

CHRIST IN YOU

(Study Guide for Colossians)

by

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Table of Contents

Foreword . . .	2
Introduction To Colossians . . .	3
Observations On Colossians . . .	4
The Conflict With Philosophy . . .	5
Promoting Christian Experience And Behavior . . .	6
Receiving Our Concept Of God . . .	7
Outline . . .	8
Notes on Specific Passages . . .	9
Study Guide To Colossians . . .	10

Foreword

CHRIST IN YOU is a study guide for the Book of Colossians. It is designed to be especially helpful in connection with Dr. Gutzke's teaching of this subject on radio as well as on tapes which he has recorded for your home study use.

Each division of this booklet is designed to help you. The *Introduction* acquaints you with the purpose and central thrust of Colossians; the *Observations* give additional specific help leading into your study of the book; three additional articles – covering the role of *Philosophy*, how God produces *Christian Experience and Behavior*, and how we receive *Our Concept of God* – are provided to emphasize points that are central in the message of the book; then a topical *Outline* follows for your convenience. *Notes on Specific Passages* are intended to clarify or emphasize important truths for you; and finally, the *Study Guide* itself provides questions, with space for the answers which you will be able to fill in as Dr. Gutzke teaches, or from your own study.

The purpose of a study guide such as this is to reinforce your learning by getting you to summarize in your own words and write it down. This is a basic principle of effective teaching. If you will do it, you will know the material better, understand it more thoroughly, and fix it in your memory. It will become part of you. If you will take part in studying in this way you will also find yourself able to approach and study other Scriptures with greater confidence.

Diagrams have been included with two of the articles to help you visualize certain basic facts emphasized in Colossians. Study them carefully, copy them yourself, or adapt them to your own visualization of the teaching.

Introduction To Colossians

There is obvious similarity in the basic truth set out in this epistle and in the Ephesian epistle. Paul is dealing with the organic life of the Church. The believer has denied his own self, entering into relationship with the living Christ by faith, wherein Christ lives His life in and through the believer. Since the one Lord thus dwells in each believer, and the one Spirit indwells and quickens, there is a vital union among all believers, similar to the members of one body. This is much more than community of interests between persons in similar circumstances, or congeniality of thoughts between persons of like nature and purpose, or cooperation of activities between persons of one aim or ambition – though all these would exist as a matter of course in the congregation of Christians. This is an intrinsic unity derived from the mind of Christ, the Word of God, by the Holy Spirit now resident in and affecting each and all believers. To illustrate, consider the fact that the branches of a tree have a relationship to one another far more intimate and vital than the legs of a table.

In the Ephesian epistle Paul elaborates on the import of this truth in its bearing on the individual believers as members of the Body, and members one of another. Both Gentile and Jew are equally integrated into this new organic entity. Fellowship among the believers should manifest this inner unity, and it will follow normally where the individual believers humbly keep their relationship to Christ in mind. God has divided certain spiritual gifts among the members to provide for mutual benefit and growth in the Lord.

In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul sketches the Ephesian truth in barest outline but elaborates on the significance of the part played by Christ Jesus as Head of the Body. The will-power is His, by which the Body, the Church, in actual spiritual life is energized, directed and sustained. The individual believer is united to Him, identified with Him, involved in Him by faith, so that literally it is "Christ in you, the hope of Glory." The believer maintains this spiritual union by his personal committal to Jesus Christ in faith, which is sustained in conceiving Christ in the pre-eminence where God has placed Him. The significance of this relationship in Christ is so complete in all its bearing upon the individual believer that no independent effort or additional measures on the part of the Christian are needed. As a matter of fact, to undertake such supplementary bolstering of the spiritual life in the wisdom and in the will of man, any man – even a good man – may actually belittle Christ as Head of the Body.

Christians could be deceived into foolishly undertaking such initiative by their very desire to seek the best and the highest. Paul warns the Colossians against such peril. The notion of furthering spiritual welfare by personal self-discipline and meritorious effort appears most plausible when the intellectual approach of the natural man is followed.

In this epistle we have the classic repudiation of naturalistic philosophy as a logical basic for Christian living. Paul is not (and never is) analyzing or interpreting the religious capacities or disposition of human nature or human culture. He is presenting the truth of salvation by Christ and here is making it clear that such salvation is by the power of God, which is fully, adequately, entirely and finally operative through Jesus Christ. Paul would affirm, without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment, that this marks Christian religion as uniquely different in its origin, its nature and its significance. He makes it the point of departure in his whole thought.

Observations On Colossians

AGAINST ERROR

In this epistle the truth of the organic structure of the Church, wherein believers are members of a Body of which Christ is the Head, is presented to meet and to refute a heresy that reduced the importance of (a) the Person of Christ (1:15-20), and (b) the Work of Christ (1:21-2:15).

While Paul plainly warns against the peril of being deceived by "enticing words," by "philosophy," he does not publicize the ideas and systems which he summarily repudiates. No one would ever learn the error by reading Paul's contention against it. It is commonly held the error here was Gnosticism, but no one would ever know it from Paul. That form of error could be "dated," but the peril of deception is constant. Paul underscores the truth which will keep the believer on lines of sound thinking at any time in the face of any current error.

"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves!" (Matt. 10:16).

A CHRISTIAN DEFINED

It becomes clear that the word *Christian* does not have its real meaning in outward appearances or forms of conduct. Piousness can be imitated. Religion can be sustained by self-discipline. Even the characteristic appearances and the psychological experience of the Christian defy sound appraisal.

That which distinguishes the gospel is not found in the patterns of behaviour exhibited by believers. It is the more inner frame of mind in which are the heart-felt intentions, the motivation and the dynamic by which the person lives. There is no better formula than "by Christ." This is not "like Christ," nor "in His steps," nor "following the Master," nor "for His sake." All these appellations are and should be considered good. But they fall short of this – "Christ in you, the hope of Glory."

The believer "follows Christ" on just one journey – to the Cross. In His dying He is our example for our dying, but in His resurrection He is our regeneration and our life. The word Christian used as a noun can well be reserved to denote the man in whom the living Lord is now living His life by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Paul is not repudiating discipline in living, nor is he arguing for indulgent license in conduct. In Chapter 2:16-23 he is repudiating religious practices as a source of spirituality. But in the remainder of the epistle he sets forth a discipline of the flesh in Christ that is far more thorough and penetrating than any pagan piety could ever be. The denial of the flesh as a means toward merit is called "asceticism," and no matter how severe it may be, it has no power to improve the soul. It tends rather to pride. The denial of the flesh that comes from believing obedience to the living Lord as Head of the Body is a matter of growth and maturity in spiritual things. And it leads to humility.

The Conflict With Philosophy

In Colossians 2:8 Paul warns the Christian against being spoiled or robbed through philosophy and joins to this the mention of "vain deceit."

From his overall argument in the letter, we see that he is not saying that a philosophical approach in itself causes harm. What will rob believers of the fulness of Christ is philosophy that makes the explanation of the truth into the standard and keeps us from going back to the Word itself. In explaining, we will always say less than the full truth.

This is why Christians sometimes disagree. One holds to a particular aspect of the truth while the second sees something else that is different, yet also true. As long as each seeks only his side, the two will feel separated. The need is to get back to the Word and to Christ. Each may then see more. Also, their own original understanding may need some correcting and filling in.

Attempts to examine and explain spiritual experience run the danger of following philosophy rather than the Lord, and thus being robbed. Life does not come from the description. The life of God comes in our contact with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in the experience itself, not in the description. We cannot receive experience in Christ by studying the psychological reaction of other believers and then attempting to duplicate their feelings or thoughts in the matter. We have the experience the Lord would give us as we individually are in touch with Him.

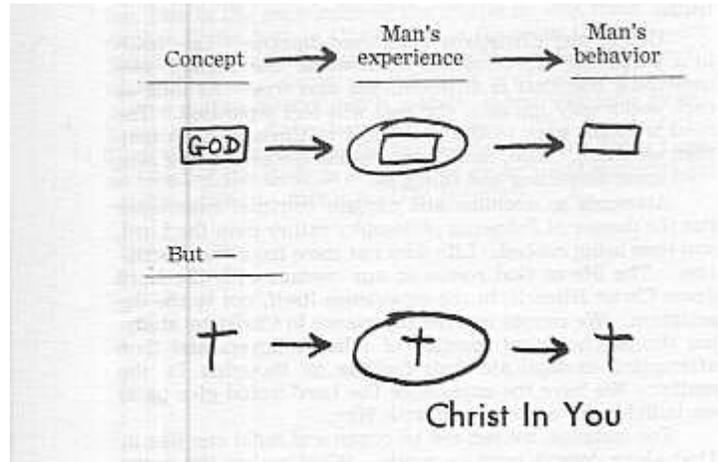
For instance, we can see an organ and build one like it. That alone doesn't produce music. What makes the organ play is the organist. Man cannot promote spirituality or spiritual experience by description and manipulation of the human factors. And philosophy is simply explaining what we can see and understand from the human side. It may be helpful but it doesn't go far enough; it doesn't make contact with the source of power that effected the experience.

So Paul reminds us in 2:9-10, "For in him (in Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him."

Promoting Christian Experience And Behavior

Religion is the behavior of man in response to his concept of God. The Christian religion is the behavior of man in response to his concept of God in Christ. If you leave out Christ, you do not have a Christian. You may have a religious person, but that in itself is not a Christian.

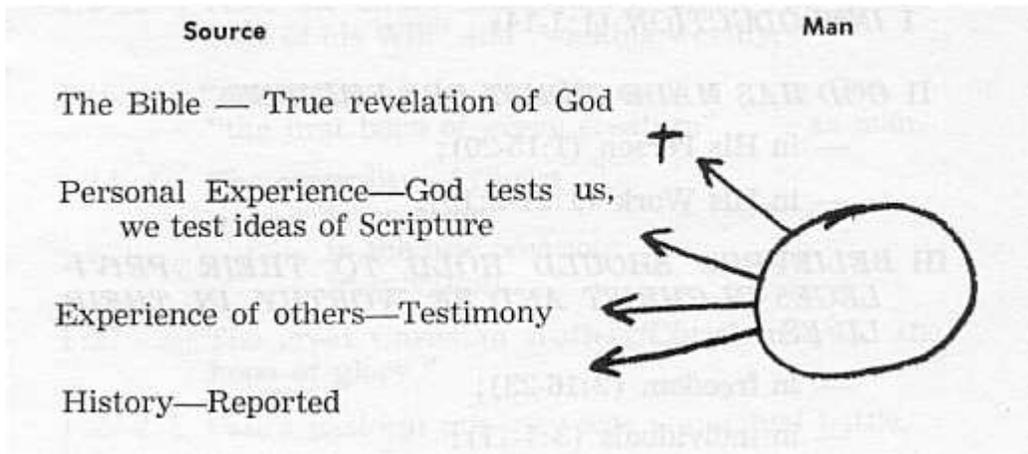
The determinative factor is the concept of God.



The truth of God is in Christ, as seen in the Scriptures. Any concept of God derived from philosophy, history, current events or other sources must be tested and corrected by the Bible.

To effect behavior, our concept of God must be brought into experience. Out of this comes conviction. Explanation (philosophy, psychology, etc.) cannot describe how conviction is produced. Thus, alone, they are unable to produce conviction.

Receiving Our Concept Of God



In receiving testimony we should seek the word of those who are genuinely interested in pleasing God. The danger in history is that those reporting may have left out important parts; historians may write to prove some point of view or philosophy. Confidence in Scripture is given by the Holy Spirit; and the inspiration of the Bible says that God has guided the writers in the data recorded so that nothing we need to know is left out in revealing God to us.

The Bible serves

- to supply authentic data of experience out of which true concepts of God are derived;
- to provide a vocabulary of terms about spiritual realities;
- to provide a literature of concrete narrative, which defines the meaning of the concepts;
- to enable the student of the Bible to relive the event, following the course of affairs under God.

Outline

I *INTRODUCTION* (1:1-14)

II *GOD HAS MADE CHRIST PRE-EMINENT*

- in His Person (1:15-20);
- in His Work (1:21-2:15).

III *BELIEVERS SHOULD HOLD TO THEIR PRIVILEGES IN CHRIST
AND BE WORTHY IN THEIR LIVES*

- in freedom (2:16-23);
- in individuals (3:1-11);
- as members of the Body (3:12-17);
- in general (3:18-4:6).

IV *PERSONAL COMMENTS (CONCLUSION)* (4:7-18)

Notes on Specific Passages

- 1:9-12 Note the direct connection between "the knowledge of his Will" and "walking worthy."
1:15 "the image of the invisible God" . . . as God.
"the first born of every creature" . . . as man.
1:14-22 The centrality of Christ
– in creation;
– in the new creation;
– in salvation.
1:27 The great Christian truth: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
1:29-2:1 Paul's pastoral ministry was a spiritual battle.
2:2-23 Paul's great concern for his people as to what *should* be, and what should *not* be.
2:8 "Spoil" in the sense of "despoil" or "rob."
2:18 The fleshly mind can be active in religious exercises.
2:18 "Angels" ...the fleshly mind will voluntarily ascribe greatness to "angels" which it with holds from Christ.
2:19 The vital energy of Christian spiritual life is de- rived directly from Christ Jesus as the Head.
2:23 Man-made religiosity can certainly look like the real thing, even to ascetic self-denial.
3:1-2 "If" . . . "Since." This is a conditional sentence not implying doubt.
"Seek", "Set your affection on" implies the function of deliberate selection (choice).
Believers are responsible for the voluntary direction of their interests.
"Things which are above" is in contrast with "things on the earth."
3:5 "Mortify . . . consider as dead (Romans 6:11, 8:13). This is the specific application of "denying self" and of "crucifying the flesh."
3:10 "Renewed in knowledge" . . . not sentiment, nor wishful thinking, nor will power, nor resolution.
3:14 "Charity" . . . the bond of maturity in spiritual living.
3:15 "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." The criterion of judgment is the peace of God.
3:19 A man is tempted to fall into a set aversion to his wife.
3:21 Fathers, in the exercise of parental control, are responsible not to discourage their children.
3:23 It is a spiritual matter to work "heartily" while employed.
4:12 It is a strenuous task to pray other people along into maturity as Christians.
4:17 There is a sober responsibility upon any man who has been assigned a task, that he achieve his assignment.

Note

After completing these studies it would help you retain the message of this book and the blessings from the studies if you would:

1. Prepare your own outline of major divisions of the epistle;
2. In your own words summarize what God has said to you through this study.

Study Guide To Colossians

(Answer questions from the passage or the broadcast studies. 40 passages are given, one for each broadcast.)

Introduction (1:1-14)

SALUTATION (1:1-2)

How is the writer (Paul) described?

How are the persons addressed described?

What do such persons have from Christ?

THANKS FOR BELIEVERS (1:3-5)

To whom does Paul give thanks?

What is an apostle of Jesus Christ thankful for?

THE EFFECTUAL GOSPEL (1:6-8)

What does the gospel produce?

What role does God's grace play in communicating the gospel

PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS (1:9-11)

What should be desired for Christians?

THANKS FOR REDEMPTION IN CHRIST (1:12-14)

How does Christ deliver the believer?

How can we be certain of sharing in the blessings of the gospel (and the answer to the prayer above)?

I God Has Made Christ Pre-eminent (1:15 -2:15)

A. *In His Person* (1:15-20)

CHRIST THE CREATOR (1:15-17)

What is Christ's importance to the universe?

What is He doing today in creation?

CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH (1:18-20)

What is Christ's importance to the Church?

How is the Christian's relationship to Christ described?

B. *In His Work* (1:21-2:15)

CHRIST THE RECONCILER (1:21-23)

Describe man before receiving Christ

How can man be reconciled to God?

How is the reconciled man to live?

CHRIST THE HOPE OF GLORY (1:24-27)

Why is this the basic principle in being a Christian?

CHRIST THE SAVIOR (1:28-29)

What should be the purpose of Christian preaching and teaching?

Does this enlarge your definition of salvation?

THE MYSTERY OF GOD (2:1-3)

What fruit of presenting the gospel is desired here?

What is the "mystery" referred to?

FAITH IN CHRIST (2:4-5)

What is the main element of Christian experience?

What is meant by "faith in Christ"?

WALKING IN CHRIST (2:6-7)

How is the progress of Christian growth described?

How can we show our thanks to God for salvation?

THE FULNESS OF GOD (2:8-9)

Could Christian faith be taken away?

What factors threaten?

COMPLETE IN CHRIST (2:10-12)

Who can take the credit for our Christian growth?

What is meant here by "circumcision"?

"Buried with him in baptism"?

"Risen with him"?

RISEN WITH CHRIST (2:13-15)

What basis for assurance of salvation is given?

What has been done that the believer may have eternal life?

II Believers Should Hold To Their Privileges In Christ And Be Worthy In Their Lives (2:16- 4:6)

A. In Freedom (2:16-23)

FREE FROM REGULATIONS (2:16-17)

Put in your own words the meaning of these verses.

What obedience does Christ want from us?

NOURISHED BY CHRIST (2:18-19)

Are all religious persons approved by God?

What religion is approved here?

DEAD WITH CHRIST (2:20-22)

How would a Christian be assured of right guidance in knowing what to do?

VANITY OF HUMAN EFFORT (2:23)

Who is the best Christian?

How is he produced?

B. *As Individuals* (3:1-11)

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE (3:1-2)

What two contacts does a Christian have each day?

How could you be free to do what will produce blessing?

HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD (3:3-4)

What is the secret of Christian life?

When would others see your Christian life?

MORTIFY THE FLESH (3:5-7)

Is the Christian responsible to avoid evil?

How is he told to do this?

Will he suffer if he does not?

PUT OFF THE OLD MAN (3:8-9)

Should the Christian be concerned about how his actions affect others?

How might the practices mentioned here be classified in contrast to verse 5?

RENEWED AFTER THE IMAGE OF CHRIST (3:10-11)

Describe a Christian according to this passage.

How are human differences among Christians overcome?

C. *As Members of the Body* (3:12-17)

PUT ON THE WAYS OF CHRIST (3:12-13)

How can Christian action be promoted?

Where must conformity to Christ's ways begin in the individual?

LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE (3:14-15)

What attitude in the believer will guarantee Christian maturity?

What additional guide to living in God's will is given?

DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD (3:16-17)

What evidence could a Christian have that the Word of God has spoken to his heart?

What motive should govern all our actions?

Put in your own words the meaning of "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

D. *In General* (3:18-4:6)

WIVES AND HUSBANDS (3:18-19)

How would the relationship between husband and wife be affected by their relationship to Christ?

How might the relationship between Christian husbands and wives witness to others about Christ?

CHILDREN AND FATHERS (3:20-21)

Why is the Lord especially pleased with obedience to parents?

How do parents provoke and discourage children?

SERVANTS (3:22-25)

What should those Christians who are in a lowly condition or status in this life desire?

What does God promise them?

MASTERS (4:1)

How should persons in authority treat those dependent on them?

What would motivate such treatment?

Is anyone in authority really free to do as he pleases?

CONTINUE IN PRAYER (4:2-4)

Christ recommended and approved that His followers "watch" (Mt. 24:42; Lk. 12:37).
How is this activity described here?

What prayer is requested for those who minister?

REDEEMING THE TIME (4:5)

Who are "them that are without"?

How would the Christian behave wisely toward those?

SPEECH WITH GRACE (4:6)

How would you speak with grace?

What is meant by "seasoned with salt"?

Why is what we say in public important?

Personal Comments (Conclusion) (4:7-18)

BE COMFORTED (4:7-9)

Is a Christian better off in communion with other believers?

How does hearing what other Christians are doing help?

FELLOW LABORERS — A COMFORT (4:10-11)

What special meaning to Paul did each of the three men mentioned have?

How did they comfort Paul?

LABORING FERVENTLY (4:12-13)

How did Epaphras minister to the Colossians?

Would this help Paul in his work?

THE CHURCH IN HIS HOUSE (4:14-15)

What is the Church?

Where is it found today?

FULFILL THY MINISTRY (4:16-18)

Is this said to each Christian?

What is your ministry?

Who would tell you so.