

INTRODUCTION

Paul recorded the words the Holy Spirit inspired him to write to the church in Colossae because of the false teachings concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many in that day believed that Christ was crucified for our sins, died and was in the grave for 3 days and rose from the dead, but did not believe that Jesus was God in the flesh. Some today would say that it is just a matter of semantics when describing the person of Jesus but, to really have a right relationship with Him we must have the correct knowledge of His purpose and His person. To diminish the person of Christ (Saying Jesus is not God come in the flesh) then His suffering and dying would have been in vain. Without a perfect sacrifice for our sins we would still be dead in them. God would not accept anything but a perfect sacrifice and the only perfect One in the entire universe is God Himself. To this error was added the need for something beyond the blood of Christ for salvation. Due to the geological location of Colossae, the church was apt to hear anything from eastern mysticism to astrology to Jewish legalism to add to what Christ did on the cross. Things have not changed much since that time. Today there is the “New Age” movement which believes that all roads lead to God. False teachers are constantly trying to add to the work that Christ did on the cross. However, we have Jesus’ word when he said, “It is finished.”, and He meant what He said! The name of Jesus is above every name yet He magnifies His word above His name!

Philippians 2:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Psalm 138:2 (NKJV)

² I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.



Colossians 1:1-2 (NKJV)

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

² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Letter writers in the first century would begin their text by introducing themselves. So Paul begins his letter to the Colossians by identifying himself, and to make sure anyone who would read this letter would know from which Paul this letter originates. He tells them what his position is in the Lord’s kingdom is and in whom he has this position and how he came to be in this position.

Paul then introduces a brother in the faith in whom he holds high esteem and considers Timothy to be his son in the Spirit. Paul goes as far as to say that Timothy’s ways are much like his when it comes to the things that pertain to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In **1 Corinthians 4:17** Paul writes: ¹⁷ For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

Then Paul details to whom this letter is intended. This letter is addressed to the saints and the faithful brethren in the church at Colossae. This did not mean others couldn't read it or share it. It just means that God has identified something in the Colossae people that needed to be corrected before they got too far away from the basic tenants of the gospel and it was written for others who will find themselves in the same predicament. In fact, there are some to this day believe that the blood of Christ alone can't save. Some believe that you must be baptized as well as accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Some believe that a place called purgatory was set up to "further" the work of the cross by a final cleansing before getting into heaven. They believe this despite the words of the Bible that are contrary to that way of thinking.

Paul then offers peace and grace. These are two gifts of God that are often misused. Some people believe that peace is simply the absence of trouble. No matter what is going on around us if we do not have a right relationship with the Father, we will never have peace. Conversely if we have a right relationship with the Father it won't matter that the world is shaking all around us.

Grace is unmerited favor for sure, but it is more than that. Grace is favor that only someone superior can give to someone who is inferior. Grace can also be defined as God's sufficiency or God's fullness in the life of the believer. **2 Corinthians 12:8-9** says:

⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. That is, the grace of God in Paul enabled him and empowered him in his weakness.

2 Cor. 8:9 says:

⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. God's grace working in us supplies the sufficiency so that we may abound to every good work. God's is more than enough." By this I mean that God is more than enough for us no matter what the situation we face.

Hebrews 12:25-29

²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven,

²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*"

²⁷ Now this, "*Yet once more,*" indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire.

Is the Concept of Purgatory Biblical?

The Catholic tradition of purgatory teaches that, upon death, many souls enter a spiritual realm between heaven and hell during which their sins are dealt with until they are prepared to enter heaven. It is a place where sin is "purged" before a person can enter heaven. Furthermore, Catholic tradition encourages the living to do works on behalf of the dead in order to improve the situation of those in purgatory. But what does the Bible say about purgatory?

First, it must be clearly noted that the Bible does not teach purgatory. Catholic theologians typically refer to a book in the Apocrypha to support their belief in purgatory. In the Apocrypha, the book of 2 Maccabees states,

"Making a gathering . . . sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection (For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead). And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness, had great grace laid up for them. It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" ([2 Maccabees 12:43-46](#)).

From this, Catholic doctrine teaches that prayers for the dead were offered before the time of Jesus to improve the condition of the soul. While it may be true that some people offered prayers for the dead, the fact remains that the source is a book not included in the Protestant Bible. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever spoke of the Apocrypha as Scripture or mentioned purgatory.

Belief in purgatory arose within the church at least as early as the fourth century, with some accepting and others rejecting the concept. However, the Council of Trent in 1563 mentioned the doctrine of purgatory as already being universally accepted within the church. While it may or may not have been universally accepted, it is clear that purgatory was commonly discussed and accepted by many at this time.

A look at the New Testament reveals a very different perspective regarding the afterlife. First, Jesus spoke very clearly of only two choices in the afterlife in [Luke 16:19-31](#). There we find that a certain rich man had died as an unbeliever and was "in torment" ([Luke 16:23](#)). Jesus made it clear that the afterlife offers two options, and that both heaven and hell are eternal.

[Matthew 7:13-14](#) also notes, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Again, only two options are provided.

There is no third option.

The end of the Bible also makes clear God's plan for the end of time. [Revelation 20:12-15](#) says,

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Once again, only two choices exist—heaven or hell (here called the lake of fire). Purgatory is an extra-biblical teaching developed beyond what Jesus and the apostles presented in the Bible. As such, it lacks biblical authority and is to be rejected. While the idea of a "middle ground" may find historical support in other places or seem sensible to many, the fact is that it is not supported by the Bible—the very book that forms the basis for Christian belief. Believers are not called to offer prayers or works on behalf of the dead. The dead's eternity has already been decided. Instead, we must seek to grow in Christ and share Him with others.

This entire text on Purgatory was taken word for word from:

<http://www.compellingtruth.org/purgatory.html>

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