

Jesus, Our All in All – Intro to Colossians, 1:1-14

As I get a little older and hopefully become a bit more mature in my faith, I am growing fond of Paul's ability to approach the ministry from a pastoral perspective. Even though his task for ministry focused on the "first gen" Christian's who did not have the influence of a Christian culture the way we do, we can still learn a great deal from him about Jesus, the Jesus follower, and the Church. This morning, we are going to begin a new series of messages titled: **Jesus, Our All in All**. To do this, we are going to work our way through the shortest of Paul's prison letters, the one he wrote to the church in Colosse.

Ephesians and Colossians are similar because they were both pinned around the same time while Paul was on house arrest in Rome. Both letters address two important doctrines of our faith. Ephesians focuses on all believers being a member of the church as part of the body of Christ. The letter we are going to study over the course of this series, the book of Colossians, focuses on the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Hopefully, as we go through this small but impactful prison letter, you will see nothing but Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and guess what some more of Jesus!

Vacuum Cleaner Example: Demonstrate vacuuming without it being plugged in to the wall. Ask: why is it not working? It's not connected to the power source. Colossians is a book all about connections. Paul, in addressing a church filled with new, baby Christians that he had never even visited teaches us a few important things about living as a Christian. First, and most importantly, he reminds us of who the source is. If we are going to be a useful Christian appliance, we must know the source and remain plugged in to the source. ****Plug the power cord into the outlet and then vacuum**** State: It's the only way it can work.

Paul begins his letter in customary fashion by introducing himself and then offering a warm greeting. He did this because it was originally something that would be read aloud to the entire congregation. **Read Colossians 1:1-2**. Not much is to be learned from this greeting outside of knowing that Paul, because he was not one of the original 12, often made such a statement to establish himself as creditable. Paul could rightfully make a claim as an Apostle because he met the requirements established in the replacing of Judas by Matthais. We know from the account of Saul's conversion Jesus called him, he also saw Jesus alive after the resurrection, and he was personally taught on some level by Jesus.

We also learn who the original audience for the letter is; the faithful Christians at Colosse, which is a small river town serving a tri-city area in Asia Minor as a crossroad for the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Now, you may be wondering why this information is important to know. Well, the information is only important when you also understand the cultural implication for each of them. Hierapolis was a place of wealth. A sort of vacation spot in Asia minor where people could go for relaxation and all things pleasurable. Laodicea was known as a major commercial trade city with heavy political influences. Then, between the two was this small crossroad town, Colosse, a pagan city with a major population of Jewish immigrants. It was

about 100 miles to the East of Ephesus, but almost 1300 miles from Rome, where Paul was located when he wrote the letter.

Now why would Paul be so concerned with people he had never met? Well, as we study this letter, you'll see that a huge problem was present in the church at Colosse. Paul received a letter from Epaphras, most likely the founder of the church in Colosse, informing him of a potential problem. It was Paul's pastoral nature that led him to write this letter and offer some advice to the people about how to manage their issue. Simply put, Paul sent this letter to address the various tenants of what we commonly refer to as "The Colossian Heresy," which is like Gnosticism, a form a religion that believes in Jesus, but teaches that He is not the only way to heaven. They also accept Christians only if they have received a higher more special knowledge from God. It is this special knowledge that gains favor for them with God and is the reason for their salvation, not faith in Jesus. Since today is just the introduction message for Colossians, we'll look at the components of this heresy in more detail as they come up in the text. It's important at this stage to know that Paul understood the seriousness of the problem and set out to address it head on.

Let's go ahead and have a look at a few more verses. **Read Colossians 1:3-14**

Paul, not truly knowing the people in Colosse followed his greeting with an offering of thanksgiving to God. What, or I should say, for whom was he thanking God? That's right, he is thanking God them; more specifically, for their faith, love, and hope, which is three key elements of Christianity. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:13.** Paul was also careful to not thank God for their knowledge. Why? Because, he didn't want them to confuse, "knowing" Christ with the heretical teaching that salvation required some "secret knowledge" given only to those God chose. Have no doubts, the Colossian Heresy was extremely dangerous. So much so that even in the prayer found here in these opening verses, Paul lovingly reminded the church at Colosse about the truths of the Gospel message.

Paul throughout this letter combats the Colossian Heresy. In his opening prayer he informed them that that accumulation of knowledge was a wasteful and empty pursuit. He wanted them to understand that it was the knowledge of God's will in their life that would bring them spiritual wisdom and divine understanding. He asked the Father to help them with that. He also wanted them to see that their faith-based good works would bear more fruit than the new things they were being taught. Paul wanted them to trust what they had already been taught about God and be wise when comparing it with the heretical teachings present in their church. Guess what, and this is the main point for today's message; There is no secret knowledge about salvation. God has revealed all we need to know about His plan to save us, and this knowledge is available for everyone. The only way to be saved is to turn from a life of sin and hand your heart over to Jesus. When you do this, Paul in verses 12-14 lists five things you'll gain from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

1. You get to share in the inheritance of Christ.

2. You are permanently rescued from Hell.
3. You are granted access to God's kingdom, which is heaven.
4. You are redeemed, which is freedom from sin and from God's wrath.
5. You are also forgiven, which means that the blood of Christ on calvary has covered all the things past, present, and future that you need to be forgiven for.

What a wonderful list of things God gives to those who put their faith in His Son, Jesus. Boy, I sure do hope you can leave here today with those things in your possession. If you know you are about to leave without those blessings, but you would rather not, then I encourage you to come forward during our time of invitation and make the decision to choose Jesus.

Let me close by making another statement about the things we've learned today concerning heresy. The Colossian Heresy is a casserole dish made from several different heresies combining Asian religious practices, Greek philosophies, Jewish traditions and ceremonies, and Christian truth. Sounds a lot like some of the religious philosophies we still have today. Of the ingredients, only Jesus is "the truth, and the way, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Him." If you believe anything other than this, then you too are putting your trust in heresy instead of the truth that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Invitational Hymn: I'd Rather Have Jesus by Gaither Music