

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Authorship: The apostle Paul identifies himself as the author, along with Timothy, who possibly served as his scribe in writing (1:1). The letter contains a first person reference in v. 23 and closes with the words, “The salutation by the hand of me, Paul” (4:18). While some scholars have cast doubt on Pauline authorship because of stylistic and theological differences, their arguments are not convincing. While some of the style and language are specific to the Colossian situation, there is much in the letter that fits Paul’s other writings. Regarding the theology of the book, while the specifics of the threat of a worldly “philosophy” (2:8) are unique to the church in Colosse, Paul’s emphasis on a high Christology and the centrality of the gospel to combat such a threat is in keeping with the theology of Paul’s other letters. There is little reason to doubt the authenticity of Pauline authorship.

Colossians is considered one of the Prison Epistles (4:3,18) and it is believed that Paul wrote this while imprisoned in Rome. This fits with Paul’s references to Aristarchus and Luke (4:10,14; see also Acts 27:2).

Date: Paul wrote the letter from prison in Rome around AD 61 or 62.

Theme: The supremacy of Christ over all things.

Purpose: To ground and settle the Colossians in the knowledge of Christ against error.

Synopsis: *The Contribution of Colossians to Redemptive Revelation*

Though Paul did not plant the church in Colosse or visit the believers there, he cared deeply for the church and received reports regarding the church’s health. Upon hearing that false teachers threatened the purity of the gospel of free grace, Paul responded with a letter. Though there are certainly difficulties in grasping a full understanding of the threat the Colossian believers’ faced, it is clear that it demanded adherence to external rites, that it was according to men and contrary to Christ (2:8,20–21). Paul responds by reminding the church that Jesus Christ is supreme over all creation and over the new creation (the church). Therefore, anything that detracts from the supremacy of Christ is to be repudiated. Paul intercedes for them and encourages them, that rather than becoming pulled away from the faith that they learned from Epaphras (1:7), they will continue to grow in and be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (v. 9).

The Christian life becomes visible in everyday life; it is distinct from the world. There must be a change in the heart, though, before there is change in one’s life. The Colossian believers faced a teaching that following certain external rules would make a person more spiritual (2:21). This teaching was contrary to the gospel of Christ and resulted in a form of religion that, while it may have appeared to be wise and humble (v. 23), actually threatened the sufficiency of the gospel. Because of this threat, Paul wrote to the Colossians to encourage them to continue in the faith of Christ that they initially received (v. 6). Instead of following after man-made wisdom, believers should continue to pursue Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (v. 3).

Therefore, the greatest antidote to external religion is a clearer vision of the person and work of Jesus Christ (1:15–22). Seeing Christ, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily (v. 19; 2:9), is utterly transforming. Paul highlights this in his prayer and works it out in greater detail in chs. 2–3. Knowing God’s will, grasping one’s union with Christ in his death and resurrection,

and fixing one's mind on things above where Christ is leads to Christlikeness, which is the goal of sanctification (3:10). Because Christ is sufficient for both justification and sanctification, the Christian should not shortchange himself by conforming merely to external forms of religion. All that he has and needs is found in Christ. Paul is quick to remind them that relying solely on Christ and living in light of the resurrection does not lead to licentiousness. Rather, those in Christ, as the elect of God, are holy and live holy lives (3:12—4:1). Reading Colossians and grasping its message brings the believer into a deeper and greater experience of the blessings found in Jesus Christ, the visible image of the invisible God.

Outline:

- I. Introduction (1:1–14)
 - A. Greetings (1:1–2)
 - B. Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
 - C. Prayer (1:9–14)
- II. Glorifying in the Supremacy of Christ (1:15–23)
 - A. Supremacy of Christ over Creation (1:15–17)
 - B. Supremacy of Christ over the New Creation (1:18)
 - C. Supremacy of Christ in the Work of Redemption (1:19–23)
- III. Paul's Ministry and Conflict for the Colossian Believers (1:24—2:7)
 - A. Paul's Ministry of Preaching the Mystery of God (1:24–29)
 - B. Paul's Concern for the Colossian Believers (2:1–7)
- IV. Paul's Warning of and Solution to False Teaching (2:8–23)
 - A. Summary of False Teaching (2:8)
 - B. Sufficiency of Christ's Death and Resurrection (2:9–15)
 - C. False Teaching Described in Greater Detail (2:16–23)
- V. Paul's Description of the Christian Life (3:1—4:6)
 - A. Foundation of the Christian Life Wrapped Up in Christ (3:1–4)
 - B. The Mortification of Sin (3:5–11)
 - C. The Putting On of Holiness (3:12–17)
 - D. Description of the Christian Life in the Household (3:18—4:1)
 - E. The Christian's Prayer Life (4:2–4)
 - F. The Christian's Life before the World (4:5–6)
- VI. Final Words (4:7–18)
 - A. Comments regarding Paul's Companions (4:7–14)
 - B. Final Greetings to the Brethren and the Benediction (4:15–18)

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE
COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER 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.

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:

Chapter 1: Paul greets the believers of Colosse and gives thanks to God the Father for their faith and intercedes for them. Paul focuses on the supremacy of Christ over the created order and in redemption.

INTRODUCTION (1:1–14)

Greetings (1:1–2)

1:1 Paul identifies himself as the author and mentions Timotheus (Timothy) his son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2).

1:2 *the saints*. A common designation Paul uses to address the church.

Thanksgiving (1:3–8)

1:3 *give thanks to God and the Father*. Paul frequently expresses his love for the brethren by offering thanksgiving to God for them. In doing so, he aims at two things: 1) to direct thanksgiving to God as the ultimate source of blessing, and 2) to encourage the believers for whom he is thankful. *praying always for you*. Paul's thoughts toward the Colossians and subsequent prayers for them were repetitive, not a one-time act.

1:4–5 Paul points to their *faith* in Christ, *love* for the brethren, and *hope* of full salvation as the reason why he thanks God—his summary of the Christian life (1 Cor. 13:13). *whereof*. Of which.

1:5 *word of the truth of the gospel*. The word of truth is the gospel (see Eph. 1:13; James 1:18).

1:6 *as it is in all the world*. The gospel successfully came to Colosse as evidenced by their faith, love, and hope. But the gospel is not limited to one place. By the time of Paul's letter the gospel had spread from all Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

and was being spread throughout the whole world according to Christ's commission (Acts 1:8).

1:7 *Epaphras*, a native of Colosse (4:12), brought the gospel and planted the church in the city. Paul recognizes him as a *fellowservant* in the gospel. *minister*. Literally, "servant."

1:8 *love in the Spirit*. Love by the Holy Spirit. Love is a vital part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Prayer (1:9–14)

1:9–14 Paul transitions from thanksgiving to intercession, writing the saints in Colossae precisely how he prays for them. Paul's prayers for the specific churches contain themes that are worked out in his letters. He does not pray abstractly for churches, but specifically for what they need in the particular circumstances in which they find themselves.

1:9 *filled with the knowledge of his will*. The only way to combat the false teaching and the vain philosophy that threatened the health of the church is to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. God's will is not something to be known only by an elite few. But it is revealed and is to be known by all the saints. The knowledge of God's will is over against the knowledge promised by the false teachers. *In all wisdom and spiritual understanding* highlights the practical use of and spiritual discernment of the knowledge of God's will. Knowing God's will manifests itself properly in the ability to apply it to life's situations.

1:10 *That ye might walk worthy*. The ultimate evidence of knowing God's will is living in a manner that is pleasing to God. *unto all pleasing*. While the temptation to please others faces believers at every turn, it is the chief aim of Christians to please God.

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:

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 unproveable 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;

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.

1:11 *Strengthened with all might.* Paul does not exhort Christians to live holy lives pleasing to the Lord without assuring them that God gives the strength *according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.* Paul does not leave the believer in doubt as to the end result of experiencing this power. It manifests itself in patient endurance and longsuffering. The former is often used with reference to circumstances and the latter with people. Christians, by God's glorious power, are strengthened to endure hardships and show patience toward others.

1:12 *made us meet.* Made us sufficient or qualified us.

1:13 *translated.* Transferred. When God redeems a sinner He transfers them from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His Son, Jesus Christ.

GLORIFYING IN THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST (1:15–23)

Supremacy of Christ over Creation (1:15–17)

1:15 *image of the invisible God.* Jesus Christ, true God of true God, is here called the representation of God. God, who is invisible, is now seen in the person of Jesus. While human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), Paul says here that Jesus Christ *is* the exact image of God. The focus here is on the revelatory character of Jesus Christ. It is this image that believers are renewed after in their sanctification (3:10). *firstborn.* While firstborn can sometimes refer to temporal order, here Paul highlights preeminent status (Ps. 89:27). *of every creature.* This phrase is subordinate to "firstborn." Christ is supreme over all creation.

1:16 *by him, and for him.* The reason for his supremacy over creation is because Christ is the agent of (*by*) and the goal of (*for*) creation.

1:17 *by him all things consist.* Literally, "in him all things are held together." Christ is not only supreme over creation because He is the agent and goal of creation, but also because He sustains creation (Heb. 1:2–3).

Supremacy of Christ over the New Creation (1:18)

1:18 *head of the body, the church.* Paul now demonstrates Christ's supremacy in redemption, noting Christ's authority and headship over the church, the new creation. *firstborn from the dead.* Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of resurrection for all the saints (1 Cor. 15:20–22). *that in all things he might have the preeminence.* The end result of Christ's work of redemption is His unmistakable supremacy.

Supremacy of Christ in the Work of Redemption (1:19–23)

1:19 *all fulness.* All the glory and majesty of God dwells in Jesus (2:9).

1:20 *peace through the blood of his cross.* Christ reconciles sinners to God by virtue of His life and atoning death. That Christ who is supreme over creation and over the new creation would suffer and die for rebellious creatures magnifies the grace and mercy of the triune God.

1:21 *alienated and enemies.* Sin alienates human beings from God (Rom. 8:7). However, Christ's death and resurrection reconcile sinners and they are restored to peace with God.

1:22 *to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable.* Such is the power of Christ's work in redemption that He not only restores peace by reconciling sinners to God, He transforms them in order to present them as holy and without blame and without reproof (Eph. 5:25–27).

1:23 *If ye continue in the faith.* Christ secures salvation for all those who place their faith in Him. Believers need, however, to persevere in that faith and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel. The Colossian believers heard teachings that tempted them to move away from or past Christ. Paul calls them to remain committed and rooted in the faith of Jesus Christ.

PAPAL MINISTRY AND CONFLICT FOR THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS

(1:24—2:7)

Paul's Ministry of Preaching the Mystery of God (1:24–29)

CHAPTER 2

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 the 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.

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

1:24 *fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.* Paul has already shown that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient and supreme. He does not imply that he needs to add to the atoning sufferings of Christ. Rather, he is referring to the suffering of God's people in the latter days. Christ told His followers that they would suffer for the sake of the gospel. Paul rejoiced that he was able to share in suffering for the sake of the gospel (Phil. 3:10).

1:26–27 Paul uses the word *mystery* to describe a truth that is known only by the revelation of God, hidden *from ages and from generations*. While there has always been a universal aspect of the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12:2; 22:18), the full display of God's purposes in salvation was not clearly seen until the arrival of Christ and His subsequent death and resurrection. The content of the mystery of the gospel that is now fully revealed is described in v. 27, namely, that the Gentiles enjoy full participation among the people of God. All those trusting in Christ enjoy His covenantal presence, namely, *Christ in you*.

1:28 *perfect.* Mature.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 1

1. Give attention to the great wonder of the incarnation. Meditate upon the supremacy of Christ in His person as the agent, sustainer, and goal of creation, considering that this person would take on flesh to redeem you from your sins. What are some reasons why Christ's incarnation would make you praise God?
2. Paul prays that the believers at Colosse might be filled with the knowledge of God. He prays that they might "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Believers tend to think of God's will as that which only deals with future plans. Yet Paul writes about God's will as informing our lives in the present, how we may live before God, being fruitful in every good work.

Chapter 2: Paul opposes false teaching and argues for the supremacy of Christ over worldly philosophies, vain deceits, and the traditions of men.

Paul's Concern for the Colossian Believers (2:1–7)

2:1 *conflict.* Struggle.

2:3 *In whom are hid.* Wisdom and knowledge can be found in Christ. He holds all these treasures in Himself. To know Christ is to have wisdom and knowledge.

2:4 *beguile.* Deceive.

2:5 *Order and stedfastness* are military terms. Paul rejoices that he has beheld their disciplined efforts in standing for the faith.

2:6 Paul encourages them to remain walking in the teaching they first received.

PAUL'S WARNING OF AND SOLUTION TO FALSE TEACHING (2:8–23)

Summary of False Teaching (2:8)

2:8 *spoil.* Literally, "capture, take captive." Some sought to capture the Colossian believers through the means of *philosophy and vain deceit*, or empty deceptions. The term *philosophy* in Paul's day was more broad than today. It was used to describe a particular school or system of thought. The kind of philosophy and vain deceit that threatened the Colossians is described by the preposition *after*, used three times. This philosophy was *after the tradition of men*. This contrasts with the faith first received which was from God. *after the rudiments of the world*. Literally, "fundamental components of the world," referring either to the spirits of the world, or, more likely in this context, the world's principles and rules. The church was being tempted to adhere to certain rules (vv. 16,20–23) if they wanted to be spiritually full. *not after Christ*. The chief problem of all the problems with the vain and empty philosophy was that it was contrary to Christ.

Sufficiency of Christ's Death and Resurrection (2:9–15)

2:9 *Godhead bodily.* Christ is fully God made visible in the flesh (John 1:18). Paul again reminds the believers that true knowledge and wisdom are to be found in Christ alone (1 Cor. 1:30).

2:10 *complete in him.* Everything that a believer needs is found in Christ, and a believer is complete in union with Christ. *head of all principality and power.* Since Christ is supreme over all things, it is utter folly to seek fullness in anything other than Him.

2:11 *circumcision.* Paul addresses the rite of circumcision and focuses on its spiritual significance, giving the true meaning of the rite. In Christ, the sins of the flesh have been cut off.

2:12 *baptism.* Paul now shows the spiritual significance of baptism, linking baptism and circumcision. The essence of both rites is Christ. The believer who is circumcised in Christ (v. 11) is also buried with Him in baptism. Baptism points to the washing away of sins. Being risen with Christ through faith

quicken 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.

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.

CHAPTER 3

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.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are

shows that sin no longer reigns and has dominion.

2:13 The result of being circumcised in Christ and buried with Him in baptism is forgiveness.

2:14 *handwriting of ordinances*. Literally, "handwritten record of debts." The debt against an individual accrued by sin (Rom. 3:23) is wiped out and obliterated. *against us*. The debt condemns the sinner. *nailing it to his cross*. Christ, however, graciously and lovingly took the debt that was against sinners and nailed it to the cross. In His sacrificial, substitutionary death, Christ paid the penalty of sin and canceled the debt.

2:15 *spoiled principalities and powers*. Christ's death conquered spiritual powers of evil (Heb. 2:14–15). *made a shew of them openly*. Christ's death was a public showing of the defeat of Satan and the powers of evil, exposing and disgracing them before all.

False Teaching Described in Greater Detail (2:16–23)

2:16–17 *Let no man therefore*. Given what Christ has done as the One who is supreme over creation and redemption, let no man judge regarding the observance of those things that are but a shadow. Paul's argument leads to this conclusion, namely, that Christ is the substance of all these things.

2:18 *Let no man beguile you*. Let no man rob you or condemn you. *humility*. False teachers often demonstrate a humility that encourages a following. *vainly puffed up*. This humility, however, is betrayed by an arrogance that claims a knowledge enjoyed by only a few.

2:19 *not holding the Head*. That their philosophy is not after Christ (v. 8) is revealed in terms as not holding to the Head, which is Christ. Their teaching is detached from Christ. *bands*. Ligaments. *having nourishment*. Only those things that are connected to Christ can be supported. Christians find their nourishment and growth only in union to Jesus Christ.

2:20–23 *if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world*. Since Christians have died with Christ and therefore been freed from obeying rules in an effort to please Him, why then live in a way that subjects one to self-effort. Do not live in subjection to those things from which Christ set you free (John 8:36). *shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility*. Relying on external religion and obedience to man-made rules

may appear to be wise and spiritually mature. *not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh*. While it appears to be wise, it cannot defeat the sinful longings of the flesh. You cannot curtail sin with asceticism.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 2

1. In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Yet, we so often seek guidance for life outside of Christ. Whether it be self-help tips or the latest marketing fad, we can be tempted to find quick solutions to life's problems outside of Christ. Give yourself, by grace, to a perpetual pursuit of experiencing Christ and living in the enjoyment of being united to Him.
2. How ought you to view your standards of conduct? When Paul says that external things do not conquer the indulgences of the flesh, is he advocating the repudiation of all standards? Consider the sufficiency of Christ's death and resurrection to sanctify, along with the motivation of the standards set forth, personally and for family.

Chapter 3: Seeking Christ, who is above, leads to genuine holiness and the defeat of the flesh.

PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (3:1—4:6)

Foundation of the Christian Life Wrapped Up in Christ (3:1–4)

3:1 *If ye then be risen with Christ*. Those who have been risen with Christ (2:12,20) can pursue those things which are above. *those things*. This refers to the substance of Paul's prayer in ch. 1: knowledge of God's will, wisdom and spiritual understanding, strength according to God's glorious power, etc.

3:2 *Set your affection*. Set your mind upon, to think upon.

3:3 *your life is hid*. This phrase has the idea of life being hidden, secure, or safe in Christ. Paul has exhorted the believers not to be deceived or judged by others. Now he encourages them that they, having died in Christ, are alive and secure in Christ.

The Mortification of Sin (3:5–11)

3:5 *Mortify therefore your members*. The solution to the legalism Paul warns Christians of in 2:20–23 is not antinomianism

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.

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.

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 men-pleasers; 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.

or a license to sin. Rather, in Christ the believer is able and expected to put to death (Rom. 8:13) the deeds of the flesh. Being dead to sin and alive in Christ, Christians are to live in a way that is in accordance to God's will, not the evil deeds of the former life outside of Christ.

3:6 *which things' sake.* The believer's life is not to be characterized by those things the wrath of God is against (v. 5; Rom. 1:18–32).

3:10 *new man.* Christians are new creatures. They are now identified by their union with Christ. *image of him that created him.* Paul has already identified Christ as the image of the invisible God and the agent of creation (1:15). He now applies those realities to the believer's salvation. A Christian is a new man in Christ. He is being renewed in the image of Christ. Holiness is not adhering to man-made rules, but conformity to and renewal in the image of Christ.

3:11 In Christ there is unity among the people of God. Whereas the vain philosophy of the false teachers divided and promoted various levels of spirituality, there is a genuine Christian equality in Christ.

The Putting On of Holiness (3:12–17)

3:12–17 *the elect of God, holy, and beloved.* Knowing that God lovingly chose them and set them apart for Himself transforms the way they live toward others and encourages unity among the body of Christ. *bowels of mercies.* Deep compassion.

3:16 *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.* Three common terms used to describe the parts of the Old Testament Psalms.

3:17 *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Paul highlights one of the primary motivations of the Christian life. Believers are not to live for the praise or affirmation of man, but all their deeds and words are to be for Christ, with a heart of gratitude to God.

Description of the Christian Life in the Household (3:18–4:1)

3:18 *as it is fit in the Lord.* The wife's submission to her husband is in obedience to the Lord. It is in compliance to the God-given roles unique to man and woman.

3:19 *Husbands, love your wives.* The husband's leadership is exercised and demonstrated in his love for his wife (Eph. 5:25). *be not bitter.* The husband is not to be harsh toward his wife.

3:20 *this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* Paul cites the fifth commandment, exhorting children to obey their parents. In doing so, God is pleased. Children and parents do well to recognize this authority structure. The child's obedience to parents is obedience to God. God is ultimate in these exhortations. The husband is under God's authority as evidenced in the wife's submission being fit in the Lord and the child's obedience being pleasing to the Lord.

3:21 *lest they be discouraged.* Fathers are the authority in the home. However, the fathers are not to be overbearing in a way that causes the child to be discouraged, or lose heart.

3:22–4:1 Paul addresses the relationship between master and slave. Servants were to work diligently with a singular focus on pleasing God. Masters were to treat servants justly, remembering that they are under God, the Master in heaven. Paul is not necessarily condoning slavery, but he is teaching the moral implications of the gospel on individuals within present day societal institutions.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 3

1. Believers are risen with Christ and exhorted to fix their minds on things above. Do you give attention to this focus in your personal walk and in your family? Do you find strength (1:11) to mortify and put off sin in God's power? Perhaps you are frustrated seeking to mortify sin in your own strength. What does living according to 3:12–16 look like in your personal interactions and in your family life?
2. Notice the manifold grace of the Holy Spirit (vv. 12–15), with which we are commanded to clothe ourselves. Reflect practically on what this calls you to do or perhaps change in your life.
3. Talk through the responsibilities of husband, wife, father, mother, and children with the whole family present

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

CHAPTER 4

MASTERS, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

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* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

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 fulfill it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

(vv. 18–25). Consider that each relationship is lived under God, before whom all relationships are accountable.

Chapter 4: Paul offers final exhortations and greetings.

The Christian's Prayer Life (4:2–4)

4:2 *Continue in prayer.* For the Christian, prayer is absolutely vital. Believers ought to give heed to their prayers, seeking to guard and to protect the duty of prayer so as not to neglect it but to continue in it. *watch in the same.* Prayer should be thoughtful and intentional.

4:3–4 Paul requests the believers to intercede for him for effectiveness in the spread of the gospel.

The Christian's Life before the World (4:5–6)

4:5–6 Paul exhorts the believers to live wisely with regard to those outside the believing community. There is a watching world and it is necessary that Christians live and speak in a way that is glorifying to God.

FINAL WORDS (4:7–18)

Comments regarding Paul's Companions (4:7–14)

4:9 *Onesimus.* Philemon's slave converted to Jesus Christ under Paul's ministry.

4:10 *Marcus.* Paul's mention of Mark (Marcus) informs that there had been full restoration between the two (Acts 15:36–39; see 2 Tim. 4:11).

4:11 *of the circumcision.* Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus, who is called *Justus* are Jewish Christians (Acts 27:2).

Final Greetings to the Brethren and the Benediction (4:15–18)

4:16 *when this epistle is read among you.* Paul intended his letters to be read to the churches collectively. *epistle from Laodicea.* Some have suggested this letter to be the same as Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, but it is difficult to know with certainty.

4:18 *by the hand of me, Paul.* Paul writes the final salutation with his own hand. Timothy (1:1) may have served as his secretary in writing the letter, but here Paul writes himself.

Thoughts for Personal/Family Worship: Chapter 4

1. Prayer is vital for the Christian life. Prayer ought to be thoughtful. It involves thanksgiving and intercession. It is easy to neglect thanksgiving, but believers have so much for which they ought to praise God. Believers ought also to remember to intercede for others, especially as it relates to the advancement of the gospel. Teach your family to pray regularly, thoughtfully, thankfully, and missionally.
2. What does it mean to make your speech around unbelievers "seasoned with salt" (v. 6)? What unbelievers do you talk to? How can you bring grace and salt into your conversations with them?