

**COLOSSIANS  
& PHILEMON  
FOR YOU**



**MARK MEYNELL**  
**COLOSSIANS**  
**& PHILEMON**  
**FOR YOU**

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## **Colossians & Philemon For You**

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To my dear *Hasat* sisters and brothers  
scattered across Turkey

## SERIES PREFACE

Each volume of the *God's Word For You* series takes you to the heart of a book of the Bible, and applies its truths to your heart.

The central aim of each title is to be:

- Bible centred
- Christ glorifying
- Relevantly applied
- Easily readable

You can use *Colossians & Philemon For You*:

**To read.** You can simply read from cover to cover, as a book that explains and explores the themes, encouragements and challenges of this part of Scripture.

**To feed.** You can work through this book as part of your own personal regular devotions, or use it alongside a sermon or Bible-study series at your church. Each chapter is divided into two (or occasionally three) shorter sections, with questions for reflection at the end of each.

**To lead.** You can use this as a resource to help you teach God's word to others, both in small-group and whole-church settings. You'll find tricky verses or concepts explained using ordinary language, and helpful themes and illustrations along with suggested applications.

These books are not commentaries. They assume no understanding of the original Bible languages, nor a high level of biblical knowledge. Verse references are marked in **bold** so that you can refer to them easily. Any words that are used rarely or differently in everyday language outside the church are marked in **grey** when they first appear, and are explained in a glossary towards the back. There, you'll also find details of resources you can use alongside this one, in both personal and church life.

Our prayer is that as you read, you'll be struck not by the contents of this book, but by the book it's helping you open up; and that you'll praise not the author of this book, but the One he is pointing you to.

*Carl Laferton, Series Editor*

**Bible translations used:**

- NIV: New International Version (2011 edition). This is the version being quoted unless otherwise stated.
- ESV: English Standard Version.



## INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON

Visit Colossae today, and there is nothing to see.

Despite being only a brief but stunning drive down Turkey's Lycus Valley from the breathtaking sites of Laodicea and Hierapolis, all that remains is a large hill with the odd block of masonry jutting out on one side. The city was destroyed by a devastating earthquake that struck the valley in around AD 60. Unlike its two illustrious neighbours, Colossae was never rebuilt, presumably because the risk of more seismic activity was great. When I visited recently, I was quite disappointed, to say the least. But this is the probable reason why the Colossian church was not included in Jesus's letters to the seven churches of Revelation 2 – 3. When John the **apostle**\* was exiled on the island of Patmos, it no longer existed.

So, we could say that the only legacy to us of this once thriving city is Paul's letter to the Colossian Christians. That is quite strange once you appreciate that, to the best of our knowledge, Paul never actually went there. But that never diminished the letter's impact, because Paul knew the world they lived in. For, as inhabitants of the Roman province of Asia, they all belonged to one of history's greatest empires: they were Roman subjects in Caesar's world.

Except that wasn't the whole story. They were also Christ-followers living in Christ's world. Despite having never met the Colossians, and despite the separation forced by his languishing in prison, Paul is insistent on that fact. He was well aware of how subversive and dangerous this message was.

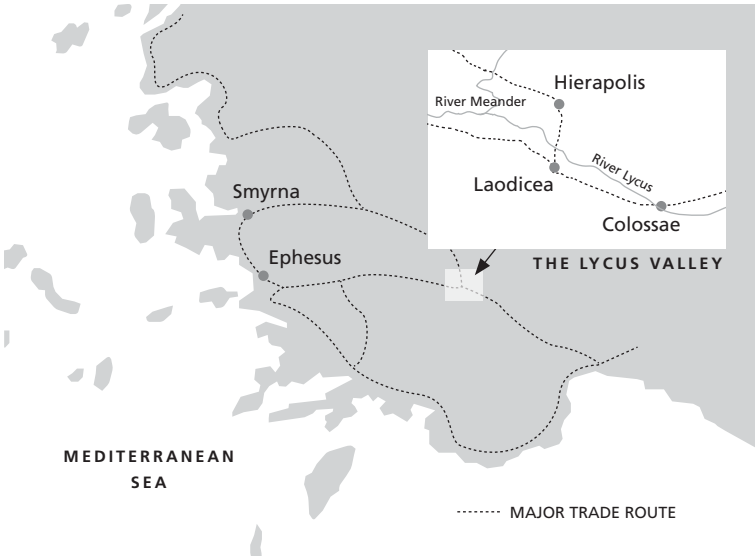
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\* Words in **grey** are defined in the Glossary (page 200).

**Introduction**

It is not usually until it gets pointed out that modern readers realise just how bold this letter to the Colossians really is. Paul is shockingly, dangerously politically incorrect. He is writing to people that he has never met nor is likely to meet (unless he could fulfil the hopes expressed in Philemon 22). He only has the report of their mutual friend Epaphras to go on (see Colossians 1:7). But still, he has the audacity to write to them about their lives and faith, to instruct and even to challenge them. But far more courageous is his determination to speak of cosmic and eternal realities in universal terms. He sees the world in black and white (with everyone split between the dominion of darkness and the kingdom of light), and towering over all stands Jesus Christ. Whatever Christ has said or achieved is automatically true for every person at every time in every place. There are no exceptions. He is the universal king. This is what gives Paul such confidence in applying Christian truths to these strangers. This is what made him courageous in the face of martyrdom. But he knew how important it was to be crystal clear for these young believers because so much was stacked up against them.

Rome’s propaganda was straightforward. It convinced Roman sub-



jects that they were far better off supporting the empire because it was the only system that could guarantee security in an uncertain world. The Latin word *pax* (meaning “peace”) could be seen everywhere—on temple walls, on city gates, on official documents. As one historian wrote, adopting the guise of a Roman citizen:

“Coins have Pax, the goddess of peace, on one side, and weapons on the other. Our gateways depict the emperor’s victories over his enemies. This is peace by the blood of the sword.”

(*Colossians Remixed*, page 52)

Even in the earliest days of the empire, adoration of the emperor was actively encouraged. Take the poet Horace, who lived during the reign of the first Caesar, Augustus. His **sycophant**ic verses declared that the emperor had “brought back fertile crops to the fields” and “wiped away our sins and revived the ancient virtues” (*Colossians Remixed*, page 54). That’s quite the achievement!

Peace. Provision. Forgiveness.

These are basic human needs. Yet who could truly be relied upon to deliver? Paul knew that Caesar never could. And he was prepared to risk everything to say so. In fact, he knew he would pay the ultimate price for proclaiming it. But both the truth and glory of the alternative made it all worthwhile.

For it is God’s Christ (and it emphatically was not Rome’s Caesar) who holds everything together in ultimate peace and security. Even when it did not always seem or feel like it.

Colossians is about the universe’s deep reality, despite appearances to the contrary. It is **worldview**-shaping, mind-expanding and game-changing. The stronger our grasp of its message, the greater our open-mouthed astonishment will become. If our first response to the teaching of this letter is not “Wow!” we are missing something. But we can’t stay open-mouthed without falling to our knees. For if Jesus really is the cosmic Lord, then how can we not dedicate every fibre of our being to him and his service?

Whenever astronauts go into orbit for the first time, they all

## Introduction

apparently experience the same sensation: the so-called “overview effect”. Being able to see the whole of planet Earth at a glance changes everything: the fragility of life on this “pale blue dot” is palpable; national boundaries no longer seem that significant; petty concerns are dissolved by a galactic perspective. It is said to be truly overwhelming. Only a precious few have had this privilege. But all who read and absorb Colossians can gain something even more remarkable: God’s overview effect.

When we see clearly that King Jesus is Lord of everything—nothing can ever be the same again.

# 1. A NEW FRIENDSHIP

Paul is clear from the outset where his allegiances lie. Sharing his opening greeting with his trusted right-hand man, Timothy, he describes himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (**v 1**)\*. He is Christ’s man, not Caesar’s man, mandated by the Lord himself as one of his apostles, responsible for laying the foundations for God’s new kingdom people. But if this seems a little formal, any distance is removed by what he, Timothy, and the Colossians have in common. He writes to them as “God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ” (**v 2**), just as Timothy is “our brother” (**v 1**). These are no empty words: they form the bonds that connect them—and us—across time, distance and culture.

Contrary to a common misunderstanding, being described as “holy” is not a moral judgment—it is not a matter of how high one has reached on some sort of righteousness ladder. After all, Paul had never met these Christians, so how could he possibly make such an assessment? Instead, his point is that their holiness is a statement of fact: a declaration of what God has done in and for these believers. Their holiness and faithfulness to Christ are the direct results of their being “in Christ” (a central theme of Colossians). This is what binds them all together, and is the foundation of everything, Paul will write.

Similarly, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father” (**v 2**) is

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\* All Colossians and Philemon verse references being looked at in each chapter are in **bold**.

no hollow **platitude**. Those two words are actually key to what sets Christ's cosmic rule apart from that of anyone else (Caesar included). For who else can offer to every person on earth the wonders of God's undeserved forgiveness and mercy? Who else can restore us (and the entire creation) to everything we were created to be? This is real peace. Even though he is writing in Greek, Paul would have been completely familiar with the Hebrew concept of "*shalom*", a word which does not translate easily into either Greek or English. It is not simply the absence of hostilities; it is the settled and contented wholeness and flourishing that inevitably result from God's work in his world. It is ultimately the perfect peace that once existed in the Garden of Eden: a peace which the world cannot fathom, and which only originates from Christ himself (see John 14:27). It is the kind of peace that casts out all fear and anxiety.

So Paul's greeting is genuinely weighty and thrilling—and a tiny foretaste of the wonders to come.

## **Deep gratitude**

The pleasure Paul has in writing this letter comes from everything he has heard about his Colossian sisters and brothers. The church had been planted a few years previously by Epaphras (see Colossians **1:7**), a local who had returned home after his conversion (see 4:12-13). Epaphras was clearly a trusted member of Paul's team ("a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf" 1:7). So, when he passes on news of the Colossians' discipleship, Paul is thrilled (**v 3**). With so much in Roman culture stacked against the possibility of this happening, it was a terrific encouragement.

Paul's gratitude to God is prompted by various elements.

## **"Your faith in Christ Jesus"**

Personal confidence and trust in Christ (**v 4**) is of course the essential component for the Christian—both at the start of the disciple's jour-

ney and for the rest of life. But Paul was not simply excited because new converts had been added to their numbers. He knew how costly this was, how countercultural it was at a time when Christianity was such a new phenomenon in the region. For not only were the Colossians making a positive statement by accepting Jesus; they were also rejecting all the other gods and ideologies on offer.

But theirs was no mere intellectual excitement about a novel idea or religious fad.

### **“The love that you have for all God’s people”**

Their new allegiance inspired a new service to their new brothers and sisters in Christ. As he says at the end of the paragraph, this is “love in the Spirit” (v 8). This love is not a matter of hollow sentimentality but effort and costly commitment. It is about identifying and meeting the needs of those around them. More than that, it is love that is indiscriminate—it is “for all God’s people”, or as the ESV translates it more accurately “for all the saints”. It is an immediate repetition of the word translated in **verse 2** as “God’s holy people”. A saint is a technical term in the Bible, someone that God has declared holy and forgiven, and therefore part of God’s people. This fact alone was the radical incentive for the Colossians’ love for others. Epaphras had clearly told Paul that there was no favouritism among them. Instead, there was ample evidence of practical love pouring out for all those who had need—just as had happened when the Jerusalem church began a few years before (see Acts 4:32-35). Perhaps this indiscriminate love is the most compelling aspect of Epaphras’ report. Love for those who are different from us (be they Christian or not) is

A saint is ...  
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of God’s people.

so counter to human nature that it surely points to this being the Holy Spirit's work. How else would it really come about?

The logic of how Paul orders the so-called Christian's trinity of faith, love and hope is surprising. We might expect to find love for others and hope of heaven to derive from trusting Christ. But here, the lynchpin for faith and love is in fact hope.

### **“Hope stored up for you in heaven”**

The Colossians have confidence about their future (Colossians **1:5**) because of what is prepared and ready for them—in God's eternal presence. Epaphras has seen how future-focused they are—but as their practical love proves, it is not a focus that tries to ignore present trials and challenges. It is simply that their confidence gives them what they need to persevere through them (**v 7-8**).

The reason believers can endure through hardship is that Christian hope is emphatically not wishful thinking. They are not idly holding out for a kind of spiritual lottery jackpot. Their hope does not depend on luck. Instead, hope's core is a promise—which is why Paul equates hope with the message he and countless others like Epaphras proclaim. “The hope ... you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you” (**v 5-6**). God's promises in Christ are what make this news good: that is because they are all about that grace we have already touched on. The Colossian Christians understood it (**v 6**) and knew it to be true. That is why they hoped for it.

They were not the only ones. People were embracing this gospel “in the whole world”, and this was “bearing fruit and growing” in lives of Christian love and faith. That is all evidence of God's surprising and inspiring work. No wonder Paul is thrilled and grateful.

So even though Paul has never met them, these believers from Colossae are very dear to him. Their conversion fills him with God-



filled joy. Their lives exhibit precisely the qualities we should always expect in new believers:

- faith in Christ
- love for all God's people
- hope for heaven

This paragraph raises the obvious question of how someone might report on our own Christian walk. What evidence is there that we are "saints"; holy people?

That is, of course, a trick question! It is not an invitation to calculate how many holiness points we might have accumulated. Even less is it an invitation to discern someone else's spiritual achievements. Instead, it is a matter of examining the reality of the faith and love springing from our hope.

## Questions for reflection

1. Faith, hope and love: In what ways can our hope for heaven motivate both our love and our faith now (v 5)? Which of these three areas of Christian believing and living do you think you are weakest on? Why might that be?
2. Think about your own conversion to Christ. How do you usually describe it? How might you describe it differently in the way that Paul does in verses 6-8?
3. Why is genuine faith never just believing things are true—that is, intellectual assent? What else is required to make it real?

## PART TWO

### A new commitment

If you want to discover a person's real priorities, there are two key questions to ask: what do you spend most money on, and what do you most often pray for yourself and others? To turn it around the other way, let me ask you this question: if somebody had access to your bank statements and prayer lists, what would they conclude? Who or what is the focus of your life from this evidence?

We would have to work quite hard to learn much about Paul's spending habits (though some hints can be found in his letters). But he has left us a great deal to go on to understand his prayer priorities. It is telling that as soon as Epaphras gives him news of these Colossian brothers and sisters, he gets straight down to work—in prayer (v 9). That serves them even more effectively than visiting them in person.

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.”

So, what does he commit to praying for?

### 1. From knowledge of God to worthiness for God

It may seem bizarre and hard to imagine, but some Christians claim to find **theology** dull and irrelevant. Yet, how can delving into the depths of who God is and what God does ever be boring?

To be fair, some teachers succeed in making it appear dull, which is tragic, as well as irresponsible. But a believer's grasp of theological truths is a matter of urgent prayer.

Paul's first focus is on God's plan for us.

“We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.” (v 9)

This is not a one-off prayer but something he is committed to praying

“continually”. Remember, these are young believers who have started well in their faith. God has granted them new birth as the result of Ephraim’s gospel preaching. But that is no ground for complacency. Ministry can never be simply about converts completing response cards at an event—it is about making and supporting lifelong disciples. The need to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will is constant. But what does that mean exactly? Is this primarily a matter of guidance, so that we discover what God wants from us on a day to day basis? That is certainly how this verse is sometimes taken. Of course, it is vital, and right, to lean on God for his direction in big life decisions—like those about work, marriage, future service and so on. Yet Paul’s weighty prayer here points to something different but even greater.

Paul tends to write about the will of God for believers in universal rather than individualistic terms. In stark contrast to worldly thinking and living (see Romans 12:1-2 or Ephesians 5:15-17), “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). To be sanctified is to live consistently with one’s identity as a “saint”, that is a person who belongs to God, as we saw in the previous section.

It is perhaps now easier to understand why this prayer must be continual. There is always room for improvement when it comes to being like our heavenly Father. So, we could say that to know God’s will is effectively to know God’s character. The two always go together in the Bible, as the Ten Commandments illustrate (see Exodus 20:1-17). For example, the command not to commit adultery reflects God’s own faithfulness to his promises; the command not to envy others reflects God’s commitment to generous provision. But even the first four commandments (which relate to our relationship to our Creator)

To know God’s will is effectively to know God’s character. The two always go together in the Bible.

To understand what God wants we need to know what God is like.

To know what God is like we need to spend time with him.

illustrate God’s nature. After all, if he is the only true God, it is entirely consistent to say we should never worship others.

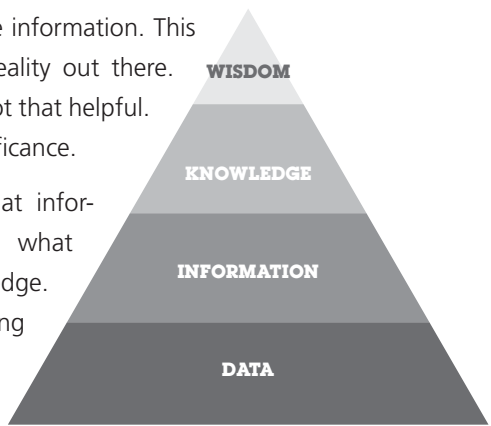
To understand what God wants we need to know what God is like. To know what God is like we need to spend time with him, listening to what he says. This marks the difference between theology as a dry, cerebral pursuit (the sole object of

which is clever and complicated statements) and theology as a living, breathing way of life. It is all about our relationship with God. No wonder this is an important prayer. It is one prayer that God longs to answer.

The key word here is “wisdom”.

Our contemporary world seems to have forgotten wisdom’s value. If people talk about it at all, they usually confuse it with knowledge.

- We drown in a sea of data: demographic statistics, quarterly sales results, hours of battery life. You name it, there is data about it. But raw data by itself gets us nowhere if we don’t know what to do with it.
- Once we see connections between different parts of the data, we have information. This describes the nature of reality out there. But information alone is not that helpful. We need to know its significance.
- So we pool together what information we can to form what can then be called knowledge. Knowledge is about grasping



the meaning of that reality, the significance of the information at our disposal.

- So far so good—but none of that tells us what to do now. For that we need wisdom. Wisdom is about knowing what action or behaviour is good, what is beneficial, what is healthy. It cannot be learned from a book or reduced to a theoretical soundbite. It takes years of experience and insight, years of success and especially of failure. That is why the wisest in society are usually reckoned to be those who have lived longest.

So you can mine the internet for all kinds of data, and are even able to rattle off streams of memorised facts and figures. You can know the average length of battery life for your type of phone, for example. You might even remember how long the charge lasted a week ago. But that by itself is pointless if you don't know what to do with it. In other words, the wise thing is to plug it into a power source every now and then.

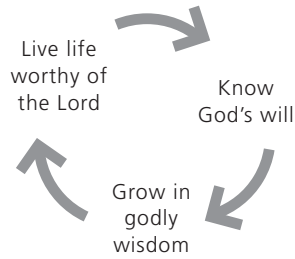
Memorising swathes of theology serves little purpose if it stays as head knowledge. The grandest purpose of theological knowledge must be to pursue godly wisdom. What is the best way to gain wisdom? Surely, it is to spend time with wise people! And there is no one wiser than our God. So Paul's continual prayer in Colossians **1:9** is for God, by his Spirit, to give us both knowledge and the wisdom and understanding to know what to do with it.

Paul does not pray for the Colossians to have a quick fix, but for God to do a lifelong work. Paul is in the discipleship business. What does he hope will result?

“... so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.” (v 10)

A life worthy of the God who has called us to be his. Notice how unrestricted he is here. It is the whole of life that is to be worthy; it is to please God in every way—to produce every good work. This includes the big set-piece events that everyone sees—like preaching at a guest

service or organising the church’s care for homeless people; and also the invisible and small ones—the quiet text to a friend who is struggling or the way we bring up our children. It includes the way we drive our cars as well as how we treat those with irritating jobs like telephone marketers or airport officials. There is no part of life that is excluded from the call to please God.



There is a kind of **virtuous circle** at work here. Paul prays for the knowledge of God’s will that brings godly wisdom—which itself leads to a worthy and pleasing life. But then, the more we live like that, the more we will actually get to know God better! We prove him right and so we trust him more.

## 2. With God’s power for patient perseverance

After reflecting on his victory at Waterloo in 1815, the Duke of Wellington remarked magnanimously, “Our men were not braver than the enemy. They were merely brave five minutes longer.” He was a realist. True warriors know how tough battles get.

Paul wants every Christian to endure to the end. It means keeping going in faith, love and hope until the thing we hope for has been attained. Notice that these paragraphs (v 3-13) constantly have that end point in view. But that is an intimidating thought—especially if the battle with temptation or opposition rages fiercely. How do we keep on bearing the fruit of good works then? Look how he continues:

“... being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience.” (v 11)

We are never abandoned to fight this battle alone. Just as the Spirit fills us with wisdom and understanding, so he enables the very perseverance he calls us to. In fact, the most powerful evidence for his

invisible work must surely be the fact that believers still believe despite their horrendous circumstances. Like the Romanian Richard Wurmbrand, who endured 11 years of solitary confinement in a communist prison; or my East African friend with an aristocratic Muslim background, who lives under threat of death from his family for his bold proclamation of the Christian faith; or the teenager who endures the malicious jeers of school friends for her faith but keeps coming to the church youth group.

It doesn't matter what the battle is—if we are in the middle of it, it is still tough. We feel alone. The future seems bleak. The pressure looks set only to increase. But this is precisely the moment to turn to the Lord (even if that is the last thing we feel like doing). It is all the more important to pray these things for others.

So perhaps, as Paul did for the Colossians, you could learn about a minority Christian community in another part of the world and commit to pray for their growth in wisdom and perseverance. It makes no difference that you are never likely to meet them. That never stopped Paul from rolling up his sleeves in prayer for churches. There are many agencies and organisations that offer this kind of information, so ignorance of what is going on out there is really no excuse.

Paul knew that the Colossians had made the first steps of faith and so he prayed for them to carry on through to the end. He didn't seek converts but disciples, and their perseverance was the surest sign of the Spirit's work.

### **3. In joyful gratitude for kingdom glory**

If this prayer has so far made the Christian life seem like drudgery, then the next verses put us straight. Perseverance might be hard, but it pales in comparison with what we already have in Christ and what we can look forward to in Christ. This is why Paul bursts with gratitude to the Father for the news from Colossae (v 12).

Then suddenly, Paul's gratitude for the Colossian believers seems to

There has been  
a revolution  
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between night  
and day.

launch his imagination into the stratosphere. This is because he does not regard them only as citizens of a far-flung provincial Roman town. Nor does he think they have made a supposedly peculiar lifestyle choice about what god or gods to believe or reject. Still less does he think they have been deluded or conned. He is convinced that an event with cosmic reverberations has taken place. There has been a revolution in their lives, bringing a transformation as total as the difference between night

and day. Why? Because God “has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light” (v 12).

Qualifications are a modern obsession. It is perfectly understandable when the jobs market is so competitive, of course, especially in a globalised world. In a dog-eat-dog culture, the only way to get ahead is to prove that I am superior to all rivals. So, an obvious route to self-promotion (apart from the traditional methods of birth into a well-connected family or collecting contacts) is to accumulate letters after your name. I know one friend who, after her law degree, qualified as a lawyer; she then decided to train as an accountant, passing with flying colours; and now, as if that wasn't enough, she is doing a theology degree in her spare time. Useful for defending a Christian who ends up in court for **tithing** on their tax return perhaps! What is clear, though, is that each set of letters after her name represents months and months of long and lonely study. She is truly qualified!

So what qualifications can Paul have in mind for sharing in God's “kingdom of light”? He says that this inheritance comes to “holy people”. Does that mean we need to obtain a certain level of holiness? And if so, how holy must we be? Is it a bit like the Olympic high jump, where we need to get into training and reach a basic minimum to



get into the games? Or is it more a matter of studying for theology exams?

That is certainly what many imagine Christianity to be: a religion for good people, and for which the “bad” need not apply. “I’m not good enough for church,” someone may think or say when we invite them to join us on Sunday.

There are so many things wrong with this view that it is hard to know where to begin. First, it never originated with Jesus himself. He spent most of his time with the “sinners and tax collectors” (as they were labelled in his day) whereas it was the religious, “churchy” types who orchestrated his execution. The second problem is how to measure goodness. How good is good enough? Most of us pitch ourselves somewhere roughly between Stalin and Mother Theresa, and hope for the best. But, supposing the holiness pass mark is 50%, what happens if I only get 49% holy? That’s still quite a lot of holiness—just not quite enough. And anyway, since when was anything less than perfection appropriate for God?

The remarkable, even miraculous, truth of the Christian gospel is that this kind of discussion is entirely unnecessary and futile. Look again at **verse 12** and notice why gratitude can be the only appropriate response. This qualification is granted—never earned. The Father does the qualifying. He gives us the status of holy people (ESV: “saints”) in the first place. Which is just as well, because since we are all trapped within the dominion of darkness, we ourselves have no means of escape to the kingdom of light. It is impossible.

As he says in **verses 13-14**, “he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”. He has not only made the impossible possible; he has made it available even to us today. How else could we, who cannot make ourselves holy, get qualified? Even if I decide to turn over a new leaf today, I still have my years of sin and rebellion behind me to deal with, and no one can change the past. But God in Christ offers forgiveness for all that—

God in Christ offers forgiveness—which means that nobody ever has to be a slave of their history.

which means that nobody ever has to be a slave of their history.

This marks nothing less than a transfer of cosmic citizenship. In the spiritual realms of the universe, there are no human empires—there is one ultimate battle between darkness and light. But the ruler of the dominion of darkness is much more subtle than human powers because he prefers to skulk around in the shadows, without its subjects even being aware of his existence. But the dark do-

minion certainly makes its presence felt as soon as God's kingdom surfaces. The last thing it wants is for people to flee to and seek asylum in the light. The only hope is for rescue to be achieved and won on our behalf. That is precisely what the Lord Jesus has done. His victory has repercussions that thread through the whole of what Paul writes in Colossians and Philemon.

We must read on to learn more about how he has done this and what it means for us. But for now, Paul is clear. This calls for overwhelmed gratitude to God. What Christ did for us in his first coming, ultimately at the cross and resurrection, gives us full confidence that we will be loved, accepted and welcomed when he returns at his second coming.

## Questions for reflection

1. Think of someone you consider to be truly wise. What is it about them, their understanding and way of thinking that you value? How could you grow more like them?
2. When was the last time you thanked God for the faith, love and hope of your friends and family? Or prayed for these things to grow?
3. "It's one thing to be grateful. It's another to give thanks. Gratitude is what you feel. Thanksgiving is what you do" (Tim Keller). How can you grow a sense of genuine gratitude in your heart? How can improve the way you express your gratitude in thanksgiving?



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