

Colossians - Introduction

Colossians was a Pauline epistle written around 60-62 AD, while Paul was in prison in Rome. It was written at the same time as Ephesians and Philemon, followed by the writing of Philippians. Paul was the author of the letter to the Colossians but Timothy probably was the pen, writing down Paul's dictation. The letter to the Colossians was carried by Tychicus to Colosse as he also carried the letters to the Ephesians (Ephesus) and Philemon, who lived in Colosse, at the same time.

Colosse was a dying commercial center located in the Lycus Valley (located in modern day Turkey) in an area known as Asia Minor in Paul's day. It was located approximately 12 miles from Hierapolis and Laodicea in the Valley, which was 100 miles east of Ephesus. There was a large population of Jews in Colosse, but the city was considered a Gentile city. It was a city in decline as Laodicea had become the primary center of commerce in the Valley during Paul's day.

Paul had not visited the city in his ministry, so the letter was written to believers he had never met. The church at Colosse was started by Epaphras, who, it is believed, was saved through Paul's ministry in Laodicea or Ephesus. Epaphras had journeyed to see Paul because he was concerned about a false teaching that was being taught to the believers in Colosse. The letter that Paul wrote to the believers in Colosse was written to address this false teaching.

The false teaching which had arisen in Colosse was a combination of beliefs from Jewish legalism and pagan mysticism, which later could be identified in Gnosticism. The false teaching in Colosse taught...

- 1) The need to follow O.T. law, ceremony, and ritual (ascetic legalism – the contemplative ideals and practices of extreme self-denial for religious reasons; no material satisfaction allowed);
- 2) The need for a special deeper knowledge (mysticism – other world mysteries known only to a few; a ceremony or practice by only a few in the spirit world);
- 3) The worship of angels as mediators to God (mysticism – other world mysteries known only to a few; a ceremony or practice by only a few in the spirit world);
- 4) Only a few knew and understood the teaching which stressed special privilege and perfection (esoteric – understood by and meant for only a select few); and
- 5) Christological teachings but denied the deity of Christ.

The false teaching, albeit "Christian" in presentation, was an attempt to move Christianity to a legalistic system of laws, ceremonies, and rituals....and it was an attempt to move Christ to a position of a lesser god.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, focuses on the supremacy of Christ over all powers, since the false teaching in Colosse devalued Christ and the new identity of the believer in Christ. Paul will assert the deity of Christ in his letter and the unity of the believer in Christ, which entails their sharing in His power and authority.

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Colossians 1:1-2: Paul begins his letter to the Colossians with his personal introduction as an apostle of Christ. Paul also included Timothy in his introduction, as Timothy was with him in Rome during his stay in prison.

Paul addressed the Colossian believers as holy and faithful brothers in Christ. The term “faithful” is used only in the N.T. in reference to believers in Christ. “Faithfulness” is a characteristic of a true believer; a lack of faithfulness calls into question the reality of the individual being a believer.

Paul greets the Colossian believers with his characteristic “grace and peace” greeting, which he uses in all 13 of his epistles. Paul desires that they experience God’s favor (grace) and a healthy condition of life (peace).

Colossians 1:3-4: Paul continues his introduction with a declaration of thanks to God for the believers in Colosse. Paul tells them that they are in his prayers and that he is thankful for their faith in Christ and for their love for all believers. This good report was given to him by Epaphras.

Colossians 1:5-6: Paul continues with his declaration of thanks to God for the hope the believers have, which comes from their faith in Christ and love for all believers. This trilogy of faith, love, and hope is a common topic for Paul. Faith is the upward look toward God and trust in Him; love is the outward expression toward others; and hope is the look forward to the future. For the believer faith looks to God and rests in the past work of Christ; love works in the present as an expression of Christ toward others; and hope is the anticipation of the future with Christ.

The believer’s hope is stored up in heaven because Christ, the essence of hope, is there. Without Christ’s victory over death and ascension into heaven, there would be no hope. This is a central theme of the gospel. The gospel is the word of truth; it is the good news of Christ providing a way of salvation for man.

Paul thanked God for the gospel being delivered to Colosse as well as the entire world. Paul rejoiced that the gospel message was spreading...and that it was producing fruit and growing. One of the characteristics of the true gospel is the message of God’s grace. The true gospel is not a message of grace PLUS works; nor is it a message of faith PLUS works; nor is it a message of hope PLUS works. The true gospel is a message of God’s grace alone.

Colossians 1:7-8: Paul writes that the true gospel message came to the Colossians through Epaphras. Paul called him a dear fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ. As stated in the introduction, Paul probably led Epaphras to Christ and taught him while ministering in Ephesus or Laodicea. It was Epaphras that went back to Colosse with the gospel message and started the church in Colosse.

Paul used the term “learned” when referring to the gospel. In the Greek this term meant that not only was the gospel message shared with them but they were also systematically instructed in the faith and how to live as a believer. This teaching would have come from Epaphras, who now was ministering on their behalf to Paul while he was in Rome. It was Epaphras who had told Paul of their love in the Spirit for Christ and other believers – a message that Paul had wrote about in verses 4 through 6.

Colossians 1:9: Paul states to the Colossians that he prayed for them daily since learning of their faith, love, and hope in Christ...as well as the false teaching that was being taught in their midst. Paul indicated that he was praying and petitioning (asking) on their behalf for the knowledge of God’s will, wisdom, and spiritual understanding in their lives. It was Paul’s request that God completely fill them with a full, deep,

understanding of God's will. This "knowledge" of God's will only comes from the Holy Spirit, who reveals God's will through the Word of God...through a practical organization and application of spiritual principles (understanding and wisdom), to their daily living. Knowledge, understanding and wisdom are often connected in Scripture.

Colossians 1:10-12: Paul's prayer and petition had a practical goal and application for the Colossians; "that you may live a life worthy of the Lord". A genuine relationship with Christ reveals itself through a transformed life. The Greek word translated "worthy" means "of equal weight". This means a believer in Christ is equal to Christ's standards; meaning a believer is to be holy as Christ is holy. A believer is to live consistent with his/her identification with Christ, who saved him/her. The goal of the believer is to please Christ in every way; to anticipate and do Christ's desires in every aspect of life. Paul writes to the Colossians that there are four things that please Christ in the believer's life. A believer pleasing Christ is:

- 1) Bearing fruit. Spiritual fruit is the by-product of a righteous life through...
 - a. Leading people to Christ (I Cor. 16:15).
 - b. Praising God (Heb. 13:15).
 - c. Giving money to those in need and the ministry of the gospel (Rms. 15:26-28).
 - d. Living a Godly life (Heb. 12:11).
 - e. Displaying holy attitudes (Gal. 5:22-23).
- 2) Growing in the knowledge of God. Growing in the knowledge of God is evidenced by...
 - a. A growing love for God's Word (Psalm. 119:97).
 - b. A more complete obedience to God (I John 2:3-5, II Cor. 10:5).

- c. A strong doctrinal foundation (I John 2:12-14).
 - d. An expanding faith (II Thess. 1:3).
 - e. A growing love for others (Phil. 1:9).
- 3) Gaining spiritual strength. Spiritual strength comes from God's enabling and power when a believer submits to God's Word and the Holy Spirit. A believer is strengthened daily by the Holy Spirit with spiritual vitality (power) and a power that overcomes resistance (might). It should be noted that "spiritual power" was a key issue for the Colossians. Many people were seeking power through connections with pagan gods and rituals to achieve wealth, influence, and prestige. Paul wanted the Colossians to know that he prayed regularly to God...that God would impart His power to them so they can live for God here on earth. This God-given power and strength that Paul prayed for produces patience and long-suffering.
 - a. Patience. In the Greek this word implies "not easily succumbing while enduring suffering or difficult circumstances". This is a focus on circumstances. The lack of patience often results in an individual losing heart and becoming discouraged.
 - b. Long-suffering. In the Greek this word means "the use of self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate". This is a focus on relationships and difficult people. The lack of long-suffering often results in an individual becoming angry and seeking vengeance.
- 4) Joyful thanksgiving. Bearing fruit, growing in the knowledge of God, and gaining in spiritual strength in a believer's life is demonstrated in joyful thanksgiving – a life of peace and contentment following God's will.

Also, joyful thanksgiving is based on the fact that God has qualified the believer (made us fit; empowered; authorized) to share in the inheritance of the saints; to share in the kingdom treasures that belong to believers; to share in the portion of the lot. Specifically Paul was stating that the Gentiles now have equal access to God the Father (not just His chosen people – the Jews) and are heirs to the inheritance He promised to His people – the Kingdom of Light. For this fact, the believer should be rejoicing and thankful.

Colossians 1:13-14: Paul continues that it is God the Father who delivers the believer from the domain (power) of darkness to the domain of light. The “deliverance” of the believer is a “rescue” – similar to the deliverance of the Jews from the slavery of the Egyptians. God has rescued the believer in Christ from the domain of Satan and the powers of evil.

When God rescues the believer from the domain of darkness He transfers them to the domain of light – the Kingdom of the Son of His love or the Son He loves. The phrase translated “His dear Son / His beloved Son / the Son of His love” means Christ is the object of God the Father’s love. This is an expression of eternal love....and it means that every person that God the Father calls and justifies is a love gift from Him to His Son.

It is through His Son, Christ, that the believer has been redeemed. Redemption means “to rescue by ransom”. Christ, through His death on the cross, paid the required ransom for the believer through the shedding of His blood. The believer has redemption through the atoning blood sacrifice of Christ,

which results in the forgiveness of the believer’s sins. The Greek word translated “forgiveness” means “to pardon” or “grant remission of a penalty”. We, as believer’s, have much to be thankful for!

Paul closed verses 13 and 14 with the focus on Christ and the redemption offered because of His death on the cross. With the focus now on Christ, Paul explains the exaltation and preeminence of Christ in verses 15-20. Paul highlights 7 unique characteristics of Christ that establish Christ as the Supreme Lord over creation and redemption. This explanation of Christ attacks the heart of the false teaching in Colosse.

Colossians 1:15:

Christ is the Image of the invisible God. Jesus is the perfect image, the exact likeness of God, and is in the very form of God (Heb.1:3; John 14:9). Christ is the perfect visible representation and manifestation of God. Christ is fully God in every way.

Christ is the Firstborn over all creation. Firstborn denotes that Christ preceded the whole creation and that He is sovereign over all creation. Firstborn implies both Christ’s priority to all creation in time, and His sovereignty over all creation in rank. This passage cannot be interpreted in a manner, such as what the Jehovah’s Witnesses do, that Christ was created by God. Christ as a part of the Trinity always was and always will be. He was not created by His birth here on earth.

Colossians 1:16-17:

Christ is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Christ is the Creator of all things – He was the instrumental Cause. Christ created all things for Himself – He is the final Cause. Christ holds all things together – He is the constituting Cause. (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2). Christ’s creation includes all things in heaven

and on earth, visible and invisible. This means the entire universe, both material and immaterial. This includes the entire hierarchy of angelic beings: thrones, powers (dominions), rulers (principalities), or authorities (powers). This description by Paul allows us an insight to the organized spirit world of angels – who were created beings over which Christ reigns supreme. When the universe had its beginning, Christ already existed. He was before all things – He was the Creator. It is Christ who sustains (holds together) the universe, maintaining the power and balance necessary to life's existence and continuity.

Colossians 1:18:

Christ is the Head of the body, the Church. Christ is the head of the Church, giving it life and direction. The Church is the universal church into which all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit the moment they believe in Christ (I Cor. 12:13). Christ is the “source” of the church. He gave life to the Church through His death; and through His resurrection He became its Sovereign.

Christ is the Firstborn from the dead. Christ was the first to rise in an immortal body (I Cor. 15:2), never to die again. Because of this fact He heads a new order of those who will be raised from the dead to be immortal as Sovereign. His victory over death establishes His supremacy over all created beings; He is preeminent. He is given first place over all creation.

Colossians 1:19:

Christ is the Fullness of God. All of God's deity (fullness) dwells in Christ. The fullness of deity, with all of deity's divine powers and attributes, completely dwell in Christ alone. This fullness of deity was not spread out among created beings, but resided in Christ alone.

Colossians 1:20:

Christ is the Reconciler of all things. Through Christ God will reconcile all things to Himself. The Greek word translated “reconcile” has a strong meaning and emphasis to a total and complete reconciliation of believers and all things of the created universe. This is not a reference to all mankind being reconciled, but is a reference to all ultimately submitting to Christ (Phil. 2:9-11). Those who believe in Christ are made righteous through Christ's death on the cross. We (mankind) who are enemies of God by birth can become His friends and children by faith. We can make peace with God through the sacrificial death and blood sacrifice of Christ.

Paul has explained the exaltation and preeminence of Christ in 1:15-20 by highlighting 7 unique characteristics of Christ that establish Christ as the Supreme Lord over creation and redemption. Paul continues to develop the theme of reconciliation through Christ as he continues to write.

Colossians 1:21: Paul, having introduced Christ as the reconciler of all things, continues to develop the theme of reconciliation. Reconciliation is necessary for man because man is cutoff, estranged, alienated from God. Man, as an unbeliever, is an enemy of God and is hostile to God in their mind. As a result of their position as an enemy of God and their internal hatred of God (inward hostility toward God), they commit sin (evil deeds, wicked works). This is the position all men are in from birth before they have the opportunity for reconciliation.

Colossians 1:22: Man is reconciled to God when he places his faith in Christ as personal Savior. Christ was the means for

reconciliation because of His physical, bodily death on the cross. As a condition of death, Christ must be a human in order to physically suffer, shed blood, and die. A spirit cannot shed blood and die. This countered the false teaching in Colosse that denied the deity and humanity of Christ.

The result of the reconciliation offered by Christ is the redemptive work of Christ which presents the believer as holy, blameless, and without reproach to God. When a person places their faith in Christ, God considers them as holy as His Son. The word “holy” refers to the believer’s position before God as righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. The word “blameless” means to be without blemish or fault. The phrase “without reproach” (un-reprovable, above reproach) means “to be free from accusation.” This means that in Christ the accused are un-acused and the condemned are freed, free from every charge.

Colossians 1:23: This reconciliation and freedom from every charge only comes by an abiding faith. Those who have been reconciled will persevere in their faith and obedience because in addition to being declared righteous (vs.22) they are a new creature in Christ with a new disposition to love God and hate sin; they desire to be obedient and are energized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase “grounded and settled” / “established and firm” / “stable and steadfast” refers to a building that is built on a solid foundation. A believer who is truly reconciled to God will not be unstable or unfaithful....or hopeless.

A person who is reconciled to God has hope (a confident expectation), which the gospel of reconciliation provides. Paul was a minister of the gospel of reconciliation to the entire world...meaning to everyone he met, Jew or Gentile.

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Paul asserts the deity of Christ and the unity of the believer in Christ, which entails their sharing in His power and authority.

Colossians 1:24: Paul now turns his writing to his personal experience. Paul rejoiced that he was able to suffer for the believers that was still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions. This does not mean that there was a deficiency in Christ’s sufferings and atoning death; Christ’s afflictions were and are sufficient and nothing can be added by anyone to secure salvation. What was “lacking” in Christ’s afflictions was the future suffering of all who experience afflictions for the sake of the gospel. It is the believer’s privilege to suffer affliction for Christ and the gospel (II Tim. 3:11; I Peter 3:13-14, 5:9; Heb. 10:32).

The Greek word translated “afflictions” here in Colossians was never used in the New Testament by any writers to describe Christ’s death. The word means “distress, pressure, trouble”, which clearly describes the afflictions in Paul’s life. Paul was experiencing persecution intended for Christ because of man’s hatred of the gospel and those who preached the gospel. Paul’s motivation for enduring persecution and affliction was to benefit and build Christ’s church.

Colossians 1:25-27: Paul explained that he was a minister of the gospel of reconciliation. This ministry was divinely commissioned by God, for Paul was given the responsibility to be the steward / administrator of the gospel of reconciliation. Paul was given the task of caring for, feeding, and leading the churches....and was accountable to God for his stewardship of this ministry.

Paul’s responsibility was to make the Word of God fully known to all men. This declaration of God’s Word included the “mystery”, which had been hidden. This “mystery” was of

Christ coming as the incarnate God to earth, and the Church, the unity of the Jew and Gentile into one body of Christ. This “mystery” was now revealed to those who believed in Christ since His death on the cross (saints), which declared that those who were without hope and without God (the Gentiles) have been given a glorious hope which is Christ. All men, Jew or Gentile, have the opportunity to know Christ personally, which is Christ in you. Christ comes to indwell the believer through the Holy Spirit. It is Christ being in the believer that generates the hope of glory, where one day the believer will dwell eternally with Christ.

Colossians 1:28-29: Paul, who had declared the truth of the mystery – ‘Christ-in-you’, now focuses on his personal ministry of being an apostle of Christ, a minister of the gospel to all men. Paul told the Colosse believers that he was “preaching, admonishing (counseling/warning), and instructing/teaching everyone in all wisdom”. His purpose was to see all men come to know Christ as personal Savior and to present them as spiritually mature to Christ. To this end Paul expended all of his strength; he labored to the point of exhaustion, he gave a great physical effort (striving, agonizing in physical exertion during an athletic event). The source of Paul’s strength was Christ and Paul rested in the truth that the spiritual and eternal results were being accomplished by God through him.

Colossians 2:1-3: Paul’s labor of love extended not only to those he personally met, but also to all of mankind. The word translated “conflict/struggle” uses the same root word translated “striving/agonizing”. Paul had a concern and love for those who he had never met.

Paul’s desire was that the believers in Colosse and Laodicea be encouraged in their heart and united in love. The goal of his

ministry was to encourage believers and have their hearts knit together in love for the purpose of reaching all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ. It is important to note there is no complete knowledge without complete commitment, and there is no complete understanding without complete yielding. Knowledge is the apprehension of truth. Understanding is the application of knowledge to living. Wisdom is the accurate and correct application of knowledge and understanding; it is the ability to discern truth from error based on knowledge and understanding.

This insight enables believers to know Christ fully (completely); it is to know the mystery of God. This knowledge of Christ that He is God incarnate, based in love, yields the riches of full assurance, which is evidenced by commitment and submission. It has been correctly stated, “If we love not God, we will ultimately love only ourselves and cannot know Christ. But if we truly love Jesus, our hearts will be as one with other Christians. We will love what the object of our love cannot help but love – His people – and, loving His people, we know that we belong to Him (John 13:34).”

It is in Christ that every believer has access to wisdom and knowledge sufficient to enable and support holy living in Christ. This wisdom is not available to a select few, but to all who believe in Christ. Everything we need to know about God, how to interpret reality, how to overcome in all circumstances, and how to live in His glory is accessible to all believers in Christ.

Colossians 2:4-5: Paul wrote to the Colossian’s that he did not want them to be deceived by persuasive words, by plausible and fine-sounding arguments. The most dangerous false

teachings seem plausible; and most time false teaching begins in the church itself. Only the complete knowledge and wisdom of Christ keeps the believer from being deceived. Only a complete commitment and submission (yielding) to Christ, making Him the focal point of all in life, will keep the believer from falling prey to false teaching. Mankind is brought to spiritual life through the Holy Spirit by Christ, and it is the continued confirmation of Jesus' identity and work that enables a believer to discern false teaching.

Because Paul was a prisoner, he was not able to be with the believers in Colosse, yet he stated that he was with them in spirit, rejoicing with them. Paul was able to make this statement because of the union of the believers in the Holy Spirit; a fellowship each believer has and enjoys despite distance. Paul noted his joy in hearing of the Colossian's "good order" and "steadfast faith"; both are military terms depicting a solid rank of soldiers drawn up in battle formation, standing firm in resisting the enemy.

Colossians 2:6-7: Paul concludes by calling the believer's at Colosse to the foundational teaching they received when they accepted Christ as personal Savior – Jesus Christ is Lord; He is God incarnate. As a believer, the first step is to become fully grounded in the truth we have heard, received, and accepted. Paul was exhorting the believers to hold fast to Christ; to walk in Him, which means to live a life, in daily conduct, patterned after Christ. Walking in Christ is nothing less than submission to His lordship. As believers we are also called to obedience so we can display our gratitude for His grace being shown to us.

Paul uses the images of a tree (rooted) and a building (built up) to remind the believer of their firm foundation in Christ.

The foundation is strong because it is Christ; it is on that foundation that faith is established and built. Faith continues to grow as sound doctrine (truth) is taught, believed, and proven.

Following Jesus as Lord manifests itself in obedience to His commandments. It is a humble embracing of His way as we reflect on and proclaim our gratitude for His grace and salvation. The true believer lives a life of thanksgiving because we have much to be thankful for – grace and salvation.

After Paul exhorts the believers to continue in Christ (2:6-7), he proceeds to attack and condemn the false teaching that was diverting the believers from Christ.

Colossians 2:8: Paul was concerned about the false teaching in Colosse and the threat of that teaching to the spiritual life of the believer, which would draw them away from Christ. Paul challenged the believers that "no one takes you captive (plundering cargo from a capture ship)" or "no one cheat / spoil (robbing of a possession) you" through "hollow and deceptive philosophy".

Philosophy is the rational investigation of the truths and principles of being, knowledge, or conduct. There are 3 branches of philosophy: natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and metaphysical philosophy. The Greek word translated "philosophy" in verse 8, only appears here in the N.T. The word refers to more than the academic discipline of philosophy as it a reference to and describes any theory about God, the world, and the meaning of life. Paul, as he is writing here, uses the same terminology as the false teachers but he is focusing on exposing the error of the false teaching being taught. He uses their terminology ("philosophy", "tradition",

and “spirits”) to expose the weakness and false foundation of their teaching.

Paul explained that the philosophy being taught was “hollow / empty and deceptive” because it was based on “human tradition / basic principles of the world rather than on Christ”. Apparently the false teacher’s philosophy involved the movement of stars, which they associated with the power of angels (or evil spirits) whom they worshipped. Paul was condemning philosophy that was based on human reason alone, apart from divine revelation.

Paul attacked the supposed higher knowledge the false teachers claimed to have attained. The false teacher’s philosophy was far from being advanced or profound; it was actually very simplistic and immature. Their philosophy was based on speculations and empty ideologies based on satanic or demonic and/or humanistic or worldly beliefs and systems. The false teaching taught that food laws and observing specific calendar dates and events were a key to holiness and true spirituality.

Paul, by using the language and terms of the false teachers, exposes the emptiness and error of their teaching; their teaching was not in agreement with Christ, the gospel, and the teachings of Christ. Because the false teaching did not exalt Christ as God, it was empty and worthless. Christ is the focus of the believer’s life, not traditions. The believer’s spiritual reality is based on loving Christ and the Word of God...and their life is a reflection of that reality, which means it is unstained by worldly trends and beliefs (James 1:27).

Colossians 2:9: Paul continues by focusing in on Christ and His deity. Paul contrasted the truth of Jesus’ deity with the lies being taught by the false teaching, which stated that Christ
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was not sufficient for true holiness and therefore was less than the one, true God.

Paul taught the believers that it is “in Christ that all the fullness of the deity lives”. In Jesus Christ, deity dwelt in His earthly body. Christ is the visible expression of God; in His incarnation and now in His glorification. Christ possesses the fullness of the divine nature and attributes in an earthly body. Therefore, it is only in Christ that one can have “fullness”; apart from Christ one can only have “emptiness”.

The false teaching in Colosse challenged Christ’s deity and humanity. They denied His humanity because of the belief that no good thing is in human form. They were teaching that Christ’s body was like that of an angel; it was only apparent and visible but not real – it was a spirit body. Paul actively challenged this teaching by writing that Christ was both fully God and truly man.

Colossians 2:10: Paul completes his teaching and challenge to the false teaching by stating that true believers have been given the fullness of Christ. Paul states a truth that believers share in Christ’s power; they are partakers of the divine nature through Christ (II Peter 1:4; John 1:16). This does not mean that believers become God but rather that they share in Him; they share in the goodness of the nature which He is. The divine “fullness” is in Christ (vs. 9) and the believers are “filled / complete” in Him (vs. 10); meaning the believer has everything they need in Christ, they do not need any other teaching to know and be like God.

The believer, being complete in Christ, shares in the body of Christ, who is the “head over every power (ruler) and authority (ruler power)”. Jesus Christ is the creator and ruler of the universe, including all spiritual beings. He is not a lesser

being emanating from God, like an angel, which was being taught by the false teachers. Christ was and is “the authority”, no one has higher authority than Christ. This truth was and is an encouragement to all believers; to know they have an intimate relationship with the greatest authority. The believer has no reason or need to live in fear because of their relationship with the greatest authority. Christ is the basis for the believer’s joy, peace, and thanksgiving.....in all circumstances.

In Christ each believer has been filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God. Thus we have the power of God to conform us to godliness and we do not need anything or anyone else to make us holy.

Colossians 2:11-12: Paul continues his argument for Christ’s sufficiency in reconciling man to God by focusing on the errors of their teaching. Paul focused on the call for circumcision. Contrary to the false teaching in Colosse, there was no need for a believer to conform to the Jewish rules and regulations in regard to the physical act of circumcision. Circumcision for the Jew symbolized man’s need of cleansing the heart, and it was an outward sign of that cleansing and identification of being a Jew. Paul taught that the physical circumcision was not required of a believer, only a belief and faith in Christ. At the time that a believer is saved, they undergo a spiritual circumcision “with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh”. This spiritual circumcision gives Spirit-given liberation from slavery to sin (R. 8:1-11).

This spiritual circumcision was done by Christ; it was a circumcision of the heart (Rm. 2:29; Eph. 2:11). This allows the believer to no longer live in the sphere of the flesh for

they have been removed from their solidarity with Adam and his sin (Rm. 6:6). The believer is now in solidarity with Christ and His righteousness. For this reason the believer’s authority is not the Law of Moses but the life of Christ.

The words “putting off” come from the Greek word that means “a total breaking away from”, which only occurs here in the N.T. This “putting off” of the old life occurs at the moment of salvation, when by faith the believer is buried with Christ in the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I. Cor. 12:13) and is raised from with Christ to new life. This is the new birth when man becomes a creation in Christ. This co-burial and co-resurrection is pictured in baptism, which is the outward affirmation of the already accomplished inner transformation.

This spiritual circumcision and baptism is effective for those who believe in Christ and in God who raised Him from the dead. It is Christ that empowers the believer to live the new life that Jesus calls the believers to live in imitation of Him.

Colossians 2:13-14: Paul writes that before a person is liberated to this new life in Christ, they are dead in their sins and in their sinful nature. All mankind from birth are separated from God; born alive in humanity but born dead spiritually with no ability to respond spiritually to God.

But God has drawn those who would believe, those who are chosen by Him, to Himself and has made them alive with Christ. Only through the union with Christ can those helplessly dead in sin receive eternal life. It is God who takes the initiative and gives life-giving power to unite sinners with His Son. It is God who used the same power that raised Christ from the dead that resurrects believing sinners to spiritual life.

This new life came to the believer when God forgave us of all our sins for He cancelled the “record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands”. Man comes into this world under the obligation to obey God completely...and man cannot meet this obligation because of his sinful nature. But God has taken this obligation, this personal indebtedness, and has nailed it to the cross where Jesus paid the debt for all – effective for all who believe in Him. It is through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross that God has totally erased man’s certificate of indebtedness and made forgiveness complete to all who believe. It is through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross that the just wrath of God against sin, which required punishment in full, was satisfied. This should motivate the believer to do all to please Him because of the great love He showed to us when we were yet sinners.

Colossians 2:15: Paul continues to instruct that by fulfilling the just and righteousness demands of God and His Law, Christ disarmed the demonic powers and authorities, triumphing over them. The cross of Christ marks the decisive defeat of Satan and his demonic powers. It was at the cross that Satan believed that he had defeated Christ by openly humiliating Him and putting Him to death on a cross. But it was the cross where Christ defeated Satan, by which Satan will be openly and publicly humiliated and put to eternal death.

God, through Christ, will make a public spectacle of Satan and his demons one day. The picture Paul uses here is that of a victorious Roman general parading his defeated foe through the streets of the defeated city and ultimately the streets of Rome.

As believers we should always remember that Satan and his demons are mortally wounded, without effective power over

the believer. We do not need to fear them because we share in Christ’s victory over them at the cross. Even though they are active and today accuse believers before God, the cross publicly reveals the failure of Satan to thwart God’s plan of salvation through Christ and His ultimate victory.

After Paul exhorts the believers to continue in Christ, he proceeds to attack and condemn the false teaching that was diverting the believers from Christ. Paul then begins to teach the believers that Christ was God and in Him the believer is complete.

Colossians 2:16-17: Based on the foundation that each believer is complete in Christ and is without need of anything additional, Paul warns the believers at Colosse against trading their freedom in Christ for a set of useless, man-made, legalistic rules; specifically rules about foods, festivals, and observances. The liberty of the believer in Christ was being attacked by those who would bring the believer back under the bondage of the Law. The false teachers used the Law to support their dietary rules about what foods could be eaten and when. They also used the Law to enforce the observance of the Sabbath.

We still have teachers today who state that we are to be observing the Sabbath; specifically stating that observing the Sabbath is God’s requirement – a requirement set up prior to the giving of the Law. We know that the required observance of the Sabbath today is a false teaching.

- 1) The Sabbath commandment is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated in the New Testament.
- 2) The early believers, following Christ’s resurrection and appearance, always met on Sunday (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2).

- 3) Colossians 2:16 specifically condemns those who command that the Sabbath be observed.
- 4) Colossians 2:17 specifically calls the Old Testament Law a shadow of things that were to come, which is a reference to Christ.

Paul taught the believers in Colosse that the ceremonial aspects of the O. T. Law (dietary regulations, festivals, sacrifices, observances) were shadows pointing to a future reality that was fulfilled in Christ. What the O. T. foreshadowed, Christ fulfilled. Since Christ, the reality has come and the shadows have no value. Once an individual accepts Christ as personal Savior, there is no need to follow a shadow.

Colossians 2:18-19: Paul warns the Colosse believers not to allow the false teachers to cheat them of their temporal blessings and eternal reward by allowing them to lure them into irrational mysticism. False teachers who turn believers away from the reality in Christ actually rob the believers of their spiritual reward. As an illustration of this principle, a judge will disqualify a runner in a race if the runner turns the wrong way or goes off the race track or course. The same truth applies to believers who are lead astray by a false teacher.

Paul lists two characteristics of the false teachers who were leading the believers away from Christ.

- 1) False Humility. Paul was commenting on the false teacher's lives and how they performed the ascetic rituals to provide a public show of humility. Ascetic rituals performed for public observation is not a demonstration of true humility but rather is a

demonstration of pride in one's self to others. Humility in which one delights is a false humility.

- 2) Worship of Angels. Paul addressed the false teaching that assigned Christ to a subordinate position under God, instead of the truth that Christ is God. The false teaching taught that between God and earth there was a host of angels that formed a bridge between God and man... of which Christ was a member. This teaching taught the worship of angels who were a part of this bridge including Christ, because He as an angel who could be worshipped.

Paul vigorously attacked the false teaching of the worship of angels. Specifically in Col. 2:9 he used the Greek word we have translated to "fullness" in a statement regarding Christ; stating that in Christ "dwelleth all the 'fullness' of the Godhead bodily". The word "fullness" was the very word that the false teachers used to define and describe the entire host of angels that formed the bridge between God and man. Paul taught that Christ was the complete and only bridge between God and man; as he stated in Col. 1:19 and 2:9.

These characteristics were an expression of legalism, because it was a teaching that brought men into slavery. The legalistic mystics in the church at Colosse dwelt on what they have seen in their visions during their ascetic rituals and worship of angels. They were "going on in detail", which means they were in a "denoted higher stage of mystery cult initiation that involved 'entering' the inner most sanctuary of a pagan temple" [KJV – "intruding into those things which he hath not seen"]. The false teachers were using their pagan worship experience to go into detail about the visions they had seen and the mystical insight they had received. These visions and

revelations were false since Christ is God's final revelation to man. But these visions, coupled with the ascetic legalistic rules, created pride without foundation in the false teachers earthly mind.

Paul taught that while the false teacher believed his legalistic mysticism brought him closer to a higher spiritual understanding and reality, it in fact was leading him away from spiritual understanding and reality. Paul stated that the false teacher had actually lost connection with the Head, Jesus Christ, who alone supplies life for spiritual understanding and reality. As Head of the body (church), Christ provides leadership and is a source of provision for every member of the body (joints and ligaments) so it grows and matures. True spirituality comes through the connection and joining with Christ. There is no spiritual reality or growth without a personal union with Christ.

Colossians 2:20: Paul continues to address the false teaching, whose focus on legalism and mysticism had created a rigid asceticism, by establishing the current state of the believer – which was being dead in Christ, being dead to sin. A believer is under no obligation to obey sin after salvation, because sin is no longer their master. Only those who are not believers are under the fleshly inclination to obey sin as their master.

The believer through salvation is placed in union with Christ's death and resurrection, which transforms the believer's life from slavery to worldly ambition, desire and sin to a new life of freedom in Christ. The believer is free from the basic principles of worldly philosophies, so why would one voluntarily walk away from a new life of freedom to an old life of slavery?

Colossians 2:21-23: Paul calls out the false teaching because it had created legalistic, esoteric rules of behavior – “Do not touch. Do not taste. Do not handle”. The false teachers were teaching an esoteric lifestyle led to holiness, which was achieved through self-neglect, self-denial, and self-infliction. Since this teaching focused on the temporal things which perished through using, asceticism was powerless to restrain sin and the sin nature and was without power to bring oneself to God. The extremes of asceticism ultimately serve only to gratify the flesh of the one practicing asceticism. Living by a set of rigid rules and doctrines of men may create a certain appearance of wisdom, but it creates a self-made religion with more confidence in one's self than in Christ. This ascetic lifestyle may appear humble and full of wisdom but it has no value in restraining sensual indulgence (satisfying the flesh). In reality the denying the body its desires often arouses and strengthens the desires being denied.

Colossians 3:1-2: Paul had previously taught the believers in Colosse that they had died with Christ; now he teaches them that they have also been raised with Christ. Because believers in Christ have a union with Christ, they have spiritually entered into His death and resurrection, so Paul taught that they were co-resurrected with Christ. As believers they should set their hearts on things above. The believer's life should be dominated by a pursuit of knowing Christ more intimately and all that belongs to living with and for Him. Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God the Father, where He is our advocate before Him (Heb. 8:1).

Paul wrote to the believers “have this ‘set disposition’ in your minds towards things in heaven”. As believers we are to concentrate our concerns on the eternal, not the temporal. Paul is saying that life in this world will be better if it is lived by

and through the power of the resurrected, ascended, glorified Christ; who now sits in the seat of authority at the right hand of God the Father. Paul is not introducing a new asceticism nor is he disdaining temporal or material things, for everything was created by God, but he is stating that we should not set our affections on worldly things and pervert God's creation for our own fleshly desires.

Colossians 3:3-4: At the moment of salvation, the believer dies to the flesh and its sin nature because of the immediate union with Christ. The verb's tense indicates that this death occurs in the past, which is a reference to the death of Christ. Concurrently at the time of salvation, the believer's life is now hidden with Christ in God. The word "hidden" implies concealment and safety; invisibility and security. These two truths combined means that the believer is dead to sin but not yet glorified, but safe and secure in Christ. In truth, Christ is the believer's very life.

But when Christ will appear at the Rapture, the Church-age believers will go to be with Him and will be glorified, free from sin and death for forever more (I Thess. 4:16-18). Then the believers, glorified and sinless as the Bride of Christ, will appear with Christ at His Return, His Second Coming to earth (Rev. 19:11-16).

Paul has finished exhorting the believers to set their mind on things above, not on things on the earth, for they were in Christ. Paul now turns his attention to challenging the believers to put off the sins of the old life.

Colossians 3:5: Paul teaches the believers that because they have died with Christ, they can get rid of sinful practices. Paul writes this as a command – "mortify", which means it is a definite act that is completed. The believer was not to go on
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living as though they were alive to sin, when in actuality they are not.

Paul continues by stating that "whatever belongs to your earthly nature" is literally "the members that are upon the earth". This is in direct contrast to what he previously wrote in Col. 3:1-4. Paul listed the evil activities that come from man's earthly nature, man's sinful nature:

1. Immorality / fornication – any form of sexual sin.
2. Impurity / uncleanness – evil thoughts and intentions.
3. Lust / inordinate affection – uncontrollable passion, unbalanced natural desire.
4. Evil desires / illicit craving – obsession with lust.
5. Greed / covetousness – insatiable desire to gain more.

The result of these things is idolatry, which is mankind following their own desires more than God's by placing themselves above God; it is the essence of worshipping themselves.

Colossians 3:6-7: Paul highlights the results of self-worship – it is to experience the wrath of God. The wrath of God is coming (present tense) and will culminate in His judgment of evil. God will judge those who follow their natural, earthly desires – those who know the truth but ignore it to do what they desire.

It is this self-worship that the believers once had lived in. The believers did live in these evil ways before they came to know Christ as personal Savior.

Colossians 3:8-9: But Paul commands them to walk no longer in those evil ways by "putting off" (getting rid of – "throwing off like a dirty shirt") these things:

1. Anger – a chronic attitude of smoldering hatred
2. Rage / wrath – an acute outburst of anger
3. Malice – an attitude of revenge and bitterness that is the root of anger and rage
4. Slander / blasphemy – evil speaking
5. Filthy language – shameful and abrasive speech

Paul teaches that as believers they are not to lie to one another because at salvation the “old man” and the former ways of life were discarded (“put off”). The basis for the “putting off” is the fact that the “old man” died in Christ and the “new man” lives in Christ. Therefore, believers are to “put off” sinful deeds and are to “put on” Christlikeness, which is done by the renewing of the mind with the Scriptures (Rms. 12:1-2).

Colossians 3:10: The believer is to “put on” the “new man”, which is a new way of life. For the believer, at the time of salvation, a qualitative change of identity occurred – from the “old man” to the “new man”. Now the believer must bring their behavior into line with their new identity. This change of behavior is constant and in need of constant renewal.

This renewal is necessary in order for the “new man” to have dominion over moral conduct before others. This renewal is like a baby being born – it is complete but immature; it is complete but has the capacity to grow through renewing itself (food, sleep, care, etc.). This renewal for the believer is in knowledge, which takes place when the believer comes to a greater, growing personal knowledge of and fellowship with Christ.

This renewal is an on-going process and it is in the image of its Creator – Jesus Christ. It is the goal of renewal to make the believer like Christ – the Son of God.

Colossians 3:11: In Christ all distinctions are removed. There are no status distinctions among believers. Paul listed a number of common distinctions people recognize and respond to:

1. National
 - a. Jew
 - b. Gentile
2. Religious
 - a. Circumcised
 - b. Uncircumcised
3. Cultural
 - a. Barbarian (foreign)
 - b. Scythian (wild savage nomad – Russian)
4. Social and Economic
 - a. Bond (slave)
 - b. Free

As a believer there are no distinctions, for Christ is all and is in all. All barriers are destroyed in Christ and all believers are truly created equal and are equal in the sight of God.

Paul teaches the believers that Christ was God and in Him the believer is complete; exhorting them to set their mind on things above, not on things on the earth, for they were in Christ. Paul exhorts the believers to “put off” the sins of the “old life” and encourages them to “put on” the virtues of the “new life”.

Colossians 3:12: Paul called the believers to take a decisive action – “put on”, which means “clothe yourself”. Paul will explain what the believers are to “put on” later, but Paul is writing this to establish what God expects from the believer...because of what God has done through Jesus for the believer. The believer is the elect of God – ones who have

been chosen by God. No one is saved solely by their own choice, but only as a response to God's effectual, free, uninfluenced, and sovereign grace. The believer is not only a chosen person, but he/she is holy (separated to God) and beloved (dearly loved); they are the objects of God's special love.

It is with this in mind that Paul tells the believers to "put on" these virtues:

1. Tender mercies meaning "a tender sympathy of heartfelt compassion". This is a description of the "seat or source" of emotions.
2. Kindness meaning "benevolence in action resulting in goodness toward others that pervades the person".
3. Humility meaning "a lowly and grateful attitude toward God, the opposite of self-love".
4. Gentleness or meekness meaning "a lowly others-first attitude toward people with a willingness to suffer insult or injury rather than inflicting such hurts".
5. Patience of longsuffering meaning "self-restraint, a steady humble response in the face of persecution or provocation; the endurance of injustice and troublesome circumstances with the hope of coming relief".

Colossians 3:13: The expression of the virtues is the tolerance for (put up with) each believer by each believer. The believer is to love and express the virtues in 3:12 through forgiveness (forgive whatever complaint), even when others have wronged or betrayed them. Why, because Jesus Christ has forgiven all of the believer's sin and this leaves the believer without foundation to hold a grudge. It is the "holding on" of wrongs that leads to bitterness and the sins mentioned in Col.

3:8-9. It was our sins that put Christ on the cross, yet He forgave us of our sins along with those who accused, beat, and crucified Him.

Colossians 3:14: But there is one thing above all of these virtues that the believer is to "put on" – Love. The greatest virtue is love (I Cor. 13), which each believer is called to do. It is love that is supreme because it is the perfect bond that unites all the virtues and holds them together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:15: As a result of all of the virtues being bonded together in love, there is unity in the life of the believer, a unity that lets the peace of Christ rule in their hearts. The Greek word translated "peace" refers to both the call of God to salvation and consequent peace with God; and the attitude of rest and security believers have because of that eternal peace. This peace is to rule (arbitrate, decide every debate) in every circumstance; meaning every trying circumstance is to be arbitrated by peace not by argument.

The believer is called to peace as members of one body, the Body of Christ. The closer the believer is to Christ, the closer they are to each other. This peace is expressed by an attitude of gratitude (being thankful). An attitude of gratitude contributes to peace because it actively counters complaining and murmuring.

Colossians 3:16: Paul exhorts the believers to "put on" these virtues and attitudes of the "new life", which comes from the believer dwelling in (to live in) richly (abundantly, extravagantly) in the Word of Christ. From the oral teachings that the Colosse believers heard to the Word of God (the Bible, the Scriptures) that the current believer has today, the believer is to study, meditate, and apply the Word of God to their life until it becomes a permanent part of their life. The

Holy Spirit fills the life (Gal. 5:22-25) that is controlled by the Word. It has been said that “a clean Bible is the sign of a dirty mind, and that a dirty Bible is the sign of a clean mind”.

When the words of Christ become a part of the believer’s life, the believer teaches (instructs) and admonishes (counsels) in humble wisdom. This teaching and admonishing is brought forth naturally in psalms (songs from the Book of Psalms), hymns (songs of praise), and spiritual songs (as opposed to secular songs) being expressed with gratitude (in grace, with thankfulness).

Colossians 3:17: Paul concludes this exhortation by challenging the believer to demonstrate all the virtues and attitudes of Christ in everything they do. There is no sacred-secular split in God’s eyes as He is sovereign over all. So all things done by the believer, they are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; whether it is word or deed. The believer is to act consistently with who Christ is and what He desires.

All things done, whether it is word or deed, are to be done with a thankful spirit; the attitude of thankfulness. As believers, we are to give thanks to God the Father by Jesus Christ for all things – no exceptions.

Paul exhorts the believers to “put off” the sins of the “old life” and encourages them to “put on” the virtues of the “new life”; then apply the “new life” to interpersonal relationships they live with daily.

Colossians 3:18: Paul begins his teaching on practical interpersonal relationships with the wife (note the similarity to Eph. 5:22-23). The wife is mentioned first because of the order of creation: woman coming from the man, man coming

from God the Father and Christ’s submission to the Father. Paul instructs the wife to “submit” to the husband. The Greek word translated “submit” means “to fall into line by rank; to willingly put oneself under the control of someone or something”. This instruction was unique to the Colosse believer because the Roman culture demanded the wife to “obey” the husband. Paul was instructing the wives to align themselves with and respect the leadership of their husbands, because this was “fitting in the Lord”.

The submission of the wife to the husband is to be in the “new life”, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus. This does imply that the wife is not obligated to follow the husband’s leadership if his leadership directly conflicts with specific scriptural commands.

Colossians 3:19: Paul instructs the husband to love his wife (note the similarity to Eph. 5:25). The Greek word “agape” is used here, which means the love of the husband for their wife is to be sacrificial; a love that is rendered selflessly. The husband is to exercise loving leadership; not dictatorial dominion.

The husband is not to be harsh or angrily resentful toward their wife. Men are prone to use harsh words, threats, unkind acts or words, and sometimes physical confrontation to intimidate or dominate their wife. If they act this way, the wife becomes bitter against the husband and reacts by not submitting to them. Wives resist authoritarian dominion but when a husband exercises compassionate care and love for his wife she often responds to this loving leadership with willing submission to the husband’s leadership.

Colossians 3:20: Paul instruction the children to obey their parents in everything (note the similarity to Eph. 6:1-3 / Ex.

20:12 - the commandment with promise). A child's disobedience to parents is defined in the O.T. as rebellion against God (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9) and was severely punished. A child's obedience to parents pleased the Lord because it reflects God's design for order in the home.

Colossians 3:21: Paul turns his instruction back to the husband and father by instructing them not to provoke their children (note the similarity to Eph. 6:4). Fathers are not to presume on the obedience of a child by issuing continual, unreasonable demands that create irritation and agitation in the child. A father is not to exasperate their child because it will only discourage them. It is the responsibility of the father to set expectations (standards) for their children; to love, discipline and praise them without constantly criticizing.

Colossians 3:22-25: Paul now addresses slaves (note the similarity to Eph. 6: 5). It is important to note that the relationships between husband and wife / parent and child are ordained by God from creation and as such Paul's instruction represents the perfect will of God. The involuntary, permanent ownership of a man by another man was not ordained by God from creation and is not the perfect will of God because it is a creation of man. It should be noted that a slave sometimes refers to a man who willingly commits themselves to serve a master he loves and respects.

The Bible does speak about the institution of slavery but it does not take a position of commending it. It was a reality of the various cultures described and documented in the Bible and numerous times the "master-slave" relationship is used to describe the believer's relationship with God.

Paul exhorts the slaves to obey their earthly masters. Paul was drawing a distinction between a master here on earth
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who oversaw the temporal material things to Christ who is the Master of eternal spiritual things. This obedience of the slave to the master is to be with sincerity of heart, meaning it was to be genuine all the time, not just when their master was watching them. This obedience was a recognition that the Lord is always watching.

Paul restates the admonition given in Col. 3:17 that as a slave they were to work honestly and with their whole heart (genuine from within) for the Lord, not for men (or master). Working with an awareness of God's presence and His character enhances the dignity of labor so that all things can be done to the glory of God. It is the Lord Christ (note: this is the only time Lord Christ is used in the N.T.) that the believer serves.

Paul explains that one day an inheritance, as a reward for their labor, is coming from the Lord and He will judge without favoritism. The Lord ensures the believer that he/she will receive just compensation for his/her genuine work done from their master. But, Paul writes, God will also deal with those who were disobedient and worked with an unthankful heart....and He will do so without partiality.

It is important to note that the principles of conduct Paul outlines in Col. 3:22-25 do apply to us today. We can substitute the employer-employee relationship to the master-slave relationship. What would happen today if believers would serve their employer with the genuine concern and care as if they were serving God Himself...and were accountable to God on a daily basis?

Colossians 4:1: Paul concludes this exhortation on personal relationships by addressing the masters of the slaves (note the similarity to Eph. 6:9). The masters are to give deliberate care

for their slaves with what is right and fair (equitable). The master of the slave is to show mutual respect and honor to the slave. They are to use their authority with justice and grace; not threatening or abusive or unkind because they are accountable to the Lord, their Master in heaven, for how they treated their slaves.

Paul closes his letter to Colosse with an exhortation to prayer.

Colossians 4:2: Paul's final exhortation to the Colosse believers begins with an exhortation to be courageously persistent (to hold fast and not let go) in prayer. The believer is to devote themselves to prayer – prayer is the communion of God with man and is the expression of man's dependence upon God for all things. Prayer is not a spiritual option or luxury; it is requirement and is essential to the spiritual life of the believer.

Prayer is to be vigilant, which means that the mind of the believer is to be fervent, intensely active, during prayer (James 5:16). Paul is literally challenging the believer to stay awake during prayer and to be alert for specific needs. Prayer is not to be vague and unfocused. Prayer is to be specific and vigorous in thought and feeling.

John Piper wrote, "Probably the number one reason why prayer malfunctions in the hands of the believer is that we try to turn a wartime walkie-talkie into a domestic intercom. Until we know that life is war, you cannot know what prayer is for. Prayer is the accomplishment of a wartime mission."

The prayer of the believer is to be leavened with thanksgiving so that it does not become a selfish pleading to have one's desires fulfilled (James 4:1-3). Thankfulness is necessary in

prayer because it establishes the proper attitude of the believer before God.

Colossians 4:3-4: Paul then asks the Colosse believers to pray for him and those with him in Rome. Paul's prayer request was specific – that opportunities (doors would be opened) would come so they could share the good news of Jesus Christ – the mystery of Christ.

Paul was in prison for declaring the good news of Jesus Christ, but he was still looking for opportunities to share the gospel message – and to share the gospel message with clarity. Paul desired to declare the gospel message clearly... "as I am obligated to".

Colossians 4:5-6: Paul encourages the believers to manifest a powerful and attractive testimony to the unbelievers around them. Paul told the believers to be wise in the way that they act: they were to establish the credibility of the gospel by how they lived their life before the unbelievers. The believers were to make the most of every opportunity (buy up the time) to declare the gospel and live a life worthy of Jesus Christ.

In addition, their speech was to be always full of grace through the use of words that were gracious and pleasing. Speech with grace is to be spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complimentary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful (Eph. 4:29-31). The believer was to exhibit speech that was pure and penetrating (seasoned with salt). The believer's speech is to be a blessing to others as well as a purifying influence to others.

Speech that is wise, interesting, stimulating, gracious, and pure provides the foundation on how to answer the questions of every man. Paul comments imply that the Colosse believers

were vitally involved in their local community and had ample opportunity to interact with unbelievers. There is also an implied question that is being asked by those who interact with the believers, which needed to be answered. And the answer was (and is) the gospel of Jesus Christ (I Peter 3:15).

Paul formally closes his letter to the believers at Colosse with personal exhortations and encouragements.

Colossians 4:7-8: Tychicus was a leader in the church at Colosse, and was the bearer of this letter from Paul to Colosse. He was to encourage the believers in Colosse. His name means “fortuitous” or “fortunate”. He was a Gentile convert that Paul took to Jerusalem to be a representative of the Gentile churches. He was mentioned by Paul in II Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12. He was considered a replacement for Timothy and Titus. He also had the responsibility to deliver Paul’s letters to the believers in Ephesus as well as to Philemon.

Colossians 4:9: Onesimus was a converted runaway slave of Philemon, who was originally from Colosse. Onesimus would accompany Tychicus as Tychicus delivered Paul’s letters to Colosse, Ephesus, and Philemon.

Colossians 4:10-11: Aristarchus was a Jew from Thessalonica who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2). He was imprisoned with Paul for preaching the gospel.

Mark was a Jew and the cousin of Barnabas. Mark deserted Paul during his first missionary journey (Acts 15:37-39), which created a falling out between Paul and Barnabas. Mark later redeemed himself with Paul and was one of Paul’s key helpers later in Paul’s ministry (II Tim. 4:11). Mark was also one of

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Peter’s close associates (I Pet. 5:13). Mark later wrote the first gospel – Mark.

Jesus/Justus was a Jew, thought to be from Rome. His name means “righteous”. He was one of the 3 “fellow workers for the kingdom of God”.

These three workers were a “comfort” (meaning “relief, consolation”) to Paul in his imprisonment in Rome. This is the only time in the N.T. that this word is used.

Colossians 4:12-13: Epaphras was a Colossian, probably a Gentile. He was the one who came to Paul with the concern over the false teaching in Colosse (Col. 1:7). Epaphras was always wrestling in / painfully laboring in prayer for the believers in the Lycus Valley, where the towns of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were located. His prayer for the believers was for them to stand firm as mature believers, perfected in Christ.

Colossians 4:14: Luke was a Gentile doctor who was often a companion to Paul during several of his imprisonments. Luke cared for Paul and was Paul’s scribe (secretary) for a number of Paul’s letters. Luke was the author of Luke and Acts. It is believed that Luke co-authored Hebrews with Paul, but this is no confirmed.

Demas was with Paul in Rome at the time Paul wrote the letter to the believers in Colosse. Later Demas would leave Paul because of the attraction of the world (II Tim. 4:10).

Colossians 4:15: Paul asked that his greetings be given to the brothers at Laodicea and to the church who met at the home of Nympha (female in the most reliable manuscripts). The early church met in homes because Christianity was not

recognized as a legitimate religion. There is archeological evidence from many different cities of the Roman Empire that show the homes in which the early church met were structurally modified to hold larger numbers than a few families.

Colossians 4:16: Paul urged the exchange of his letters once they were read. Once the letter was read in Colosse it was to be sent to Laodicea to be read and visa-versa. The Laodicean letter is thought to have been the letter to the Ephesians.

Colossians 4:17: Archippus was probably the son of Philemon (Philemon 2). He was ministering in Colosse. Paul exhorts the Colosse believers to tell Archippus to see to it (to take heed / to look out for dangers in) that he completes the ministry that God has given him. Paul was concerned that Archippus was having problems and he was not completing his work in Colosse.

Colossians 4:18: Paul closes his letter to the Colosse believers by signing the letter with his own hand. It is probable that Luke wrote the letter for Paul as Paul dictated it. Once written, Paul signed the letter with his own hand to verify its authenticity.

Paul asks the readers of the letter to remember his imprisonment so that they would be in prayerful support of Paul.

Paul closes his letter with a brief benediction that God's grace be with them.

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