



## Colossians - Chapter 1 verses 1 to 14

## We always thank God

It's always worth reading Paul's opening greetings. We always sign our names at the end of letters. Paul always introduces himself with an appropriate description of himself (take a look at other letters for comparison). He introduces himself as 'an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God' (v1). He's not really pulling rank here but he wants the locals to know that what he says has authority. It is to be taken seriously and not to be ignored.

Take some time to greet one another at the start of a New Year and ask God to speak to you through the book of Colossians.

Ask God to make his authoritative word clear and exciting through the coming year

Paul had been in Ephesus debating the faith in the hall of Tyrannus for two years (Acts 19:9 and 10). It is possible that Epaphrus heard Paul there and went home to Colossae to plant a church.

Paul's persistence in Ephesus, despite opposition, is clear. Debating every day must have been very wearing for him.

Talk about times you found it hard to be persistent or where God has given you the power to be persistent.

Paul's greeting is very positive and encouraging – 'to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ'.

- Holy not because they are good but because they knew God had set them apart
- Faithful because they were battling away trying to follow Christ.

And his 'grace and peace' phrase is very common in Paul's writing.

- Grace – a God-like patience knowing how patient God is with us
- Peace – a great sense of living for God in this secular world

Are our greetings to one another too 'secular'? Should we say things like 'grace and peace'? Should we be distinctive in the way we describe our brothers and sisters? Should these notes be addressed to 'the holy and faithful people of (say) Oliver's Battery'

Paul's positive tone continues in verse 3. He says 'he has heard about them' (v4) which convinces scholars that Paul never went to Colossae. But Paul is clear he has a real love and concern for the Christians there. He is thankful to God for them and he prays for them.

Do we thank God often enough for the people that surround us?

Could you spend time in your group saying thank you for each person in the group – make sure you don't leave anyone out !

Paul commends them for their faith, hope and love. Their faith was new to them so to have their hope built on that faith was commendable. And they needed hope in this era of growing anti-Christian persecution. So battling with false teachers and fearing persecution, as they had to do, made it hard to keep their faith in Christ going.

When we are surrounded by a world which often ignores Jesus Christ, what are the things that make our faith harder to sustain.

Do we talk about our eternal hope often enough or are we too wound up in the 'here and now'?

How is 'our love for the saints best expressed'?

Paul then gives them a bigger picture. He reminds them that the good news came to them (v5 & 6) but it is also bearing fruit 'all over the world'. It is growing all over the world just like it is for you in Colossae. And that is due to faithful men like Epaphras who was almost certainly the leader in Colossae who had brought the gospel to his home town having heard Paul's teaching in Ephesus.

Do we think too much about the church in our own back yard rather than getting to know what God is doing all over the world?

Can we be too parochial and less missional?

Should we all have a 'mission project' that we support and pray for?

And there's something more that Paul prays for. He asks that God will 'fill them with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding' (v9). That has a purpose – that they 'may live a life for the Lord and please him in every way'. He wants them to

- Bear fruit in every good work
- Grow in the knowledge of God
- Be strengthened with all power
- Have good endurance and patience
- Joyfully give thanks to the Father.

This is Paul's passionate longing for people who he has never met. How much more then should we pray for our friends who we are meeting with in the same way.

The actions listed above should be our longing for ourselves. Why not pray for yourself?

## THE DOWNLOAD VERSE

The teaching sessions in Download (14's to 18's) for this term are also centred on Colossians. Obviously, everybody is welcome to use this section but this is a verse that our Downloaders (and all of us) can think about through the week.

*'For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves in who we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins'*

Take some time this week to reflect on what Jesus has done for you and **THANK HIM**