

## A Faithful Community

### **God's Word:**

Colossians 1:1-14

### **Key Verse:**

“For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

Colossians 1:9

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### **Breaking It Down:**

While there is no record of Paul ever visiting the city of Colosse, some believe Epaphras founded the church there. Epaphras was a trusted co-worker of Paul and a native of Colosse who became a Christian when Paul ministered in Ephesus. (See Colossians 1:7; 4:12.)

The letter of Colossians was written primarily to combat a growing heresy within that body of believers. While the heresy is not named, it seems to have included elements of pagan philosophy and Judaism. Paul wrote to correct the problem and to call the church to return to the simple faith in Christ. He gave a strong warning to reject outside philosophies and religious teachings that were incompatible with the teachings of Christianity. The apostle shows them that the answers they vainly sought to find elsewhere can only be found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Paul repeats his assurance that he constantly prays for them. His prayer is that they obtain the full knowledge of the Holy Spirit and please God in everything, living in a way His children ought to live. This kind of living begins with a proper attitude towards God: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). Right knowledge, according to Paul, leads to right behavior. And right behavior leads to obedient lives. God is looking for people who will be obedient to His Word and to His will for their lives. It

doesn't matter how charismatic or influential a person is. It doesn't matter how many spiritual gifts a person has, how well a person can speak, or how well a person can pray. What God wants is for us to live in obedience to the knowledge of the Word we have within us.

Paul also prays that the Colossian Christians would be equipped, not only with knowledge, but also with power. The power he longs for them to have comes from God Himself. Such power will help them stand firm in the face of trials and oppositions that will test their faith in Christ.



### **Living It:**

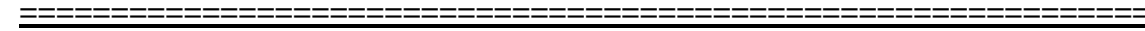
Perhaps more than any other sporting event, crew rowing requires a coordinated team effort. The rowers must pull together in complete harmony and unison if they are to be successful. If the oars on one side are pulled too hard, the boat will go slightly off course and waste some of its focused energy. If one rower begins the stroke too early or releases too late, again the boat will be pulled off target. All the rowers must listen carefully to the cadence of the coxswain and stay in rhythm. The rower cannot be listening to a cadence of his or her own making or the cadence of the boat in the next lane.

One of the things that endeared the Colossian church to Paul was that they were "pulling together." They were united by their faith in Christ and their love for one another. Many churches are sadly lacking in this area. The members have different agendas and different goals. Some members may pull on the oar that preserves tradition and resists change. Other members may be pulling on an oar for radical change and dropping of tradition. The "boat" of a church like this will go in circles. As Paul writes to the church at Colosse, we get a picture of the kind of church the Christians in the city were, or should have been.



People in our society are searching for meaning in their lives through various false paths, but grace and peace come only through Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can give us the strength and power to face the trials and challenges in our lives. Everywhere we turn we find

some offer of the good life based on the purchase of a book, product, or “new” teaching. Yet the life we genuinely need has been offered to us through the cross of Calvary.



**Understanding It:**

1. What did Paul thank God for? What did he pray for concerning the Colossian church?
2. What does it mean to be “A Faithful Community?”
3. What are some of the non-Christian philosophies that affect churches today?
4. How do you go about “growing in the knowledge of God?”



**Doing It!**

Paul saw the church as a body (Romans 12:5), a unified entity working as one. This week, make a list of the strengths and weaknesses you see in the church at Colosse. Then compare the list with your church. Share your findings with your pastor.

