

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### COLOSSIANS 1:1-14 | FIRSHTHAND FAITH

#### KEY TERMS

**Christ** - A title attributed to Jesus in the New Testament that is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Messiah* (see John 1:41). By calling Jesus the *Christ*, Paul identifies him as the rescuer and ruler of God's people.

**Saints** - From the Greek word *hagios*, meaning "holy ones." This term refers to all followers of Jesus and is one of Paul's favorite ways to refer to Christians.

**The Gospel** - The gospel is the announcement of the good news that through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has made a way for sin to be atoned for, for human beings to live in a restored relationship with their Creator, and for the entire creation to be restored.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

By opening his letter with his name and a greeting, Paul is following the typical letter writing style of the 1st century. Many commentators suggest that Col 1:1-2:5 is one extended "introduction" to the letter.

#### BACKGROUND

Paul begins his letter to the church in Colossae identifying himself as *an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God* (v. 1). The term *apostle* means "ambassador" and was applied to Jesus' disciples (see Matt 10:2), Paul, and others in the New Testament (see 1 Cor 12:28 and 2 Cor 8:23). Paul also identifies Timothy as a co-sender of the letter and the Christians in Colossae as the recipients, before moving into thanksgiving, which is typical of Paul's other letters (vv. 1-3; see Eph 1 and 1 Cor 1). Here in Colossians 1, Paul says that he is thankful to God the Father *because* of their faith in Jesus and love for other Christians, which both *proceed* from their heavenly hope (vv. 3-5). Just like in 1 Cor 13:13, Paul weaves together faith, hope, and love. Paul's introduction also highlights his doctrine of the Trinity by referencing the Father (v. 3 & 12), the Son (v. 3 & 4), and the Spirit (v. 8). In his thankfulness, Paul references the growth of the gospel message both around the world and within the church in Colossae – making note of Epaphras, a companion of Paul who first brought the gospel to Colossae (vv. 6-8; for more background information about Colossians, see the [Colossians Introduction Guide](#)).

Paul then shifts from thankfulness to God to specific prayers for the church. The thrust of Paul's prayer is that the Colossians would be *filled with the knowledge of [God's] will...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord* resulting in thankfulness towards God and great joy for what God has done (vv. 9-12). The ability to do this, according to Paul, rests in the *power and glorious might* of God (v. 11). In verses 13-14, Paul makes a powerful statement about what is true of all followers of Jesus: *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*. These verses highlight that in Jesus, God's people have been saved from the power of sin and brought into a new kingdom and community.

#### GOING DEEPER

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 and 1 Peter 1:3-9. What do these passages teach about a Christian's inheritance in Christ? How does this inheritance help with present trials and suffering?

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **COLOSSIANS 1:1-14 | FIRSTHAND FAITH**

#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Read Colossians 1:1-14. What key words or phrases most catch your attention in these verses?
2. Verses 4-7 speak to the Colossians' story of receiving Christian faith. How would you describe the way the word of truth, the gospel, came to you (verses 5-6)? How has God changed your life?
3. Colossians 1:9-14 describe Paul's prayer for these Christians. What specific things did he pray for in the following verses:
  - verse 9:
  - verse 10:
  - verse 11:
  - verse 12:

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

4. What do you think it would look like to be "strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might" (verse 11)? Is there anything in your life currently that needs God's strength to give you "all endurance and patience with joy"?
5. Verses 12-14 list three reasons why we should be thankful. How should these realities motivate real gratitude and thankfulness in your own life?
6. Verse 10 says that we are "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord." How would you describe your current relationship with God – non-existent, distant, strained, confused, dependent upon others ("secondhand"), close, intimate, vibrant?
7. What are you most looking forward to in this study of Colossians? What hopes do you have for your personal growth?