

**LESSON 3**  
COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

Pray as you begin your study. Ask God for concentration, understanding and an obedient, responsive heart. Thank Him for His power in you to enable you to walk through life in a manner pleasing to Him. Thank Him for the hope Christ won for you by His death on the cross and His resurrection.

Review your memory verse, Colossians 1:13-14. Write it out and put it in one or two places where you'll see it often.

Memorize Colossians 1:15-17. Start early in the week. First read it aloud several times. Next write it several times. Finally, say it to someone.

Read Colossians 1:1-23 three times. \_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3.

Verses 1-14 give us an extensive view of Paul's prayers. Let's examine these verses carefully so that we can apply elements of Paul's prayers to *our* prayers.

1. Make a list of all the different aspects you can see of Paul's prayer. Use verses 1 through 14. (You may want to include things like how he begins, who and what he prays for, when he prays, etc.)
  
2. Why do *you* pray? Are you praying regularly and specifically for someone? Jot down name(s) that you could pray for in this way. Are you praying these things for yourself in this way?

Read Colossians 1:15-23 again.

3. This passage often uses the relative pronouns *he*, *him*, and *his*. Look back to the verses just before verse 15 to identify the one to whom these words refer. Who is it?
  
4. Does Paul make a sudden shift in his thinking in verses 15-23 or is he expanding and explaining a previous thought? Please explain your answer.

5. What would you say is the *big idea* Paul is teaching the Colossians (and us) in verses 15-23?
  
6. From these verses, who is Jesus Christ?
  - a) in His relation to God
  
  - b) in His relation to creation
  
  - c) in His relation to the church

Before we go further into the meaning of some of the verses listed above, a note of explanation is necessary. There is often some confusion about the word translated *firstborn* in verses 15 and 18. Research shows that the Greek word for *firstborn* is *prototokus*, which is a combination of "first" and "place." The idea conveyed is one of the right of primogeniture or exclusive inheritance. In other words, everything went to this one. It does not have to be the one who actually *came* first as you can see from Jeremiah 31:9 and especially Psalm 89:27. Also, the context of Colossians 1 clearly shows (verse 16) that He Himself is *not* a created being but rather inherits all of creation "for" (or because) He created *all* things. In other Scripture, Jesus Christ is spoken of as being the only *begotten* son of God, not created.

Read John 1:1-18 and Hebrews 1:2-4. These passages help to expand the meanings of some of the terms in Colossians.

7. Using the above passages for reference, what do the following phrases mean?
- a) He is the *image* of the invisible God.
  
  - b) *All* things created *through* Him
  
  - c) *All* things created *for* Him
  
  - d) He is the *head* of the body, the *church*.
  
  - e) In Him the fullness of God dwells (is at home).
8. Define:
- a) reconcile
  
  - b) alienated
9. What is the purpose of Jesus' death on the cross? Can you see how Colossians 1:19-20 would make this possible?

The words "reconcile *all things* to Himself" (verse 20) do not mean "all men" but rather convey the completeness of the plan of God. This plan encompasses not only a reconciliation of sinful man, but also of the created order which was subjected to frustration because of sin. (Romans 8:20, 21)

Read Colossians 1:21-23. Notice the shift that Paul makes from general truth (all things) to personal truth (you).

10. What is Christ's final goal for you?

11. What is your part in the realization of this goal? How does Colossians 1:11 relate to your part? How does the "hope laid up for you" (Colossians 1:5) motivate you in moving toward the goal?
12. Verse 18 shows that Jesus Christ should have first place in everything. Does He have first place in your life? (*Think* about this one. It's personal and won't require an answer in class.) Think about your priorities.
13. Worship the Lord Jesus Christ by writing out a prayer of thanksgiving based on who He is, what He has done and what He is doing for you.