



KNOWING CHRIST

Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

Colossians 2:1-23

Inductive Discovery Lesson 19

What do we know about the church in Colossae? We know they were a small community of believers, most from a Gentile background. They first heard the gospel from Epaphras, a local man who was converted and disciplined through Paul's ministry at Ephesus. After five years or so, the congregation was still small enough to meet in the home of one man (Philemon 2). From Paul's description in chapter one, we know they were loving, devoted and spiritually fruitful. Safe to say, they were young in faith and hungry to learn. Now doesn't that sound like a church you'd want to be part of?

It warmed Paul's heart to hear about this open-hearted band of believers. He surely planned to meet them someday, if ever he was free to leave Rome. Epaphras knew his old friend and mentor loved the Colossians as much as he did—he saw it in his face, heard it in his prayers. We can imagine the relief he felt when Paul decided to write to them. Paul had a way of seeing things clearly for what they were. He wasn't confused by persuasive speech or sidetracked by subtle errors. *If you don't know what you stand for, you'll fall for anything.* The Colossians needed to hear this...and so do we.

Background

History gives us more details about the Colossians. We know they lived in a tired little town past its prime. Back in the day, it had been a strategic military outpost and a gateway to the rich Lycus Valley. Over time, new cities came up and trade routes changed. Colossae now sat off the beaten path. They couldn't compete with their larger, more progressive neighbors in Laodicea and Hierapolis. If you were looking for health, pleasure, or relaxation, the spas of Hierapolis was the place to go. Laodicea had a famous medical center and a prosperous wool industry. It was the political and financial capital of the whole region. Colossae's population dwindled. Their economy was in decline. Times were tough and families struggled to make ends meet.

Just a few years after Paul wrote this letter, an earthquake leveled Colossae. If not for the seemingly insignificant church there, history would have shrugged its shoulders and moved on. But God inspired the apostle Paul to write a letter that remains vitally relevant today.

Working Text for Colossians 2:1-23
New Living Translation (NLT)

1 I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other friends who have never known me personally. **2** My goal is that they will be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have full confidence because they have complete understanding of God's secret plan, which is Christ Himself. **3** In Him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. **4** I am telling you this so that no one will be able to deceive you with persuasive arguments. **5** For though I am far away from you, my heart is with you. And I am very happy because you are living as you should and because of your strong faith in Christ.

6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to Him. **7** Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all He has done.

8 Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ. **9** For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, **10** and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe. **11** When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away of your sinful nature. **12** For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with Him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. **13** You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. **14** He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. **15** In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.

16 So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new-moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. **17** For these rules were only shadows of the real thing, Christ Himself. **18** Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on self-denial. And don't let anyone say you must worship angels, even though they say they have had visions about this. These people claim to be so humble, but their sinful minds have made them proud. **19** But they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For we are joined together in His body by His strong sinews, and we grow only as we get our nourishment and strength from God.

20 You have died with Christ, and He has set you free from the evil powers of this world. So why do you keep on following rules of the world, such as, **21** "Don't handle, don't eat, don't touch." **22** Such rules are mere human teaching about things that are gone as soon as we use them. **23** These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, humility, and severe bodily discipline. But they have no effect when it comes to conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires.



OBSERVATION

Read the section and record what you see. **Use the first column to keep track of what you specifically find in the Bible passage.** (Who? What? When? Where?) Briefly describe, *in your own words*, what it says.

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?

Colossians 2:1-7

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Colossians 2:8-15

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Colossians 2:8-15 (continued)

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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Colossians 2:16-23

Facts from the passage:

My Research and Personal Observations:

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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 2:1-23.

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

“full assurance of **understanding**” (vs. 2) _____

“treasures of **wisdom** and **knowledge**” (vs.3) _____

“**philosophy** and **empty deceit**” (vs.8) _____



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 2:1-7

Lesson: _____

Application: _____ ?

Colossians 2:8-15

Lesson: _____

Application: _____ ?

Colossians 2:16-23

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

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him
and established in the faith, as you have been taught,
abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7 NKJ

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 . . .

When we stop going forward, we stall; when we stall, we can fall.
Steady progress is possible when we are grounded and rooted.¹

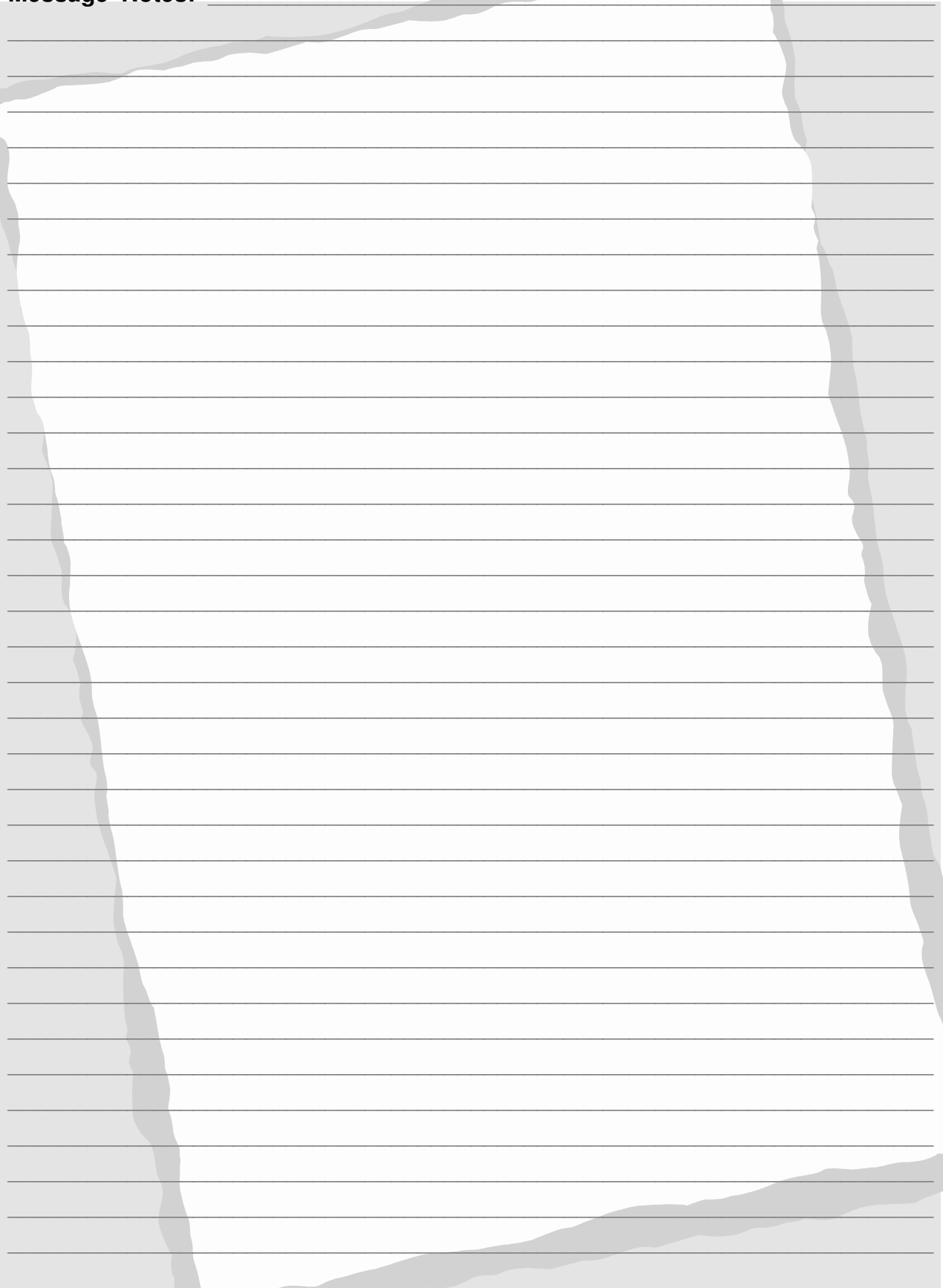


God's Word Bearing Fruit

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 Holman N.T. Commentary, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*, pg. 304

Message Notes:

A large rectangular area with a torn paper border, containing numerous horizontal lines for writing notes. The border is irregular and jagged, giving it the appearance of a piece of paper torn from a larger sheet. The lines are evenly spaced and cover the entire interior of the rectangle.



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