

## **Colossians**-by Nathan White

### **Chapter 1**

Paul opens with a greeting typical of his writings and moves into a lengthy prayer of thanksgiving for them. He is moved deeply by their love and faith, born of the hope they have in Christ. He is excited to see them growing in grace, not by moving on from the gospel, but by growing in their understanding of it. He desires that they continue to bear fruit, offering a prayer for their strengthening that is rooted firmly in the gospel. This prayer on their behalf is based explicitly on the message that God “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 then writes beautifully about the preeminence of Christ in all things, how he is the image of the invisible God, the head of the church, the firstborn from the dead ensuring our resurrection, and how he reconciles us to God by his blood. Paul keeps the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ at the forefront of his writing. As you might expect, he will continue to do so all the way through the letter.

### **Chapter 2**

Keeping the Christ-centeredness of the book, Paul reminds the Colossians that all the treasures of God are ours in Christ (v. 3). What that practically means is growth doesn't come by moving beyond Christ, but by walking in faith. Just as we received Christ in faith, we grow by walking in faith. Paul encourages the Colossians to remember the freedom that truth entails. If all that is God's is given to us in Christ, we don't have to pursue some special knowledge apart from him. In Christ, the fullness of deity dwells bodily and any philosophy that convinces us we need something else for reconciliation with God is a philosophy that is empty and deceitful. In Christ we have been given the Holy Spirit, we have been united to God, and our sin has been dealt with. Because of the overwhelming sufficiency of Christ, we should allow no one to convince us that we need to add anything to his work. No visions, no secret knowledge, no asceticism can do more to make us right with God than Christ already has.

### **Chapter 3**

Because of the great work that Christ has done for us, we should happily set our attention and affections wholly on him. Paul again emphasizes that growth does not come by looking away from Christ to other things, but by focusing intently on him. Because our sin has been nailed to the cross and fully atoned for and because we have been resurrected with Christ, we should endeavor to put to death that which is earthly in us. We should put away the sin for which God's wrath was poured out on Christ. But Paul calls the Colossians not only to take off their sin, he also calls them to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. He calls them to lovingly bear with one another. There is a fascinating thread which holds all of these attributes together. None can be exercised in isolation. Practicing these things *has to happen in the context of a community*. Sanctification requires the local church. We must work out our salvation with the other people for whom Christ died.

### **Chapter 4**

Paul moves to close the letter by asking for prayer to help him proclaim Christ even while in prison. Even as he ends his letter, he keeps Christ at the forefront of his message. He then calls them to walk wisely before those outside of the church, but he doesn't tell them to do so just for the sake of being moral. He calls them to walk wisely and make the best use of their time so

that they can answer opponents of the faith. Even his final exhortation to act wisely is connected to honoring and exalting Christ. Paul's concern as he closes his letter to the Colossians is for Christ to be proclaimed. He wants to see Christ's Church to honor him well. We even see this in the commendations of individual workers. He makes a point not only to send greetings from fellow believers to the Colossians, but to speak highly of those who have served the cause of Christ well. Paul ends his letter as he began it: with an encouraging emphasis on the work of Christ for, in, and through his people.

**-Reflecting on Colossians-**

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in Colossians. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish Colossians before we move forward?

*"You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip." Psalm 18.35,36*