

A STUDY OF THE PRISON EPISTLES

ACCESS

A soldier was standing outside the gates of the White House when a young boy walked by. "What are you doing?" the boy asked the soldier. The soldier responded, "I'm waiting to speak to President Lincoln." "Oh, come with me" the boy replied. The two passed through the gates and up to the house. The soldier hesitated as he saw the guards, but they merely opened the door as the two passed through. They walked into a room where the president, Abraham Lincoln, was standing next to the desk. The young boy ran up and said, "Daddy, this man wanted to speak to you."

I heard this story a long time ago, and like many Abraham Lincoln stories, it may or may not be true. However, it makes a strong point, a son *always* has access to his father—no matter who, no matter what, no matter when.

We are like the soldier stranded with no access to God. Our sin barred the door. Jesus, the Son, has said, "Oh, come with me." Our access to the Father comes only through the Son—whose magnificence cannot be overstated.

COLOSSIANS 1:9–14, 21–23

⁹ For this reason we also, from the day we heard about you, have not ceased praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you may live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects—bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. ¹³ He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

²¹ And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, ²² but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him— ²³ if indeed you remain in the faith, established and firm, without shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard. This gospel has also been preached in all creation under heaven, and I, Paul, have become its servant.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Colossians 1 presents Christ high and exalted. Verses 15-20 detail the supremacy of Christ. While our study today focuses more on the authority we've received in light of who Christ is, we must understand that these verses surround a passage on the majesty of our Lord.

One phrase that gets questioned in Colossians 1 is about Jesus as "firstborn." Scan the QR code for a discussion of that question and to discover even more about Christ.



DISCUSSION

If you could have a meal with any person throughout history who would it be and why?
(not including Jesus or Paul)

1. For what did Paul pray after hearing of the faith of the Colossians? (9)

2. What things did Paul list describing the command to "live worthily?" (10-12)

3. How did Paul describe the Colossians before Christ? (21)

4. In what ways might the command to "live worthily" be confused with a works based salvation? (10-13)

5. What is one thing that needs to change as a result of this study?

Paul responds in prayer to hearing about the Colossians. He is imprisoned, and yet burdened to pray for others. Do you need prayer? Do you feel a burden to pray for others? Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

STUDY NOTES

...AND IN THIS CORNER

Michael Buffer, the guy who coined his trademark catchphrase “Let’s get ready to Rumble” is the best fight announcer in the world. Sugar Ray Leonard once told him that “When you introduce a fighter, it makes him want to fight.”

Buffer has a recognizable style, giving stats of the men in each corner that are about to pound the snot out of each other. He reads off their height, weight, home town, and their accolades and awards—oh, and what color shorts they’re wearing.

If Jesus were sitting in the corner of a boxing ring, Colossians 1:15–20 could stand as his stat-line—*image of the invisible God...all things were created through him and for him...all things are held together in him...reconciled all things to himself by making peace through his blood on the cross*. I don’t recommend you just read Colossians 1:15–20, you should commit it to memory.

As hyped as a fighter may get hearing their own accomplishments, nobody can go toe-to-toe with this. However, Jesus has already won his fight. And, he has given *us* everything we need to win *our* fight. The challenge for us is that we still must go 12-rounds. Jesus, the supreme heavyweight champion is in our corner, but as we see in our passage, the fight isn’t over. We have to keep listening to Jesus—move where he says move and swing when he says swing. We will get punched, but we must remain steadfast.

UNITY WITH GOD REQUIRES GOD’S AUTHORITY

Our study so far through *Philippians* dealt primarily with horizontal relationships—our relationships with one another. *Colossians* is mostly vertical—our relationship with God—but with horizontal application. We see this immediately in Paul’s first response to the Colossians’s *faith in Christ and love for all the saints* (1:4). Paul wrote, “**From the day we heard about you, have not ceased praying for you.**”

Paul rejoiced in the faith of the Colossians, but he understood their need to grow. Additionally, before Paul brings correction, he usually butters up his audience—he shows them that they *are* the kind of people he will soon challenge them to be. Essentially, he tells them they *are* people of faith and love, and because of that he is **asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**. The same is true of you. We rejoice in your faith and love, yet recognize your need to grow.

Paul called the Colossians to **live worthily of the Lord and please him in all respects**. This is super important for us to understand. Paul doesn’t command a “salvation repayment plan.” He isn’t saying “Be good so God loves you.” His command is to live consistently with the salvation they received. This is like a father correcting his child by saying, “In this family, we don’t act like that.” Because we’ve received salvation, we honor God’s gift and seek to please the One who gave us unfathomable grace and mercy. We don’t “earn” anything by our good works, we’re just a part of the family, and this is how our family acts.

So, how do we live in a manner worthy? Simple, **bearing fruit in every good deed, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the saints’ inheritance in the light**. OK maybe it’s not so “simple.” But here’s the good news—you cannot do any of this on your own nor should you try.

The God who saved you wants you to identify with him in every aspect of life. He has granted you authority to take hold of your life and change the world. You are no longer a victim of circumstance. You have everything you need to change the world for the glory of God. **He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

GOD’S AUTHORITY EMPOWERS HIS MESSENGER

God has done so much for us through Christ. When we think of living in a manner worthy and bearing fruit, one huge application is telling people the Good News you’ve received. **You were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and blameless before him.**

Living in a manner worthy brings many challenges—otherwise Paul wouldn’t need to write these letters. We must **remain in the faith, established and firm**. Life is sometimes a fight. We get hit in the mouth. We have a choice, listen to our fears and failures, or listen to the Champ in our corner. If Christ is who he says he is, then we have nothing to fear. He is our unwavering **hope**. He brought us into his family. We live as a part of God’s family and invite others to join us.