



The Book of Colossians
Colossians Is A Book Of
Connections

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Colossians

OVERVIEW:

Colossians is a book of connections. Writing from prison in Rome, Paul combatted false teachings, which had infiltrated the Colossian church. The problem was “syncretism,” combining ideas from other philosophies and religions (such as paganism, strains of Judaism, and Greek thought) with Christian truth. The resulting heresy later became known as “Gnosticism,” emphasizing special knowledge (*gnosis* in Greek) and denying Christ as God and Savior. To combat this devious error, Paul stressed Christ’s deity—his connection with the Father—and his sacrificial death on the cross for sin. Only by being connected with Christ through faith can anyone have eternal life and only through a continuing connection with him can anyone have power for living. Christ is God incarnate and the *only* way to forgiveness and peace with God the Father. Paul also emphasized believers’ connections with each other as Christ’s body on earth.

Paul’s introduction to the Colossians includes a greeting, a note of thanksgiving, and a prayer for spiritual wisdom and strength for these brothers and sisters in Christ (Col. 1:1-12). He then moves into a doctrinal discussion of the person and work of Christ (Col. 1:13-23), stating that Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), the Creator (Col. 1:16), the “head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18), and the “beginning and the firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18). His death on the cross makes it possible for us to stand in the presence of God (Col. 1:22).

Paul then explains how the world’s teachings are totally empty when compared with God’s plan, and he challenges the Colossians to reject shallow answers and to live in union with Christ (Col. 1:24-2:23).

Against this theological backdrop, Paul turns to practical considerations—what the divinity, death, and resurrection of Jesus should mean to all believers (Col. 3:1-4:6). Because our eternal destiny is sure, heaven should fill our thoughts (Col. 3:1-4), sexual impurity and other worldly lusts should not be named among us (Col. 3:5-8), and truth, love, and peace should mark our lives (Col. 3:9-15). Our love for Christ should also translate into love for others—friends, fellow believers, spouses, children, parents, slaves, and masters (Col. 3:16-4:1).

We should constantly communicate with God through prayer (Col. 4:2-4), and we should take every opportunity to tell others the Good News (Col. 4:5-6). In Christ we have everything we need for salvation and for living the Christian life.

Paul had probably never visited Colosse, so he concludes this letter with personal comments about their common Christian associations, providing a living lesson of the connectedness of the body of Christ.

Read Colossians as a book for an embattled church in the first century, but read it also for its timeless truths. Gain a fresh appreciation for Christ as the *fullness* of God and the *only* source for living the Christian life. Know that he is your leader, head, and power source, and make sure of your connection to him.

THE BLUEPRINT

In this letter Paul clearly teaches that Christ has paid for sin that Christ has reconciled us to God, and that Christ gives us the pattern and the power to grow spiritually. Because Christ is the exact likeness of God, when we learn what he is like, we see what we need to become. Since Christ is Lord over all creation, we should crown him Lord over our lives. Since Christ is the head of the body, his church, we should nurture our vital connection to him.

1. What Christ has done (Col. 1:1-2:23)

Always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. [13] For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. [14] God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all our sins.

[15] Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. [16] Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. [17] He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.

[18] Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything. [19] For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, [20] and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the cross. [21] This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, [22] yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, he has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault. [23] But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed by God to proclaim it.

2. What Christians should do (Col. 3:1-4:18)

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. [2] Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. [3] For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

[5] So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. [6] God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. [7] You used to do them when your life was still part of this world. [8] But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. [9] Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. [10] In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you. [11] In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

[12] Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. [13] You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. [14] And the most important piece of clothing you must wear is love. Love is what binds us all together in perfect harmony. [15] And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

[16] Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. [17] And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.

[18] You wives must submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. [19] And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly.

[20] You children must always obey your parents, for this is what pleases the Lord. [21] Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying.

[22] You slaves must obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Obey them willingly because of your reverent fear of the Lord. [23] Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. [24] Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ. [25] But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites who can get away with evil.

[4:1] You slave owners must be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven.

[2] Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. [3] Don't forget to pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to preach about his secret plan—that Christ is also for you Gentiles. That is why I am here in chains. [4] Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

[5] Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity. [6] Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone.

[7] Tychicus, a much loved brother, will tell you how I am getting along. He is a faithful helper who serves the Lord with me. [8] I have sent him on this special trip to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you. [9] I am also sending Onesimus, a faithful and much loved brother, one of your own people. He and Tychicus will give you all the latest news.

[10] Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. And as you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. [11] Jesus (the one we call Justus) also sends his greetings. These are the only Jewish Christians among my co-workers; they are working with me here for the Kingdom of God. And what a comfort they have been!

[12] Epaphras, from your city, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. He always prays earnestly for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident of the whole will of God. [13] I can assure you that he has agonized for you and also for the Christians in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

[14] Dear Doctor Luke sends his greetings, and so does Demas. [15] Please give my greetings to our Christian brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and those who meet in her house.

[16] After you have read this letter, pass it on to the church at Laodicea so they can read it, too. And you should read the letter I wrote to them. [17] And say to Archippus, "Be sure to carry out the work the Lord gave you."

[18] Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—Paul.
Remember my chains.

May the grace of God be with you.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Christ is God

EXPLANATION:

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, Lord of all creation, and Lord of the new creation. He is the expressed reflection of the invisible God. He is eternal, preexistent, omnipotent, equal with the Father. He is supreme and complete.

IMPORTANCE:

Because Christ is supreme, our lives must be Christ-centered. To recognize him as God means to regard our relationship with him as most vital and to make his interests our top priority.

THEME: Christ is head of the church

EXPLANATION:

Because Christ is God, he is the head of the church, his true believers. Christ is the founder, the leader, and the highest authority on earth. He requires first place in all our thoughts and activities.

IMPORTANCE:

To acknowledge Christ as our head, we must welcome his leadership in all we do or think. No person, group, or church can regard any loyalty as more critical than that of loyalty to Christ.

THEME: Union with Christ

EXPLANATION:

Because our sin has been forgiven and we have been reconciled to God, we have a union with Christ that can never be broken. In our faith connection with him, we identify with his death, burial, and resurrection.

IMPORTANCE:

We should live in constant contact and communication with God. When we do, we all will be unified with Christ and with one another.

THEME: Man-made religion

EXPLANATION:

False teachers were promoting a heresy that stressed self-made rules (legalism). They also sought spiritual growth by discipline of the body (asceticism) and visions (mysticism). This search created pride in their self-centered efforts.

IMPORTANCE:

We must not cling to our own ideas and try to blend them into Christianity. Nor should we let our hunger for a more fulfilling Christian experience cause us to trust in a teacher, a group, or a system of thought more than in Christ himself. Christ is our hope and our true source of wisdom.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print