

St Andrew's

R O S E V I L L E

GROWING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST



FULLNESS IN CHRIST

Studies in Colossians
Preaching Program and Bible Studies
Term 4, 2022

Introduction

Paul's Letter to the Colossians shows us what a complete, mature and full Christian life is... and his answer might surprise us!

Against a background of false teaching that the fullness of life is found in religious observance, or ecstatic spirituality, or asceticism – Paul states that the fullness of God is in Jesus Christ, and if we are in Christ, we are filled with Him.

The key verses which summarise the letter (and which will be our memory verses for the term) are:

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” (Col. 2:6-7 NIV)

Living the new life in Christ is not a matter of moving on to bigger and better things – for there is nothing bigger and better than Christ! The new life in Christ is built on knowing him more deeply, and so growing more and more like him.

Mal York
September, 2022

Study 1 – God’s Gospel

Week Starting 27th September

Pray

Share something for which you are thankful to God.

Read Colossians 1:1-8

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father. ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people— ⁵ the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. ⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, ⁸ and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 1:1-2.

2. What do we learn about the writer(s) of the letter?
3. What do we learn about the recipients?
4. What does it mean to be God’s Holy people? What are some ways that this is seen amongst God’s people here at St Andrew’s? What might St Andrew’s be missing?

Focus on Colossians 1:3-8.

5. For what does Paul give thanks?

6. What impact has the gospel had:

a. on the Colossians?

b. around the world?

7. What does 'bearing fruit' look like? Is St Andrew's bearing fruit?

8. If it is the Colossians who have responded so well, why should God be thanked?

9. How did you first hear the gospel?

10. If Paul was writing to St Andrew's here, could the same be said for our church as is said for the Colossians?

a. If so, what can we rejoice in?

b. If not, what can we change?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

11. How does 1:1-8 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians? (This question will be asked for every passage/every week).

PRAY

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 2 – God’s Will

Week Starting 3rd October

Pray

What does it mean to know someone’s will?

Read Colossians 1:9-14

⁹ For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, ¹² and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 1:9-11.

2. Think back to last week’s study, what was the reason that motivates Paul to not stop praying?
3. Why does Paul pray that God fills the Colossians with “knowledge of God’s will” and the “wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives”? How will this help them?
4. How can someone today be filled with a ‘knowledge of God’s will’? Is this happening for you?

5. What is the outcome of someone being filled with the 'knowledge of God's will' and an 'understanding that the Spirit gives'? Do we see evidence of this at St Andrew's?

6. What does a life worthy of the Lord look like?

Focus on Colossians 1:11-14.

7. 'Endurance and patience' are not words that are used much in the world today. How might these passages help us to recapture these concepts in our lives?

8. If God answered Paul's prayer, in your life, why might living this way lead to 'giving joyful thanks'?

9. How can we know if the inheritance for God's Holy people can be a reality for us?

10. What kingdom movement do we see happening when someone becomes a Christian?

11. Why should the Scriptures and prayer be central to our spiritual growth?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

12. How does 1:9-14 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 3 – God’s Christ

Week Starting 10th October

Pray

Brainstorm the different ways that people might complete the phrase “Jesus is _____”

Which one do you find most compelling?

Read Colossians 1:15-23

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers 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 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 1:15-20.

2. What is the repeated idea through all of these verses?

3. Why is the Son supreme over all things?

4. What does it mean that the Son 'reconciled' all things? Can this mean everyone is saved? (compare with 1:23 and 2:15)

5. Using these verses, what would you say to someone who said that Jesus was just a good teacher?

6. What would you say to someone (like a Muslim) who said that Jesus was merely a prophet from God?

7. What would you say to someone (like a Jehovah's Witness) who said that the Son was a 'created being'? Isn't that what 'firstborn' implies (15)?

Focus on Colossians 1:21-23.

8. What has changed in God's relationship with the Colossian Christians?

9. How did this change come about?

10. Is this change permanent? Why/why not?

11. Have you been reconciled to God? How can you know?

12. What is your role in ensuring that your reconciliation continues?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

13. How does 1:15-23 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 4 – God’s Servant

Week Starting 17th October

Pray

What sorts of things attract people to particular churches?

Read Colossians 1:24-2:5

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. ^{2:1} I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 1:24-27.

2. What is Paul's unique role in spreading the gospel?

Read Acts 9:15-16 and 26:13-18.

3. What light might these verses shed on what Paul means by 'filling up in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's sufferings' (24)?

4. What is Paul of the word of God and what role does it have in Paul's ministry (25)?

Focus on Colossians 1:28-2:5.

5. What else does Paul's ministry involve?

6. How do the various ministry activities at St Andrew's Anglican reflect God's priorities? (as we see them modelled in Paul's practices)

7. Why can it be tempting to shift our priorities away from Paul's?

8. What is Paul's desired outcome for the Colossians Christians (as well as others)?

9. What are the threats to the Colossian church? And to our church?

10. Is Paul optimistic or pessimistic about them? Why?

11. What are the signs of Christian maturity (1:28) and unity (2:2) at St Andrew's Anglican Church?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

12. How does 1:24-2:5 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 5 – God’s Triumph

Week Starting 24th October

Pray

What is your favourite holiday and why?

Read Colossians 2:6-19

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸ Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. ¹⁹ They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 2:6-15.

2. What is the danger that Paul is warning against in verse 8?

3. How does 2:9-15 develop the idea of the 'fullness of Christ' from 1:19?

4. Why can the Colossians have confidence that they are 'united to Christ' and so have the 'fullness of God'? vv13-14

5. How would you answer someone that says they don't "feel like" they are united with Christ, yet confessing a Christian faith?

6. What effect does the death and resurrection of Jesus have on:
 - a. the Colossians?

 - b. their sin?

 - c. the 'powers and authorities' (see also Eph 6:12)? (and who/what are they?)

7. Are you confident that Christ has accomplished everything needed for your salvation? How does this shape your life?

Focus on Colossians 2:16-19.

8. Paul gives two examples of attempts to disrupt/subvert in the Christian life. For each, why does Paul reject them?

a. Jewish religious days (16-17)?

b. Ecstatic spirituality (18-19)?

9. Paul is quick to dismiss people who have false worship. How does he describe them? Why is this of concern to him?

10. How does his teaching here help us to think about how to identify those who worship is false?

Re-read Colossians 2:6-7.

11. How does 2:6-19 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 6 – God’s glory

Week Starting 31st October

Pray

Choose three words/phrases to describe who you are.

Read Colossians 2:20-3:4

²⁰ Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹ “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? ²² These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. ²³ Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence. ^{3:1} Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 2:20-23

2. How did we die with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of the world? And what exactly does “the elemental spiritual forces of the world” mean?
3. Paul’s issue is that some of the Colossians still live as though we belong to the rules of the world. What is an example of rules of the world (or religious rules) that oppose the rules of Christ, that some in the church might still live by?

Are some of the world’s rules still OK? How do we tell the difference?

4. What is the problem with following the rules of the world, now that we have died to Christ?

5. When those who follow Christ, still live by the rules of the world, who is most at danger here?

6. Are there any 'rules of the world' that you have followed, that you have or need to discard now that you have died with Christ?

Focus on Colossians 3:1-4.

7. What does it mean to set our 'hearts' and 'minds' on things above?

8. What does it mean for Jesus to be seated at the right hand of God?

9. How does knowing Christ is 'seated at the right hand of God' give us the motivation to set our hearts and minds there?

10. To what have we died and how can our life be hidden in Christ?

11. How do verses 3-4 give us confidence as Christians?

Re-read Colossians 2:6-7.

12. How does 2:20-3:4 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 7 – Vision Day

Week starting 31st October

Please use this time to either:

Catch up on a study that you have missed in the past few weeks.

Spend the time praying for the Vision of St Andrew's that you heard last Sunday.

Study 8 – God’s Community

Week Starting 7th November

Pray

What is something that you owned that simply got too old, so you needed to replace it?

Read Colossians 3:5-17

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 3:5-11

2. Why does Paul urge us to ‘put to death’ what belongs to the earthly nature?
3. The list of earthly nature is evident in the world around us. What are some ways we can help each other avoid living these ways?

4. What is the problem for those who 'used to live this way'?

5. Paul really focuses in on what we do (vs5) and what we say (vs8). How are these connected?
Matt 15: 11 & 18-20

6. How is the new self, better than the old self?

7. Which of the 'old self' behaviours do you struggle to 'put off'?

Focus on Colossians 3:12-17

8. How are we to be differently clothed?

9. Which of the 'new self' behaviours do you struggle to 'put on'?

10. What is the place of the message of Christ in helping us grow into our new identity in Christ?

11. What is the place of the community of God's people in helping us grow into our new identity in Christ?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

12. How does 3:1-17 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 9 – God’s household

Week Starting 14th November

Pray

Describe a Christmas present that you are looking forward to giving to a family member.

Read Colossians 3:18-4:1

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism. ^{4:1} Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 3:18-19.

2. What are wives to do? And to whom? And why?
3. What are husband NOT to do with an instruction to wives?
4. If Jesus ‘submitted’ to the Father (Hebrews 5:7) and both husband and wives are to ‘submit’ to each other (Ephesians 5:21) what is Paul asking wives to do here?

5. When should they stop submitting? So what are wives to NOT do?

6. What are husbands to do?

7. What are wives NOT to do with the instruction to husbands?

8. Sometimes these verses are used to justify husbands being tyrants and to make wives into 'doormats'. Does a careful reading of these verses (in their immediate context and the rest of the biblical context) allow this?

Focus on Colossians 3:20-21.

9. What are children to do?

10. What are fathers to do? Why do you think this verse is particular addressed to 'fathers' rather than 'parents'?

11. How has your relationship with your parents changed since you were a child?

12. What do Deut 5:16 and 1 Tim 5:4 teach us about the ongoing responsibility of an adult to their parents?

Read Colossians 3:22-4:1.

13. What are slaves to do?

14. What are masters to do?

15. Though the employer/employee relationship is different to the master/slave one (employers are bound by industrial relations laws and employees are free to resign and seek alternative employment), what principles can these verses teach us about how to be godly employers and employees?

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

16. How does 3:18-4:1 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 10 – God’s servants

Week Starting 21st November

Pray

How did you first hear the message of Jesus?

Read Colossians 4:2-18

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. ⁷ Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. ¹⁰ My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. ¹⁶ After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.” ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

1. Are there any questions from the passage?

Focus on Colossians 4:2-6.

2. How should the Colossians pray?

3. For what does Paul ask them to pray?

4. Spend some time praying for open doors for the gospel and clear proclamation at:
 - a. SRE (Scripture) Christmas assemblies.

 - b. Carols and Christmas services at St Andrew's.

 - c. Your own Christmas Dinner.

 - d. For each other as we live as God's chosen people.

5. What are the similarities and differences between Paul's proclamation and the 'answering' conversations of the Colossians?

6. How have you been involved in either type of evangelism?

Focus on Colossians 4:7-18.

7. How do Paul's final greetings:
 - a. encourage the Colossians in their ministry?

- b. build bonds of fellowship between Paul and the Colossian church (whom he had never met)?

- c. build bonds of fellowship between the Colossian and the Laodicean churches (roughly 20km apart)?

8. Who will you pray for and encourage in their ministry?

9. How can your small group express this gospel partnership with:

- a. Someone on the ministry team?

- b. One of our link missionaries?

- c. Another bible study group?

- d. Those who serve us faithfully in church? (Wardens, Parish Council, Bible Study leaders, Youth leaders, Sunday School teachers)

Read Colossians 2:6-7.

10. How does 4:2-18 contribute to our understanding of Paul's main point in Colossians?

Personal Reflection: What is one thing I will change about my life as a result of this study?

Prayer points:

Study 11 – Group Social – Christmas / End of Year celebration

Week Starting 28th November

Please use this time to either:

Catch up on a study that you have missed in the past few weeks.

Do something social.

Celebrate the end of year by going out for meal together.

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