

Colossians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Adult Quarterly

CHRISTIAN LIGHT SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Unit 1: Colossians and Philemon

- | | | |
|------------|---|----|
| 1. June 5 | The Preeminence of Christ (Colossians 1:9-29) | 4 |
| 2. June 12 | Avoiding Perversions of the Truth (Colossians 2:4-23) | 8 |
| 3. June 19 | Expressing Christian Virtues (Colossians 3:1-17) | 12 |
| 4. June 26 | Holiness in Human Relationships (Colossians 3:18-4:6) | 16 |
| 5. July 3 | Above a Servant—A Brother Beloved (Philemon 1:1-21) | 20 |

Unit 2: 1 Thessalonians

- | | | |
|--------------|--|----|
| 6. July 10 | Faithful Followers Under Test (Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thess. 1:1-10) | 24 |
| 7. July 17 | Principles of Christian Leadership (1 Thess. 2:1-20) | 28 |
| 8. July 24 | Principles of Christian Growth (1 Thess. 3:1-13) | 32 |
| 9. July 31 | Living in Light of the Lord's Return (1 Thess. 4:1-18) | 36 |
| 10. August 7 | Called to Be Children of Light (1 Thess. 5:1-28) | 40 |

Unit 3: 2 Thessalonians

- | | | |
|---------------|---|----|
| 11. August 14 | Christ's Coming in Judgment (2 Thess. 1:1-12) | 44 |
| 12. August 21 | The Son of Perdition (2 Thess. 2:1-17) | 48 |
| 13. August 28 | The Authority of the Apostles' Teaching (2 Thess. 3:1-18) | 52 |

Home Daily Bible Reading and Study Guide 56

Alternate Memory Passage..... 64

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Introduction to This Quarter's Lessons

COLOSSIANS, PHILEMON, 1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

Unit 1 – Colossians and Philemon

Unit 1, the first five lessons of this quarter, covers two of the letters Paul wrote while in prison. The two are companion epistles. Both contain the names of the same people as bearers of the letters. The letters were delivered at the same time by Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9). Onesimus was the runaway slave that was returning to Colosse to face his Christian master with Paul's letter appealing to Philemon to accept him as a "beloved brother." Philemon was the leader of a house church in Colosse.

Colossians is one of Paul's shorter letters written to churches while he was in prison. The other two are Philippians and Ephesians. If you read Ephesians and Colossians together, you will immediately note many similarities. It has been estimated that about one-fourth of Colossians is found in Ephesians! Note the parallel passages as you study.

As with most of Paul's epistles, Colossians is divided into a doctrinal section (Chapters 1, 2) and a practical section (Chapters 3, 4). As usual, we find much that is "practical" even in the part that focuses more on theology. We must approach Christianity with proper beliefs, but it cannot stop there. We are to mold our behavior to fit our faith in the preeminent Christ. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (3:2).

Philemon is the shortest of Paul's epistles. It reminds us that Christ in our lives changes our relationships with others. Paul never became involved in politics to call for an end to slavery. However, his advice to Philemon helped sound the death-knell to slavery. Whether in the master-slave relationship or in the employer-employee relationship, Christian principles of love and respect must apply.

Unit 2 – 1 Thessalonians

Paul established the church in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). The church included a few Jewish converts and a larger number of people from heathen background (1 Thessalonians 1:9; Acts 17:4). His stay with the church he started quickly ended when some Jewish people accused him before the city fathers of "turning the world upside down" and teaching that Jesus was king instead of Caesar. Paul was escorted out of town and Timothy was sent to encourage the Thessalonian believers.

The first three chapters of 1 Thessalonians consist of Paul's praise for the church's spiritual growth. Then he encourages the church to strengthen them in the faith. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the dead in Christ and the

coming day of the Lord. He concludes with an appeal for holy living in light of the day of the Lord.

Unit 3 – 2 Thessalonians

The second epistle to the Thessalonians is shorter and simpler than the first one. Apparently, the church needed more detail and correction concerning their view of the Second Coming of Christ. In Chapter 2 he clarified his teaching on the Second Coming. He spoke of the signs that would precede the return of Christ—lawlessness and the coming of the “man of sin”—the “lawless one.” Some of the early Christians seemed to believe that Christ’s return would occur very shortly. They needed the encouragement to focus on holy living in light of the Second Coming. They needed to be busy serving the Lord and living faithfully for Him as they followed Jesus’ command: “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13).

How to Use the Study Questions

The questions on page 4 of each lesson encourage research, thought, and discussion of lesson themes. The space after each question is for you to make notes (before you come to class) on the results of your study and meditation. Generally, the first question relates to the first part of the lesson, then consecutively through the lesson.

The questions are not intended to replace, but to supplement and make practical your study and discussion of the Scripture text.

Pointers for Studying the Lesson

Sunday school will be much more meaningful and inspirational to you (and to your teacher) if you invest a bit of time preparing each week. Here are some preparation pointers:

- Pray for the class and for your teacher during the week. Pray that this lesson will challenge you to a deeper walk with God.
- Read the lesson text several times during the week. If possible, read the surrounding context of the lesson.
- Jot down your thoughts and questions in the wide margin beside the Scripture text.
- Think through the questions on the fourth page of the lesson. Jot down thoughts about them in the space provided.
- Come prepared to participate!

**Memory
Selection:**

And he is
the head of
the body, the
church: who
is the begin-
ning, the first-
born from the
dead; that in
all things he
might have the
preeminence.
Colossians 1:18

**Scriptural
Background:**
Colossians 1

Printed Text:
Colossians
1:9-29

UNIT 1: COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON
Lesson 1, June 5, 2022

The Preeminence of Christ

Hymns: “Before Jehovah’s Awful Throne”
“Out of the Depths”
“Rise Up, O Men of God”

Colossians calls us to seek knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding from God. If we do this, we will seek His will and give Him first place in our service and devotion.

Focus: To give Jesus Christ first place—His rightful place—in our hearts, in our lives, and in our churches.

Christ Preeminent

Colossians 1:9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is

the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ in You

19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

20. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

21. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:

23. If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

24. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

25. Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26. Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27. To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Lesson Commentary

Christ Preeminent

Though verses 9-18 do not mention Jesus or Christ, that is who the passage is about. The first eight verses of the chapter name Him and focus on Him. In the printed portion, He is referred to as God's "dear Son." If we allow Him to fill us, then we will be filled with all the good that God has for us. When we are filled with the knowledge of His will, we will be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), with joy (Acts 13:52), with the fruits of righteousness (Philippians 1:11), with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19).

Our conduct must reflect the holy life that is consistent with our profession

of obedience to God. Sound doctrine (knowledge) should lead us to right conduct and to obedience to Jesus Christ. The word translated *power* (*dunamis*), in verse 11 is the same word used in Acts 1:8 to speak of power from the Holy Spirit. When we experience His might and His glorious power at work, we will be able to have joy even in persecution and trying circumstances. It has been said that “joy not rooted in the soil of suffering is shallow.” Are we willing to suffer for Christ’s sake? The believer must be filled with God (verse 9), be fruitful (verse 10), and fortified or strengthened (verse 11).

We have redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ (verse 14). He is God Himself, made visible to human eyes. He is the firstborn of every creation. This is not stating that He was created but that He has a place of superiority and supremacy with God. He was before all things—that is, because He is part of the eternal Godhead. As Creator, He holds the entire universe together.

Christ is to be first in our lives and thus head of the body, the church. He is to have first place in all things. The English word *preeminence* is an excellent translation of the Greek word. *Pre* means “before,” or “foremost.” *Eminence* refers to “something that is prominent or stands out above all else.” A high place that can be seen from a long distance away is also an *eminence*. Does Jesus have the highest place in my life? Can He be seen through me? Is He the head of my life? Is He the head of my church?

Christ in You

Again in verse 19, we encounter the concept of fullness or being filled. This is one of the key themes of Colossians. All God’s fullness dwells in Christ. Christ wants to fill us. “Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16).

Holiness is a key theme in the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles. Holiness refers to separation from all that is unclean, being set apart for the glory of God. *Unblameable* means “without moral defect.” *Unreprovable* suggests “freedom from guilt, blameless, and irrefutable.”

Continuing in the faith (verse 23) is a requirement for continued reconciliation with Christ and for ultimate salvation. Paul continued in the faith and suffered much as Christ suffered for His body, the church (verse 24). He could see that his suffering had a purpose, a goal, for the good of others. In a real sense, he did not suffer for himself alone, but for the good of others.

Mystery is mentioned four times in Colossians, twice in today’s lesson (verses 26, 27). *Mystery* in the sense that Paul used it is not a riddle or some undiscoverable thing that God has hidden from us. This mystery, that existed from the creation of the world (Romans 16:25), is revealed to Christ’s saints. The revelation of this mystery is revealed in the church, the body of Christ. All believers are members of Christ’s body. He is its head. Jews and Gentiles can become members of that body. Christ in the believer and the believer being part of His body is the “hope of glory.” We have no hope by ourselves but only with His abiding presence within.

Verse 28 reveals a twofold reason for the preaching of the Gospel. It is God’s message to warn sinners and to teach them His way. It is also to teach believers the truths of the Christian faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. The Gospel proclaims the way of salvation and nurture.

Study Questions

1. How do we walk worthy of the Lord?

2. Which of these terms can apply to Jesus—Creator, created, immortal?

3. What is preeminence? How is Jesus' preeminence evident in your life?

4. How is reconciliation dependent on us?

5. How does “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (v. 27) correspond to Paul’s testimony in verse 29? Can we share that testimony?

Alternate Memory Passage

June, July, August 2022

The following Scripture is for classes that would like to memorize a passage instead of individual verses this quarter. (The superintendent could be in charge of the memory work, if all the youth and adult classes wish to memorize it together.)

We suggest that students memorize and repeat together one verse each Sunday and two the last Sunday, adding to the verses memorized the previous Sundays.

Colossians 3:1-14

- 1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.**
- 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**
- 3. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.**
- 4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.**
- 5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:**
- 6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:**
- 7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.**
- 8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.**
- 9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;**
- 10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:**
- 11. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.**
- 12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;**
- 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**
- 14. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.**