

Walking With the Father Through Colossians

Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.

I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.

As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.

As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.

Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,

Margie Martin

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Paul's letter to the believers in the city of Colossae in Phrygia, modern day Turkey, was probably his ninth letter. This region covered the towns of Colossae, Laodicea, Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamia, and Ephesus.

Along with the letters to the Ephesians and Philippians, Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest during his first Roman imprisonment (61-63 A.D.). These letters probably were all delivered around the same time by the same courier.

Similar to Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he wrote this letter to the Colossians without having specifically visited their city for any length of time. The only time he spent with these believers would have been for brief visits during his second and third missionary trips.

Timothy's name in the greeting indicates his growing stature in the early church.

For the history of this church, see these passages:

Acts 16:6
Acts 18:23

Paul's second missionary journey
Paul's third missionary journey



New Testament World

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

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Colossians 1:1-2

“To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae”

As a young Christian I had been involved in a ministry with singles at my local church, but after awhile, I felt pulled to be more involved. I had heard one of the young pastors teach and loved what he had to say and how he said it because it was so practical and down to earth. He was the pastor for the junior highers, and so even though I wasn't drawn to that age group, I volunteered to be on his ministry team. As we spoke on that Sunday afternoon about my being involved, he said that he didn't care what my gifts were, he only asked that I be faithful to the ministry. I figured that I could do that since being faithful was something I could *choose* to do. It didn't require knowledge or experience, just a choice.

So as I look at this verse and see Paul's description of these believers in Colossae, I realize that it really doesn't matter what gifts we have or what we know or how long we've been believers. What is important to God is that we are:

Holy: Whole, complete, dealing with sin, choosing to do what's right instead of giving in to what's easy, set apart for His use.

Faithful: Dependable, not hot and then cold, not wishy-washy, choosing to walk with Christ in the easy as well as the hard areas and times.

Brothers [sisters] in Christ: Aligning ourselves with the family of God, and choosing to see others as family members instead of acquaintances; allowing God to redefine the standards as to how we treat each other.

This is quite a description to live up to, isn't it? Which part of it do you think you need to work on today?

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Colossians 1:3-14

“ . . . the faith and love that spring from the hope . . . ”

I am overwhelmed by this section! Every phrase has so much in it that I wondered, when I read it the second time, what is the bottom line, where do I start so I can:

- Live a life worthy of the Lord? (v. 10)
- Please Him in every way? (v. 10)
- Bear fruit in every good work? (v. 10)
- Grow in the knowledge of God? (v. 10)
- Be strengthened with all power? (v. 11)
- Have great endurance and patience? (v. 11)
- Joyfully give thanks to the Father? (vv. 11-12)
- Share in the inheritance with all of the saints in the kingdom of light? (v. 12)

Paul says that the Colossians' reputation of faith in Christ Jesus and love for all the saints springs from hope. So let's look at this word hope for a few minutes. This section gives us the following information:

- It is stored up for you in heaven. (v. 5)
- We heard about it in the word of truth—the gospel. (v. 5)
- It rescued us from the dominion of darkness. (v. 13)
- It brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. (v. 13)
- In Him (the Son) we have redemption (bought back) and the forgiveness of sins. (v. 14)

Today as I was writing I realized that I had been basing my hope on my circumstances, my emotions, and my own perspective—and I was in a bad spot because of it. God's version of hope, however, is based on facts that have already happened and that have ramifications for the present and the future. I'm going to spend some time rethinking my thinking so my hope is sure and not flaky, that it's worth hoping in.

What are you hoping for today?

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Colossians 1:15-23

“But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.”

Remember in the first section of this letter when Paul referred to the Colossians as *holy* and then in the second when we concentrated on *hope*? Today Paul combines these two words. Are you struggling with being holy, or are you in need of hope today? I’m needing some hope as I write, so this is timely for me—and perhaps for you?

First Paul says that God has reconciled us to Himself by Christ’s physical body through death:

Reconciled: Be brought back together in a loving relationship, the conflict and barriers removed, and He did it so effectively that we are “*holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.*” So God through Christ did all of this work for us.

Christ’s physical body: Not an animal sacrifice, but the perfect, promised One becoming human and having a physical body like ours

Through death: A painful ending at the hands of others, not a dying-in-your-sleep type of death that comes at the end of a full life **or** an accident that brings instant death

Do you or I “feel” differently yet? No? Then let’s continue. We are to:

Continue in our faith: Just as we came to Jesus Christ in faith, we need to continue walking in faith (and not feelings).

Be established and firm: Is our faith established and firm? What is its foundation: sand or rock, feelings or human logic, or His truth?

Not be moved from the hope held out in the gospel: The gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ has to be the basis of our faith.

The question is, how can we be established, firm, unmoving? What’s your answer? I think mine includes reviewing the basics like we did today, choosing to continually think these thoughts, and thanking God for what He’s done and is doing instead of concentrating on the thoughts that flit around, flow through, and overtake my thoughts. What is your foundation built on today? What are you going to do about your thinking?

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Colossians 1:24-2:5

“The mystery . . . this mystery . . . the mystery of God”

Do you like a good mystery? I sure do, especially political thrillers. Sometimes I can barely stand not knowing who the bad guy really is or how the good guy is going to get out of his predicament.

Paul writes in this section about “the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.” Added to this revealed mystery are glorious riches—sounds like the making of a good book. So what is this mystery? Paul says this mystery is Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One, the One described through the sacrifices and in the Law and the Prophets, the One alluded to in the Psalms. Paul says that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (vv. 2-3)

You know, for those of us who are on this side of the cross, this truth seems so obvious, doesn't it? We've grown up with the knowledge of Christ; we're familiar with the details of His life and death. At times we probably yawn during Christmas and Easter celebrations because the story is so familiar.

But to the Colossians and others in the first century, this news was brand new! They did have other religions and mysteries to intrigue them, but Paul said that this revealed mystery from God was different. Religions have truth in them, but Paul says all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ.

The difference between Christ and religions? We don't have to search for the answers, because Christ is in us if we have put our faith in what He did for us on the cross. All wisdom, knowledge, and power are available to us. All we need to live the life He's given us is within us as we depend on His life and not on our own abilities. It's not up to us any longer. And His life within us is our confidence that, when we die, we'll be with him in glory. Life with Him after we die is something to look forward to, it is our hope, and how we live here on earth does matter. He's done all the work; we only have to respond.

So, how are you living? Don't worry about your neighbors, kids, or spouse. Is this revealed mystery true in your life, or are you finding yourself just giving lip-service to it and continuing to live as you always have? Do you have a life that satisfies? If not, are you ready for a change?

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Colossians 2:6-23

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is head over every power and authority.”

Take a moment, if you will, and list what you feel is missing in your life. Is it lack of time—or too much time? Is it a need for recognition or appreciation? Is it a desire to have a perfect body or one just like _____? Is it a job that pays more money or just another job? Is it a new or better car or just reliable transportation? Is it a career or ministry direction? Is it friends who *really* care?

These certainly are real needs and wants, and at one time or another I know I’ve longed for each one as you probably have. So how do we reconcile these needs/desires against the statement that we have the fullness of Christ who has all of the fullness of God? Hard question, huh? How would you answer it? Because I think there is an answer!

What our Lord has taught me to do over the years is to stop looking at the need or desire itself and review who God is: His power, ownership of all things, and absolute love for me as His child. And as Paul writes here, I am to overflow with thankfulness. (Notice, this is an action of giving thanks, not a spirit of thankfulness—that comes later.)

Then with the knowledge of God as my Father, Provider (for He owns and controls all), and Lord, I talk to Him about what I feel is lacking and ask Him to provide as He sees fit. This isn’t easy to do; all too often I find myself trying to meet my own needs instead of going to Him. Then I wait.

At times He fills the need or want. Other times He takes away the desire. But often what I realize is that He uses these desires so I’ll come to Him and talk to Him as I would a real person—not using a spiritual sounding voice or words, but having a real conversation.

And what do I discover? I find that communication with Him is far more satisfying than anything I was longing for. And I find that if I really do need something (like solid transportation), He provides it through His own resources, and it’s perfect.

How about you? What are you discovering? Instead of concentrating on what you don’t have, is it time to go to Him and have a long, heart-to-heart talk? You may want to write down what He has to say to you today.

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Colossians 3:1-17

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above . . . set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (emphasis added)

Have you ever read a verse and thought “I needed to read that today, right now! How did God know?” That was me on Saturday.

Let me give you some background so you’ll know why I picked these verses for today. On Friday my husband and I were having a “play day,” and I had told him of an idea I had for my women’s group to keep us from being sarcastic toward others, especially our husbands. The idea was to put a quarter into a kitty every time we said something we shouldn’t have.

It ended up that day that we started passing quarters back and forth as we listened to ourselves. It seemed that I was fishing out quarters more often than he was; I had no idea that I was so sarcastic. Needless to say, it was a real wake-up call for me.

The next day we were going to be around some people who I really struggle with because of their negativity. I started to go to the change jar so I could have lots of quarters ready to give to my husband as I thought negative thoughts, but then decided I should first sit down and read today’s section.

God’s words hit me right in the face. I realized that my mind and heart were set on things here on earth, not on His truth. But then I thought, “Wait a minute; that’s not really me—I have been raised with Christ. I can do things differently; I am a new person.”

And so I set my heart and mind on things above . . . and this dear couple wasn’t as negative as I’d expected them to be.

What are you going to do with your quarters today?

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Colossians 3:18-4:1

“ . . . as is fitting in the Lord . . . this pleases the Lord . . . reverence for the Lord . . . also have a Master in heaven”

Oh, these commands again:

Wives	→	submit
Husbands	→	love
Children	→	obey
Fathers	→	do not embitter
Slaves	→	obey
Masters	→	provide

Have you noticed that Paul *doesn't* write the following statements:

Wives, submit to your husbands when they're following the Lord and doing everything you want them to.

OR

Husbands, love your wives when they fix your favorite meal, don't argue with you, or look like a model.

OR

Children, obey your parents when they're reasonable, let you have what you want, and let you do what you want.

OR

Slaves (employees), obey your earthly masters (bosses) when they're fair, tolerant, pay you what you deserve, and treat you well.

OR

Masters (employers), provide your slaves (employees) with what is right when they work hard, are dependable, and are trustworthy.

Get the idea? Paul says we're to live in such a way that we're accountable to the Lord for our actions and behaviors, not because the other person deserves it or has earned our loving, respectful behavior.

Take a look at your relationships. Does your half of the relationship prove to the world that you have a Master in heaven?

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Colossians 4:2-6

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

I've been listening to my conversations lately and haven't always been impressed with what comes out of my mouth. So this verse is a good standard for me—for you too?

Let's look at what Paul is saying here. He seems to be concentrating on our conversations with outsiders, those who haven't asked Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior. He's probably assuming that we don't have to be told how to converse with fellow believers. (Oops!)

Conversations: We're to be having *talks* with them, not monologues or just interactions at work or at the grocery store, but real conversations.

Full of grace: We're to be uplifting, loving, kind, gracious, supportive, truthful in our speech, seeing what's good.

Seasoned with salt: Salt at that time preserved food as well as added flavor, but salt is to be used as a seasoning, not poured on or used miserly.

So we will know how to answer: Perhaps if we seek to speak this way, God will supernaturally let us know how to answer questions or how to even ask the right questions when we're speaking with those He's wooing to Himself through us.

What an honor and privilege to be used this way. Seems like it would make the effort worth it, don't you think?

What is it about how you speak? Can you hear yourself as others hear you? Do you come across the way you really want to and think you do? Do you want to start changing? Does your heart need to change first?

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Colossians 4:7-18

“Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.”

Aren't these wonderful final greetings in this letter? Even though Paul is in chains, so to speak, under house arrest in Rome, fellow workers in the ministry are able to come and go. Paul seems upbeat and is using his time wisely and purposefully.

Contrast this, however, with the end of 2 Timothy when Paul has been rearrested and is in a much different situation. He writes to Timothy, his son in the faith:

“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica, Cresens has gone to Galatia, and Titas to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”
(2 Timothy 4:9-13)

Paul is basically alone, cold, and lonely. These are the last words we have from Paul. He's been faithful to the end, even when the circumstances have been hard, uncomfortable, and unpleasant.

What a challenge for us as we get old in the faith. Will we be faithful and helpful in the ministry and an encouragement to others? Or will we love this world so much that like Demas we just want to be comfortable?

Just as Epaphras was wrestling in prayer for the Colossians that they may stand firm in all the will of God, be mature, and be fully assured; let's pray for each other that we'll stand firm in the will of God to the end, mature and seeing His face. Because how we choose to look at life now will determine how we live at the end of our lives.

As you've been reading, have you thought of an area in your life where loving the world's comforts is more attractive than standing firm in the ways of the Lord? Is that what you really want to choose?
