



Colossians 1:1-8 We Declare Christ's Love

One of Paul's Prison Epistles:

The Prison Letters	
● Ephesians	Union with Christ Our source
● Colossians	Supremacy of Christ Our head
● Philemon	Neither slave nor free Christ our liberator
● Philippians	Appeal to humility Christ our example

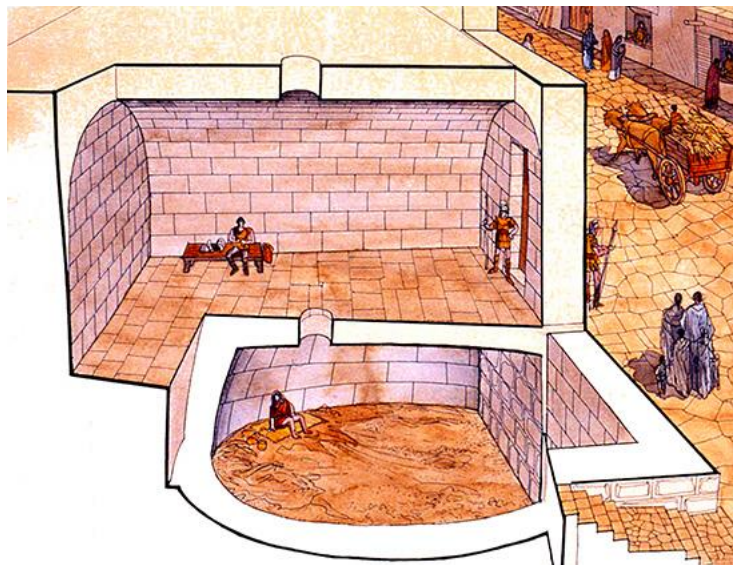
- Written to a church whose congregation he hadn't met
 - For a Pastor he loved - Epaphras
 - It's Epaphras' solicitation for help that leads Paul to writing this letter.
 - **Epaphras reports to Paul in Rome that several new doctrines are arising in Colossae and he needs Paul's help to refute them.**
 - Humanist Heresy (2.1-7)
 - Greek Heresy. (2.8-10)
 - Jewish Heresy. (2.11-17)
 - Eastern Mystical Heresy. (2.18-19)
 - Legalist/Pharisaical Heresy. (2.20-23)
- Under some of the most difficult circumstances a human could endure.
 - Paul turned his prison into a powerful pulpit.

- Why don't we?





Mark Twain's Illustration after his visit to Rome



- The use of the Tullianum as a prison became common sometime during the Roman Republic, around the fourth century B.C.E. **The once large, airy sanctuary was divided into two vaulted, claustrophobic levels, the lowest of which encased the spring and was accessible only through a tight opening, still visible today, used to lower prisoners into what must have seemed like a dark and foul-smelling antechamber to Hell.** ¹

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, An apostle, by the will of God: (1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; cf. Rom. 15:32; 2 Cor. 8:5)
Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle **(not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),**

¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium.MAGAZINE-ancient-prison-of-saints-jewish-rebels-reopens-1.5420806>

- It is God's will that each of us fulfill a calling in Him
 - We cannot all be apostles
- **BUT** – we can be gifted in many miraculous callings
1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually as He wills.**
- Does God force us to be something we do not want to be?
 - **NEVER** – but remember, He wants to stretch you out, stir you up.
 - **You may always feel as though you are the worst at this calling – but you would be in good company:**
1 Corinthians 15:9 For **I am the least of the apostles,** who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

- **Paul likely never visited Colosse**

- Church planted and Pastored by Epaphras (v. 7)
- The city was in Phrygia, in the valley of the Lycus, **about ten or twelve miles beyond Laodicaea and Hierapolis.** The region is volcanic, and the earthquakes common to large portions of Asia Minor are here peculiarly severe. ²

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Saints:**

The term *agios, saint, properly denotes a holy person, separated from sin, and consecrated to God,* probably from *agos, a thing sacred, purity*; and such the gospel requires every man to be, and such every true believer is. To restrict it here to those who adhered to the purity of the Christian faith in opposition to the Judaizing Christians, greatly impoverishes and debases the sense, as Dr. Doddridge well remarks. **Taking it in the sense of those few holy persons canonized by the church and now in heaven is of course a wholly mistaken and unscriptural view of the term.** ³

- Saints, then, are persons upon whom the Lord has bestowed a great favor and who have been entrusted with a weighty responsibility. Ideally, saints are believers. So also here: the phrase “to the saints and believing brothers” (note the fact that the definite article the is not repeated before the second noun) expresses one thought, for saints who are true to their calling are, of course, believing brothers, and that “in Christ,” by virtue of union with him. ⁴

² Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 461.

³ Jerome H. Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere-Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 1398.

⁴ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, vol. 6, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 44.

- **Our Father.**

The only instance in which the name of the Father stands in the opening benediction of an epistle without the addition and Jesus Christ. ⁵

Luke 11:1–2

1 Now it came to pass,

as He was praying in a certain place,

when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him,

“**Lord, teach us to pray,** as John also taught his disciples.”

2 So He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

3 We give thanks to **the God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

4 since we heard of **your faith** in Christ Jesus and of **your love** for all the saints;

5 because of the **hope** which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of **the truth of the gospel,**

- **Your:**

- Do I have the kind of Faith, Love, and hope that would be noteworthy to a true Apostle?

1. Faith – is Faith growing in me, am I pleasing God with my faith?

Romans 10:17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Hebrews 11:6 **But without faith it is impossible to please Him,** for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2. Love

1 Corinthians 13:1–3

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

⁵ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 462.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

3. Hope

1 Peter 1:3–5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,**

4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- Jewish texts spoke of future rewards already reserved for the righteous, hence early Christian readers would be familiar with the idea. ⁶

6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

Colossians 1:10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, **being fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- **It has always been God's design for us to be fruitful**

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful** and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Hosea 14:7–8

7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;

They shall be revived like grain,

And grow like a vine.

Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

8 "Ephraim shall say,

'What have I to do anymore with idols?'

I have heard and observed him.

I am like a green cypress tree;

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Col 1:5.

Your fruit is found in Me.”

Galatians 5:22–23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law.

The fragrant fruit tree:

2 Corinthians 2:14–15

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ,

and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ

among those who are being saved
and among those who are perishing.

Psalms 1:2–3

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

7 as you also learned from **Epaphras**, our dear fellow servant,
who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf,

8 who also declared to us **your love in the Spirit.**

- **Epaphras:**

- **Max Anders:** “The most significant day in the history of Colosse was not the day Xerxes rested in the city on his march against Greece, nor was it the day Cyrus marched his Greek army through the city. **No, the most significant day in the history of Colosse was the day Epaphras came to town and planted the seed of the gospel.** No banners unfurled in the wind, nor did trumpets blare in the breeze;

but lives were changed and destinies were eternally altered when the gospel was planted.”⁷

Colossians 4:12 **Epaphras, who is one of you**, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

The Pastor of Colossae informed Paul of the congregation’s “love in the Spirit.”⁸

- **“in” the Spirit**

- Epaphras told Paul about their **“love in the Spirit,”** grounded in the Holy Spirit.⁹

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, **who worship God in the Spirit**, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

- **“of” of the Spirit**

Romans 15:30

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, **and through the love of the Spirit**, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,

1 John 4:17–19

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

18 There is **no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear**, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

OH, if not for the Love of Christ, where would we be today?

- We wouldn't be writing epistles in our jail cells – Prisons to Pulpits
- We wouldn't be singing at midnight in the cell when the earthquake hits!
- **We would be lost, unloved, unholy, un-forgiven!**

⁷ Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 280.

⁸ “Don't you remember the mighty change that occurred when the message of God's redemptive truth made its first appearance among you? That gospel needs no addition or supplement. Its influence is being felt in ever-increasing measure, both extensively, invading region after region, and intensively, producing fruit upon fruit in hearts won for Christ. Do not attempt to exchange God's powerful work for man's beggarly elements” (cf. 2:8). (William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, vol. 6, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 50–51.)

⁹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Col 1:8.