

# Truth, Faith, and Practical Living

## Overview of the Book of Colossians

The apostle Paul had never been to Colossae (cf. Col. 2:1), yet he had “*heard of their faith in Christ Jesus*” (Col. 1:4) from a preacher named Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:7). The text infers that Epaphras contacted Paul (Col. (4:12) while in a Roman prison (Col. 4:8) and told the apostle of the great faith of the Colossians and the challenges that they faced (Col. 1:8). Paul wrote the Colossian letter with the intent to inform the Colossians of their Christian duties, encourage the brethren to put their faith into action, and expose erroneous teachings.

With the facts before him, Paul first prayed for the Colossians. Paul prayed that the Colossians would be “*filled with knowledge of God’s will*” (Col. 1:9), “*walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing*” (Col. 1:10), “*strengthened with all power*” (Col. 1:11), and that they would “*give thanks unto the Father*” for the opportunity of salvation (Col. 1:12-14).

Paul brought the Colossians back to square one of their receiving justification from sins through the blood sacrifice of Jesus (Col. 1:14, 20-22; 2:13-14; 3:1-3). Jesus was identified as being “*preeminent*” (i.e., the first in all things). The qualifying factors of the Lord’s preeminence are His being the image of God, being firstborn of all creation, being the creator, being before all things, all things consisting through Him, being the head of the body, the church, and all the fullness dwelling in Him (Col. 1:15-19). The redemption of mankind is made possible through the Lord Jesus Christ if the faithful will remain in truth as law abiding citizens of the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14, 23).

The challenges of the Colossians came in the form of false teaching and practices. Paul presented “*Christ’s*” name as one that stands in metonymy to truth at Colossae 1:25-27). This contrast continues into chapter two. “*Christ*” (Col. 2:8) is contrasted to the “*rudiments of the world*” (Col. 2:8, 20), “*philosophy*” (Col. 2:8), “*tradition of men*” (Col. 2:8), “*the precepts and doctrines of men*” (Col. 2:22), and the “*fleshly mind*” (Col. 2:18). When Paul used the name of Christ in these chapters he intended for us to understand that he was speaking about truth, the gospel, or the word of God (cf. Col. 1:25-27; 2:2, 5, 8). Christians are to occupy an “*order*” (post or position) in relation to truth (i.e., “*faith in Christ*”) (cf. Col. 2:5). Paul warned the Colossians that certain false teachers had the capacity to lead one astray from one’s post or position in truth saying, “*This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech*” (Col. 2:4; cf. 2:8 too). Christ alone (His sacrifice and teaching) provides the ability for sinful man to be “*forgiven of all our trespasses*” (Col. 2:13). Paul’s conclusion is that Mosaic Law keeping (Col. 2:16), willful humility or severity to the body (a form of asceticism) (Col. 2:18, 23), worshipping of angels (Col. 2:18), and will-worship (Col. 2:23) will help no one to heaven. The Colossians were not to allow those who hold these positions to sway them from that firm post or position in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul reminded the Colossian Christians who they were in chapters three and four. They had died to the old man of sin and were now alive in Christ (Col. 3:3). This being the case, they needed to “*put to death*” sinful passions of the flesh (Col. 3:5ff). Furthermore, the Colossians were encouraged to put on the “*new man*” (Col. 3:10) which is further identified at Colossians 3:12ff. Every word or action of the Christian is to be dictated by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). The Christian’s life is found not only in the church and home but in the work place as well (cf. Col. 3:18 – 4:1). In all aspects of life the Christian is called upon to be Godly. The book of Colossians helps us understand that Christ demands that we put our faith into practice.