

COLOSSIANS

Author: Paul the Apostle with some input from Timothy, his spiritual son. Notice the use of the personal pronouns "we" and "I" in various places.

Date: 50-52 or 60-62 AD. Probably written while Paul was under house arrest in Rome, which would indicate the later date, but it could have been written earlier from Ephesus or Caesarea.

Original Recipients: Gentile Christians. It has often been suggested that the nearby church of **Laodicea** mentioned in *Revelation* must have also included those from this city.

Col 4:15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at **Laodicea**, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the **Laodiceans** and that you in turn read **the letter from Laodicea**.¹

Type of Literature: Historical Narrative and Personal Letter.

Content: This letter was written to address an assortment of wrong teaching and outright heresy. The negative issues addressed included legalism, philosophy, the worship of angels, mysticism and perhaps an early form of Gnosticism. **It presents Jesus as preeminent and all sufficient** and it warns Christians not to fall into adding meaningless or dangerous things that sound spiritual. This church may have been established by Epaphras, rather than Paul.

Col 1:4 Since **we heard of your faith** in Christ Jesus,..7 As ye also learned of **Epaphras** our dear fellow-servant, **who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;**

Colossians 1 Jesus has made His Church holy. (29 verses)

1) Apostolic introduction and blessings.

v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **and Timothy** our brother, 2 **To God's holy people in Colossae**, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

2) Paul's commendation indicates that he had heard of them, but not met them.

v. 3 **We** always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because **we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus** and of the love you have for all God's people— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in **the true message of the gospel** 6 that has come to you.

¹ All scripture is quoted from the NIV unless clearly marked with standard abbreviations.

3) **The Gospel is growing and bearing fruit among them.**

v. 6b. In the same way, **the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you** since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

4) **Paul was told of their love by Epaphras.**

v. 7 You learned it from **Epaphras**, our dear fellow servant, **who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf**, 8 and **who also told us of your love in the Spirit.**

5) **Their love in the Spirit stirred Paul to pray for them.**

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

6) **Jesus is our Creator and God.**

v. 15 **The Son is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation. 16 **For in him all things were created**: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; **all things have been created through him and for him.** 17 **He is before all things**, and **in him all things hold together.**

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 **All things were made by him**; and **without him was not any thing made that was made.** KJV

1. **Jesus was “in the beginning”**
2. **Jesus “the Word” is God.**
3. **Jesus created everything.**

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by **his Son**, whom he appointed **heir of all things**, and **through whom he made the universe.** 3 **The Son** is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, **sustaining all things** by his powerful word.

Note: Colossians 1:15 - 17 is one of the most important passages in the NT for explaining the deity of Jesus. Five things are clear:

- 1) **JESUS Christ is the Creator of the universe.**
Col 1:16 “For **by him or in him** were all things created” (John 1:3, Heb. 1:2)
- 2) **Whatever has been created was created for JESUS.**
Col 1:16 “all things were created by him, and **for him**”
- 3) **JESUS existed prior to all creation.**
Col 1:17 “And **he is** before all things” (John 1:1)
- 4) **JESUS is the master of the universe.**
Col 1:17 “**by him** all things consist or hold together” (Hebrews 1:3)
- 5) **Since these four things are true, that means that JESUS Is God Himself.**

7) Jesus is also the Head over the Church.

v. 18 And **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. 19 For **God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him**, 20 and **through him to reconcile to himself all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.**

8) You are “reconciled” to God only if you continue in the Faith.

v. 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But **now he has reconciled you** by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 **if you continue in your faith**, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Note: “ultimate reconciliation” is the heresy that says Jesus will ultimately reconcile every man to God, so that they all spend eternity with Him.

9) The “mystery” of God’s plan to reconcile Gentiles to Himself through Jesus.

v. 24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 **the mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but **is now disclosed to the Lord's people**. 27 To them **God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**. 28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Colossians 2 Buried with Christ in Baptism. (23 verses)

1) If you know Jesus, you know the Lord's mystery.

v. 1 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you **and for those at Laodicea**, and for **all who have not met me personally**. 2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know **the mystery of God, namely, Christ**, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of **wisdom and knowledge**. 4 I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. 5 For **though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit** and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

2) New life is found only in Jesus by faith.

v. 6 So then, **just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord**, continue to live your lives in him, 7 **rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith** as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

3) Don't be deceived by philosophical ideas; Jesus is our Lord and our God.

v. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through **hollow and deceptive philosophy**, which **depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world** rather than on Christ. 9 For **in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form**, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. **He is the head** over every power and authority.

4) Water baptism represents our NT circumcision, plus burial and resurrection.

v. 11 In him you were also **circumcised with a circumcision** not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were **circumcised by Christ**, 12 having been **buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him** through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins**, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

5) The power of the Cross and the public spectacle of Jesus' victory.

v. 15 And **having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.**

6) We have religious liberty in Jesus.

v. 16 Therefore **do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day**. 17 **These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

7) Don't get caught up in hyper-spirituality.

v. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and **the worship of angels** disqualify you. **Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind.** 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

“In Colossae, angels were probably being venerated; although this veneration was against the teachings of Pharisaism, some evidence indicates that many common Diaspora Jews addressed prayers and petitions to angels, a practice that overlapped with magical spirit invocations.” *IVP Bible Background Commentary*

8) Don't retreat into empty legalism and asceticism.

v. 20 **Since you died with Christ** to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its **rules:** 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 **These rules,** which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. 23 **Such regulations** indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their **harsh treatment of the body,** but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

9) The Colossian heresy issues addressed in Amplified language.

v. 16 Therefore **let no one judge you in regard to food and drink** or in regard to [*the observance of*] a **festival** or a **new moon** or a **Sabbath day.** 17 Such things are only a shadow of what is to come and **they have only symbolic value; but the substance [*the reality of what is foreshadowed*] belongs to Christ...**20 **If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were still living in the world, do you submit to rules and regulations,** such as, 21 "**Do not handle [*this*], do not taste [*that*], do not [*even*] touch!"?** 22 (these things all perish with use)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men. [Isa 29:13] 23 **These practices indeed have the appearance [*that popularly passes as that*] of wisdom** in self-made religion and mock humility and **severe treatment of the body (asceticism), but are of no value** against sinful indulgence [*because they do not honor God*].

Colossians 3 We are instructed to live for Christ. (25 verses)

1) In Christ, you must take control of your thought life. (*Movies, TV, Music, Web*)

v. 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts on things above,** where **Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.** 2 **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.** 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Psalm 110:1 The LORD says to my lord: "**Sit at my right hand** until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

- 2) **We must live in the Spirit and not according to the leading of our flesh.**
v. 5 **Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:** sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 **You used to walk in these ways,** in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also **rid yourselves of all such things** as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since **you have taken off your old self** with its practices 10 and have put on **the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Genesis 1:26-28).**
- 3) **The new creation in Jesus is not exclusively available to one group. (Gal 3:28)**
v. 11 Here there is **no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all,** and is in all.
- 4) **We are God's chosen people in Jesus and we must live in unity.**
v. 12 Therefore, as **God's chosen people,** holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** 14 **And over all these virtues put on love,** which binds them all together in **perfect unity.**
- 5) **Jesus is our inspiration in all things.**
v. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 **Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.** 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- 6) **Household codes.**
v. 18 **Wives,** submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 **Husbands,** love your wives and do not be harsh with them. 20 **Children,** obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 **Fathers,** do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. 22 **Slaves,** obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.
- 7) **Live by doing everything you can to please the Lord.**
v. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as **working for the Lord,** not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. **It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Col 4:1 Masters, provide your **slaves** with what is right and fair, because you know that **you also have a Master in heaven**.

Colossians 4 Concluding remarks and salutations. (18 verses)

1) Pray for Pastor Pitts and other Pastors.

v. 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And **pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ**, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray **that I may proclaim it clearly**, as I should.

2) Be ready to share your faith with everyone.

v. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; **make the most of every opportunity**. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, **so that you may know how to answer everyone**.

Story: Yesupadam's "be ready to preach."

3) Paul's companions are commended during his farewell.

v. 7 **Tychicus** will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with **Onesimus (Philemon)** our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. 10 My fellow prisoner **Aristarchus** sends you his greetings, as does **Mark, the cousin of Barnabas**. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) 11 Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. **These are the only Jews among my co-workers (note: not Luke)** for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. 12 **Epaphras, who is one of you** and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Our dear friend **Luke, the doctor**, and **Demas** send greetings.

- **Tychicus**
- **Onesimus (Philemon)**
- **Aristarchus**
- **Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.**
- **"These are the only Jews among my co-workers" (note: not Luke)**
- **Epaphras, This church may have been established by Epaphras.**
- **Luke, the doctor**
- **Demas**

Tychicus: Paul's companion and fellow labourer in the gospel (Act 20:4); accompanied him in part on his return journey from the third missionary circuit. Tychicus stayed

behind in Asia, perhaps at Miletus (Act 20:15; Act 20:38). With Paul again in his first Roman imprisonment: Col 4:7-8. **Tychicus, being an Asiatic himself, fitly carried both the epistles to the Asiatic Ephesians and Colossians, and Philemon**; but was not a Colossian as Onesimus. In Tit 3:12 Paul proposes to send Artonus or Tychicus to take Titus' place at Crete, and so to set Titus free to join Paul at Nicopolis. In 2Ti 4:12, in his second Roman imprisonment, Paul says "***Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.***" Others make Paul send Tychicus to take Timothy's place there as president of the church. Tradition made Tychicus subsequently bishop of Chalcedon. *Faucets Bible Dictionary*

Aristarchus: He is suddenly mentioned along with **Gaius** as having been seized by the excited Ephesians during the riot stirred up by the silversmiths (Act 19:29). We learn later that he was a native of Thessalonica (Act 20:4; Act 27:2). When Aristarchus attached himself to Paul we do not know, but he seems ever after the Ephesian uproar to have remained in Paul's company. He was one of those who accompanied Paul from Greece via Macedonia (Act 20:4). Having preceded Paul to Troas, where they waited for him, they traveled with him to Palestine. He is next mentioned as accompanying Paul to Rome (Act 27:2). There he attended Paul and shared his imprisonment. He is mentioned in two of the letters of the Roman captivity, in the Epistle to the church at Col (Eph 4:10), and in the Epistle to Philem (Phm 1:24), in both of which he sends greetings. In the former **Paul calls him "my fellow-prisoner."** According to tradition he was martyred during the persecution of Nero. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

2 Tim 4:9 Do your best to come to me quickly, 10 for **Demas**, because **he loved this world, has deserted me** and has gone to Thessalonica.

4) **Missing letter to or from the Laodiceans?**

v.15 Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at **Laodicea**, and to Nympha and the church in her house. 16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the **Laodiceans** and that you in turn read **the letter from Laodicea**.

5) **Conclusion**

v. 18 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. **Remember my chains**. Grace be with you.