

JANUARY BIBLE STUDY 2014
Personal Study Guide

Colossians

Christ Is All You Need



JESUS

Jesus Christ was with God the Father before the world was created. He became human and lived among humanity as Jesus of Nazareth. He came to show us what God the Father is like. He lived a sinless life, showing us how to live; and He died upon a cross to pay for our sins. God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus is the source of eternal life. He wants to be the doorway to new life for you. In the Bible Jesus was called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29). In the Old Testament, sacrifices were made for the sins of the people. Jesus became the sacrificial lamb offered for your sin.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- Admit to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- By faith receive Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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INTRODUCTION



Colossians: Christ Is All You Need

You cannot live the Christian life. If that statement sounds discouraging or inaccurate—I understand. It seems more loving to say, “You can do it. Just keep trying. God will bless your efforts.” As a Baptist pastor, I’ve delivered my fair share of “try harder, do more, be stronger” messages.

For years, I lived and taught that spiritual growth was the result of consistently engaging in the spiritual disciplines. If I wanted a stronger relationship with God, I needed to pray more, study more, share more, serve more, give more, and go more. If I did those things consistently, then I would experience spiritual growth.

Unfortunately, the opposite happened. Instead of spiritual growth, I grew weary and overwhelmed. There was no way to keep up with the demands of life and religion. I gained biblical knowledge and personal discipline, but it didn’t lead to life.

In time, God helped me see that growth in Christ is not trying harder, but trusting more. When I finally accepted that sheer determination is not the key to spiritual growth, the result has been a life of growth and freedom.

I’ve said a lot in a few paragraphs. Let me back up and share a story that will bring everything in perspective.

On the morning of August 27, 2004, I was trying to pray. I just couldn’t do it. Instead of praying, my mind raced from one thing to the next. I had things to do, problems to solve, people to meet, goals to accomplish, and expectations to live up to. After several failed attempts to stay focused, I decided to write my thoughts in a journal. I wrote everything that I needed to do. I wrote down everything that people told me I had to be. I also wrote every goal I was trying to accomplish.

Over the next 45 minutes, I jotted down 15 personal concerns, 26 family concerns, and 89 work-related concerns. There were 130 identifiable issues that were pressing for my time and attention.

All of them seemed important. On a personal side, I wanted to be a great Christian. To be a great Christian, I was taught that I needed to be a soul-winner, servant, student of God’s Word, giver, prayer-warrior, and disciple maker. I needed to be more holy, more gracious, more loving, more faithful, more patient, and more compassionate. I needed to memorize Scripture, put on my spiritual armor,

intercede for the sick, and walk in faith. That is just 16 of the 130 things on the list.

When I finished the list, it was the first time that the weight of expectations really hit me. Every time I focused on one area, something else seemed to go lacking. When I tried to pray more, I didn't share the gospel as often. When I tried to share the gospel more, I didn't memorize Scripture sufficiently. When I attempted to memorize more Scripture, I felt guilty for not serving more at church.

I constantly felt like I was letting God down. On the morning of August 27, I had a moment of unbelievable clarity. I cannot do it! There is no way I can fulfill every expectation. There's not enough time in the day to do everything that I feel needs to be done. I don't have enough discipline or inherent goodness to live up to God's perfect standards. I could not control or accomplish the 130 things spinning in my head at that moment.

No sooner did the thought come to mind than these words followed. "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

I can remember thinking, "Either Jesus is lying or I have greatly missed the Christian life." I knew Jesus would never lie, so the misunderstanding must be on my side. I prayed through my frustration. I said, "God, this isn't easy. The burden of the Christian life is not light. There are so many things to do, and be, and accomplish. How can this statement be true?"

In the silence of the moment, three little words stood out. "Come to Me." They were there all the time. In my hurry to do the right things, I missed an important step. Jesus' first words are an invitation to be with Him. In all my efforts to do something for God, I missed what Jesus was asking of me. He said, "Come to Me."

In the years that followed, God has taught me an incredible truth. Christianity is not about doing things *for* God; it is about being *with* God. When we are with God, in intimate fellowship, God lives His life through us.

Once this truth penetrated my heart, I started to see it elsewhere in Scripture. Jesus taught this principle when He spoke of the vine and the branches. "Remain in Me, and I in you.

Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me” (John 15:4-5). When we remain in Christ, He produces fruit through us. Our part is to remain in Him; His part is to live through us. This principle is also seen in the following passages. Words and phrases have been italicized for emphasis.

He also appointed 12—He also named them apostles—to *be with Him*, to send them out to preach (Mark 3:14).

and I no longer live, but *Christ lives in me*. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens (Eph. 2:6).

When I realized that my part was to be with Him, remain in Him, or abide in Him—I saw that His yoke was easy and His burden was light. I didn’t have 130 things to do. I had one thing to do. My responsibility was to be with Christ and He would live His life through me.

You’ve heard part of my story. Now I have some questions for you. Do you feel overwhelmed by the demands of the Christian life? Do you ever feel like you’re going through the motions of Christianity? Are you weary and worn down by the Christian routine? Are you so busy doing good things that you don’t have time to rest, reflect, and refresh?

If so, heed the words of Christ: “Come to Me.” The invitation of Christ is extended to all who are weary and burdened. He’s not asking you to bring anything. He just wants you to come.

You may have a number of reservations about what I’ve shared. “What about the disciplines of the Christian faith? There is more to spiritual growth than just being with Christ. Someone has to do something. Someone has to give, and someone has to go, and someone has to work. We all can’t just sit around.”

The issue is not being versus doing; the issue is doing from the overflow of being.

I understand the concerns. I pushed back on these areas as well. Hopefully, this next statement will alleviate some tension. When we are with Christ, He will give us plenty to do. The issue is not being versus doing; the issue is doing from the

overflow of being. Will we allow our actions to be the overflow of an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ?

Colossians: Christ is All You Need is a study to help you experience the abundant life in Christ. Jesus said that He came so that we might “have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). This study will help you move away from performance-based religion and step into the freedom of a relationship with Christ.

In order for that to happen, we must see ourselves from God’s perspective and learn to rest in what we discover. As we work through Paul’s letter to the church in Colossae, we will see that believers are rooted in Him, free in Him, built up in Him, hidden in Him, complete in Him, forgiven in Him, and seated with Him. We are secure in Christ because “the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ” (2:9). Our life is in Christ, and He lives through us.

In contrast to a human-centered approach to God, Paul argued that Christ is preeminent in everything and He alone is the source for the Christian life. In order to stress the fullness of the believer’s life in Christ, Paul emphasized our position and possessions in Christ. At least 15 times in *Colossians* Paul used phrases like “in Christ,” “in Him,” “in God,” or “in the Lord.”

Paul’s purpose in writing the Letter to the Colossians was to remind believers that Christ is all we need. It sounds simplistic, it sounds naïve, it may even sound cliché, but Christ is all we need.

If you are tired of performance-based religion, this study is for you. If you are overwhelmed by religious routines and if you are searching for the abundant life, I encourage you to take this journey with me through *Colossians*. If you have a sneaking suspicion that there’s more to the Christian life than what you’re tapping into, just keep reading. You are on the right track. The questions that linger are invitations to deeper intimacy with God.

May God free, empower, convict, and encourage you through the truths of Christ found in the Letter to the Colossians.



CHAPTER 1



You Are Secure In Christ

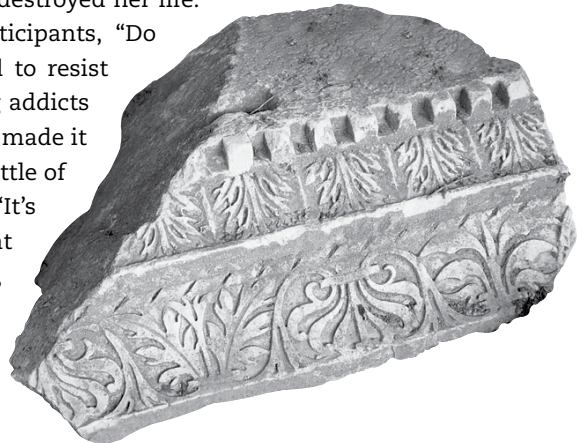
COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

A young couple has been trying to have a baby for years, and the doctor just confirmed their greatest fear. They had another miscarriage. Grieving and in search of encouragement, they contact their pastor. He listens and sympathizes with their pain. The only words that come to mind are, “I’m sorry this happened. I’ll pray for you. During this difficult time, try to remember that Christ is all you need.”

Mike is driving home from the factory for the last time. After 21 years of faithful service, he just got laid off. Due to budget issues, middle management was the first to go. He’s embarrassed. He’s hurt. He has no idea of what to say to his wife. When he arrives at home, his wife greets him at the door with a kiss. He can’t hold it in. In a moment of emotion and frustration, he tells her everything that happened. She tries to console him, but words don’t seem like enough. Finally she says, “Mike, I love you and I’m proud of you. You didn’t do anything wrong. We’re going to be okay. Besides, Christ is all we need.”

Sara has been a part of a recovery group for five months. As a teenager, she became addicted to meth. It almost destroyed her life.

The group facilitator asks the participants, “Do you feel like you’re better equipped to resist temptation?” One by one, recovering addicts affirm their newfound strength. “I’ve made it this far, I can do it.” “Addiction is a battle of the mind and my mind is stronger.” “It’s been two years for me. I’m confident that I can stay clean.” As Sara listens, she can’t help but feel like an outsider. She doesn’t feel stronger. In fact, it feels like the temptation is stronger than ever. She shares her

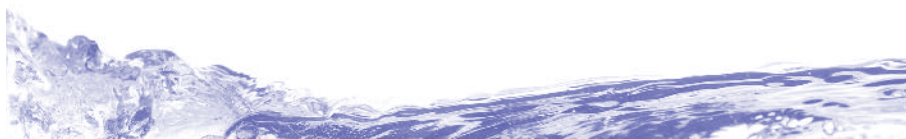


assessment. The facilitator says, “I know you feel weak. Your mind tells you that you can’t live without drugs. But keep your focus on Christ. He is all you need.”

Christ is all you need.

We want to believe that statement. We want to know that when our hopes are dashed, and our lives are turned upside down, and when we are wrestling with sin, Christ is enough. Inside we may even believe it at some level. In light of eternity, Christ is all we need to get to heaven.

But our eternal destination is not our only concern. We need answers to temporal questions as well. Is Christ enough for a broken heart? Is He enough to calm our fears? Is He enough to provide food for our families, and give direction to our lives, and destroy the grip of sin? As Christians, we’re grateful that Christ secures our eternal destination, but can He also meet our immediate needs?



LEARNING ACTIVITY

Not Enough

Many life experiences seem to communicate “not enough” to us. They seemingly mock our inability and insufficiency. Here are some examples:

Divorce: Your love is not enough.

Job termination: Your work/production is not enough.

Bankruptcy: Your balance/assets are not enough.

Illness: Your body is not enough.

Doubt/Confusion: Your wisdom is not enough.

What other life experiences communicate “not enough”?

As I stated in the introduction, the entire Letter to the Colossians can be summarized in one statement: Christ is all you need. However, to understand the depth of that statement, we need to understand the context of this letter. Let’s spend a few moments diagnosing the condition and the setting of the church in Colossae.

The entire letter to the Colossians can be summarized in one statement: Christ is all you need.

Page 9: A cornice stone at Colossae. Ancient Colossae has never been excavated.

A CLOSER LOOK

Colossians At a Glance

Who were the recipients of the letter?

A young church showing remarkable gospel progress and potential.

Where did they live?

Colossae was located in the Lycus River Valley of Asia Minor, 100 miles east of Ephesus and near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. The population of Colossae was a mix of Gentiles and Jews.

Why did Paul write the letter?

Epaphras, a key leader in the church, paid Paul a visit in Rome (Paul was in prison there) and informed the apostle of certain heretical teachings that were being spread in the Colossian church.

What were the particular threats Paul addressed?

(1) Greek philosophy, whose preconceived ideas about creation led to a rejection of both Christ's deity and humanity; (2) Jewish legalism, which asserted that Christ's death was not enough for either salvation or sanctification.

What is the major theme of Colossians?

Christ provides everything believers need for salvation and the Colossian heresy had nothing to add to what Jesus has already accomplished.

The church at Colossae was young and growing. They were grounded in the gospel (1:23), they were growing in the gospel (vv. 5-6), and they were living the gospel (vv. 4). Their maturity was demonstrated by their faith in Christ and their love for all

the saints (v. 4). Paul's overall encouragement to the church was to continue on the path they started. "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, overflowing with gratitude" (2:6-7). The church had been given an incredible foundation.

While the church was moving in the right direction, it was not exempt from veering off course. They lived in a city that was drenched in pagan influences. The church was comprised of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, both bringing remnants of their former lives into the church. Due to certain heretical teachings popping up in that region, the leadership was understandably cautious.

The primary leader mentioned in the Colossian church was Epaphras. While Paul never identified Epaphras as the one who started the church, he indicated that he was heavily involved with its formation. Epaphras was the one who taught them the gospel, and he was the one who reported their condition to Paul (1:7-8). Due to his concern over possible heresy, Epaphras made a 1,300-mile trip to Rome to visit Paul in prison. Colossians was Paul's reply to the concerns of Epaphras.



Based on the contents of the letter, it would seem that the church had not yet been infected with heresy. However, the danger of possible infection was real. From that perspective, Colossians was a preventative letter.

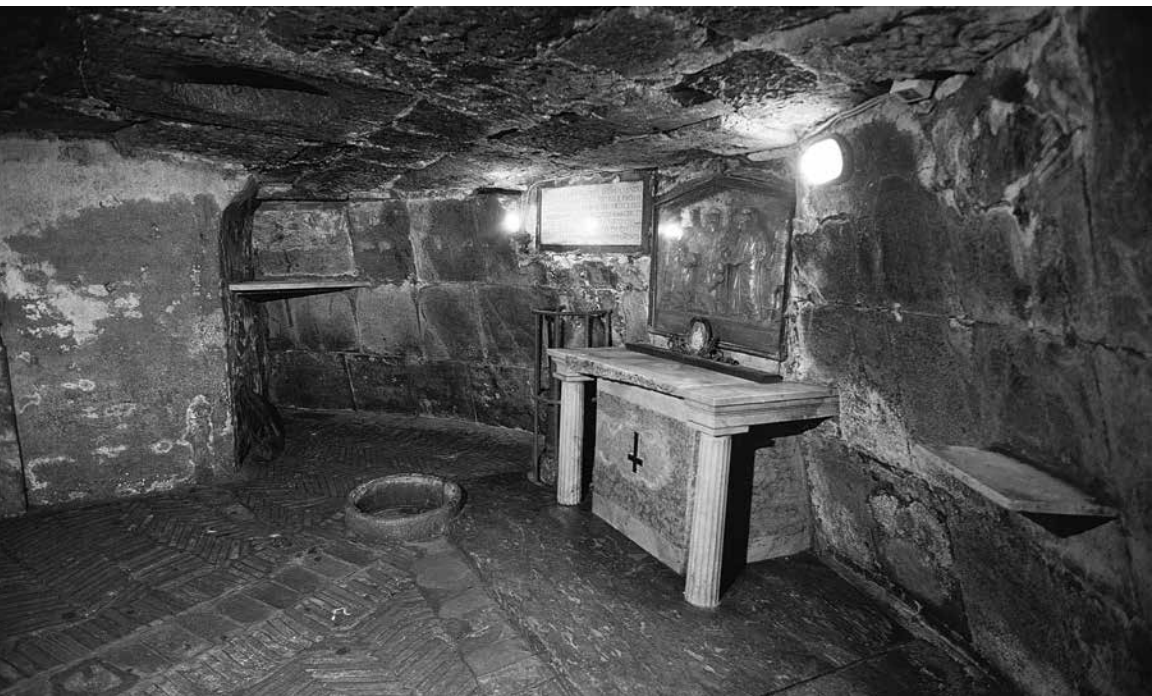
To fully grasp the teachings of Colossians, it is important to understand the heretical teachings that threatened the church. False religious teachers rarely teach something that completely rejects established truth. Instead, they add something to the truth or they twist the truth to fit their ideas. In this case, false teachers were attempting to infuse Christian doctrine with a mixture Greek philosophy and Jewish legalism. The result was a departure from Christ-centered living and a return to performance-based religion.

The first challenge came from Greek philosophy. When Greek philosophy was added to Christian doctrine, it attacked the nature and sufficiency of Christ. Let's begin by discussing the attack against Christ's nature.

There was a group in the first-century church that rejected the nature of Christ (both His deity and His humanity). Their background in Greek philosophy led them to believe that God was good and matter was evil. Therefore, God would never become a man, because that would make Him evil. Consequently, Jesus (the man) could not be God. Paul confronted this belief by stating, "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ" (2:9).

Not only did some people reject Christ's divinity, they also rejected His humanity. The incarnation of Christ (God becoming flesh) did not make logical sense. From their perspective, God could not have created evil matter. If matter is evil, then Jesus could not be human; rather, He was an emanation from God. To combat that teaching, Paul stressed that God did become a man in the Person of Jesus Christ. "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself... He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death" (1:19-20,22). In addition to heretical teachings about Christ's nature, there were also people who believed that Christ was not sufficient for salvation. The Greeks loved knowledge and they took pride in the complexities of their philosophy. It was inconceivable to them that Christ was sufficient for salvation because the gospel was too simplistic (1 Cor. 1:22-23). Everyone could understand it. If everyone could understand it, then it must be lacking

Left: Tel Colossae near the modern town of Honaz, Turkey.



depth. This group claimed to receive special visions that led to deeper knowledge (Col. 2:18). They taught that salvation was the result of Christ plus knowledge. In order to challenge this false teaching, Paul reminded them that God's mystery is Christ Himself (2:2).

After addressing issues related to Greek philosophy, Paul turned his attention to concerns involving Jewish legalism. On the surface, Jewish legalism did not sound as harmful. The legalists never rejected the nature of Christ. That was a step in the right direction. However, the emphasis they placed on Jewish customs made them equally dangerous.

*The moment anything is added to Christ for salvation,
it is a different gospel. The Greeks added knowledge to Christ;
the Jewish legalists added circumcision to Christ.*

Jewish legalists taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation. In so doing, they fell into the same trap as those who embraced Greek philosophy. The moment anything is added to Christ for salvation, it is a different gospel. The Greeks added knowledge to Christ; the Jewish legalists added circumcision to Christ. Either way, they denied the sufficiency of Christ. Paul challenged this

teaching by saying, “You were also circumcised in Him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of the Messiah” (2:11). He goes on to say, “In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision ... but Christ is all and in all” (3:11). In other words, Christ is all you need.

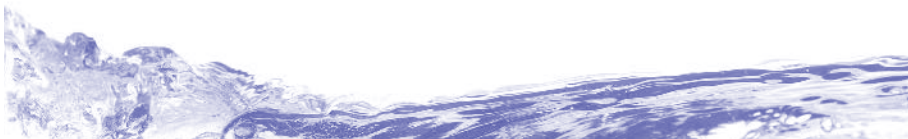
Jewish legalists also considered self-denial to be the primary path to spiritual growth. From their perspective, a person grew spiritually by avoiding or depriving themselves of certain pleasures. In rebuttal, Paul asked, “If you died with the Messiah to the elemental forces of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations: ‘Don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch’? All these [regulations] refer to what is destroyed by being used up; they are commands and doctrines of men” (2:20-22). He went on to say, these teachings have “a reputation of wisdom by promoting ascetic practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence” (v. 23).

Finally, the Jewish legalists emphasized keeping the Jewish dietary laws and observing holy days. Paul reminded the Colossians that ceremonialism does not make us right with God nor does it keep us right with God. “Therefore, don’t let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day” (2:16). Those things were a shadow, but Christ is the substance (v. 17). Christ is all you need.

Christ is enough. He is enough to save you. He is enough to develop you. He is enough to sustain you. He is enough to keep you. Christ is all you need.

If the Colossian believers allowed Greek philosophy to influence their teachings, they would eventually reject the nature and sufficiency of Christ. If they allowed Jewish legalism to creep into their teachings, they would reject the sufficiency of Christ and add ceremonialism and self-denial to spiritual growth. With each challenge, Paul pointed back to the same answer: Christ is enough. He is enough to save you. He is enough to develop you. He is enough to sustain you. He is enough to keep you. Christ is all you need.

Left: The Mamertine prison in Rome, Italy, where Paul was imprisoned at one time. It is beneath the church of Giuseppe dei Falegname in modern Rome. The lower chamber was probably initially a cistern and dated as early as the 6th century B.C.



LEARNING ACTIVITY

Match the Philosophy

Match the two challenges Paul addressed in Colossians to the appropriate description. Give contemporary application and examples of that to today's culture.

Challenge	Matching Description	Application and Examples
1. Greek philosophy	a. "I'm strong enough"	
2. Jewish legalism	b. "I'm smart enough"	

Answers 1.b; 2.a

Based on the specific teachings that threatened the Colossian church, the Letter to the Colossians is considered the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. The sufficiency and nature of Christ are emphasized throughout the book. Both are set up with Paul's description of Christ's nature in chapter one. Jesus is described as God (1:15), Creator (v. 16), Ruler (v. 17), Savior (v. 20), Sustainer (v. 17), and Head of the church (v. 18).

Based on who Christ is, our position is secure. Paul helps us see that we are rooted in Him, free in Him, built up in Him, hidden in Him, complete in Him, forgiven in Him, and seated with Him. We are secure in Christ because "the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ" (2:9). Our life is in Christ, and He lives through us.

As in many of Paul's letters, he started with doctrine and moved to application. Colossians is no different. Chapters 1–2 describe correct belief; chapters 3–4 encourage correct behavior.

Now that context has been established and the theme has been shared, let's turn our attention to the concept that believers are secure in Christ. Our security is connected to Christ's nature. Read through Paul's description of Christ's nature from Colossians 1:15–20. Pay close attention to references related to His nature.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. He is also the head

of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross—whether things on earth or in heaven.

There are at least six aspects of Christ's nature represented in these verses. Each aspect strengthens our sense of security by revealing the depth of Christ's character and ability. Let's take a few moments to describe each part of Christ's nature and show how it relates to the Christian life.

1. Jesus is God (Col. 1:15,19).

“He is the image of the invisible God ... For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.”

Jesus was not just a good man, a miracle worker, a great prophet, or a revolutionary leader. Jesus is God. He is the “image of the invisible God.” If you want to know what God is like—look no further than Christ. If you want to see the wisdom of God, look to Christ. If you want to see the mercy of God, look to Christ. If you want to see the power of God, the grace of God, the truth of God, the glory of God, the heart of God, then look to Christ. All the fullness of God dwells in Him. Jesus is God.

WORD STUDY

“Image” (1:15)

The word translated as “image” means manifestation, appearance, or visible form. The word was used to describe a person's portrait or his reflection in the mirror. It was also used to speak of idol images, statues that were intended to express the intangible qualities of pagan deities in tangible form. This important phrase means that Jesus is the visible form of the invisible God.

He is the One who has expressed the intangible qualities of God in tangible form. This description implies His deity, His identity as God in human form. (CQ)

Christ's deity is also mentioned by other biblical writers. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John continued in verse 14 with the words, "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." If the Word is God and the Word is Jesus—then Jesus is God. The writer of Hebrews declared, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word" (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is not somewhat like God. It's not that He has some "god-like" qualities. Instead, He is "the exact expression of His nature."

Jesus is God. Therefore, all of the attributes and abilities of God are in Christ. If Jesus is God, then is anything impossible for Him? Is there a sickness He cannot heal? Is there a bill He cannot pay? Is there a problem He cannot fix? Is there a marriage He cannot restore? Jesus is God. When a Christian understands the deity of Christ, there is security.

WORD STUDY

"Fullness" (1:19)

The word translated as "fullness" means the "sum total" or "completeness." The one referred to in the pronoun "His" is clearly "God." The HCSB helps readers properly identify the antecedent by capitalizing the pronoun "His." Thus, Paul is asserting that the sum total or completeness of God dwelled in Christ. The sentence is later clarified by Paul in Colossians 2:9, "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ." All that is essential to God's being resided in Jesus in bodily form. Simply put, Jesus is fully God and fully man. Jesus is not partially but completely God. Everything that makes God, God, has made its home in the body of Jesus Christ. (CQ)

2. Jesus is Creator (Col. 1:16).

"For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him."

Jesus is the Creator; He is not an artist. An artist takes what is and makes something beautiful. The Creator speaks to what is not and brings it to be. When we understand Christ as Creator, we can find security in knowing that God is not limited to the resources we have, or the opportunities we see, or the strength we possess. He has so much creative potential within Him that He can speak to the invisible and make it visible.

If you reflect on creation from Genesis 1–2, you will notice that God spoke everything into existence. The creative directive was, “Then God said ... and it was so.” By the power of His word He created plants, animals, seas, land, people, planets, stars, solar systems, galaxies, space, time, and matter. Jesus is the Creator. If He created everything by the power of His word, is there any problem too great for His power?

Take Christ’s creative power and apply it to your life. When you’re concerned about the health of a loved one, remember, Jesus is the Creator. When you’re in need of a job, remember, all He has to do is speak a word. When your courage is gone and your faith is wavering and your hope is almost out, remember that Jesus does not need a head start to fix your problem. He can speak your answer into being.

You are secure in Christ.



Left: Creation epic tablet. In this episode the Babylonian god Anshar summons the gods together for a banquet, to celebrate Marduk’s appointment as champion of the gods following his defeat of Tiamat, primeval Chaos. The tall narrow shape is characteristic of tablets in this series.

A CLOSER LOOK

Thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities (1:16)

While everything was created by Jesus, Colossians 1:16 specifically mentions “thrones,” “dominions,” “rulers,” and “authorities.” These designations refer to various ranks of spiritual beings or angels. “Thrones” are apparently the angels that attend to the throne of God in the highest heaven. “Dominions” (literally “bearers of ruling authority”) seem to be a class of angels

who oversee the government of nations. “Rulers” are the archangels, the generals of the heavenly hosts. “Authorities” are probably angels who have particular powers to perform special tasks. The ancient Jews regarded these classes of angels as the highest and greatest of all. Yet Christ is identified as the Creator of these highest and greatest of angels. This clearly shows that those groups that claim that Jesus was merely an angelic being rather than God in human form greatly insult His dignity. Far more than a mere angel, Jesus created the highest and greatest of angels. He is as superior to the angels as the Creator is to the creature. This truth strengthens the notion that we are secure in Christ. (CQ)

3. Jesus is Ruler (Col. 1:17a).

“He is before all things.”

Jesus is not a passive Creator who watches idly; He is the ruler “before all things.” He is Lord; He is Sovereign; He is God.

When you pray, keep in mind that you’re not just sharing your heart with someone who cares. When you pray, you are sharing your heart with the One who is in charge. Jesus loves you, and He cares for you. We are told to cast all our cares on Him (1 Pet. 5:7). All of that would be encouraging if Jesus was just concerned. However, He can actually do something about the trials you’re facing. Jesus is Ruler. Therefore, you are secure in Christ.

4. Jesus is Sustainer (Col. 1:17b).

“by Him all things hold together.”

There are so many things that make it possible for life to exist. Dry air is primarily made up of nitrogen (78.09 percent) and oxygen (20.95 percent). The remaining one percent is made up of argon (0.93 percent), carbon dioxide (0.03 percent), and other trace gases (0.003 percent). Those are some pretty specific measurements. Who keeps the mixture in right proportion?

How do the planets know which path to take? How do birds know to fly south in winter? What makes crops grow, and rain fall, and life flourish? Who feeds the animals, churns the seas, and controls the seasons? His name is Jesus. Jesus is the Sustainer. By Him all things hold together.

Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of being a husband, a father, a pastor, a leader, a neighbor, etc. The issues keep piling up. The problems

seem endless. There are great opportunities in every direction. There is so much to do, but I have limited control. There are times when I feel helpless, and I must resign myself to watching from the sidelines.

Jesus has never felt helpless. There has never been a time when He could not wear every hat, juggle every ball, and keep every plate spinning. Day after day, He cares for every need and He knows what to do. Jesus is the Sustainer.

When you feel helpless, run to Jesus! You are secure in Him.

5. Jesus is Head of the church (Col. 1:18a).

“He is also the head of the body, the church.”

People may hold leadership positions within the church, but Christ is the Head of the church. The reason I have hope in the future of the church is not because I see every pastor sold out to God or the world embracing Christ’s ideals. I have hope for the future of the church because Christ is still the Head.

*I have hope for the future of the church because
Christ is still the Head.*

He will direct the church, position the church, and use the church as He sees fit. Jesus is the Head of the church. As a Christian, you are secure in Him.

6. Jesus is Savior (Col. 1:20).

“and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross—whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

Humanity was created for a relationship with God. Sin severed that relationship. If the story of redemption stopped there, life would have no meaning. Praise God, the story keeps going. There was nothing we could do to reconcile the relationship on our own. Instead, Jesus did what we could never

do. He lived a perfect life, He died on the cross for our sins, and He rose from the dead that we might have life. He offers eternal life (a reconciled relationship; John 17:3) to those who will repent of their sins by placing faith in Jesus Christ. That is the gospel message.

As Christians, we are secure in Christ because we have been reconciled to God. We don't need to feel like God is mad at us and out to get us. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus." We can boldly come before the throne of grace with confidence. We are reconciled to God.

Sleep well tonight. Relish the reconciliation of God. Enjoy the blessing of knowing that Jesus is the Savior, and He has secured your position before God.

Do not fear; you are secure in Christ.

We've listed six aspects of Christ's nature. Do you see how an understanding of Christ's nature brings security to the believer? Your greatest need is not more money, more opportunities, more time, or more ability. Your greatest need is to know Christ, to believe Christ, and to live in fellowship with Christ. You are secure in Christ because He is all you need.

Personal Reflection

1. Where in your life do you struggle with the notion that Christ is all you need? Identify two or three areas.
2. The apostle Paul listed six aspects of Christ's nature in Colossians 1:15-20. Based on what he wrote, why do Christians still struggle with security?
3. Our security is connected to Christ's nature. What are a few practical ways to grow in your knowledge and understanding of Christ's nature?

It sounds simplistic, it sounds naïve, it may even sound cliché, but Christ is all you need. He is enough. He is enough to save you. He is enough to develop you. He is enough to sustain you. He is enough to keep you. Christ is all you need. Christ not only is enough—He is everything. If all you have is Christ, you are complete.

In this January Bible Study, pastor Paul Gotthardt challenges believers to move away from performance-based religion. The Christian life is not about trying harder, but trusting Christ more. The issue is not being versus doing; the issue is doing from the overflow of being.

As you walk through the Christological themes of Colossians, you will be reminded that everything God desires to do in and through our lives He will accomplish out of the overflow of our relationship with Christ. Christ is all we need.

Paul Gotthardt, lead pastor of Life Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, wrote the lessons in this personal study guide. Paul is a graduate of the University of Georgia and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Charles Quarles wrote the word studies and closer look studies marked with his initials (CQ). Dr. Quarles is Vice President of Faith and Learning, Dean of the Caskey School of Divinity, and Research Professor of New Testament and Greek at Louisiana College.

Brett Selby, leadership specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, wrote the learning activities.

An item related to teaching this Personal Study Guide is the January Bible Study 2014 Leader Guide (ISBN: 978-1-4158-7806-4). The Leader Guide includes in-depth commentary, teaching plans, and a CD-ROM with additional teaching and administrative helps.

Christ Is All You Need

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