

Colossians 1v1-12 – Introduction to the letter

Colosse was a city in today's Turkey. Then it was in the Roman Empire. All around them, people were pagans. They lived for themselves, for pleasure, and worshipped false gods. But Epaphras (v7) had preached the gospel, and some people had believed. Paul had never met them (2:1), but now he wrote to them. We have the blessing of listening to his words, to encourage this group of Christians living in a pagan world. Christians, living in a place where people did not love God.

1. Who was writing (v1-3, 7, 9)

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ”. Paul wrote with authority. The Son of God chose him to teach the churches. We are not reading the words of man, but words from heaven; words from our Maker and our Saviour. We should tremble! But we should also rejoice. God the Father and God the Son send us words of grace (kind blessing) and of peace (v2). Jesus bought this peace for us when he died on the cross. Now he tells us how to live. Paul was not only an apostle with authority. He was also a servant and a brother (v2, 7). He dearly loved all Christians – even those he had not met. He prayed for them and wanted them to grow (v9). He gave thanks when he heard of them (v3). How wonderful to have a letter from someone who cares so much for people like us and wants to bless us! Let us study it carefully.

2. Who was reading (v3-6, 8)

The Christians in Colosse were ordinary people – wives, husbands, fathers, children, slaves, masters (3v18-22). But to God they were very special: they were all “saints” (v2), which means “holy ones”. It means “ones that God has chosen for his own plans”. All Christians are saints. They are also “brothers” (v2) – they have come into God's family, as equals. They are also heirs (v12) – they have a glorious inheritance in Christ. Because of these things, they live very differently. They live with faith, hope and love (v3-5). They trust in Jesus alone for their salvation, and they do not trust in themselves. They love one another. They love *all* (v4) believers because they *all* belong to Jesus. They do good works (v6). They have confidence, knowing that Jesus will bring them safely into eternal glory. They heard this good news in the gospel, and they hold onto it. So, they are very different to the world. Are you?

3. His prayers for them (v9-12)

What did the great apostle want for these believers? What were his desires for them? He had great desires for them – that is why he prayed. When we cannot visit someone, we can always pray – and we must. He wanted them to know Christ's will. He wanted them to walk in obedience to Jesus. Not just a good outward life, but one of true wisdom and understanding from the Holy Spirit (v9). Jesus is alive and sees everything we do. We must aim to please him always (v10). If we are “saints” in name, then we must be in our life too. We cannot do this in our own strength. Only the living power of Christ can turn us away from sin and selfishness (v11). Only he can make us rejoice as we forget ourselves and serve him and serve other people (v11). Only he can make us thankful and faithful (v12). Our great need in life is not success in exams, or to get a good husband or wife, but to first of all totally give ourselves in repentance and love to Jesus and Jesus' people. That is a Christian.