

Colossians 1:21-29

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[0 : 00] I'm going to give a brief overview of Colossians really quickly. So chapter 1, verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all of the saints because of the hope reserved for you in heaven.

You have already heard about this gospel and the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. It is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you since the day you've heard it and came to truly appreciate God's grace.

You learned this from Ephraim. Our dearly loved fellow servant, he's a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has told us about your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are now asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of God, and being strengthened by all power, according to his glorious might, so that you might have great endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.

[1 : 30] He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for everything was created by him, in him and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. He is the head of the body of the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the head, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds, expressed in your evil actions, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.

If indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that is before you, this gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become a servant of it.

[2 : 49] Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church. I have become its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, warning him, teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me. And just up to verse 3 in chapter 2. 4. I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have seen me, for all who have not seen me in person.

I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding, and have the knowledge of God's mystery. Christ. I'm going to pray really quickly, and let me begin. Heavenly Father, I thank you that you are a good and kind king, that you sent your Son, who is the firstborn of all creation, O Lord. I pray for clarity and for boldness as I preach and proclaim your word, O Lord.

[4 : 04] I pray for hearts to receive it well, O Lord. I pray for all humility on everyone's part, including mine, O Lord. I pray against Satan, against his devices, O Lord, and I pray that our attention would be focused on Christ, his preeminence, his preeminence, his reconciliation, and now us as ministers of reconciliation.

Amen. So just a note of view. First, verse 2, this is a letter of encouragement. It's not necessarily a letter that's written to rebuke them, not in any sort of way.

We see that in verse 2. To the saints in Christ at Colossae, who are faithful brothers and sisters. He's not writing this to people who need rebuking. He's writing it to faithful brothers and sisters. And you can usually tell that tidbit from all of Paul's letter at the beginning. Colossians and Ephesians are sister letters because they're both letters of encouragement.

If you look at that tidbit in Ephesians, you'll see the same things. Faithful saints who are in Ephesus. Verse 3 to 8, Paul is happy and thankful for the news of good fruit, good and godly fruit from these believers that he's never met before.

[5 : 25] Verses 9 to 14, even though he's thankful for the fruit of salvation and all these good things that are coming from them, he still prays for spiritual maturity for them.

He wants them to be fully matured in Christ. In verse 15 to 20, what I believe is the magnum opus of this chapter, Paul gives us a hymn of Christ's preeminence.

And then to the section that I'll preach on, verse 21 to chapter 2, verse 3, this, in a sense, is the practical application of Christ's preeminence over the cosmos.

Paul has laid out what he believes about Christ, what Christ's preeminence is, and now we're getting into, well, what do we do with this? And so my first point, verses 19 to 23, is we are aliens now reconciled.

We are aliens now reconciled. And to start, verse 21, 19 to 21, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile everyone to himself, whether things on earth, in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

[6 : 55] Once you were aliens, hostile in your minds, expressed in your evil actions. So at one point, if you're a believer now, you were totally depraved.

Total depravity. It's what I want to start with. I want to start with that because it says you were alienated and hostile in your minds, expressed in your evil actions.

What total depravity means is that from birth, we inherit a sinful nature and we are beings now bent towards sinning. All of our being is bent towards sinning.

That is our desire. And honestly, whenever I think of this, I think of Lord of the Rings. I think in particular of one character, I think of Gollum.

I think of Gollum because of how much he loves the ring. Gollum starts off as a hobbit, as Smeagol, and is kind of good.

[7 : 58] He's just a river folk, chilling, having fun, enjoying creation. And then the ring enters the picture. It poisons his mind, poisons it so much that he hates the light.

He hates the moon and he hates the sun. That he goes into a cave of darkness where he dwells there for 500 years and is obsessed with this ring, this precious.

And then we continue the story that at the end of it, he would even give his life. He dies to be with this ring of how much he loves it.

That is a picture of total depravity and sin. Sin loves the darkness. It loves the darkness. There is no one that I know who is sinning who wants to reveal that sin.

Sin loves darkness. And sin wants to bring us to death. The wages of sin is death. We are working to death in our sinning.

[9 : 05] And for those who are not saved, you are totally depraved now. But what precious verses for us in verse 19 and 20, that Christ is sent to reconcile us.

Christ is sent to save us. Christ, the firstborn of all creation, he was sent by God, promised by the prophets to come to take on the weight of the world, to live a perfect life, and to suffer, to bleed, and to hang on a cross and die.

And three days later, he rose from the grave. And that is the only thing that we could believe in that would save us from total depravity, from this nature that is bent towards sinning.

And I love that it says that we once were alienated, past tense. We are no more. We are no more in this total nature.

Yes, we still have a sin nature, but we are now reconciled, believer. Romans 3, 19 to 18 gives us a great picture of what depravity looks like in the human.

[10:31] You don't have to turn there. I could just read it. Let's read this part. There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands.

There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away. All alike have become worthless, and there is no one who does what is good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave.

They deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing bitterness. Their feet is swift to shed blood of ruin, and wretchedness are in their path, and the path of peace they have not known, and there is no fear of God in their eyes.

That is total depravity. What does that mean? That means that you, us, would have picked up a stone and stoned Stephen as he was preaching the gospel with us.

You, me, us, we would have yelled crucified to the Messiah because of our depravity. You, I, us, we are Barabbas.

[11:39] We are murderers. We are defilers. We are evil. But Christ takes our place as he took Barabbas'. He saves him from this punishment that he deserves.

But even more than that, verse 23, verse 22 to 23, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him if you indeed remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.

Even more, brothers and sisters, taking our place, dying for us, he will present us as what? Holy. Who's the only person that I know that is holy?

The Lord Almighty. He will present us as holy, faultless. Who's the only person that I know that is faultless? The Lord Almighty. And blameless.

Who is the only person that I know that is blameless? The Lord Almighty. And he will present us as these things to his father.

[12:58] Let me remind you who God is and who will be presented to. God is the king of the cosmos. Hubble telescope can take a snippet of his kingdom and still not fully reveal it.

He holds together the fabric of time and space by the word of his mouth. He is omnipresent. He is everywhere. He is omniscient.

He knows everything in his kingdom. He is omnipotent. There is nothing that he cannot do. Shall I continue? He is enthroned in heaven and earth is his footstool.

He is holy, holy, holy. The king of kings and the Lord of lords. The majesty, the perfect one. That's who will be presented to as holy, perfect, and blameless.

We should be trembling before that. As Isaiah says, tremble before the word of the Lord. As Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up, he says, woe is me, a man of unclean lips, living amongst people of unclean lips.

[14:07] When we are before the Lord God, our face should be to the ground and we should be like dead men. Instead, we are presented by Christ as holy, faultless, and blameless.

But there's also an if in verse 23. If you indeed remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard. Let me ask you this, church.

Is the gospel still precious to you? Are you like Jesus' relative who when brought before them in their community, he could not perform miracles because of relations with them?

Has the gospel, has grace, has salvation, has all these glorious truths become common to you? Or is it just like water rolling off the duck's back that you're just like, yeah, salvation, grace.

grace. So like, I can spend my day without thinking about it. Has it become these common objects to you? If it has, repent.

[15:20] It should not be like that. The king of the cosmos deserves eternal worship. Not a second thought. If these things are common to you, as it should not be, repent.

Do not become like relatives of Jesus where because of relations, because of time spent with him, you say, I already know about grace. I already know about these things.

Do not be like that. Repent and believe in the gospel. And if you are holding fast to that, praise God. Praise God, truly. But does this verse mean, if you hold fast, does it mean that you can lose your salvation?

By no means. This is not what that means. This is not accurate with scripture. It says in the scriptures, he who has found, he is the founder and finisher of your faith.

He is the author of salvation. He is the perfecter of your faith. He is the author of all creation. He is writing what I am speaking right now. But, what Paul is getting to is what he talks about in 2 Corinthians 13.5.

[16:40] You want to turn over there really quickly? 2 Corinthians 13.5.

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves or do yourselves not recognize as Jesus Christ is in you. Test yourselves, brothers and sisters, to see if you are in the faith.

More recently, I mean, the person that I can think of is Carlos. A person who, at one point, I would have called a brother. Test yourself to see if you are in the faith.

And then, again, in the book of James, turn with me if you can to James chapter 5. Or, sorry, James chapter 2, 18 to 26.

But some will say, you have faith and I have works.

[17:55] Show me your faith without works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. Good. Even the demons believe and they shudder. Senseless person, are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?

Wasn't Abraham, our father, justified by works in offering Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was active together with his works and by works faith was made complete.

And the scripture was fulfilled to say, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness and he was called God's friend. See that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

In the same way, wasn't Rahab, the prostitute, also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route.

Just as this body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead. You cannot have faith and truly be pleasing to God without works.

[19:06] as it says in Colossians 1, 21, once you were alienated and hostile in your minds expressed in your evil actions, you show that you were alienated and hostile to God expressed by your evil actions.

You show that you were in the faith and that you love God by your actions. You cannot have one without the other. Truly, but I'm also not preaching for a works-based salvation by no means. I do not believe that. I do not believe that you can bring anything, that you can add anything to Christ's finished work on the cross. But God is true in what he says that if by your works you are shown fruitless, if you are a branch that produces nothing, you will be cut off and thrown into the fire to burn forever.

Test yourself. Are you in the faith? What are your fruits? Can anyone here affirm your fruits? What do they look like? Verse 23.

Verse 23b. The gospel has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven and I, Paul, have become a servant of it. I just want to, there's many ways that I can go.

[20:39] Just suffice it to say this, that this should be interpreted in cosmic terms instead of geographical terms because honestly that would be a lie. The gospel now has not been proclaimed in all creation.

The gospel then in Paul's days has not been proclaimed in all creation. The Americas weren't even found. But we should emphasize or see an emphasis in the word all creation as in Christ is the firstborn of all creation.

Viewed in cosmic terms, he is preeminent over all creation. His gospel, his kingship is over all creation. that does not mean that when he died and rose on the cross that that went out to all creation.

No, that also does not mean that God's glory, his eternal power being revealed by his creation is what's saving people. No, it is cosmic proportion to this gospel has gone out to all creation.

But that's what I want to say in that section. Now, section, verse 24 to chapter 2-3, the three things that I want us to consider in this portion of Colossians.

[21 : 56] One, we will suffer. Two, the mystery is revealed. And three, we must labor as Paul labored.

I'll say that again. We will suffer. The mystery is revealed. We must labor as Paul labored. verse 24. Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for you and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church.

Just a note on Paul's suffering here. He is by no means, again, adding to Christ's works. That's not what he's saying here. What he is saying is he is following his preeminent Savior, the one who goes before all Christians and saying, I am following a crucifix life as my Savior followed.

I am taking up my cross daily and suffering as all Christians are promised suffering. Christ is the firstborn, the preeminent, the one who leads the way.

We must follow in Christ, we must follow Christ. He says in Matthew 5, blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and other all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

[23 : 17] Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Paul's reward is great in heaven.

Truly, rejoice when you are persecuted and follow in Paul's example of suffering. Rejoice. did not shy away from suffering. He despaired so much in life at one point that he wanted to die.

Yet because of Christ, he continued going. The second point, the mystery is revealed. I've become its servant, verse 25, I've become its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known.

The mystery, hidden for ages and generation, but now revealed to his saints. God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, warning him, and teaching him, everyone, with all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ and labor for this, striving with strength that works powerful in me.

[24 : 29] For I want you to know how greatly I am struggling for you, for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, Christ, in him are hidden all the treasures and wisdom of knowledge.

Mystery. Paul has mentioned the mystery like five times in three verses or five verses, and he talks about the mystery in Ephesians.

What is this mystery? Simply, the mystery is Christ. Christ and the gospel, and the mystery is Christ and his prophetic, these prophetic words that were promised of him.

Christ revealed in the Old Testament is this mystery, and the gospel that is before us is that mystery. You might think the gospel, Christ, a mystery?

I've known that since birth. I've been sitting in these pews since conception. This isn't a mystery. It's not new to me. But two things to consider on this.

[25 : 46] First, Gentiles had no part in the covenant with Yahweh. We were aliens. If a non-Jew came to Israel, they were called resident aliens.

They didn't belong there. They had no part in the covenant, in the Old Covenant. But Jews did. But now, Christ offers a way for even Gentiles to worship the King of Kings, and the mystery is revealed to the world, not just to the Jews.

Praise God for that. Second, consider our spiritual heritage. Adam, who walks with God in the garden, and after a royal screw-up that any of us would do, is left with a conscience of what did I just do to the world?

Noah, who was a man found right, who was the only man found righteous on the planet, he builds an ark trusting what God says is true. Faithful father Abraham, who leaves his hometown of Ur to follow God into the wilderness.

Sarah, by faith, even Sarah, who was past childbearing, was enabled to bear child because she considered him faithful, who made the promise.

[27 : 03] Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Phineas, Miriam, Aaron, Caleb, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Hannah, Ehud, Deborah, Samson, David, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, I could keep going.

These men and women who were faithful did not have this mystery revealed. They were not given the privilege of knowing who Christ is and who the gospel is.

They were never, this was never fully revealed to them, but it is to you. And praise God that he chose that you would be born in this half of the covenant, in this new covenant, this age, this

modern period, this country, this time for you to have freedom of religion and know what the gospel is.

Oh, great is our God that in his kindness that he would reveal this mystery to us because there's still people in America who this mystery is not revealed to. Praise him.

last point on this section is that we must labor as Paul labored. Verse 28 onward.

[28 : 21] We proclaim him warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

I labor for this striving with his strength that works powerfully in me. These verses, Christ's church, must be ours.

We're a new work. This is the work that we're doing. Let me read that again. We proclaim him warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we might present them mature in Christ.

I labor for this striving with all strength that works powerfully in me. That is our work. That is what we must champion.

All this theology, Christ's preeminence, him being the firstborn, the suffering servant, his glory, his ministry of reconciliation, now ours.

[29 : 24] As Sam read earlier, turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5, 17. Therefore, if anyone, let me say that again, therefore, if anyone, not select people, not apostles, not evangelists, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away and see the new has come.

Everything is from God who has reconciled us himself through Christ and has given us, everyone who is in Christ, the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us, to those who are in Christ.

It's not only Christ's church that this labor belongs to, it belongs to all who are in Christ. Meaning, let me read that again, we who are in Christ must proclaim him, warning, teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we might present everyone mature in Christ.

That is the charge given to a Christian. I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me. That means that you do not do this in your own strength.

Paul was given 39 lash minus one from the Jews five times. He faced dangers on the seas, on the roads.

[31 : 06] He was without food, without clothes, with frost. How can one do that in their own strength? Verse 29, I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.

In this new work, if you are striving in your own strength, if you are already getting tired, consider that you're striving in your own strength. Consider that and then repent.

Turn to the Lord. Ask for strength. Striving means to endeavor to reach or strain for something above or beyond.

We all know how to strive. We were all once, Isaiah or Reuben, reaching to grab something. We all know how to strive.

We all know how to strain for something. Apply that to your Christian life. You must strive. And if you're not, then according to this verse, you are not walking as a Christian should be.

[32 : 19] If you're just living the Christian life, you are not walking how a Christian should be living. You should be living in a way to present everyone mature in Christ.

Show me your fruits. Where's the fruit of that? Continue really quickly. Verse 21, I want their hearts to be, verse 2, sorry, I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love so that they might have all riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, Christ. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You should want this for other people. You should be praying this for other people. You should be desiring this for other people. If you're older in here and you have a far longer time with the Lord than I ever have, do not put those books on the bookshelf and just say, young people don't need me.

I need fathers. I need those shelves off the books. I need those books off the shelf for you guys to teach me. I need old people.

Do not consider that I am too young. Wisdom has no age limit. Wisdom is Christ incarnate.

Solomon asked for wisdom and wisdom was given to him at a young age.

[33 : 51] Wisdom is doing what is right, doing what is godly. It's not experiential. That is worldly wisdom. Wisdom has no age limit. Young people, you can be wise.

I'm a young person. I can be wise. That's the Lord for it. But that's all. I want to close with some application points.

Here are some ways to struggle and to strive. First, pray. Ephesians, chapter 6.

Ephesians 6, 18. Pray at all times in the spirit with every prayer and request and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for the saints.

19, pray also for me the message may be given to me when I open my mouth and make known the boldness of the mystery of the gospel. At the end of everything that Paul is saying with the armor of God, he ends it with pray.

[35 : 04] Truly, that is the Christian's weapon. Prayer. Strive in prayer. Labor in prayer. You don't have time to go and share the gospel? Pray. Pray. There's no one underneath you who you're teaching?

Pray. Pray for Christ's church. Pray for strength for Christ's church. Pray for the loss. Pray for maturity. Pray for other churches as Paul is praying for another church.

Is there another church that you know of that you're praying for? Do you want them to be mature in Christ? Is this your only bubble? Pray.

Pray for other churches. Pray for pastors. Pray for ministers. Pray that we may be mature in Christ. Pray that our ministry would be going out and bringing those in to make them mature in Christ.

Two. Fast. I don't know why. I don't know how. But it works. It works. Fasting works.

[36 : 05] A dependence upon God works. Saying, Lord, I'm emptying myself. Look upon my struggling. Help me, Lord. Listen to these things that I'm praying for.

Do you fast now? Do you do the quarterly fast just because the Holocaust is doing it? Fast. Works. Three.

Go evangelize. I love evangelism. Ephesians 6.16. In every situation... Sorry, not 6.16.

15. And your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. Go evangelize. If you're a mom and you have kids, go to the park. If you're a single person, you got a bunch of time.

Maybe. Go evangelize. If you're just married, go to the park with your family. Go evangelize. If you're a new couple, go evangelize.

[37 : 16] It is the best way to be persecuted. Rack up your rewards in heaven by being persecuted. Go get the loss.

Four. Moms, bring your kids in the gospel. People are watching. There are so many people who are watching kids who are obedient now. They're like, why are your kids so obedient?

Because I'm not gentle parenting. Because I spanked my kids because the word commands me to. Dads, work hard without grumbling.

Your coworkers are watching. If you work with a bunch of believers, that's awesome. I don't. I work with a bunch of non-believers. I get the ability to preach the gospel all the time.

But if my work is just sloppy and terrible, why would they listen to me? Rejoice in trials.

[38 : 19] Do not be anxious in trials. That is a fool's errand to be anxious in trial. Do not be anxious. Turn to the Lord in the same way that we strive with His strength.

We need His strength in trials. That's the only way that we can rejoice when we lose a baby. That's the only way that we can rejoice when we lose a loved one.

That's the only way we can rejoice when we have no money and we just got fired and our house is on fire. That's the only way is with His strength.

And then the last application point, rest in Christ. How do we get strength? It's by resting in Christ. Meaning, read God's word and pray daily.

Truly, read God's word and pray daily. This is not a, you must do this to be saved. It is a, that is the only way for you to receive strength. It's by asking the Lord, going before Him, being on your knees, reading His word, being encouraged in the faith.

[39 : 26] He is your daily bread. He is your sustenance. All my application points, but to close, I just want to read the lyrics to this song, which is, He is our strength.

Lord, send your church to the nation afar. Burden our hearts for the hearts that are hard. Please be our strength. You send your spirit to help in your place.

Behold, you are with us forever always. He is our strength. Lord, we're unable unless you enable.

Graciously give us your strength to go make disciples of every land so we may stand and worship and adore the Lamb.

He is our strength. Every nation and every tongue hear of His goodness and what He has done. He is our strength. Lord, send Christ's church into the world for your glory.

Graciously give us strength to desire your glory above all else. I need your grace. We need your grace. Help us deny ourselves.

[40 : 35] You are my strength. Though for the gospel we may lose our life, it's incomparable to Jesus Christ who is our strength.