

Colossians - Scripture Reading

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[0 : 0 0] With that, we're going to move to a scripture reading, and I want to just reorient us to what scripture reading is and why we're doing it. In 1 Timothy 4.13, Paul tells his mentee, the person he's been training in ministry, says this to Timothy, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. We preach here, we teach here, those are important, but he also tells Timothy, just read scripture. Why? Well, Paul encouraged this practice of Timothy as a means of edification for the whole body. God works through his truth being proclaimed, and even the reading of the words of the text together is a proclamation.

The power is in the words, not necessarily the preacher. And today, even though we love preaching and we will continue to do that, we believe that he will speak to us as we open his words. So would you please open your Bible to Colossians? If you do not have a Bible, we've got some in the back there.

Maybe my brother Matthew will hand those out if people need those. Just raise your hand and we'll get you a Bible to follow along with us. But we're going to be reading the entire book of Colossians together this morning. I'm so excited for this. And as we open up, I just want to give us a really quick backdrop to what the book is about that will help us as we're reading it together to really understand what's going on. So Paul is the one that wrote this book. He was an apostle of the gospel and actually says Paul and Timothy, which is pretty amazing. So you've got this, he's mentoring somebody in ministry, and it's almost like he pulls along and says, let's write this epistle together.

It's kind of the vibe here. Got a Bible right here. Yep, coming forward. ESV, we're going to read the ESV. So if you don't have ESV, you can still follow along, but if you'd like to follow the same translation, we've got a bunch ready for you. But here's what's amazing is Paul writes this with Timothy alongside him in prison toward the end of his ministry. He's thinking about how he wants to encourage the churches and edify them. And so he hears a report of the Colossian church from a man named Epaphras, and he decides, I need to write to this church. Who is Epaphras? Well, the book tells us, we're going to see this as we work through it together. I'm just kind of summarizing. Epaphras, we're told, is the one that came to Paul and gave him a report of Colossae. Why? Because Paul tells us he's of you, meaning Epaphras was a Colossian. He grew up in that town. He loved that town, and he, some point he met Paul in their ministry, got saved. Paul mentored him in pastoral ministry and sent him out to plant a church. And guess where Epaphras went to plant his church?

Colossae. He went back home. I'm sure this is an amazing conversation. Hey, Epaphras, go and plant a church. Your town needs a church. There's no believers there. So he goes and he plants the church. He stays there for a while. He comes back to give Paul a report of how things were going.

[2 : 56] And here's the report, essentially. Worldly philosophies were threatening the church and taking people's focus away from the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus. Paul says this in verse 2-4, many plausible arguments have come to you. And what he means by that is this. There's a lot of people that have come into your town, and they're coming into your church, and they're saying, here's a really good idea. Here's a good worldview. Here's a good argument that you should consider when it comes to your faith, Christians. Plausible arguments. And here's what Paul's essentially about in this book. Don't be pulled off of the path of this simple faith in the gospel that you have received.

Colossae was a small town. It was overshadowed by two growing metropolis cities. And when Paul sent Epaphras here, he knew that this church was situated, I'm going to call it a gateway town.

In other words, to get from one side of Asia Minor to the other side of Asia Minor, you had to go through Colossae. But it's a small town. So here's what's happening in this small town that's a gateway town. All of the worldly views and philosophers, all these people, all these ideas, a lot of them really bad, they come through, they stop in Colossae, and these weird views are propping up, and the church is falling prey to them. A gateway town. Spokane's kind of a gateway town, right? To get from one side of the mountains to the other, you kind of got to go through Spokane. You got to go all the way down through Boise. We get this. But here's what's going on. Three major false doctrines are creeping into the church. And this is called syncretism, which is a mix or a blend of worldviews.

The church had Christ, that's all they needed, and all of a sudden they start taking in all these different worldviews to form a really weird form of Christianity that was growing. First, we have the false teaching of Jewish legalism and law. You're going to see this when Paul says, moons and festivals, and you can't touch this, you can't touch that. Why are you listening to these Jewish people that are coming in saying, you got to go back to law? So there's legalism happening. But then secondly, there's mysticism and spirituality. Paul at one point says, why are we insisting on the worship of angels? What in the revering of these spiritual beings that are not Christ? So there's mysticism.

There's people that are coming in saying, we got to be super spiritual and worship all of the eternal beings in the sky. And then there's a third false view, and it's called asceticism, which is abuse of one's body, the mortification of the body, so that we don't sin. All three of these false views are from different tribes of people. Again, gateway town, and they're all infecting the church. And now what you have, if I can use this illustration, is Colossae is starting to flirt with a spiritual cocktail of weird beliefs. And here's what Paul's essentially doing. Here's the illustration of Colossians.

[5 : 53] I want you to remember that all you need is Jesus. He's sufficient. He's supreme. All that is needed for life and godliness and salvation is found in Christ. Don't listen to anyone that tries to add on to the gospel. So here's the illustration. Paul is essentially saying in this book, I want you to return to water. Water refreshes you. It replenishes you. It's all you need to live. You don't need all these different things to be poured into your cups that you can, I have to live in order to live. I have to drink all of this weird mix of beliefs. No. Paul says all you need is Christ. Pure water. That's the illustration I want to use to help us understand what's happening. So ultimately, Colossians, we learn about the eternal splendor of Jesus Christ in all things. He is of highest value. He is of greatest magnificence. And he is of greatest help. And so lastly, before we read, I want to just give us the key verse for Paul. He says, he builds up to this point, Colossians 2, 6 to 7. This is the highlight of the book, the centerpiece of the book. It is the pinnacle for him. This is what he says.

Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in Thanksgiving.

So before we read, I want to encourage us to be attentive with our minds, maintain a posture of worship with our hearts, and remember that we are worshipping the Lord as one body as we read. So let me pray quickly for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures. God, we thank you for this wonderful book. We thank you that your servant Paul had enough wisdom and love and care to write to a church that's starting to be confused on the gospel, that he might clear it up for them and brush away all that is not necessary. Lord, I pray that as we read this, that you would, through your Spirit, illuminate the text, that we would see within ourselves any place or any way that we have gone beyond your gospel, you would burn those things up like chaff and leave only Christ behind. We thank you for this text in the name we pray. Amen. Would you read Colossians with me?

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, 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, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints. Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which

[11:07] I, Paul, became a minister. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God 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. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I had for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for all that have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. For in him the wholeness, the fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

In him you also were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all of our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions puffed up without reason or by his sensuous mind and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with the growth that is from God. If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that are all perish as they are used according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual morality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked when you were living in them, but now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is bearing, being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave-free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

[17:18] Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Bond servants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you have also a master in heaven.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful for it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that the door, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I am in prison, that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak.

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

[18 : 38] Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts.

And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother who is one of you, they will tell you of everything that has taken place here. Our Astarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions.

If he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justice. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Damus. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house.

[19 : 47] And when the letter has been read among you, have it also read at the church of Laodiceans. And see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, see that you fulfill your ministry that you have received in the Lord.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you. This is the word of the Lord.