

“Filled...”

Colossians 1:1-14

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at Believers City Church
in Menomonie, Wis
on July 2nd, 2023

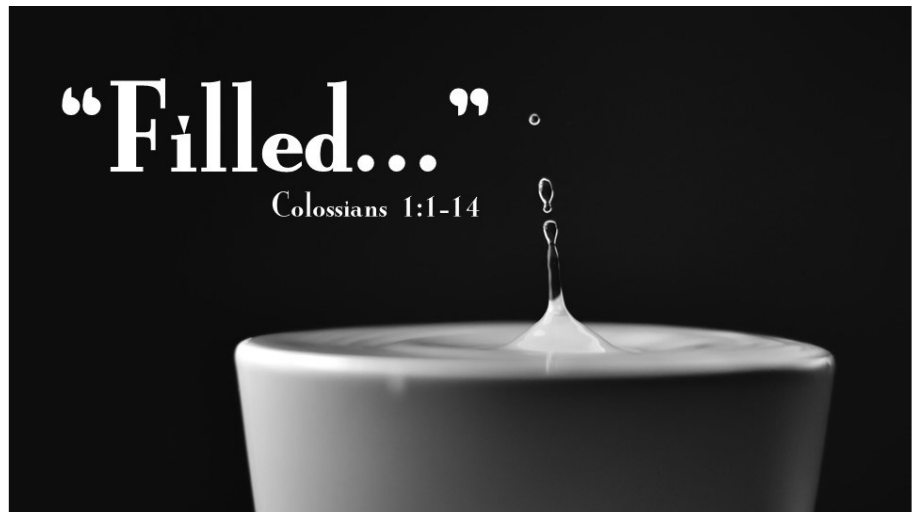
1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord

Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; 7 as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Is Christ enough? Are you whole and complete today or even as we gather this morning you are still looking for that something that is missing...*something* that will satisfy and gratify? We want Jesus on some level, but we still want...*well, more.*

Today we live in a society plagued by unbridled desire and chronic consumerism. Bleak and empty, despite endless options and unprecedented prosperity. These issues converge to create a vacuum that pulls us ever deeper into ourselves and further from healthy human interaction, from purpose, from meaning. The greater church too is often caught up in this chase, corporately seeking some new and exciting experience, some new doctrine, some new success formula, or some special sign. The corporate church today is far more concerned with how it might please the unredeemed populace than its Creator and Lord. Yet Colossians 2:10 tells us, “You *are* complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” How do we rectify such a dichotomy?

The book of Colossians tells us of the overwhelming nature of Christ and moreover how to appropriate what we have been promised in Him. Because it is not enough that Christ is all-sufficient, unless we actually apply that fact to our lives in the practical realm. What place are you giving Christ in your life? Is He first? Has He been given total supremacy of your daily life? Is He the absolute, final authority and power in our priorities and decisions?



Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians have all led up to this letter. With all that we have learned about Him, we must now ask the crucial question: Is He enough for you? Is He enough for all your needs, all your wants and desires?

Paul was in a prison in Rome when a letter from a man named Epaphras arrived telling Paul that the false faith of Gnosticism had found its way into the church of Colossi. “Gnosticism” was, *and still is*, a “higher thinking” religious sect...a group of people that believed themselves to be “in the know”...*as in*, the rest of you ‘are not.’ These folks have an extreme belief system, wherein there is a distinct separation of the body and spirit. The group comes in two parts: those who believe that all matter is evil, therefore they must live in total rejection of all the body desires and needs. Absolute poverty and withholding of all ‘creature comforts’ are the general practice of this first group.

The second group believes also that all matter is evil and there is no escaping that. However, because of the separation of body and spirit, the body does not matter to God. Thus, in this version of this “faith,” one can give themselves wholly over to all desires of the flesh and therefore all desires were gratified.

Indeed Gnosticism had crept into the church in Colosse, just as it has come into the church in America today. Basically, it is the concept of “*Jesus plus...*”.

Chapter 1

1:1

Paul was not an apostle of some group or denomination. He was simply an apostle of Jesus Christ.

“apostle” means “sent forth.” Paul was indeed an apostle sent forth by Jesus Christ Himself. It seemed that when Paul began a letter this way, he was going to be doing some correcting and doing it to some people who had a hard time accepting that he was indeed an apostle.

It was likely that these false teachers who had come into the church in Colossi, were challenging Paul’s position and authority, for that is generally the “M.O.” of guys of this stripe. It was simply a case of “divide and conquer.”

Paul says it was “by the will of God” that he was an apostle. It was not something he did himself, I.E. - via some seminary training, university degree, or even by the blessing of some individual or group! Ironically, there was a time in his life wherein he knew one thing for sure, and that was he would certainly never be a disciple of Jesus Christ! But the “will of God” had different plans!

Paul was uniquely *called*...and moreover *equipped*, for the manifestation of this divine will...this divine *plan*.

“*Timotheus our brother...*” - Note Paul’s close connection and relationship with Timothy, who is mentioned here and in past letters. It is clear that Paul was always willing to share the limelight.

1:2

“*To the saints*”, the “set apart ones.” We too have been “set apart” so we can take this letter, addressed to the church in Colossi as our own. For all true Christians are “set apart,” thus making us all saints in Him.

“faithful brethren”...while “saints” speak of position, this title speaks of relationship. All believers are saints, but not all believers are “faithful brethren.” Those in Colossi were trustworthy, steadfast, and unswerving in their devotion not to just God but to each other. They had apparently “showed their colors” over the months and years that had passed. It is a rare thing to be able to not just have *brethren* in one’s life, but moreover to experience the rare blessing of having *faithful* brethren!

“grace and peace”

Grace is our source and peace is the result. Paul no doubt believed that no one knew more about grace than he did! For indeed his was an *extensive* journey!

1:3-4

“Praying always for you”

Let us again be reminded...as we were in the past few letters we covered, that Paul was in prison while writing this letter. Yet his concern was not for himself, but for those in Colossi and the other churches which he had begun.

“We heard of your faith...and love which ye have”

I wonder if people say that about us?

Faith “in Jesus Christ”

Faith is not just a “belief”. Faith is only as good as its object. The faith of these believers was not in themselves or their power to believe. This wasn’t a case of the “little engine that could.” Their faith was centered upon Jesus Christ, thus it had very little to do with them.

1:5

“Hope” is “*an expectation, a looking forward to.*” **Their** “hope” was so strong and so real, that it testified of through a genuine standing in Christ and a great love for one another. Anyone can *claim* such a futuristic “hope” but those who truly have it, express its reality in the way that they live out their lives.

What was behind this great hope and all of its attributes? Verse 5 says it was the “word of the truth of the gospel.” In an age that manipulates the truth to the extent of nearly abolishing its reality, this is the real result of real truth...

1:6

“the gospel... (6) which has come to you, as [it has] also in all the world...” “all the world?” The writing of this letter is only roughly 30 years after Christ! With no cell phones, fax machines, e-mail, or evening TV news, and still “*all the world.*”

This “truth” that has come to all of the world has brought results to whoever is willing to receive it. The true Gospel and the receiving of it brings forth fruit in the lives of those who hear it. That is actually one of the litmus tests *of* true redemption.

1:7-9

There is evidence of the trail that this Epaphras took in Chapter 4, where Paul tells us that Epaphras was “one of you.” It is quite possible, that Epaphras found himself under study at the School of Tyrannus where in Acts 19, we are told Paul taught for over two years. Epaphras then likely went home and shared the gospel with those in his home town of Colossi, eventually becoming their pastor. In all of this, we essentially have the Biblical path of raising up pastors. Elsewhere in Acts, many of those appointed over the new churches planted never even left

their home church prior to being sent out. Reborn, disciplined, trained, raised up, anointed for ministry, and reproduced.

This was Paul's first and most important prayer for this church as it lays the foundation for all that follows.

He desired that the believers in Colossae would come to vividly know God's will, which would lead them to all wisdom and spiritual understanding. He wanted them to not just participate in such matters but to actually be "filled" with such matters. To be "complete" and "whole." For such to be imminently satisfying and fulfilling. For Jesus to "be enough." Paul's prayer is an echo of the letter in its totality: "filled" means "fully supplied, to make complete" ...and this is the theme of the Book of Colossians!

We need to note that the word "fill" in the Greek has in it the idea of "control." Thus such a filling has a purpose! Paul desires that they not only *know* and *possess* the will of God, but that it controls them!

This wisdom that is spoken of here, comes both supernaturally through the Holy Spirit, as well as practically through experience with walking in Him. It begins, says Proverbs 9:10, through the "fear" of the Lord; "fear" (gr) also entails respect and reverence. "Spiritual understanding" has in it the idea of application. Paul wanted them to apply the knowledge of God's will to their own lives and all situations.

So many believers today have such a poor knowledge of God and His plans and ways and wonder why they struggle and strive. Psalms 103:7 tells us about such saying that the "people knew the *acts* of God, but Moses...he knew the *ways* of God." And then many of us that do have such knowledge, never apply that which they have come to know. Thus they are "like children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14). These live out their Christian life primarily in their heads.

1:10

Paul's second prayer element is... "that you might walk worthy of the Lord." Paul wanted them to know God's will, not just for information, but for application in their daily lives; and this firstly so that He might be honored, so He might be pleased. It's a simple question really. Is God pleased and honored by the actual walking out of your life?

Paul's desire is that God *in* them, will show God *out* of them. He wanted them, in the power of God, to produce good works. This is an idea that runs through all of Paul's teachings. Not that works make us righteous in God's eyes, but Paul knows that God's real power has real results! (see Eph 2:10, John 15:16) Jesus Himself not only asked us to produce good works, but has given us the power to do so (See Acts 1:8, Heb 13:21)

This is more than an issue of effort but moreover of the "fruit of the Spirit" of which the greatest is love. Paul has acknowledged in verse 8, the reality of love among the church in Colosse. Love is where it begins and love is where it ends.

Paul prayed that they would get stronger: "with all might"...(gr) "dunamis" or "dynamite." This is similar to his writing to the Ephesians (3:16). We really have culturally abandoned the concept and teaching in the Word, of God's desire that we be strong. Of Him calling us to "be men." Today's tendency in society to excuse ourselves from all calls for strength has crept into the church and we are becoming so soft and passive, which one is hard-pressed to find supported in scripture. We tend to personally excuse ourselves from such calls to strength, claiming exemption due to one thing or another. It is so widespread, that it has left the church weak and impotent for the most part.

“according to his glorious power” : The power that is available to us, is not according to our need or even according to our own capacity to absorb, but according to His ability to supply!

There is a big difference between giving “out of” and “according to” His riches. If you are in desperate need and a millionaire gives you a check for \$100, he is giving “out of” his riches. But if he gives you a signed check and tells you to fill in the amount that you need, he is giving you “according to” his riches. This is the blessing style of our Lord.

We are strengthened “unto” or “to exercise” every kind of endurance and patience. And further, we are to do so with joy. Perhaps you are saying, “Oh, but if you only knew what I am going through, you would understand why I have no joy...” Again we must ask ourselves...“How big is my God?”

The word “patience” in the Greek is made up of two words that literally mean “to remain under.” Paul knew what it meant to “stay under” a difficult situation. Time and time again he would be in severe trial and tribulation, and would still manifest “patience and longsuffering.” He didn’t sit out of the game until his difficulties went away. (see 2 Cor 12:9). There is a phrase in sports, “play through the pain”

1:12

“QUALIFIED” (Gr) means **“sufficient, and equipped.”** We must learn to take God at His word, to actually believe what He has told us. If we do not, we should then question our very salvation state.

NOTE: He has made us partakers! It is not our doing, but His. Moreover, our “inheritance” is not just received upon death, (unless you count OUR death of the old man!) rather we begin to receive the inheritance in the spiritual realm beginning the moment of salvation.

He has made us equipped, or ‘sufficient’ to partake in this inheritance. But such is no guarantee that we will indeed partake of it. We have been made “joint heirs” with Christ receiving much of what are the attributes and power given to Jesus Himself by the Father. However, though we are entitled, much of our inheritance is never acquired because of our fear, apathy, or ignorance. Note the children of Israel: God had promised them the land of Canaan, but it was still necessary for them to go into the land and personally acquire what God had given them.

Paul had told the believers in Colosse that he had been diligently praying for them. He now begins to show them the supremacy of Christ in every detail of life. Paul’s goal here was to show these believers and ultimately all believers, that Christ was all they need and they are now...if they are willing to except the idea, “complete in Him.” He shows them in the following passages that this “completeness” or “wholeness” is through Jesus Christ, God in flesh, and Him only. And that if Jesus IS supreme in their lives, He is sufficient for all their needs.

Many of us claim supremacy of Christ in our lives, but live our lives constantly in at least perceived need! How can this be? Our lives are lived in strife and anxiety instead of the promised peace and wholeness. Verse 10 tells us that we are “complete in Him.” Are you? If not, what is the issue do you think?

1:13

“from the power of darkness”...

Scripture clearly tells us that we have been rescued not only from the guilt and penalty of sin, but the power of sin in our lives. “power” means “governmental authority, jurisdiction, control in decisions.” The unredeemed individual is a slave to sin and to this world. They do not know freedom. Satan and sin controls him or her. But

for the born-again believer, we have been set free and are no longer in bondage to the controlling power of sin. This is a fact, whether we live in it or not. Many believers never seem to move beyond the redemption moment. They never acquire the victory over sin that is possible through the “power” of the Holy Spirit. This is the spiritual maturity that is spoken of in the Book of Ephesians.

A parallel of salvation and spiritual deliverance from slavery is seen in the children of Israel’s redemption from Egypt. God rescued them from a judgment that came upon the firstborn. They were instructed to kill a lamb and apply the blood to the doorpost and mantle of their homes. But if the road ended there, they would have been alive, but still in slavery. He further delivered them from slavery by providing a way through the Red Sea, away from Egypt, away from bondage. ‘Egypt’...the scriptural symbol of the world, no longer held power over the people of God.

The word “conveyed” or “translated” in scripture was used to describe taking a population away to be relocated in another country. This was done in warfare so that the conquered people would lose their national identity and would become a part of the new country. We must note here that the “kingdom of the Son” exists today. It is a “new country”, a new home for the believer, to which we have been “conveyed” into... (1Thess 2:11-12)

Note He “*has*” conveyed us. A past tense act! It has already taken place. On the cross, the door to this kingdom, this new country, was opened to us. And now, we who are born again, have passed through those doors and have entered into a new country. One with new loyalties, new politics, a new ruler, and a new government.

1:14

“redemption” (gr) means “deliverance” or “forgiveness.” A “setting free through ransom, or payment.”

“**through his blood**” – Note Gods requirement of the blood of sacrifice. Why? (again; see scripture concerning blood and salvation Exodus 12) In blood there is life. This is the price of redemption. (Note Heb 9:22, Lev 17:11)

Note that we *have* this redemption...*past tense!* The price has been paid. We have been freed. We have thus been offered to “move” to our new country already. Perhaps this explains why the believer is no longer at home in this world, but longs to be with Christ, away from Egypt. For while we are free from the bondage of Egypt, it still exists; still attempting to draw us back, back into bondage.

Satan wants to convince us that we still owe. Jesus said He has paid it all, once and forever! Satan wants you to go on paying, trying to convince you that YOU must add to the cross, in works, in penance, in following rules and laws. He also wants to convince you that it is a debt that cannot EVER be paid because it is too great in your case! But that fact remains Christian...*you are already home.*