

# INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

This letter, the letter to Philemon, and the letter to the Ephesians [which was also sent to Laodicea (*Col. 4:16*)] were all written by Paul while in prison at Rome [*Acts 28:16*]. The three cities mentioned in this letter [Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis] were close to each other, all in the province of Asia [see map].

No one knows for sure that Paul planted the churches here, but Dr. James MacKnight believes the churches at Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis were planted by him, with the help of Timothy. Epaphras (*Col. 1:7*) may have been one of the first converts, and may have also helped plant the church here.

In this area the hedonism of the Greeks met the mysticism of the East. Also, large colonies of Jews had been settled in this area [from Babylon] by one of the Macedonian kings of Syria. Their Judaism had been influenced by the religion of Zoroaster. There was danger that these things would modify Christianity and distort its truth. This was a serious matter (*Gal. 1:8*). Paul stresses the place of Jesus at the Father's right side [the place of honor], also his role in Creation (*Col. 1:16-17*). The false teachers evidently were saying that the [animal] sacrifices of the Law of Moses were needed, because Christianity had no sacrifices for sin. Paul shows that it is THE SACRIFICE of Jesus - *once for all time* - that sets us free from sin (*Col. 1:13-14*). False teachers were saying that Jesus had not given all the truth, but angels would reveal it. Therefore Paul stresses that Jesus is the KEY (*Col. 2:3*) to ALL God's wisdom and knowledge.

The date of writing is probably 62 A.D.

# THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

**1** From Paul, who by God's will is an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy—

**2**To God's people in Colossae, those who are our faithful brothers in Christ:

May God our Father give you grace and peace.

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

**3**We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. **4**For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love for all God's people. **5**When the true message, the Good News, first came to you, you heard of the hope it offers. So your faith and love are based on what you hope for, which is kept safe for you in heaven. **6**The gospel is bringing blessings and spreading through the whole world, just as it has among you ever since the day you first heard of the grace of God and came

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: **2**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

## Thanksgiving and Prayer

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven, and which you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. **3**  
**4**  
**5**  
**6**

1-2. **From Paul, who by God's will is an apostle.** Not elected or appointed, but chosen by God. **And from our brother Timothy.** Paul's other letters written at this time, show that Timothy was in Rome. He is mentioned seven times in the introduction of Paul's letters to the churches: here; in *2 Corinthians*; *Philippians*; *1 Thessalonians*; *2 Thessalonians* and *Philemon*. **To God's people.** This name was applied to all Christians. Paul calls them "faithful brothers."

3. **We always give thanks.** Both Paul and Timothy made a regular habit of prayer for all the churches in their care.

4. **For we have heard of your faith.** Probably from Epaphras (who was a member of the church at Colossa - *verse 7; 4:12*), who was with Paul at Rome.

5. **So your faith and love.** He gives thanks for their hope of heaven, which is the basis for their faith and love. This hope was part of the gospel preached to them, and they look to the spiritual treasure kept safe in heaven for them.

6. **Spreading through the whole world.** The gospel spread freely among all the nations under Roman influence, and people from other nations took the gospel with them as they returned from Roman territory to their native lands. (See note on *Matt. 24:14*.) **Just as it has among you.** The gospel creates holy lives in those who listen to it.

to know it as it really is. <sup>7</sup>You learned this from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful worker for Christ on our behalf. <sup>8</sup>He told us of the love that the Spirit has given you.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason we always pray for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives. <sup>10</sup>Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants, and always do what pleases him. Your lives will be fruitful in all kinds of good works, and you will grow in your knowledge of God. <sup>11</sup>May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious might, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience. <sup>12</sup>And give thanks, with joy, to the Father, who has made you fit to have your share of what God has reserved for his people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>He rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son,

You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. 8

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the 13

7. **You learned this from Epaphras.** He is thought to be the one who planted the church here, acting by Paul's direction [or perhaps assisting Paul]. We do not know where this Epaphras became a Christian, but possibly at Ephesus, the capital of the province, during Paul's three year stay there. He is not the Epaphroditus of *Phil. 2:25; 4:18*. He is praised as a faithful worker, and is identified with the church there (*Col. 4:12*).

8. **He told us.** He was with Paul at Rome as this was being written.

9. **For this reason.** Because of all that Paul had heard about them. **We ask God to fill you.** Knowledge would be their best protection against false teaching, and would make them more confident. The Holy Spirit gave the early church the wisdom and understanding which we now have in the form of the New Testament (*1 Cor. 12:8; Eph. 1:3,8-9*).

10. **Then you will be able to live.** They would praise God with their lives, by living as he wants them to do. **Fruitful.** Good works and knowledge honor God.

11. **May you be made strong.** God offers to give us strength, so we can be strong, even when falsely accused (*1 Cor. 10:13*).

12. **And give thanks.** No matter what you may face, thank the Father and praise him. The Colossians had once been unfit for the Kingdom, but God had made them fit to receive every blessing in Christ. **Light.** Purity, truth. Darkness symbolizes evil, ignorance, etc.

13. **He rescued us.** We were prisoners of the power of darkness - Satan (compare *Luke 22:53*). **Brought us safe into the Kingdom.** God, through the gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17*) had already rescued the Colossians from Satan's power and they are now safe in the Kingdom of Jesus (his church). This took place when they were born of water and the Spirit (*John 3:5*). Note this speaks of the Kingdom as already in existence.

<sup>14</sup>by whom we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.

Son he loves, in whom we <sup>14</sup> have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

### The Person and Work of Christ

<sup>15</sup>Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the firstborn Son, superior to all created things. <sup>16</sup>For by him God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities. God created the whole universe through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He existed before all things, and in union with him all things have their proper place. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body's life; he is the firstborn Son who was raised from death, in order that he alone might have the first place in all things. <sup>19</sup>For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full

### The Supremacy of Christ

He is the image of the in- <sup>15</sup>  
visible God, the firstborn  
over all creation. For by him <sup>16</sup>  
all things were created:  
things in heaven and on  
earth, visible and invisible,  
whether thrones or powers  
or rulers or authorities; all  
things were created by him  
and for him. He is before all <sup>17</sup>  
things, and in him all things  
hold together. And he is the <sup>18</sup>  
head of the body, the  
church; he is the beginning  
and the firstborn from  
among the dead, so that in  
everything he might have the  
supremacy. For God was <sup>19</sup>  
pleased to have all his full-

<sup>14</sup>. **By whom we are set free.** God's act in Christ. It is the totality of Christ's sacrifice which is the basis of our being set free (*Eph. 1:7*). Satan is holding the whole human race prisoner. Jesus made a way to escape.

<sup>15</sup>. **Christ is the visible likeness.** God is Spirit - invisible. Christ came and took a body of flesh - the Eternal Logos in human form (*John 14:10; Heb. 1:1-3*). **The firstborn Son.** That is, he existed before creation began. It does *not* say he was the *first created*, but the firstborn. See *John 1:2-3*. **Superior to all created things.** Jesus was not created, but is God - the Logos.

<sup>16</sup>. **For by him God created everything.** He existed before any creation. God made everything by him. Compare *John 1:3; Heb. 1:2*. **The seen.** The material universe. **The unseen.** Angels, both good and bad. This places Christ far above every angel, evil spirit, etc., including Satan [who is a fallen angel]. Everything and everyone, both angels and men, are included by the "spiritual powers, lords, rulers and authorities." (*Eph. 1:21*) **Through him and for him.** This shows Christ's place. See also *1 Cor. 15:24-28*.

<sup>17</sup>. **He existed before all things.** He was with the Father before anything at all was created, including angels. **In union with him.** He is the one who placed them in their proper sequence. See also *Heb. 1:3&18*.

<sup>18</sup>. **He is the head of his body.** The church [*Matt. 16:18*] is identified as the spiritual *body* of Christ, and he is its head. (See *Eph. 1:22*) **The source.** Of the new creation (*2 Cor. 5:17*). **Firstborn Son.** He was the first to conquer death - rising from the dead never to be recaptured by death. See also *1 Cor. 15:20*.

<sup>19</sup>. **The full nature of God.** This can be understood of Christ's humanity (*Col. 2:9*), and also that "completeness" is in him.

nature of God. <sup>20</sup>Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's death on the cross, and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.

<sup>21</sup>At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. <sup>22</sup>But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence. <sup>23</sup>You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and not allow yourselves to be shaken from the hope you gained when you heard the gospel. It is of this gospel that I, Paul, became a servant—this gospel which has been preached to everybody in the world.

### Paul's Ministry to the Church

<sup>24</sup>And now I am happy about my sufferings for you. For by means of my physical sufferings I help complete what still remains of Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, which is the

ness dwell in him, and <sup>20</sup>through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Once you were alienated, <sup>21</sup>from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now <sup>22</sup>he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in <sup>23</sup>your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

### Paul's Labor for the Church

Now I rejoice in what was <sup>24</sup>suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the

**20. Through the Son.** See *Eph. 1:10*. God made peace. God chose to focus his saving power through the historical act of Christ's death. It is through the *totality* of this sin-offering that we can become friends with God and friends with each other. **All things.** Compare *Romans 8:19-21*. All of Creation seems to have been cursed in the sin of Adam. God has chosen to remove this curse through Christ.

**21. You were far away.** The evil things which mankind does and thinks makes them the enemies of God - hostile to him and to each other. Christians *had* been like that, but became *new* in Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

**22. By means of the physical death of his Son.** Not God - but rather men and women are changed through the physical death of Christ. Without Christ and the Cross, there could be no Good News! God has made this "bloody death" both the symbol and the *reality* of being accepted as God's friend. Read *1 Cor. 1:18-31*. **Holy, pure, faultless.** God pronounces us "not guilty" as the result of our union with Christ (*Gal. 3:26-29*).

**23. You must, of course, continue faithful.** Our new relationship to God because of our union with Christ, requires us to live as God directs us to do, and, to hold firmly to every promise. The Devil will attempt to destroy *hope*. **Which has been preached.** See note on *verse 6*.

**24. For by means of my physical sufferings.** He was in prison because he preached Christ. He could be happy because of the results of this suffering. **I help complete.** Christ's sufferings on the Cross are complete! But, Christ shares the sufferings of his people. ["Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (*Acts 9:4*).] We have a work to do - in which Christ shares. (Compare *Rev. 6:9-11*)

church. <sup>25</sup>And I have been made a servant of the church by God, who gave me this task to perform for your good. It is the task of fully proclaiming his message, <sup>26</sup>which is the secret he hid through all past ages from all mankind, but has now revealed to his people. <sup>27</sup>God's plan is this: to make known his secret to his people, this rich and glorious secret which he has for all peoples. And the secret is this: Christ is in you, which means that you will share the glory of God. <sup>28</sup>So we preach Christ to all men. We warn and teach everyone, with all possible wisdom, in order to bring each one into God's presence as a mature individual in union with Christ. <sup>29</sup>To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength that Christ supplies, which is at work in me.

**2** Let me tell you how hard I have worked for you, and for the people in Laodicea, and for all those who do not know me personally. <sup>2</sup>I do so that their hearts may be filled with courage, and that they may be drawn together in love and have the full wealth of assurance which true understanding brings. And so they will know God's

church. I have become its <sup>25</sup> servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that <sup>26</sup> has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to <sup>27</sup> make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

We proclaim him, coun- <sup>28</sup> seling and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I <sup>29</sup> labor, struggling with all the energy he so powerfully works in me.

**2** I want you to know how strenuously I am exerting myself for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that <sup>2</sup> they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of

**25. Who gave me this task.** God himself made Paul a servant of the church of Christ. In becoming a servant, Paul received an obligation (*Eph. 3:2*). He was to *live* God's message himself, and, to *take it* to everybody in the world.

**26. Which is the secret.** See *1 Cor. 2:9*. God revealed himself in past ages, but his final and complete revelation in Jesus Christ was kept secret, even though it was "hinted at" through the prophets.

**27. God's plan is this.** To make known his secret in and through Christ. **And the secret is this.** Christ living in the "people of God" [through the Spirit (*Eph. 2:22; Rom. 8:9-11*)].

**28. So we preach Christ to all men.** God's call is to everyone (*John 6:45*). Jesus sent his followers to "all peoples everywhere." **In order to bring.** Those who are set free from sin by their union to Christ, and indoctrinated with Truth, will be approved by God.

**29. To get this done.** We call on the grace of Christ to help us get the job done. See *Heb. 4:16*. Jesus uses the "hands" of the "people of God" to carry out his mission of bringing men and women to himself.

**1. Let me tell you.** Paul speaks about the persecutions he has suffered because of preaching the gospel, especially his two years imprisonment at Caesarea (*Acts 24:27*), and his imprisonment at Rome as he writes this letter (*Acts 28:30-31*). No one knows for sure that Paul planted the churches here, but *MacKnight* believes that the churches at Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis were planted by him, with the help of Timothy [and perhaps Epaphras].

**2. That they may be drawn together.** That both Jews and Gentiles will become "one" in Christ - formed into one church. **God's secret.** "By means of the gospel the Gentiles have a part with the Jews in God's blessings." (*Eph. 3:6*). [*See Col. 1:26-27*]

secret, which is Christ himself. <sup>3</sup>He is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>4</sup>I tell you, then, do not let anyone fool you with false arguments, no matter how good they seem to be. <sup>5</sup>For even though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I am glad as I see the resolute firmness with which you stand together in your faith in Christ.

### Fulness of Life in Christ

<sup>6</sup>Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. <sup>7</sup>Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become ever stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.

<sup>8</sup>See to it, then, that no one makes a captive of you with the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by men, and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ. <sup>9</sup>For the full content of divine nature lives in Christ, in his

God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

### Freedom From Human Regulations Through Life With Christ

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in

3. **He is the key.** Angels are not the key (as the false teachers were saying). Jesus is the key to God's wisdom, and he is himself the wisdom of God (*Col. 1:19*). See *Matt. 11:27*.

4. **Do not let anyone fool you.** If they had "true understanding" (*verse 2*) this would not be possible. Knowledge is a strong defense against false teachers.

5. **Yet I am with you in spirit.** Through the interest he had in them, and the things Epaphras had told him (*Col. 1:7*). **You stand together.** God's act in Christ to save men formed the basis for the faith which caused them to stand together.

6. **Since you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord.** Accepted him as the visible likeness of the invisible God, the creator of all things, the head [teacher and ruler] of the church which is his body; and have been saved by his death and his mediation. **Live in union with him.** Don't abandon him for angels or the Law.

7. **Keep your roots deep in him.** Your life grows out of him like a tree from the earth. Read what Jesus said about the "Real Vine" in *John 15:1-17*. **As you were taught.** By Paul and his helpers.

8. **See to it, then, that no one makes a captive of you.** By letting the false teachers talk them into worshipping angels and saying they should not eat meat. He says more about this in *verses 16-18*. **Teachings handed down, etc.** Jewish tradition about angels was almost the same as what the Platonists taught about demons. Compare *Gal. 4:3*.

9. **For the full content.** Jesus is God (the Logos) in human form (*John 1:14*). He is both Son of Man and Son of God. [The Jews understood both titles to mean the same. See *Luke 22:69-70*.]

humanity, <sup>10</sup>and you have been given full life in union with him. He is supreme over every spiritual ruler and authority.

<sup>11</sup>In union with him you were circumcised, not with the circumcision that is made by men, but with Christ's own circumcision, which consists of being freed from the power of this sinful body.

<sup>12</sup>For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death. <sup>13</sup>You were at one time spiritually dead because of your sins, and because you were Gentiles without the Law. But God has now brought you to life with Christ; God forgave us all our sins. <sup>14</sup>He canceled the unfavorable record of our debts, with its binding rules, and did away with it completely by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And on that cross Christ freed himself from the power of the spiritual rulers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.

<sup>16</sup>So let no one make rules about what you eat or drink, or about the subject of holy days, or the

bodily form, and you have <sup>10</sup>this fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you <sup>11</sup>were also circumcised, in the putting off of your sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ. In bap- <sup>12</sup>tism you were buried with him and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in <sup>13</sup>your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled <sup>14</sup>the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing <sup>15</sup>it to the cross. And having <sup>15</sup>disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Therefore do not let any- <sup>16</sup>one judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration, or a sab-

10. **And you have been given full life in union with him.** No one could offer them more than they already had in Christ. See *1 Cor. 3:21-23*. **He is supreme.** Over angels and all creation!

11. **In union with him.** Some were saying every Christian must be circumcised. But this had already been rejected by the Holy Spirit [*Acts 15:1-29*]. Christ's own circumcision is spiritual.

12. **For when you were baptized.** Note that he identifies "being freed from the power of this sinful body" with baptism. Baptism is contrasted with the circumcision made by men. **You were buried with Christ.** Paul teaches we must act out the events of the Cross (*Rom. 6:3-4*). See also *Gal. 2:19-20; Eph. 2:4-6*. We die with him, are buried with him, rise with him, and rule with him.

13. **You were at one time.** To be dead because of sins is to be without spiritual or eternal life. **But God has now.** Through the gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17*). This is God's offer to forgive (*Acts 2:38*).

14. **He canceled.** The Law of Jewish rites. The Law was a curse because no one could keep it (see *James 2:10; Acts 15:10*). **Nailing it to the Cross.** Jesus canceled the Law by fulfilling it for us (*Rom. 8:3-4*). Those who nailed Jesus to the Cross effectively destroyed the Law by that act. The blood of the New Covenant poured out from the wounds made by the nails.

15. **And on that Cross.** He conquered the evil angels and the Devil and all his powers. See *John 12:31; 16:11*.

16. **So let no one make rules.** Since the Law was canceled, no one may force the Christian to keep its ritual and rites. **What you eat.** Jewish dietary rules (see *Lev. 7:10-27*) would not permit some foods. Some gentiles thought it was wrong to eat meat (*Rom. 14:2*). See also *1 Cor. 8:8; Heb. 9:10*. **Holy days.**



new moon festival, or the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>All such things are only a shadow of things in the future; the reality is Christ. <sup>18</sup>Do not allow yourselves to be condemned by anyone who claims to be superior because of special visions, and insists on false humility and the worship of angels. Such a person is all puffed up, for no reason at all, by his human way of thinking, <sup>19</sup>and has stopped holding on to Christ, who is the head. Under Christ's control the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and grows as God wants it to grow.

### Dying and Living with Christ

<sup>20</sup>You have died with Christ and are set free from the ruling spirits of the universe. Why, then, do you live as though you belonged to this world? Why do you obey such rules as <sup>21</sup>"Don't handle this," "Don't taste that," "Don't touch the other"? <sup>22</sup>All these things become useless, once they are used. They are only man-made rules and

bath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

If you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and

The Jewish holy days. **New moon festival.** The monthly Jewish rite (*Num. 28:11*). **Sabbath.** The Sabbath day [Saturday] was canceled along with the Law. It was a special symbol (*Exod. 31:13-17*). Sunday is the Lord's Day, but it was not "set apart" like the Jewish Sabbath.

17. **All such things.** The Jewish ritual looked forward to Christ. Christ is the reality; and his body, the church, is made up of those made free by Truth.

18-19. **Do not allow yourselves.** If you are *condemned*, you lose your reward. Do not allow any teacher to lead you away from Christ. Jesus is real! The special visions; the false humility (*Mark 12:38*); and the worship of angels; - are fake! The worship of angels, or any human being, living or dead, - is forbidden (*see Rev. 19:10*). **Such a person is all puffed up.** The teacher who tells you to follow these rules which will condemn you, has begun to think his "knowledge" is more important than Christ's death and resurrection. **Under Christ's control.** Christ is the Head of the body - his church. *See Eph. 4:16.* He is the source of the body's life and growth.

20-21. **You have died with Christ.** You died with Christ in your act of baptism (*verse 12*) and became free from the Law and human wisdom (*verse 8*). **Ruling Spirits of the universe.** This sometimes means the Jewish rites (*Gal. 4:3*). It is implied that angels rule this world, and that forbidding marriage and the eating of meat and making rules about such things comes from them. [These would have to be bad angels.] **Why do you obey such rules?** "Don't handle this," "Don't taste that," "Don't touch the other," are the rules of the false teachers, which Paul says belong to this world, not to Christ. Christians do not belong to this world, therefore they do not obey the obsolete rites mentioned in this chapter [as a religious act].

22. **All these things.** What you eat or drink. God did not make the rules these false teachers are forcing on the Colossian Christians. [*See verse 14*].

teachings. <sup>23</sup>Of course they appear to have wisdom in their forced worship of angels, and false humility, and severe treatment of the body; but they have no real value in controlling physical passions.

teachings. Such regulations <sup>23</sup> indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

**3** You have been raised to life with Christ. Set your hearts, then, on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. <sup>2</sup>Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>Your real life is Christ, and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory!

**Rules for Holy Living**

**3** Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

**The Old Life and the New**

<sup>5</sup>You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greediness is a form of idol worship). <sup>6</sup>Because of such things God's wrath will come upon those

23. **But they have no real value.** The ritual and austerity of these false rules seems wise. But these things are no help at all in controlling the problem of sin. In fact, the ritual and the austerity make the person "puffed up" with his own pride.

1. **You have been raised to life with Christ.** The result of a definite act (*Col. 2:12*). In their baptism they were "buried with Christ," and "raised with Christ." **Set your hearts.** The Christian is a citizen of the heavenly world. See *Phil. 3:20; Eph. 4:8*.

2. **Keep your minds fixed on things there.** To keep your values and motives correct, and to keep from losing sight of your goal - which is union with God in Eternity.

3. **Your life is hidden.** People hide money and jewels to keep them safe. The Christian's life is safe with God, and will be given to them in the Resurrection.

4. **When he appears.** A tree in winter is not dead even though the life is hidden. In the Second Coming of Christ, the Christian's real life will show itself. Compare *1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:19*.

5. **You must put to death.** Those vicious appetites and passions that are common to humanity. **Immorality.** Any sex act with another person - *other than* between husband and wife. See *Rom. 1:26-27*. **Indecency.** Antisocial behavior. [Peeping-Tom; indecent exposure; etc.] **Lust.** Here it means homosexuality [both male and female versions]. **Evil passions.** Dirty talk, drunkenness, and in general those things which are contrary to Christian motives. **Greed.** This speaks of one who thinks only of his money and power, making these things his "god." It is the *love* of money which is wrong (*1 Tim. 6:10*).

6. **Because of such things.** In the past, God destroyed nations and cities for such sins. In the Judgment, God's wrath will come on those who do such things (*Rom. 1:18*).

who do not obey him. <sup>7</sup>And you yourselves at one time used to live according to such desires, when your life was dominated by them.

<sup>8</sup>But now you must get rid of all these things: anger, passion, and hateful feelings. No insults or obscene talk must ever come from your lips. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, because you have put off the old self with its habits, <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self. This is the new man which God, its creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, to bring you to a full knowledge of himself. <sup>11</sup>As a result, there are no Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, or free men, but Christ is all, Christ is in all.

<sup>12</sup>You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Be helpful to one another, and forgive one another, whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive each other in the same way that the Lord has forgiven you. <sup>14</sup>And to all these add love, which

You used to walk in these 7 ways, in the life you once 8 lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, 9 slander, filthy language. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and 10 have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no 11 Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen 12 people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each 13 other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues 14 put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

7. **And you yourselves at one time.** This was the way they used to live before they knew Christ. See *1 Cor. 6:9-11*. The whole Gentile world was living this way (see *1 Peter 4:3-5*).

8. **But now.** Get rid of all the sins mentioned, and the ones which follow. In their baptism they got rid of the "old man," and in their union with Christ, took on his qualities as a "new man" (*2 Cor. 5:17*).

9. **Do not lie.** Lying would be proof that they had not rid themselves of the "old man." See *Rom. 6:6*; [Holy living is a battle (*1 Cor. 9:25-27*).]

10. **This is the new man.** Those born of water and the Spirit (*John 3:5*) become new in Christ and "march to a different drummer" (*Eph. 4:24*). **Constantly renewing.** Growing, maturing (see *Heb. 6:1-3*; *Eph. 4:12-16*).

11. **As a result.** Differences of race, national origin, social status, etc., lose their meaning in the one who dies to the world and becomes united with Christ. No one is excluded from the blessings that come by being a "new man" in Christ.

12. **You are the people of God.** It is a paradox that the Christian is the one who chooses God, only to find that God has chosen him. Everyone without exception has the option to choose God (*John 6:45*). **So then.** One who chooses God must be holy in his life and actions.

13. **Be helpful . . . forgive.** Whether rich or poor, every Christian can follow the example of Christ. When we are helpful and forgiving, we bless ourselves. God will forgive us in the same way we forgive others (*Matt. 6:12*).

14. **And to all these add.** As you would put on a coat to keep out the cold wind. **Love.** AGAPE. This kind of love is not an emotion, but a deliberate act of decision. Love makes it easy to be helpful and to forgive.

binds all things together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup>The peace that Christ gives is to be the judge in your hearts; for to this peace God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Christ's message, in all its richness, must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct each other with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God, with thanksgiving in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.

### Personal Relations in the New Life

<sup>18</sup>Wives, be obedient to your husbands, for that is what you should do as Christians.

<sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

<sup>20</sup>Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents always, for that is what pleases God.

<sup>21</sup>Parents, do not irritate your children, so that they will become discouraged.

Let the peace of Christ <sup>15</sup> rule in your hearts, since, as members of one body, you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of <sup>16</sup> Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and counsel one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you <sup>17</sup> do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Rules for Christian Households

Wives, submit to your <sup>18</sup> husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives <sup>19</sup> and do not be harsh with them.

Children, obey your par- <sup>20</sup> ents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not embitter <sup>21</sup> your children, or they will become discouraged.

15. **The peace that Christ gives.** This is not "freedom from problems," but the "hope of happiness." God calls both Jew and Gentile into *one body* - the church of Christ [the messianic community] - and gives them *hope*. Compare *Gal. 5:22-26*.

16. **Christ's message.** The gospel which Paul had preached to them. **Teach and instruct.** Those who immerse themselves in God's word to learn his message, will be able to teach others this Truth. **Sing.** Christianity is uniquely a singing religion. Songs are used to praise God, to teach and to instruct. *Psalms* - such as the Psalms of David. *Hymns* - songs of praise. *Sacred songs* - which have a spiritual theme. **Sing to God.** Our first purpose is to worship and honor God our Father and Jesus Christ. Our second purpose is to teach and instruct. Compare *Eph. 5:19-20*.

17. **Everything you do or say.** Honor God with your whole life! See *Rom. 12:1-2*. "In the name of Jesus" means to use his principles to guide your life.

18. **Wives.** Wives are to cooperate with their own husbands, whether Christian or not. [See *1 Cor. 7:12-16*.] The apostle commands wives to obey their [own] husbands, and husbands to love their [own] wives. It seems these are the greatest areas of need, due to the differing psychology between men and women.

19. **Husbands.** Love your wives as Christ loves his church (*Eph. 5:25*).

20. **Children.** It is normal for children to rebel against their parents, yet they must obey them, since they need to be guided and helped to take their place in life. Tests have shown that even very poor training is much better than none at all. [This does not mean to *sin* when asked.]

21. **Parents.** It is easy to be harsh and punish children more severely than ought to be done. This may make them bitter and cause them to hate.

<sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your human masters in all things, and do it not only when they are watching you, just to gain their approval, but do it with a sincere heart, because of your reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord, and not for men. <sup>24</sup>Remember that the Lord will reward you; you will receive what he has kept for his people. For Christ is the real Master you serve. <sup>25</sup>And the wrongdoer, whoever he is, will be paid for the wrong things he does; for God judges everyone by the same standard.

**4** Masters, be right and fair in the way you treat your slaves. Remember that you too have a Master in heaven.

### Instructions

<sup>2</sup>Be persistent in prayer, and keep alert as you pray, with thanks to God. <sup>3</sup>At the same time pray also for us, so that God will give us a good opportunity to preach his message, to tell the secret of

Slaves, obey your masters <sup>22</sup> in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that <sup>24</sup> you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who <sup>25</sup> does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

**4** Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

### Further Instructions

Devote yourselves to pray- <sup>2</sup> er, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, <sup>3</sup> too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which

**22. Slaves.** Half the world were slaves in the first century. Christianity took the sting out of slavery, and finally brought an end to it. Both the slave and the servant had the same duties. It was their Christian obligation to do their work well, since this would honor their high calling in Christ.

**23. Whatever you do.** Christ gives dignity to human work and toil. We should fulfill our obligations to honor God.

**24. For Christ is the real Master you serve.** Every man is to us "Christ by proxy." See *Matt. 25:31-46*. [Note that these have done either good or bad to Christ by proxy.]

**25. And the wrongdoer.** There is no excuse for failing to do your part. [But God expects *love* to be your motive (*1 John 4:18*).]

**1. Masters.** This is part of the thought in the previous chapter. Slave owners, foremen, managers, etc., are to be fair with those they have authority over, and treat them like human beings. The whole world and everything in it changes for the one who is in Christ!

**2. Be persistent in prayer.** Make prayer a regular habit (see *Luke 18:1; Acts 1:14; Eph. 6:18*). God knows our prayer (*Rev. 8:3-4*). **Keep alert.** Examine your motives (*James 4:3*). Also, prayer is not a "substitute" for action (*Matt. 25:1-13*). **With thanks to God.** Let your *thanks* rise up to God like the "sweet smell of incense" (*Rev. 5:8*).

**3. Pray also for us.** Ask God to give a good opportunity to preach Christ! Note the spirit of this. **To tell the secret of Christ.** The Good News of God's act in Christ to set men free! It was a secret until it was revealed. (See *1 Cor. 2:6-10; 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 1:26; 2:2*.) **In prison.** See notes on *Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7*.

Christ. For that is why I am now in prison. <sup>4</sup>Pray, then, that I may speak in such a way as to make it clear, as I should.

<sup>5</sup>Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. <sup>6</sup>Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone.

### Final Greetings

<sup>7</sup>Our dear brother Tychicus, who is a faithful worker and fellow servant in the Lord's work, will give you all the news about me. <sup>8</sup>That is why I am sending him to you, to cheer you up by telling you how all of us are getting along. <sup>9</sup>With him goes Onesimus, the dear and faithful brother, who belongs to your group. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

<sup>10</sup>Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have already received instructions about him, to welcome him if he comes your

I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

### Final Greetings

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to

4. **To make it clear.** Paul had to speak to be understood (compare *1 Cor. 14:19*) to show people how to be set free from their sins.

5. **Be wise.** Do not deliberately bring persecution on yourselves. Use every opportunity to honor God with your life by doing good to others.

6. **Your speech.** You can drive people away by your talk. Be pleasant and interesting, so you can say a good word for Christ to others. **The right answer.** Present the Truth in the best way (see *1 Cor. 9:19-23*). And, *know* what you are talking about!

7. **Our dear brother Tychicus.** See *Eph. 6:21* for note on Tychicus. Letters had to be carried privately by messengers, since they had no postal system such as we have. This man was one of Paul's most trusted associates (*Acts 20:4; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12*). He delivered this letter from Paul to the Colossians and the letter to the Ephesians at the same time.

8. **That is why I am sending him to you.** Tychicus was to deliver the letters to the churches and also to work to strengthen them. He was an "evangelist" (see note on *Eph. 4:11*).

9. **With him goes Onesimus.** He is the runaway slave mentioned in the letter to Philemon. Colossae was his home, and he is returning to Philemon as a "Christian brother." Tychicus must have delivered the letter to Philemon at this same time.

10. **Aristarchus.** One of Paul's associates. He was from Thessalonica (*Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2*). He is mentioned in *Philemon 24*. **Mark.** He was with Paul and Barnabas on the first tour of missions (*Acts 13:5*). Some think the death of Barnabas is implied in John Mark being with Paul at this time. **To welcome him.** There may have been some doubt about Mark because of his previous failure (*Acts 15:37-38*), but he had since demonstrated his faith, and Paul places his seal of approval on him.

way.) <sup>11</sup>Joshua, called Justus, also sends greetings. These three are the only Jewish converts who work with me for the Kingdom of God, and they have been a great help to me.

<sup>12</sup>Greetings from Epaphras, another member of your group, and a servant of Christ Jesus. He always prays fervently for you, asking God to make you stand firm, mature, and fully convinced, in complete obedience to his will. <sup>13</sup>I can personally testify to his hard work for you, and for the people in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

<sup>14</sup>Luke, our dear doctor, and Demas send you their greetings.

<sup>15</sup>Give our best wishes to the brothers in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house. <sup>16</sup>After you read this letter, make sure that it is read also in the church at Laodicea. At the same time, you are to read the

you, welcome him.) Jesus, 11  
 who is called Justus, also  
 sends greetings. These are  
 the only Jews among my  
 fellow workers for the king-  
 dom of God, and they have  
 proved a comfort to me. 12  
 Epaphras, who is one of you  
 and a servant of Christ Jesus,  
 sends greetings. He is always  
 wrestling in prayer for you,  
 that you may stand firm in  
 all the will of God, mature  
 and fully assured. I vouch 13  
 for him that he is working  
 hard for you and for those  
 at Laodicea and Hierapolis.  
 Our dear friend Luke, the 14  
 doctor, and Demas send  
 greetings. Give my greetings 15  
 to the brothers at Laodicea,  
 and to Nympha and the  
 church in her house.

After this letter has been 16  
 read to you, see that it is also  
 read in the church of the  
 Laodiceans and that you in  
 turn read the letter from  
 Laodicea.

11. **Joshua called Justus.** Only mentioned here. [Jesus and Joshua are the same name in Hebrew.] Most of the "evangelists" who worked with Paul must have been Gentiles, but this man was probably a Roman Jew.

12. **Greetings from Epaphras.** See *Col. 1:7*. He may have helped begin the church at Colossae, and was a member there. **Prays fervently for you.** Even though far away, he works for them through prayer. [This strongly implies the power of prayer.]

13. **His hard work.** Epaphras felt an obligation toward the churches at Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea. He may have helped begin them, and had been their teacher.

14. **Luke.** Luke was a doctor of medicine and also a historian (*Luke 1:1-4*). He was a Gentile. **Demas.** One of Paul's associates, perhaps the one who "wrote down" this letter of Paul's. He is mentioned favorably in *Philemon 24*, but seems to have "gone bad" (*2 Tim. 4:10*).

15. **Nympha.** [This name could belong to either a man or woman.] She was one of the Christians in Laodicea, and a "house-church" (which was separate from the main congregation) met in her home. Some large churches met in temples, etc., (*Acts 2:46*), but "house-churches" were also common (*Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2*). [The church in Jerusalem may have had 100,000 members at its peak.]

16. **Make sure it is read also.** Paul intended that copies of his letters would be "passed around" between churches. The letter which Laodicea would send them was *Ephesians*.

letter Laodicea will send you. <sup>17</sup>And tell Archippus, "Be sure to finish the task you were given in the Lord's service."

<sup>18</sup>With my own hand I write this: *Greetings from Paul*. Do not forget my chains! May God's grace be with you.

Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."

I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

17. **And tell Archippus.** He was another of Paul's associates (*Philemon 2*). Some important mission had been assigned to him.

18. **With my own hand.** Paul dictated his letters to a helper (*Rom. 16:22*), but often added a few words in his own handwriting (*Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17; 1 Cor. 16:21*). **Do not forget my chains.** He mentions his being in prison three times in this chapter (*verses 3, 10, 18*). His meaning is: "Be willing to spend yourself for Christ." (Compare *2 Cor. 12:15*)