmed from the wisdom of man, these deep thoughts that sounded so *spiritual* but were completely *unscriptural*.

Now you add to these eastern type speculations a form a Jewish legalism requiring along with the heretical philosophy; the rite of circumcision, the need to keep certain dietary laws, and to uphold certain days above others i.e. new moons and sabbaths and you get a little taste of what Epaphras was up against.

But the letter to Colosse is radically relevant for us today as well; it addresses cultic issues, philosophies of man, practical issues such as can Christ really change lives? Can He give peace, joy, and happiness; does knowing Him give meaning, hope and purpose in life? Colossians deals with all these issues, and it seeks to emphasize the remedy for all of them by demonstrating the sufficiency and supremacy, the preeminence of Christ.

I believe the theme of the book is summed up in Col 3:11 “*Christ is all, and in all*” In other words He’s all we need, He’s God, the Creator, the Savior, and the Head of the church. He is our hope, He is our peace, He is our strength when we’re weak and comfort in time of need, our all in all and so as to where the book of Ephesians (which is closely related to this book) focuses more on the body, Colossians focuses on the Head of the body, Jesus Christ So lets begin here in vs 1.

Vs 1- 2

So right off the bat the author is identified, and we find of course that it is Paul who is writing this epistle to the Colossian believers. Now just for the record, when we begin a new letter in the bible I like to take the time to remind us of the fact that in reality there is always 2 authors to every book of the bible, the instrumental author and the actual author. The instrumental author in this case being Paul, he is the instrument, or the vessel that is being used to pen this letter, however as with the rest of the word of God, the actual author is the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us that, “*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” 2 Tim 3:16-17 “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*”

So as we go through the book of Colossians receive it for what it is, not the word of man, or the opinion of man, but as the inspired Word that was literally God breathed to you and me. and Since Paul is writing to deal with some corrective issues, he sort of flashed the badge of his apostleship so that they’ll receive what it is he has to say. The fact that he’s an apostle gives him the right to instruct them even though he’s never seen them, and by stating his apostleship, it will immediately diffuse that mentality of “who are you to tell me what to do?” Because he tells them who he is, an apostle of Jesus Christ and Because he’s an apostle that means that he’s more than just some messenger, he’s an official representative of the One who sent him. The word “apostle” meaning “one who’s sent”, now we don’t have apostles in the strict biblical sense today, the bible tells us that the “foundation” of the church was built of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone.

Since he's an apostle that means that the things that he writes to them is more than just mere opinion in regards to what's happening (no different than anyone else's) but rather it's the authoritative Word of God for their lives, and for ours.

He says that He's an apostle or "sent one" of Jesus Christ and Not because he decided that would be a good career move, or give him power and influence over people, nor because he was nominated by some committee or board somewhere, but by the will of God. In Gal we read, "*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).*"

In other words Paul didn't just decide one day to go into the ministry and while he was at it, he may as well go all out and be an apostle. This was something that God had divinely ordained and appointed him to, and you can read of his calling in Acts ch 9, so many people decide to make ministry their vocation because it seems better than what they're doing now. Or maybe they're power hungry, they want to be seen, or be influential in people's lives, but as I've said over and over we're not in the ministry to make a name, but rather to magnify a name, the name of Jesus Christ and The only way that we're going to be effective in the respective roles that we assume or obtain is if God has placed that call on our lives, if we're in the will of God.

Paul said that He was what He was by the grace of God, it was the will of God for His life, I believe that every believer is called to function in some capacity in the body of Christ. But it's important that we be functioning in the right place and in the proper capacity, believe me when I say that there are a lot of active people that are busy doing what God never called them to do, and the result is a lot a burning rubber but very little ground covered.

God placed Paul in the role and capacity in which he functioned, and it's important that that's where we all function, with in the capacity that God has called us to. and Just like we read in Philippians we see here that Timothy was with him there in Rome when he wrote this letter, Timothy didn't write it with him, but he's there with him as he frequently was, ministering to, and along side Paul. and He says in vs 2

Vs2 (1st 1/2)

Now understand that he's not in reference to 2 different groups of people, the "saints and faithful brethren," are synonymous. The word "and" can also be translated "even" so that he's calling them saints *even* faithful brethren. Now when you hear the word "saint" most of us are inclined to think of some individual who long after they were dead was recognized for some super human accomplishment that qualified them to be voted into sainthood and have a statue made after them and placed in a Catholic Church or something.

But biblically speaking every believer in Jesus Christ is a saint, and it's not because of anything we do or have done, but do to the work that's already been done on our behalf by Christ upon the cross. and You and I may not feel like no saint, but according to God's perspective that's exactly what you are, the word "saint" simply means "set apart." So he's writing to those who have been set apart, separated from sin being set apart to God. Sanctified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, "faithful" noting the source of that separation, they are full of faith, believing brethren, believers in Jesus Christ are really the only true saints, and that's who he's writing to, and he brings up 2 locational references, 1 being of radical significance, the other not mattering much. He says, "In Christ, in Colosse" the words "who are" have been added by the translators for clarification purposes.

Now I have no doubt that God establishes where we're to be, what areas (maybe) that we'll ultimately reside so that we might seek Him out and be used of Him in the reaching of others. Acts 17:26-27 says that, "*He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him.*" So if you've ever wondered why it was that you were born when you were vs another time period, or why you live where you do vs some other continent, now you know, it's because God wanted to place you in the most ideal settings for what you would need to seek Him out. But the fact that you're *in* Joplin Mo, isn't nearly as important or significant as you being *in* Christ, believe me when I say that when it's all said and done that's what's going to matter, not whether or not you were in Joplin, or LA or any other city or nation, but whether or not you were found *in* Christ.

Being in Christ goes way beyond being a Christian, it carries enormous phrase of spiritual implication. We all started out "*in* Adam" and in Adam is sin and death, but in Christ that we have redemption, it's in Christ that we're made alive, it's in Christ that we have eternal life, have the forgiveness of sin being reconciled to God, are made righteous and are sanctified, it's in Christ that we're made new. and On and on we could go, Rom 3:24 says that we're, "*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" Rom 6:11, "*reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Rom 6:23 "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" 2 Cor 5:17 "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" It's in Christ that we're brought near to God, accepted in His sight, so much to gain in Christ, Eph 1:3 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*" All that heaven affords for man now here on earth is already our possession, it's ours to draw from and live by. But so much to lose if we're not if we're not in Christ, being eternally separated from God, cast into outer darkness having rejected the light of the world. These saints may be in Colosse, but what's important is that they're in Christ. and He says, (Finish last ½ of vs 2)

This is what we'd refer to as a "typical Pauline greeting" grace and peace, always being coupled together and always in that order because as you know it's impossible to experience peace *with* God or the peace *of* God with out 1st experiencing or being a recipient of the grace of God.

But I don't want you to lose the impact of what it means for Paul to write this just because we see it so much. Paul was in prison (ultimately) because of the doctrine of the grace of God; and he's ready to die for it, so don't think that for Paul "grace" was a word that he just threw around flippantly. It was something that he had a passion for, because it's by grace that we're saved through faith, salvation is not of works, or of ourselves it's the gift of God administered through His grace. His "unmerited favor," in God's grace He gives us what we don't deserve, eternal life in Christ, in His mercy He doesn't give us what we do deserve, which is everlasting separation from God in the lake of fire. and So the grace of God is a huge issue in the scriptures. Here's a few scriptures regarding just a pinch of what the grace of God entails for you and me. Eph 1:7 *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."*

God's grace includes the forgiveness of sins, brought to us by the undeserved shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ So grace to you by God includes forgiveness, the washing away of sin, but notice that little phrase "the *riches* of His grace." He is "rich" in grace, and His the riches of His grace weren't all spent or used up in the forgiveness of your sin, how much grace was exhausted in the forgiving of your sin? Some of us had a debt bigger than others but none of us could afford the payoff, and then multiply that by everyone else that has allowed God to take care of their sin debt as well, but God's grace is inexhaustible, no matter how much grace He spent or continues to spend on you, it's impossible to even put a dent in it.

It's sort of interesting because even though we need a lot of grace (at least in our finite understanding, if you could measure it) when it comes to our sin, but at the same time there's nonetheless left over when we're covered. "The *riches* of His grace" there's just no end to them; there are so many treasures of the grace of God that He desires to lavish upon us. Not only just in new birth, but in our growth and service, Eph 2:8-9, the scripture we were referring to a moment ago, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* Justification by grace through faith, something every Christian is aware of, at least until some get their mind skewed thinking they did something to earn it. But the fact of the matter is we can't earn justification before God, we can't work for it, deserve it, labor for it or anything else, it's a gift of God's grace through faith. and Though every believer is aware of that fact you'd be surprised to know the number of believers that aren't aware of the grace of God that offers progressive, growing *sanctification*.

Most believers relate grace to justification, but yet neglect to allow the grace of God to work in them for sanctification. and So what happens is they get justified by the grace of God, but then they try to mature and grow up in and through their own self-efforts of the flesh. and It leads to a very carnal, wearisome, striving, lack of advancing, unfruitful Christian experience.

I would venture to say that at sometime or another we've all fallen into one or more of those categories through out our Christian experience, and some live there indefinitely, seeking to accomplish the desires of the Spirit, through the efforts of the flesh, but the bible is very clear, it can't be done. Having begun in the Spirit are you now going to be made perfect in the flesh? It's a rhetorical question with the answer implied by the format of the question, the answer is no.

The scriptures are clear that as much as we need the grace of God for justification, we need it at work on us, in us, and through us for sanctification. Sanctification speaking of consecration, or dedication, being set apart as unto the Lord, the process of sanctification is that process by the grace of God that makes us like Jesus.

How hard would you have to work to become like Jesus? Can you walk on water? You see, you can't achieve Christ-likeness through your own self will and self effort, that ability comes from another dimension all together that has nothing to do with you or me. But it has everything to do with the grace of God at work in your life, and the grace of God at work in your life will allow you to do what would otherwise be impossible, as it pertains to your growth and service in life.

The bible tells us that our presence in heaven will be a display of the exceeding riches of the grace of God in His kindness towards us who are in Christ. Eph 2:5-7 says, *“Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”*

In other words it's like when people or the hosts of heaven see me there, they'll just look at me and think, “man, now there goes a display of the exceeding riches of the grace of God.” The fact that I'm there will me like a trophy of the grace of God, I'll just forever display the grace of God. John 1:16-17 sums it up nicely, *“And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

Grace upon grace just lavished upon us in Christ, of His fullness. Paul says, *“Grace to you and peace”* the absence of hostility and alienation, and not only that but the presence of harmony and tranquility. Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines it as, *“the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is.”* and This peace comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ John 16:33, there Jesus said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”* So the peace of God isn't dictated circumstantially, but it's granted relationally, it comes from being in Christ, the victor over this world.

Rom 5:1-2 "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Eph 2:13-14 "*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off (being in Adam) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.*" You see our peace isn't a place or procedure, nor does it come from either of those, our peace is a person, and that's good because places and procedures change, there's uncertainty there. But Jesus never changes, places and procedures come and go, but He'll never leave us nor forsake us. Christ Himself is our peace,

1 more 2 Thess 3:16 "*Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.*" I'm so glad that Jesus is the Lord of peace Himself, one of His names is the Prince of peace, we'll see in ch 3 of this book that we're to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. But I'm glad that Jesus is the Prince of peace because I find that we're in need of the peace of God so often in life, things seem boisterous and out of control. We feel like our lives are being tossed to and fro by the ferocious storms of life and if something doesn't happen quick we'll capsize and sink.

The disciples felt that same way on a couple of occasions, and in Mark we read where they were crossing the sea of Galilee and this great windstorm arose so that the waves beat into the boat, and it was filling up. But we read that Jesus, (the Prince of peace) was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they woke Him up and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" In other words we're all going to die here, we're frantic and in a panic, things in our lives are out of control and it's as if you don't even care. But then we read that He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

I love that story because it shows me that no matter how rough the waters maybe in my life, that with a single word Jesus can speak peace into my life, so that there's a great calm and I'm able to then regroup and remember who He is, the fact that He's in control and He's promised that we'll cross over to the other side.

Now things may get a bit rough from time to time on the way, but with Jesus in the boat, peace is just a word away. I don't know what's going on in every life here, but if the storm is breaking lose and you feel like you're about to capsize and sink, cry out to the Lord, look to Him and allow Him to speak peace into your life.

The bible says that we're to cast our cares upon Him because He cares for us. Grace, and peace, they don't come from man, they come from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ Listen to this and then we'll close, 2 Peter 1:2 "*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*" There are times when it seems we need the grace and peace of God, not just added to our lives, but *multiplied*. Sometimes things just come upon us so fast, and they're so heavy and impossible for us, they seem to hit from out of nowhere and we need grace and peace multiplied to our lives, not just added. and The good news is that that can happen, grace and peace can be "multiplied" to our lives. How, *in* the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, the means God uses to multiply grace and peace to our lives is that of calling us to get acquainted more intimately with Him. It's through the Knowledge of God, grace and peace is multiplied to us as we get to know the Lord who gives grace and peace and has grace and peace, it's through relational fellowship with Him. The more you get to know Him, the more you'll experience His grace and His peace in your life, so may we get to know Him more.

Maybe you're here this morning and you don't know Him at all, you've never experienced the grace of God and you don't have peace with God, this morning you can experience both in the person of Jesus Christ who died for you that He might become for you justification and sanctification, righteousness and redemption having shed His blood on the cross for you. and If you'll allow Him to robe you in His righteousness today, you can stand justified before God in Him, just as if you'd never sinned at all, you can have a clean slate, being a new creation in Christ, don't put off tomorrow what you can have today.