

The Power of Hope

Colossians 1:1-8*

Colossians has a distinctive message, one that is extremely relevant to us today. It is primarily a letter of hope: hope that comes by the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. False teaching had arisen in the Colossian church, and if left unchecked would threaten the security of this fellowship. Paul's letter was written as a response to this urgent need.

Three purposes seem to have been in Paul's mind as he wrote Colossians. First, he sought to show the deity and supremacy of Christ in the face of the Colossian heresy (1:18; 2:9). Second, he wanted to lead believers into spiritual maturity (1:28; 2:6-7). Third, he wanted to inform them about his state of affairs and elicited their prayers on his behalf (4:2-8).²

The identity of those who have hope (1-2)

The source of your hope (3-5)

The fruit of your hope (6)

The proof of your hope (7-8)



LETTER PROFILE

- Possibly the first of Paul's prison epistles (A.D. 60-62)
- The church at Colossae was not founded or visited by Paul but probably founded by Epaphras.
- Philemon and Onesimus were from Colossae.
- The letter was written to encourage a group of believers who were growing spiritually.
- The letter was written to warn a group of believers who were being confronted with false teaching which undermined the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ.
- Very similar in style and vocabulary to Ephesians.

CITY PROFILE—COLOSSE

- Located one hundred miles east of Ephesus.
- Together with Hierapolis and Laodicea, Colossae was part of a tri-city area in the Lychus valley in what is now south central Turkey.
- Once an important city, by the time of Paul, Colossae had become a small market town.
- The population was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles (11,000 Jews by A.D. 62).
- The cities of the Lychus valley were prosperous despite frequent earthquakes.

AUTHOR PROFILE—PAUL

- Jewish-born in Tarsus, near the Lebanese border in modern Turkey.
- Roman citizen.
- Prominent, highly educated Jewish religious leader (Pharisee).
- Dramatically converted to Christianity (A.D. 34/35)
- Primary apostle to the Gentiles, tireless missionary.
- Imprisoned and executed in Rome, (A.D. 66-67), during Nero's reign.

"It is not until a man finds his faith opposed and attacked that he really begins to think out the implications of that faith. It is not until the Church is confronted with some dangerous heresy that she begins to realize the riches and the wonder of orthodoxy."

—William Barclay

* These notes are prayerfully presented to aid, not replace, your personal study of God's word.

¹ Norman L. Geisler, "Colossians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 668.