



Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

Colossians 1:1-29

Inductive Discovery Lesson 18

During the sixties of Paul's day, people were hungry for spirituality. Some looked for it in nature, believing the simpler they lived the more spiritual they would become. Some thought that philosophy was the path to spirituality. Others looked to the stars and interpretations of dreams. Throughout the Roman Empire, pagan beliefs dominated, Judaism fought to hold its own, and the Church was still finding its voice.

About the time that Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians, a new strain of *spirituality* was trying to filter its way into the young church. It was a toxic combination of secret rituals and faulty knowledge that was eventually called gnosticism. Epaphras feared some of his spiritual family might be pulled into the notion that trusting Christ for salvation and walking by faith in Him was not enough. So he headed to Rome, seeking help from Paul.

When Paul opened his door to find Epaphras standing there, he was overjoyed. *Come in my friend, come in! How are you? What news do you bring from home?* Epaphras sat down with his old friend and mentor and poured out his heart. The church he had helped to plant was strong and fruitful, but some were bringing in new ideas and causing problems. Paul listened as Epaphras did his best to describe the discussions in Colossae that were spinning a tangled web of philosophy, mysticism and legalism. He told Paul how men who claimed to be *in the know* were subtly watering down the gospel truth. Paul didn't personally know the Colossians, but he was stirred by what Epaphras shared and the two probably spent a long time together in prayer that day. Then Paul sat down to write a loving letter of encouragement and instruction to his unseen friends.

Tracing Paul's Steps: *The Church in Colossae*

- During Paul's stay in Ephesus (3rd missionary trip) a man from Colossae named Epaphras is converted and disciplined by Paul. He returns home to preach the gospel and a church is planted. This church met in Philemon's home. (Acts 19, Colossians 1:7, Philemon 2)
- About 7 years later (approx. 60 AD) while living under house arrest in Rome, Paul has a visit from Ephahras. He reports good things about his church, but warns Paul that a dangerous teaching is beginning to sprout up in the region. Paul writes this letter to encourage the believers and combat the false doctrine. (Colossians 4:12-13)
- During this same period of time, Paul has an unexpected visitor named Onesimus. He is a runaway slave, hiding in Rome from his master Philemon. Paul leads him to faith in Jesus and now faces the delicate task of sending him back to Colossae. Paul writes a letter to Philemon, asking him to treat his repentant servant gently. (Philemon)

Working Text for Colossians 1:1-29
English Standard Version (ESV)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, **2** To the saints and faithful brothers 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 behalf **8** 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 to the Father, who has qualified you 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.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18** And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **22** he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **23** if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, **25** of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, **26** the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. **27** To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. **28** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. **29** For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.



Use the second column to record information you gather from other sources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, etc. You can also use this section to jot down **your thoughts, impressions or questions that come to mind.** *Do your best to follow Paul's train of thought.* Does he emphasize a particular topic? Are his words urgent? Encouraging? Commanding? What issues or problems does he address? What questions does he ask?

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

4

Facts from the passage:

[illegible]

Facts from the passage:

[illegible]

Key Words and Phrases

Key words and phrases help us understand the main point the writer wants to make. How do we recognize key words and phrases? Here are some simple things to look for.

- When you see a word or phrase repeated, you can be sure Paul is using it to make his point.
- If you are unfamiliar with a word or its meaning, it becomes a key word *for you*. Take time to learn the definition so you will understand how it is being used in the sentence.

List any key words and phrases you found in Colossians 1:1-29.

Write the definition of the following words or phrases. Use a regular dictionary or a concordance with a Greek Dictionary if you have one.

“the **truth** of the gospel” (vs. 5) _____

“the **knowledge** of God” (vs.10) _____

“**grounded** and **steadfast**” (vs.23) _____



INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?*

Look for a spiritual lesson. Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: “Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?*

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to ***put it into action***.

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Colossians 1:1-14

Lesson: _____

Application: _____ ?

Colossians 1:15-23

Lesson: _____

Application: _____ ?

Colossians 1:24-29

Lesson: _____

Application: _____ ?

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the passage is about. _____

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



Take a Closer Look

He rescued us from the domain of darkness,
and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13-14 NAS

Memorize God's Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize from and re-write the verse here.

Meditate on God's Word

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



Something to Think About . . .

Redemption and forgiveness go together.
Christ has not only set us free and transferred us to a new kingdom,
but He canceled every debt so that we cannot be enslaved again.¹
Warren Wiersbe

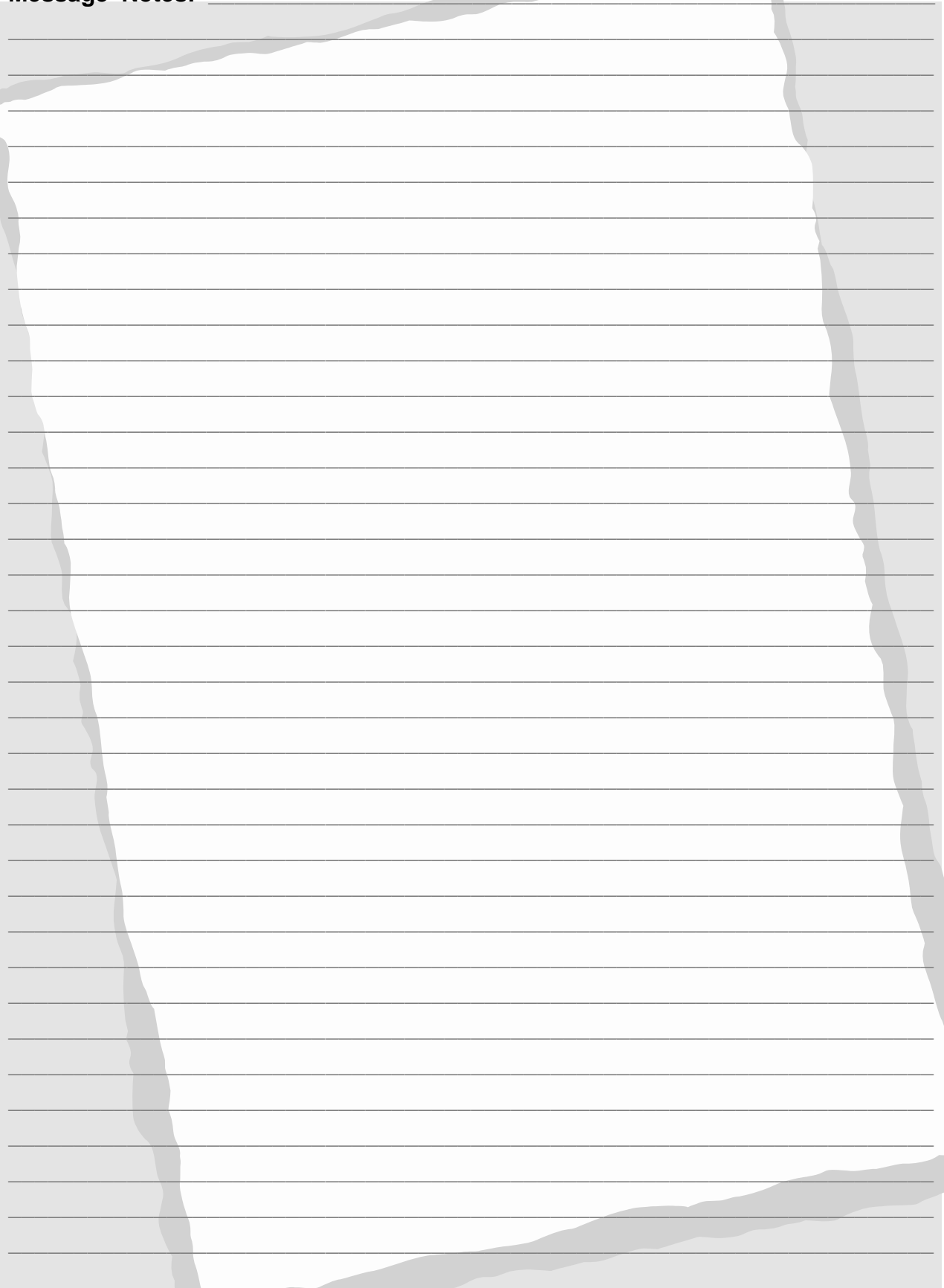


God's Word Bearing Fruit

For you, personally, what has been the most important lesson from this study?
How will you put what God has shown you into practice?

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition Commentary*, pg. 115

Message Notes:



A large rectangular area with horizontal lines, resembling a notepad or a message box. The area is framed by a light gray border. The left and bottom edges of the area are irregular and torn, giving it the appearance of a piece of paper being pulled out of a surface. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



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