

# Colossians

## “Christ in You”

### Background

Colossians was written by Paul while he was in prison in Rome about AD62. The Colossians lived in the Lycus Valley, about 120 miles east of Ephesus. It was a very small town that shipped its wool products down the Lycus River which flowed into the Meander River and emptied into Miletus Bay. From there the products were shipped to various places in the ancient world.



The town had most likely been evangelized by Epaphras, a disciple of Paul in Ephesus, who also became the first pastor-teacher. At the time of writing, he was visiting Paul in prison to get his advice on an encroaching Christological heresy. While there, Epaphras was also imprisoned, so Paul wrote the letter of Colossians to address the heresy. He sent the letter via Tychicus, along with the letter to the Ephesians, about AD62. The heresy reduced Christ to less than God yet more than man. Because He was less than God, the claim was that He needed to be supplemented with human philosophy, mysticism, asceticism, and legalism.

## Overview

Colossians addresses Gentile believers who were living by faith and loving one another. Paul prayed that they would advance in knowledge of His will so that they would walk worthy of the Lord and bear fruit, giving thanks to the Lord. The Christological heresy was a threat to their spiritual walk. To disarm the threat, Paul presents Christ as the fullness of deity dwelling in bodily form, and in Him we are complete. Therefore, we don't need anything but Christ. We just need to keep seeking the things above, and thinking the things above, where Christ is.

## Theme

The theme is the supremacy of Christ over all things. Christ is God and man in one person, and we are complete in Him. Therefore, we don't need anything more than Christ to grow spiritually.

## Chapter Summaries

Chapter I describes Paul's thanksgiving to God, prayers for spiritual growth, the supremacy of Christ, and his ministry of proclaiming Him so believers can grow to

maturity. Chapter 2 expresses Paul's struggle for believers in prayer that they may know the supremacy of Christ and walk in Him, straying from human philosophy, legalism, mysticism, and asceticism. Chapter 3 exhorts us to keep seeking the things above where Christ, who is our life, is seated, and to consider ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God, putting on the new man, letting the word of Christ dwell richly within us so that it overflows in our human relationships. Chapter 4 exhorts us to be devoted to prayer with thanksgiving and to conduct ourselves wisely in the world, both in our talk and our walk.

## Basic Outline of Colossians

- I. Supremacy of Christ (1:1-2:23)
  - A. Prologue (1:1-2)
  - B. Thanksgiving to God (1:3-8)
  - C. Prayer for Spiritual Growth (1:9-12)
  - D. The Position of Christ (1:15-20)
  - E. The Position of Believers (1:21-23)
  - F. Paul's Ministry of Christ in You (1:24-2:5)
  - G. Walk in Christ (2:1-7)
  - H. Avoid Human Philosophy (2:8-10)
  - I. Avoid Legalism (2:11-17)
  - J. Avoid Mysticism (2:18-19)
  - K. Avoid Asceticism (2:20-23)

## II. Submission to Christ (3:1-4:18)

A. Seek Heavenly Things (3:1-4)

B. Off with the Old Practices, On with the New  
(3:5-17)

C. How to Live in Relationships (3:18-4:1)

D. Prayer (4:2-4)

E. Conduct and Speech (4:5-6)

F. Final Greetings and Exhortations (4:7-17)

G. Epilogue (4:18)

## 1:1-2:23 Supremacy of Christ

In the doctrinal portion, Paul introduces himself, addresses his audience, gives thanks to God, prays for the Colossians, exalts Christ, reminds them that they were once spiritually dead but are now reconciled to God, describes his ministry as a stewardship from God to proclaim the mystery of Christ in believers so that all believers can become mature in Christ.

## 1:1-2 Prologue

<sup>1</sup>Paul and Timothy wrote the letter to the Colossians. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, which was made known when the resurrected Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Timothy is simply described as our brother. <sup>2</sup>The Colossians Paul

wrote to were saints who were living by faith. Paul relayed grace to live the Christian life, and peace as the result of living the Christian life, from God, the Father we all share.

### 1:3-8 Thanksgiving to God

3Paul and Timothy give thanks to God the Father, 4because they had heard of their faith in Christ and their love for other believers that was 5based on the hope of rewards laid up for them in heaven, which they previously heard about in the word of truth, which is the gospel, 6which had come to them, just as in all the places it had gone in the world where it was constantly bearing fruit and bringing about growth, even since the first day they heard and understood the grace of God in truth, 7which they learned from Epaphras, a fellow bond-servant, who is faithful to Christ, 8who had informed them of their love produced by the Spirit.

### 1:9-14 Prayer for Spiritual Growth

9In addition to thanking God, Paul and Timothy were praying for the Colossians. Their request was that God fill them with true knowledge of what God wants for their lives in all practical wisdom and spiritual matters. 10This way they will walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord,

pleasing Him in all respects, resulting in bearing fruit, increasing in knowledge, <sup>11</sup>being strengthened with His power so that they might acquire all steadfastness and patience, and <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father for qualifying us for rewards, <sup>13</sup>rescuing us from the authority of Satan, and transferring us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>the one in whom we have redemption, which is the forgiveness of sins.

## 1:15-20 The Position of Christ

<sup>15</sup>Christ is the visible icon of the invisible Father, the heir of all creation, <sup>16</sup>because in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether places of authority or those in authority, all things have been created through His agency and for Him. <sup>17</sup>He is also pre-existing all things, and in Him all things are sustained. <sup>18</sup>He is also the head of the body, which is the church. He is the beginning of the new humanity, the heir of the believing dead, so that He will come to have first rank in the new order. <sup>19</sup>The reason is because the Father decreed that all the fullness of deity would dwell in Him. <sup>20</sup>He also decreed that through Him all things would be reconciled to Himself. He accomplished this through the blood of His cross, so that things on earth and things in

heaven will eventually be restored to their original pristine condition.

### 1:21-23 The Position of Believers

21 Before we became believers, we were alienated from God spiritually, hostile toward Him in our thinking, and this inward hostility was manifested by our evil behavior, 22 but now He has made us friends of God by offering His fleshly body on the cross, with the goal that we be presented before Him at the judgment seat of Christ holy and blameless and beyond reproach. 23 This goal is attained as we continue in the faith firmly established and immoveable, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which is resurrection, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven beginning with the cross, and of which Paul was made a minister on the Damascus road.

### 1:24-29 Paul's Ministry of Christ in You

24 Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for fellow believers. He was doing his share of suffering as a member of Christ's body, which is the church. By doing so he was filling up the sufferings that the body must suffer so as to reach the full measure of suffering which Christ, the head, suffered for us. 25 Paul was made a servant of the body as a

stewardship responsibility entrusted to him by God, with the goal that he preach the word of God to as many people as possible, <sup>26</sup>, specifically, the secret truth which had been hidden from past ages and generations, but now has been made known to His saints, <sup>27</sup>the ones whom God wanted to make known the wealth of this secret among Gentiles, which is Christ in your human spirit so that you are alive to God. This is the hope of glory, namely that His life in our spirit will give rise to our resurrection life. <sup>28</sup>Paul and Timothy proclaimed Christ, warning every man and instructing every man with all practical wisdom, so that they could present every man mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>This was the purpose of Paul's ministry, for which he toiled to exhaustion, agonizing in the strength of God which works mighty things within him.

## 2:1-7 Walk in Christ

<sup>1</sup>Paul wanted them to know how great a spiritual battle he had entered into by prayer on their behalf and for those in Laodicea, and for all who never met him, <sup>2</sup>so that immediately they would be encouraged since they were knit together in love, with the long term goal that they acquire all the wealth that comes from being certain they understood the true knowledge of God's mystery, which centers on Christ, <sup>3</sup>the one in whom are hidden all the



treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4Paul said this so that no one would delude them with slick arguments. 5Even though he was not with them in body, he was with them in spirit through the reports that revealed their orderly Christian life and steadfastness of faith. 6As a result, they should walk in Christ, 7having been firmly rooted in Him and now being built up in Him and further established in faith, just as they were taught, and just as they were overflowing with thanksgiving.

## 2:8-10 Avoid Human Philosophy

8Beware that no one carries you off as a prisoner through human philosophy and vain deception based on the tradition of Judaism and the so-called powerful beings that governed the world, rather than according to Christ. 9Because Christ is God in a physical body, 10and in Him you are totally complete, and He holds the superior rank over all rule and authority;

## 2:11-17 Avoid Legalism

11and in Him you were circumcised in heart, so that your old person that the sin nature exploited is dead; 12this took place by means of being buried with Him in Spirit baptism, in which you were also raised up spiritually with

Him through faith by the work of God who raised Christ from the dead. <sup>13</sup>When you were spiritually dead in your transgressions and uncircumcised flesh, God made you alive spiritually with Christ, having graciously forgiven us of all our transgressions, <sup>14</sup>having destroyed the document recording our debts consisting of requirements we failed to meet, which was hostile to us, and He has removed it, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He also broke the authority of rulers and authorities, making a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Christ. <sup>16</sup>As a result, no one is to judge you with regard to the requirements of the Mosaic Law—<sup>17</sup>these things were representations of the reality which is Christ.

## 2:18-19 Avoid Mysticism

<sup>18</sup>Stop letting people rob you of rewards by having you deny yourself and worship angels, those who claim to have seen visions, having become arrogant without any real reason by their fleshly mind, <sup>19</sup>and not holding fast to the head (Christ), from whom the entire body (church) is being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments with a growth that is from God.

## 2:20-23 Avoid Asceticism

20 Since you have died with Christ to the so-called powerful beings that rule the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit to rules, such as 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 which all refer to things destined to perish by consumption—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are practices which surely look wise in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value in the fight against the flesh.

### 3:1-4:18 Submission to Christ

In the application portion, Paul exhorts believers to seek heavenly things, having taken off the old man, now take off its old practices and having put on the new man, now put on new practices, how to apply the new man practices in worship, marriage, family, and the workplace, he challenges them to prayer and thanksgiving, to walk and talk properly, and sends greetings and final exhortations.

### 3:1-4 Seek Heavenly Things

1 Therefore, since you have been raised up spiritually with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, in the favored position at the right hand of God. 2 Keep thinking on the things above, not on the things that are on

earth. <sup>3</sup>Because you have died spiritually and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ, who is our spiritual life, is revealed from heaven, then you also will be revealed with Him in your glorified body.

### 3:5-17 Off with the Old Practices, On with the New

<sup>5</sup>Therefore, put to death whatever in you that is worldly; sexual misconduct, immorality, strong desires, evil cravings, and wanting more than you really deserve, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>It's because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon unbelievers, <sup>7</sup>and in these things we once walked, when we were living among them. <sup>8</sup>But now you should also put aside: anger, wrath, mean-spirit, slander, and curse words from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, because you took off the old man with its evil practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new man who is in the process of being renewed to true knowledge according to the icon of the One who created him—<sup>11</sup>a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, because Christ is all, and in all.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as those who are the choice of God, set apart and cherished, put on compassion, a sweet disposition, humility, considerateness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>putting up with one another and forgiving each other, whoever has a

complaint; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. <sup>14</sup>Above all this, put on love, which is the perfect bond that unifies. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace that we have in Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell richly within you, manifested through teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts, <sup>17</sup>and whatever you do in word or deed, do it in harmony with the name of the Lord Jesus.

### 3:18-4:1 How to Live in Relationships

<sup>18</sup>Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, which is appropriate in the Lord. <sup>19</sup>Husbands, have a warm regard for your wives and do not allow yourself to become bitter toward them. <sup>20</sup>Children, listen and be ready to obey your parents in all things, because this is well-pleasing to the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Fathers, do not irritate your children, so that they will not become discouraged. <sup>22</sup>Slaves, listen and be ready to obey those who are your masters on earth, not just while they are watching, as those who please men, but with sincerity of heart, as if the Lord is watching. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do your work gladly, as for the Lord, rather than for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward that

consists of the inheritance as a form of repayment. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. <sup>25</sup>For he who does wrong will receive the consequences [in this life] of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. <sup>4:</sup><sup>1</sup>Masters grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

#### 4:2-4 Prayer

<sup>2</sup>Be busily engaged in prayer, staying awake in it with thanksgiving; <sup>3</sup>praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ [in you], for which I have also been imprisoned; <sup>4</sup>for the purpose that I may make it clear in the way I am obligated to speak.

#### 4:5-6 Conduct and Speech

<sup>5</sup>Walk with wisdom toward unbelievers, making the most of opportune moments. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to respond to each person.

#### 4:7-17 Final Greetings and Exhortations

7As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother, faithful servant, and fellow voluntary slave in the Lord, will bring you information. 8For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may come alongside of their hearts; 9and with him I am sending Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is from Colossae. They will inform you about the whole situation here [in prison]. 10Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; namely that if he comes to you, welcome him); 11and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only co-workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision [Jews], and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. 12Epaphras, who is one of your number, a voluntary slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand mature and certain in all that God wants for your life. 13For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and Demas. 15Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter from Laodicea. 17Say to Archippus,

“Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

## 4:18 Epilogue

181, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember [in prayer] my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

## 50 Doctrines (1:1-2:23)

1. Thanksgiving (1:3-8, 12)
2. Prayer (1:9)
3. Reward (1:5, 10)
4. Missions (1:7)
5. Gospel (1:5)
6. Prayer
7. God's will (1:9)
8. Practical wisdom (1:10)
9. Spiritual life (1:10)
10. Walk (1:10)
11. Bearing fruit (1:10)
12. Increasing in knowledge (1:10)
13. Strengthened by God (1:11)
14. Becoming steadfast and patient (1:11)
15. Giving thanks (1:12)



16. Rewards (1:12)
17. Rescued from darkness (1:13)
18. Transferred to kingdom (1:13)
19. Christ is creator (1:16)
20. Christ is sustainer (1:17)
21. Christ is reconciler (1:20)
22. Dead in sin (1:21)
23. Reconciliation (1:22)
24. Judgment seat of Christ (1:22)
25. Perseverance (1:23)
26. Resurrection (1:23)
27. Ambassador (1:23)
28. Suffering (1:24)
29. Ministry (1:25)
30. Judgment seat of Christ
31. Perseverance
32. Mystery of Christ in you (1:27-28)
33. Maturity (1:28)
34. Living by God's strength (1:29)
35. Prayer (2:1)
36. Knowledge (2:2)
37. Wisdom and knowledge (2:3)
38. Orderly Christian life (2:5)
39. Human Philosophy (2:8)
40. Christ's deity (2:9)
41. Christ's humanity (2:9)
42. Complete in Christ (2:10)

43. Christ first rank (2:10)
44. Spiritual circumcision (2:11)
45. Spirit baptism (2:12)
46. Cross work (2:13-14)
47. Legalism (2:16-17)
48. Mysticism (2:18-19)
49. Asceticism (2:20-23)
50. Sin nature (2:23)

## 17 Applications (3:1-4:18)

1. Believers should discipline themselves to keep seeking the things above and keep thinking the things above, not things on earth (3:1-2).
2. Believers should put to death whatever is in them that is worldly (3:5-9).
3. Believers should put on the things of God (3:10-13).
4. Putting on love is more important than anything we put on, since it holds everything together (3:14).
5. Let the peace that we have with God because of Christ be a reigning factor in your life (3:15).
6. Be thankful on a daily basis (3:15).
7. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. You will know if it is if you are overflowing with wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (3:16).

8. In all your decision making, make the decision that best fits with what is revealed in the totality of Scripture (3:17).
9. Wives, be subordinate to your husbands (3:18).
10. Husbands, cherish your wives and do not allow yourself to become bitter toward them (3:19).
11. Children, listen to your parents with a readiness to obey (3:20).
12. Fathers, do not irritate your children, it discourages them (3:21).
13. Employees, work hard whether your boss is present or not, do it for the Lord. You will be re-paid for your hard labor (3:22-25).
14. Employers, treat your employees with justice and fairness. They will appreciate it and work hard for you (4:1).
15. Busy yourself with prayer, stay awake when you pray, be thankful (4:2-3).
16. Live wisely among unbelievers and make the most of the opportune moments to give the gospel (4:5).
17. Speak attractively to people, drop spiritual subjects in your discussion (4:6).

### Big Take Away:

You don't need anything more than Christ to grow spiritually. Christ is God the creator who came in human flesh, who died for you and rose again, who destroyed the

debt you owed, who reconciled you to Himself, who killed your old person and made you a new person, who made you spiritually alive with Him, who is in you, and makes spiritual growth possible. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and He will come to have first rank in the new order.