

Colossians 1

Summary

- Many people today, like the false teachers of Colosse, will give Jesus Christ a place of eminence, but they will not give Him His rightful place of preeminence.
- In this first chapter, the apostle declares Christ's preeminence in several areas of life.

Preeminent In The Gospel Message (1:1-12)

- Paul opens with words of thanksgiving. This passage, which expresses the apostle's own gratitude, shows that he practiced what he commanded of others. Vss. 4-8 express the grounds and occasion of Paul's thanksgiving. He specifically mentions three items.
- The first item was the good report of the well-being of the Colossian Christians. His reference to having "heard" about their condition is in keeping with the fact that he had not personally visited Colosse (cf. 1:9; 2:1). The source of this information was probably Epaphras, although we cannot be certain.
- The second item is the progress of the gospel in the world. The gospel was a fruit-bearing power in the many place where it was preached throughout the ancient world. "Bringeth forth fruit" suggests that the gospel is like a living organism whose seed is in itself. The gospel conveys the knowledge of the "grace of God in truth."
- The third item concerns the work of Epaphras, through whom the Colossians had been instructed in the gospel. What we know about this man is found only in this passage (vss. 4, 7, 9), in 4:12-13, and in Philemon 23. He was a native of Colosse and had worked not only in that city but also in Laodicea and Hierapolis. He had communicated to Paul about the Colossians' love.
- The prayer in vss. 9-11 is a wonderful petition. He wants them to be filled with the knowledge of God's will that they may be able to live worthily of the Lord, pleasing Him in everything. This involves fruitfulness, growth, patience, longsuffering and gratitude to God for the blessings of redemption.

Preeminent In The Cross (1:13-14)

- "Delivered" means "to liberate or save." "Darkness" in scripture is symbolic of ignorance, falsehood and sin (John 3:19; Romans 13:12). God's action in behalf of His people does not stop with

deliverance from the authority of darkness. He has also "translated" them which means to remove persons from one country and settling them as colonists and citizens in another country. This takes place at conversion. The kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God in our hearts; a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36).

- By virtue of baptism into Christ, redemption and forgiveness are ours. "Redemption" is a term that speaks of a release brought about by the payment of a price and was used of the deliverance of slaves from bondage or of prisoners of war from captivity. The central feature of our redemption is the "forgiveness" or "sending away" of our sins. They are no longer barriers that separate us from God.

Preeminent In Creation (1:15-17)

- There are two ideas with Christ being in the "image of God." The first is one of likeness. Christ is the image of God in the sense that He is the exact likeness of God, like the image on a coin or the reflection in a mirror (Hebrews 1:3). The second is one of manifestation. Christ is the image of God in the sense that the nature and being of God are perfectly revealed in Him (John 1:18).
- "Firstborn" carries with it the idea of supremacy in rank and dignity. He is Lord over all of God's creation.
- Christ is firstborn over creation because He made it. To Him it owes its unity, its meaning and its very existence. Vs. 17 serves as a summation of thought of vss. 15-16.

Preeminent In The Church (1:18-23)

- To be the "head" of the church is to be its sovereign ruler. The term "church" embraces all the redeemed people of God. The "body" of Christ suggests three points: (1) that the church is a living organism, composed of members joined to each other, (2) that the church is the means by which Christ carries out His purposes and performs His work, and (3) that the union that exists between Christ and His people is intimate and real.
- "Reconcile" suggests removing all enmity between God and the human race and effecting in humankind a condition of submission to, and harmony with, God. The result of this reconciling work is that the Colossians will be holy, unblameable and unproveable in the sight of God.

Preeminent In Paul's Ministry (1:24-29)

- The sufferings Paul endured in the course of his work were in the

interest of the Colossians and of the whole church. In that knowledge, Paul is able to rejoice. The sufferings that Christians endure are a continuation of what He endured, and in that sense they complete His afflictions.

- Paul considered the work to which God appointed him as both a high privilege and a sacred trust (1 Corinthians 4:1). The "mystery" which Paul proclaimed was the gloriousness of having Christ within our hearts. This was preached to the whole world.
- Paul devoted his life to warning people about sin and converting them to Christ. The word "labour" is a term from the athletic arena, signifying intense exertion.

Thought Questions

- How would you would be able to accomplish the elements in Paul's prayer in vss. 9-11?
- Where else are the ideas in vs. 14 mentioned in the New Testament?
- How is Christ described in vss. 15-17?
- Comment upon what you think "fulness" means.
- How is Christ in you?