

July 13, 2025
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Colossians 1:1–14

STICK TO GOD’S PLAN.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

In our epistle text this morning, St. Paul is sitting in prison, writing a letter to the Christians in Colossae, located in the southwestern part of modern-day Turkey. The congregation was not directly founded by Paul, but most likely by his coworker Epaphras. (cf: Colossians 4:12–13) Most of its members had never met Paul. (cf: Colossians 2:1) But now, Paul has been joined in prison with Epaphras and Philemon. (cf: Philemon 23) And Epaphras brings word that unscrupulous false teachers are injecting their heretical teachings into the church and threatening God’s Word of truth in the Gospel.

Out of a sense of pastoral and apostolic responsibility to the true Gospel, Paul writes this letter to guide the members away from heresy and back into the truth about Jesus and His saving work. And while this letter is addressed to the Colossian Christians, it’s also addressed to you dear *saints* of St. Timothy, and to all who are *in Christ*.

As you heard earlier in our text, Paul opens his letter with a salutation like any other letter of its day, except this letter has a stamp of divine authority on it. Paul is:

“... an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” (Colossians 1:1)

This means his proclamation is the proclamation of Christ. (cf: Luke 10:16) When he says he is writing:

“... to the *saints* and faithful brothers *in Christ*...” (Colossians 1:2)

... he’s writing to you. You’re named in verse two.

By means of your Baptism, you are a *“saint.”* You are *“in Christ.”* The word *“saint”* means: **“... things set apart for God’s purpose, dedicated, sacred, holy.”** (ANLEX, 32) At the font you were set apart as a child of God and dedicated for His purpose. To be *“in Christ”* describes a harmonious relationship with Christ Jesus and your baptismal incorporation into the body of Christ. (cf: Deterding, Colossians, Concordia Commentary, 23)

So in this letter to the Colossian Christians and to you, Paul is urging you to stand firm against the false teachers and false gospels that try to modify God’s plan of salvation. In short, he’s saying: *“Stick to God’s plan.”* And what exactly is God’s plan? God’s plan is to forgive the sins of the whole world for the sake of the shed blood of Christ alone. By trusting in Christ alone, mankind secures eternal salvation.

Because of the sin you have inherited from your ancestors Adam and Eve, plus the sins you yourself have committed along the way, you were destined for eternal death and damnation. But while you were still a sinner, Christ died for you. (cf: Romans 5:6–8) In His earthly life He lived a perfect life and fulfilled God's entire Law because you could not. In His sacrificial death on the cross, He endured God's entire *wrath against*, and paid the *wages of*, your sin, so that you would not.

While the natural man has a certain amount of intelligence in natural things, he is utterly incapable of understanding spiritual matters... the things that have to do with the obtaining of God's grace and salvation. (cf: 1 Corinthians 2:14–16) But in Baptism you were given the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit. Working through God's Word, the Holy Spirit has called you by the Gospel, enlightened you with His gifts, sanctified and kept you in the true faith. By His means of grace He has imputed to you all the gifts Christ won for you on the cross, namely forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation. God declares you a righteous saint for Christ's sake. Your sins have been *charged* to Christ, and His righteousness has been *credited* to you.

Because of Jesus' bloody sacrificial death on the cross, you and all who believe in Christ will never die. He is God's divinely anointed and appointed Savior. This has been God's plan for the salvation of the whole world from before the foundation of the world. (cf: Ephesians 1:4) Accept no substitutes. It cannot be perfected. It cannot be modified or improved upon. God's plan is so simple that by the power of the Holy Spirit, even babies can receive it. Yet, it's so brilliant that the smartest person in the world cannot comprehend it. God's plan is so grand and gracious that the greatest among us are humbled by it. His plan is the only plan that saves. (cf: Acts 4:12) But that doesn't mean everyone receives it.

Unfortunately, many people are not content with God's divine plan. They believe that they can improve His perfect plan of salvation which alone leads to eternity. When Jesus walked the earth, many Jews didn't believe that He was the Christ. Some still await a human messiah. Others have simply given up. In the seventh century the Islam faith was founded by a man named Mohammed, to whom Muslims believe their god Allah, gave his word in their holy book, called the Qur'an.

In the 1800s, Joseph Smith claimed he would correct God's incomplete plan by sharing new prophecies and a new scripture in the Book of Mormon. Charles Taze Russell denied the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the existence of hell – and founded the "Watch Tower Tract Society" which after his death would be renamed "Jehovah's Witnesses," an organization who saw their work as restoring Christianity to their misinterpreted version of God's Word and plan.

And the list goes on. But all of these false religions and religious leaders have one thing in common: they've substituted their plan of salvation for the true plan given by God. (cf: John 14:6–27) The result is – they and their followers are on the wide road that leads to eternal damnation. Without faith in Christ and His shed blood covering their sins, they are without hope and salvation. Without Jesus interceding on their behalf, they have no advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

Just like we heard in St. Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians last week, in today's text, Paul is exhorting the Colossians and you to live lives worthy of the Christian name given you in Baptism. It's Paul's prayer:

"... that you may be filled with the knowledge of [God's] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father..." (Colossians 1:9–12)

You don't live this way to earn salvation but so that others see the joy of your salvation and come to faith. You live this way because you have been saved by the blood of Christ and desire that others might also know God's plan of salvation in Christ. Before God's plan, you and I and all mankind were spiritually dead and eternally condemned. Now, because of what God has done, we're alive in Christ. If God ***can do*** this for us, He ***can do*** the same for others. And by the blood of His Son, He ***has done*** the same for others.

In our text St. Paul says that it's God the Father:

"... who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."
(Colossians 1:12)

This word here translated as ***"qualified"*** can also be translated as ***"made sufficient."*** (cf: Deterding, Colossians, Concordia Commentary, 36–37) It's a word of grace where God the Father has provided what you and I cannot provide for ourselves. You have been made ***sufficient*** to share the Good News of the inheritance of what God has done for you in Christ Jesus. It's true for the Colossians and it's true for you. In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul writes:

"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient..." (2 Corinthians 3:5–6)

God has placed you in various stations and vocations in this life. He has called you to be a parent, a grandparent, an employee, an employer, or supervisor, or whatever, not because of your abilities. No. He has called you and ***qualified*** and made you ***sufficient*** to serve your neighbor wherever you find yourself each and every day. But the devil is in the details.

You know your imperfections and shortcomings and failures. Even if no one else knows your secret sins, you know them, and the devil knows them. The devil and your own conscience accuses you and reminds you of your moral failures and the harm you have caused others. Human instinct tells you that you have to do something to quiet your accusing conscience, and there are plenty of false teachers in the world who say the same thing. Like the false teachers in Colossae, you hear false teachers say you have to X, Y, and Z to be forgiven your sins. Or they say that Jesus has gotten you to the doorstep of heaven but it's up to you to crawl across the threshold and into the presence of the Lord – as if Jesus' death on the cross was not ***sufficient*** to pay for your salvation and guarantee you eternal life. The devil is the source of all false teaching. He was a murderer from the beginning, and is the father of lies. (cf: John 8:44)

You are *qualified* and made *sufficient* by Christ's work of salvation on your behalf. He forgives you of all your sins and enables you to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. He has a plan, and He has perfectly worked the plan. Paul says:

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13–14)

Before God's plan, you and I and all mankind were spiritually dead and eternally condemned. Now, because of what God has done, we are alive in Christ. If God *can do* this for us, He *can do* the same for others. And by the blood of Christ Jesus, He *has done* the same for others.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.