

Colossians 1:19 - 2:7

Day 1

Christ 's Work of Reconciliation. Read Colossians 1:19-23

1. What does the description in 1:19 say about Jesus Christ? Compare 1:15; 2:9 (See also John 14:9)

FYI: fullness "The Gnostics used the same word, *pleroma*, to denote the totality of all the thousands of divine emanations or lesser gods. But Paul said, 'No way! Jesus is not one of the lesser gods of the fullness. He is the Fulness!'"
- R. Kent Hughes (36)

"Paul used the term *fullness* to refer to the complete embodiment of God." - The Nelson Study Bible

"Paul is asserting that in Christ the completion of Deity dwells. He is not merely a being endued with great power, but is rather the dwelling place of the very essence of God."
- Stuart Allen (130)

Jesus "took on human flesh; he is fully God and fully man...Jesus is God in bodily form. That's why we see in Scripture that one minute Jesus is thirsty because He's a man, and the next minute He calms the sea because He's the Son of God."
- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1415)

2. What work did Christ do on the cross? What realms of creation were affected? 1:20

"reconcile" *apokatallasso* Strong's NT:604, "to reconcile completely"... "to change from one condition to another," so as to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace...It is the divine purpose, on the ground of the work of Christ accomplished on the cross, to bring the whole universe... into full accord with the mind of God, Eph 1:10."
- Vine's Expository Dictionary

3. Why was it necessary for God (in human form: John 1:1,14) to obtain this reconciliation?
1 Peter 1:18-19

4. Review Colossians 1:13-20 below by underlining the titles/descriptions of Christ and circling His works/accomplishments.

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities -- all things have been created through Him and for Him.

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 1:13-20 NAS

5. Fill in the following to contrast the Colossians' before and after state:

"once you were/formerly"	"but now"
Vs. 21	Vs. 22
•	•
•	•
•	•

"**alienated**" – Strong's #526 NT:526 *apallotrioo* NT:526; to alienate, estrange...to be shut out from one's fellowship and intimacy" – Thayer's Greek Lexicon

"**hostile**" (NIV "*enemies*") – Strong's NT:2190 a hater "actively, hostile, hating and opposing another: 1 Cor 15:25; 2 Thess 3:15 used of men as at enmity with God by their sin" – Thayer's Greek Lexicon

"**evil**" – Strong's NT:4190 *poneros*; hurtful, i.e. evil KJV - bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked

"**holy**" – Strong's *hagios* NT:40, fundamentally signifies "separated" (among the Greeks, dedicated to the gods), and hence, in Scripture in its moral and spiritual significance, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God, sacred" – Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"**blameless**" (NIV "*without blemish*") – Strong's NT:299 "Irreproachable, one who cannot be blamed." – The Complete Word Dictionary (138)

"**beyond reproach/free from accusation/unreproveable**" Strong's NT:410 That cannot be called to account, unprovable, unaccused, blameless" – Thayer's Greek Lexicon
"free from any legal charge." – The Complete Word Dictionary

"There are no grounds for any accusation (Romans 8:33,34). What a goal for sinners such as we are! Can we ever thank the Lord enough for all this?" – Stuart Allen (132)

6. Write out the phrases that describe how this reconciliation was accomplished. 1:20:b, 1:22a

7. From Romans 5:6,8,10, what words describe our former state (*while/when we were*)?

- What does this say about our part in reconciliation? Romans 5:18,19 (see also 2 Cor. 5:18)

FYI: "While the scriptures paint the darkest possibilities for man apart from Christ, they also give us the highest, noblest vision of man known to any religious conception anywhere! When one is reconciled to Christ, he or she will be presented before Him as holy, without blame, and beyond reproach." – R. Kent Hughes (39)

8. What focus/stand did Paul exhort the believers to have? 1:23 (See 1 John 3:1,2)

FYI: established/grounded Strong's NT:2311 *themelioo*; "suggests being founded securely, as on a rock. "Firm" (lit., "settled") depicts a steady and firm resolve." – Expositor's Bible Commentary

firm/steadfast/settled Strong's NT:1476 *hedraios* (to sit); sedentary, i.e. (by implication) immovable "In the N.T. metaphorically, of those who are fixed in purpose: 1 Cor 15:58; Col 1:23" – Thayer's Greek Lexicon

Proclaimed to every creature under heaven. "C.F.D. Moule suggests that the statement does not mean that the gospel had been preached to every individual, but that it had been "heard in all the great centers of the Empire (cf. Rom 15:19-23)" – David Guzik

Applying the Word: What would you pick as a powerful point from these verses to explain to someone that faith in Christ is the only way to God?

Day 2

Paul's Ministry. Read Colossians 1:24-29

9. What was Paul's attitude about the suffering that he had to endure? Why 1:24 (See Ephesians 3:13)

FYI: "The term 'afflictions of Christ' is never associated with the redemptive suffering of Jesus upon the cross. It speaks, rather, of those ministerial sufferings which Paul bears because he represents Jesus Christ." (Lane)
- David Guzik

"In this verse, Paul is not saying that Christ's death was insufficient ...or that somehow he was a co-redeemer with Christ. Paul is making the point that a Christian will endure the sufferings that Christ would be enduring if He were still in the world...Christ had told His disciples that if the world hated Him it would hate His followers."
- Nelson Study Bible (2012)

"While...some of our suffering may result from our own foolishness or lack of faithfulness, it is a joy to realize that all sufferings connected with true service and witness are the 'sufferings of Christ.' The link between the Lord and His redeemed people is so close that what affects them affects Him. Paul learned this at the outset, on the road to Damascus. 'Why are you persecuting Me?', the Lord said to him, referring to his persecution of believers. (Acts 9:4)"
- Stuart Allen (133)

10. What had the Lord revealed to Paul at the beginning of his ministry? Acts 9:16

- What always accompanied Paul's sufferings? 2 Corinthians 1:5
- Why do we share in afflictions? John 15:18-21

Digging Deeper

For a list of the types of things that Paul endured see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28.

11. What title is given to the church in relationship to Christ? 1:24b (See Ephesians 1:22,23)

12. How and why was Paul given his ministry? 1:25

13. Ephesians 3:1-10 parallels Colossians 1:25-27 in describing the *mystery*:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles -- 2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; 3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; 6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, 7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:1-10 NAS

	Colossians 1:25-27	Ephesians 3:1-10
How did Paul come to know the mystery?	1:25	3:3
From whom and for how long had the mystery been hidden?	1:26a	3:5,9
To whom was it revealed?	1:26b	3:5
What is the mystery?	1:27	3:6,8b
What objectives ("so that") did this ministry have?	1:28 <i>perfect</i> - complete, mature	3:10
What empowered Paul for preaching?	1:29 (See 1 Corinthians 15:10)	3:7

Applying the Word: How rich do you feel? What do phrases such as “Christ in you, the hope of glory”, “the unfathomable riches of Christ” and “to present you holy and blameless and beyond reproach” indicate about how valuable you are?

Day 3

Paul's Labor and Struggles. Read Colossians 1:25 - 2:3

14. What was the focus of Paul's message? 1:25b, 1:28a

- To whom did Paul present the message of Christ? What methods did he use? 1:28b (See Acts 20:30,31)
- What was the goal of Paul's ministry? 1:28c (See Ephesians 4:13,14)

FYI: Perfect/complete *teleios* “means ‘mature’...That all believers should develop spiritually and grow up...Ephesians 4:13,14 makes perfectly clear. There was a danger of this not happening...Paul labored intensely *kopiaō* (implying laboring to the point of weariness) that this would not be the experience of the Colossian saints...The error that was creeping in and which this epistle directly combats, most probably was gaining ground in the minds of some who were not growing in grace and knowledge and acknowledgment of Christ...The Apostle therefore strives... to bring such back to Truth and vital spiritual growth which can only take place when the Lord Jesus is accorded His rightful place as the pre-eminent One.”
- Stuart Allen (140)

Admonish/teach/warn (1:28) “The...verb means, “To impart understanding,” “to lay on the mind or the heart.” The stress is on influencing not only the intellect, but also the will and disposition...The goal of Paul's ministry was to bring people to maturity in Christ, and not to dependence upon himself.”

every man. “In contrast, the false teachers at Colosse ‘believed the way of salvation to be so involved that it could be understood only by a select few who made up sort of a spiritual aristocracy.’ (Vaughan)” - David Guzik

Teaching everyone “The Greek text of verse 28 is emphatic, mentioning ‘everyone’ three times. Paul proclaimed Christ and admonished and taught everyone because he truly believed Christ was for everyone, and he saw great potential in every soul he touched. What a way to look at life!”
- R Kent Hughes (49)

15. In the following, underline Paul's focus and goal.

- Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. NAS
- Philippians 1:20-21 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. NIV
- Philippians 3:7-11 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

16. What words describe Paul's response to his ministry? 1:29a

- In 1:29, Paul uses one word after another to describe God's power and work in him. What kind of strengthening and power does this express? See Ephesians 1:19,20

Labor Strong's NT:2872 *kopiaō*; to feel fatigue; by implication, to work hard: KJV - labour, toil, be wearied.

striving – Strong's NT:75 *agonizomai*; to struggle, "to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers antagonistic to the gospel" - Thayer's Greek Lexicon

power (NIV "energy") – Strong's NT:1753 *energeia*; working, efficiency

powerfully/mightily – Strong's NT:1411 *dunamis*; force (literally or figuratively); specially, miraculous power

works - Strong's NT:1754 *energeo*; to be active, efficient:

"to be operative, be at work, put forth power" - Thayer's Greek Lexicon

17. What did Paul want the Colossians to know? 2:1 (Compare 2 Timothy 2:10)

FYI: "In mentioning his struggle (*conflict*), Paul again uses the noun *agon* from which we get *agony*. The word originally was derived from the place where the Greeks assembled for their Olympic games, a place where they agonized in wrestling and footraces, where they fought to win. Paul had been agonizing, fighting for the Colossians with everything he had. What makes this truly remarkable is that he had never once personally visited them or their neighboring churches." - R. Kent Hughes (52)

18. How did Paul labor for people he had never seen?

- 1:3,9
- 1:24
- 1:25
- 2:4,5
- 4:3
- 4:8
- 4:18

19. Why did Paul want them to know about his struggles? 2:2a Why do you think *his* struggles produce these qualities in them?

- What kind of unity is Paul talking about? How does that differ from uniformity? (See Ephesians 4:2-3)

Food for Thought: "It is important for believers to be encouraged and united. When Christians are discouraged there is a tendency to despair, to get things out of focus, to have priorities wrong, to be self-centered. When Christians are not united in love there is a tendency to criticize one another, to find fault, to dwell upon differences." - Michael Penny (20)

20. What does this encouragement and unity bring? 2:2b

Digging Deeper

See the importance Proverbs 3:13-15 gives to understanding.

Full assurance/riches NT:4136 *plerophoria*; entire confidence: in Col 2:2, the freedom of mind and confidence resulting from an understanding in Christ."
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

Understanding Strong's NT:4907 *sunesis*; a mental putting together, i.e. intelligence "to comprehend, reason out...the ability to understand concepts and see relationships between them." - Complete Word Study Dictionary

"Many lack **full assurance** about the character of God and are unconvinced that *He is really good and loving*. Others lack **full assurance** of their salvation and wonder if their *Christian life is for real*. Great freedom and confidence comes when we come to this **full assurance**."
- David Guzik

21. To what does this understanding lead? 2:2c ("know" (*epignosis*) = acknowledgement)

FYI: "But the Colossians were Christians! They knew Christ! Why should Paul be struggling for them to know Him? Again, the word for know is *epignosis* and the KJV translates it "acknowledgment" ... There are many ways we can *acknowledge* Christ in our lives, but the one which concerns Him most, and which is one of the hardest for us, is to love one another as He loves us. It is by this that others will know that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35)...the life we lead is of great concern to our God."
- Michael Penny (20)

"The Gnostics sought knowledge as an end in itself, but Paul reminds the Colossians that true knowledge will demonstrate itself by bringing people together in Christ's love in the church...The Gnostics thought only certain 'knowledgeable' people could join their elite group; Paul teaches that every believers has access to complete wisdom found in Christ."
- The Nelson Study Bible (2013)

22. What does knowing Christ give us access to? 2:3

Food for Thought: "The touchstone of all doctrine ... is Christ (Col 2:8) Christ is revealed as our very life itself (Col. 3:4), and eventually as our "All and in all" (Col. 3: 11)... 'That I may know Him' is the climax of all prayer. 'I know Whom I have believed' is the basis of all assurance. 'To know the love of Christ' is to possess a knowledge far beyond our greatest faculties...It is the simplest yet the most profound lesson of the ages."
- Stuart Allen (142)

23. Underline what Jesus said about truth and understanding.

- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. NAS
- John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." NIV
- John 8:31-32 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." NAS
- John 18:37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." NAS
- John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. NAS (See Psalm 119:160)

24. What is the nature of the wisdom that comes from the Lord? See James 3:17
25. How is wisdom shown in our lives? James 3:13; Matthew 7:24 (How does that compare to the wisdom/advice of this world?)

FYI: "Knowledge is the comprehension of truth; wisdom is the application of that truth to life."

- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1416)

Applying the Word: Who is one of the wisest Christians you have known? Why do you think that way about them?

Day 4

Warnings and Encouragement. Read Colossians 2:4-7

26. What did Paul want an understanding of Christ to prevent? 2:4 (See Romans 16:18)

FYI: "It might sound simple, but deceivers are deceivers. They won't announce their false doctrine as false doctrine, and it will often be similar enough to the truth to be dangerous."

- David Guzik

"Remember, the Bible is our standard for discerning truth from error. Only the full understanding of Christ can keep believers from being deceived by persuasive arguments."

- The Tony Evans Bible (1416)

Deception looks authentic. It is supported by intelligence, credentials, popularity and even a touch of class...

Fine-sounding arguments "It was an important warning in Paul's day, and it is equally *apropos* today when the means of persuasion are so highly developed. We are subject to space-age subtleties which the apostle could never have imagined. For our souls' sake, there must be a deep growing knowledge of Christ and a love among us!"

- R. Kent Hughes (56,64)

27. For what did Paul commend the Colossians? 2:5

28. What instruction did Paul give for their lives? 2:6 (What does each title say about their understanding and commitment to Christ?)

Digging Deeper

Compare the instruction and warning in 2 Peter 3:17-18.

FYI: "We too will be resistant to the Gnosticizing influences around us if we walk in the reality of 'Christ Jesus as Lord.' The reason the major cults are cults is because they have defective doctrines of Christ...Certainly not the Christ of the scriptures. This is also true of virulent forms of legalism and some of the extreme for of the 'prosperity gospel' which eat away at the fringes of evangelicalism."

- R. Kent Hughes (63)

29. In 2:7, list the words Paul used to describe a walk with Christ. What do these indicate to you? (Cross-ref 1:10, 1:23a)

30. Compare the word pictures given in:

- Psalm 1:2,3
- Matthew 7:24-27
- John 15:4-5

31. Underline the concerns Paul had for believers.

- Acts 20:30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. NIV
- 2 Cor 11:3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. NIV
- 2 Cor. 11:13-15 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. NIV
- Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel- 7 which is really no gospel at all. NIV
- Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. NIV
- 2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. NIV
- Jude 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. NIV

32. How do you think “*overflowing with gratitude/thankfulness*” (2:7c) reinforces our walk/life in Christ? Where does it put our focus? (See 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Applying the Word: What “fine sounding arguments” have you heard that tend to draw people away from Christ?

The Church at Colosse – Pre-gnosticism

- 1) Jewish element – emphasis on legalism, religious observances
- 2) Pagan element – a combination of various religions with oriental myths and Greek philosophy
- 3) Christian element - a look or mask of Christianity
 "It did not deny Christ, but it dethroned Him...This Christian facade made the Colossian error all the more dangerous." - Expositor's Bible Commentary

2nd Century Gnosticism

Beliefs

1. Salvation was attained by knowledge not faith.
2. Matter was evil (this included the body of man); the spirit or mind was good.
3. God did not create the world but used a series of intermediate beings ("*aeons*") each a little farther from him. (The last in the chain created the earth and thus keep God's purity uncontaminated.)
4. These aeons or angels inhabited the stars and had power over man's destiny, and thus they needed to be placated and worshipped.
5. God's incarnation was not real. (He would not be interested in or contaminate Himself with the evil on earth.) Therefore, either Jesus was not a man (his body was just an illusion) or Jesus was not divine.

Lifestyle

1. Air of exclusiveness. Only an elite group attained salvation.
2. Denial of the body because matter was evil through:
 - a) Punishment and deprivation – "asceticism" (2:23) or
 - b) Indulgence – "hedonism, libertinism or license" (3:5)
3. Pursuit of special or secret knowledge through mystical experiences – included superstitious magic and astrology Each sect or group believed that it had a secret knowledge received by revelation that was inaccessible to anyone on the outside.

Ramifications to Christianity

1. God unreachable - not interested, not in control; not the creator
2. Christ was created by God
3. This is not the work of the Spirit
4. Worship is of an angelic caste system. (2:18)
5. Only knowledge is important, not faith
5. The body not important

FYI: "The problem came from false teachers who were propagating what is called Gnosticism. Gnostics considered themselves to be people of superior knowledge who could help 'lesser' Christians attain deeper spirituality. ...The Gnostics, 'people in the know,' the spiritual elite with all the answers, held as their basic doctrine that matter (anything physical or created) was evil and that only the spirit was good. They reasoned, therefore, that God could not be involved in creation, because being perfect He could not touch matter which was intrinsically evil. Therefore, the world came into being through a complicated surrogate process as God put forth thousands of emanations (or lesser gods), each of which was little more distant from Him, so that finally there was an emanation (a little god) so distant from God that it could touch matter - and it created the world. .. This reasoning led to the belief that Jesus Christ, if He really was the Son of God, could not have taken on a human body because matter is evil. This delusion spawned the Gnostic romances about Jesus being only a ghost-like phantom. To the Gnostics, Christ was *not* Creator, the Incarnation was *not* real, and Christ was *not* enough!"
 - R Kent Hughes (14)