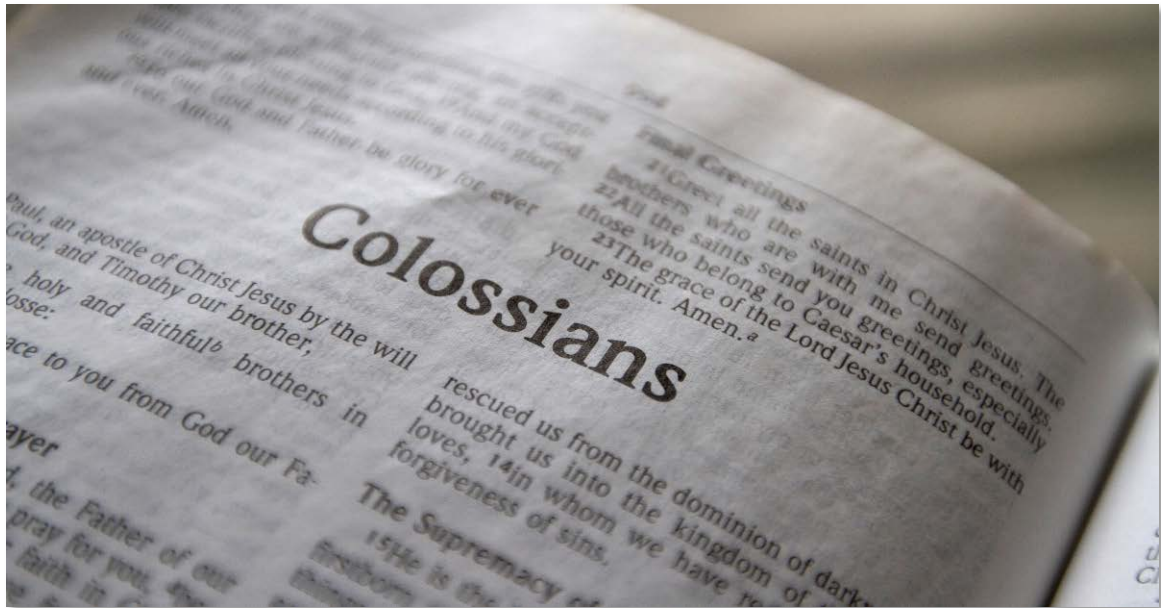


# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE COLOSSIANS 1.1-18



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

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Introduction and Purpose: Colossians 1.1-18  
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## Colossians 1.1-18: Introduction

The opening verses of Paul's letter to the Colossians wash over us like a tsunami of spiritual refreshment, as he stakes out the breadth, scope, and power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a great salvation, and Jesus is the whole of it. He has pre-eminence in all things, and He is the Head of His Body, the Church, of which we are members. The Colossians understood the power of the Gospel. They had been called to be saints of God and were conveyed into the Kingdom of His Son. They were increasing in Him and in the good works of love that mark our discipleship.

These first 18 verses should thrill us with the prospect of what is to come in this concise but powerful epistle.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Faithful in Christ

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 46.1-3*

God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
*Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled,  
*Though* the mountains shake with its swelling.

*Sing Psalm 46.1-3*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.  
Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea consume the mountain range;  
waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

*Read Colossians 1.1, 2*

*Preparation*

1. How did Paul refer to the Colossians?

2. What did he wish for them?

*Meditation*

As in each of his epistles, Paul's greeting is packed with spiritual truths. Paul identified himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (v. 1). There is authority in that salutation. Whatever Paul had to say to them, it carried divine authority. Timothy was with him as he wrote this brief but encouraging letter; Paul refers to him simply as "our brother", and thus he established a bond and connection between them and the Colossians – they were in the same family.

That family is comprised of "saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (v. 2). Paul used the word "saints" to refer to their *position* in Jesus Christ. As believers, we have been "set apart" for Him and positioned *in* Him – "hidden in Christ with God" (Col. 3.3). He is our refuge. The word *faithful* describes the *condition* of the Colossian believers. As we shall see, they *lived* like saints in the strength of Jesus, and this was a source of much thanksgiving on the part of Paul and Timothy (v. 3).

Paul summarizes his purpose in writing in the second part of verse 2: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is the divine disposition of favor toward His people. But it also His communication of that favor, together with power to make that favor active in our lives. Paul wrote to the Colossians so that they might know more of God's grace, issuing in His peace, which is the condition of all those who have been conveyed into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (v. 13; cf. Rom. 14.17, 18).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

To: The Colossians whose position in Jesus and their favorable condition caused them to live like saints by the knowledge of God's favor that made them active and powerful in the Holy Spirit.

From: Paul the apostle of Jesus by the will of God.

In Mark 2.1-12 we read the story of a paralytic. Jesus both forgave his sins and healed his body. His salvation and subsequent actions caused the people to say, “We never saw *anything* like this!”

Paul explained that Jesus said to him, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you...I now send you, to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26.16-18).

To: Us, whose position in Jesus is secure and should be causing us to be active and powerful in the Holy Spirit, living like saints. But do we? Do others observe our salvation and life and say, “We never saw anything like this”?

From Paul: who tells us that we, too, are called by the will of God. He offers us his lovely salutation, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 2). Now get busy.

We can be faithful in Christ, when we remember Who has called us out of darkness into light, and the purpose to which we have been called. Let’s set out to be the people about whom others say, “We never saw anything like this!”

#### *Reflection*

1. What do we mean by *position* in Christ and *condition* in Christ?
2. What should we want people to see of our *condition* in Christ? Why do we need grace for this?
3. How can we become more like the Colossians and those of whom people said, “We never saw anything like this”?

*[Paul] premises that he is an Apostle of Christ set apart by the will of God. From this it followed, that he did not act rashly in writing to persons that were not known by him, inasmuch as he was discharging an embassy with which God had intrusted him. For he was not bound to one Church merely, but his Apostleship extended to all. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Colossians 1.1*

*Thank You, Lord, for setting me in Jesus Christ; help me to be faithful today as I...*

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 46.4-11*

Thank the Lord that you are in Christ – safe in His refuge and strength. Praise, exalt, and glorify Him, and commit your day to serving Him in all you do.

#### *Psalm 46.4-11*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

God’s everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat’ning the earth with sore distress;  
nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.

God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God's Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth,  
shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside;  
Then He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the Lord and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail:  
Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!  
God is our stronghold, never to fail: thus may our hope and joy increase!

## 2 Reason for Thanksgiving

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 87.1, 2*

His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.  
The LORD loves the gates of Zion  
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.  
Glorious things are spoken of you,  
O city of God!

*Sing Psalm 87.1, 2*

(St. Anne: [\*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past\*](#))

Upon the holy mountains rest the footings of the Lord,  
Who loves of Israel's flock the best the keepers of His Word.

*Read Colossians 1.3-5*

*Preparation*

1. When did Paul pray for the Colossians?
2. Why did he pray for them?

*Meditation*

Paul prayed for the believers in Colossae. He said he prayed “always” for them, meaning, I think, that he prayed for them as often as they came to mind (cf. Phil. 1. He was grateful for them (v. 3), that they were faithful saints (v. 2), and that they demonstrated that faithfulness by their love for one another (v. 4). The love they bore toward one another stemmed from the hope they shared, a hope laid up for them in heaven (v. 4). Elsewhere Paul described the Christian’s hope as “the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5.2). The Christian takes his stand in this hope; that is, we engage the world and all our daily tasks from the vantage point of living for and unto the glory of God in all we do (1 Cor. 10.31).

The glory of God is the Presence of God, as He makes Himself known to us in His infinite being and might, together with all His many virtues. God manifests His glory to us, both in the Word of Scripture (2 Cor. 3.12-18) and in the works of creation (Ps. 19.1-4). The more we know of God, and the more we seek His Presence, the more we will realize His glory in this life, and the more our hope of glory in the life to come will motivate and sustain us to be faithful saints of the Lord Jesus.

The promise of the Gospel is not merely that we will go to heaven when we die. It is that we will see and know and worship God in His glory, unimpeded by any sinful obstructions or lack of spiritual power (v. 5). The Gospel we proclaim is about God and His glory, about being united with Him Who is all beauty, splendor, majesty, righteousness, peace, joy, goodness, and truth, and participating in His pleasure forever. Such a hope, fully grasped and firmly experienced, fills us with love for God, our fellow believers, and our lost and needy neighbors.

Such love should lead us all to give thanks and praise and to long for even more of the glory of God each day.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Paul and Timothy were giving thanks for God and all His precious gifts to the saints, both those of the here and now and the there and then.

And they were also thankful for the Colossian believers who were living their lives in such a way that caused others to say, “We never saw anything like this!” (Mk. 2.12) They said this because of the news that they had heard about them, “of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints” (v. 4). And they had this love for God and for others “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (v. 5). And this hope had been shared with them by other believers “which you heard in the word of the truth of the gospel...” (v. 5).

It all comes in a bundle. Others share. We hear. We believe. We share. Others believe. They share. And this all comes from the gracious hand of God. Our Reason for Thanksgiving.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph.2.4-7).

*Reflection*

1. What would it look like if you were “always” in prayer, like Paul?
2. What is the hope of glory? How can believers have that hope? What does that hope mean to you?
3. What do we mean by saying that the Gospel comes to us “all in a bundle”? How do you experience that?

*We must always take notice that he makes use of thanksgiving in place of congratulation, by which he teaches us, that in all our joys we must readily call to remembrance the goodness of God, inasmuch as everything that is pleasant and agreeable to us is a kindness conferred by him.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Colossians 1.3*

*Thank You for the Gospel, Father; help me live it in love today as I...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 87.3-7*

Praise and thank God for His Church. Pray for your own church, for churches which are experiencing persecution, and for the Church in every land, that God may fill His people with joy and empower them for bold witness to Jesus Christ.

*Sing Psalm 87.3-7*

(St. Anne: [\*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past\*](#))

For glorious things are spoken of the City of our God;  
the nations know His matchless love wher'er His feet have trod.

From south and north, from east and west they come, called by His grace;  
thus Zion stands, full strong and blessed, before the Savior's face.

The Lord will count and tally all in Jesus born again;  
then let them sing, who on Him call, “We joy in God, Amen!”



### 3 By Grace, unto Grace

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 80.4-7*

O LORD God of hosts,  
How long will You be angry  
Against the prayer of Your people?  
You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
And given them tears to drink in great measure.  
You have made us a strife to our neighbors,  
And our enemies laugh among themselves.  
Restore us, O God of hosts;  
Cause Your face to shine,  
And we shall be saved!

*Sing Psalm 80.4-7*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Laud, and Honor\*](#))

*v. 4, 5*

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?  
Shall bitter tears fall ever? O Lord, renew Your care!

*v. 6, 7*

Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress;  
renew, O Lord, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

*Read Colossians 1.6-8*

*Preparation*

1. What happened as the Gospel took root among the Colossians?
2. What is the primary fruit Paul mentions here?

*Meditation*

The Gospel comes to us by the grace of God, with the grace of God, and unto the grace of God.

In its outworking, grace is divine working power, the effect of which in those who receive it is to bring forth fruit and to increase (v. 6). This is what the Colossians were experiencing. The fruit of the Gospel is eternal life, that is, to know God and Jesus Christ, which seed is brought to and planted in us by the Spirit of God (Gal. 4.4-6). He begins to work in us (Phil. 2.13), by the Word of God, to bring forth the fruit of Jesus in us, transforming us increasingly to His likeness (2 Cor. 3.10-18).

Where the Gospel has been truly heard and received, grace bears fruit and increases. Paul learned of how the grace of God was working among the Colossians by Epaphras, his "dear fellow servant" (v. 7). In this letter, as in many of his other letters, he wants to celebrate what God has done and urge the believers on to greater increase in His grace. This increase is what all seek who have truly come to know the Lord. We want more of Jesus, more of the Father, and more of the Spirit, and less of everything else.

The "grace of God in truth" must be learned (v. 7). We must apply ourselves to hearing the Word of God, submitting to the Holy Spirit, and living as Jesus did. As we do, God meets us with His grace, so that "love in the Spirit" rises in us and spreads to all the people around us.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

What if people were talking about you?

What would they say?

Would they be accusing you of good?

Why would they be talking about you?

Daniel was talked about. His enemies were trying to do him in but “they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.” Then his enemies said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”

And because they knew that Daniel faithfully prayed in his room three times a day, they “found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.” Caught. Obeying God. (Dan. 6.4, 5, 11)

And here in the book to the Colossians these believers had been “caught” in the same act.

People were talking about them and declared to Paul about their “love in the Spirit”.

Caught. Believing in Jesus and showing love to others!

By grace, and with grace, let us be caught in the same act of love that has been among us since the day we heard and knew the grace of God in truth (v. 6).

*Reflection*

1. What do we mean by saying that grace is “divine working power”? What does it work for?
2. How was it evident that the grace of God had reached the Colossians? How about Daniel?
3. How should we expect the grace of God to empower us?

*Faith, hope and love are the nerves and sinews—they are the principal heads of the Christian religion. While Paul congratulates the Colossians on their success, he also prays that God will increase their inheritance steadily and uphold them from that day forward. By rightly dividing these concepts, Paul connects them to their powers and duties: Faith stretches toward Christ Jesus and leans on his merits, love busies itself with everything holy and excellent, and hope perseveres on account of the eternal treasure set aside for us in heaven. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Commentary on Colossians 1.3-5*

*Father, help me to stretch toward Jesus and lean on Him today, so that I will bear fruit as I...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 80.8-19*

Pray for the Church throughout the world, the “vine” God has planted, and which has often borne much fruit. Pray for revival, and for the grace and favor of God to shine on His people, that His salvation may increase and bear fruit everywhere.

*Sing Psalm 80.8-19*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Laud, and Honor\*](#))

*v. 8, 9*

You set us free from sin, Lord, and planted us in grace;  
we rooted in Your strong Word have spread from place to place.

*v. 10, 11*

Our shadow covered mountains, our branches reached the sea;  
Your grace flowed like a fountain of life, abundantly.

*vv. 12, 13*

Now You in wrath have spoken and bruised Your chosen vine.  
We languish, Lord, are broken by wrath, deserved, divine.

*vv. 14, 15*

Once more, Lord, hear our pleading: return and heal this vine!  
Look down on us, so needy, and show Your love divine!

*vv. 16, 17*

Though we be burned and perish because of Your command,  
revive us, Lord, and cherish this son of Your right hand.

*vv. 18, 19*

Then let us not return to our sinful, selfish ways,  
but call on You and learn to surround You with our praise.

## 4 How to Pray for the Saints

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 16.3*

As for the saints who *are* on the earth,  
“They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.”

*Psalm 16.3, 11*

(All to Christ: [\*Jesus Paid It All\*](#))

The saints within the earth, majestic in their day,  
delight me with the worth of all they do and say.

*Refrain, v. 11*

Make me know life’s way! Pleasures fill Your hand.  
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

*Read Colossians 1.9-12*

*Preparation*

1. How many different things did Paul include in his prayers for the Colossians?
2. Do you see anything like a progression here, or an “order of operations”?

*Meditation*

Once again, Paul mentions his constant praying for the Colossians (cf. v. 3). By his example, Paul teaches us the importance of praying for our fellow believers, that they might be faithful saints like the Colossians. Paul would say we should pray about everything and without ceasing, as often as the Lord puts another believer in our mind (cf. Phil. 4.6, 7; 1 Thess. 5.17; Phil. 1.3). Let’s consider the specific items he sought from the Lord for the Colossians.

We’ll work back to front: Paul prayed that they would be a people who gave thanks and praise to God (v. 12). He knew they would need patience and joy to continue their witness for the Lord, so he prayed that God would strengthen them with His might and power (v. 11). He prayed that they might increase in the knowledge of the Lord as they walked in a manner worthy of the Gospel, bearing much fruit of good works and knowing the pleasure of the Lord in every area of their lives (v. 10). And he knew they would need clear knowledge of God’s will, coupled with wisdom and spiritual understanding, for any of this to be true (v. 9).

Here is a simple template for praying for other believers: That they may be filled with the knowledge of God and His will, and live out in wisdom and understanding all that God shows them of Himself. Thus they will walk in a manner worthy of their calling and give thanks to the Lord at all times. We should pray this way for the believers God has put in our lives, for such prayers can be of much benefit to other believers.

Let our prayers for them begin with their being filled with the knowledge of God and His will, which is gained through devoted reading and study of His Word, coupled with prayer and obedience. From this beginning, grows all the good fruit of true discipleship.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

The Colossians’ love was declared to Paul. But was that enough?

Was that the total fulfillment of their faith?  
When a movie is being made the director calls out, “Lights. Camera.”  
And then what? Without the “Action!” there isn’t much to the production.

Paul was pleased with the Colossians’ love, but he was praying for more: “For this reason” (their love) “we also...do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be:

1. filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
2. that you may walk worthy of the Lord,
3. fully pleasing *Him*,
4. being fruitful in every good work and
5. increasing in the knowledge of God;
6. strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;
7. giving thanks to the Father Who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col. 1.9-12).

Action.

And how do we do this? How do we bring this action to our love?  
How will we ever be able to accomplish in our own lives the things that Paul prayed for?  
Or to see other believers accomplish?

We must realize that God’s Word, and His Law, are our sustenance; and that God gives us the power through the Word, prayer, and His Holy Spirit to live it.

As Moses said: “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you...all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life...” (Deut. 32.46,47)

“From this beginning (reading and studying the Word, prayer, obedience), grows all the good fruit of true discipleship.”

*Reflection*

1. Paul makes a strong connection between knowing the Lord and acting as a faithful saint. How would you describe that connection?
2. Who are the believers in your Personal Mission Field? Will you pray for them like Paul prayed for the Colossians? Then let them know you’re praying this way?
3. Whom can you ask to pray for you this way?

*Paul’s prayer is his way of building on the fundamentals of belief already taught to the Colossians, so that faith will be extended to practice, to right actions.* Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428), *Commentary on Colossians*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 16.1, 2, 4-11*

Seek the Presence of the Lord and the glory in His face (2 Cor. 4.6). Ask Him to guide you and your fellow believers with His counsel, to lead you into His pleasure, and to give you power to walk the path of life.

*Psalm 16.1, 2, 4-11*

(All to Christ: [\*Jesus Paid It All\*](#))

Preserve me, O my God; I refuge seek in You.  
You alone are all my good, my Lord and Savior true!

*Refrain v. 11*

Make me know life's way! Pleasures fill Your hand.  
Fill my life with joy each day! Before Your face I stand.

They endless tears shall weep who worship idols vain;  
their ways I will not keep, nor speak their empty names.

*Refrain*

My portion and my cup are You, my Savior dear;  
You help and hold me up and ever keep me near.

*Refrain*

I bless Your Name, O Lord; my mind instructs each night;  
You teach me by Your Word and guide me in the right.

*Refrain*

You are ever with me, Lord; in You I shall not fall.  
But rejoicing in Your Word, I abide within Your call.

*Refrain*

Soon Your glory I shall see, for as Jesus rose again,  
You will come to gather me to my home with You in heav'n.

## 5 Delivered and Conveyed

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 91.1-3*

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the LORD, “*He is my refuge and my fortress;*  
*My God, in Him I will trust.*”  
Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
*And* from the perilous pestilence.

*Sing Psalm 91.1-3*

(Lauda Anima: [\*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven\*](#))

All who dwell within God’s shelter in His shadow will reside.  
He our Tow’r, our Fortress ever, in Him we our trust confide.  
From the trapper’s snares He saves us; safe from sickness we abide.

*Read Colossians 1.13, 14*

*Preparation*

1. From what have we been delivered?
2. To what have we been conveyed?

*Meditation*

These two verses offer a concise and thrilling summary of the power and effects of the Gospel. The Gospel is power, as Paul explained in Romans 1.16, the power of divine grace that operates for our salvation. But do we truly recognize just how *great* that power is, and *how great* is the salvation is effects?

First, the Gospel has power to *deliver* us. Think about what that means: A delivery is something moved from one place to another, one condition or situation to another, one owner to another. We were owned by the prince of darkness; our minds were shrouded with lies; we stumbled around trying to make sense out of our lives without any reliable light to guide us. Then the Gospel *delivered* us from that. Say hallelujah!

And there’s more: We were delivered from darkness and *conveyed* or even *transferred* into the Kingdom of the Son of God! Dorothy stepping out of that black-and-white cabin into the technicolor land of Oz has nothing on us! The Greek verb use dhere is μεθιστημι *methistemi*. It means “to cause a change of state, with emphasis upon the difference in the resulting state – to change to, to turn into, to cause to be different from, to transform” (Louw and Nida). Dorothy coming out of that cabin was still Dorothy, and she would ultimately return to her black-and-white home. But we have been conveyed, transferred, turned into, made new and different in a Kingdom ruled by the Son of God’s love! And we aren’t going back to the darkness ever again.

Because we are redeemed, forgiven, born again, adopted, and saved! Bask in it, friends, and rejoice!

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Reflecting on delivering and conveying made me think of moving. Kind of like Dorothy, but with a little less whirlwind and fewer munchkins. So, I looked up moving companies for names to use like

Mayflower and Allied. But curiously, as it turns out, the number one best moving company these days is named Trinity!

Indeed.

Imagine. We lived in darkness. And then God in His mercy through the work of His Son and the power of the Holy Spirit moved us out of that state. All the documents are taken care of by Him: the moving estimate, the bill of lading, the final payment. Redeemed by Him. No cost to us. Everything forgiven. Jesus paid it all.

Now we unpack and get settled in our new home. As God said to David, He says to us:

“Moreover I will appoint a place for My people...and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over My people...and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house” (2 Samuel 7.10, 11).

As we get familiar with our new surroundings, we hear these words of encouragement from Peter: “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1.10, 11).

Safely delivered and conveyed.

#### *Reflection*

1. If we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness, should we continue living there? Explain.
2. Now that we are conveyed into the Kingdom of God’s Son, how should we live? What should we seek?
3. Dorothy longed to go back to her home. Our home lies ahead, beyond this life. She prepared to go home by clicking her heels together. How should we prepare for our home?

*God rescued us from the power of darkness, and then he truly transferred us to the kingdom of the Son whom he himself loves. The power of darkness is the power of Satan, whom we assuredly formerly served in habitual sins of ignorance and darkness, in idolatries, in contemptible gods, in impiety and in evil deeds—all in abominable shame and disgrace. The heavenly Father has liberated us from all this and set us free. Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Commentary on Colossians 1.12-14*

*Thank You, Lord, for delivering me from darkness and conveying me into Your light! Help me today to...*

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 91.4-16*

What safety and strength we know in the shelter of our Lord! Thank and praise Him for His grace. Call upon Him to keep and use you this day. Rejoice in His great salvation!

#### *Sing Psalm 91.4-16*

(Lauda Anima: [\*Praise My Soul the King of Heaven\*](#))

He will shade us with His pinions, ‘neath His wings we safety find.  
From night’s terror, from day’s arrow, from the fears that stalk our mind.



When destruction falls at noon time, safe in Him shall we abide.

Thousands at our sides may falter – it will not to us come near!  
We instead shall see the end of all who at God's mercy sneer.  
Evil shall no more befall us for we hold the Lord most dear.

He shall give His angels charge to bear us up, lest we should fall;  
they will guard and carry all who on the Savior's mercy call.  
Cobra, mighty lion, serpent: We shall tread upon them all!

Save us, Lord! We love You only; set us up secure on high!  
You we know, on You we call in trouble: Hear us when we cry!  
Show us Your salvation, let long life forever satisfy!

## 6 In All Things Pre-eminent

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 110.1-3*

The LORD said to my Lord,  
“Sit at My right hand,  
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”  
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.  
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!  
Your people *shall be* volunteers  
In the day of Your power;  
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,  
You have the dew of Your youth.

*Sing Psalm 110.1-3*

(Aurelia: *The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the Lord says to my Lord,  
“until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”  
From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;  
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

*Read Colossians 1.15-18*

*Preparation*

1. How does Paul describe Jesus?
2. What does God intend for Jesus in His role as Head of the Church?

*Meditation*

If we let this profound litany settle into our soul, our love for Jesus cannot help but increase, and our confidence in Him will soar.

He is the very image of God, the Creator of all things and the One Who upholds all of creation, so that it continues in its order, beauty, knowability, and utility without fail. He is the Head of the Church and the firstborn from the dead. He is Jesus! Do we want to know God? Look to Jesus. Do we want to understand and make best use of the workings of the cosmos? Look to Jesus. Do we want to realize our own fullest development as believers, and as communities of believers? Look to Jesus.

No wonder that, in just a bit, Paul will instruct us to set our minds on the things that are above, where Christ is seated in heavenly places (Col. 3.1-3).

God's intent is that “in all things He may have the preeminence.” Jesus is “to be in the first position, with the implication of high rank and prominence – to be first, to have superior status” (Louw and Nida). The question that confronts every faithful saint is, “How will I acknowledge and practice this today?”

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, and to be invisible means to be not perceptible by vision.

God sent Jesus as a visual representation of Himself. And through Jesus, Who is the Word of God (Jn. 1.1-4), we can know God. We see Him through His Word and through His creation. We are told to pray: “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Psa. 119. 18).

Then we are told that not only is God invisible, but a lot of His creation is also unseeable by the human eye. “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible...” (v. 16). This brings to mind the story we read about in 2 Kings 6, when Elisha prayed that the invisible would become visible: “And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (v. 17).

There is a world full of the majesty and glory of the Trinity, visible and invisible. And all these things were created “through Him and for Him” (v. 16). He is Preeminent over all.

Sadly, we miss many opportunities for enjoying the Lord and praising Him because our focus and attention are only on the seeable; and God is obscured from our view because we ignore the powerful invisibles of life. But they are there, nonetheless.

Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth Thou has for me;  
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.  
Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see;  
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!  
(Clara H. Scott, 1895)

#### *Reflection*

1. What do you find to be helpful disciplines in acknowledging and submitting to the pre-eminence of Jesus?
2. “Things unseen” play an important role in the life of faith (Heb. 11.1). In what ways?
3. How would you explain to a new believer what it means that Jesus is pre-eminent in all things?

*For if he is the Author and Restorer of all things, it is manifest that this honor is justly due to him. At the same time the phrase in omnibus (in all things) may be taken in two ways — either over all creatures, or, in everything. This, however, is of no great importance, for the simple meaning is, that all things are subjected to his sway.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Colossians 1.18*

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 110.4-7*

Praise Jesus for His excellence, His greatness, and His victory over sin and the devil. Commit yourself afresh to Him for this day’s work, that He might be preeminent in all you do.

#### *Sing Psalm 110.4-7*

*(Aurelia: The Church’s One Foundation)*

Filled with the Spirit’s power, in holy robes of love,  
from early morning’s hour they serve their Lord above.  
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness  
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,

when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,  
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

## 7 The Measure of Salvation

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 116.1-6*

I love the LORD, because He has heard  
My voice *and* my supplications.  
Because He has inclined His ear to me,  
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.  
The pains of death surrounded me,  
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;  
I found trouble and sorrow.  
Then I called upon the name of the LORD:  
“O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”  
Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;  
Yes, our God *is* merciful.  
The LORD preserves the simple;  
I was brought low, and He saved me.

*Sing Psalm 116.1-6*

(Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise To God Who Reigns Above\*](#))

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.  
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.  
The snares of death encompassed me; hell’s grip could not unloosened be;  
distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, “O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!”  
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.  
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –  
I rest in Him forever!

*Read Colossians 1.1-18; meditate on verses 17 and 18.*

*Preparation*

1. What has God accomplished for us in our salvation?
2. How should we respond to such a great salvation?

*Meditation*

In the opening verses of his letter to the church in Colossae, Paul invites us to get on the same page with him concerning the greatness of our salvation. If someone were to ask you, “What does it mean to be saved?”, how would you reply? For perhaps most Christians, the answer would be, “To have my sins forgiven so that I shall go to heaven when I die.” And that’s certainly true.

But that’s certainly not all.

We who have come to the salvation of Jesus Christ are set apart unto Him – saints! – and increase, through faithful obedience, in love for God and our neighbors. Our hope for eternal life with the Lord is so strong that it leads us to proclaim the Good News to everyone we can, and by this the Gospel spreads throughout “all the world” (v. 6). We who are saved are delivered from the power

and penalty of the kingdom of darkness (v. 13). We have become citizens in the Kingdom of God's love, members in the Body of Christ, and brethren and servants to one another (vv. 13, 1, 7). By our ardent faith and faithfulness, we increase daily in the knowledge of God and His will, live in a manner befitting our calling, and bear fruit in every good work by the might and power of God at work in us (vv. 9-12; Phil. 2.13).

We who are saved know, love, and serve the living God, as He has revealed Himself to us in Jesus Christ, the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the vast cosmos, Head of the Church, and Ruler over all things (vv. 15-18). Him we know with increasing knowledge (v. 10). Him we serve with faithfulness and love (vv. 1, 4), abounding in good works reflective of our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (v. 10; cf. 1 Thess. 2.12). And we hope fervently for that day when we will be joined forever with our King and Lord and Savior (v. 5).

For the greatness of our salvation is Jesus, from Whom, through Whom, and unto Whom are all things, for His praise, honor, and glory forever (Rom. 11.36).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

So, this should be fun. Right? This being saved. Well, that's what many churches push today: Are the congregants pleased and happy, and maybe even having a doggone good time?

But is that really what being in the Kingdom is all about? Is that how we serve our King Jesus?

He Who is the Pre-eminent Ruler of all the cosmos.

He Who was, and is, and is to come. The Almighty. (Rev. 1.8)

He Who is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

He Who is The Head of the body, the Church.

He Who is the Heir of all things, "through whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1.2, 3).

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4.11).

No. Truly. Fun is not the *modus operandi* of any kingdom, especially not the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Who was bruised for our iniquities; and the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. (Is. 53.5) This Man of sorrows deserves our utmost love and serious sacrificial service – "for His praise, honor, and glory forever."

#### *Reflection*

1. What do we mean by saying that "the greatness of our salvation is Jesus"?
2. Why should all "saints" be eager to be "faithful" followers of Christ?
3. What is the measure of our faithfulness? How can concentrating on Jesus help us realize that goal?

*Christ is the head of the church, if things heavenly and earthly live together in him, such that if the whole body is ever deprived of its head, that is, separated from its Creator, there would be an insane and empty chaos.* Ambrosiaster (fl. 366-384), *Commentary on the Letter to the Colossians*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 116.7-19*

Thank and praise the Lord for His great salvation and all the many blessings and benefits that come with it. Renew your commitment to Him, and offer yourself as a living sacrifice to Him for this day.

*Sing Psalm 116.7-19*

(Mit Freuden Zart: [\*All Praise to God Who Reigns Above\*](#))

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.  
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.  
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,  
and dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.  
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?  
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love  
and pay my vows most truly.

How sweet to Him when saints depart – save me, Your servant, Savior!  
From sin You loosed my wand'ring heart; I praise Your Name forever!  
On You I call, my vows to pay; here in Your presence I would stay  
Your praise to offer ever.

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. What is the difference between our *position* in Christ and our *condition* as believers? How can improve our condition to line up more with our position?
2. How do believers in Jesus become evident to people in the world?
3. How does Paul describe the pre-eminence of Jesus in these verses? What does that mean for our daily walk (v. 10) in Him?
4. What does it mean to “increase” in the knowledge of God? What does such “increase” produce in us?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from Colossians 1.1-18? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For Prayer:*



## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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