

Colossians

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Author: Paul the Apostle · Written: c. AD 60-62 · Category: Pauline Epistles

Introduction

Colossians presents the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ with unparalleled majesty, confronting a dangerous syncretism threatening the young church. False teachers were blending Christian faith with Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and mystical asceticism—requiring dietary restrictions, Sabbath observance, self-abasement, and worship of angels as intermediaries between God and humanity. Paul responds not by directly refuting each error but by exalting Christ so high that all additions become absurdly unnecessary. Christ is **the image of the invisible God, the creator and sustainer of all things, the fullness of deity in bodily form**—in Him believers are complete, lacking nothing.

The letter's opening hymn (1:15-20) ranks among Scripture's highest Christological passages, declaring Christ's supremacy over all creation and His reconciling work through the blood of His cross. Paul then applies this theology: if you died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why submit to regulations as if still living in it? If you were raised with Christ, set your minds on things above. The **sufficiency of Christ** demolishes legalism, mysticism, and asceticism—all human attempts to add to what God has fully provided in His Son.

Paul wrote Colossians from Roman imprisonment around AD 60-62, likely at the same time as Ephesians and Philemon. The church at Colossae had been founded not by Paul but by Epaphras, his co-worker who had evangelized the Lycus Valley cities of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. When Epaphras reported the false teaching threatening the believers, Paul wrote this letter, sending it with Tychicus and Onesimus. Though Paul had never personally visited Colossae, his pastoral concern and apostolic authority shine throughout the letter.

The **Colossian heresy** was a complex syncretism combining Jewish elements (circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbaths, festivals) with Greek philosophical speculation (elemental spirits, the material world as evil) and proto-Gnostic mysticism (secret knowledge, visions, angel worship, severe asceticism). The false teachers apparently taught that Christ was insufficient—believers needed additional experiences, knowledge, and practices to achieve full spiritual maturity. Paul's response establishes that Christ is not merely first among many spiritual powers but supreme over all, and believers possess fullness in Him.

Book Outline

- **Introduction and Thanksgiving** (1:1-14) — Apostolic greeting to the saints at Colossae. Thanksgiving for their faith in Christ, love for the saints, and hope laid up in heaven. Prayer that they be filled with knowledge of God's will, walking worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit, strengthened with power, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified them to share in the inheritance and delivered them from darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son.
- **The Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ** (1:15-23) — The magnificent Christ-hymn: Christ is the image of God, firstborn over creation, creator of all things visible and invisible, sustainer of all, head of the church, first to rise from the dead, possessing all fullness, reconciler of all things through His blood. Believers once alienated and hostile have been reconciled through Christ's physical death to be presented holy if they continue in faith.
- **Paul's Ministry of the Mystery** (1:24-2:5) — Paul's suffering for the church's sake. His stewardship to make God's word fully known—the mystery hidden for ages now revealed: Christ in you, the hope of glory. Paul's goal is to present everyone mature in Christ, striving with Christ's energy. Though absent in body, Paul rejoices in their good order and firm faith, encouraging them to continue in Christ as they received Him.
- **Warning Against False Teaching** (2:6-23) — Walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as you received Him, rooted and built up in Him. Beware of philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition and elemental spirits. In Christ dwells the fullness of deity and believers are complete in Him. United with Him in death and resurrection, forgiven all trespasses, the legal record canceled and nailed to the cross. Christ triumphed over the powers. Let no one judge you regarding food, drink, festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths—these are shadows; Christ is substance. Don't submit to mystical visions or angel worship. Don't follow regulations about what to handle or taste—these have no value against flesh's indulgence.
- **The New Life in Christ: Putting Off and Putting On** (3:1-17) — Since raised with Christ, seek things above where Christ is seated. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Put to death the earthly: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness. Put away anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying. You have put off the old self and put on the new self, being renewed in knowledge. No ethnic or social distinctions remain—Christ is all in all. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Above all, put on love. Let Christ's peace rule. Let Christ's word dwell richly. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving.

- **Christian Households and Relationships** (3:18-4:1) — Instructions for transformed household relationships. Wives submit to husbands as fitting in the Lord. Husbands love wives; don't be harsh. Children obey parents in everything. Fathers don't provoke children. Slaves obey earthly masters wholeheartedly, serving the Lord Christ who will give the inheritance. Masters treat slaves justly, knowing you have a Master in heaven.
- **Prayer, Witness, and Concluding Exhortations** (4:2-6) — Continue steadfastly in prayer with thanksgiving. Pray that God opens doors for the gospel mystery. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of time. Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, knowing how to answer everyone.
- **Personal Greetings and Instructions** (4:7-18) — Tychicus will tell them about Paul's circumstances. Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, is coming with him. Greetings from Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus called Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas. Instructions to read this letter in Laodicea and exchange with their letter. Final charge to Archippus. Paul's autographed greeting. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

Key Themes

- **The Supremacy of Christ Over All Creation:** Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation—not the first created being but the heir and ruler of all. By Him all things were created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, thrones and powers and rulers. All things were created through Him and for Him. He exists before all things and holds all things together. No power, no being, no philosophy rivals or supplements Christ.
- **The Sufficiency of Christ for Salvation and Sanctification:** In Christ dwells all the fullness of deity in bodily form, and believers are complete in Him. No additional knowledge, experience, or ascetic practice is needed. Christ has reconciled all things through His blood. He has disarmed the powers and authorities, triumphing over them by the cross. Believers have been forgiven, made alive with Christ, and delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son.
- **Freedom from Legalism, Mysticism, and Asceticism:** Believers have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world—why then submit to regulations: 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch'? These regulations have an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion, asceticism, and harsh treatment of the body, but they are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Christ is the substance; rituals and regulations are mere shadows.
- **Hidden with Christ in God:** Believers have died and their life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, we will appear with Him in glory. This union with Christ in His death and resurrection is the foundation of the new life. Our true identity and security are found in Christ, seated at God's right hand, far above all earthly troubles and temptations.
- **The New Life: Putting Off and Putting On:** Having been raised with Christ, believers must put to death what is earthly—sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness. Put away anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying. The old self with its practices has been put off. Put on the new self, being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and above all, love.
- **Christ, the Mystery Hidden and Now Revealed:** The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to the saints is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. This mystery—that Gentiles are full members of God's people through Christ—was unknown in previous ages but is now disclosed. Paul's ministry is to proclaim Christ, warning and teaching everyone, that he may present everyone mature in Christ.

- **Transformed Relationships in Christ:** The gospel transforms every relationship. The new self abolishes ethnic and cultural divisions—there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; Christ is all and in all. Household relationships are renewed: wives submit, husbands love, children obey, fathers don't provoke, slaves serve wholeheartedly, masters treat slaves justly.
- **Doing Everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus:** Whatever believers do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. This comprehensive principle governs Christian life—every sphere, every activity, every relationship comes under Christ's lordship. Work is done not to please men but serving the Lord Christ. The Christian life is worship rendered to Christ in all things.

Key Verses

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

— Colossians 1:15-17 (The Christ-hymn's opening verses present the highest Christology in Paul's letters. Christ is not a created being but the creator of all, the one through whom and for whom everything exists. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. This supreme Christ renders all angelic intermediaries unnecessary and all philosophy inadequate.)

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.

— Colossians 1:27 (The mystery hidden for ages is now revealed—Christ dwells in Gentile believers by His Spirit. This indwelling Christ is the hope of future glorification. The gospel mystery is not secret knowledge for the elite few but Christ Himself accessible to all who believe, regardless of ethnicity. The indwelling Christ is both present reality and future hope.)

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

— Colossians 2:9-10 (The death blow to the Colossian heresy. The totality of deity resides in Christ in bodily form—not partially or symbolically but fully and permanently. Believers are therefore complete in Him. No mystical experience, no ascetic practice, no secret knowledge can add to the completeness believers already possess in Christ.)

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

— Colossians 2:13-14 (The comprehensive work of salvation accomplished in Christ. Spiritually dead sinners are made alive with Christ, all trespasses forgiven. The legal record of our debts and failures—the accusations the law brings against us—has been canceled and nailed to the cross. Christ has dealt definitively with our sin problem.)

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

— Colossians 2:15 (Christ's victory over the spiritual powers through the cross. Rather than being defeated by crucifixion, Christ disarmed the hostile powers, shaming them publicly and leading them in His triumphal procession. The cross that looked like defeat was actually Christ's conquest. This eliminates any need to placate or worship angels—they are defeated enemies.)

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

— Colossians 3:1-3 (The transition from theology to ethics. Because believers are united with Christ in resurrection, they must set their minds on heavenly realities where Christ reigns. Earthly focus is incompatible with resurrection life. Our true life is hidden with Christ—secure, protected, and invisible to worldly eyes.)

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

— Colossians 3:11 (The radical unity and equality of believers in Christ. Every human distinction that divides—ethnicity, religion, culture, social status—is abolished in the new humanity. Christ is everything and in everyone who believes. This verse confronts every form of prejudice and exclusion with the gospel's transforming power.)

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.

— Colossians 3:17 (The comprehensive principle governing Christian life. Every action, every word, every sphere of life comes under Christ's lordship. Nothing is secular or excluded from His rule. Christian living is not about religious activities separated from daily life but bringing all of life under submission to Christ with thanksgiving.)

Historical Context

Colossae was a city in the Lycus Valley of Phrygia in the Roman province of Asia (modern western Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus. Though once commercially important, by Paul's time it had declined in significance compared to nearby Laodicea and Hierapolis. The church had not been founded by Paul but by Epaphras, probably converted during Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19). Epaphras had evangelized his hometown and surrounding cities, and the believers met in homes, including that of Philemon (Philemon 2).

Paul wrote Colossians during his Roman imprisonment, likely around AD 60-62 (Acts 28). The letter is part of the 'Prison Epistles' along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. Epaphras had traveled to Rome, bringing news of the church and the false teaching threatening it (1:7-8; 4:12-13). Paul sent the letter with Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9), apparently at the same time as Ephesians (similar carrier) and Philemon (concerning Onesimus).

The **false teaching** at Colossae was syncretistic, combining elements from multiple sources. Jewish features included requirements for circumcision (2:11), dietary restrictions (2:16), Sabbath observance (2:16), and concern for festivals and new moons (2:16). Greek philosophical elements included speculation about 'elemental spirits' (2:8, 20) and treating the material world as inferior or evil, leading to asceticism (2:21-23). Proto-Gnostic mystical features included claims to special knowledge, visions and revelations (2:18), self-abasement, and worship of angels as intermediaries between God and humanity (2:18).

This 'philosophy' (2:8) apparently taught that Christ alone was insufficient—believers needed additional knowledge, experiences, and practices to achieve spiritual maturity or access to God. Angels were venerated as spiritual powers controlling cosmic forces; ascetic practices were pursued to achieve enlightenment; regulations and rituals were required for spiritual progress. This teaching threatened the gospel's sufficiency and Christ's supremacy.

Literary Style

Colossians opens with one of Paul's most magnificent theological passages—the Christ-hymn of 1:15-20, which may reflect an early Christian hymn or confession. Its elevated language, parallelism, and theological density suggest liturgical origins. The passage's structure presents Christ's supremacy over creation (vv. 15-17) and the church (vv. 18-20), with His role in creation and redemption held in perfect balance.

The letter's **vocabulary and style** share significant overlap with Ephesians—both written around the same time and dealing with related themes. Words rare or unique in Paul appear: 'fullness' (pleroma), 'elemental spirits' (stoicheia), terms for spiritual powers, and the title 'image of the invisible God.' The theological density and cosmic scope resemble Ephesians more than Paul's earlier letters.

Paul employs **antithetical structures**—contrasts that clarify truth by juxtaposing opposites. Substance versus shadow (2:17), wisdom versus empty deceit (2:8), things above versus things on earth (3:2), the old self versus the new self (3:9-10). These contrasts sharpen the letter's polemic edge—Paul is not negotiating but declaring incompatibilities.

The **ethical section** (3:1-4:6) follows Paul's typical pattern: indicative precedes imperative, theology grounds ethics. 'Since you were raised with Christ' (3:1) provides the foundation for 'put to death what is earthly' (3:5). The 'putting off' and 'putting on' metaphor (3:8-14) powerfully depicts transformation—like changing clothes, believers discard the old life's vices and don the new life's virtues.

Inclusio brackets major sections, repeating themes at beginning and end to signal boundaries. The 'word of truth, the gospel' (1:5) returns at the end (4:5-6). 'Walk' appears at the letter's beginning (1:10) and end (4:5). Christ's supremacy announced early (1:15-20) is reasserted throughout. These literary devices create a unified, cohesive argument.

Theological Significance

Colossians presents Christianity's highest **Christology**—the doctrine of Christ's person and work. Christ is the **image of the invisible God** (1:15), not a created likeness but the exact representation of God's nature. He is the **firstborn over all creation** (1:15), not the first created being but the heir and sovereign ruler. **By Him all things were created** (1:16)—not by angels, not by emanations, but by Christ Himself. All things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, including all spiritual powers (thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities), were created through Him and for Him. Christ is not part of creation but creation's source and goal.

Christ **exists before all things and in Him all things hold together** (1:17). He is not merely first temporally but preeminent ontologically. The universe's cohesion and continued existence depend on His sustaining power. He is also **head of the body, the church** (1:18), possessing authority and providing life and direction. He is **the firstborn from the dead** (1:18), the first to rise to immortal resurrection life, guaranteeing believers' future resurrection. **In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell** (1:19)—the totality of deity resides permanently in Christ.

The doctrine of **cosmic reconciliation** appears in 1:20—through Christ's blood shed on the cross, God is reconciling all things to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven. This does not necessarily mean universal salvation but that Christ's work addresses the entire created order's fallenness, ultimately bringing all things under His lordship (cf. Philippians 2:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The scope of redemption matches the scope of creation—as comprehensive as the fall's damage.

Union with Christ dominates the ethical section. Believers have **died with Christ** (2:20; 3:3), severing connection to the old life and the world's elementary principles. They have been **raised with Christ** (2:12; 3:1), sharing His resurrection life. They have been **buried with Him in baptism** (2:12), identifying with His death. Their **life is hidden with Christ in God** (3:3), secure and protected. When **Christ who is our life appears**, believers **will appear with Him in glory** (3:4). This union is both positional (already accomplished) and experiential (to be lived out).

The **sufficiency of Christ** addresses the Colossian heresy directly. **In Him dwells all the fullness of deity bodily** (2:9)—not partially or symbolically but completely and permanently. Believers are **complete in Him** (2:10)—nothing is lacking, no additional knowledge or experience is needed. Christ has **disarmed the rulers and authorities**, making a public spectacle of them and triumphing over them in the cross (2:15). The spiritual powers the false teachers wanted to placate or worship are defeated enemies. Christ alone is sufficient for salvation and sanctification.

Colossians develops a theology of **freedom from religious regulations**. Believers have died with Christ to the **elementary principles of the world** (2:20)—whether Jewish laws, pagan superstitions, or philosophical speculations. Why then submit to **regulations**: 'Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch' (2:21)? These have an **appearance of wisdom** in self-made religion and asceticism but are **of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh** (2:23). External rules cannot produce internal transformation. Christ, not regulations, delivers from sin's power.

The letter addresses **mystery theology**—God's plan hidden for ages and now revealed. The mystery is **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (1:27). What was unknown in previous generations—that Gentiles would be full members of God's people, indwelt by Christ through the Spirit—is now disclosed. The mystery is not secret knowledge for spiritual elites but Christ Himself, accessible to all who believe. Wisdom and knowledge are found **in Christ** (2:3), not in esoteric speculation.

New creation emerges in 3:10-11. The new self is being **renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator**. In this new humanity, ethnic distinctions (Greek and Jew), religious distinctions (circumcised and uncircumcised), cultural distinctions (barbarian, Scythian), and social distinctions (slave and free) are abolished. **Christ is all and in all**—He defines identity, establishes unity, and creates a new community transcending human divisions.

Christ in Colossians

Colossians presents Christ as **supreme over all creation and sufficient for all salvation**. He is the **image of the invisible God** (1:15)—not a created image but the exact representation of God's nature, the visible manifestation of the invisible God. He is the **firstborn over all creation** (1:15), the heir and sovereign ruler, possessing the rights and authority that belong to the firstborn. This is a title of supremacy, not a claim that He is created.

Christ is **creator of all things** (1:16)—all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, including all spiritual powers (thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities), were created through Him and for Him. Nothing exists that He did not create. He is **before all things** (1:17), existing prior to and supreme over creation. **In Him all things hold together** (1:17)—the universe's continued existence and cohesion depend on His sustaining power. Remove Christ and creation collapses.

He is **head of the body, the church** (1:18), possessing authority over it and providing it with life and direction. He is **the beginning, the firstborn from the dead** (1:18), the first to rise to immortal resurrection life, guaranteeing believers' future resurrection. His supremacy extends over both creation (as its source) and new creation (as the firstfruits of resurrection). **In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell** (1:19)—the totality of deity resides in Christ, permanently and bodily (2:9).

Through Christ, God is **reconciling all things to Himself** (1:20), making peace **through the blood of His cross** (1:20). The crucifixion is not defeat but victory, the means by which hostile powers are defeated and rebellious creation is brought back under God's reign. Believers who were **alienated and hostile** have been **reconciled in His body of flesh by His death** (1:22) to be presented holy, blameless, and above reproach.

The mystery hidden for ages is **Christ in you, the hope of glory** (1:27). Christ indwells believers by His Spirit, transforming them and guaranteeing future glorification. **All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him** (2:3)—not in esoteric philosophy or mystical experiences but in Christ alone. **In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily** (2:9), and believers are **complete in Him** (2:10).

Christ has **disarmed the rulers and authorities** (2:15), stripping them of their power and weapons. He **made a public spectacle** of them, **triumphing over them in the cross** (2:15). What appeared to be Christ's defeat—crucifixion—was actually His victory parade, leading conquered enemies in triumphal procession. The spiritual powers have been definitively defeated.

Christ is our life (3:4). He is not merely the source of life or the example for life—He is life itself. Our true life is **hidden with Christ in God** (3:3), secure and protected. When **Christ appears**, we **will appear with Him in glory** (3:4). The Christian hope is not disembodied existence but resurrection glory when Christ returns. **Whatever you do**, do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus** (3:17)—He is Lord over every sphere of life.

Relationship to the New Testament

Colossians shares profound connections with **Ephesians**, likely written at the same time. Both address Christ's supremacy, the church as His body, the mystery now revealed, spiritual warfare, household codes, and are carried by Tychicus. Ephesians emphasizes the church's unity and calling; Colossians emphasizes Christ's sufficiency against false teaching. They are companion pieces—Ephesians addressed to a region (Asia), Colossians to a specific church.

The Christ-hymn (Colossians 1:15-20) parallels the Christ-hymn in **Philippians 2:6-11**. Both present preexistence, role in creation (implied in Philippians), incarnation, death, exaltation, and universal lordship. Colossians emphasizes cosmic scope; Philippians emphasizes humility and obedience. Together they provide complementary portraits of Christ's person and work.

Colossians' teaching on **union with Christ**—dying and rising with Him (2:12, 20; 3:1, 3)—echoes **Romans 6** and anticipates similar themes in Ephesians 2. Baptism symbolizes identification with Christ in death and resurrection. The old self is crucified; the new self lives to God. This foundational doctrine undergirds Christian sanctification.

The **household codes** (3:18-4:1) appear in similar form in **Ephesians 5:22-6:9**, **1 Peter 2:18-3:7**, and **1 Timothy 6:1-2**. These instructions show how the gospel transforms existing social structures from within. While not immediately overturning the institution of slavery, Paul's teaching undermined it by establishing the equality of master and slave before Christ and demanding just treatment.

Colossians' polemic against **worship of angels** (2:18) contrasts with **Hebrews** defense of Christ's superiority to angels (Hebrews 1-2). Both establish that Christ is not one among many spiritual mediators but the unique, superior, and sufficient mediator between God and humanity. No angelic intermediaries are needed or acceptable.

The theme of Christ's **sufficiency** anticipates the book of **Hebrews**, which argues that Christ's priesthood, sacrifice, and covenant are superior to and replace the old order. Both letters combat the temptation to add requirements to simple faith in Christ. Christ is not insufficient or preliminary—He is the final and complete revelation and provision.

Colossians' vision of **cosmic reconciliation** (1:20) connects to Paul's vision in **Romans 8** of creation's groaning and liberation. The fall affected all creation; redemption's scope matches the fall's. Christ will restore not just humanity but the entire created order, bringing all things under His lordship. This provides the framework for understanding Christ's kingdom and the new heavens and new earth.

Practical Application

Colossians warns against the perennial temptation to **add to Christ's sufficiency**. In the Colossian context, the additions were Jewish laws, mystical experiences, and ascetic disciplines. In contemporary contexts, the additions might be: church membership, speaking in tongues, political activism, therapeutic techniques, spiritual disciplines, or cultural practices elevated to requirements. The test remains: **Does this teaching present Christ as insufficient?** If salvation or spiritual maturity requires Christ plus anything else, it is false teaching.

The letter calls believers to maintain **theological vigilance**. 'See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit' (2:8). False teaching often appears sophisticated, spiritual, and sincere. It may have 'an appearance of wisdom' (2:23). But appearance is not reality. Believers must test all teaching against the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ. Does it exalt Christ or supplement Him? Does it point to Christ or to human achievement?

Christ's supremacy over all creation addresses contemporary issues of science, philosophy, and competing worldviews. Christ is not one religious option among many or one explanation for ultimate reality. He is the creator, sustainer, and goal of all that exists. All truth is God's truth, and all truth ultimately points to Christ. Scientific discovery, philosophical inquiry, and cultural exploration, rightly understood, reveal Christ's wisdom and glory.

The doctrine of **completeness in Christ** (2:10) frees believers from the treadmill of performance and achievement. We are not incomplete Christians striving for fullness but complete in Christ, growing into the fullness we already possess positionally. Spiritual maturity is not climbing a ladder to reach Christ but living out of union with Christ. We already have everything we need for life and godliness in Him (2 Peter 1:3).

Colossians teaches that **ethics flow from theology**. The indicatives of chapters 1-2 (who Christ is, what He has done) ground the imperatives of chapters 3-4 (how we should live). We put off vices and put on virtues not to become Christians but because we are in Christ. Transformation is not the condition for acceptance but the consequence of already being accepted in Christ.

The **putting off and putting on** metaphor (3:8-14) provides a practical framework for sanctification. Specific vices must be identified and decisively rejected—sexual immorality, impurity, anger, malice, slander, lying. Specific virtues must be intentionally cultivated—compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love. Transformation is both negative (ceasing sinful patterns) and positive (establishing righteous patterns).

Setting your mind on things above (3:2) is not escapism but proper focus. Our citizenship is in heaven; our life is hidden with Christ there; our hope is His appearing. This heavenly focus reorients earthly life—we pursue different goals, value different things, and endure trials differently. The hope of glory sustains us through present difficulties.

The principle that **whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus** (3:17) eliminates the sacred-secular divide. There is no secular sphere where Christ is not Lord. Work, family, leisure, citizenship—all come under Christ's authority and are opportunities for worship. Every task done for Christ's glory and in dependence on His grace is spiritual service.

Colossians addresses **relationships with wisdom and grace**. The household codes show how gospel transforms structures from within. Wives submit as fitting in the Lord; husbands love and are not harsh; children obey; fathers don't provoke; slaves work wholeheartedly for the Lord; masters treat slaves justly. Each party's responsibilities are defined, and all relationships operate under Christ's lordship. Power is constrained; service is dignified; mutuality is expected.

The letter calls for **wise and gracious witness** to outsiders (4:5-6). Walk in wisdom toward them, making the best use of time. Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, knowing how to answer each person. Christian witness combines truth and grace, urgency and patience, boldness and courtesy. We represent Christ to a watching world.

Finally, Colossians reminds us that **Christ is all and in all** (3:11). Every distinction that divides humanity—ethnicity, religion, culture, social status—is overcome in Christ. The new humanity in Christ transcends and abolishes the old humanity's divisions. This vision confronts racism, classism, nationalism, and every ideology that divides people. In Christ's body, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, barbarian nor Scythian—Christ is everything and in everyone.

Chapter 1

Greeting

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,
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.
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Thanksgiving and Prayer

- 3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,
4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,
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;
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:
7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;
8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.
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;
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;
11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;
12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
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The Supremacy of Christ

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

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:

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

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.

19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

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

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

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;

Paul's Ministry to the Church

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:

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;

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

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:

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

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

Chapter 2

Paul's Concern for the Colossians

- 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;
 - 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;
 - 3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 - 4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.
 - 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.
-

Freedom in Christ

- 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:
- 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
- 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.
- 9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
- 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:
- 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:
- 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.
- 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;
- 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;
- 15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Warning Against False Philosophy

- 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:
 - 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.
 - 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,
 - 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.
 - 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,
 - 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
 - 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?
 - 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.
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Chapter 3

The New Life in Christ

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
 - 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
 - 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
 - 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.
-

Put to Death the Old Self

- 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:
 - 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:
 - 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.
 - 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
 - 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;
 - 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:
 - 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.
-

Put on the New Self

- 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
- 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.
- 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
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Christian Household Rules

- 18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.
- 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
- 20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
- 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.
- 22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:
- 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
- 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
- 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.
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Chapter 4

Masters and Slaves

- 1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
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Devoted to Prayer

- 2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
 - 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:
 - 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
 - 5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.
 - 6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.
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Final Greetings and Instructions

- 7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:
- 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;
- 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.
- 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;)
- 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.
- 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.
- 13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.
- 14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

- 15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.
- 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.
- 17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.
- 18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

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