

COLOSSIANS

Colossians is one of the most Christ-centered books of the Bible. In it, Paul stresses the supremacy of the person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation He provides in order to combat a growing heresy in the church at Colossae. Christ, the Lord of creation and Head of the body which is His church, is completely sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the believer. The believer's union with Christ in His death, resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation upon which his earthly life must be built. Relationships inside and outside the home can demonstrate daily the transformation that faith in Jesus Christ makes in the walk of the believer.

Author: Apostle Paul, while imprisoned in Rome under house arrest (Acts 28:16-31; Col 4:18)

Date: Written around AD 60

Audience: Church at Colosse, which was started by Epaphras (Col 1:7-8)

Purpose: Main purpose was to refute the heresy that had entered the church. The heresy was a mixture of Jewish legalism, eastern mysticism, and an early stage of Gnosticism. The heresy was marked by:

1. Ceremonialism (2:16-17, 11; 3:11)
2. Asceticism (rigid self-denial) (2:21,23)
3. Angel worship (2:18)
4. Depreciation of Christ (1:15-20; 2:2-3,9)
5. Secret knowledge (Gnosticism) (2:18, 2-3)
6. Reliance on human wisdom and tradition (2:4,8)

Major Theme: *Jesus Christ alone is sufficient!*

Introduction and Title – If Ephesians can be labeled the epistle portraying the “Church of Christ”, then Colossians must surely be the “Christ of the Church”. Ephesians focuses on the Body, Colossians on the Head, the first portion doctrinal (1-2) and the second

practical (3-4). Paul's purpose is to show that Christ is preeminent – first and foremost in everything - and the Christian's life should reflect that priority. Because believers are rooted in Him, alive with Him, hidden in Him, and complete in Him, it is utterly inconsistent for them to live life without Him. Clothed in His love, with His peace ruling in their hearts, they are equipped to make Christ first in every area of life.

Theme and Purpose – The resounding theme in Colossians is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ in all things. The believer is complete in Him alone and lacks nothing because “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9); He has “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). There is no need for speculation, mystical visions, or ritualistic regulations as though faith in Christ were insufficient. Paul's predominant purpose was to refute a threatening heresy that was devaluating Christ, by a positive presentation of His true attributes and accomplishments. A proper view of Christ is the antidote for heresy. Paul also wrote this epistle to encourage the Colossians to “continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” (1:23) so that they will grow and bear fruit in the knowledge of Christ (1:10). A firm adherence to the true gospel will give them stability and resistance to opposing influences. Another purpose in the mind of the apostle is reflected in 3:1-4:6. Paul wanted the Colossians to understand the implications of the preeminence of Christ not only in doctrine, but also for practice. The supremacy of Christ is one side of the coin – submission to Christ is the other. The believer's position in Him (3:1-2) provides the basis and power for a transformed life in every area.

A very brief outline:

Chapters 1 & 2: What Christ did for us (more "doctrinal" in nature)

Chapters 3 & 4: What Christ does through us (more "application" in nature)

Key to Colossians –

Key Word: *Preeminence of Christ

***Key Verses (2:9-10; 3:1-2)** – “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (2:9-10).

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, no on things on the earth” (3:1-2).

Key Chapter (3) - Chapter 3 links the three themes of Colossians together showing their cause and effect relationships. Because the believer is risen with Christ (3:1-4), he is to put off the old man and put on the new (3:5-17), which will result in holiness in all relationships (3:18-25).

Survey of Colossians – Colossians is perhaps the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. In it Paul stresses the preeminence of the person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation He provides, in order to combat a growing heresy that is threatening the Church of Colossae. This heresy seeks to devalue Christ by elevating speculation, ritualism, mysticism, and asceticism. But Christ, the Lord of creation and Head of the body, is completely sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the believer. The last half of the epistle explores the application of these principles to daily life, because doctrinal truth (1-2) must bear fruit in practical conduct (3-4). The two major topics are supremacy of Christ (1-2) and submission to Christ (3-4).

Outline of Colossians

Part One: The Supremacy of Christ in the Church (1:1-2:23)

I. Introduction	1:1-14
A. Paul's Greeting to the Colossians.....	1:1-2
B. Paul's Thanksgiving for the Colossians.....	1:3-8
C. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians.....	1:9-14
II. The Preeminence of Christ.....	1:15-2:3
A. Christ Is Preeminent in Creation.....	1:15-18
B. Christ is Preeminent in Redemption.....	1:19-23

C. Christ is Preeminent in the Church.....	1:24-2:3
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III. The Freedom in

Christ.....	2:4-23
A. Freedom from Enticing Words.....	2:4-7
B. Freedom from Vain Philosophy.....	2:8-10
C. Freedom from the Judgment of Men.....	2:11-17
D. Freedom from Improper Worship.....	2:18-19
E. Freedom from the Doctrine of Men.....	2:20-23

Part Two: The Submission to Christ in the Church (3:1-4:18)

I. The Position of the

Believer.....	3:1-4
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II. The Practice of the

Believer.....	3:5-4:6
A. Put Off the Old Man.....	3:5-11
B. Put On the New man.....	3:12-17
C. Personal Commands for Holiness.....	3:18-4:6
1. Holiness in Family Life.....	3:18-21
2. Holiness in Work Life.....	3:22-4:1

3. Holiness in Public

Life.....4:2-6

III. Conclusion

- A. Commendation of Tychius4:7-9
- B. Greetings from Paul's friends4:10-14
- C. Introduction Regarding This Letter4:15-18

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14 -- SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Paul - a positive person despite a very tough earthly life. Why?? He had an eternal perspective (hope of heaven).

→ Application: keeping an eternal perspective can help us deal with ANY earthly troubles/trials that come our way.

- ◆ Paul practiced what he taught in Eph. 4:29 -- he edified (built up) the Colossians with his speech.

→ Application: we can edify each other by positively reinforcing godly/biblical character traits & behaviors, thanking/encouraging people for their ministry and service; encouraging people who are going through a tough time.

- ◆ The gospel has been bearing fruit and growing ever since the N.T. church started in Jerusalem with only 120 members.

→ Application: we should faithfully support the proclamation of the gospel and proclaim it ourselves; we should not lose hope for the unbelievers in our lives that appear to have no interest in Jesus.

- ◆ Gaining knowledge, wisdom, understanding (i.e., knowledge, truth) is important, because of the guidance it gives us in living a life worthy of the Lord and which pleases Him.

→ Application: we should strive to increase our knowledge of biblical truth by regularly attending Sunday School and church, plus reading & studying the word throughout the week. We should commit to practicing what we learn.

- ◆ Praying for each other is important.

→ Application: we can regularly pray for each other, including praying that our good works will bear fruit; we will be strengthened with power; we will have endurance and patience; we will have a joyful attitude and regularly give thanks.

- ◆ Jesus has redeemed us, and through Him we have our sin debt paid (forgiven).

→ Application: we should be very grateful for what Jesus has done for us, and make it a priority to share the good news with others.

Colossians Personal Study Guide

To get the most out of our study, please try to read through the book at least once each week. Also, taking the time to answer the following questions can help you better understand the book, and prepare you to offer some insights that can benefit the rest of the class.

Chapter One

- 1) What did Paul continually do for the Christians he knew (verse 3)?

- 2) (verses 3 - 8) What are some of the characteristics of the Colossians that cause Paul to be thankful for them?

- 3) How do you feel when somebody tells you the specific things that they notice and appreciate about you? How often do you tell others why you appreciate them?

- 4) (verses 10 - 12) What are some specific things that we can pray for each other? Take time now to pray for some specific people in the Romans XII class.

- 5) How often do you pray for other people in the class and church? What can you do to improve upon your praying practices?

- 6) (verses 12 - 14) How does Paul contrast our condition before and after we became Christians?

- 7) Reread verses 12-14, putting your name in each sentence. Isn't it great what God has done for you!!

- 8) (verses 15 - 20) Make a list of things that you learn about Jesus Christ.

- 9) (verses 21 - 22) What has Christ's death on the cross done for you?

- 10) (verses 28 - 29) Why was Paul working/laboring hard? Did Paul have to work on just his own power?

Chapter One notes:

Chapter Two

- 1) (verses 1 - 3) What are some things that Paul is working hard to see achieved in the people at Laodicea and Colosse?

- 2) (verses 2 - 4) Where does true wisdom and knowledge reside?

- 3) (verses 2 - 4, 8) How can we avoid being deceived by fine-sounding worldly arguments?

- 4) (verses 6 - 7) On what basis do we receive Jesus as our personal savior, faith OR our own good works (refer to Eph 2:8-9)? Should we live our daily lives based on faith?

- 5) (verse 7) What should our lives be overflowing with?

- 6) What are some things that you have to be thankful for?

- 7) (verses 9 -10) What can you learn about Jesus in these verses?

- 8) (Verses 11-15) Paul describes some of what the "fullness in Christ" includes.
Summarize what Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection does for you?

- 9) (verse 13) How many of our sins have been forgiven by God when we put our trust/faith in Jesus?

- 10) (verse 15) Who did Christ triumph over by the cross (refer to Eph 6:12)?

- 11) (verses 16 - 19) What are some concerns that Paul warns us against?
- 12) (verses 20 - 23) What does Paul have to say about following human-based teachings and rules?

Chapter Two notes:

Chapter Three

- 1) (verses 1 - 4) What should we set our minds on? Why is that often difficult to do?
- 2) (verses 5 - 10) What are the things we should avoid (put to death; rid ourselves)?
- 3) (verse 11) What does this verse say about Christian unity of people from different backgrounds?
- 4) (verse 12) What are three characteristics of Christians?
- 5) (verses 12 - 13) What should we "clothe" ourselves with?
- 6) (verses 13 - 17) List the characteristics/behaviors Paul encourages us to have?
- 7) (verse 16) What does this verse say about the Word of God? How do we let the Word dwell/live in us richly?
- 8) How regularly do you sit under biblical teaching? How often do you personally read & study the bible? What can you do to improve the consistency of your bible reading & studying?

- 9) (verse 17) We should do everything in the name of _____, and according to I Cor 10:31, we should do everything for the glory of _____.
- 10) (verses 18 - 25) Summarize Paul's teaching for:
- ◆ Wives:
 - ◆ Husbands:
 - ◆ Children:
 - ◆ Fathers:
 - ◆ Slaves (employees):
- 11) (verses 22 - 25) When we work for other people (e.g., employer), who are we also working for?

Chapter Three notes:

Chapter Four

- 1) (verse 2) What should we be devoted to? What attitude should we have concerning prayer?
- 2) (verse 3 - 6) What are some things for us to pray for?

- 3) Since God is the one who opens doors for the gospel, take time to pray for open doors for you to share with the unbelievers He has placed in your life. Also, pray for open doors for our pastoral staff, fellow members of Romans XII & MFBC, and a missionary that you know.

- 4) (verses 5 - 6) What are some keys to effectively reaching people for Jesus Christ?

- 5) (verse 12) What was Epaphras wrestling in prayer for?

- 6) (verses 7 - 18) Paul concludes his letter with numerous messages and greetings. What qualities in these people does Paul affirm, and why? What qualities would you like to see better evidenced in your life? What can you do to see those qualities grow in your life?

Chapter Four notes: