Christ Alone: **Colossians** – **wk 1 – When I think about you**

**In the early church - letters received from the apostles were treasured. Held to same level as the law and prophets. Most only had a few.**

**One of those early letters circulating was Colossians.**

**This letter covers a lot. It's a small book with a big message –**

**The supremacy of Christ in all things**

**It is a blueprint for a healthy life in every area.**

**Colossians 1:1** **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.**

**The WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN - and WHY?**

**1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother**

**Who - Paul the Apostle = "sent one" of Jesus (Tim - pastor in Ephesus)**

**When you tell one of your kids to go wake up your brother – they are your apostle – sent with a message. They carry your words / instruction / authority / urgency - if they don’t get up, who are they disobeying (not the messenger) but the parent.**

**Paul is an apostle of Jesus w/ Jesus’ words, instruction, authority, and urgency - his spokesperson. That is a big claim.**

**He did not ask for it - it was given to him by Jesus. (Emmaus) He was abused, beaten, starved and imprisoned for it. It's a burden & blessing.**

**When - Paul is in prison in Rome - house arrest (Acts)**

**Paul had lived in Ephesus (for 3yrs) – people came and went back to start a church in their city. That’s how Colossae started - Paul had never been there, but he heard about them**

**2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:**

**Where - Colossae – In modern Turkey (Map)**

**100m. east of Ephesus - tri-city metro - once a thriving trade route – now small town - declining & struggling. Paul had never been there. But had led many of the people there to Christ.**

**The church, now 6 yrs old, was swept up with weird beliefs & lifestyles. Their pastor (Epaphras) traveled to Rome to get some counsel from Paul but ended up in prison too. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon with two letters… (background on Onesimus).**

**Why - This is Paul’s response to clear up confusion concerning Jesus.**

**Why would Paul, in jail, write to a dying town church? Because no matter where you are, God cares about you & wants to see you mature.**

**This town like many trade routes is filled w/ diff. religions, pagan philosophies - making their way into the church.**

**This letter covers a variety of issues – filled with warnings, encouragement, and instructions. It covers both…**

**Orthodoxy (what to think - our faith) / Orthopraxy (how to live - our life)**

**Covers things like the pre-eminence of Christ, legalism, angel worship**

**Immorality, family, marriage, backsliding, & living compassionate lives.**

**Jesus is the key to this letter - he is the fullness of God**

**Let's jump in - Paul starts with the leadership love sandwich (love - discipline - love) He starts out telling them what they are doing right.**

**Thankful for Them**

**Colossians 1:3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, (why?) 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 increasing—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.**

**What is he thankful for? When I think about you, I am blessed!**

**That when he thinks of them - HE IS THANKFUL THEY ARE:**

**ROOTED IN JESUS CHRIST**

**4 …we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus... 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. We are thankful of your faith in Jesus.**

**\*\*\* Faith is not knowledge, hope, a force or cosmic law.**

**What is Faith? (Defined in scripture) Belief, trust, & obedience - it is trust that results in action. (Heb 11:1-6, Mar 1:15, 9:7, Lu 8:12-13, Matt 7:24-27, Ro 10:17, Jam 2:14-19, Eph 2:8-10)**

**Where we are in Christ is far more important than where we are in life**

**I don't know where you in life - what you’re going through - where you live - what side of the town you're in - your job situation – but what matters to me is - your faith in Christ.**

**We get so caught up in life and where we are and what we're doing. Paul zeroes in on what's important - Are you in Christ!**

**I thank God some of you are rooted and remain in Christ.**

**Colossians 1:4 *(We thank God for )* …the love that you have for all the saints,**

**ROOTED IN LOVE**

**When he thinks of them, he is overwhelmed by their love**

**What is (biblical) Love? A decision & action, not just emotion (Matt 25:34-40, Lu 6:27-36, 10:25-37, Joh 13:35,15:12, 1 Joh 4:19-21)**

**Love is not a feeling, sympathy, empathy, or thought. Love is making a decision - getting up and doing something about it. It reaches out to our neighbors, clothes, feeds, forgives, serves.**

**John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

**John goes so far are as to say - 1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us. 20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.**

**Colossae - I am thankful for your love - you got this right...**

**BTW - Even though they had great love for others - they were failing in other areas. Love is not all you need.**

**Colossians 1:3 *(We thank God)* 5b …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 (the Roman world) it is bearing fruit and increasing - as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth…**

**ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL**

**They embraced the Gospel. Gospel = means life changing good news.**

**What is the True Gospel? The true gospel is this: Deity, Death and Resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. There is no other.**

**Confusion over what the gospel is:**

* **The Gospel is not you are okay, God loves you. But rather you are broken, stuck in sin, but the healer has come.**
* **The Gospel is not acts of service and justice. While love is an action - the gospel is a message.**
* **The Gospel is not one of many ways. There is no other gospel, no other way – according to Jesus and the Apostles.**

**Paul points out 2 important domains for the Gospel.**

**This is the message of Jesus and the entire NT - Know this:**

**The gospel is local: “the gospel, which has come to you…”**

**Someone came to you - told you - gave it to you. You are in Christ because you were told the true message of the good news.**

**The gospel is global: “the gospel… as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing - as it also does among you”**

**God has a plan for the world – the gospel is to be taken to the world!**

**A key to this was their teachable heart - 7 You learned it from Epaphras, (their pastor) our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.**

**I am thankful for your pastor Epaphras who taught it and that you received it and learned it from him.**

* **When I think of you, I am thankful - of your faith in Christ, your love for others, and that you embrace the true gospel**
* **When I think of you, I pray for you - what does he pray for?**

**Praying for Them**

**Col 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, (remember he never met them) we have not ceased to pray for you, asking (God) that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, (Who would like to know God’s will? I pray you can know the will of God so that know what job to take, who to marry, to date, what to buy, where to go to school. No, so that…) 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him…**

**HIS PRAYER - I pray you know and understand God's will**

**WHY? So that you live a life that honors Jesus**

* **God's will is not so much about the decisions we make as it is about the life we live.**

**It's not so much about what town you live in - but how you live there**

**It's not so much about what job you have - but who your work reflects**

**God's will is more about who we are becoming than what we are doing? Are you becoming in love and action more like him.**

**Paul prayed for knowledge of God's will; not answers to life's problems That you know God's plans - not that our problems would disappear.**

**He then gives them God's Will**

**God's will is - ...10 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 being 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.**

**Sometimes translations are more wordy than the original and can often seem confusing – let’s break it down.**

**God's Will for Every Christian Made Simple - 4 Things**

**1. Bear fruit - "bearing fruit in every good work…"**

**(Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 2:11-12, Matthew 5:16, Matthew 6:1-21)**

**John 15:1-12 - Jesus calls himself the vine - and we are his branches. We are to remain in him - and if we do we will bear much fruit.**

**It is God's will that we make God look good. Do things that make God famous.**

**We were created for this... Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (This is his plan from the beginning)**

**Without good works we have no creditability. If we say Jesus is loving and caring - then we are to reflect that in our life and actions - we are to do that! James 2:26 faith without works is dead.**

**Often nobody will listen until they know you care.**

**The gospel is a message – but the feet of the gospel is love and good deeds.**

**2. Know God - "...and increasing in the knowledge of God..."**

**(Phil 3:7-16, Eph 1:17-19, 2 Pet 1:2-4)**

**Two things**

**\* You can know God. Atheist, agnostics, others – will tell you it is arrogant to think you can know God - or it’s weird.**

**Jeremiah 9:23 Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, 24 but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”**

**\* You can know a lot about God and not know God. Notice it does not say know about God... there's a difference. You can have a lot of bible knowledge... or even care for people.**

**The theologians and bible teachers of Jesus age knew a lot about God - but did not discern Jesus right in front of them. Happens still today.**

**Want to know God? Know God's word and walk out what you already know. When you walk in this - you understand Him more and more.**

**Here is the next one – 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, (Sounds awesome! But this is not about winning football games – but his power is for this) for all endurance (to handle hardship in all circumstances) and patience with joy… (strength to deal with people in joy)**

**3. Toughen Up (Acts 14:21-22, 1 Peter 5:7-10, Col 3:13-15, 1 Cor 13:4)**

**We often think that being in God's will means everything goes good... but it's not. Sometimes it's meant to toughen us up.**

**Though we don't want it - what we really need in this life is endurance and strength. The people we endure - the trials we face - circumstances we are placed in – they chisel and mold us to look like Jesus.**

**The vast majority of NT prayers are based on endurance, strength, boldness, and submission to God's will.**

**Prayer that would turn heads - Lord make him a little tougher, strengthen them a little more, build patience, give him trials...**

**Bear fruit / Know God / Toughen up / and... 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.**

**4. Be Thankful (1 Thess 5:16-18, 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10, Ephesians 2:1-5)**

**Want to know God's will for you - stop complaining... stop being bitter... stop being negative... stop assuming the worst.**

**This is a way to make counseling meetings short...**

**1 Thess 5:16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

**His will is for you to be thankful - there is freedom here.**

**When our kids are thankful... our response...**

**But my life is in chaos / shambles - What do I have to be thankful for?**

**I’m sick – I’m broke – I’m alone – I’m depressed – tell me!!! Paul does…**

**Col 1:12 …giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you (Thru the cross) to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Thankful this life is not the end) 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, (our position in Christ) 14 in whom we have redemption, (broke the chains of sins power) the forgiveness of sins. (Washed us, forgave us, and gave us a new life)**

**That's the reason you have to be thankful!**

**In Christ (because of the cross) you are redeemed, forgiven, and have an eternal hope and inheritance. We are just passing through.**

**You won’t always be sick, broke, or depressed - you are not alone!**

**Next week we dive into the heart of Colossians...**

**Is Jesus really enough?**