

*Embracing
God's Grace*

*Elizabeth
George*



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Contents

Foreword

Before You Begin

COLOSSIANS

1. Greeting the Brethren ~ 11
COLOSSIANS 1:1-2
2. Giving Thanks to God ~ 18
COLOSSIANS 1:3-8
3. Praying for Spiritual Maturity ~ 25
COLOSSIANS 1:9-12
4. Grasping the Preeminence of Christ ~ 32
COLOSSIANS 1:13-18
5. Realizing What Christ Has Done for You ~ 38
COLOSSIANS 1:19-23
6. Serving Christ Sacrificially ~ 44
COLOSSIANS 1:24-26
7. Understanding the Mystery ~ 49
COLOSSIANS 1:27-29
8. Encouraging Growth in Believers ~ 56
COLOSSIANS 2:1-10
9. Describing the New Life ~ 63
COLOSSIANS 2:11-15
10. Staying Connected to Divine Power ~ 70
COLOSSIANS 2:16-23
11. Focusing Our Affections on Heaven ~ 77
COLOSSIANS 3:1-4
12. Putting Off the Old Life ~ 83
COLOSSIANS 3:5-9

13. Putting On the New Life ~ 89
COLOSSIANS 3:10-17
14. Building a Christian Home ~ 97
COLOSSIANS 3:18-21
15. Knowing Who's Boss ~ 103
COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1
16. Walking in Wisdom and Grace ~ 108
COLOSSIANS 4:2-6
17. Turning to Kindred Spirits in Christ ~ 114
COLOSSIANS 4:7-9
18. Acknowledging a Few Heroes of the Faith ~ 119
COLOSSIANS 4:10-14
19. Being Faithful to God ~ 126
COLOSSIANS 4:15-18
- PHILEMON
20. Greeting a Beloved Friend ~ 131
PHILEMON 1-3
21. Nurturing a Heart of Thanksgiving ~ 137
PHILEMON 4-7
22. Pleading for Forgiveness ~ 143
PHILEMON 8-16
23. Expecting the Best from Others ~ 149
PHILEMON 17-21
24. Extending God's Grace ~ 154
PHILEMON 22-25
25. Reflecting on God's Grace ~ 160
- Leading a Bible Study Discussion Group ~ 165

Notes ~ 173

Lesson 1

Greeting the Brethren

Colossians 1:1-2

When you're a published author, it's assumed that you know something about writing. That's one reason I'm often asked to read, give suggestions for, and endorse book manuscripts. However, because of my packed schedule and limited time, I have to graciously decline. But on occasion, if I personally know the author of a book, I will agree to write an endorsement of the person and their ministry. This endorsement lets people know what I admire and appreciate about the author of the work.

As we begin our study of the New Testament epistle of Colossians, that's exactly what the great apostle Paul is doing. He's writing his endorsement of a group of believers—a church body—he's never met, yet whose spiritual qualities he's heard a great deal about. In addition, Paul is sending an endorsement to the church of the very man who has brought him a glowing report of the growing and dynamic Christians

in Colosse. But as Paul's letter progresses, he also voices concerns for their continued spiritual growth.

Let's now look at what Paul, a powerful encourager, has to say about embracing God's grace.

Colossians 1:1-2

- 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.

Out of God's Word...

1. *Paul*—How does Paul describe himself in verse 1?

Using an English dictionary, define an *apostle*.

How does Paul say he became an apostle?

What additional information do these scriptures tell you about Paul?

Romans 1:1—

Galatians 1:1—

What else do you learn about Paul's situation in Colossians 4:3?

2. *Paul's companion*—What other person is mentioned in this greeting to the Colossians (verse 1)?

What do we know about him from these verses?

Acts 16:1-3—

Philippians 2:19-22—

2 Timothy 1:5—

2 Timothy 3:15—

3. *Paul's readers*—How does Paul describe those who will read his letter (verse 2)?

Where are his readers located?

The city of Colosse was 100 miles east of Ephesus on the Lycus River and included what was known as the “Asian region.” Colosse was not as influential as the nearby city of Laodicea, but as a trading center and crossroads, it exerted an impact on religious thinking and philosophy.

What do you learn about Paul's ministry in Ephesus as he speaks to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:31?

How widely did the message spread beyond Ephesus according to Acts 19:10?

4. *Paul's greeting*—What two greetings does Paul offer to his readers in verse 2?

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What is the source of these blessings (verse 2)?

...and into Your Heart

- *Your role as a mentor/discipler*—Paul's mention of Timothy brings to mind the issue of mentoring or discipleship. More than 10 years have passed since Paul first asked young Timothy to join his missionary team. Timothy has been nurtured and trained to the point he is now a seasoned missionary. So much so that he is capable of passing on to others what he learned from Paul so they too can grow spiritually. Titus 2:3-5 describes the role "older women" are to play in this mentoring and training process. Who does God say your students are (verse 4)?

What are you to teach them (verses 4-5)?

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What does Paul say you should do to prepare yourself for fulfilling this role (verse 3)?

How important is it to mentor and disciple young women?

What part can you play in training up the next generation of godly women?

Can you think of any areas in which you need preparation so you can teach others?

- *Your position and practice*—Paul referred to the Colossian Christians as “saints” or “set apart ones.” You, along with them, are not a saint because of any merit of your own. You are a saint because you have been set apart by God’s great grace to devote yourself to a holy and pure way of life. This is your fixed spiritual *position* in Christ.

But how are you doing when it comes to living in the real world of practical everyday life? What qualities in your life and actions would cause you and others to describe you as “faithful”? List a few here, then any areas that need improvement. Make it your goal to leave no room for doubt about your faithfulness to Christ.

- *Your blessings*—Paul offers two blessings to the Colossians in his greeting. Both have as their source “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Grace” means God’s unmerited favor. And “peace” is what Jesus established between believers and the Father through His death on the cross. With God as your Father, you now have “peace from God” and the “peace” of God. Read Ephesians 2:8 and comment on God’s grace in your life.

Heart Response

Paul had a deep love for Jesus Christ, and that love spilled out of his heart and into the letters of love and concern he wrote to the people in various churches, including the church at Colosse. His heart was always burdened for churches everywhere. He was devoted to encouraging and correcting believers regarding anything that was happening to them or might happen.

Now, the church in Colosse was not situated in an important city. It was more like a small-town church. Why, who in the world would care about them?!

Well, Paul cared! And he was thrilled by their growth and maturity. However, when he heard about a serious doctrinal error in the church at Colosse, he was compelled—out of love and a caring heart—to write this letter.

Consider your love for Jesus. As you begin this study and continue to read and live the truths in the book of Colossians, think about these things: First, how is your spiritual growth? What does your growth curve look like? Next, do you know any believers you could help to better understand God's grace and the Christian faith? Be sure to pray for them. Also ask God to show you how you can assist them with a heart of love. And finally, in what ways can you share what you're learning with those around you—your family, friends, and coworkers? With those who don't know Jesus?

Follow Paul's example and do what you can. Pray for those you know. Encourage others. Make it your heart's intent to let them know about God's truly amazing grace!