

Paul, along with Timothy, writes the letter of Colossians to a church body he's never met, only heard of, through the interactions of a faithful brother. It's a church that's experienced a mingling of philosophies, primarily because of its location, roughly 100 miles to the east of Ephesus, on a trade route where Eastern and Western thoughts collide. Throughout the book we learn of Paul's attempt to combat the Colossian heresy of Gnosticism. In doing so, he points the believers to Jesus and their identity in Him.

Colossians 1:1-14

Thanksgiving and Prayer

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Some days it's difficult to be thankful. Sinful decisions and negative distractions aren't required to draw us off course either. More commonly it's simply the busy rush of life, deadlines and responsibilities that pull our attention away from expressing gratitude toward God and others.

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHAT are you most thankful for today?

HOW often would you say you express your thankfulness to those around you?

WHEN you consider gratitude toward God, specifically, what are the first things that tend to come to mind?

WHAT connections are you able to make between your attitude of thankfulness and the Lord's grace in your life?

HOW does the specific work of the Lord in your life affect how you live each day?

Colossians 1:1-14

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Read Colossians 1:1-14

OBSERVATION

How does Paul address himself and his audience in vs. 1-2?

According to vs. 3-8, what is Paul thankful for?

Explain what specifically has come to the Colossians (vs. 5) and what it is producing (vs. 6)?

Describe what we learn about Epaphras from vs. 7-8?

In vs. 9, what does Paul say he and Timothy are doing on behalf of those in Colossae and *why*?

What are they asking the Lord to do (vs. 9)?

List the imperatives (commands) Paul gives his readers in vs. 10-12?

Paraphrase Paul's final reminder in vs. 13-14.

INTERPRETATION

How would you describe Paul's opening tone of this letter and why?

What does it mean to be a "saint"? Why is this title so significant to the Colossians, and who else might be considered a saint today? (See 1 Peter 2:9-10).

How would you explain the relationship between faith, hope, and love, as it's described here in vs. 3-8?

Who was Epaphras? How would you describe his relationship with those in Colossae? Consider chapter 4:12 .

What are the two connecting words used in vs. 9 creating the "cause" in the previous text, and the "effect" in the text that follows?

Describe Paul's response ("effect") to what is true ("cause") of the Colossians in vs. 9-12. In other words, because of what's true of the Colossians, what does Paul choose to do (vs. 9) and *what for*, specifically?

Why do you think Paul ends this section as he does in vs. 13-14? What relationship does his attitude toward God and his prayer life for others share?

APPLICATION

What adjustments are needed in your life regarding *who* you are in Him and *how* you pray for others?