

Christians First, Citizens Second

July 18 2021 • Colossians 1:4-6, 9-14

Rev. Rick Dietzman, Sequim Community Church

A. Understanding the grace of God in truth

We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven... in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing. – Colossians 1:4-5

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

B. What the early Christians prioritized is instructive today (Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus - c. 110 AD)

- “They do not, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines.”
- “They display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life.”
- “They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven”
- “They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives.”
- “They love all men, and are persecuted by all.”

C. The Covenant of Peace (shalom) applied

“They received commandments which they engraved upon their minds and observe in hope and expectation of the world which is to come. Wherefore they do not commit adultery, nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly.”

– The Apology of Aristides on behalf of the Christians c. 120 AD

“They marry, as do all others, they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh.”

– Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus - c. 110 AD

“We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now share...and communicate to every one in need. We who hated and destroyed one another...pray for our enemies.”

– First Apology of Justin Martyr - c. 150 AD

D. Core Lifestyle Emphases

- Dependent on Jesus
- Faithful to Family
- Connected to the Needs of Others
- Gracious (hesed) Hospitality to all

E. The truth set before their eyes

“The Christians are just and good, and the truth is set before their eyes, and their spirit is long-suffering; and, therefore, though they know the error of the Greeks and are persecuted by them, they bear and endure it; and for the most part they have compassion on them, as men who are destitute of knowledge. And on their side, they offer prayer that these may repent of their error.”

– The Apology of Aristides on behalf of the Christians - c. 120 AD

For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do...They are surprised that you do not join them... and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

– 1 Peter 4:3-5

F. Our Actions

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.

– Colossians 1:10

G. Our Dependency

Being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

– Colossians 1:11

For further study on this subject

See www.newadvent.org/fathers to read the early apologies.

How Christianity Changed the World by Alvin J. Schmidt