

“Not Forgotten”
Colossians 1:1-2

Introduction:

1. This Morning:
 - We Are Going To Begin A New Series:
 - Through Paul’s Inspired Letter:
 - To The Colossian Church!
 - So Please Turn There With Me:
 - To The First Chapter Of The Epistle To The Colossians!
 - Where We Read Paul’s Own Introduction:
 - In 1:1-2 - “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, / To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!”
 - Now - Just Who Are These “Saints & Faithful Brethren In Christ Which Are At Colosse?”
 - Just Who Is Paul Writing To?
2. I Think It Will Be Helpful For Us:
 - As We Begin Looking At This Letter:
 - To Know A Bit More About These Colossian Christians!
 - Paul Was Writing To A Relatively Small Church In A Relatively Small City Called Colosse – Or – Colossae!
 - And Colosse:
 - Was Just One City:
 - In A “Tri-Cities” Area Of Asia Minor:
 - Which Is Modern Day Turkey!
 - These Three Cities:
 - Were Located In The Rich & Fertile Valley:
 - Of The Lycus River:
 - And Colosse Was Just Upstream A Few Miles From The Two Other Major Cities:
 - Of Laodicea & Heirapolis - Which You Can See On The Back Of Your Bulletin This Morning!
 - 3. Hundreds Of Years Before Paul Wrote This Letter:
 - The City Of Colosse Was A Major City:
 - Situated Along A Major Highway:
 - And Was A City Of Hustle & Bustle!
 - It Was A Place Of Refuge:
 - For Those Who Just Made It Through The Arduous Mountain Ranges Of Central Turkey!
 - And It Was A Place Of Commerce:
 - As It Was Known For Its Sheep And The Mineral-Rich Waters Of Its River & Streams:
 - Which Enhanced The Dyeing Process Of Their Wool!
 - 4. And Throughout History:
 - The City Of Colosse Was Considered To Be:
 - A Very Important City!
 - For Example:
 - During The Time Of Xerxes:
 - Emperor Of Persia - And Likely The Husband:
 - Of Queen Esther - Colosse Was Described As:
 - “A Great City Of Phrygia!”
 - During The Time Of Cyrus The Great:
 - Also Mentioned In The Bible:
 - Colosse Was Known To Be:
 - “A Populous City, Prosperous And Great!”
 - But Over Time:
 - Things Changed For Colosse!
 - The Great Highways Shifted Away From Colosse:
 - To Laodicea - Just 12 Miles Away!
 - And As The Roads Changed, So Did Her Fortunes!
 - Eventually:

- The City Of Laodicea Became:
 - The Place To Go!
 - It Became The Political, Commercial, And Entertainment Capital Of The Region:
 - And Provided An Easy Path All The Way To The Coast - To The Great City Of Ephesus - Just 100 Miles Down The Valley!
 - But Then:
 - The City Of Hierapolis Also Became:
 - More Prominent Than Colosse!
 - About 6 Miles North Of Laodicea:
 - It Became An Important Religious Center & Place Of Recreation - Known Especially For Its Hot Springs!
4. And So - Those Two Other Cities:
- Possessed Everything Anyone Could Possibly Want!
 - So - By The Time Paul Wrote This Letter:
 - Colosse Became Known As Simply Another “Small Town!”
 - A “Back-Water” Of Sorts - But Still Considered Part Of The “Tri-City” Family - Yet It Was In Decline!
 - It Was A City Almost Forgotten Of All Its Glory!
 - But - As We Just Read From 1:1-2 - It Was:
1. ***A Place – Not Forgotten!***
- Not Forgotten – By God!
 - Because It Was A ***Place*** That Was Still In Reach:
 - Of The Gospel Of Jesus Christ!
 - Now - We Are Not Exactly Sure Of All The Details About The Spread Of The Gospel:
 - To Colosse - But It Seems Likely To Have Occurred During Paul’s Third Missionary Journey - Which Is Found In Acts 18:23 - 19:26!
 - But As Paul Is On This Journey:
 - He Stops In The City Of Ephesus:
 - And Remains There For Three Years!
 - And While He Continued To Minister There - We Read These Words:
 - From Acts 19:9-10 - “But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. / And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks!”
 - In 19:10 - We Are Told That - “All They Which Dwelt In Asia Heard The Word!”
 - And That Would Certainly Include That Old, Small, Back-Water Town Of Colosse!
 - It Is True That - Colosse Was A Place:
 - That Was Beginning To Be Overlooked By Man!
 - But It Was ***Not*** Overlooked:
 - And ***Not*** Forgotten:
 - ***By God!***
 - In Fact - It Is Also Quite Possible:
 - That - Like The Rich, Fertile Soil Of Their Valley:
 - God Had Already Prepared The Soil Of People’s Hearts - In That Same Valley!
 - And So - We Also Find:

2. ***A Preparation – Not Forgotten!***

 - Not Forgotten – By God!
 - When Paul Wrote This Letter:
 - The Triple Cities Of Colosse & Laodicea & Heirapolis:
 - Were In The Roman Province Of Asia:
 - But The People Were Also Known By Their Proud & Ancient Heritage:
 - As Phrygians!
 - Although They Were On The Western Fringe:
 - Of That Region:
 - They Were Still Quite Proud Of:
 - Their History, Their Religion, And Their Language!

- But Even As Phrygians:
 - We See That God Had Already:
 - Prepared Them For The Gospel:
 - By Providing Them With A Witness Around 200 Years Before The Coming Of Christ!
- The Light Begins:
 - In Colosse - When Some 2,000 Jewish Families:
 - Were Transported To The Region:
 - As A Military Settlement - In Order To Help Maintain Peace:
 - For The Greek Emperor, Antiochus The Great!
 - And The Jews Found The Area:
 - Around Colosse - To Be Very:
 - Habitable & Hospitable For Them!
 - They Were Able To Work Their Own Land, Live Under Their Own Laws, And Worship Their Own Lord!
 - There Is Evidence:
 - That The Jews Who Lived Near Colosse:
 - Were Still Very Faithful And Had:
 - Close Ties To Jerusalem & The Temple - Paying Their Temple Tax Every Year!
 - And By The Time Jesus Was Born:
 - The Jewish Population Had Grown:
 - To Over 11,000 Families!
 - God Had Graciously Provided A Witness Of Himself & His Word Through His People!
 - But Then We See:
- The Light Brightens:
 - In Colosse - When Some Of Those Same Faithful Jews:
 - Traveled To Jerusalem One Year:
 - To Celebrate The Feast Of Pentecost!
 - And We Can See What Happened:
 - In Acts 2:5-11 - “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. / Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. / And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? / And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? / Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, / Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, / Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God!”
 - Some Of Jews Who Were There In Jerusalem:
 - On The Day Of Pentecost:
 - Were From Asia As Well As Phrygia!
 - Possibly Some From Colosse Itself!
 - And They Would Have Heard About:
 - “In [Their] Own Tongues – the Wonderful Works Of God!”
 - They Would Have Heard:
 - The Gospel Message That Peter Preached On That Day!
 - And - Perhaps - Some Of Them:
 - Might Even Have Believed!
 - Because In 2:37-41 - “When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? / Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. / For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. / And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. / Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls!”

- And As Those Jews:
 - Went Back To Their Homes - "Out Of Every Nation Under Heaven!"
 - Including Phrygia & Asia - And Even Colosse:
 - God Had Already Prepared The Spiritual Soil For Them:
 - To Hear & To Believe In The Gospel!
- Either Way - There Was A Witness For God:
 - Already In Colosse!
 - And The Preparation Of That Place:
 - Had Not Been Forgotten:
 - By God! But Then - We Can Also See That The Colossians Themselves Were:

3. *A People – Not Forgotten!*

- Not Forgotten – By God!
 - Because God Cares More For The People:
 - Than The Place!
 - And We Can See This In The People:
 - God **Had & Used** In The City Of Colosse:
 - To Build His Church!
 - And In This Special Case - God Used:
 - Local People!
 - The Primary Person Associated With:
 - The Colossian Church Is:
 - Epaphras - Who Was - According To:
 - 4:12 - One Of Them - "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ!"
 - Ephaphras Was A Colossian:
 - Who Came To Know the Lord & Then Share The Lord To His Own People!
 - Now - We Wonder - When Did He Become A Christian? How Did He Become A Christian? Not Entirely Sure! Perhaps He Was In Ephesus When Paul Arrived There, And Was Saved Under His Ministry!
 - But We Do Know That:
 - Ephaphras Came From Colosse:
 - And Cared for Colosse!
 - So Much That He Witnessed To Colosse & Became Its First Christian Pastor!
 - And It Is Likely That:
 - Paul Never Even Went To Colosse Before He Wrote This Letter To Them!
 - Since In 2:1 - He Wrote - "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh!"
 - But That Was OK:
 - Because They Were Still In God's Hands!
 - And God Cared To Use One Of Their Own To Bring Them The Gospel!
 - But God Also Used:
 - Loyal People!
 - There Isn't Much Known About Ephaphras:
 - But Look At How He Is Described!
 - In 1:7 - "As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ!"
 - And In 4:12 - "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God!"
 - Epaphras - As The Founder & Pastor Of The Colossian Church:
 - Wanted God's Best For Them!
 - And So - When There Came A Problem:
 - He Sought Paul Out For Help - And He Traveled All The Way To Rome To Do So:
 - Even Though Paul Was Imprisoned There - And It Appears - Even Epaphras Was As Well For A Time!
 - Philemon 1:23 - "There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus!"
 - And So - The People Of Colosse:

- Were Not Forgotten By God!
 - When Paul Went To Corinth:
 - Remember What The Lord Told Him?
 - Acts 18:10 - "I Have Much People In This City!"
- Well - The City Of Colosse Might Not Have Been Much!
 - And The Church Of Colosse Might Have Not Been Much!
 - But The Lord Had His People There Too!
 - And He Cared For Them! He Called Out To Them! And He Created A Church!
- And Through The Letter Paul Wrote To Them:
 - We Can Also See:

4. ***A Problem – Not Forgotten!***

- You See - Satan Had His Eye On That Small Church:
 - In That Small Town As Well!
 - And He Sought To Sow Seeds Of Error!
 - And When The Church Was Just About 8 Years Old, Epaphras Was Concerned That This Error Would Infect The Church!
 - And So - Even Though Paul:
 - Was Imprisoned In Rome By This Time, And Was Still Burdened With "The Care Of All The Churches!" (2 Corinthians 11:28)
 - He Too Took Notice Of & Cared For The Needs Of The Colossian Church!
 - And In His Letter We Discover:
 - The Substance Of The Problem!
 - A New Philosophy Was Creeping Into The Church:
 - And It Was Trying To Mix Together With The Gospel:
 - Some Elements From The Jewish Religion & Some Elements From Pagan Religion!
 - And This Was Somewhat Appealing, Because It Promised A Deeper Knowledge About & Walk With God!
 - But The Substance Of The Problem:
 - Was Clear! This New Philosophy Meant That:
 - Jesus Was Not Enough!
 - The Church Was Becoming "Dissatisfied With The Simple Gospel Preached [To Them] By Epaphras!" (Zahn)
 - And So - Jesus Alone Was Not Enough:
 - To Save - Because:
 - You Needed To Maintain Some Of The Jewish Laws & Rituals!
 - And - Jesus Alone Was Not Enough:
 - To Sanctify - Because:
 - You Needed To Use Other Ideas & Philosophies To Grow Closer To God!
 - "Their Error Was Not In Denying [Christ], But In Dethroning Christ!" (John Eadie)
 - And That Is Still A Problem - Isn't It?
 - Well - Paul Wrote To Provide:
 - The Solution To The Problem!
 - And That Is - ***Christians Are Complete In Christ!***
 - Paul Confronts This Problem This Head On In:
 - 2:8-10 - "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. / For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. / And ***ye are complete in him***, which is the head of all principality and power!"
 - And Since Jesus Is Sovereign:
 - He Must Be Supreme:
 - In Your Life & In Our Church!
 - And These Great Truths About Jesus Christ Will Lead to Great Transformation!
 - "Christ Is The Antidote Not Only For Theological Error But Moral Error As Well! A True Apprehension Of Christ Manifests Itself In Ethical Living!" (D. Edmund Hiebert)
- And So - Through Colossians:

- This Problem Is Not Forgotten!
 - It Was In God's Own Plan & Providence:
 - To Provide & Preserve It For Us!
- Why? Because We Often Face Similar Problems!
 - Similar Errors! We Are Often Tempted To **Look Away** From Jesus - And To **Look To** Some **"Get Spiritual Quick" Scheme!**
 - And We Soon Devalue & Dethrone Jesus Christ In Our Lives!
- But - We Also Have The Same Solution!
 - The Same Antidote - And That Is:
 - To Always Be "Looking Unto Jesus The Author & Finisher Of Our Faith!" (Hebrews 12:2)
- God Has Now Ensured:
 - That This Problem Will Not Be Forgotten!
 - And We Must Not Forget It As Well!
 - But - We Also Need To Make Sure That:

5. **The Purpose – Not Forgotten!**

- Colosse As Both A City & A Town:
 - Gradually Faded Away:
 - Into Obscurity!
 - Even As It Struggled To Maintain Its Former Days Of Glory!
 - Not Long After The Writing Of This Letter:
 - In Fact - Within Just A Few Years - History Records For Us That An Earthquake Decimated The Region:
 - Including The Triple Cities Of Laodicea, Heirapolis, And Colosse!
- The City Of Laodicea Was Able To Rebuild Rather Quickly:
 - And Did So Without Any Financial Help From Rome!
 - And This Corresponds With What We Know About the Laodicean Church As Well - When Later, John Writes In Revelation 3:17 - "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!"
 - The Church Had Taken On The Cultural Identity Of The City!
- The City Of Hierapolis Was Also Able To Rebuild!
 - But Even Though They Required The Assistance Of Rome:
 - It Eventually Became An Important City For The Church As Well!
- But The City Of Colosse?
 - After The Earthquake:
 - It Became Smaller Than It Already Was!
 - And Eventually:
 - The Entire Town Moved About 3 Miles South:
 - To Settle At The Foot Of Mt. Honaz:
 - And Even The Name Was Changed To Chonae!
 - For A Time - There Was Still Evidence:
 - Of A Small Church In Colosse!
 - From Time To Time - A Church Council Would Convene - And A Bishop Of Colosse Would Sign His Name!
 - But That Too Changed!
 - As The Church Also Merged With The New Town To The South!
- And Today - Colosse Is:
 - An All-But-Forgotten Mound Of Ruins:
 - With Just A Few Signs Of It Ever Being Inhabited!
 - By The Time Of The Middle Ages - The Turks Moved In & The Memory Of Colosse & Its Church Was Gone!
 - But - Through This Inspired Letter:
 - The Purpose Of That Church:
 - Is Not Forgotten!
 - Its Purpose Remains To Call Us Back To Christ!
- And It Does This:

- Every Time We Read It!
 - Over & Over & Over Again!
 - Because We Need It!
 - We Are So “Prone To Wander!”
- And So We Need Him!
 - Yes - As Our Savior!
 - But Also As Our Sovereign God:
 - And Our Supreme Lord!

Conclusion:

1. Because - This Is Who Christ Is!
 - 1:15-18 - “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: / For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: / And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. / And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence!”
2. Have You Forgotten Christ In This Way?
 - He Has Not Forgotten Us!
 - He Has Not Forgotten You!
 - He Has Not Forgotten:
 - Our Place!
 - Our People!
 - Our Problems!
 - “It Is A Wonderful Thought That To A Church Located In A Town Which In Paul’s Day Was Already So Insignificant, A Church Which In All Possibility Was Small In Membership, The Very Important Epistle Of Colossians Was Sent. What May Seem Small In The Eyes Of Men Is Frequently Great And Important In The Eyes Of God!” (William Hendrickson)
3. So - Let Us Remember:
 - Our Own Purpose!
 - 2:6 - “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him!”
 - If You Believe In Jesus Christ:
 - Remember That You Belong To Jesus Christ!
 - And You Are “Complete In Him!”

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