



**St Andrew's Anglican Church
Somerville**

Term 3 Series 2024

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Daily Bible Reading Notes and Small Group Discussion for Colossians

This term at St Andrew's we're looking at Colossians, with the theme 'Christ is Enough'. The book paints a beautiful, full, massive picture of Christ's divinity, in particular his supremacy over all things, and his sufficiency for us people.

Paul wrote Colossians to encourage the believers in Colossae; to recall the act of rescue that God accomplished for them (1:13–14), to consider the wonder of who Jesus is as Creator and Sustainer of all things, as head over all things, and as the one through whom God reconciles all things to himself (1:15–23); and to remain in relationship to Jesus the Messiah in the face of others who call for their loyalty (2:6–8). It then ends on practical teaching for us in light of who Jesus is and what he's done for us.

This term, each set of questions is designed for your own personal Bible Reading as you read through the book. There are reflection questions for 5 days of the week. Some days have more questions than others, so feel free to pick 1-2 to reflect on for that day. Bible Study leaders can then select questions they find most helpful to discuss in groups. They can also (obviously) write their own questions, or allow others to bring questions they've reflected on and found helpful (or confusing!) during the week. Hopefully this material will encourage you greatly as we dig into Colossians together in term 3!

Study 1: Cause for constant thanksgiving. Col 1:1-8

Day 1

What do we learn about the author of this letter from verse 1?

What do we learn about the audience of this letter from verse 2? How do you understand the greeting which Paul sends in verse 2b? In what sense are 'grace' & 'peace' things that can be sent?

Do you have a standard 'greeting' you send to people? Does it vary between those who are "in Christ" as opposed to those who are not?

Day 2

Why does Paul "always thank God" when he prays for the Colossians (v3&4)? How and why is their faith a reason, or a cause, for thanksgiving to God? How might it make a difference to Paul's prayers if he only gave thanks half of the time, or if he never gave thanks for them?

What things do you tend to give thanks for most often? If you woke up tomorrow and all you had left was what you gave thanks for today, what would you have?

Day 3

Here we see the great Christian triad of 'faith, hope and love' (vv.4&5). What do we learn about the relationship between those three qualities/virtues here? How are they different? And how do they relate to one another?

In what measure would you say you possess these three virtues? And comparatively, in what proportion? (Where would you say you're strongest? And where would you say you're weakest? Why do you think?)

Day 4

The gospel (the message, the good news) is responsible for so much, and almost personified, in this section. Can you write a profile/job description for the gospel from verses 5&6? What is the gospel responsible for? What does it do & secure?

What else might you be tempted to attribute these things to? What other powers or powerful means might be credited with such results? What are the implications of this view of the gospel for the Christian life & for Christian mission? Take a moment to jot the chief ones you can think of down.

Day 5

From the world-wide movement described in verse 6 comes the personal particulars of the Colossians and of Epaphras. What do you think you miss if you overlook the universal / global sweep described here, for a merely personal experience? What do you think you miss if you neglect the personal and the particular for the global?

Take a moment to think from whom you learned of the good news about Jesus Christ. Take a moment to think of those to whom you've taught the good news about Jesus Christ. Give thanks and pray for them. Note: Epaphras' speech goes in two directions. Who are you currently telling the good news to? And who do you tell about those you've been talking to?

Small Group Discussion

Sermon Notes

Study 2: Points for constant prayer. Col 1:9-23

Day 1

“For what reason” do you think Paul has not stopped praying for the Colossians? From the excellent report he’s heard, would you think constant prayer is called for? Why might he? How is this logic similar or different from his constant ‘thanksgiving’ for them (see last week’s study)?

What sort of people do you think are in need of constant prayer? Who / which people would be the most constant focus of your prayers? Why?

Day 2

Paul has one supreme prayer point (v9). What is it? What would you expect from someone “filled with the knowledge of God’s will”? And what does Paul?

From verse 10b onwards, if you had to unpack a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him in every way, what would be the first things you think of? How does Paul unpack that life? (**clue**: look for the participles / “-ing” words). Fill them in below:

No.	Verse	Paul’s Comment	Your Paraphrase
1			
2			
3			
4			

Day 3

What does Paul expect will be the well-spring of “joyful thanks” for the Colossians (and any Christian)?

What should this mean for our thankfulness? The content? The manner? Our thankfulness for ourselves? For others?

Day 4

What is the dominant note in this hymn about Christ (v15-20)?

How does / should his ‘supremacy’ affect the way we relate to him? What are the tell-tale signs of a relationship with Christ who is “above all things”? What are the tell-tale signs of a relationship with Christ who is ‘in the mix’ with a whole lot of other things?

What is the connection between: the whole world and the church; creation and redemption/salvation? In what sense does Christ rule the world? And to what extent does Christ rule his Church? Where are you most likely to see this? How?

Day 5

How does Christ effect a ‘reconciliation’ of all things?

What does Christ’s universal/comprehensive reconciliation (v19) mean for his people personally (v21-23)? What part do they play in it (v23)?

To what extent do you use this language of ‘reconciliation’ (alienated, enemies) when you think / talk about salvation? What value can you see in this? How well (or not) do you think this terminology and framework would resonate in our world?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 3: Paul's Charge. Col 1:24-2:5

Day 1

How can Paul 'rejoice in his sufferings'? This is curious. What does it mean for him to fill up in his flesh what is still lacking?

To what extent are any of your sufferings similar to Paul's? And how are they different? (**clue:** "for you" v.24)

And to what extent does this similarity (or difference) affect the way you feel about them and experience them?

Day 2

What is Paul's primary service to the church – Christ's body? To what extent do you feel you can / do share in this same service? What is the relationship between verse 27 and verse 28?

To what extent do you think what you're doing conforms to what God is doing? How much do you think Paul's ambition here is peculiar to him? And how much is it open and embracing of us?

Day 3

In verses 28 and 29 Paul explains his priority in mission. What does he do? How does he do it? And why does he do it? What else could he have done?

What competes with this priority in your service? In the service of the church? What gets your most strenuous effort?

Day 4

What / who is Paul contending for? And why is it important for people to know “how hard” he is contending for it?

What / who are you contending for? Is it important for others to know how hard you are contending for it? Why, why not?

Day 5

What is Paul’s goal (v2a)? What is the goal of the goal (v2b)?

What is the goal of the goal of the goal (v2c)? Have you followed this logic? How do you understand it? [X -> so that Y -> in order that Z]

On this grand trajectory, where would you place yourself, and what do you think the apostle Paul would think you need most? To what extent do you feel able to pursue these goals and contribute to the growth of others?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 4: The Way In is the Way On. Col 2:6-7

Day 1

What do you think it means to “receive Christ Jesus as Lord”?
How else might you receive him?

How would you know if someone has done this or not?

How do you know if you have or not? How easily would others be able to see this?

Day 2

What do you think it means to “continue to live in him”? What are the alternatives to this?

How would you describe the pattern of your life? And how do you cope with and accommodate the exceptions? When do the exceptions become the pattern, do you think?

Day 3

When Paul says “rooted and built up in him”, what do you think he means (v7)?

We understand the importance of roots and foundations. What do you think makes for deep roots and a firm foundation in the Christian life?

How happy are you with where you’re at on this front?

Day 4

What experience do you think Paul is referring to when he says “strengthened in the faith as you were taught” (v7)?

What do you think most stands to strengthen your faith? What do you do to strengthen your faith?

How strong in your faith do you feel at the moment?

Day 5

Thankfulness has been a significant theme of this letter already (see 1:3, 1:12) and it will continue to be (see 3:15-17, 4:2). What impression does “overflowing” give you? What in your experience most stands to detract from your thankfulness? And what stands to contribute to it the most? Spend some time in thankfulness to God for these things.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 5: False Spirituality. Col 2:8-23

Day 1

From verse 8, what kind of person can be ‘taken captive’? Do you feel free? In what sense are you free? What stands ready to kidnap you? How does this work in your mind?

What examples of this can you think of? How close, or real, a threat do you feel this to be?

Day 2

How are verses 9-12 an antidote to people under threat? What various strengths can you find referred to in these verses?

Reflect on the terms ‘fullness, head, circumcision by Christ of whole old self, raised with him, God’s working...’)

Which of these potent and precious realities are most likely to be overlooked, do you think? And why? Which are the hardest to fathom/appreciate, and why?

Day 3

From verses 13-15, how does Paul unpack the salvation that’s found in Christ? What does this mean for us personally? What does it mean for the “powers and authorities” (v15)? Who are these “powers and authorities” do you think?

What does it mean for us universally? How has your relationship with Christ affected your relationship with the world at large?

Day 4

Read verses 16-23. Paul seems to have in mind two things: a very earthly religion of human traditions; as well as a super-spiritual reality of “elemental forces”. What evidence / expression / examples can you find of the earthly and religious? What evidence / expression / examples can you find of worldly spirituality?

In your own experience, what modern equivalents have you encountered of these? What is their appeal? Why are people drawn to them?

Day 5

Paul seems to slip easily between what’s earthly and human, and what’s elemental and spiritual. What do you think is the connection between these two realms?

How and why can Paul call these people “unspiritual” (v18)?
How and why have they lost touch with Christ who is the head?

How would you describe the spirituality that comes from being connected with Christ the Head?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 6: The Heavenly Life on Earth. Col 3:1-17

Day 1

What is the standard timeline for a human life? What is the timeline Paul maps out for the Christian in v1-4?

What is hard when things are “hidden”?

How easy (or hard), even how possible is it, to “set your heart” or your mind on something? What added complications come from trying to set your heart and mind on things above?

What do you think are the things above and what do you think are the things below? In your experience, which get less attention than they deserve, and which get more? Why? What can be done about this?

Day 2

“Put to death” sounds so extreme. What might be a more ‘moderate’ approach? How would you describe your approach to your own earthly nature?

From Paul’s list, which things are you most likely to combat most fiercely? Which things are you less ruthless with and more able to accommodate? Why do you think?

What motivations does Paul give for turning from our sinful ways? Which one speaks most strongly to you?

Day 3

Which virtues does Paul list as appropriate aspirations as a child of God? Which do you find most surprising and why? Which do you find hardest? When and why?

Why is love supreme?

How is the Christian person described (v12)? How and why is this the foundation for a new life?

What is the peace of Christ? In what sense can peace rule / reign? What are the alternatives? What might challenge the rule of peace? How does 'thankfulness' fit with this?

Day 4

What is the message of Christ? How might this dwell amongst us richly? What would that involve? What are the alternatives to this?

What stands to squeeze the place of Christ's word? And again, why is "gratitude" important to this?

Day 5

What picture does v17 paint of the Christian life? What does it mean to do things in the name of the Lord Jesus? What are some things you couldn't do in his name? What are some things you must do in his name? What are some things that you might do differently for the sake of his name?

And again, how does "giving thanks" constrain what you do, and how you do it?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 7: Heavenly Human Relations. Col 3:18-4:1

Day 1

Read 3:18-4:1. What is the significance of all these groups being included and having their own word? What does that tell you about each group? And about the Christian faith in general?

In the ancient world, who might you have expected to be excluded or referenced? Who would you expect to come first out of wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters?

What do you think a passage like this has to teach about inclusion? And what do you think a passage like this has to teach about differentiation?

How do you expect a passage like this to be heard today? Why, do you think? How do you hear it? What factors help / complicate our understanding?

Day 2

What are wives called to? What do you understand by the term submit? And what is added by the adverbial phrase “as is fitting in the Lord”?

What are husbands called to? What are they warned against?

Day 3

What are children called to? What exceptions apply? And what reason is given?

What must fathers (parents) not do? What does it mean to “embitter”? And what will be the result if they do? What might this look like?

Day 4

What are slaves called to? And what are the obvious temptations in this? What is supposed to keep a slave honest?

What are masters called to? What temptations arise for them? What should keep them honest in this?

How do you think this is similar to / different to employer and employee relationships today?

Day 5

What do / should we learn from this focus on human relations? How are these relations related to the Lord?

How do you understand the connection and relationship between the vertical (relationship with God) and the horizontal (relationship with others)?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 8: Speaking to God and People. Col 4:2-6

Day 1

'Devotion' is such a strong word. What picture does it conjure up? What do you think qualifies for devotion? How does your commitment and practice compare?

What makes constancy hard? What makes consistency hard? What makes commitment hard? What most characterises your prayer life?

Day 2

Paul expects two key characteristics to accompany Christian prayer. Firstly, what does it mean to be watchful? Why is it important to be watchful? How does watchfulness contribute to and impact prayerfulness? How will the things you pray for change if you are not watchful? (E.g.: You'll just pray for what you're told / asked by others to pray for, rather than what you are actively watching to pray for. Reactive not proactive.)

Secondly, why thankfulness? How does thankfulness relate to and impact prayerfulness? How might a lack of thankfulness impact the content and tone of your prayers? Which of these do you think is most lacking in your prayerfulness? Why? How might you address this?

Day 3

In verses 3 and 4, Paul has two prayer points for himself. A) How would you paraphrase the prayer point in verse 3? What might answers to this prayer look like and involve? B) What hopes and expectations do you think Paul has in verse 4?

Day 4

How do you think about God's part and your part in evangelism? Which part are you most likely to overlook? Which part are you most likely to concentrate on? How do you think your witness could be improved?

What do you think it means to be "wise" in the way you act towards outsiders? How does Paul unpack this? What do you think it means to be opportunistic? What does this require? How well do you think you do this? What about making the most of your opportunities? What does this require? How well do you go at this?

Day 5

So much turns on your "conversation" (v6). Why do you think this is the case?

What do you think it means to be "full of grace"? Do you think this refers primarily to content, or to manner, or to both? How? Why? Why might the apostle Paul add "always" to this injunction?

What do you think it means to be "seasoned with salt"? Do you think this refers primarily to content, or to manner, or to both? How? Why? What is the purpose of this kind of conversation (v6b)? And how could this be the result?

In terms of conversation with outsiders, which part of this package do you find the hardest? Where do you feel least equipped? What would you most like to work on? And how could you go about this? Where do your strengths lie in this?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

Study 9: Team Christian or Group Effort. Col 4:7-18

Day 1

Who is Tychicus? Who is he coming with? And why is Paul sending them (v8)? Why is 'the Colossians hearing all the news about what's happening there with Paul' so important? Why is hearing about other believers so important?

And why is it such an encouragement? (Think about how the letter started.) What does it say about us if we always think our news is more important? Who's news do you follow closely? Why? And what impact does this have on you?

Day 2

What do we learn about Paul's Jewish co-workers (v10-11)? Particularly, what does it mean to "provide comfort" to someone? How does one do this? Who provides you with comfort and how do they do it? Who do you hope you provide comfort to? How do you think you do that?

Day 3

Epaphras (who himself is a Colossian) is a star. He is always wrestling in prayer. How does this description affect the way in which you think of the activity of prayer? Add to this Paul's comment in verse 13, "I vouch for him that he is working hard for you".

How does this contribute to Paul's view of prayerfulness? How do you think the activity of prayerfulness tends to be seen in our world? How do you hear / receive it when in the face of some crisis, a fellow believer says, "I'll pray for you"?

Day 4

What Paul writes for the Colossians he also wants read to the Laodiceans and vice versa, what he wrote to the Laodiceans he wants read to the Colossians (v16). What does this tell you about the word of God? The relationship between the churches of God? How does, or should, this impact our reading of scripture (given that we're reading letters written to Colossians so long ago in a different context, yet it's still important to us)?

What's the difference between personal Bible reading and corporate Bible reading?

Why is it important for us to read the Word of God together as a church? Why is it not just a private activity?

Day 5

How would you feel if you were Archippus (v17)? What is he to be told? What does this tell you about Christian community? What value is being expressed here? Is this encouragement, or is it accountability, or both? How would you decide?

How important is both anyway? Where have you received encouragement to persevere? And where have you experienced accountability to follow through? How might you provide both encouragement and accountability to others?

In Paul's sign off, what's he asking them to do in "remembering his chains"? How is that an example to them? And how is it a call for prayer / concern? Is it a frustration re opportunities OR a fulfilment of prophecy OR both? How does it encourage you?

Small Group Discussion Questions

Sermon Notes

