

Dr. Ron Armstrong • May 23 & 24, 2020
Letters from Prison: Your Problems Will Chase You

Colossians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, [2] To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse (koh-LAH-see): Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints-- [5] the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel [6] that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. [7] You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, [8] and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

[9] For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. [10] And we pray this in order that you may **live a life worthy** of the Lord and **may please him** in every way: **bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, [11] being strengthened** with all power according to his glorious might so that **you may have great endurance and patience**, and **joyfully [12] giving thanks** to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. [13] For he has **rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

A. Colossians is one of the four prison letters.

1. Our prison letters (epistles) are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon and they all deal with tough stuff.
2. As we mature, we get better at facing problems. We improve with effective practice.
 - a. Practice limiting the frequency of the discussion. Instead, schedule time to worry, discuss, focus, pray, and decide.
 - b. Practice letting everyone have their say.
 - c. Practice patience. Rushing to try to "fix" stuff often makes it worse.
 - d. Practice putting it on the shelf. You're not forgetting or ignoring it; you're just controlling when you are coming back to it.
3. We will always face the temptation to "leave" problems instead of facing them. Remember:
 - a. Most problems we try to run from look like cans tied to a car at a wedding.
 - b. There will be more problems when we get there. They may be different, but they will be just as tough.

B. What does a successful Christian look like?

1. Paul's list:
 - a. Worthy life (adding value).
 - b. Pleasing to God.
 - c. Good works are happening.
 - d. Growing knowledge.
 - e. Getting stronger.
 - f. Endurance and patience.
 - g. Joyful and thankful.
2. None of these things make you a believer. It's not a to-do list; it's a result list.

C. For he has rescued us ...