

# Colossians

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Introduction to Colossians: [Authorship](#), [Date](#), [Audience](#), [Purpose](#), [Theme and Content](#), [Comparisons](#), [Authenticity](#)

(Reference a similar introduction to [Ephesians](#).)

As a general introduction to Colossians, readers always face the questions of who wrote the letter, when, who is the intended audience, what is the purpose for writing, what are the themes, how does this writing compare with other writings, and what is the letter's authenticity? As to the latter question of authenticity, its genuineness has been, as Daniel Wallace points out, "assailed on critical grounds" by T. Mayerhoff, F.C. Baur and the Tübingen school (See Wallace below). General consensus seems to suggest Colossians was written by Paul, or should have been since it so closely structures a Paulinian theology, in the end 50's to early 60's during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The purpose for the letter seems to have been to combat new and popular teaching that would subvert the pure gospel. New Advent says Colossians was written to combat a number of worldly teachings:

Colossians was written as a warning against certain false teachers, about whom St. Paul had probably heard from Epaphras, his "fellow-prisoner" and the founder of the Church of the Colossians. The most diverse opinions have been held regarding these seducers. They were called philosophers by Tertullian, Epicureans by St. Clement of Alexandria, Jews by Eichhorn, heathen followers of Pythagoras by Grotius. They have also been called Chaldean magicians, Judaizing Christians, [Essenes](#), Ebionites, Cabbalists, Gnostics, or varying combinations of all these (see Jacquier, Histoire, I, 316; Cornely, Introduction, III, 514).

As for purpose, themes, and scope for why Colossians is written, the following succinctly summarizes:

In scope, Colossians presents the all supremacy, all

sufficiency, uniqueness, and the fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the God-man Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and the total solution for man's needs both for time and eternity. It is a cosmic book, presenting the cosmic Christ: the **Creator/Sustainer** and **Redeemer/Reconciler** of man and all the universe.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/survey/nt-04.htm#TopOfPage>

Finally, a clear resemblance exists between Ephesians and Colossians, as remarked upon by John Nelson Darby:

If the Epistle to the Ephesians delineates the privileges of the body, that to the Colossians reveals the fullness that is in the head, and our completeness in Him. Thus in that to the Ephesians the church is the fullness of Him who filleth all in all; in that to the Colossians, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, and we are complete in Him.

<http://www.ccel.org/d/darby/synopsis/Colossians.html>

## Letter

1. The New Advent Catholic introduction to Colossians (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/0413b.htm>) identifies the letter as one of four written by Paul during his imprisonment in Rome (Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians being the other three).

2. **AUTHOR:** This letter was written by the Apostle Paul about the same time as Ephesians and Philemon. Tradition says it was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, recorded in Acts 28. Paul never visited Colossae himself (2:1), and we believe the church there was started with contact with Epaphras and possibly even Philemon while Paul was preaching for two years at Ephesus, 90 miles west of Colossae.

[http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk\\_nt/coloss.htm](http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk_nt/coloss.htm)

3. Who wrote the Letter to the Colossians? What does Col 1:1 indicate about the authorship of the Letter to the Colossians? It indicates that the author of the Letter to the Colossians was Paul, along with Timothy.

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTIntro/Col.htm>

#### 4. Daniel Wallace

Most NT scholars accept the genuineness of Colossians, though it has been assailed on critical grounds from some circles. Beginning with T. Mayerhoff (1838) and F. C. Baur (1845) and the Tübingen school, Colossians has found itself outside the pale of undisputed Pauline books.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

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#### **Date**

1. Between A.D. 61 and 63 (New Advent)
2. David Malick

#### II. LOCATION AND DATE: FROM ROME IN AD 60-61.

A. Location: 11 Paul's (first) Roman Imprisonment: 1. Until recently, Rome was considered by most to be the location from which Paul wrote<sup>12</sup> 2. Caesarea: Some<sup>13</sup> understand Caesarea to be the location of writing, but this is unlikely for the following reasons: a. It is unlikely that a runaway slave (Philemon) would have fled to Caesarea to escape detection and would have found access to Paul like he would have in Rome (where Paul was under house-arrest) b. Paul expects to be released in the near future since he requests Philemon to prepare him lodging (Phm. 22) and this probably would not have been the case at Caesarea where Paul knew that his only hope was to appeal to Caesar c. It is unlikely that Caesarea was the home of active missionary work requiring such a large staff of Paul's co-workers of Gentile origin for Philemon to seek refuge, and it does not seem that this small harbor city was the center of vigorous propaganda suggested in Colossians 4:3,4<sup>14</sup> 3. Ephesus: 15 Some<sup>16</sup> understand Ephesus to be the location of writing, but this is unlikely for the following reasons: a. No evidence exists to affirm that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus (Acts 19)<sup>17</sup> b. It is unlikely that a runaway slave (Philemon) would have fled to Ephesus and remained there long enough to know Paul since it was no more than 100 miles away from Colossae c. The "we"

sections of Acts do not allow for Luke to have been with Paul while he was in Ephesus (Acts 16:10ff; 20:6,13ff; cf. Col. 4:14) 4. Rome:18 The most probably location of writing was probably Rome for the following reasons a. This is a known imprisonment of Paul's which allows for the events reflected in Colossians and Philemon b. Acts supports Luke's presence in Rome with Paul (the "we" sections; Acts 27:2ff) c. Paul was under house-arrest in Rome which would have allowed him visitors such as co-workers and Onesimus d. The imperial capital would have allowed the run-away slave Onesimus to seek anonymity and then asylum in Paul's presence there e. No other imprisonment in Acts seems to be a real alternative (Philippi in Acts 16:23-40; Caesarea in Acts 24:27) f. Travel between Rome and the east was frequent and not too formidable a task to make the communications between the prison epistles possible g. Although not determinative, the doctrinal outlook of Colossians seems to belong to a later rather than to an earlier period supporting a Roman origin over one in Ephesus<sup>19</sup> h. It is very probable that Aristarchus accompanied Paul to Rome (Acts 27:2; cf. Col. 4:10) and thus shared in his imprisonment i. Even though Paul intended to go on to Spain from Rome (Rom. 1:10ff; 15:19ff) it is not possible to know with certainty what he did upon his release. He could have changed his mind, or at least changed his immediate plans and thus gone to Colossae B. Date: If the Roman hypothesis is accepted, then it is likely that Paul wrote Colossians early<sup>20</sup> in his (first) Roman imprisonment (i.e., AD 60-61)

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/col/col-intr.htm>

### Parallel Ephesians and Colossians Text

3. When was the Letter to the Colossians written?

3.1. What do Col 4:3, 10, 18 imply about Paul's situation at the time of writing the Letter to the Colossians?

These passages imply that Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letter to the Colossians.

3.2. From what you know about Pauline chronology, when could Paul have written the Letter to the Colossians? (It must

be remembered that Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years sometime during the period of 56-60, and his first Roman imprisonment, lasting at least two years, occurred sometime during the period of 58-62.)

Depending on whether he did it during his Caesarean or his first Roman incarceration, Paul may have written the Letter to the Colossians as early as 56 or as late as 62. (It is also theoretically possible that Paul wrote the Letter to the Colossians during his second Roman imprisonment, which would place it around the mid 60's.)

Where was the Letter to the Colossians written?

4.1. If he wrote the Letter to the Colossians while in prison, where most likely was Paul when he wrote?

Paul could have written the Letter to the Colossians from Caesarea or Rome, because he was in prison in both places long enough to write a letter.

4.2 It has been argued that Paul wrote the Letter to the Colossians during an incarceration in Ephesus, of which Luke says nothing in the Book of Acts (All Luke says is that there was a riot in Ephesus) (see R. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, 2.216-22; Martin is dependent on G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry*, 1929). Although this hypothesis is possible, the evidence in favor of an Ephesian provenance for the letter is far from compelling.

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTIntro/Col.htm>

4. Daniel Wallace

This letter was sent while Paul was in prison in Rome (59-61 CE). Since the apostle gives no indication that he will be released soon (*contra* Philippians), it is likely that this was written before the end of his imprisonment. Further, it is obvious that it was sent along with the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to Philemon. Once the occasion for the writing of Colossians/ Philemon is established, it can be reasonably supposed that all three letters were written sometime during the middle of Paul's imprisonment—hence, c. 60 CE. But more than that can be said here.

Philemon 22 seems merely to be an expression of the hope of release from prison, without giving any indication as to when. If this is read as an expression of imminent release, then the relative dating of Ephesians-Colossians-Philemon in relation to Philippians may need some revision. But other considerations certainly suggest that Philippians is the last of the so-called prison epistles: (1) Phm 22 may be a somewhat exaggerated statement (intended to reflect Paul's positive attitude more than the reality of imminence), for if Paul was in Rome, it would take him several weeks to travel to Asia Minor; (2) Epaphras is mentioned in Phm 23, as someone known to Philemon (cf. also Col 4:12), without any mention of his illness (cf. Phil 2:25ff.)—even though news of his illness was known to Christians outside of Rome (ibid.); (3) Only Timothy is with Paul when he wrote Philippians (Phil 2:19-21), while Luke, Demas, Aristarchus, Mark, and Epaphras are with him when he wrote Colossians-Ephesians-Philemon (cf. Col 4:10-14; Phm 23-24). Whatever else this indicates, it is evident that Philippians cannot be dated at the same time as the other three epistles; (4) the final proof is that Paul *sends* Epaphroditus to the Philippians (Phil 2:25-30) with the epistle, while he is still with Paul when the apostle wrote the other three letters. All of this evidence points to Philippians being written not only at a different time than the other three prison epistles, but at a *later* time. Hence, a date of c. 60 CE is most appropriate for Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.

**<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>**

##### 5. Jason Dulle [A Comparison of Colossians and Ephesians](#)

The epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians are very similar in content. At the same time, however, there are many differences between the two. This paper will focus on these parallels and distinguishing marks on both a macro and micro-level.

The two epistles seem to have been written and delivered at the same time to the same general area and by the same individual. Paul describes himself as being in prison in both epistles (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Col 4:3). Ephesus and Colossae

were fairly close in proximity, which would make it easy for both of them to be delivered on the same trip. Both epistles designate Tychicus as the bearer of the epistle to the designated churches, who would 'tell of Paul's state of affairs upon arrival' (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7). If Paul's imprisonment is the one referred to in Acts 28, then Tychicus would have delivered the epistles from Rome. If Paul did write these letters at the same time, it might explain why they are so similar in content.

## 6. Dr. Grant Richison Campus Crusades

### **Author:**

The Apostle Paul.

### **Date of Writing:**

About A.D. 61 while imprisoned in Rome.

### **Theme:**

Christ as the head of the universal church.

### **Reasons for Writing:**

During Paul's absence from the Lychnus Valley an insidious error crept into the Colossian Church. Epaphras went to Rome to report the inroads of this heresy (Colossians 1:7-8). The heresy was a combination of Judaism and incipient gnosticism (anything material was sinful).

These errors led to two practical problems:

1. Asceticism (2:21-23) -- flee from the world
2. License (3:5-17) -- indifferent to the world

Paul had two primary purposes in writing this letter:

First, to set forth Christ as pre-eminent (1:18;2:9). This is God's answer to error. Jesus is no angelic being from God; he possesses a real body (cf. 1:16-17). In that body is all the fullness of the Godhead. Angels are subject to him. There is no need for any other

mediation than Christ between God and man (1:19-20).

Secondly, to warn against the false philosophies of tradition, legalism, mysticism and asceticism (2:18-23).

## 7. Abide in Christ

**AUTHOR:** The author claims to be Paul the apostle (1:1). There is no real doubt to this conclusion. It has every mark of Paul's style and "there is no evidence that anyone else took Paul's name to palm off this striking and vigorous polemic."

**DATE:** This letter was "sent at the same time with the Epistle to Philemon and the one to the Ephesians since Tychicus the bearer of the letter to Ephesus (Eph. 6:21f), and the one to Colossae (Col. 4:7f) was a companion of Onesimus (Col. 4:9) the bearer of that to Philemon (10-12). If Paul is a prisoner (Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:20; Philemon 9) in Rome, as most scholars hold, and not in Ephesus. . . the probable date would be A. D. 63. I still believe that Paul is in Rome when he sends out these epistles. If so, the time would be after the arrival in Rome from Jerusalem as told in Acts 28 and before the burning of Rome by Nero in A. D. 64. If Philippians was already sent, A. D. 63 marks the last probable year for the writing of this group of letters."

**OCCASION:** The letter was written upon the arrival of Epaphras in Rome from Colossae with news of the state of the church there (1:7-9; 4:12f). One very disquieting feature of the new teaching there "was a strong inclination on the part of the Christians to accept an attractive line of teaching which (although they did not suspect it) was calculated to subvert the pure gospel which they had believed and bring them into spiritual bondage."

"Grievous wolves" have descended upon the churches in the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea) and are leading many of the believers astray. These false teachers and deceivers were later called Gnostics. The culture of Paul's day was full of the teachings of

the mystery cults which professed new thought with a world view that "sought to explain everything on the assumption that matter was essentially evil and that the good God could only touch evil matter by means of a series of aeons or emanations so far removed from him as to prevent contamination by God and yet with enough power to create evil matter." These Gnostics (*hoi gnostikoi*, the knowing ones) with their philosophic speculations applied their theory of the universe to the Person of Christ. Many today are content to deny sin, disease, death and evil in spite of the evidence to the contrary. The issue was so grave that Epaphras journeyed all the way to Rome to seek Paul's wisdom and help

<http://www.abideinchrist.com/messages/colintro.html>

8. J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.  
1998

**Author and Title:**

Because of the greetings in 1:2, Colossians became known as *Pros Kolossaeis*, "To the Colossians." As with the other epistles of Paul surveyed thus far, both the external and internal evidence strongly support Paul's authorship. But the authorship of this epistle has been doubted by some on the grounds of the vocabulary and the nature of the heresy refuted in this epistle. *Expositor's Bible Commentary* has an excellent summary of the key issues involving the authorship and date of Colossians.

That Colossians is a genuine letter of Paul is not usually disputed. In the early church, all who speak on the subject of authorship ascribe it to Paul. In the 19th century, however, some thought that the heresy refuted in ch. 2 was second-century Gnosticism. But a careful analysis of ch. 2 shows that the heresy there referred to is noticeably less developed than the Gnosticism of leading Gnostic teachers of the second and third centuries. Also, the seeds of what later became the full-blown Gnosticism of the second century were present

in the first century and already making inroads into the churches. Consequently, it is not necessary to date Colossians in the second century at a time too late for Paul to have written the letter.

Instead, it is to be dated during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, where he spent at least two years under house arrest (see Ac 28:16-31).<sup>58</sup>

### **Date: A.D. 61**

Paul wrote all four prison epistles during his first Roman imprisonment. This means he wrote it in A.D. 60-61 (see the discussion on the date of Ephesians and Philippians).

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### **Audience**

1. New Advent Catholic <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/0413b.htm>

Three cities are mentioned in Colossians, Colossæ (i, 2), Laodicea, and Hierapolis (iv, 13.) These were situated about 120 miles east from Ephesus in Phrygia, in Western Asia Minor, Colossæ and Laodicea being on the banks of the Lycus, a tributary of the Mæander. All three were within two or three hours' walk from one another. Sir William Ramsay has shown that these towns lay altogether outside the routes followed by St. Paul in his missionary journeys; and it is inferred from Coloss., i, 4, 6, 7, 8 and ii, 1, that they were never visited by the Apostle himself. The great majority of the Colossian Christians appear to have been Gentile converts of Greek and Phrygian extraction (i, 26, 27; ii, 13), though it is probable that there was a small proportion of Jews living amongst them, as it is known that there were many scattered over the surrounding districts (Josephus, Ant., XII, iii, 4, and Lightfoot).

2. Intervarsity Press

Paul's glad greeting of his readers as those who possess the

prospect of being transformed in Christ also intends to draw them together into a community for Christian witness. Wright stresses the importance of the parallelism between "in Christ" and "in Colosse" (unfortunately obscured in the NIV translation, at Colosse): those who are faithful believers in Christ are also responsible citizens in Colosse, and the two worlds must never be separated. Their public witness to Christ in the town of Colosse must always reflect their participation with him in the power of God's salvation (1986:47). In drawing this parallelism, Paul has the Colossian conflict in mind, for this congregation of saints is struggling to connect their life in Christ with their life in Colosse. In fact, their religious observance tends toward moral asceticism and spiritual mysticism, which actually disconnect them from the world around them. Added to these tendencies, their interest in philosophical speculation has given rise to a variety of Christian devotion that is much too private and esoteric, and largely irrelevant to unbelievers in Colosse.

Because Paul is writing to a congregation that specializes in theological abstraction, his advice often takes on a similar cast. Colossians is difficult to preach and teach because it is the ideas of faith that are at stake, not the actions of faith. Yet we will find that Paul always holds the two together. All that he writes envisages the parallelism "in Christ" and "in Colosse," which is the focal point of Christian life: those in Christ who are made holy and faithful by divine grace must live "in Colosse" as public agents of divine grace.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary?language=english&version=niv-ibs&book=col&chapter=1>

### 3. David Malick

**AN INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup> TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS**  
**I. AUTHOR: THE APOSTLE PAUL<sup>2</sup>**  
**A. External Evidence:**  
 Paul is strongly affirmed to be the author of Colossians 1. Colossians was undisputedly Pauline until the nineteenth century a. The Later Church Fathers accepted it<sup>3</sup>  
 b. It was not disputed in the later decades: 1) It was probably used as early Justin<sup>4</sup> 2) It was included in Marcion's canonical list (c. 140) and in the Muratorian canon (c. 170) 2. This letter is included in the Chester Beatty papyri (P46)<sup>5</sup>  
**B. Internal Evidence:**<sup>6</sup>

Even though there are concerns by modern, critical scholars about Pauline authorship, the evidence for Pauline authorship is not overturned: 1. The primary objections to Pauline authorship are the divergence in literary style, vocabulary, and syntax from Paul's other writings.<sup>7</sup> Also it was believed that Paul was combating the heresy of second-century Gnosticism. But literary differences can be explained by appealing to the new content of the letter, the heresy which he is addressing, and Paul's adaptation of traditional material. Also, there is no need to understand the heresy as a second-century Gnosticism (see below) 2. There are close links between Colossians and Philemon (the latter of which is generally unquestioned as a genuine work of Paul): a. Both include Paul and Timothy's name in the opening greeting (Col. 1:1; Phm. 1) b. Both include greetings from those with Paul at this time, namely, Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (Col. 4:10-14; Phm. 23,24) c. Archippus is called a "fellow soldier" in Philemon 2 and directed to fulfill his ministry in Colossians 4:17 d. Onesimus, concerning whom Philemon is written, is mentioned in Colossians 4:9 as being sent with Tychicus and as bring "one of you" 3. Paul is specifically identified in the letter to the Colossians: a. The mention of Timothy along with Paul in the prescript is customary in the undisputed letters of Paul<sup>8</sup> b. The author follows the Pauline practice of conveying his personal greetings from his fellow workers to the congregation by means of a dispatched message (4:8) c. The author follows the Pauline practice of closing the letter with his personal signature, as well as, making mention of his own situation as prisoner<sup>9</sup> d. Paul is identified in the body of the letter (1:23ff) e. Paul ties his apostleship to the same tradition of Jesus Christ (1:23ff; 2:6) f. The expression, "I, Paul" is typical in the Pauline corpus to render his persona<sup>10</sup>

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/col/col-intr.htm>

#### 4. Mark Copeland

**AUTHOR:** The apostle Paul, joined in his salutation by Timothy (1:1), and signed by Paul himself at the end of the letter (4:18). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Paul include: Eusebius (300 A.D.), Origen (250 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.),

Irenaeus (200 A.D.), and the Muratorian Fragment (180 A.D.).

[http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec\\_outlines/colo/colo\\_00.htm](http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/colo/colo_00.htm)

**TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING:** Colossians is one of Paul's four "prison epistles" (4:18; cf. Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). The general consensus is that these epistles were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome (cf. Ac 28:16,30-31). If such is truly the case, then Paul wrote Colossians around 61-63 A.D. from Rome. The indication is that the epistles to the Colossians, Philemon and the Ephesians were carried to their destination by Tychicus and Onesimus (cf. 4:7-9; Phile 10-12; Ep 6:21-22).

[http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec\\_outlines/colo/colo\\_00.htm](http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/colo/colo_00.htm)

5. To whom was the Letter to the Colossians written?

2.1. What do Col 1:2 and Col 4:16 indicate about the intended readers of the Letter to the Colossians?

These passages indicate Paul wrote the Letter to the Colossians to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae and intended that the letter be read by the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis, nearby cities.

2.2. Colossae was a Phrygian city in the Roman province of Asia. It was situated in the Lycus River valley, and populated by Phrygians, Greeks and even dispersed Jews (Josephus says that Antiochus the Great moved 2, 000 Jewish families from Babylonia and Mesopotamia into the regions of Lydia and Phrygia [Ant. 12.147-53]). From what Paul says in Col 2:1 what do you conclude about Paul's relationship with this church (or lack thereof)?

It appears that Paul had never been to Colossae at the time of writing, so that he knew the members of the church only indirectly.

2.3. From Col 1:7; 4:12-13, what do you conclude about the beginning of the churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis?

The church was actually founded by Epaphrus, as were the churches in Hierapolis and Laodecia (nearby cities); Col 1:7 implies that Epaphrus was commissioned by Paul to preach there.

2.4. What do Col 1:8; 4:12 indicate about Epaphrus' whereabouts at the time of the composition of the letter? Who was to carry the letter to the Colossians, according to Col 4:7?

These passages indicate that Epaphrus was with Paul; Tychicus was to carry the letter.

2.5. According to Philemon 23, why is Epaphrus with Paul, and not in Colossae or somewhere else? (This assumes, correctly, as we shall see, that Paul writes his Letter to the Colossians and his Letter to Philemon during the same period of time.)

In Philemon 23, Paul describes Epaphras as his "fellow prisoner," implying that he also is in prison. How and why Epaphras ended up incarcerated is not clear.

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/NTIntro/Col.htm>

## 5. Daniel Wallace

Paul addressed this epistle to the church at Colossae, a church which was one hundred miles inland from Ephesus, in the heart of the Lycus Valley. The apostle had never visited the church (1:4; 2:1). Most likely, the church was founded by Epaphras (cf. 1:7; 4:12-13) who was, in turn, converted by Paul when Paul was at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10).

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

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## **Purpose**

1. Colossians was written as a warning against certain false

teachers, about whom St. Paul had probably heard from Epaphras, his "fellow-prisoner" and the founder of the Church of the Colossians. The most diverse opinions have been held regarding these seducers. They were called philosophers by Tertullian, Epicureans by St. Clement of Alexandria, Jews by Eichhorn, heathen followers of Pythagoras by Grotius. They have also been called Chaldean magicians, Judaizing Christians, Essenes, Ebionites, Cabbalists, Gnostics, or varying combinations of all these (see Jacquier, Histoire, I, 316; Cornely, Introduction, III, 514).

Here, philosophy in general is not condemned, but only the philosophy of those false teachers (Hort, Jud. Chr., 118). This was not "according to Christ", but according to the "tradition of men", and was in keeping only with the very alphabet of worldly speculation (kata ta stoicheia tou kosmou -- see Gal, iv, 3). Josephus and Philo apply the word "philosophy" to Jewish teaching, and there can be no doubt that it was applied so in Coloss., ii; some of its details are given in 16-23: (1) The false teachers wished to introduce the observance of Sabbaths, new moons, and other such days. (2) They forbade the eating and drinking and even the very tasting and touching of certain things. (3) Under the false pretence of humility they inculcated the worship (threskeia) of angels, whom they regarded as equal or superior to Christ. The best modern commentators, Catholic and non-Catholic agree with St. Jerome that all these errors were of Jewish origin. The Essenes held the most exaggerated ideas on Sabbath observance and external purism, and they appear to have employed the names of the angels for magical purposes (Bel. Jud. II, vii, 2-13, Lightfoot, Col. and Dissertations). Many scholars are of opinion that the "elements of this world" (stoicheia tou kosmou) mean elemental spirits; as, at that time, many Jews held that all material things had special angels. In the Book of Henoch and the Book of Jubilees we read of angels of the stars, seasons months, days of the year, heat, cold, frost, hail, winds, clouds etc. Abbott (Eph. and Coloss., p. 248) says that "the term properly used of the elements ruled by these spirits might readily be applied to the spirits themselves, especially as there was no other convenient term".

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/0413b.htm>

## 2. David Malick

V. PURPOSES FOR COLOSSIANS: A. To provide advice about the dangerous heresy which had arisen in Colossae and was threatening the security of the church in all of the Lycus valley (cf. 4:16) B. To answer the heretical issues by asserting the absolute, direct, and continuing supremacy of Christ over all of creation (1:15--3:4) C. To encourage his readers to live life (personally, within the church, in the home, and in their relationships) in view of Christ as supreme over all of creation (3:5--4:6) D. To encourage the churches in the Lycus valley to maintain their orderly Christian lives as well as their stability in the faith in the face of the threat of the false teachers 2:2-530

III. THE COLOSSIAN HERESY<sup>21</sup> A. The Nature of the Heresy--Explicit and Implicit Indications about the Colossian Problem:<sup>22</sup> 1. Explicit Teaching of the Opponents: a. It emphasized abstinence from certain foods and some types of drink 2:16,22 b. It required the observance of Jewish feasts and sabbaths at different intervals 2:16 c. It stressed "self-abasement" and visions 2:18,23 d. It involved angelic worship--either as the object of worship or as the subject of worship (i.e., doing worship) 2:18 e. It taught the need for some kind of worship which was human in origin, a "self-made religion-worship 2:23 f. It praised the value of treating the body severely 2:23<sup>23</sup> g. It was depicted by Paul as "Philosophy and empty deceit" espousing the "elementary principles of the world" (2:8) 2. Implicit References in the Book: a. It demoted Christ from his supreme place 1:13- 20; 2:9ff b. It seems to have as a catchword the term/phrase "fullness" [of deity] 1:19; 2:9 c. It claimed to promote higher spirituality. Paul counters with the argument that they are spiritually complete in Christ (2:10) and warns that the rules and regulations of this religious system only promote the indulgence of the flesh 2:23 d. It probably required circumcision of adherents 2:11; cf. 3:11 e. It may have misconstrued the death-burial- resurrection motif 2:12,13,20; 3:1-5 f. It cast doubt on the completeness of forgiveness in Christ 1:14; 2:13-14; 3:13 B. Possible Sources of the Heresy:<sup>24</sup> 1. Essenism: a. B. Lightfoot was the major proponent of this position affirming many parallels between the Heresy and the asceticism of this Jewish group<sup>25</sup> b. Even

though there are some parallels, there is no evidence that they lived in the western portions of Asia Minor c. While this explains the emphasis on higher knowledge and special revelation, it fails to explain the mystical experiences which are apparent in the epistle 2. Greek Pagan Cults: a. There are many theories along this line of thinking:

Neopythagoreanism, mystery religions, pre-Christian Gnosticism, the Iranian Redemption myth, the initiation into the Isis mysteries b. This is an attempt to emphasize the Hellenism on the church at the time c. While some of these "cults" actually fight against one another, there is no doubt that the Heresy in Colossae was influenced by the Hellenism of their day; it is difficult to be even more specific 3.

Gnosticism: a. Gnosticism was a "religious movement that proclaimed a mystical esotericism for the elect based on illumination and the acquisition of a higher knowledge of things heavenly and divine"<sup>26</sup> b. However, there was not a pre-Christian Gnosticism and it is doubtful that the biblical writers were fighting a known foe called Gnosticism c. There may well have be roots of a Christian Gnosticism (incipient Gnosticism) which later became the Gnosticism of the second and third centuries AD 4. Syncretistic Religion: a. The heresy contains a combination of parts of many of the above views wherein Jews and Gentiles are attempting to advance beyond apostolic Christianity b. This view is very possible and perhaps even diplomatic 5. Jewish Mysticism--the Merkabah

Mysticism<sup>27</sup> a. The merkabah mysticism consisted of "religious exercises designed to facilitate entry into the vision of the heavenly chariot (hb\*K\*r+m#) with God visibly enthroned above it--the vision granted to Ezekiel when he was called to his prophetic ministry (Ezek. 1:15- 28)"<sup>28</sup> b. In order to obtain such a vision it was necessary to observe: 1) The Mosaic Law concerning purification 2) A period of asceticism of 12 to 40 days 3) The mediatorial role of angels when the heavenly ascent was attempted c. There are possible parallels to this concept in rabbinic experience, Paul's experience (2 Cor. 12), other Jewish writings like 1 Enoch 14:8-23, Daniel 7:9-10, and later Gnostocism<sup>29</sup> 6.

Conclusion: a. A definitive conclusion about the source of the heresy is not possible since so many possibilities exist b. It is very possible, however, that the view of Jewish mysticism is more closely tied to the heresy in view of the Jewish elements which are certainly involved c. Perhaps this Jewish mysticism became a later expression of Gnosticism .

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/col/col-intr.htm>

### 3. Mark Copeland

**PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:** Paul had received a report of the situation at Colosse by way of Epaphras (1:7-8). This report was for the most part favorable (2:5). But the subject matter in the epistle strongly suggests that the church was facing a two-fold danger: \* The danger of relapse into paganism with its gross immorality (cf. 1:21-23; 2:6; 3:5-11) \* The danger of accepting what has been come to known as "The Colossian heresy". This heresy was a syncretism involving four elements of both pagan and Jewish origin: \* Philosophies of men - which denied the all sufficiency and pre-eminence of Christ (2:8) \* Judaistic ceremonialism - which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (2:11,16-17) \* Angel worship - which detracted from the uniqueness of Christ (2:18) \* Asceticism - which called for harsh treatment of the body as the means to control its lusts (2:20-23) To guard against these dangers, Paul writes to: Warn the Colossians against relapse (1:21-23) Warn them against the "solution" being urged upon them by those denying the all-sufficiency of Christ (2:8-23) Direct their attention to the "Beloved Son", the "All-Sufficient and Pre-Eminent Savior" (1:13-18; 2:8-10)

[http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec\\_outlines/colo/colo\\_00.htm](http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/colo/colo_00.htm)

4. **PURPOSE:** The main purpose for writing this letter was to correct some wrong ideas about Christ that were being taught in the towns of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (4:13). The teachers of these false doctrines were usually called "Gnostics." The word "gnostic" comes from a Greek word which means "to have a special knowledge of God."

[http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk\\_nt/coloss.htm](http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk_nt/coloss.htm)

### 5. Daniel Wallace

Assuming that Epaphras and Epaphroditus are one and the

same,<sup>17</sup> we can begin to get a picture as to the occasion. In our introduction to Philippians, we suggested the following reconstruction.

(1) When Paul appealed to Caesar in the summer of 58 CE (after having been imprisoned in Caesarea for over two years), he sailed for Rome for trial (Acts 25:10-12; 27:1). News of his appeal would certainly have spread to his churches. The Philippians would have wanted a share in his expenses (Phil 4:10).

(2) They dispatched Epaphroditus to Rome with their gift (Phil 4:18). But Epaphroditus came with more than money: he also had questions for the apostle about the church's opponents, and the members' own poverty (cf. Phil 3:2, 18-19; 4:6, 19).

Now, as we intersect these date with Colossians a fuller picture emerges:

(3) Epaphroditus apparently did not go directly to Rome, but went back to Colossae, his home church.<sup>18</sup> He would have wanted to check on this church which he founded, and if there were any issues at stake, he would seek out Paul for advice. When he arrived at Colossae he discovered that a new heresy had arisen. Consequently, he went *post haste* to Rome.

(4) Once he arrived in Rome, he reported to Paul the news of the Colossian heresy and of the Philippians' desire to have Timothy come back to them.

(5) At about the same time Onesimus arrived, seeking refuge.<sup>19</sup>

(6) Paul could not spare Timothy, but was apparently able to dispatch other assistants as needed.<sup>20</sup>

(7) The apostle could send Tychicus to Asia Minor, with letters to Philemon (about Onesimus), the Colossians, and the circular letter (known as "Ephesians") which he had been preparing for some time.

(8) Hence, because of the long and exhausting journey, Paul could not send Epaphroditus back to Philippi until he had rested up. Further, the situation in Philippi, though important to address, was not as urgent as the situation in Colossae.<sup>21</sup>

(9) After Paul dispatched Tychicus, and after his other assistants had been dispatched or had abandoned him for whatever reasons (cf. Phil 2:19ff.), Paul intended to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians. Unfortunately, he became ill—even to the point of death.<sup>22</sup> Paul could not send him until he was well, and this presumably took several months (for the Philippians knew of his sickness).

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

6. Lewis R. Donelson, review of *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians* by Walter T. Wilson (Society of Biblical Literature):

The recent trend in scholarship on Colossians has been to emphasize the Jewish character of both the text and its context. Walter T. Wilson, while acknowledging the Jewish context of much of Colossians, moves against this trend by reading Colossians through the lens of Hellenistic philosophical paraenesis. In fact, Wilson's main thesis is that Colossians participates in specific Hellenistic conventions of moral education and philosophical paraenesis in both its form and content. And he makes a good case.

Wilson argues, furthermore, that understanding these paraenetic conventions explains many of the curious rhetorical strategies of the letter. For example, this kind of paraenesis is directed primarily to the novice whose conversion needs further maintenance. Thus, the focus on conversion, baptism, and remembrance in Colossians is not a unique Christian form of argument but is, on the contrary, typical of philosophical paraenesis. Doctrinal material in paraenesis is not typically presented by way of full systematic articulation but by way of reminders of what has been learned earlier. It evokes a larger system that remains unstated. Thus, the often-noted gaps in the theological logic of Colossians denote not true gaps in the system but adherence to the

conventions of philosophical paraenesis. Philosophical paraenesis wants to reinforce the worldview of the new school; it wants to contradict any contrary worldview; and it wants the novice to actualize this new worldview in behavior. Thus, all philosophical paraenesis will be animated by affirmation, correction, and exhortation. Wilson notes how beautifully Colossians fits this pattern. He even outlines the literary structure of Colossians in these three categories: 1:3-2:7 is paraenetic affirmation, 2:8-23 is paraenetic correction, and 3:1-4:6 is paraenetic exhortation.

<http://www.bookreviews.org/Reviews/9004109374.html>

## 7. Abide in Christ

**PURPOSE OF WRITING:** Paul wrote to counter the Gnostic attack on the Person of Christ. The Docetic (*dokeo*, to seem) held that Jesus did not have a real human body, but only a phantom body. He was an aeon and had no real humanity. The Cerinthian Gnostics (followers of Cerinthus) "admitted the humanity of the man Jesus, but claimed that the Christ was an aeon that came on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove and left him on the Cross so that only the man Jesus died."

Paul confronted both false teachings with "his full-length portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Son of Man (both deity and humanity) in opposition to both types of Gnostics." Cf. Phil. 2:5-11.

Colossians is just as relevant today when men try to rob Jesus Christ of his death as when Paul wrote it. It speaks to the New Age Movements, the legalists, as well as the "licentious element that let down all the bars for the flesh while the spirit communed with God."

## 8. J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.

### **Theme and Purpose:**

The theme is the fruitful and effective power of the gospel message which heralds the supremacy, headship, and the utter

sufficiency of Christ to the church which is His body. In this little epistle, we see Paul's "full-length portrait of Christ."<sup>59</sup> Colossians demonstrates that because of all that Jesus Christ is in His person and has accomplished in His work, He, as the object of the believer's faith, is all we need for in Him we are complete (2:10). In scope, Colossians presents the all supremacy, all sufficiency, uniqueness, and the fullness of the person and work of Jesus Christ as the God-man Savior, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and the total solution for man's needs both for time and eternity. It is a cosmic book, presenting the cosmic Christ: the **Creator/Sustainer** and **Redeemer/Reconciler** of man and all the universe.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/survey/nt-04.htm#TopOfPage>

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### **Themes and Content**

1. Paul explains and demonstrates the preeminence of Christ in creation, redemption, and the relationships of life in this letter to the Colossians. Christians are complete in Christ. Paul wrote this letter around A.D 60-61. This book is perhaps one of the most Christ centered books in the Bible. This book centers around the Head of the Church which is Jesus Christ. The two major themes in this book are the supremacy of Christ in Chapters one and two and the submission to Christ in Chapters three and four.

<http://colossians.jesusanswers.com/>

2. Mark Copeland

**THEME OF THE EPISTLE:** With the focus on Jesus Christ as the answer to the "Colossian heresy", the theme of this letter is clearly: **CHRIST - THE FULNESS OF GOD, AND THE PRE-EMINENT, ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOR KEY VERSES:** Colossians 2:9-10 "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."

[http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec\\_outlines/colo/colo\\_00.htm](http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/colo/colo_00.htm)

3. **THEME:** The Pre-eminence of Christ. #12; **RELEVANCE:** The message of this book is greatly needed today. In a time when Christ is scorned and his teaching rejected, we need to hold forth the grand truth of this inspired letter penned by the apostle Paul. It was written when false teachers (the Gnostics) and Judiazers were attacking the gospel, and Christians themselves were not living up to principles it set forth.

[http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk\\_nt/coloss.htm](http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk_nt/coloss.htm)

#### 4. Bible Notes

**COLOSSIANS :** This book is a letter from Paul and Timothy to Christians in the city of Colosse -- to the ones that will be "in the kingdom of light." Paul said that in their prayers (i.e., the apostles -- implying for these Christians to use this way also) they begin by thanking "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Implying that Christ existed before God made anything at all (was the "firstborn over all creation"), Paul continued, "He is the Head of the Body, the Church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy." (Colossians 1:18) Further, "...through Him to reconcile (i.e., to settle or resolve) to Himself all things...by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross..."(Colossians 1:20)

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Several of Paul's other points include:

1. "...the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you (i.e., in your minds and hearts), the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)
2. "and you have been given fullness in Christ , who is the head over every power and authority." (Colossians 2:10)
3. "...buried with Him (i.e., Christ) in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the Power of God who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12)
4. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things...When Christ appears, then you also will

appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:2-4)

5. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach...and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude (i.e., thankfulness) in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)

Paul also instructed them to forgive others, let love be your guide; husbands and wives should be loving; children, obeying; parents, minimizing scolding children; slaves, obeying masters; masters, being just and fair to slaves.

<http://www.biblenotes.net/colossians.html>

## 5. Daniel Wallace

The letter's theme, seen in the light of the rising heresy, is *the sufficiency of Christ*.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

The apostle Paul, with Timothy, begins the letter with a greeting to the saints at Colossae (1:1-2).

The body of the letter begins at 1:3.<sup>27</sup> Paul begins on a positive note in which he outlines the sufficiency of Christ (1:3-2:7). He follows this with a negative statement in which he argues against the views of the heretics at Colossae, who especially imbibe in christological heresy (2:3-3:4). The body is concluded with a call to live the Christian life in light of Christ's sufficiency (3:5-4:6).

The first major section, on the positive presentation of the sufficiency of Christ, involves four parts. (1) Paul's thanksgiving for the Colossians because of their positive response to the gospel (1:3-8), coupled with a prayer for them to grow in knowledge and productivity (1:9-14). This prayer deals, though very subtly, with the heart of the epistle: the heretics claim to have a superior knowledge, yet their very philosophy chokes out any productivity for God (cf. 2:20-23). (2) Without so much as an "Amen" to the prayer, Paul continues with a recital of an early Christian hymn in which

Christ is magnified as Deity in the flesh, the Creator incarnate (1:15-20). (3) The hymn, which ends with a note on Christ as reconciler of “all things,” serves as a bridge to Paul’s next theme: Christ has reconciled the Colossians to God—a ministry of reconciliation which Paul has proclaimed (1:21-23). (4) Finally, Paul addresses his own ministry in greater detail: (a) he has been commissioned with proclaiming “the mystery” (again, borrowing terms of his opponents)—“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27)—so that “we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (1:24-29); (b) he is presently concerned about the believers in the Lycus Valley, especially that they might not be “deceived by fine-sounding arguments” (2:4) which deny the sufficiency of Christ (2:1-7).

After having established both the sufficiency of Christ and Paul’s commission and concern, he now must turn, in this major section, to the heart of the matter: Heretics in Colossae have denied the sufficiency of Christ and this heresy has already affected the believers in the church (2:8–3:4). In essence, Paul’s argument is not to make an *exclusively* frontal attack, but to intertwine this attack with a subtle table-turning technique. That is, he uses the language of the heretics to affirm his gospel, showing that their view is insufficient, and that Christ is sufficient. Paul develops three primary points: (1) He restates the sufficiency of Christ (2:8-15)—in the light of the heretics’ wrong views (2:8), addressing three issues: (a) as the theanthropic person (“in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” [2:9]), he has ultimate authority (2:9-10); (b) the power which raised Christ from the dead is available to believers (2:11-12); and (c) the death of Christ is not defeat, but triumph—over our heart (2:13), over the law (2:14), and over “powers and authorities” (2:15).

He now turns to the influence that the heretics have had on the Colossians (2:16–3:4). This can be viewed in two ways (hence, our second and third points). (2) The heretics’ combination of Jewish legalism and mysticism (2:16-19) is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ, for such a heretic “has lost connection with the Head” (2:19). (3) Since believers have died (2:20-23) and risen with Christ (3:1-4), their return to human regulations (2:20-23) and lack of real appreciation for the true mystery, Christ himself (3:1-4), are a contradiction of their corporate life in Christ.

In the third and last major section, Paul addresses paraenetic concerns (3:5–4:6). But these are not to be disconnected with the preceding discussion in any way. Rather, Paul's concern now is to show that Christ is sufficient not only for salvation, but also for sanctification. This third section, in effect, becomes a preemptive handling of the heretics' charges concerning the pragmatics of Paul's gospel. For although these heretics emphasized the inadequacy of Christ coupled with the adequacy of knowledge, they also put a premium on living a holy life (cf. 2:20-23, etc.). This syncretistic Jewish-Greek heresy needed response then at both levels: philosophically and pragmatically.

Paul outlines three areas in which Christ's sufficiency does enable and should motivate believers to grow in grace. Although Paul packages this entire section with imperatives, beneath the surface is the fact of Christ's sufficiency for sanctification (or else the commands would be irrelevant). (1) His sufficiency enables believers to grow individually—that is, in relation to the flesh (3:5-17). This is because believers have already put off the old man (3:5-11; cf. 3:9) and have put on the new man (3:12-17; cf. 3:10). Thus, their battle against sin is rooted in their changed nature—a direct result of the sufficiency of Christ applied. (2) Christ's sufficiency enables believers to act responsibly in the extended home (3:18–4:1). Wives should submit to their husbands (3:18) and husbands should love their wives (3:19); children should obey their parents (3:20) and fathers must not embitter their children (3:21); slaves should obey their masters (3:22-25) and masters should take care of their slaves properly (4:1). (3) Christ's sufficiency enables believers to focus on the needs of others (4:2-6). Thus, they are required to be devoted to prayer for Paul and his companions—especially that they might gain opportunity in their evangelistic efforts (4:2-4); and believers should themselves make the most of their opportunities in sharing their faith (4:5-6).

The epistle closes with final greetings in which the letter-bearer, Tychicus, is commended (4:7-9), and Paul's co-laborers (4:10-14) and Paul himself (4:15-18) send their greetings.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

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## **Comparison between Ephesians and Colossians**

### 1. David Malick

EPHESIANS COLOSSIANS Emphasizes the Body (Church)  
Emphasizes the Head (Christ) The spirit is pastoral The spirit  
is polemical The emphasis is on oneness in The emphasis is  
on Christ completeness in Christ.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/col/col-intr.htm>

### 2. John Nelson Darby

If the Epistle to the Ephesians delineates the privileges of the body, that to the Colossians reveals the fullness that is in the head, and our completeness in Him. Thus in that to the Ephesians the church is the fullness of Him who filleth all in all; in that to the Colossians, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, and we are complete in Him. There is another difference however, which it is important to remark. In the Epistle to the Colossians we do not- save in the expression, "love in the Spirit "- find any mention of the Holy Ghost. He is fully brought forward in the Ephesians. But on the other hand, we have Christ as our life far more fully developed, of equal importance in its place. In Ephesians we have more largely the contrast of heathenism with christian privilege and state. The formation of the soul in living likeness to Christ is largely developed in Colossians. It is more, in the well-known expressions, Christ in us than we in Christ, though these cannot be separated. A further important difference is that in Ephesians the unity of Jew and Gentile in one body holds a large place. In Colossians the Gentiles only are in view, though in connection with the doctrine of the body. These differences well noted, we may say that the two epistles have a great resemblance in their general character.

<http://www.ccel.org/d/darby/synopsis/Colossians.html>

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## Authenticity

Daniel B. Wallace (<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>) provides the following evidence for and against Pauline authorship, concluding no good reason exists to doubt the authenticity of Paul's authorship. He divides his discussion into two broad categories: external and internal evidence. For external evidences, he provides the following:

Ignatius has several reminiscences from Colossians, though no explicit quotations. Polycarp and Barnabas also seem to allude to it. Justin Martyr's allusions are stronger still, and Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen explicitly call it Paul's letter. Both Marcion's canon and the Muratorian canon list it, and it is found in P<sup>46</sup>, the earliest MS containing any of the *corpus Paulinum*. Normally dated at c. 200 CE, this papyrus has been recently reassessed: Young Kyu Kim gives it a date of sometime before the reign of Domitian (70s CE).<sup>1</sup> Although the external evidence for the authenticity of Colossians is not as good as for 1 Corinthians or Galatians, it is nevertheless quite strong. "In fact, the external testimony for it is so ancient and consistent as to obviate any doubts regarding its authenticity."

For internal evidence, he uses two categories to argue both against and for Paul's authorship: Linguistic and Literary, and Theological. Arguments against Paul's being the author of Colossians is its different style (labored with subsidiary clauses, and different genitive, preposition, and participle styles). Different vocabulary is used, for example, justification by faith. Wallace notes that Mayerhoff argued that Colossians depended on Ephesians but that most today argue the reverse.

Arguments for Paul's authorship include the possibility of using Ephesians in draft form as the basis for Colossians. This suggests the authenticity of both books:

Concerning the hypothesis of *literary dependence* on Ephesians—a view which most would not adopt today—either Colossians is dependent on Ephesians or Ephesians is dependent on Colossians. Regardless of which came first, as we pointed out in our introduction to Ephesians, such literary

dependence does not at all argue against authenticity (especially since it is so free most of the time, without much exact agreement).

The second category is theological. An argument against Paul's authorship is that Colossians--about wisdom, philosophy, fullness, perfection, and incarnation of the anthropic person--suggest the writers opposes gnosticism:

Most scholars today would regard the theological argument (originally articulated by Baur) as bearing the real force in the argument against authenticity. In our discussion of the heresy at Colossae we will see that the *most* that can be said about the heresy is that it is incipient gnosticism. That is to say, what Paul is opposing is not the full-blown gnosticism of the second century.

Another argument against Paul's authorship is the relationship to Ephesians issue: if Ephesians is genuine, Colossians must be genuine. In rejecting one or the other, Wallace says scholars tend to reject Ephesians:

*if Colossians were not genuine, then we would have the completely unparalleled situation of a pseudepigraphist using another pseudepigraphist's work—which he himself believed was genuine—in order to pass off his work as genuine.*<sup>10</sup> In that case, Colossians must have been regarded as genuine well before 90 CE.

Yet another reason for authenticity is the relation of Colossians to Philemon; Wallace quotes Guthrie:

1. Both contain Timothy's name with Paul's in the opening greeting (Col 1:1; Phm 1).
2. Greetings are sent in both letters from Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke and Demas, who are all clearly with Paul at the time (Col 4:10-14; Phm 23-24).
3. In Phm 2 Archippus is called a 'fellow-soldier,' and in Col 4:17 he is directed to fulfill his ministry.
4. Onesimus, the slave concerning whom the letter to Philemon is written, is mentioned in Col 4:9 as being sent

with Tychicus and is described as 'one of you.'

In the light of these data it is impossible to imagine that the two epistles were sent at different times, and since the authenticity of Philemon is generally unquestioned it carries with it the high probability that Colossians is a genuine work of Paul.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, there is no good reason to doubt the authenticity of Colossians. Precisely because of this, most NT scholars accept it as genuine.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

The Catholic New Advent provides similar arguments based upon external and internal evidence.

## 2. New Advent

The external evidence for the Epistle is so strong that even Davidson has gone to the extent of saying that "it was unanimously attested in ancient times". Considering its brevity, controversial character, and the local and ephemeral nature of the errors dealt with, it is surprising how frequently it was used by early writers. There are traces of it in some of the Apostolic Fathers and it was known to the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas, to St. Polycarp, and Theophilus of Antioch. It was quoted by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, etc. From the Muratorian Fragment and early versions it is evident that it was contained in the very first collections of St. Paul's Epistles. It was used as Scripture early in the second century, by Marcion, the Valentinians, and by other heretics mentioned in the "Philosophoumena"; and they would not have accepted it had it originated among their opponents after they broke away from the Church.

New Advent in looking at internal evidence points to the close connection with Philippians and Philemon, both admitted to be genuine letters of Paul. Further the last two chapters' moral position fits with similar moral arguments from other epistles and fits with the details of Paul's life.

As the historical evidence is much stronger than that for the majority of classical writings, it may be asked why its genuineness was ever called in question. It was never doubted until 1838, when Meyerhoff, followed by others, began to raise objections against it. It will be convenient to deal with these objections under the following four heads: (1) Style; (2) Christology; (3) Errors dealt with; and (4) Similarity to Ephesians.

Advent then agrees the style of Colossians is heavy and complicated and without the usual Pauline eloquence. The counter though is that Paul wrote this in his advanced age after years of confinement. Other works also contain long and involved sentences:

It has also to be observed that many of the old Pauline expressions and methods of reasoning are most naturally and inextricably interwoven with the very tissue and substance of the Epistle. Ample proofs for all these statements and others throughout this article, are given in works mentioned in the bibliography. Dr. Sanday has voiced the opinion of fair-minded critics when he says that nobody can view the Epistle as a whole, without being impressed by its unbreakable unity and genuine Pauline character.

(It is objected that the Epistle contains many strange words, nowhere else used by St. Paul. That, however, is precisely what we should expect in an Epistle of St. Paul. Every Epistle written by him contains many words employed by him nowhere else. Alford gives a list of thirty-two *apax legomena* in this Epistle, and of these eighteen occur in the second chapter, where the errors are dealt with. The same thing occurs in the earlier Epistles, where the Apostle is speaking of new subjects or peculiar errors, and there *apax legomena* most abound. This Epistle does not show more than the ordinary proportion of new words and in this respect compares favourably with the genuine II Cor. Furthermore, the compound words found in the Epistle have their analogues in similar passages of the authentic Epistle to the Romans. It would be most absurd to bind down to a narrow and set vocabulary a writer of such intellectual vigour and literary versatility as St. Paul. The vocabulary of all writers changes with time, place, and subject-matter. Salmon, Mahaffy, and others have pointed out that similar changes of

vocabulary occur in the writings of Xenophon, who was a traveller like St. Paul. Compare the earlier and later letters of Lord Acton (edited by Abbot Gasquet) or of Cardinal Newman.

New Advent also says the authenticity of Pauline authorship is questioned on the basis of Christology in Colossians

It has objected that the exalted idea of Christ presented in the Epistle could not have been written by St. Paul. In answer to this it will be sufficient to quote the following passage from the genuine Epistle to the Philippians: "Who [Christ Jesus] being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (ii, 6, 7, etc. See Romans, i, 3, 4; Gr. text, viii, 3; I Cor., vii, 6; II Cor., viii, 9; Gal., iv, 6, etc.). That the Christology of the Epistle does not differ in any essential point from that of St. Paul's other Epistles is seen from an impartial study of these latter.

New Advent also agrees that gnostic language is used to argue against Paul's authorship but says the terms employed by the Gnostics were used in a way quite different from Paul's use of them.

The errors of Judaic Gnosticism, condemned in the Epistle, were quite embryonic when compared with the full-blown Greek Gnosticism of the second century (see Lightfoot, Coloss., etc.).

A final argument by New Advent is Colossians' similarity to Ephesians. The theories are quite intricate:

- Davidson stated that out of 155 verses in the latter Epistle 78 were identical with Colossians. De Wette held that Ephesians was but a verbose amplification of Colossians. Baur thought Ephesians the superior letter, and Renan asked how can we suppose the Apostle spending his time in making a bald transcription of himself. But as Dr. Salmon pointed out, an Apostle might write a circular letter, that is, he might send to different places letters couched in identical words. Many theories have been elaborated to explain these undoubted resemblances.

- Ewald maintained that the substance was St. Paul's, while the composition was left to Timothy.
- Weiss and Hitzig had recourse to a theory of interpolations.
- But the theory that has gained the greatest amount of notoriety is that of H.J. Holtzmann. In his "Kritik der Epheser- und Kolosser-Briefe" (1872) he instituted a most elaborate and exhaustive comparison between the two Epistles. He took a number of passages which seemed to prove the priority of Ephesians and an equal number which were just as conclusive that Colossians was the earlier. The natural conclusion would be that all these similarities were due to the same author writing and dispatching these Epistles at one and the same time. But Holtzmann's explanation was quite different. He supposed that St. Paul wrote a short epistle to the Colossians. From the study of this epistle a later writer composed the Epistle to the Ephesians. Then taking St. Paul's short Epistle to the Colossians he made interpolations and additions to it from his own composition to the Ephesians and thus built up our present Epistle to the Ephesians, and that with such success that the thing was never suspected until the nineteenth century. This intricate and complicated theory did not gain a single adherent, even amongst the most advanced critical school.
  - Hilgenfeld rejected it in 1873; but its best refutation is von Soden's detailed criticism of 1885. He held that only about eight verses could be regarded as interpolations.
  - Sanday in Smith's "Dict. of the Bible" (I, 625) pointed out that von Soden's lines of demarcation were purely imaginary,
  - and Pfeleiderer showed the inconsistency involved in his rejection of these verses. The results of these criticisms and of further study convinced von Soden, in 1891, that the whole Epistle was

genuine, with the exception of a single verse -- a verse now generally held to be genuine.

- In 1894 Jülicher stated that the best solution was to admit the authenticity of both Epistles, though he speaks more hesitatingly in "Encyc. Bibl." 1889. J. Weiss made an abortive attempt to resuscitate Holtzmann's moribund theory in 1900.
- The expressions supposed to have come from Colossians occur quite naturally in Ephesians, but by no means in the same context and connection, and vice versa. As Holtzmann's hypothesis has completely broken down, his study of the Epistles shows such close relationship between them that there can be only one other possible explanation: that both are the genuine writings of one man, and that man was St. Paul. Paley, who wrote his "Horæ Paulinæ" in 1790, set forth this side of the argument long before these objections were thought of; and the fact that he can still be quoted, without qualification, in this connection, is the best proof of the futility of all such objections. He says (Horæ Paulinæ, London, 1790, 215):
  - Whoever writes two letters or discourses nearly upon the same subject and at no great distance of time but without any express recollection of what he had written before will find himself repeating some sentences in the very order of the words in which he had already used them; but he will more frequently find himself employing some principal terms, with the order inadvertently changed, or with the order disturbed

by the intermixture of other words and phrases expressive of ideas rising up at the time, or in many instances repeating not single words, nor yet whole sentences, but parts and fragments of sentences. Of all these varieties the examination of our two epistles will furnish plain examples, and I should rely on this class of instances more than on the last, because although an impostor might transcribe into a forgery entire sentences and phrases, yet the dislocation of words, the partial recollection of phrases and sentences, the intermixture of new terms and new ideas with terms and ideas before used, which will appear in the examples that follow, and which are the natural products of writing produced under the circumstances in which these epistles are represented to have been composed -- would not, I think, have occurred to the invention of a forger, nor, if they had occurred would they have been so easily executed. This studied variation was a refinement in forgery which I believe did not exist, or if we can suppose it to have been practised

in the instances adduced below, why, it may be asked, was not the same art exercised upon those which we have collected in the preceding class?

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/0413b.htm>

Commentaries:

Easton's Bible Dictionary

### Colossians

Colossians, Epistle to the  
was written by Paul at Rome during his first imprisonment there ([Acts 28:16,30](#)), probably in the spring of A.D. 57, or, as some think, 62, and soon after he had written his Epistle to the Ephesians. Like some of his other epistles (e.g., those to Corinth), this seems to have been written in consequence of information which had somehow been conveyed to him of the internal state of the church there ([Colossians 1:4-8](#)). Its object was to counteract false teaching. A large part of it is directed against certain speculatists who attempted to combine the doctrines of Oriental mysticism and asceticism with Christianity, thereby promising the disciples the enjoyment of a higher spiritual life and a deeper insight into the world of spirits. Paul argues against such teaching, showing that in Christ Jesus they had all things. He sets forth the majesty of his redemption. The mention of the "new moon" and "sabbath days" ([2:16](#)) shows also that there were here Judaizing teachers who sought to draw away the disciples from the simplicity of the gospel. The doctrinal part comprises the first two chapters. His main theme is developed in chapter 2. He warns them against being drawn away from Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and who was the head of all spiritual powers. Christ was the head of the body of which

they were members; and if they were truly united to him, what needed they more?

- The practical part of the epistle (3-4) enforces various duties naturally flowing from the doctrines expounded. They are exhorted to mind things that are above ([3:1-4](#)), to mortify every evil principle of their nature, and to put on the new man ([3:5-14](#)). Many special duties of the Christian life are also insisted upon as the fitting evidence of the Christian character. Tychicus was the bearer of the letter, as he was also of that to the Ephesians and to Philemon, and he would tell them of the state of the apostle ([4:7-9](#)). After friendly greetings (10-14), he bids them interchange this letter with that he had sent to the neighbouring church of Laodicea. He then closes this brief but striking epistle with his usual autograph salutation. There is a remarkable resemblance between this epistle and that to the Ephesians (q.v.). The genuineness of this epistle has not been called in question.

## Earth

- In the sense of soil or ground, the translation of the word *adamah* . In [Genesis 9:20](#) "husbandman" is literally "man of the ground or earth." Altars were to be built of earth ([Exodus 20:24](#)). Naaman asked for two mules' burden of earth ([2 Kings 5:17](#)), under the superstitious notion that Jehovah, like the gods of the heathen, could be acceptably worshipped only on his own soil.

(2). As the rendering of *'erets* , it means the whole world ([Genesis 1:2](#)); the land as opposed to the sea ([1:10](#)). *Erets* also denotes a country ([21:32](#)); a plot of ground ([23:15](#)); the ground on which a man stands ([33:3](#)); the inhabitants of the earth ([6:1](#); [11:1](#)); all the world except Israel ([2 Chronicles 13:9](#)). In the New Testament "the earth" denotes the land of Judea

([Matthew 23:35](#)); also things carnal in contrast with things heavenly ([John 3:31](#); [Colossians 3:1,2](#)).

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# Chapter 1

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[Col 1:1](#) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus *our* brother,

[Col 1:2](#) 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.

[Col 1:3](#) We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

[Col 1:4](#) Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints,

[Col 1:5](#) For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

[Col 1:6](#) Which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the grace of God in truth:

[Col 1:7](#) As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

[Col 1:8](#) Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

**Col 1:9** For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

**Col 1:10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

**Col 1:11** Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

**Col 1:12** Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

**Col 1:13** Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

**Col 1:14** In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

**Col 1:15** Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

**Col 1:16** 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:

**Col 1:17** And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

**Col 1:18** 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.

**Col 1:19** For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

**Col 1:20** And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

**Col 1:21** And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

**Col 1:22** In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

**Col 1:23** If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

**Col 1:24** Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

**Col 1:25** Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

**Col 1:26** *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

**Col 1:27** To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

**Col 1:28** Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

**Col 1:29** Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

# Interpretation 1

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## Interpretation of Chapter One

The Intersociety Press Commentary outlines chapter one as greeting, prayer, theology on the foundation of faith, new exodus, new creation, new age, and Paul's defense of his ministry.

Paul's Greeting (1:1-2)

Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-12)

The Foundation of Faith: God's Grace in Christ (1:13-23)

The New Exodus (1:13-14)

The New Creation (1:15-20)

The New Age (1:21-23)

Paul's Defense of His Ministry (1:23--2:3)

[Return to the Bible Gateway](#)

Daniel Wallace summarizes Colossians as outlining the sufficiency of Christ, arguing against heretics and christological heresy, and calling for Christians to live in the light of Christ's sufficiency:

The apostle Paul, with Timothy, begins the letter with a greeting to the saints at Colossae (1:1-2).

The body of the letter begins at 1:3.<sup>27</sup> Paul begins on a positive note in which he outlines the sufficiency of Christ (1:3-2:7). He follows this with a negative statement in which he argues against the views of the heretics at Colossae, who especially imbibe in christological heresy (2:3-3:4). The body is concluded with a call to live the Christian life in light of Christ's sufficiency (3:5-4:6).

The first major section, on the positive presentation of the sufficiency of Christ, involves four parts. (1) Paul's

thanksgiving for the Colossians because of their positive response to the gospel (1:3-8), coupled with a prayer for them to grow in knowledge and productivity (1:9-14). This prayer deals, though very subtly, with the heart of the epistle: the heretics claim to have a superior knowledge, yet their very philosophy chokes out any productivity for God (cf. 2:20-23). (2) Without so much as an “Amen” to the prayer, Paul continues with a recital of an early Christian hymn in which Christ is magnified as Deity in the flesh, the Creator incarnate (1:15-20). (3) The hymn, which ends with a note on Christ as reconciler of “all things,” serves as a bridge to Paul’s next theme: Christ has reconciled the Colossians to God—a ministry of reconciliation which Paul has proclaimed (1:21-23). (4) Finally, Paul addresses his own ministry in greater detail: (a) he has been commissioned with proclaiming “the mystery” (again, borrowing terms of his opponents)—“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27)—so that “we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (1:24-29); (b) he is presently concerned about the believers in the Lycus Valley, especially that they might not be “deceived by fine-sounding arguments” (2:4) which deny the sufficiency of Christ (2:1-7).

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

The Catholic Encyclopedia divides Colossians into two main parts, the first being dogmatic-polemical:

The Epistle consists of two parts the first two chapters being dogmatico-polemical and the last two practical or moral. In the first part the writer shows the absurdity of the errors by a direct statement of the supereminent dignity of Christ, by Whose blood we have the redemption of sins. He is the perfect image of the invisible God, begotten before all creatures. By Him and for Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, spiritual as well as material, and by Him are all things upheld. He is the Head of the Church and He has reconciled all things through the blood of His cross, and the Colossians "also he hath reconciled . . . through death". St. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles and a prisoner for their sakes, exhorts them to hold fast to Christ in Whom the plenitude of the Godhead dwells, and not to allow themselves under the plausible name of philosophy, to be re-enslaved by Jewish traditions based on the Law of Moses,

which was but the shadow of which Christ was the reality and which was abrogated by His coming. They are not to listen to vain and rudimentary speculations of the false teachers, nor are they to suffer themselves to be deluded by a specious plea of humility to put angels or demons on a level with Christ, the creator of all, the master of angels, and conqueror of demons.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04131b.htm>

The author addresses himself and his companion Timothy to their audience. Paul's authority for addressing the saints and faithful bretheren at Colosse rests in his being an apostle of Jesus Christ. The reader will note that Paul does not claim a direct and physical relationship with Jesus Christ; rather, he is apostle by the will of God.

Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,  
and Timotheus our brother,

Col 1:2 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.

Paul says in verse one that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ by God. The Intersivarsity Press Commentary suggests Paul establishes his authority in the face of expected opposition. The gentile mission was quite controversial for early Christianity:

Recall that Paul's Gentile mission was quite controversial in earliest Christianity, when many believers understood themselves as belonging to a messianic movement within Judaism. Boundaries between the church and synagogue were still quite fuzzy; Paul's preaching of a "law-free" gospel (as in Galatians) and his conversion of Gentiles without compliance to the most basic proselyte requirements of Greek-speaking Judaism (as in Romans) were increasingly difficult for religious Jews, and even for many Jewish Christians, to accept (see Acts 11:1-18; 15:1-5; 21:15-26). Moreover, although Paul had witnessed the resurrection of Christ on the Damascus Road, some early Christian leaders still doubted his apostolic credentials. After all, he had persecuted Christ's disciples and had not been with Christ from the beginning

(see Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor 15:8-11).

This ambivalence toward Paul's apostolic credentials within the early church is reflected in Acts, where Paul's ministry is commissioned by the Lord (Acts 9:15-6) but his apostleship results from a congregation's ordination (Acts 13:3; cf. 1 Thess 2:6-7). Even the church's mission to the Gentiles was initiated by Peter, the leader of the Twelve who immediately succeeded Jesus; he, not Paul, was appointed by God to bring salvation to the Gentile soldier Cornelius. Paul himself adds other reasons, including the itinerant nature of his evangelistic ministry, which was widely scorned in the ancient world (cf. 1 Thess 2:1-16).

Against this background of controversy, then, the pointed manner of Paul's introduction is made necessary by readers who know him only by "muddy" reputation. Paul reminds them that his personal authority (and by implication the trustworthiness of his advice) is not granted by another person nor by some more prominent congregation but by Christ Jesus, the Lord of the church. Moreover, Christ's decision to do so was by the will of God. Since the will of God is the redemption of all creation, Paul does not use this idiom to "strong-arm" his readers into an undesirable submission. Rather, he understands that his ministry to the Colossians--given by Christ, who gave himself for their redemption (1:14)--conforms with the will of the One who wills their rescue from the reign of darkness (1:13). Some have even linked this reference to the will of God with Paul's commission on the Damascus Road (cf. Acts 22:14), an event that harks back to God'

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

In addition to establishing his authority, Paul greets the people of Colosse in a familiar apostolic greeting:

The apostolical benediction is the same as usual: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. He wishes them grace and peace, the free favour of God and all the blessed fruits of it; every kind of spiritual blessings, and that from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; jointly from both, and distinctly from each; as in the

former epistle.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/MatthewHenryComplete/mhc-com.cgi?book+col>

The Intersociety Press Commentary points out that the first part of the greeting is a familiar Roman greeting:

The apostle's conventional salutation wonderfully expresses the theology of his Gentile mission. Grace to you was a common greeting between people living in the Roman world. In Paul's vocabulary of God's salvation, however, it underscores the stark contrast between God's saving grace and the secular forms of salvation offered by the ruling elites of the Roman world. Every event Paul recites in the story of God's salvation--beginning with God's election of a people for salvation (3:11-12), climaxing with God's sending of Jesus as Son (1:15-20) in order to lead that people on a new exodus from sin (1:13-14), and concluding with God's call of Paul as apostle (1:24--2:5) in order to lead Gentiles into God's final triumph over evil in Christ (1:21-23)--is understood as the work of God's grace. That is, grace empowers a holy and faithful life from which death and sin are absent (see Rom 6:4). Unlike the Roman offer of secular salvation, often repressive and always conditional, God's salvation is offered as a free gift, even to those without social merit or political power.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Charles Hess, however, argues the greeting is not quite that of the Romans:

Grace to you. Paul did not use the customary Greek salutation, CHAIRE Hail! (see Lu 1:28) but, more appropriate to Christians, CHARIS Grace!

And peace from God our Father.<sup>[12]</sup> The Hebrew SHALOM peace<sup>[13]</sup> is equivalent to the Greek EIREENEE peace but in Paul's greeting "peace" has the special meaning that Christ gave to it. He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you," adding that His peace is "not as the world gives" (Joh 14:27; compare Col 3:15).

Colossians, Chapter One <http://www.oldpaths.org/Library/Comments/Hess/Col/col1.html>

Not only, though, does Paul say "Grace be onto you," but "peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second critical word of Paul's salutation, peace, has a biblical background, reflecting the prophetic catchword shalom. The prophets of the Old Testament speak of shalom when describing the fulfillment of God's promise to restore all things to their created order: peace is the word that summarizes a "new world," transformed from its fallen state into the form of life intended by the Creator God. More than a reference to internal and spiritual contentment, then, the biblical idea of peace embraces every dimension of human existence--past, present and future. Certainly in Colossian Christianity, God's victory in Christ is celebrated and confessed as a cosmic event: the exalted Christ now mediates God's rule over the natural order as well as over the spiritual order (1:15-20). As a result, peace is more than a good feeling or mystical experience; it presumes a universal condition, in which all of human life is brought into conformity with the Creator's intentions for all things (3:5--4:6).

Both Paul and Timothy give thanks that the people addressed have faith in Christ Jesus and a love for all the saints; they are grateful, too, for the hope laid up for them in heaven heard in the word of the truth of the gospel. This gospel is "in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit." Interestingly, "the truth of the gospel" is heard "in the word." This trilogy of faith, hope, love will be matched by another trilogy in verse 11 of endurance, patience, and joy:

Col 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Col 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Col 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

Col 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

The reader should note that the position of the believers in Colosse is on earth with "the hope ...laid up.. in heaven." John Nelson Darby says:

The address to the Ephesians places them perhaps more immediately in connection with God Himself, instead of presenting them as in brotherly communion on earth. They are not called brethren in Ephesians 1:1, only saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. They are viewed as walking on earth in Colossians, though risen. Hence there is a long prayer for their walk, though on high and holy ground as delivered. In Ephesians it begins with the full purpose and fruit of God's counsels. In that epistle the apostle's heart expands at once in the sense of the blessings enjoyed by the Ephesians. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. For the Colossians there was a hope laid up in heaven. And there is a preface of many verses referring to the gospel they had heard, and introducing his prayer for their walk and state down here. This brings us where Ephesians 1:7 brings us, but with a much more enlarged development of the personal glory of Christ, and more in an historical way of God's actual dealings. It is also a more personal church address than the Ephesians.

<http://www.ccel.org/d/darby/synopsis/Colossians.html>

Another fellow laborer, Epaphras, has also been instrumental in this labor of love:

Col 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Col 1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Epaphras has, in fact, declared to Paul and Timothy the love of this people.

Prayer of Thanks

Having heard of this people and their love, Paul and Timothy have since

been much in prayer. The prayer is a practical one that they may be "filled with the knowledge of his [God's] will... increasing in knowledge... strengthened with all might." Paul and Timothy are grateful that they have been able to meet in the common inheritance of light, delivered from darkness, and "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son...[having] redemption through his blood":

Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Col 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Col 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Col 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

The Intersity Press adds an intriguing explanation of poetic structure in verses three through eleven, reminding readers how very much can sometimes be missed. The chiasmus is a literary logic illustrating the figure X:

Viewed as a literary chiasmus, Paul's thanksgiving contains two parallel although inverted series of three theological ideas (vv. 3-6 and vv. 9-12), with the vertex in between (vv. 7-8), as follows:

**A** We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you (v. 3),

**B** because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints--the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven (vv. 4-5)

**C** and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 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 (vv. 5-6).

**D** You learned [the gospel] from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit (vv. 7-8).

**C'** 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. 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, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might (vv. 9-11)

**B'** so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully (v. 11)

**A'** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (v. 12).

Paul first (A/A') gives thanks to God, because he has heard reports of the readers' piety, described by two related triads of good works (B, faith, love and hope, and B', endurance, patience and joy). He concludes by interpreting their piety to be the natural fruit and logical growth of accepting the gospel's truth (C/C').

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

That Epaphras is the vertex seems to be consciously chosen: "Epaphras's relationship with the Colossian church is a key to unlocking the reason Paul wrote Colossians" (Intervarsity Press Commentaries). This commentary suggests Paul may be concerned about Epaphras's status among the

Colossian believers, and "this comment at the thanksgiving's vertex to help secure his reputation as an exemplary believer."

First, church tradition asserts that the Epaphras who shared Paul's prison cell according to Philemon 23 is the same Epaphras Paul mentions in Colossians. While the references to Epaphras in Colossians do not suggest that he is in prison, Philemon, which was written before Colossians, could refer to an earlier imprisonment. Epaphras's past imprisonment could well have resulted in a prolonged absence from Colosse, during which time others (including theological opponents) could have taken charge of the congregation's spiritual nurture. Now that he is able to return to his former ministry, Paul's prayer recalls the importance of Epaphras's earlier ministry to reestablish him in this congregation.

A second and more important clue comes from Colossians 4:12-13, where Paul vouches for Epaphras's commitment to the Colossian congregation. Why would Paul sense a need to vouch for Epaphras and to stress the close tie the two men share in the Gentile mission? Masson has suggested that Paul wants to overturn Epaphras's reputation for incompetence, and even laziness, which has helped the false teachers succeed (1950:156). While this speculation seems strained to me, it is true that Paul is concerned with Epaphras's reputation. I suspect Paul is concerned because the truth of Epaphras's teaching, which had converted the readers to Christ, is now jeopardized. In this sense, Paul's letter defines and defends the content of Epaphras's teaching and witness.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

In Philemon 23, Epaphras is identified as a fellow prisoner: **Phi 1:23** There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus;

Darby points to the fact that the Colossians are sitting on earth:

But let us consider more closely that which is said to the Colossians. The blessed calling of which the apostle speaks (Eph. 1:3-10), and the privileges of the inheritance (11-14), are wanting in Colossians; risen but on earth, they are not sitting in heavenly places, all things being thus their inheritance. It is not they in Christ there, but Christ in them

the hope of glory, and the prayer referred to above fills up the chapter till we come to the common ground of Christ's glory in Colossians 1:15; and even here the divine glory of Christ is brought out in Colossians, the simple fact of the purpose of God as to Christ in Ephesians.

Already, the writer begins to theologize with verses thirteen and fourteen:

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

The Intersity Press Commentary shows the rescue as echoing Old Testament stories of God's intervention:

Paul's confession of God's gracious decision to usher the church into the promised land continues by specifying its result: God *rescued us . . . and brought us into the kingdom of the Son*. God's action is described in the aorist tense (*has rescued*), which suggests that the defeat of demonic enemies and the church's entrance into God's kingdom have already taken place. The verb translated *rescue* (*rhyomai*) echoes the Old Testament stories of God's intervention to deliver an embattled Israel from its enemies, especially the master story of the exodus, when God delivered Israel from the pharaoh's tyranny and the avenging angel. For Paul, the climactic act of God's intervening grace, which constitutes the church's Passover, occurred when Christ trusted God even to death. In a sense, the saving result of Christ's death reoccurs whenever a person trusts in Christ for salvation (compare Rom 3:22; 7:24--8:1).

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

The prayer gives way to theology in Colossians 1: 15:

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Col 1:16 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:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

The Colossians are reminded that "Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." As such, Christ is the Creator of both the visible and invisible, and all things belong to him. As Christ is the firstborn of all things created in heaven and earth, the church is the firstborn from the dead for the purpose that Christ might have preeminence. The language is poetic as the writer strains to link the lordship of Christ to the cosmos. As the Intersociety Commentary says, Jesus "is the cosmic Christ," Lord of the material and spiritual, and as Lord over all, Christ has reconciled the two into a new world.

In this passage Paul employs various images of creation to clarify "the word of truth, the gospel" (1:5-6). By linking the lordship of Christ to God's creation of the entire cosmos, Paul's tacit claim is that Christians have been remade into a new humanity, characterized by their holistic spirituality. Against his ascetic opponents at Colosse, who have rejected the material for the spiritual, Paul confesses Christ as Lord over *both* worlds; he is the "cosmic Christ." Therefore, believers are to resist any teaching that divides their life into separate spheres, material and spiritual, which would also divide their loyalty to Christ. If Christ is Lord over all of God's creation, then those in Christ have been re-formed into a new creation and embody God's reconciliation of all things (v. 20).

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Furthermore, since nothing in the structure of Colossians seems to be without purpose, the parallelism in fifteen and eighteen declares the lordship of Christ. In seventeen, he is the "image" while in eighteen, he is the "beginning and the firstborn among the dead":

Thus, in verses 15 and 18 Christ is introduced by a relative pronoun (*hos*, "he") combined with the linking verb (*estin*,

"is"), resulting in a crucial parallelism that sets forth Paul's essential convictions about the lordship of Jesus Christ: (1) *he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation* (v. 15) and (2) *he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead* (v. 18).

This grammatical clue is crucial for interpretation, not only because it provides a nice balance to the passage but, more important, because it divides the passage into two integral christological themes that Paul will develop in the main body of his letter. The first theme, introduced in verses 15-17, considers the role of Christ within the created order, while the second, introduced in verses 18-20, considers his role within the new order of his kingdom now populated by God's people (compare v. 13). Paul's parallel claims about the Lord Christ nicely frame the Bible's conviction that God's creation and redemption are two parts of an integral whole. This theological conviction implies a practical point as well: the redeemed community is a new creation, and the current demonstration that God's grace has reconciled and reintegrated all things spiritual with all things material in accord with God's will.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

The Intersociety Press Commentary links Paul's Christology to the Jewish understanding of wisdom:

The similarity of terminology with Jewish interpretation of Wisdom's work in both creation (Prov 8) and salvation (Is 40) provides yet another important clue to the teacher of this passage. Many religious Jews of the first century, such as Paul, ordered their lives by biblical Wisdom, not only because it provided practical advice for a wide assortment of daily affairs but indeed because this advice was viewed as the very "word of God" (Prov 30:5-9), necessary for salvation (Wisdom 6:24). Various New Testament writers make this same point. James, for example, views Wisdom as the heavenly "word" from God, necessary for salvation (Jas 1:17-21; compare 2 Tim 3:15). Matthew's gospel shows how Jesus taught his disciples the Wisdom of God for their salvation (Mt 7:24; 10:24; 11:25; 24:45; 25:1-9). Paul makes it clear that he follows in the way of the earliest church, then, by

drawing upon Jewish Wisdom to explain his faith in Christ (compare 1 Cor 1:30).

Two core convictions of biblical Wisdom are important as background to Paul's understanding of Christ's cosmic lordship. First, Wisdom teaches that every aspect of human life (including its religious, social, political, family and economic dimensions) is to make visible the Creator's invisible intentions (see Heb 11:1-2). If God is true and good, so are the intentions for all that the Creator has made. So Israel's sages distilled their observations of human life into the Old Testament Proverbs to express the Creator's good intentions as guides toward the good life and away from misfortune.

Second, the messianic Jews (Jews waiting for Messiah to come) who lived around the time of Jesus and Paul linked Israel's practice of biblical Wisdom to the coming of the Messiah. What had first been composed as a social ethic to order Israel's national life now took on eschatological importance: the practice of Wisdom became a condition for Israel's entrance into God's promised salvation.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Paul makes an important theological point in establishing the lordship of Christ:

For the apostle's confession that Jesus is cosmic Lord makes the even more profound claim that in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has been made one of us, for us. Certainly Paul's primary point in this compositional context is to claim something decisive for the Lord's *messiahship*: that is, Jesus' messianic work, especially his death (v. 20), embodies or incarnates the work of God. In fact, the truth about God's grace (vv. 4-5) is disclosed personally and within history by Jesus from Nazareth.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Col 1:18 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.

Interestingly, the writer uses "firstborn from the dead" in echo of verse fifteen's "firstborn of every creature," suggesting Christ is head of a new and reconciled order:

The second stanza of Paul's christological confession begins with a different point: Christ is *the beginning*. The word *beginning* comes from the same word-family as *rulers* (1:16) and probably carries the same idea: the Lord Christ is at "the beginning of"--or "rules over"--God's new creation, the church, even as he is Lord now over the various elites of God's created order. At times the word carries a temporal meaning, referring to the beginning or first event of a sequence of events. So this claim for Christ's lordship over the church may have a historical aspect: Jesus' death and resurrection begins his cosmic lordship (compare Phil 2:9-11) and inaugurates the new age of salvation's history in him (1 Cor 15:12-28). Paul further expands the confession here by adding the appositional phrase *the firstborn from among the dead*. The new age initiated by Christ's death and resurrection constitutes nothing less than a new order of human life in Christ, the essential ingredient of which is victory over death in its various expressions.

Significantly, Paul recycles the word *firstborn* (*prototokos*), which he used earlier to stake out Christ's status as Lord *over all creation* (v. 15). This word, found in both stanzas, stakes a common claim in two different spheres, creation and church. The histories of God's salvation and God's creation are joined together under the lordship of Christ. God's triumph over spiritual darkness and human sins through Christ results in the restoration of a fallen creation and of sinful creatures, who now share a common Lord. This truth, made real in our common experience of God's powerful grace, will be completely demonstrated at Christ's return.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

In Christ, Paul declares, the fullness of the Father dwells:

Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all

fulness dwell;

Through the blood of Christ on the cross, reconciliation of things in earth and in heaven has been effected; likewise, the work of Christ is reconciling "all things unto himself," including those who been alienated formerly from him and enemies in wicked work.

Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

This reconciliation, Paul reminds them, came in the body of Christ's "flesh through death" for the purpose that these people would present themselves holy, unblamable, and unreprouable:

Col 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:

Col 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

John Nelson Darby describes this reconciliation and its connection to the later mystery revealed:

It will be noticed also, that the apostle speaks of his gospel as spread abroad in all the world. Grace had overstepped the narrow limits of Judaism and the expectation of the Messiah, in order to make known the testimony of the perfect love of God in the whole creation under heaven, of which Paul was the instrument as the apostle of the Gentiles. [12] Hitherto, then, the Spirit of God has set before us the two preeminences of Christ, that over creation and that over the assembly, and the two reconciliations which answer to them, namely, first, that of the things over which Christ is set as Head, that is, of all things in heaven and earth; and second, that of Christians themselves: the latter already accomplished, the former yet to come. The ministry of the apostle had now the same double

character. He has not undoubtedly to preach in heaven; but his ministry is exercised in every place under heaven where there is a soul to hearken. He is a minister of that gospel; and then he is a minister of the assembly, a distinct service or ministry, making known its true position and its privileges, connected indeed with the other, in that the gospel went out also to the Gentiles to bring them in. (Vers. 23, 25) By this last instruction he completed the word of God: an important principle with regard to the exclusive authority of the written word, which shews that its totality already exists, demonstrated by the subjects which it comprises; subjects which are entirely completed, to the exclusion of others which people may seek to introduce. The circle of truths which God had to treat, in order to reveal to us the glory of Christ and to give us complete instruction according to His wisdom, is entire, when the doctrine of the assembly is revealed. There were no others to be added. [13] It is not a question here as to the dates of the books, but of the circle of subjects. The law, the kingdom, the Person of Christ, redemption and the ways of God, had already been brought out; the doctrine of the assembly was then to be revealed, in order to make the communications of God complete as to their subjects.

<http://www.ccel.org/d/darby/synopsis/Colossians.html>

Paul next reminds his audience that he, also, has suffered for their sake, having been afflicted in the flesh for Christ's sake in the cause of the church. Of this church, Paul proclaims himself a minister "according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God:

Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

The RSV translates Colossians 1.24 somewhat differently:

<sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

What is meant by "lacking in Christ's afflictions"?

What, however, is the plain meaning of Paul's cryptic phrase that his suffering *fill[s] up . . . what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions*? In what sense does the suffering of Christ "lack" anything? And in what sense does Paul's suffering "fill up" what Christ's suffering lacks, if anything? I have argued that here Paul's emphasis is not on God's salvation, as before, but on Christ's church. To the point, Paul is surely not saying that the Lord Christ lacks anything as the messianic agent of God's salvation; nor does he mean that the redemptive results of his death need to be supplemented by Paul. His previous confession of Christ's lordship (1:15-20) and his subsequent assertion of God's forgiveness (2:13-14) testify to Paul's confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's work. Lohse is quite right, then, to object to any interpretation that renders this phrase as a reference to the community's "mystical union" with a suffering Christ, whereby the community is absorbed into and derives spiritual benefit from Christ's passion (1971:69). In fact, Paul rarely speaks in his writings of Christ's suffering (as distinguished from his death) and almost never of Christ's suffering in terms of God's salvation (as the writer of 1 Peter, for instance, does in 1 Pet 2:20-22). The images of a suffering Christ in Paul's writings are usually employed to illustrate and interpret his own suffering as a missionary. Here suffering is exemplary of servanthood, but not expiatory of sin. In this way Christ's suffering is logically parallel to his own; like Christ, Paul is God's "suffering servant"; and like Christ's, his suffering indicates obedience to God's commission.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Certainly, the church has much to suffer in servanthood: suffering abounds in the temporal, and faith, love, and hope requires endurance, patience, and an understanding of real joy.

Back to theology, Paul proclaims a mystery hidden from former ages and generations is not manifest to God's saints. God has made this mystery known among the gentiles, a manifestation of Christ in the gentiles:

Col 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

### *Salutation*

Paul concludes the greeting with a universal sweep: it is his purpose, and God's, that "every man [be presented] perfect in Christ Jesus; to this common end, Paul labors:

Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

### *Summary of Theology*

1. Jesus embodies or incarnates the work of God.
2. Jesus is head of the church, the body.
3. God's fullness dwells in Jesus.
4. Jesus reconciled all things in heaven and in earth.

4. The church is to present itself holy, unblameable, unreprouvable.

5. In Jesus, God has revealed the mystery hidden for ages that God works effectively among gentiles to the end that every man be presented perfect in Christ.

# Chapter 2

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[Col 2:1](#) 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;

[Col 2:2](#) That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

[Col 2:3](#) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[Col 2:4](#) And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

[Col 2:5](#) For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

[Col 2:6](#) As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him:

[Col 2:7](#) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

[Col 2:8](#) 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.

[Col 2:9](#) For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

[Col 2:10](#) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

[Col 2:11](#) In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the

circumcision of Christ:

**Col 2:12** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

**Col 2:13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

**Col 2:14** Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

**Col 2:15** *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

**Col 2:16** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

**Col 2:17** Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

**Col 2:18** Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

**Col 2:19** And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

**Col 2:20** Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

**Col 2:21** (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

**Col 2:22** Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

**Col 2:23** Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

# Interpretation 2

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According to [J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.](#), chapter two is critical to understanding Colossians:

**Chapters 2** is key in that it demonstrates why and how the believer is complete in Christ and needs nothing added to the saving person and work of Christ. **Chapter 3** then builds on this as root to fruit or cause and effect. Because believers are complete in Christ (2:10) and are thereby risen with Him, they now have all they need for Christ-like transformation in all the relationships of life (3:1f.).

### Christ as Seen in Colossians:

Wilkinson and Boa point out:

This singularly christological book is centered on the cosmic Christ—"the head of all principality and power" (2:10), the Lord of creation (1:16-17), the Author of reconciliation (1:20-22; 2:13-15). He is the basis for the believer's hope (1:5, 23, 27), the source of the believer's power for a new life (1:11, 29), the believer's Redeemer and Reconciler (1:14, 20-22; 2:11-15), the embodiment of full Deity (1:15, 19; 2:9), the Creator and Sustainer of all things (1:16-17), the Head of the church (1:18), the resurrected God-Man (1:18; 3:1), and the all-sufficient Savior (1:28; 2:3, 20; 3:1-4).<sup>60</sup>

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/survey/nt-04.htm#TopOfPage>

The Intersociety Press Commentary outlines chapter two of Colossians as largely an argument against Christ-less theology, including sophistry and secular philosophy. The writer argues, not only that Christ is in history, but that Christ is Lord over history. Further, the writer condemns ascetic piety, accusation without foundation, righteousness without relationship, and religion without results. This simply continues the writer's argument from chapter one that God's plan has been reconciliation (faith, love, hope and endurance, patience, and joy) of the heavenly and earthly spheres. The attention here is the earthly or "the ways of humankind": Said simply, the structure of chapter two asserts the writer's spiritual relationship with the fellowship and then moves into a longer section admonishing them to walk worthily by avoiding the lure of multiple religious structures and philosophies of the era.

Paul's Defense of His Ministry (1:23--2:3)

PAUL'S ARGUMENT AGAINST CHRISTLESS THEOLOGY (2: 4-15)

The Error of Sophistry (2: 4-8)

Paul's Response to the "Philosopher" (2: 9-15)

Christ Is God Within History (2: 9-10)

Christ Is Lord over History (2: 10-15)

PAUL'S POLEMIC AGAINST CHRISTLESS ETHICS (2: 16--4: 1)

The Error of Ascetic Piety (2: 16-23)

Accusation Without Foundation (2: 16-17)

Righteousness Without Relationship (2: 18-19)

Religion Without Results (2: 20-23)

[Return to the Bible Gateway](#)

Daniel Wallace outlines the second chapter of Colossians as addressing heretics in Colosse who have denied the sufficiency of Christ :

After having established both the sufficiency of Christ and Paul's commission and concern, he now must turn, in this major section, to the heart of the matter: Heretics in Colossae have denied the sufficiency of Christ and this heresy has already affected the believers in the church (2:8-3:4). In essence, Paul's argument is not to make an *exclusively* frontal attack, but to intertwine this attack with a subtle table-turning technique. That is, he uses the language of the heretics to affirm his gospel, showing that their view is insufficient, and that Christ is sufficient. Paul develops three primary points: (1) He restates the sufficiency of Christ (2:8-15)—in the light of the heretics' wrong views (2:8), addressing three issues: (a) as the theanthropic person ("in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" [2:9]), he has ultimate authority

(2:9-10); (b) the power which raised Christ from the dead is available to believers (2:11-12); and (c) the death of Christ is not defeat, but triumph—over our heart (2:13), over the law (2:14), and over “powers and authorities” (2:15).

He now turns to the influence that the heretics have had on the Colossians (2:16–3:4). This can be viewed in two ways (hence, our second and third points). (2) The heretics’ combination of Jewish legalism and mysticism (2:16-19) is a denial of the sufficiency of Christ, for such a heretic “has lost connection with the Head” (2:19). (3) Since believers have died (2:20-23) and risen with Christ (3:1-4), their return to human regulations (2:20-23) and lack of real appreciation for the true mystery, Christ himself (3:1-4), are a contradiction of their corporate life in Christ.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

The Catholic Encyclopedia, as pointed out in the interpretation to chapter one, divides Colossians into two parts, the first part including both chapter one and two:

The Catholic Encyclopedia divides Colossians into two main parts, the first being dogmatic-polemical:

The Epistle consists of two parts the first two chapters being dogmatico-polemical and the last two practical or moral. In the first part the writer shows the absurdity of the errors by a direct statement of the supereminent dignity of Christ, by Whose blood we have the redemption of sins. He is the perfect image of the invisible God, begotten before all creatures. By Him and for Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, spiritual as well as material, and by Him are all things upheld. He is the Head of the Church and He has reconciled all things through the blood of His cross, and the Colossians "also he hath reconciled . . . through death". St. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles and a prisoner for their sakes, exhorts them to hold fast to Christ in Whom the plenitude of the Godhead dwells,

and not to allow themselves under the plausible name of philosophy, to be re-enslaved by Jewish traditions based on the Law of Moses, which was but the shadow of which Christ was the reality and which was abrogated by His coming. They are not to listen to vain and rudimentary speculations of the false teachers, nor are they to suffer themselves to be deluded by a specious plea of humility to put angels or demons on a level with Christ, the creator of all, the master of angels, and conqueror of demons.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04131b.htm>

The writer, in chapter one acknowledged as Paul, addresses the fellowship of Colosse but also Laodicea, those who have not been acquainted with Paul in the flesh. He reminds them that are united ("knit together in love") through the mystery of "God, and of the Father, and of Christ." This is the divine wisdom introduced in chapter one. The reader needs to recall, too, that this is the mystery hid from all ages now made manifest and includes the reconciliation heaven and earth and the salvation of all humankind--to include the gentiles of Col 1. 26 and 1.27. One is not to doubt the fact that, to this writer's thinking, God and Christ are one in supremacy and eternal purpose from the beginning:

**Col 2:1** 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;

**Col 2:2** That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

**Col 2:3** In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Intervarsity Press Commentary links the first three verses to a continuing defense of Paul's apostleship to the gentiles:

By including this autobiographical sketch of his mission, Paul shifts the theological focus of his letter from God's salvation (1:13-23) to the church, and from God's Son, in whom salvation is now possible, to himself, through whom that possibility is now proclaimed among the Gentiles. Any religious authority Paul might claim over the Colossians (1:24-29) or any spiritual obligation he feels toward his readers (2:1-3) is based first of all on his commission from God to continue to proclaim the gospel's truth in Christ's name among the Gentiles (compare Acts 9:15-16)

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

The reader will recall the summary six theological points advanced in Colossians, chapter one:

*Summary of Theology*

1. Jesus embodies or incarnates the work of God.
2. Jesus is head of the church, the body.
3. God's fullness dwells in Jesus.
4. Jesus reconciled all things in heaven and in earth.
4. The church is to present itself holy, unblameable, unreprouvable.
5. In Jesus, God has revealed the mystery hidden for ages that God works effectively among gentiles to the end that every man be presented perfect in Christ.

Paul, absent in the flesh, reminds the fellowship of their unity from remaining steadfast in faith, love, and the hope of their calling.

**Col 2:5** For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

He then urges them to walk worthily of their calling:

**Col 2:6** As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him:

**Col 2:7** Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

In back of this admonition is the possibility of relapse into old systems and old ways. The rest of the chapter then lists a number of teachings unworthy of Christ and the gospel. The fellowship of Colosse and the Laodiceans are warned against false teachers, and Paul reminds them the fullness of the divine is in Jesus (9). In Christ is full perfection (10), indeed, everything that is needed (11-15). In Christ is the circumcision not made with hands (11), a co-burial and resurrection (12). The chasm between Jew and gentile is removed (14). Salvation comes by holding fast to Christ (18). Condemned practices include empty words, the teaching of men, and all that is opposed to God (8). Evils to be avoided include self-inflicted suffering (18), angel worship (18), mere human wisdom (18), and austerities (21). The Intersociety Press Commentary structures the rest of chapter two into two main sections of theological and ethical argument:

Following this pattern, Colossians contains two sharp discussions. The first discussion is theological (2:4-23): Paul challenges the legitimacy of the theological convictions that underlie the competing understanding of Christian faith in Colosse. The second discussion is mainly ethical (3:1--4:1): Paul draws upon moral tradition (*paraenesis*) to describe the character of Christian life that is now imperiled by the false teaching.

The polemical and theological discussion is divided into two subsections, each presenting an argument against a principal ingredient of the false teaching. In 2:4-8, the apostle introduces the first problem that threatens the readers' faith. I call it sophistry: the use of an elegant vocabulary in *fine-sounding arguments* to deceive an unsuspecting audience (2:4). According to Paul, certain Christian teachers at Colosse promote a *philosophy* of religion that consists of *human traditions* and centers on *the basic principles of this world*

(2:8). Paul responds to this theological error in 2:9-15 by restating two central claims about Christ on which this congregation's faith has been properly constructed: (1) Christ is the *fullness of the Deity . . . in bodily form* (2:9; compare 1:19), and (2) he is *the head over every power and authority* (2:10; compare 1:18, 20). On this christological tradition (rather than *human traditions*) the community can participate with Christ in God's forgiveness of their sins (2:11-15).

Intervarsity Press <http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

One should look carefully at the theological arguments in chapter two.

**Col 2:9** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

**Col 2:10** And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Paul argues here that Christ is the complete revelation of God within history (2. 9-10, 1.19) and that Christ rules over every other power within God's created order (2. 10-15, 1.18):

**Col 2:10** And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

**Col 2:11** In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

**Col 2:12** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

**Col 2:13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

**Col 2:14** Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the

way, nailing it to his cross;

**Col 2:15** *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Paul's argument in these verses is directed against any Christ-less philosophy as well as Jewish practices:

- abstinence from certain foods and some types of drink 2:16,22
- observance of Jewish feasts and sabbaths at different intervals 2:16
- "self-abasement" and visions 2:18,23
- angelic worship--either as the object of worship or as the subject of worship (i.e., doing worship) 2:18
- worship which was human in origin, a "self-made religion-worship 2:23
- treating the body severely 2:23
- "Philosophy and empty deceit" espousing the "elementary principles of the world" (2:8), including demoting Christ from supreme place 1:13-20, 2:9ff, indulgence of the flesh 2:23, circumcision 2.11, misconstruing death-burial-resurrection 2:12, 13, 20; 3:1-5, doubting completeness of Christ's forgiveness 1:14; 2:13-14; 3:13, and hellenistic influences

The points made are that Christ is supreme, the head of all principality and power (10) and that nothing else is needed ("ye are complete in him"); no circumcision is needed (2.11) for now any circumcision is one "made without hands" (2.11). What is cut away in this new circumcision will be "sins of the flesh" (2.11); the forgiveness of Christ is complete (2.13); the handwriting of ordinances is blotted out (2.14) "nailed to the cross," and Christ triumphs over all principalities and powers (2.15).

The theology web site suggests what is known as the Colossian heresy includes the following:

a. Its Christology.

It is clear enough that the false teaching was in some way detracting from the Person of Christ, for Paul lays great stress upon Christ's preeminence (1:15-19). This was a tendency which became fully developed in the Gnosticism of the second century.

b. Its philosophical character.

The apostle warns against "philosophy and vain deceit" (2:8), which suggests a tendency on the part of

some of the Colossians to be attracted by it. It cannot be determined with any certainty in what sense Paul uses the word "philosophy", but it is generally supposed to point to Hellenistic elements. It is possible that the use of the terms "fullness" in 1:19, "knowledge" in 2:3, and "neglect of the body" in 2:23 may also be drawn from the same general background. All these terms were in use in second-century Gnosticism.

c. Its Jewish environment.

The epistle reflects the fact that this heresy involved Jewish elements. The most conclusive reference is that of circumcision (2:11; 3:11), of which Paul finds it necessary to put it into its true Christian perspective. The warning against human "tradition" (2:8) would be an apt reference to the familiar Jewish tendency to superimpose the traditions of the elders upon the ancient law, but could also be understood of Gentile tradition in view of its close association with philosophy. The ritual tendencies found in 2:16, where the readers are urged not to allow anyone to judge them in respect to meat or drink, or feasts or new moons or sabbaths, are predominantly, if not exclusively, Jewish.

d. The elements of the world.

These elements may be understood in two ways, either as elementary spirits or as elementary teachings. Although the case of the former, it would be a reference to the powerful spirit world which was at that time widely believed to control the affairs of the natural world. If it means "elementary teachings" it would presumably describe a purely materialistic doctrine concerned only with this world.

e. Exclusivism.

It is possible that there was a tendency towards exclusivism among the false teachers since Paul seems to be at pains to express the all-inclusiveness of Christianity (1:20, 28; 3:11). It is significant that in 3:28 Paul states his aim to present every man perfect, since "perfection" was regarded in most Gnostic circles as a privilege of the few.

f. From this somewhat fragmentary evidence it may safely be deduced that the heresy was of syncretistic Jewish-Gnosticizing type. One suggestion is that there

was here a Jewish Gnosis influenced by Iranian ideas. Another is that pagan Phrygian influences were present.

<http://www.theologywebsite.com/nt/colossians.shtml>

Matthew Henry in his commentary describes the cheating appearance of knowledge "after the tradition of men":

II. The fair warning given us of our danger: *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, v. 8.* There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion, such a study of the works of God as leads us to the knowledge of God and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful, which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God, and while it pleases men's fancies ruins their faith; as nice and curious speculations about things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which have only an empty and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world:* this plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or economy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders and the rudiments or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel state; the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. Those who pin their faith on other men's sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, have turned away from following after Christ. The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it and contradiction to it. Now here the apostle shows,

1. That we have in Christ the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law; for example, (1.) Had they then the Shechinah, or special presence of God, called the glory, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ (*v. 9*): *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the

cherubim, in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat; but now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him bodily; not as the body is opposed to the spirit, but as the body is opposed to the shadow. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in the Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man. (2.) Had they circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant? In Christ we are *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands* ([v. 11](#)), by the work of regeneration in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision. *He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart*, [Rom. ii. 29](#). This is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. *It is made without hands*; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are *born of the Spirit*, [John iii. 5](#). And it is *the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit*, [Tit. iii. 5](#). It consists in *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh*, in renouncing sin and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the *putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*, [1 Pet. iii. 21](#). And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of sin. *The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed*, [Rom. vi. 6](#). Christ was circumcised, and, by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that effectual grace which puts off the *body of the sins of the flesh*. Again, The Jews thought themselves complete in the ceremonial law; but we are *complete in Christ*, [v. 10](#). That was imperfect and defective; *if the first covenant had been faultless, there would no place have been sought for the second* ([Heb. viii. 7](#)), and the law was *but a shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect*, [Heb. x. 1](#). But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete sacrifice for sin and revelation of the will of God. *Which is the head of all principality and power*. As the Old-Testament priesthood had its perfection in Christ, so likewise had the kingdom of David, which was the eminent principality and power under the Old Testament, and which the Jews valued themselves so much upon. And he is the Lord and head of all the powers in heaven and earth, of angels and men. *Angels, and authorities,*

and powers are subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22.

2. We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking (v. 12): *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you have risen with him.* We are both buried and rise with him, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is anything in the sign or ceremony of baptism which represents this burying and rising, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's supper: and he is speaking of the *circumcision made without hands*; and says it is *through the faith of the operation of God.* But the thing signified by our baptism is that we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant and an obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are raised with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our living to righteousness, or newness of life. God in baptism engages to be to us a God, and we become engaged to be his people, and by his grace to die to sin and to live to righteousness, or put off the old man and put on the new.

<http://www.apostolic-churches.net/bible/mhc/MHC51002.HTM>

The rest of Colossians chapter three addresses ascetic piety:

**Col 2:16** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

**Col 2:17** Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

**Col 2:18** Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

**Col 2:19** And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

**Col 2:20** Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the

rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

[Col 2:21](#) (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

[Col 2:22](#) Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

[Col 2:23](#) Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Common practices are first identified: the forbidding and judging of certain meats and drink, observance of holy days, the new moon, and the Sabbath (2. 16): worship of angels and excessive humility (2. 18), a too legal adherence to ordinances (2.20), excessive don't do's (touch not, taste not, handle not), all of these identified as fleshly practices (2.23). The Intervarsity Press Commentary summarizes this legalism succinctly:

What finally defines the borders of true Christianity is "being in Christ," where God's grace transforms a people into an alternative faith community. Any definition of Christianity that substitutes regulations of self-denial for self-transformation by the grace of God is spiritually impoverished and finally useless.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

B. W. Johnson in the People's Bible summarizes this section of Colossians in the following way:

**16-19. Let no man therefore judge you.** As the law was nailed to the cross ([verse 14](#)), let no man compel you to keep its ordinances. **In meat, or in drink.** By requiring you to eat only what the Jewish law prescribes ([Lev. 7:10-27](#)). See [Rom. 14:17](#); [1 Cor. 8:8](#); [Heb. 9:10](#). Compare [1 Tim. 4:3](#). **Or in respect of a holy day.** Such as the Passover, Pentecost, etc. **Or of the new moon.** The monthly observances ([Num. 28:11](#)). **Or of the Sabbath day.** The Jewish Sabbath had passed away with the law. **17. Which are a shadow of things to come.** The body, or substance, which casts the shadow is Christ. We are to pay no attention to the shadows since Christ

has come, but to observe what we find in him and the gospel. **18. Let no man beguile you.** Rob you of your reward by his guile. He will do so if you become unworthy of it by a **voluntary humility.** By a humility that is willed, and therefore is affected rather than real. It is probable that the false teachers made a great pretence of humility, and taught a self-abasement, like that of monks clad in sackcloth, or who go barefoot. **And worshiping of angels.** One feature of the heresy against which Paul warned them was angel worship. See [Rev. 19:10](#). Angel worship, the worship of saints, dead or living, of pope, or any created thing, is forbidden. "Worship God," said the angel before whom John bowed. Church history states that at a later period Michael the archangel was worshiped. **Dwelling in the things which he hath seen** (Revision). Claiming special revelations. He refers to "no man." **19. Not holding the Head.** Not clinging to Christ the Head, from whence the whole body, the church, derives its nourishment and increase.

**20-23. Wherefore.** Ye died with Christ, died to the world, and to its **rudiments**, or fleshly ordinances. See note on [verses 8](#) and [12](#). Why, then, as though belonging to the world, should you be subject to obsolete Jewish ordinances? **21. Touch not, etc.** Why are you subject to prohibitions of food and drink which command you to "touch not?" etc. **22. Which all are to perish.** The prohibition applies to "things all of which perishing in the using;" *i. e.*, to food and drink. **After the commandments.** These ordinances, whether Jewish traditions, or those of ascetics, are dependent upon the [231] commands and teachings of men. **23. Which things.** The doctrines just condemned. **Have a show of wisdom.** But only a show. **In will-worship.** Self-imposed, arbitrary worship. **And humility.** Ostentatious humility. **And severity to the body.** By starving it and refusing proper food. This implies that these teachers demanded mortifications of the flesh, such as have been always commended in the Romish church. **But are not of any value.** They have no efficacy in overcoming the lusts of the flesh. In the [first verse of the next chapter](#) we are told the only way of overcoming the flesh. In this chapter can be discovered traces of the ascetic spirit which a few centuries later became so dominant in the church. It is well to note that it is placed under the condemnation of the Holy Spirit.

<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/bjohnson/hg1/PNT12-02.HTM>

David Guzik has argued that Paul counters gnostic mysticism and excessive legalism in the last section of Colossians two:

6. (18-19) Paul rebukes the strange mysticism of the Colossian heresy

a. *False humility* and the *worship of angels* must be distinctives of the Colossian heresy (as they were of the Essenes)

b. These things do not make one more spiritual; *holding fast to the Head* (Jesus) does

c. When these strange, mystical movements arise in the church, they don't appeal to the *whole body*, but only to a few "elites" - not so in God's plan; He wants *all the body* to grow together

d. *Grows with the increase which is from God* is God's plan for church growth; God gives the increase, we are called to be faithful in our calling

i. Where does the increase come from? The ingenuity of man, or the power of God?

ii. If size is the only measure of God's blessing, then cultic groups are very blessed.

7. (20-23) Paul rebukes the essence of legalism

a. *Do not, do not, do not* is a perfect definition of legalistic religion, defined more by what we *don't do* than by what we *do*

b. Christianity is a moral religion; it does have its clear boundaries. But at its foundation, Christianity is a religion of *positive action*

c. Legalism is when the *doctrines of men* are promoted as the law of God

i. Example: the idea that smoking is a sin; it may be a filthy habit - but it is not prohibited by the law of God

ii. Where the Word of God prohibits (such as with sexual conduct outside of marriage) we can prohibit; where it is silent, it is a matter between the individual and God

d. Verse 23 is the greatest indictment against legalism in the Bible; at the bottom line, legalism's rules have no value in restraining the flesh

i. All your rules may have an *appearance* of wisdom - but they have no real value

ii. The legalistic pastor runs off with the church secretary: how often has it happened? The rules don't restrain the flesh, they *feed* the flesh in a subtle, powerful way

iii. *Self-imposed religion* is man reaching to God, trying to justify himself by keeping a list of rules; Christianity is God reaching down to man in love through Christ

<http://www.calvarychapel.com/>

Dr. Sidney Davis, Jr. insists that much of Colossians 2.16 and 17 have been misunderstood as Paul's opposition to semitic practices: <http://www.sabbathmorefully.org/Colossians3.html>

Paul says the annual Holy Days and the Sabbath are currently shadows of things to come.

**Paul does not say that they were shadows that were fulfilled at the coming of Christ.**

**From this we know that the events they foreshadow have not been completed yet; therefore, the shadows still have relevance.**

**Instead of doing away with God's Sabbath and the Holy Days, this passage of Scripture, when understood correctly, affirms them and shows that the Colossian Church was actually keeping them.**

**It is not the LAW that Paul is focusing on here in Colossians, it is the FORGIVENESS of God and the completeness in Christ. We can today like the Colossian Christians find in the holy days of which the Sabbath is a part a continuing relevancy and meaning as we study and celebrate them in the body of Christ.**



# Chapter 3

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[Col 3:1](#) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

[Col 3:2](#) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

[Col 3:3](#) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

[Col 3:4](#) When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

[Col 3:5](#) Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

[Col 3:6](#) For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

[Col 3:7](#) In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

[Col 3:8](#) But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

[Col 3:9](#) Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

[Col 3:10](#) And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

[Col 3:11](#) Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

**Col 3:12** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

**Col 3:13** Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

**Col 3:14** And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

**Col 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

**Col 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**Col 3:17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

**Col 3:18** Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

**Col 3:19** Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

**Col 3:20** Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

**Col 3:21** Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.

**Col 3:22** Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

**Col 3:23** And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

**Col 3:24** Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

**Col 3:25** But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.



# Interpretation 3

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The third chapter of Colossians addresses concrete ways in which Christ's sufficiency enables believers to live victoriously:

Paul outlines three areas in which Christ's sufficiency does enable and should motivate believers to grow in grace. Although Paul packages this entire section with imperatives, beneath the surface is the fact of Christ's sufficiency for sanctification (or else the commands would be irrelevant). (1) His sufficiency enables believers to grow individually—that is, in relation to the flesh (3:5-17). This is because believers have already put off the old man (3:5-11; cf. 3:9) and have put on the new man (3:12-17; cf. 3:10). Thus, their battle against sin is rooted in their changed nature—a direct result of the sufficiency of Christ applied. (2) Christ's sufficiency enables believers to act responsibly in the extended home (3:18–4:1). Wives should submit to their husbands (3:18) and husbands should love their wives (3:19); children should obey their parents (3:20) and fathers must not embitter their children (3:21); slaves should obey their masters (3:22-25) and masters should take care of their slaves properly (4:1). (3) Christ's sufficiency enables believers to focus on the needs of others (4:2-6). Thus, they are required to be devoted to prayer for Paul and his companions—especially that they might gain opportunity in their evangelistic efforts (4:2-4); and believers should themselves make the most of their opportunities in sharing their faith (4:5-6).

The epistle closes with final greetings in which the letter-bearer, Tychicus, is commended (4:7-9), and Paul's co-laborers (4:10-14) and Paul himself (4:15-18) send their greetings.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/colotl.htm>

The IVP New Testament Commentary on Colossians remarks on the importance of understanding Paul's use of the indicative (fact) and imperative (command) in Colossians 3:

The language of this passage reflects the cosmic idiom of Colossian Christology (compare 1:15-20), and the ideas it expresses are thoroughly Pauline. Three of these ideas are especially important for understanding his moral instruction. The first is discerned from the grammar of the passage. As elsewhere in his writings, Paul integrates indicative verbs (those indicating facts) with imperative verbs (those that demand something of the reader). Many scholars have recognized the importance of this grammatical relationship for Paul and have explored its significance. In my opinion, the interplay between indicative and imperative moods of the same verb within a passage expresses the logical connection between what one believes and the way one lives (compare "walk by the Spirit" in Gal 5:16, 25). If we trust what Paul proclaims to be true--that the indicatives or facts of God's salvation are found in Christ Jesus--then we also must trust that God's grace will transform us so that we are able to live in accord with God's perfect will. Our minds are *in fact* renewed to know God's will; our sin nature has *in fact* been "crucified with Christ" and replaced with the Spirit of the Risen Christ. The result is that our vices are exchanged for virtue. For Paul, the transformed life is the moral result of our participation in Christ's work and helps to validate our public confession that he is indeed God's Christ and creation's Lord.

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

What Paul is up to in chapter 3 of Colossians is then summarized by IVP Commentary as structurally presented:

The second emphasis of Pauline ethics is discerned from the literary structure of this opening passage. The christological foundation for ethics is made clear by the four explicit references to Christ in 3:1-4, all of which are located at the center of the passage. Especially important in my view is the coupling of an article with each of Paul's four references to Christ. This grammatical strategy is quite unusual and may

well stress the decisive importance of Christ for what follows (see Harris 1991:136).

The last two references to Christ in verses 3 and 4 form the center of an inverted parallelism and thereby give readers a visual aid to confirm Christ's central importance for life:

3: (A) Your life (*he zoe hymon*) . . . (B) with Christ (*syn to Christo*);

4: (B') When Christ (*hotan ho Christos*), (A') who is your life (*he zoe hymon*).

This foundational conviction of the moral life is fleshed out in what follows (3:5--4:1). This passage includes three codes of Christian conduct (3:5-10; 3:12-16; 3:18--4:1), each of which concludes with a summary statement of Pauline ethics (3:11, 17; 4:1). These three summary statements include a christological confession that recalls the central importance of Christ's lordship for the community's obedient response to God's will

Let's look at the introduction and these three codes and summary statements:

**Col 3:1** If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

**Col 3:2** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

**Col 3:3** For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

**Col 3:4** When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Verse one sets a hypothetical condition with the "If ye then be risen with Christ..." followed by a moral imperative: "Set your affection on things

above, not on things on the earth." The old self is dead (3), and life now is Christ: "your life is hid with Christ in God."

Code 1:

**Col 3:5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

**Col 3:6** For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

**Col 3:7** In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

**Col 3:8** But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

**Col 3:9** Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

**Col 3:10** And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Summary:

**Col 3:11** Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all.

With the old self dead, the new life is to evidence itself by abstaining from the worldly practices of fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication. Why? The Christological principle is unity in Christ: "Christ is all, and in all." The new self is renewed in knowledge "after the image of him that created him." Consider *Intervarsity Press's Commentary* on the revolution effected by the death of Christ:

I would contend that the genius of Paul's ethical teaching is not the various codes he provides to describe the moral life. They contain nothing new; in fact, Paul's Judaism offered a much more comprehensive morality than did his Christianity.

Indeed, Torah had already codified God's will. For Paul the problem is practical; it has to do with the sorts of persons we are and whether we are actually able to do God's will. Thus, Paul's moral innovation stems from his christological monotheism. His claim is that in Christ we not only are forgiven and redeemed by God but are also transformed into new persons, capable of knowing and doing the will of God. Nothing less than a moral revolution was triggered by the death and resurrection of Jesus!

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Code 2:

**Col 3:12** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

**Col 3:13** Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

**Col 3:14** And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

**Col 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

**Col 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Summary:

**Col 3:17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

In the second code, Paul moves from the negative "put off" pagan vice to the positive "put on" Christian virtue: renewed in the knowledge and image of God, Christians are put on mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, longsuffering, charity, and peace; the word of Christ is to dwell within the

Christian as wisdom, resulting in joy: teaching, admonishing, and singing. Summarizing, Paul reminds Christians that what they do in the name of the Lord Jesus is also done to the Father.

The tone of Paul's moral exhortation changes from negative to positive as he shifts his attention from pagan vice to Christian virtue. This shift of emphasis reflects the natural movement of conversion out of darkness into light. In the previous passage Paul addresses the community as a "new self" because with Christ they have put to death the "old self" and have risen to newness of life. In this passage Paul defines Christian character rather than prescribes rules to obey. For him, morality is a matter of what sort of person one becomes in Christ, where one "puts on" the capacity for doing the good that God has willed. Therefore, believers are transformed by the working of divine grace into people who have the character to do God's will. This new character results in and is clearly demonstrated by transformed relationships within the church (3:12-17) and the home (3:18--4:1).

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Building upon the foundation of a transformed self and a transformed set of relationships within the church, Paul next addresses family relationships in the final code:

Code 3

**Col 3:18** Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

**Col 3:19** Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

**Col 3:20** Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

**Col 3:21** Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.

**Col 3:22** Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;

[Col 3:23](#) And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

[Col 3:24](#) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

[Col 3:25](#) But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

### Summary

[Col 4:1](#) Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

The Intersociety Press Commentary rightly sees that Paul's purpose is christological and eschatological:

With closer scrutiny, however, we should find critical differences between the secular and Christian worlds and between their codes for family conduct. For example, Paul calls his readers to observe his code for reasons that are both christological (3:18: as is fitting in the Lord) and eschatological (3:24: you will receive an inheritance from the Lord ). That is, his reasons are religious and not societal. Further, the egalitarian sociology of God's people (see 3:11) is radically different from the hierarchy and patriarchy of the Jewish and Roman worlds. Where the new age has dawned in Christ, people are valued as equals regardless of their station or role. The believer's way of seeing has been transformed by divine grace, and this renewal of the mind has resulted in a new sense of being and a new capacity for doing. In this sense, then, calls to submit to or love another mean something very different for the believer than for the nonbeliever. In fact, Paul, who teaches that God's grace works within the community to produce a distinctively virtuous life (3:12-17), would no doubt argue that without our participation with Christ in God's saving work the intent of such household rules is corrupted so that they produce only vice (see 3:5-9).

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When Paul is read correctly in Colossians, he does not advocate

submissiveness: relationships are built and grounded in Christian love. Recall the mystery of verses three and four:

**Col 3:3** For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

**Col 3:4** When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The normal distinctions are erased and replaced by an equalitarian sociology where individuals are valued as equals. The reader should note, too, that Paul addresses husbands, telling them to love their wives; children, the resulting creation of the husband-wife relationship, telling them to obey their parents (mother and father); Paul then addresses relationships in which typically one individual is perceived as stronger than the other, an outcome that Paul sees as a matter of flesh and not spirit: fathers are not to provoke their children, and servants are to obey masters according to the flesh. All, however, is to be done with singleness of heart and heartily as to the Lord (23). Once again, the Intervarsity Press Commentary renders the morality exactly:

Paul's general concern stems from the deeper logic of his gospel, introduced in the opening thanksgiving: ideas about God are embodied in action toward others, and only the truth about God's grace can produce holiness and peace in human lives. In this light, Paul has made three critical points in his description of the Christian life.

First, Christian morality is properly motivated by mindfulness of the "things above," where the enthroned Christ is found (3:1-4). When people confess Christ's lordship over all creation (1:15-20), they will resist the separation of morality into compartments, one spiritual and the other material. The values of God and the norms of God's reign, which Jesus incarnated during his messianic mission, inform all spheres of the church's conduct. In this sense, the believer's public conduct, whether in word or deed, will be at odds with the values of the secular order, whether at work or at home.

Second, Christian morality is set within the new creation (3:9-10), an egalitarian community (3:11), which has "put to death" by God's grace all vices that result in death rather than life and therefore undermine God's purposes for creation.

Third, the new life that characterizes the faith community now hidden with Christ in God (3:1-4) bears witness to God through Christ by word and deed (3:12-17).

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Matthew Henry analyzes Colossians three into a section addressing spiritual life and the need to mortify sin and a section recommending love and relative duties. He says of chapter three, " The apostle, having described our privileges by Christ in the former part of the epistle, and our discharge from the yoke of the ceremonial law, comes here to press upon us our duty as inferred thence." He goes on in his conclusion to remark on Paul's broad understanding of duty:

It is probable that the apostle has a particular respect, in all these instances of duty, to the case mentioned 1 Cor. vii. of relations of a different religion, as a Christian and heathen, a Jewish convert and an uncircumcised Gentile, where there was room to doubt whether they were bound to fulfil the proper duties of their several relations to such persons. And, if it hold in such cases, it is much stronger upon Christians one towards another, and where both are of the same religion. And how happy would the gospel religion make the world, if it every where prevailed; and how much would it influence every state of things and every relation of life!

<http://www.apostolic-churches.net/bible/mhc/MHC51003.HTM>

From husband to wife to children, Paul moves to the master-slave relationship:

Paul completes the Colossian Haustafel by turning his attention to slave masters. Already he has described the sociology of the community located by God's grace in Christ, which makes "slave and free" equal because they are both in Christ and he in them (3:11). It should not surprise the reader, then, that Paul promotes an alternative understanding of the Roman institution of slavery. The gospel does not necessarily seek to reverse the social arrangements between slave and master; in this case, Paul does not exhort the master to

emancipate the slaves (however, see Philemon). Rather, his instruction is for the master to provide slaves with what is right and fair-- something any virtuous person would do (compare 3:12). Although other codes in the ancient world also encouraged the humane treatment of slaves (see O'Brien 1982:232), the issue for Paul is where one finds the moral competency to do what the code outlines. The requisite virtue to do what is right and fair belongs to the "new creatures" found in Christ.

However, Paul's teaching also presses the christological incentive behind such behavior: you know that you also have a Master in heaven-- mind the "things above"! The relationship between earthly masters and the heavenly Master provides the moral impetus for just treatment of household workers. Further, if the phrase "Master in heaven" alludes to 3:1-4, as most commentators suppose, then it conveys an eschatological meaning as well. According to the Jewish moral tradition, inhumane treatment of slaves would bring down the Lord Almighty's wrath on Judgment Day (compare Jas 5:1-5). According to Paul's teaching, a relationship with Christ transforms all earthly relationships, including those between masters and slaves. So the Christian master, transformed by God's grace, will naturally treat slaves fairly and will therefore "appear with [Christ] in glory" (3:4).

<http://bible.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/webcommentary>

Nave's Topical Bible introduces into Paul's admonition for Christians to set their affections on things above and not on earth a list of possible competing affections:

Affections  
(Bible links not active)

Should be supremely set upon God  
[Deuteronomy 6:5](#); [Mark 12:30](#)

- Should be set upon the commandments of God  
[Psalms 19:8-10](#); [119:20,97,103,167](#)

- Should be set upon the house and worship of God  
1 Chronicles 29:3; Psalms 26:8; 27:4; 84:1,2
- Should be set upon the people of God  
Psalms 16:3; Romans 12:10; 2 Corinthians 7:13-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:8
- Should be set upon heavenly things  
Colossians 3:1,2
- Should be zealously engaged for God  
Psalms 69:9; 119:139; Galatians 4:18
- Christ claims the first place in  
Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26
- Enkindled by communion with Christ  
Luke 24:32
- Blessedness of making God the object of  
Psalms 91:14
- Should not grow cold  
Psalms 106:12,13; Matthew 24:12; Galatians 4:15; Revelation 2:4

- Of saints, supremely set on God  
Psalms 42:1; 73:25; 119:10
  
- Of the wicked, not sincerely set on God  
Isaiah 58:1,2; Ezekiel 33:31,32; Luke 8:13
  
- Carnal, should be mortified  
Romans 8:13; 13:14; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5
  
- Carnal affections crucified in saints  
Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:24
  
- False teachers seek to captivate  
Galatians 1:10; 4:17; 2 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:3,18; Revelation 2:14,20
  
- Of the wicked, are unnatural and perverted  
Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3; 2 Peter 2:10

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# Chapter 4

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[Col 4:1](#) Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

[Col 4:2](#) Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

[Col 4:3](#) Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

[Col 4:4](#) That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

[Col 4:5](#) Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

[Col 4:6](#) Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

[Col 4:7](#) All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

[Col 4:8](#) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

[Col 4:9](#) With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.

[Col 4:10](#) Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

[Col 4:11](#) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only *are my* fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

**Col 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.

**Col 4:13** For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

**Col 4:14** Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

**Col 4:15** Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

**Col 4:16** And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

**Col 4:17** And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

**Col 4:18** The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

# Interpretation 4

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Structurally, chapter four of Colossians advocates believers to continue in prayer, remain watchful, and give thanks. Paul shows his concern for "outsiders" by advising Christians to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Redeeming the time suggests eschatology. Believers' speech should evidence grace, seasoned with salt to allow them to answer to every man. Before a salutation, Paul names several individuals important to the ongoing evangelism.

The Intersociety Press Commentary interprets Paul's remarks in his benediction as showing the practical authority of Paul's apostleship:

Paul includes various instructions (4:7-9, 16-17) and personal greetings (4:10-15) in the letter's benediction to guide the church's response toward his coworkers. In one sense, these concluding words show the practical authority of Paul's apostleship: virtually everyone he mentions is given identity within the congregation by relationship to him. This is clearest in the instructions he gives for receiving Tychicus (see below, commentary on 4:7-9). Paul defines the congregation's vocation by his own. Therefore, while some continue to inspect this passage for clues to help reconstruct the chronology of Paul's life, its principal value remains theological: Paul's primary interest is to gird up his apostolic authority to strengthen the prospect for a successful evangelistic campaign, in keeping, then, with his preceding exhortation.

It is a prospect that seems imperiled. Paul refers to his imprisonment three times in this benediction (4:3, 10, 18) and says that he is sending Tychicus in order to tell the Colossians about our circumstances (4:8), presumably difficult. His cryptic aside about Mark (4:10) may suggest some internal

strife within the mission's leadership (compare Acts 15:36-41); even Archippus's instructions (4:17) seem odd unless it is necessary for Paul to exhort him to complete the work. Further, Paul's strong and extraordinary endorsement of Epaphras (4:13) is unnecessary, given his previous association with this congregation (1:7-8), unless there is some trouble in his relationship with the Colossian believers (see introduction, and also my comments on 1:7-8). Lastly, Paul's admission that only a few Jews participated with him in the Gentile mission (4:11) may reflect the growing rift between the church and synagogue as well as between Gentiles and Jews within the church (Acts 15:1-4; 21:17-26; Gal 2:1--3:5).

Against this backdrop, then, Paul uses this letter's benediction to bolster support for his mission within a troubled community so that their prayers (4:2-6) and his (1:8-9) will not be in vain.

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The individuals mentioned each have a significant role in the ongoing evangelism. Tychichus, according to Intervarsity, is Paul designate to continue the ministry at Colosse:

Paul often uses benedictions for personal commendations, often to solicit support for a colleague. The apostle's introduction of Tychicus to the Colossians carries considerable weight. He is more than a courier of personal regard--someone sent by Paul to field questions about his imprisonment so that the believers can pray more effectively for him (Wright 1987:155). The titles Paul gives Tychicus, dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant, suggest a role more important than that of a messenger. He was, in O'Brien's words, "a particularly valued colleague" (1982:247). In fact, the title faithful minister (diakonos, literally "servant," from which we derive "deacon") is used earlier to describe the ministry of both Epaphras (1:7) and Paul himself (1:23). Moreover, the title fellow servant (syndoulos) is used earlier (1:7) to describe Epaphras as one who participates equally with Paul in the Gentile mission. In effect, Tychicus is Paul's own designate to continue the ministry, at least at Colosse, during his imprisonment. Epaphras would have been the natural person

for this ministry, since he first brought the gospel to Colosse; however, apparently his relationship with the Colossians is troubled and requires Paul's intervention (4:12-13).

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Tychicus' importance is revealed through a literary device, the chiasmus:

he sends Tychicus as minister and servant to encourage [their] hearts--the very purpose Paul has assigned to himself (2:2).

This point is highlighted by the chiastic pattern of the text itself. Recall that a chiasmus is a literary device that arranges words and ideas into two parallel and inverted passages, with an odd member placed at the vertex, where the two passages intersect (ABCDC'B'A'). The odd phrase found at the vertex (D) helps the reader locate the passage's principal idea. Consider verses 7-9 in this light:

A Tychicus will tell you all the news about me (v. 7a).

B He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord (v. 7b).

C I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances (v. 8a)

D and that he may encourage your hearts (v. 8b).

C' He is coming with Onesimus (v. 9a),

B' our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you (v. 9b).

A' They will tell you everything that is happening here (9c).

The chiastic shape helps us to identify the most important ingredient in the instructions Paul sends to the Colossians: that [Tychicus] may encourage your hearts. Paul's chief interest is that his ministry continue through Tychicus during his imprisonment (see Lohse 1971:171). The chiasmus also subordinates Onesimus to Tychicus, for it is the latter who is central to Paul's plans and additionally is called faithful minister. The credential added to Onesimus, who is one of you (4:9), suggests that his task is to help Tychicus gain entry into this Colossian community.

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In 10-11, Paul mentioned three Jewish colleagues positively--Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus--who may, in fact, belong to the party "from the circumcised." Paul next implies that Timothy probably will come to Colosse. Epaphras, as Intervarsity points out, has a special relationship with Colosse, perhaps as the founding father of the congregation. Epaphras's prayer that the Colossian believers stand firm in all the will of God (compare 1:9) indicates his commitment to them. Importantly, maturity for Paul means seeking perfection in Christ:

According to O'Brien, the word mature (*teleios*) "touches on one of the key issues at Colosse in which members of the congregation were encouraged by false teachers to seek maturity or perfection through their philosophy (2:8) with its ascetic practices, visionary experiences and special revelations, rather than through Christ" (1982:253). Paul also uses this word to summarize his and God's purpose for mission: "so that we may present everyone perfect [*teleios*] in Christ" (1:28). The second term, fully assured (*plerophoreo*), belongs to the *pleroo* word-family, which Paul has used in confessing the core convictions of Colossian Christianity (1:9, 19; see also 4:17), in introducing his own mission (1:25; 2:2) and in arguing against the false teaching in Colosse (2:9-10). Paul's use of these two catchwords in describing the aim of Epaphras's prayer for the Colossians ties Epaphras with Paul in both the Colossian crisis and its resolution (see Lohse 1972:173-74).

This also may explain why Paul adds his extraordinary testimony of Epaphras's tireless campaign in the Lycus valley: I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. If we understand this comment in the light of the preceding one, Paul's reference to Epaphras's working hard may well combine with his wrestling in prayer for you to create a more favorable impression of him (so Schweizer 1972:240-41; Harris 1991:210-11). I am more inclined, however, to see it as a digression (as does O'Brien 1982:254), which allows Paul to vouch for Epaphras's commitment to the Colossian believers.

But why should Paul think his support for Epaphras is necessary now? Again, my speculation is that Epaphras, who is the principal architect of Colossian Christianity, has been

discredited at home for some unknown reason, and that this has imperiled the work of the Gentile mission there. The coupling of vouch (from the word for "martyr," martyreo) with working hard (ponos, which emphasizes the painful outcome of hard labor) recalls the book of Revelation, where the faithful testimony (martyria, Rev 6:9) of the true disciple results in "pain" at the hands of evil powers and in the coming of Christ to bring this suffering to an end (ponos, Rev 21:4). Perhaps here too Paul uses these words to indicate that Epaphras is an exemplar of faithfulness, against the opinion of certain opponents.

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And finally, Paul says that Luke, Demas, Nymphas salute you:

Luke and Demas are joined together as they are in 2 Timothy 4:10-11; in the letter to Timothy, however, Demas has sadly deserted Paul "because he loved this world" (2 Tim 4:10), and Paul is left with only Luke. Whether Nympha is male (Nymphas) or female continues to be debated, since both forms are found in extant manuscripts of Colossians (O'Brien 1982:256). The question carries greater significance if a house church was generally led by the person who owned the home. If the homeowner here is a woman, as the NIV translation assumes, then a case could be made that female leadership was a part of the landscape of earliest Christianity. (Note also Paul's references to Priscilla in Rom 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:19, and Luke's narrative about Lydia in Acts 16, especially vv. 15, 40).

Matthew Henry in his commentary, also, provides extensive information about these individuals:

In the close of this epistle the apostle does several of his friends the honour to leave their names upon record, with some testimony of his respect, which will be spoken of wherever the gospel comes, and last to the end of the world.

I. Concerning Tychicus, v. 7. By him this epistle was sent; and he does not give them an account in writing of his present state, because Tychicus would do it by word of mouth more

fully and particularly. He knew they would be glad to hear how it fared with him. The churches cannot but be concerned for good ministers and desirous to know their state. He gives him this character, *A beloved brother and faithful minister*. Paul, though a great apostle, owns a faithful minister for a brother and a beloved brother. Faithfulness in any one is truly lovely, and renders him worthy our affection and esteem. *And a fellow-servant in the Lord*. Ministers are servants to Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and capacities of service. Observe, It adds much to the beauty and strength of the gospel ministry when ministers are thus loving and condescending one to another, and by all just means support and advance one another's reputation. Paul sent him not only to tell them of his affairs, but to bring him an account of theirs: *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts, v. 8*. He was willing to hear from them as they could be to hear from him, and thought himself as much obliged to sympathize with them as he thought them obliged to sympathize with him. It is a great comfort, under the troubles and difficulties of life, to have the mutual concern of fellow-christians.

II. Concerning Onesimus (*v. 9*): *With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*. He was sent back from Rome along with Tychicus. This was he whom Paul had begotten in his bonds, *Philem. 10*. He had been servant to Philemon, and was a member, if not a minister, of their church. He was converted at Rome, whither he had fled from his master's service; and was now sent back, it is probable, with the epistle to Philemon, to introduce him again into his master's family. Observe, Though he was a poor servant, and had been a bad man, yet, being now a convert, Paul calls him *a faithful and beloved brother*. The meanest circumstance of life, and greatest wickedness of former life, make no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere Christians: they partake of the same privileges, and are entitles to the same regards. *The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all those that believe; for there is no difference (Rom. iii. 22)*: and *there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28*. Perhaps this was some time after he was converted and sent back to Philemon, and by this time he had

entered into the ministry, because Paul calls him a brother.

III. *Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner.* Those who join in services and sufferings should be thereby engaged to one another in holy love. Paul had a particular affection for his fellow-servants and his fellow-prisoners.

IV. *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas.* This is supposed to be the same who wrote the gospel which bears his name. *If he come unto you receive him.* Paul had a quarrel with Barnabas upon the account of this Mark, who was his nephew, and *thought not good to take him with them, because he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, Acts xv. 38.* He would not take Mark with him, but took Silas, because Mark had deserted them; and yet Paul is not only reconciled to him himself, but recommends him to the respect of the churches, and gives a great example of a truly Christian forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forget as well as forgive. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, Gal. vi. 1.*

V. Here is one who is called *Jesus*, which is the Greek name for the Hebrew *Joshua*. *If Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day, Heb. iv. 8.* *Who is called Justus.* It is probable that he changed his name for that of Justus, in honour to the name of the Redeemer. Or else Jesus was his Jewish name, for he was of the circumcision; and Justus his Roman or Latin name. *These are my fellow-labourers unto the kingdom of God, who have been a comfort unto me.* Observe, What comfort the apostle had in the communion of saints and ministers! One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, who were working out their own salvation and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take great comfort in those who are their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship and converse together are a great refreshment under the sufferings and difficulties in their way.

VI. *Epaphras (v. 12),* the same with *Epaphroditus*. He is *one of you*, one of your church; *he salutes you*, or sends his

service to you, and his best affections and wishes. *Always labouring fervently for you in prayers.* Epaphras had learned of Paul to be much in prayer for his friends. Observe, 1. In what manner he prayed for them. He laboured in prayer, laboured fervently, and always laboured fervently for them. Those who would succeed in prayer must take pains in prayer; and we must be earnest in prayer, not only for ourselves, but for others also. It is the effectual fervent prayer which is the prevailing prayer, and availeth much ([Jam. v. 16](#)), and *Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, v. 17.* 2. What is the matter of this prayer: *That you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* Observe, To stand perfect and complete in the will of God is what we should earnestly desire both for ourselves and others. We must stand complete in all the will of God; in the will of his precepts by a universal obedience, and in the will of his providence by a cheerful submission to it: and we stand perfect and complete in both by constancy and perseverance unto the end. The apostle was witness for Epaphras that he had a great zeal for them: "*I bear him record; I can testify for him that he has a great concern for you, and that all he does for you proceeds from a warm desire for your good.*" And his zeal extended to all about them: to *those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.* He had a great concern for the Christian interest in the neighbouring places, as well as among them.

VII. *Luke* is another here mentioned, whom he calls the *beloved physician.* This is he who wrote the Gospel and Acts, and was Paul's companion. Observe, He was both a physician and an evangelist. Christ himself both taught and healed, and was the great physician as well as prophet of the church. He was the beloved physician; one who recommended himself more than ordinary to the affections of his friends. Skill in physic is a useful accomplishment in a minister and may be improved to more extensive usefulness and greater esteem among Christians.

VIII. *Demas.* Whether this was written before the second epistle to Timothy or after is not certain. There we read ([2 Tim. iv. 10](#)), *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.* Some have thought that this epistle was written after; and then it is an evidence that, though Demas forsook Paul, yet he did not forsake Christ; or he forsook him

but for a time, and recovered himself again, and Paul forgave him and owned him as a brother. But others think more probably that this epistle was written before the other; this in *anno* 62, that in 66, and then it is an evidence how considerable a man Demas was, who yet afterwards revolted. Many who have made a great figure in profession, and gained a great name among Christians, have yet shamefully apostatized: *They went forth from us, because they were not of us, [1 John ii. 19](#)*.

IX. The *brethren in Laodicea* are here mentioned, as living in the neighbourhood of Colosse: and Paul sends salutations to them, and orders that this epistle should be read in the church of the Laodiceans ([v. 16](#)), that a copy of it should be sent thither, to be read publicly in their congregation. And some think Paul sent another epistle at this time to Laodicea, and ordered them to send for that from Laodicea, and read it in their church: *And that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea*. If so, that epistle is now lost, and did not belong to the canon; for all the epistles which the apostles ever wrote were not preserved, any more than the words and actions of our blessed Lord. *There are many other things which Jesus did, which if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books which would be written, [John xxi. 25](#)*. But some think it was the epistle to the Ephesians, which is still extant.

X. *Nymphas* is mentioned ([v. 15](#)) as one who lived at Colosse, and had a church in his house; that is, either a religious family, where the several parts of worship were daily performed; or some part of the congregation met there, when they had no public places of worship allowed, and they were forced to assemble in private houses for fear of their enemies. *The disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews ([John xx. 19](#))*, and the apostle preached in his *own lodging and hired house, [Acts xxviii. 23, 30](#)*. In the former sense it showed his exemplary piety; in the latter his zeal and public spirit.

XI. Concerning *Archippus*, who was one of their ministers at Colosse. They are bidden to admonish him to mind his work as a minister, to *take heed to it, and to fulfil it*--to be diligent and careful of all the parts of it, and to persevere in it

unto the end. They must attend to the main design of their ministry, without troubling themselves or the people with things foreign to it, or of less moment. Observe, (1.) The ministry we have received is a great honour; for it is *received in the Lord*, and is by his appointment and command. (2.) Those who have received it must fulfil it, or do the full duty of it. Those betray their trust, and will have a sad account at last, who *do this work of the Lord negligently*. (3.) The people may put their ministers in mind of their duty, and excite them to it: *Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry*, though no doubt with decency and respect, not from pride and conceit.

XII. Concerning himself ([v. 18](#)): *The salutation of me Paul. Remember my bonds*. He had a scribe to write all the rest of the epistle, but these words he wrote with his own hand: *Remember my bonds*. He does not say, "Remember I am a prisoner, and send me supply;" but, "Remember I am in bonds as the apostle of the Gentiles, and let this confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ:" it adds weight to this exhortation: *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy, Eph. iv. 1*. "Grace be with you. The favour of God, and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and be your portion."

<http://www.apostolic-churches.net/bible/mhc/MHC51004.HTM>

# Links

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[Jeanie C. Crain Study of Ephesians](#) Links page contains sources for study of Paul

[Intervarsity Press Commentary](#)

[Hebrew Version of the World English Bible Colossians](#)

[Colossians Web Page](#) Excellent set of links

[David B. Wallace, Ph. D Colossians](#)

[John Nelson Darby](#)

[Peter Bercovitz As Paul Tells It](#) (lots of links)

[FrontLine The First Christians](#)

[Robert Price The Evolution of the Pauline Canon](#)

[The Paul Page New Perspective](#)

[Paul and the Pauline Epistles](#)

[Jeff Richardson Study of Colossians](#)

[The People's New Testament Colossians](#)

[Jason Dulle A Comparison of Ephesians and Colossians](#)

[David Guzik's Commentary on Commentary on Colossians](#)

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[Scripture References Book of Colossians](#)

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# Outlines

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## Outlines to Colossians

### 1. IntersVarsity Press

Paul's Greeting (1:1-2)

Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3-12)

The Foundation of Faith: God's Grace in Christ (1:13-23)

The New Exodus (1:13-14)

The New Creation (1:15-20)

The New Age (1:21-23)

Paul's Defense of His Ministry (1:23--2:3)

[Return to the Bible Gateway](#)

### 2. Mark Copeland

OUTLINE: INTRODUCTION (1:1-14) 1. Salutation (1-2) 2. Thanksgiving and prayer (3-14) I. THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST (1:15-23) A. IN CREATION (1:15-17) 1. The image of the invisible God (1:15a) 2. The first-born over all creation (1:15b-17) B. IN REDEMPTION (1:18-23) 1. The head of the body, the church (1:18a) 2. The beginning, the first-born from the dead (1:18b) 3. That He might have preeminence in all things (1:18c) a. In Whom all the fullness dwells (1:19) b. In Whom all things are to be reconciled to God (1:20) c. The Colossians as a case in point (1:21-23) II. THE APOSTLE OF CHRIST (1:24-2:7) A. PAUL'S SERVICE (1:24-29) 1. His joy in suffering for them (1:24) 2. His ministry (1:25-29) a. A stewardship to proclaim the mystery of God now revealed (1:25-27) b. A labor to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (1:28-29) B. PAUL'S SOLICITUDE (2:1-7) 1. His great concern for them (2:1-3) 2. Reasons for this concern (2:4-5) 3. Exhortations to be firmly established in Christ (2:6-7) III. WARNINGS AGAINST THE "COLOSSIAN HERESY" (2:8-23) A. WARNING AGAINST PHILOSOPHY (2:8-10) 1. Beware of being cheated by philosophy and empty deceit (2:8) 2. In Christ dwells the fullness of God, and you are complete in Him (2:9-10) B. WARNING AGAINST JUDAISTIC CEREMONIALISM (2:11-17) 1. In Christ you have a circumcision made without hands (2:11-12) 2. You are made alive in Christ, and the handwriting of requirements that was against us has been taken away at the cross (2:13-15) 3. Therefore don't let anyone judge you in

regards to food, festivals, or sabbath days (2:16-17) C. WARNING AGAINST ANGEL WORSHIP (2:18-19) 1. Don't let anyone defraud you of your reward by appealing to angel worship and imagined visions of a fleshly mind (2:18) 2. Such people do not hold fast to Christ as the Head, and from whom true divine nourishment comes (2:19) D. WARNING AGAINST ASCETICISM (2:20-23) 1. Having died with Christ to the world, there is no need to submit to human ordinances (2:20-22) 2. While having appearances of wisdom, such practices have no value in controlling the indulgences of the flesh (2:23) IV. THE CHRISTIAN SOLUTION (3:1-4:6) A. SET YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE (3:1-4) 1. Since you were raised with Christ, seek those things above (3:1-2) 2. For you have died and your life is now hidden in Christ, to be revealed when He appears (3:3-4) B. PUT OFF THE OLD MAN (3:5-9) 1. Put to death your members here on the earth, for the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience (3:5-7) 2. Put off the old man with his deeds (3:8-9) C. PUT ON THE NEW MAN (3:10-17) 1. Put on the new man, renewed in the image of our Creator (3:10-11) 2. As God's elect, put on Christ-like qualities (3:12-14) 3. Let God's peace rule in your hearts, and be thankful (3:15) 4. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with song and singing with grace in your hearts (3:16) 5. Do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, with thanksgiving (3:17) D. FAMILIAL RESPONSIBILITIES (3:18-4:1) 1. Wives toward their husbands (3:18) 2. Husbands toward their wives (3:19) 3. Children toward their parents (3:20) 4. Fathers toward their children (3:21) 5. Servants toward their masters (3:22-25) 6. Masters toward their servants (4:1) E. EXHORTATIONS TO PRAYER AND PROPER CONDUCT (4:2-6) 1. Devote yourselves to prayer (4:2-4) 2. Walk in wisdom and let your speech be with grace (4:5-6) V. PAUL'S COMPANIONS (4:7-14) A. COMMENDATIONS OF HIS MESSENGERS (4:7-9) 1. Tychicus, a faithful servant who will inform them of Paul's circumstances (4:7-8) 2. Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother (4:9) B. GREETINGS FROM HIS FRIENDS (4:10-14) 1. Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus, fellow workers for the kingdom of God (4:10-11) 2. Epaphras, one of them, and a servant of Christ (4:12-13) 3. Luke the beloved physician, and Demas (4:14) CONCLUSION (4:15-18) 1. Greetings to those in Laodicea, and to Nymphas and the church in his house (4:15) 2. A command to read and exchange the epistles from Paul (4:16) 3. A personal exhortation to Archippus (4:17) 4. A personal signoff from the hand of Paul, with a request for remembrance and a prayer in their behalf (4:18) REVIEW

**3. Outline of Colossians Theme: Christ is Preeminent I. DOCTRINE -- Chapter 1 CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DECLARED 1. In the Gospel message -- 1:1-12 2. In Redemption -- 1:13-14 3. In Creation -- 1:15-17 4. In the Church -- 1:18-23 5. In Paul's ministry -- 1:24-29 II. DANGER -- Chapter 2 CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEFENDED 1. Beware of empty philosophies -- 2:1-10 2. Beware of religious legalism -- 2:11-17 3. Beware of man-man disciplines -- 2:18-23 III. DUTY -- Chapter 3 & 4 CHRIST'S PREEMINENCE DEMONSTRATED 1. In personal purity -- 3:1-11 2. In Christian fellowship -- 3:12-17 3. In the home -- 3:18-21 4. In daily work --**

3:22 - 4:1 5. In Christian living -- 4:2-6 6. In Christian service -- 4:7-18

**SERMON - - - - WHO IS JESUS? Colossians 1:15-20**

1. The article "One Solitary Life" by George Peck.
2. This passage helps us to see "Who Jesus Is."
3. One of the greatest controversies to range in early church history occurred in the fourth century over this very passage. A man named Arius argued that Jesus was the very first thing that God created, and then Jesus created everything else. He reasoned that, after all, the obvious meaning of "first-born" is the one born first. That led to his conclusion that Jesus was not divine like the Father, but just a created being.
  - a. A brilliant young man named Athanasius soundly rejected that view and the "Arian" doctrine was branded as heresy. The historic view has been that Jesus, because He is the image of God, is eternal just as God the Father Himself is eternal. He is "very God" as Athanasius put it.
  - b. Thought is has been sixteen hundred years since Arius and Athanasius battled it out, the problem has not disappeared. Some religious groups today do not believe that Jesus is God or that He is eternal.
4. **WHO IS JESUS? I. JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF GOD (1:15)**
  - 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: (Colossians 1:15)
    1. "He is the image of the invisible God" (1:15a) One difficulty people have in believing God is that God cannot be seen. Even as great a man as Moses had the longing to see God. He pleaded with God to just give him a glimpse (See Exodus 33:17-23).
    2. The Greek word translated "image" in v. 15 is "eikon."
      - a. Notice the meaning of that word in religious circles.
      - b. Notice how that word is used today in computer circles.
      - c. What do you have on your driver's license?
      - d. Passports in Paul's day had a section called "Dis-tinguishing Marks" that described something about the person that set him apart from everyone else. The Greek word "eikon" was used in that part of the passport.
  3. TEV "Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God."
    - II. **JESUS IS THE FULLNESS OF GOD (1:15, 19)**
      - 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; (Colossians 1:19) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)
        1. Jesus is not something "like" God, He is "everything" God IS!
        2. Hebrews 1:3 "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature..."
        3. All of the attributes of divinity belong of Jesus, He IS God.
      - III. **JESUS IS THE AGENT OF GOD (1:16)**
        - 16 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: (Colossians 1:16)
          1. The word "for" means is in the sense "because." By Him, Jesus, all things were created. HE was not created, He CREATED!
          2. "Before Jesus the carpenter made stools, Jesus the Creator made stars." He fashioned plows, He fashioned planets. Before He made tables, He made trees from which those tables would be made.
          3. He also made all the invisible things of our universe.
        - IV. **JESUS IS THE HEAD OF GOD'S CHURCH (1:18-23)**
          - 18 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. (Colossians 1:18)
            1. From Jesus comes all the guidance and direction for the church.
              - a.

The "doctrine" is "His doctrine" (Heb. 6:1; 2 John 1:9) b. He is not just "first" but the "Source." 2. Jesus was the first to rise never to die again. 3. Over What was He to have the preeminence? All things! Creation, powers, the church, death... Why was he to have the preeminence? For in Him the sum total of the powers and attributes of God dwell. V. JESUS IS THE PEACE-MAKER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD 20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (Col. 1:20-21).

[http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk\\_nt/coloss.htm](http://fly.hiwaay.net/~wgann/walk_nt/coloss.htm)

#### 4. Daniel Wallace

### III. Outline

#### I. Salutation (1:1-2)

#### II. Orthodoxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Explained (1:3–2:7)

##### A. Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Colossians (1:3-14)

###### 1. Thanksgiving for the Colossians' Faith (1:3-8)

###### 2. Prayer for the Colossians' Knowledge and Growth (1:9-14)

##### B. Hymn to Christ the Lord (1:15-20)

##### C. Affirmation of Christ the Reconciler (1:21-23)

##### D. Paul's Commission concerning the Mystery of Christ (1:24–2:7)

###### 1. Paul's Past Labors Aimed at Perfection in Christ (1:24-29)

###### 2. Paul's Present Concern regarding Defection from Christ (2:1-7)

#### III. Heterodoxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Denied (2:8–3:4)

##### A. The Sufficiency of Christ Restated (2:8-15)

###### 1. Statement against Heretics (2:8)

2. Restatement of Christ's Sufficiency (2:9-15)

a. Christ our Authority (2:9-10)

b. Christ our Power (2:11-12)

c. Christ our Victor (2:13-15)

B. The Colossians' Practices as a Denial of the Sufficiency of Christ (2:16-19)

C. The Colossians' Practices as a Contradiction of their Corporate Life in Christ (2:20–3:4)

1. Death with Christ Means Death to Human Regulations (2:20-23)

2. Resurrection with Christ Means New Perspective (3:1-4)

IV. Orthopraxy: The Sufficiency of Christ Experienced (3:5–4:6)

A. Experienced Individually (3:5-17)

1. Negative: Putting off the Old Man (3:5-11)

2. Positive: Putting on the New Man (3:12-17)

B. Experienced in the Home (3:18–4:1)

1. Wives and Husbands (3:18-19)

2. Children and Parents (3:20-21)

3. Slaves and Masters (3:22–4:1)

C. Experienced in Relation to Others (4:2-6)

1. In Relation to Paul (4:2-4)

2. In Relation to Unbelievers (4:5-6)

V. Final Greetings (4:7-18)

A. Commendation of Tychicus (4:7-9)

B. Greetings from Paul's Co-Workers (4:10-14)

C. Greetings from Paul (4:15-18)

5. New American Bible Introduction

I. Address (Col 1:1-14)

II. The Preeminence of Christ (Col 1:15-2:3)

III. Warnings against False Teachers (Col 2:4-23)

IV. The Ideal Christian Life in the World (Col 3:1-4:6)

V. Conclusion (Col 4:7-18)

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible/colossians/intro.htm>

6. [Maranatha Church, Inc. Outline](#)

7. Epistle to the Colossians

Brief Outline <http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txs/colossia.htm>

1. Salutation and thanksgiving (1:1-8)

2. Doctrinal section (1:9-2:5)

3. Practical exhortations (2:6-4:6)

4. Concluding salutations (4:7-18)

8. Quartz Hill School of Theology <http://www.theology.edu/ntintro/col.htm>

As the reader can tell, we have momentarily left the canonical order in our discussion of its writings. For, as all know, Philippians follows Ephesians. But because Ephesians and Colossians are both considered pseudonymous by NT scholars, and because they are so extraordinarily similar in content, character, and purpose, it seem appropriate to consider them both in close proximity.

The letter to the Colossians was written by a student of Paul's who lived in Ephesus and wrote around 80 CE. Colossae was a major city located in the Lycus River valley in Phrygia in the province of Asia Minor. The church there was established, not by Paul, but by an associate of his, Epaphras.

The purpose of this letter is identical to the purpose of Ephesians (which see, above). This has led some to suggest that there may have been a certain group of Paulinists (disciples of Paul) who associated together and shared many of the same ideas and theological perspectives. This is certainly a possibility, though there is no way to demonstrate it. One of the more interesting aspects of Colossians is the

very old hymn found in 1:15-20. This hymn must have been in widespread use among the Christians of the early Church.

An outline shows the similarity to Ephesians:

- 1- Greeting (1:1-2)
- 2- The Lordship of Christ (1:3-23)
- 3- The Mystery of Christ (1:24-2:5)
- 4- Christ's Lordship (Revisited) (2:6-23)
- 5- Ethical Admonition (3:1-4:6)
- 6- Farewell Remarks (4:7-18)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Read Philippians and Brown's

#### 9. Catholic Doors Ministry

- 1:1-1:2 Salutation**
- 1:3-1:14 Paul Thanks God for the Colossians**
- 1:15-1:23 The Supremacy of Christ**
- 1:24-2:5 Paul's Interest in the Colossians**
  
- 2:6-2:19 Fullness of Life in Christ**
- 2:20-2:23 Warnings against False Teachers**
  
- 3:1-3:17 The New Life in Christ**
- 3:18-4:1 Rules for Christian Households**
  
- 4:2-4:6 Further Instructions**
- 4:7-4:18 Final Greetings and Benediction**

<http://www.catholicdoors.com/outline/o-co.htm>

#### 10. <http://www.tyler.net/triddorus/colossians.html>

***A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Man - Overview of Colossians; 1:1-12***

**(Distribute and discuss handouts on *An Overview of Colossians* and *An Overview of Paul's Ministry*.)**

***Outline of the Letter***

I. Introduction (1:1-14)

A. Greetings (1:1-2)

B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

C. Prayer (1:9-14)

II. The Supremacy of Christ (1:15-23)

III. Paul's Labor for the Church (1:24-2:7)

A. A ministry for the sake of the church (1:24-29)

B. A concern for the spiritual welfare of

his readers (2:1-7)

IV. Freedom from Human Regulations through

Life with Christ (2:8-23)

A. Warning to guard against false teachers (2:8-15)

B. Pleas to reject the false teachers (2:16-19)

C. An analysis of the heresy (2:20-23)

V. Rules for Holy Living (3:1-4:6)

A. The old self and the new self (3:1-17)

B. Rules for Christian households (3:18-4:1)

C. Further instructions (4:2-6)

VI. Final Greetings (4:7-18)

11. Dr. Grant Richison Campus Crusades

 **Outline of the Book of Colossians:**

Preliminary statements, [1:1-2](#)  
Pre-eminence of Christ, [1:3-2:3](#)  
Polemic against error, [2:4-3:4](#)  
Practical exhortations, [3:5-4:6](#)  
Personal messages, [4:7-17](#)

12. <http://rgfn.epcc.edu/users/av568/15p3.html>

### Outline of the letter:

#### Introduction/Salutation (1:1,2)

- I. Paul's thanksgiving prayer. (1:3-14)
  - A. Thanks God for their faith. (3-8)
  - B. Prays that they continue and grow in this faith. (9-14)
- II. Christ is Lord of all things. (1:15-29)
  - A. Creation. (15-17)
  - B. The Church. (18)
    - 1. Reconciles the believers to God. (19-22)
    - 2. Paul's task is to proclaim this reconciliation. (23-29)
- III. Christ is the antidote to false teaching. (2:1-23)
  - A. Paul's concern for the Colossians. (1-5)
  - B. Christ is all they need. (6-15)
    - 1. Christ is God. (6-9)
    - 2. Christ gives victory over sin. (10-15)
  - C. They don't need more laws. (16-19)
    - 1. Old. (16,17)
    - 2. Or new! (18,19)
    - 3. They are useless! (20-23)
- IV. The true Christian life. (3:1-4:6)
  - A. Believers rise with Christ. (3:1-4)
  - B. Believers put sins to death. (5-11)
  - C. Believers wear good works. (12-17)
  - D. Believers subject themselves to God's will for human relationships. (18-4:1)
    - 1. Wives to husbands; husbands to wives. (18,19)
    - 2. Children to parents; parents to children. (20,21)
    - 3. Slaves to masters; masters to slaves. (22-4:1)
  - E. Believers are always on their guard. (4:2-6)

1. Praying. (2-4)
  2. Being careful towards unbelievers. (5,6)
- V. Personal messages. (4:7-17)
- Closing blessing. (4:18)

13.

**Outline:**<sup>61</sup>

I. Doctrinal: The Person and Work of Christ (1:1-2:3)

A. Introduction (1:1-14)

1. Paul's Greeting to the Colossians (1:1-2)
2. Paul's Gratitude for the Colossians' Faith (1:3-8)
3. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians' Growth (1:9-14)

B. The Person of Christ (1:15-18)

1. In Relation to the Father (1:15)
2. In Relation to the Creation (1:16-17)
3. In Relation to the New Creation (1:18)

C. The Work of Christ (1:19-2:3)

1. The Description of His Work (1:19-20)
2. The Application of His Work (1:21-23)

3. The Propagation of His  
Work (1:24-2:3)

II. Polemical: The Heretical Problems in  
Light of Union With Christ (2:4-3:4a)

A. The Exhortation Against  
False Teaching (2:4-8)

1. Exhortation Regarding  
the Methods of False  
Teachers (2:4-5)

2. Exhortation to Progress  
in the Life of Faith (2:6-7)

3. Exhortation Regarding  
the Philosophy of the  
False Teachers (2:8)

B. The Instruction of the True  
Teaching (2:9-15)

1. The Believer's Position  
in Christ (2:9-10)

2. The Believer's  
Circumcision (2:11-12)

3. The Believer's Benefits  
(2:13-15)

C. The Obligations of the True  
Teaching (2:16-3:4)

1. Negative:  
Emancipation from  
Legalistic and Gnostic  
Practices (2:16-19)

2. Negative:  
Emancipation from

Ascetic Ordinances (2:20-23)

3. Positive: Aspirations for the Heavenly Life (3:1-4)

III. Practical: The Practice of the Believer in Christ (3:5-4:6)

1. In the Inward Life (3:5-17)

2. In the Home and Household Life (3:18-4:1)

3. In the Outward Life (4:2-6)

IV. Personal: The Private Plans and Affairs of the Apostle (4:7-18)

1. His Special Representatives (4:7-9)

2. His Personal Salutations (4:10-18)