

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

COLOSSIANS LESSON 1 (Chapter 1)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (Col. 1:2). I’m Timothy Sparks.

Ben Bailey:

And I’m Ben Bailey. Welcome to our study of the Book of Colossians. As we study Colossians, we’re going to learn that it is a book that exalts Christ as Head of the church, and that urges us to exalt Christ in our lives. These lessons are being brought to you by loving, caring members of the churches of Christ. The church of Christ in your area would like for you to stop by and visit with them. They would be happy study the Bible with you. We, too, would like to help you in your study of God’s Word. We are making this lesson available on CD or DVD. You might like to have a copy of it for yourself, or you might like to give it to a friend or relative to help them with their study of God’s Word. Most of our lessons are available in either CD or DVD formats. Lessons on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and other books are available. We will gladly make these available to you free of charge. We also have a four-lesson Bible correspondence course, if you would like to make use of it. It is an easy yet effective way for you to study the Bible. It will come to you in the mail (free of charge), and you can send it back in a self-addressed stamped envelope. It’s a good way to study, to learn, and to come to know God better. If you would like to enroll, you can go to our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form that you will find there, and we will be happy to assist you in whatever way we can.

Timothy Sparks:

In the Book of Ephesians, we learned about the church of the Christ. Now, we’re going to learn about the Christ of the church. In Colossians, the overall theme is the supremacy and the superiority of Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18 teaches us that Christ has the preeminence. He alone has first place. He is the One Who must rule and reign in the lives of Christians. That message is at the heart and core of the Book of Colossians. We’re also going to learn from passages such as Colossians 3:16 that Christ should dwell in our hearts “richly.” That means that Christ is the One Who should be the focal point, the center, of our lives, because we are “made complete” in Christ (Col. 2:10). Everything we say, do, or think should radiate around Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best illustration I could give to you to summarize the Book of Colossians would be to ask you to draw a circle and put a dot right in the middle of it. That circle should represent the Christian’s life. The dot in the middle should represent Christ. I repeat: Everything we say, do, or think should radiate around, and focus on, Jesus Christ, Who is the center-

piece of the Christian's life. Paul is telling Christians that they need "Christ **only**," not "Christ **plus**."

Ben Bailey:

Christ must indeed be the focal point of every Christian's life. Paul knew that the Colossians were facing some serious struggles. Judaizing teachers were troubling them. There were certain people who were teaching that human philosophy was more important than the doctrine of Christ. And there were some who were advocating manmade doctrines of their own. Paul points out that Christians must place **Christ and His doctrine** as the focal point of their lives. Paul begins his epistle by offering thanks for those Christians in Colossae. He says, "We give thanks, praying always for you" (Col. 1:3). He urges them to remember the hope of Heaven that has been laid up for them (vs. 5). He's thankful for them, and for the hope they have as Christians. Here, we learn a vital lesson. Christians ought to be thankful for each other. We ought to pray and thank God for fellow Christians who can be a source of strength for us. Think of all the things that Paul would have faced alone, had he not had faithful brethren in Christ to help him. Luke, Timothy, Silas, Barnabas—all of these were faithful companions of Paul. And Paul was thankful for each one of them! Today, we, too, ought to be thankful for close friends and family who are members of the church. Jesus had a few close friends, such as Peter, James, and John. He was grateful for their faith, and encouraged them, as no doubt, they encouraged Him. Paul therefore begins this letter by expressing how thankful he is for those Christians in the city of Colossae.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul tells the Christians in Colossae that there is a hope laid up for them in Heaven, and that they had heard of this hope "in the word of the truth of the Gospel" (Col. 1:5). Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:32). If we continue in His Word, we are His disciples, and we can know the truth, and the truth will set us free. So we hear about the hope in Heaven laid up for us in the word of the truth of the Gospel. Gospel means "good news." The good news is that you don't have to die, go to Hell, and be lost eternally. Instead, you can be saved, delivered, redeemed, and go to Heaven to be with God throughout all eternity. In Colossians 1:6, Paul says that the Gospel had been preached "in all the world." He mentions in Colossians 1:23 that the Gospel was preached to "every creature under Heaven." We're going to see a number of times throughout the New Testament that every accountable soul had had an opportunity to hear and obey the Gospel of Christ. Paul says, "They have not all obeyed the gospel..., but have they not heard?" (Rom. 10:16-18). Then Paul answers his own question when he says, "Yes, indeed." He says that the Gospel had gone into all the world. Look how evangelistic the people of the first century were. They were so zealous and so enthusiastic that they took the Gospel to the then-known world at that time. Every human had the opportunity. As Paul says, they didn't all obey. But at least they heard. That's the Great Commission that Jesus gives to Christians (Mt. 28:19-20).

Ben Bailey:

That's also one of the things for which Paul was praying in Colossians 1:9. Paul said that he wanted the Christians in Colossae to come to a knowledge of "God's will and spiritual understanding." Paul was concerned about the people's spiritual state. We often pray that people will recover from physical sickness, but do we pray as often for their spiritual

needs? That's what Paul prayed about—that they would know God's will, and come to a spiritual understanding of what that will meant in their lives. Our prayer and our hope today is that if you are not a child of God, you will come to an understanding of what God's will is, and that you will understand how God has made a plan for you to become a Christian and to understand spiritual matters. We are concerned about your soul. We want you to know and understand what God's will is for your life. The Bible is a book that **can** be understood. The things that we say today are said out of love for your soul, with the hope that you can come to a better understanding of God's will. God has **always** wanted His people to understand what His will is for them. The Bible says in Ephesians 5:17, "Do not be ignorant, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Paul encouraged Timothy, "Study to show your self approved unto God a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We learn a great lesson in Acts 17:11 from those who were in Berea. It is said that they "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word of God with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were true." Whenever we speak to you from God's Word, **our** responsibility is to speak the truth. **Your** responsibility is to search the Scriptures to see if what we are saying is true to the Word of God, and then to obey that Word and to live your life accordingly.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul tells the Christians in Colossae that his desire is that they "walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him" (Col. 1:10). To "walk worthy of the Lord" is to live in accordance with the Lord and His will. Paul stressed this to the Christians at Ephesus as well when he urged them to "walk worthy of the calling of which we have been called" (Eph. 4:1). We need to strive to please God in all that we do. Jesus said, "I always seek to do those things that are pleasing to Him" (Jn. 8:29). Jesus was about His Father's business, even at the tender age of twelve. In Luke 2:49, we find Him asking, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Jesus was striving to be fully pleasing to God. If you go through this life, and you're not pleasing to God, He's not going to be able to say on the Day of Judgment "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." However, if we are pleasing to the Lord, we will hear those words of commendation. There's a great day coming for the faithful child of God who walks in accordance with God's Word. But there is a sad day coming for those who have not obeyed God—a day of doom and despair, at which time they will be separated from the Lord. Jesus is the One Who must take first place. Our focus must be on Him, and on Him alone. That, in fact, is the very thing that Paul is stressing to the Christians in Colossae.

Ben Bailey:

In verses 12 and 13 of chapter 1, Paul reminds the Christians exactly what Jesus had done for them. He tells them that God, working through Christ, had qualified them to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We are partakers of God's eternal inheritance. It is God Who has "delivered us from the power of darkness and has conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (vs. 13). What a powerful statement! What has Jesus done for us? What has He accomplished on behalf of all humanity? He has qualified us to be "a partaker in God's eternal inheritance." He qualifies us when we meet His terms of pardon. He has made the necessary sacrifice, and as a result, He has delivered us from the power of darkness. Think of the deepest, darkest place you can imagine. How scary, how lonely, and how dark it must be. The light of Jesus Christ can shine right into the middle of that place, as God delivers you from the power of darkness,

the power of Satan, and the horror of sin. That is not all He does, however. He not only qualifies us, He not only delivers us from darkness, but He also translates (or conveys) us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus said, "I will build My Church." Then He said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Peter was going to open the kingdom (the church) for occupancy. The church and the kingdom often are used as synonyms. God is the One Who conveys us into His kingdom, the church. I find this idea to be very interesting, especially as there are some in religion today who say that the kingdom has not yet arrived. There are many teaching today that we, as Christians, are not actually part of the kingdom because the kingdom is not here. It's a future event. The idea is that there's a time coming when Christ is going to establish a reign on Earth that will last a thousand years (a concept known as premillennialism). It is at that time, supposedly, that the kingdom will be established here on Earth. There is a serious problem with that idea, however. Colossians 1:13 says in the first century, they were **already** a part of God's kingdom! Premillennialism is a hoax. The idea that the kingdom has not yet been established is wrong! Jesus established the kingdom when He established the church. He established the church in Acts 2. In verse 47 of that chapter, we learn that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. So, yes, today there **is** a kingdom. We are not waiting for a 1,000-year reign. We're living in the last days right now! Paul said, "These are the last times." (1 Tim. 4:1-2). We learn from Hebrews 1:1-2 that God, "in times past spoke to the Fathers by the prophets, but has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." When we think about all that God has done for us, it ought to motivate us to walk worthy according to the Gospel, as Paul said in Colossians 1:10.

Timothy Sparks:

We learn also from Colossians 1:14 that in Christ, we have redemption—the forgiveness of our sins. Redemption means that we are "bought back." In Him, we have our redemption. If you are not in Christ, you're not redeemed. It is only in Christ that redemption can take place. In Ephesians 1:7, Paul makes a similar statement, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Redemption takes place "in Christ." We learn from 2 Timothy 2:10 that salvation is "in Christ." Peter said in Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Salvation is available **only** through Jesus. Christ Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is our way. He is our access. He is the truth. He is the only means by which we can come to know how to go to Heaven. And He is the life. He is the way that we can learn how to live in the here and now, and then have eternal life to come. As we look at Colossians 1:14, we see that this concept of redemption, or forgiveness of sins, takes place when we come to believe in Christ, repent of our sins, confess Him, and have His blood applied at the point of our baptism (Acts 2:38). Paul mentions we have our redemption in Christ through the forgiveness of our sins. How is it that we receive redemption and the forgiveness of our sins? Paul reminds the Christians at Colossae to whom he is speaking that they had "redemption and forgiveness of sins." They automatically would think back to the day when they were baptized into Christ—the occasion when their sins were washed away. That's what Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16 when he told him to "arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Paul wants to remind them of their redemption, and of their proper place "in Christ."

Ben Bailey:

Paul returns to the focal theme of Christ. In verse 15, Paul goes back once again to the theme of the Book of Colossians—“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). Paul says of Christ, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” If you want to know what God is like, what His character is like, and what you should think of when you think about God, then you should think of Christ. God was saying, in essence, “Here He is. This is My Son, and He and I are alike.” Christ is the image, the impression, of what God is really like. Jesus left Heaven and came to Earth as God in the flesh (Mt. 1:21). He is the firstborn over all creation. Paul says in verse 16 that Christ is also the Creator. “By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” Jesus played an active part in creation. We learn from Genesis 1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” But as we study further, we learn that Jesus had an active part in that creation. John 1:1 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Who is this Word, this Logos? The answer is found in verse 14—“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father.” Jesus Christ had a very important role in creation. It was because of His active part that the world was created, and that all things exist. Why is Paul telling us this? He wants to create reverence and respect, and to help us want to give Jesus the preeminent place in our lives that He alone deserves. Why should I give Christ the preeminent place in my life? Because He is my Creator, and because I am His creation. I don’t tell **God** what to do. He tells **me** what to do. It’s like a father-child relationship. God is our Father, and we are His children. We honor, respect, and look up to Him. We give Him the place of honor because He created us. We owe Him that respect.

Timothy Sparks:

Paul continues in verse 18 by saying, “Christ is the head of the body, the church.” Paul is saying that God has placed Jesus over the church. The church owes its allegiance to Christ. He is the firstborn of the creation. This does not mean that Jesus Himself was created. It means that He is the creative agency. He is the beginning of God’s creation. He is the Originator, as we learn from John 1:1-3 (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”). Jesus is the means by which God brought everything to fruition. He therefore occupies His rightful place as Head over the church. We learn from passages such as Ephesians 5:23-27 that the church is the bride of Christ. Earlier in Ephesians, we learn that the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). In Colossians 1, we learn that Christ is the Head of the church. The church, therefore, must function and operate as Jesus dictates. Just as our body operates based upon our head and our thinking process, so Jesus is the Head of the church. He is the One Who directs and instructs the rest of the body. Whenever your head (brain) tells your hand to do something, your hand does it. The head tells the hand, and the hand obeys. When Jesus gives instructions to the church, the church must obey. We learn from this very important passage that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. He is the first to die—and to be raised—never to die again! Although Satan tried to keep Jesus from being able to secure salvation for us by keeping Him in the grave, Jesus arose. He tore away the bars of death. Because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, Paul tells Christians that we, too, have the hope of also being resurrected (1 Cor. 15). Thus, Christ has every reason

to receive the first place in your life, in my life, and in the life of the church. He alone must have the preeminence, the priority, and the supremacy. All things belong to Christ.

Ben Bailey:

The only way we can be saved is by being “in Christ.” Paul said in Colossians 1:21-22, “You, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.” The only way to get back to God is through Jesus. In Colossians 1:27, Paul spoke of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The only hope we have in this life is found in Jesus Christ. He is our hope. He is our peace. He is the only way we can have access to God. Why should I give Christ preeminence? If it weren’t for Jesus, I would have absolutely no hope. I couldn’t go to Heaven. If it weren’t for the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this world would be a pitiful, hopeless place in which to live. Today, if you are not a Christian, we encourage you to become one. Why would you ever want to live without God in your life? Why would you want to do anything in life that doesn’t put Jesus first? God has provided mankind with a plan of salvation. As Paul said, God “desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). It is God’s desire for you that you live with Him in eternity forever. We do that by believing in Jesus as the Son of God. Do you believe in Christ as Lord and Savior? Jesus said, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24). But belief alone isn’t enough. There are many today who say that all you have to do is “believe in the Lord and you’ll be saved.” The only time the phrase “belief alone” or “faith only” occurs in your Bible is James 2:24 (“We are justified by works, and not by faith only”), and there it is condemned. There is more to being saved than just belief. We have to repent. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” We have to change our thinking from a sinful lifestyle to a righteous lifestyle. We also must confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” The Bible also teaches that we must be baptized into Christ. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Jews who had crucified Jesus cried out, “Men and brethren what must we do?,” the answer was clear—“Repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins.”

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Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR COLOSSIANS LESSON 1 (CHAPTER 1)

1. The Book of Ephesians is about “the church of the Christ.” What is the Book of Colossians about?
2. What is the overall theme of the Book of Colossians?
3. Paul told the Christians in Colossae that they had “hope laid for them in Heaven.” According to Colossians 1:5, how did they know about that hope?
4. According to Colossians 1:6 and 1:23, to whom had the Gospel been preached by the time Paul penned the Book of Colossians?
5. We learn from his comments in chapter 1 that Paul was concerned about the spiritual state of some in the church in Colossae. Based on his statement in Colossians 1:9, what was it for which it prayed?
6. What is the connection between Ephesians 5:17 and 2 Timothy 2:15?
7. Paul told the Christians in Colossae that they should “walk worthy of the Lord” (1:10). What does the phrase “walk worthy of the Lord” mean?
8. In Colossians 1:12, Paul wrote that Christ qualifies us “to be partakes of the inheritance of the saints in light.” What did he mean by that statement?
9. What is the relationship between the church and the kingdom?
10. According to Colossians 1:13, is the kingdom something that is to arrive in the future, or is it here now?
11. Hebrews 1:1-2 points out that in the past, God spoke to people through His prophets. How does He speak to us today?
12. What does the word “redemption” mean?
13. According to Ephesians 1:7, how do Christians receive redemption?
14. Paul told Timothy that salvation is found “in Christ” (2 Tim. 2:10). How does one get “in Christ”? Support your answer with Scripture.
15. Genesis 1:1 speaks of God as having created the heavens and the Earth. According to Colossians 1:16, was anyone else involved in the act of creation? If so, who was it?
16. Ephesians 1:22-23 teaches us that the church is the body. According to Colossians 1:18, who is its head?
17. According to Colossians 1:21-22 and John 14:6, there is only one way we can find our way back to God. What is it?