

Colossians 1.¹⁻²

'In Christ'

Background

Paul's letter to the church at Colossae is something special!

It's special for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the unparalleled focus on the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ which pervades the whole letter (of course, all Paul's letters are very much Christ-centred, but in this letter that Christ-centredness is all the more pronounced).

It's special, too, as being the only letter written by Paul to a church where that church is not one (apparently) he ever visited. Moreover, it's a 'companion piece' to the letter to the church at Ephesus, written and 'posted' at the same time (Tychicus and Onesimus were the 'postmen' – see [Col.4.7-9](#) and compare [Eph.6.21](#)); and it's likely that each of those letters was intended to be something of a 'circular' to be read in more than simply the address on the envelope. The letter to Philemon was also written, and sent, at the same time (Philemon, it seems, lived in Colossae and had been converted through Paul's ministry in Ephesus).

The letter to the Colossians, like these other letters, was written by Paul from 'prison' – in all likelihood (though it can't be proved conclusively) this was the 2-year 'imprisonment' in Rome referenced in Acts 28, which was more a case of his being under house arrest than an actual incarceration ([Acts 28.16](#)).

The best place

This first study concentrates on the opening two verses of the letter, the customary and formal 'greeting' at the start of a letter in those days. Paul was in Rome: his readers were in Colossae: but wherever they may have been geographically, they were all 'in Christ' – and that's the best place to be, whatever your circumstances may be!

Although these opening verses follow the customary format of a letter back in those days, they nonetheless provide a first glimpse of why Jesus is 'simply the best' and why the best place to be is indeed 'in Christ'.

While starting, therefore, with the first 2 verses of the letter to the Colossians, the daily Bible readings then pick up and expand on this theme of being 'in Christ' by following through Paul's teaching in Romans 8 which starts with the great affirmation that for those who are 'in Christ' there is now no condemnation, and ends with the climactic re-assurance that there can be no separation from the love of God that is 'in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

Start with and concentrate on '**day**' (1), accordingly. The questions accompanying each of the daily Bible readings should prompt some useful discussion, but if you haven't time for them all then I suggest you major on '**days**' (3) and (7) in addition: for each of the '**days**' (1), (3) and (7) I've added some more questions.

1) Monday 12th September – best

Read [Colossians 1.1-2](#)

“.. the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ ..” (Col.1.2)

‘Simply the best’ summarises the whole letter (quite possibly a ‘circular’) which Paul wrote to this church: Colossae itself may not have been the best place in the world to live – but to be ‘in Christ’ certainly is! Grace and peace in abundance are yours.

What does it mean to be ‘in Christ’?

How does that happen? How does a person come to be ‘in Christ’?

How did that happen in your own life?

In the light of what you read in these two verses, what are some of the blessings which flow to those who are ‘in Christ’?

Paul speaks of Timothy as ‘our brother’ and refers to the believers at Colossae using the same ‘family’ terminology: back in March 2020 we were resolved as a fellowship, by God’s grace to ‘be a family’: what progress have we made on that front and how might that ‘family’ life be best fostered and sustained?

Prayer: *You drew me up from the pit, O God, and set my feet upon the Rock: You called me out of the tomb and placed me ‘in Christ’. Thank You that I am a new creation!*

2) Tuesday 13th September – righteous

Read [Romans 8.1-4](#)

“.. there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ..” (Rom.8.1)

Believers are now ‘in a relationship with’ Jesus Christ, mutually committed to one another and sharing a complete oneness. What Jesus has done is therefore now all yours also. The righteous requirements of the law have all been met by Him, for us.

In what way is ‘the righteous requirement of the law’ fully ‘met in us’?

What difference(s) does it make to your living when you know that there is now no condemnation for you to face?

Prayer: *What a Friend I have in You, Lord, Jesus! How wonderful that You have borne all the condemnation on my sin and removed from me the great weight of my guilt!*

3) Wednesday 14th September – Spirit

Read [Romans 8.5-11](#)

“.. because of His Spirit who lives in you ..” (Rom.8.11)

The risen Lord Jesus dwells in the lives of His people by His Holy Spirit. That means you'll live in a different manner – it's no longer *you* who lives, but Christ who lives in you (see [Gal.2.20](#)) by His Spirit – and you'll die in a certain hope.

What does Paul write here which makes it clear that all Christians indwelt by the Holy Spirit?

To be 'in Christ' is to have 'Christ in you': what's meant by Paul when he writes in [Col.1.27](#) that 'Christ in you' is 'the hope of glory'?

In what ways has your mind been renewed and your thinking changed by the Holy Spirit's dwelling within you?

What does Paul mean when he speaks about a person being 'in the realm of the flesh'?

What's your experience of the fact that 'your body is subject to death'?

And what does Paul mean by following that statement with the assurance that 'the Spirit gives life because of righteousness' (v.10)?

Prayer: Teach me Your way, O Lord. Inform my perspective, transform my behaviour, and in all I say and do today enable me by Your Spirit to bring pleasure to You.

4) Thursday 15th September – children

Read [Romans 8.12-17](#)

".. those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God .." (Rom.8.14)

As the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt, so as a believer you have been delivered from the bondage of sin: you are no longer a slave to fear, you are a child of God – and the Spirit Himself is careful to teach you that new life of true freedom.

How can you be ruthless in putting to death 'the misdeeds of the body'?

In what ways have you shared (and might you share) in the sufferings of Christ?

Prayer: Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son, and leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is done. Give me grace to live as Your child throughout today.

5) Friday 16th September – redemption

Read [Romans 8.18-25](#)

".. we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship .." (Rom.8.23)

The best is still to come, so far as believers are concerned. Always! Our faith in Jesus is always characterised by the hope of resurrection, the 'redemption of our bodies' when at last we shall be fully and finally free. We're living now towards that day.

To what extent and in what ways should Christians be involved in care for the environment?

How does the knowledge of what you one day will be affect the way you live out your life in the here and now?

Prayer: *I'm glad to praise You, Lord, for the glorious hope You have given to us: help me to rejoice, even through the trials I face, in the knowledge of what is still to come.*

6) Saturday 17th September – purpose

Read [Romans 8.26-30](#)

".. in all things God works for the good of those who love Him .." (Rom.8.28)

In and through His risen Son, has a purpose for His people, which is sure of fulfilment: through the circumstances which come your way and by the sovereign activity and help of His Spirit, He will conform You finally to Jesus' likeness. He knows your needs!

How would you describe the purpose God has for you in Jesus, and how are you seeing that being fulfilled through 'all things' which happen?

Why can you be so sure that God will fulfil His purpose for your life?

Prayer: *Lord, how comforting and re-assuring it is to know that You have a purpose for my life and that You plan to do me good not harm, to give me hope and a future.*

7) Sunday 18th September – secure

Read [Romans 8.31-39](#)

".. in all these things we are more than conquerors .." (Rom.8.37)

Being 'in Christ Jesus our Lord' (that is, in that covenant relationship with Him) is the best and most secure place to be! You have been loved by the Almighty with an all-encompassing, everlasting love – and nothing can ultimately harm you!

What are the main ways in which your faith as a Christian is likely to be challenged, according to what Paul writes in these verses?

What are the experiences which you find hardest to cope with?

How does the knowledge that 'in all things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us' affect the way you handle difficulties?

How may you be able today to encourage your fellow believers with the truths of this passage in the face of the trials they're facing?

Prayer: *I will raise my voice in worship today, O Lord, and celebrate Your love. No love is greater! And who can stand against us when You, our God, are for us!*