

DATE: **14th April 2026 - "Thanksgiving and Prayer" Colossians 1 v 1-14**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brothers^[a] in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your^[a] behalf⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, 12 giving thanks^[a] to the Father, who has qualified you^[a] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

We have two important questions to ask ourselves as we begin our look into Paul's letter to the Colossians.

- 1). What place does Jesus occupy in relation to the creation and the church?
- 2). Who can find salvation in Him, and how can they find it?

THE SETTING

Colossae was a major textile centre located in western Asia Minor in the Lycus river valley. The city was especially prosperous during the Persian period (sixth to fourth centuries BC), but its influence as a commercial centre had diminished somewhat by the first century AD. Apparently, Paul did not establish the church at Colossae. Perhaps his converts from nearby cities did.

False teachers were at work in the church at Colossae as we shall see when we get to Chapter 2 and Paul saw them as a threat, just as they are today in their devious presentation of a false doctrine that removed Jesus from His central position in revelation and salvation. Also, they perverted the gospels teaching about how people could be redeemed.

This passage is essential for us to develop an understanding of the nature of the one God known in three Persons. We pray and give thanks to the Father. His grace in providing salvation is the heart of the gospel (v6). He fills us with spiritual wisdom to know and do His will. We grow in His knowledge and gain strength from His power. Even though we may not be Jews, God gives us the necessary qualifications to be His heirs, participating in the kingdom, which belongs to the beloved Son. God has rescued us and reconciled us through Christ.

Christ is the Father's Son in whom we have faith and whose ministers we are. We seek to live lives worthy of His example so we may fully please Him. He is the agent of our redemption and forgiveness. The Spirit is the source of the love which characterizes God's church.

The ultimate purpose of the gospel is to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ and lead them to grow and mature in that relationship (1 Peter Ch 2 v 1-3). God's concern is not only for the salvation of the lost but also for the ongoing, regular spiritual growth of the saved. The failure to grow spiritually often produces theological and moral heresy (1 Cor Ch 3 v 1-3). The proclamation of the gospel is God's safeguard for believers intended to encourage us in spiritual growth and perseverance.

Paul in his many letters to churches across the whole area of the Mediterranean as we know it today, inevitably gives thanks for the highly valued groups of Christians that form the different churches. Gratitude characterised his life. In fact, he obeyed his own command to give thanks "in all circumstances" (1 Thes Ch 5 v18). Christian community and fellowship are very much reasons for thanksgiving. What Paul had done was to take a normal form of Greek letters and transform it into Christian prayer. Correspondence expressing gratitude to God for the recipients encourages them, cements relationships, and joins separated people in worship of God. Christian's thanks go to God through Jesus, our greatest reason for gratitude.

Heavenly hope is the basis for saintly service(Eph Ch1 v15). Love, "does" more than it "feels". God's people love one another. Others come to know about this love through the deeds of love we do for each other. Such loving action brings joy and thanksgiving to God's people. Saints are holy ones because Christ's love impels us to action.

The revelation of God's truth produces growth and response to grace and redemption. Preaching the gospel of hope and love is one means of God's revelation. Hope that is anchored in the glories of heaven inspires faith and love for living today. The basis of future, heavenly hope is the good news of the Word of truth.

God's Grace. Salvation involves understanding that God is on our side because He has chosen to show us grace rather than absolute justice. The gospel of grace is the power of God unto salvation (Rom Ch 1 v16). As the gospel goes all over the World it breaks down all barriers: religious, cultural, and racial. This glorious reality brings people to faith in Christ and bears fruit for God's glory.

God gives His Spirit to those who have faith in His son Jesus (verse 4). The spirit exercises a personal, moral, transforming influence upon us, so we become people of love. This is God's ultimate purpose for us (Matt Ch 22 v 34-40) because it makes possible the common covenant life (fellowship) shared by God and His people. Love is the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal Ch 5 v 22).

Paul called Epaphras a fellow slave and a faithful servant (diakonos) of Christ Jesus. All Christians are ministers of Christ; all who minister in His name are highly esteemed. The greatest in the kingdom is the one who stooped to help others (Rom Ch 1v1 & Eph Ch3 v7).

Epaphras was a minister (Greek diakonos) of Christ. (Eph Ch 6 v 21 & 1 Thes Ch 3 v2). Deacon originally meant table waiters or servants (John Ch 2 v 5 & 9). The early church leaders saw themselves as servants of the new covenant (2 Cor Ch 3 v6), of Christ (2 Cor Ch 11 v 23), of God (2 Cor Ch 6 v 4), of the gospel (Eph Ch 3 v 7), or of the church (Col Ch 1 v 25). These leaders followed Christ's call for greatness by becoming servants (Mark Ch 10 v 43) (Greek diakonos). Eventually deacons became one of the two main leadership positions in the church along with the pastors, who would be called overseers or bishops and elders.

To live the Christian life, we must receive God's strength. He has all power so we need not worry the supply will run dry. In troubled times His strength provides the patience we need to continue growing in Christ rather than giving up when troubles or difficulties come our way.

The kingdom of God is the kingdom of Jesus. Those who have received His redemption and forgiveness are members of the kingdom. Humans normally live under the power or tyranny of evil or sin. Satan rules such lives. God however has defeated the dark powers and led us away to a new homeland, that of the kingdom where His beloved Son rules. There we experience the freedom of His redemption and forgiveness from sin and guilt.

Salvation is thus a present experience of the new living conditions that we would not want to relinquish.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church-based, morning home group on Tuesday 14th April 2026. All scripture is from the ESV Translation.

