

## **Introduction to Colossians**

"Doctrine." How foolish of me to take the view that "doctrine is for theologians and scholars." Consequently, my faith floundered for three decades, as I embraced Arminianism and man-centered theology by default.

The resulting burden of legalism began to crush me. I gradually jettisoned "disposable elements" of my faith, but to no avail. I eventually became a spiritual shipwreck.

I see the importance of true doctrine all over the Bible now. It was there before, but I didn't see it.

Colossians 1&2 is all about doctrine. Paul wrote it to correct the false doctrine that had infected the young church there. Some were saying that in order to be saved, you had to abide by a list of rules.

Colossians 3:1-4:6 is all about God-centered living, and applying for our faith to the way we live.

## **Chapter One**

vs 4-8 Faith in future grace results in fruit bearing in the form of love 'in the Spirit and for all the saints.'

vs 9-14 Here we go with a list of things that God does. I repeat, He does these:

He fills us with knowledge of His will, wisdom and understanding. The results of this include sanctification, fruit bearing, knowledge of God Himself, and strength.

But that we don't get confused about the source of this strength, Paul stops to remind us: it is according to His glorious might!

The list of the results of His work in us goes on: steadfastness, patience, joy, and the ability to give Him thanks (because all the glory goes to Him, since these result from His work in us).

Want proof? Here's what HE did:

Qualified us, rescued us, and transferred us!

Then, in case we still don't embrace God-centered theology, a burst of massive description of the supremacy of Christ follows:

vs 15-22 Everything seen and unseen came from Him and holds together in Him. He is preeminent over all, always has been, always will be. The entire plan of salvation begins and ends with Him, and Him only. No room for or need to add anything.

vs 23a The Big IF. A warning to those fools who think doctrine doesn't matter. Faith must be established, firm, and steadfast. An immovable faith in true future (note the word: 'hope') grace is required for reconciliation.

vs 23b-29 What does God-centered theology mean for ministry? Ministry is God-centered too!

vs 23b God made Paul a minister. Paul did not make himself a minister. In case we have a short memory, he repeats this two verses later!

vs 24 Our afflictions are God-centered as we suffer as part of Christ's body.

vs 25a see Vs 23b.

vs 25a-29 In carrying out the ministry that He bestows, we proclaim, admonish, and teach toward the end that The Big If of 23b is fulfilled. We labor and strive. But is this to be done in our own man-centered strength? No indeed! It is according to HIS power! His mighty work within us!

Note on vs 27 and speaking of His mighty work within us, vs 27 is a jewel of a verse, right up there with Romans 8: 28 and Romans 8:32. Wanna be gloriously rich? you are! He is in us! Jesus, the Preeminent One! Within me! Wow! And the ultimate in future grace: the promise of resulting glory!

## **Chapter Two**

This chapter is also about God-centered theology. Paul gets specific, and dismantles the various forms of man-centered doctrine, concluding in vs 23 that 'the commandments and teachings of men have the appearance of wisdom, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. Why? Because they are void of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

vs 1-3 What is the source of encouraged hearts, spiritual unity, assurance, and true knowledge? It is Christ Himself and no other!

vs 4-8 But men will attempt to delude, and take us captive through man-centered philosophy. We are to battle these attacks by having 'good discipline' that is based on faith that is firmly rooted, built up, and established in Christ and Christ-centered doctrine. And being found thus in Him, we overflow with gratitude. Why? The next verses make it clear:

vs 9-10 Christ is fully God in bodily form! He completes us! He is preeminent! Look at what He has done:

vs 11-15 He has freed us from bondage to the flesh, He has given us new life. He has removed the penalty of our sin, because He personally paid the penalty.

Then He triumphed over and humiliated His (and our) enemy.

vs 16-23 So, it follows that all these man-centered doctrines have no substance, since they fail to be based on the delight in and supremacy of Christ in all things. Such doctrines are dangerous, because they lead to pride and will cheat us out of our eternal reward. Self-made religion and self-abasement, and man-centered asceticism won't set us free from the flesh.

Conclusion: We are to hold fast, cling to, rely on, cherish, delight in Christ, the head, grow with a growth which is from God, not man.

### **Chapter 3**

If chapters 1&2 are about God-centered theology, chapter 3 through 4:6 is about God-centered living.

Practical instruction about living day-to-day, hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute.

vs 1-4 Christ-centered focus. Seek Him, set your mind on Him. Our life is found in Him. Then we get a monumental promise: we will be revealed with Him in glory!

vs 5-8 Christ-centered dying to self. In view of the massive promise of glory, we deliberately crucify self-centeredness: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed. anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying. The promise for those whose self-centered lives are characterized by these qualities: the wrath of God!

vs 9-10 Renewed! Change!

From: old self and evil practices.

To: New self, true knowledge, image of the Creator!

vs 11 Discrimination based on externals? No!

vs 12 Note the reminder of God-centered theology: 'chosen by God.'

vs 12-16 The characteristics of the new self: holy, beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearing, recognizing His forgiveness in forgiving others, LOVE, peace, overflowing with thankfulness and steeped in the Word.

vs 17 God-centered living in a nutshell: Everything we do or say is in His name, and demonstrates our thankful heart.

vs 18-21 God-centered family life:

Wives- be subject to your husbands.

Husbands- love your wives without bitterness.

Children- be obedient to parents so as to please the Lord.

Fathers- do not exasperate your children.

vs 22-25 God-centered working:

Workers show your subordination to the lord by being subordinate to your boss from the inside out. Another monumental promise: the reward is from the lord- an inheritance! The penalty for man-centered workers will not be overlooked!

## **Chapter Four**

vs 1 God-centered employers:

Treat your workers with justice and fairness- for you too have a Boss!

vs 2-4 Be diligent, alert and thankful in God-centered prayer. The focus of our requests: That He would act to open doors, and that He would enable us to speak His Word.

vs 5-6 Our conduct and speech are to God-centered: characterized by wisdom and grace, so outsiders will become thirsty for Him.

vs 7-16 Examples of God-centered lives:

Tychicus- beloved brother, faithful servant, fellow bond-servant in the Lord; a messenger of encouragement.

Onesimus- beloved brother, faithful.

Aristarchus, Mark, Justus- fellow workers, encouragers.

Epaphras- bond-servant, prayer laborer, one who cares deeply for God's work in the hearts of believers.

Luke- beloved.

vs 17 God-centered ministry: It is a gift from Him. We are to give it our whole-hearted attention with the goal of fulfilling it.

vs 18 In closing, Paul confirms the authenticity of the letter, requests prayer, and leaves us focused on the most God-centered concept of all: Grace!