

COLOSSIANS

Author :

Paul an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Date :

Sometime about 60 AD.

Themes :

Paul is in prison, being persecuted for preaching the gospel of Christ. However he is not occupied with his own difficulties but, as usual, has his mind and his heart fixed on Christ and Christ's people. He had never visited Colosse but he knew the condition of the church there, and so he writes this letter to encourage them and to show them more fully who Christ is and what He has done for believers. His principal theme is the preeminence and greatness of Christ and the believer's completeness and fullness in Him. Some false teachers had gone to Colosse, acted as though they were very wise, taught some philosophical nonsense and doctrine contrary to the truth of Christ, and tried to pervert His gospel. They insisted that the "wisdom" they taught was necessary for salvation, that Christ is not God or the Saviour of the world, that there were many angels and spiritual beings who were mediators between God and men and that Christ was only one of these, that worshiping angels and practicing severe austerities on the body were good things. Opposing their false teaching, Paul writes of the complete redemption and salvation Christ has purchased for men (1:13,14,20), of Christ's full deity (1:15-19), and of the perfect wisdom believers can find in Christ (2:3). Some key verses are 2:8-10.

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

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse: Grace *be* to 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 *you have* for all the saints, 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven. You heard of this *hope* previously in the message of the truth of the gospel 6 which has come to you, as *it has* to all the world and brings forth fruit, as *it does* in you also since the day you heard it and truly knew the grace of God; 7 *since* indeed you learned from

Epaphras, our dear fellow worker who is a faithful servant of Christ for you. 8 Also he has told us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason we too, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in complete wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 so that you might behave in a manner worthy of the Lord and please Him in everything, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, so that *you may have* complete endurance and patience together with joy, 12 *and go on* giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit to share in the

1:1 "Apostle" – Rom 1:1; Gal 1:1. "Timothy" – Phil 1:1.

1:2 Rom 1:7. Colosse was a small unimportant town about 160 kilometers east of Ephesus in the land now known as Turkey. It was near Laodicea.

1:3,4 Compare Rom 1:8; Eph 1:15,16.

1:5 "Hope" – here hope means that which believers expect some day to have, not the present experience of hope in their hearts. Compare v 27; Titus 1:2; 2:13.

"Laid up for you" – 1 Pet 1:4.

"Gospel" – Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 15:1-8.

1:6 "Fruit" – Matt 13:8; Mark 4:26-29. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16). When it is clearly, boldly and faithfully preached it will bear fruit.

"Knew" – observe the connection between knowledge and fruit-bearing. Compare Matt 13:23.

"Grace" – notes at John 1:14,16; Rom 1:7; Eph 2:8,9.

1:7 "Epaphras" – 4:12; Philemon 23. These references give all we know about this servant of Christ.

"Servant" – Rom 1:1; 6:18,22. What greater thing can be said of anyone than this: "A faithful servant of Christ"?

1:8 "Love in the Spirit" – Rom 5:5. We can only have God's love (Greek "agape" – see note at 1 Cor 13:1) in our hearts through God's Spirit. In all the earth it is to be found only in true believers in Christ.

1:9 "Pray for you" – here is another example of Paul's prayers for believers – Eph 1:17-19; 3:16-19; Phil 1:9. In none of them does he ask God for material things. Wisdom, understanding, strength, love – these are the things above all else that he wanted them to have. Let us learn from this the lesson God wants us to learn.

"Knowledge of His will" – Rom 12:2. He prays this for them because the other things he wants to see in their lives (v 10) are based on this. We cannot set out to do God's will unless we understand what it is.

"Complete wisdom and spiritual understanding" – this is one of the themes of this letter – v 28; 2:2,3; 3:16. God alone can give them – Eph 1:17. Neither education nor philosophy can produce them. They

mean far more than knowing about God or the Bible. They come from heaven, and to get them we must seek the God who is in heaven. Compare Job 28:12-28; Prov 2:1-6; 1 Cor 1:20,25,30; 2:10-14.

1:10 "Worthy of the Lord" – Eph 4:1; 1 Thess 2:12. Wisdom and understanding are not an end in themselves. They are to enable us to live as we ought. If what we call wisdom does not do this, it does not deserve the name of wisdom.

"Please Him in everything" – 2 Cor 5:9; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4. If we live to please ourselves we will not please the Lord in any way. We must have the same attitude He had – Phil 2:5; John 8:29. Our actions should not be based on what we want or do not want, what pleases us or does not please us – Matt 10:38,39. If we live as this verse directs, we can become people according to God's heart (as David was – see note at 1 Sam 13:14).

"Fruitful" – John 15:1-8.

"Increasing in the knowledge of God" – not just in the knowledge of God's will, but of God Himself. Compare Phil 3:10; 2 Pet 3:18.

1:11 "Strengthened" – Eph 3:16; Phil 4:13.

"All might" is God's power which alone can give true spiritual strength. Why did Paul want these believers to have this strength and power? That they might do miracles? That they might become great preachers? No – that they might endure their trials, have patience and joy, that they might do the good they could in their little town and live a life that would bring glory to God.

"Endurance and patience" – see Rom 8:25; 1 Cor 13:4; 2 Cor 1:6; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 6:12; 10:36; 12:1; Jam 5:10.

"Joy" – Phil 1:4; 3:1; 4:4.

1:12 "Thanks" – this is a recurring theme in this letter (2:7; 3:15,17; 4:2) and throughout the Bible (Lev 7:12,13; Ps 7:17; 50:14,15; 56:12; 100:4; Dan 6:10; Matt 14:19; 26:27; Eph 5:4,20; Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 5:18).

"Made us fit" – they did not make themselves fit for God's inheritance. That is totally impossible for any person (Rom

inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, 14 in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, 16 for by him all things were created, *things* that are in heaven, and that on earth, visible and invisible, whether 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 hold

3:19,20; Eph 2:1-3; Jer 13:23). Only if we are God's children by a new, spiritual birth are we qualified for an inheritance with Him – John 1:12,13; 3:3-8; Rom 8:16,17; Eph 4-10.

"Inheritance" – Eph 1:14; 1 Pet 1:4.

"In light" – the light of God and of Christ, the light of glory – Rev 21:23,24.

1:13 Here are two very different kingdoms. Every person is in one or the other.

"Darkness" – Acts 26:18; Luke 22:53; Eph 6:12; John 3:19,20. Satan is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness. Christ rules His kingdom of light (note on kingdom of God at Matt 4:17). He rescues people and brings them from Satan's kingdom to His own. He does this by giving them light and by His almighty power making them children of the light (2 Cor 4:4-6; Eph 5:8). This is the great work of God now going on throughout the world.

"His dear Son" – Matt 3:17.

1:14 "Redemption through his blood" – Eph 1:7.

1:15 "He" means the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Image of the invisible God" – God is spirit and cannot be seen by physical eyes (John 1:18; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; Heb 11:27). But Christ revealed what God is like. He is the exact likeness of God in human form – 2:9; John 1:1,14; 14:9; 2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3.

"Firstborn" – Rom 8:29; Heb 1:6; 12:23; Ps 89:27. The Son of God shares the nature of God, is God. This means He is eternal. As God He never had a beginning, was never "born." The Greek word translated "firstborn" (*prototokos*) here signifies pre-eminence and sovereignty. The Jews could even say of Jehovah God, the uncreated Creator of the universe revealed in the Old Testament, that He was the firstborn of the world. Here Paul is saying that Christ is the Lord over all creation. That this is his meaning is clear from the next verse. See also notes and references at Luke 2:11; Phil 2:6.

1:16 "For" – Christ is called the "firstborn" because all creation came into existence through Him (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2; Gen 1:1), not because He was born first (or because He was born at all). Since He is the Creator of all things it is clear that He Himself was not created.

"For Him" – only of the one true God could it be said that all creation was for Him. The

together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church, *and* he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased *the Father* that all fulness should dwell in him, 20 and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, *I say*, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

21 You also were once alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked deeds, but now he has reconciled you 22 in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above

same Greek words are translated "to Him" in Rom 11:36. There they refer to God alone. Christ is not some kind of lesser god created by a greater God. He Himself is God.

"Thrones" – compare Rev 4:4.

"Dominions. . . powers" – Eph 1:21; 3:10.

1:17 "Before all things" – Christ, the Son of God, was not a part of creation. He existed before creation and brought creation into existence.

"Hold together" – compare Heb 1:3. Christ keeps the vast universe from becoming a chaos. His is the power that makes it an ordered system. He holds all its parts together. Could this be said of anyone except God?

1:18 "Head" – see Eph 1:22,23.

"Body" – Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12,13.

"Church" – Matt 16:18.

"Beginning" – the Greek word means either "source" or "one who has the first place." Christ is the one from whom His Church came into existence, and He occupies the supreme place in it.

"Firstborn from the dead" – Rev 1:5. This means more than that Christ was the first to conquer death. It means that He has first place, He is the sovereign of all those who shall, like Him, rise from among the dead. Compare Rom 14:9.

"Preeminence" – Eph 1:22; Phil 2:9-11. Christ must have the supremacy and He will have it.

1:19 All the fullness of God was in the man Christ Jesus – 2:9; John 1:1,14.

1:20 "Reconcile" – the whole world had fallen away from God into sin (Rom 3:19,20), and God's anger burned against the sins of mankind (Rom 1:18). There was no peace between heaven and earth. God sent Christ to make peace. Christ did so by becoming a blood sacrifice to take away the sins of the world – John 1:29; Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 2:16.

1:21 "Alienated" – Eph 2:12; 4:18.

"Enemies" – Rom 5:10; Jam 4:4.

"In your mind" – they did not think they were God's enemies, but because the thoughts and desires of their minds and hearts were contrary to God, they were His enemies. Compare Rom 8:5-8.

"By wicked deeds" – sinning is what makes men God's enemies.

1:22 Verse 20; Eph 2:16-18.

"Holy" – Eph 1:4; 5:25-27.

reproach in his sight, 23 if you continue in the faith established and firm and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard, which has been preached to every creature which is under heaven, of which I Paul have been made a servant.

24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have been made a servant of this *church*, in accordance with the position of *over-seer* that God has given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God, 26 the mystery kept hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God desired to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles,

"Above reproach" – 1 Cor 1:8; Rom 8:33. **1:23** "If" – Paul is not suggesting that some believers may not continue in their faith. He is defining what true believers are and do. Their continuing in the faith would be the proof that they had been reconciled. Compare 1 Cor 15:2; Heb 3:6,14; 10:38,39; John 10:27; Luke 22:32; 1 John 2:19.

"Established and firm" – true faith rests on a firm foundation (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20), and makes believers firm.

"Under heaven" does not have the same meaning as "the ends of the earth" or the whole world – Mark 16:15; Acts 13:47. But Paul is informing them of how widespread the preaching of the gospel was in that part of the earth.

1:24 "My sufferings for you" – 4:10,18; 2 Cor 1:5,6; Eph 3:1,13. Paul's sufferings were a result of preaching the truth, winning people to Christ and working to establish Christ's Church on earth. He rejoiced not because suffering was pleasant to him, but because he suffered for Christ and for others. This he regarded as a privilege – Phil 1:29; 3:10. Compare 1 Pet 4:13-16.

"Lacking" – was there something lacking in Christ's sufferings on the cross? No, absolutely not. Was His sacrifice for the sin of the world incomplete? No, and Paul is not speaking of that here. Certainly Christ's sufferings for our sins were once and for all, and perfect, and finished forever – John 19:30; Heb 10:10,14; 1 Pet 3:18. But now Christ is building His Church (Matt 16:18; Eph 2:19-22), and He is giving His servants the privilege of working with Him. In this sinful world this means troubles and tribulation and suffering and affliction. They are not yet finished, so are still "lacking". Christ has given His servants the honor and privilege of suffering with Him for the sake of the Church.

1:26 Eph 3:2-9; Rom 16:25-27.

"Saints" – Rom 1:7.

1:27 "Riches" – Eph 3:8. Compared to these riches every system of thought devised by men is poverty-stricken.

"Christ in you" – John 17:23; Rom 8:9,10;

which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 We preach him, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 Indeed for this *purpose* I labour, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.

2 For I want you to know what a great struggle I have for you, and *for* those at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts might be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *so enter* into all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, into the complete knowledge of the mystery of God, of the Father and of Christ. 3 In *Christ* are hidden all

2 Cor 13:5; Rev 3:20.

"Hope of glory" – Rom 5:2; 8:18. If Christ is not in us we have no valid reason to hope we shall be saved and see God's glory.

1:28 Compare Acts 20:20-24.

"Complete wisdom" – the wisdom God gave him – 1 Cor 1:30; 2:7,10,12,16. He was not boasting in his own wisdom. He prayed that they might have complete wisdom – v 9. He knew this was possible to have because he had it. So can believers now – Jam 1:5.

"Perfect" – compare 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 4:12-15. See references and notes at Matt 5:48; Phil 3:12,15; Heb 6:1; 10:14.

1:29 To Paul Eph 3:20 was not mere theory. Observe that though God's power was working in Paul this did not mean easy activity for him. Quite the opposite – it meant great labor and struggle (the same Greek word is used in 4:12; Luke 13:24; 1 Cor 9:25).

2:1 "Struggle" – 1:29. Paul struggled in prayer for believers whether he had met them or not. He well knew that every believer is precious to Christ and bore Christ's name before the world.

"Laodicea" – Rev 3:14.

2:2 Another example of the content of Paul's prayers – 1:9.

"Encouraged" – Acts 4:36; 9:31; 16:40; Rom 1:12; 15:4; Eph 6:22; Phil 2:1; 1 Thess 2:11,12. Paul considered this an important ministry.

"Knit together in love" – Rom 12:10; Eph 4:2,3; Phil 2:2.

"Understanding" – see what Paul considered "riches." Compare Prov 3:13,14; 8:10,19; 16:16.

"Mystery" – a revelation from God. See note at Matt 13:11.

"Of God, of the Father and of Christ" – no one can know Christ unless God reveals Him – 2 Cor 4:4-6. In the same way no one can know God unless Christ reveals Him – Matt 11:27. The knowledge of Christ and God the Father is greater riches than everything else put together. Compare Phil 3:7-11; John 17:3.

2:3 If we know Christ we are at the source of all spiritual wisdom. Observe the word

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 And I say this so that no one may deceive you with persuasive words. 5 For though I am absent in the body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

"all". All wisdom, without limit, is in Christ. If we do not know Him we are completely lacking in spiritual wisdom even though we know all philosophy and have all of the world's knowledge. See 1 Cor 1:20,21. What some people call the way of wisdom for salvation is the way to pride and arrogance, not the way to salvation.

"Hidden" – the wisdom and knowledge of Christ are not clear to everyone, they do not lie on the surface. They must be sought as people would seek for hidden treasures. Compare Prov 2:1-6. Psalm 119 gives the example of one seeking for spiritual understanding with his whole heart. Happy are those who imitate him.

2:4 There are always those who deceive others (and themselves) with "persuasive words." They can make man-invented ways and the wisdom of philosophy or religion sound very reasonable and good. Only by faith in Christ and an understanding of the truth, and of the reality He gives, can we keep ourselves from false ways.

2:5 "In spirit" – 1 Cor 5:3,4. Paul is not suggesting that his spirit could leave his body and travel to other places. He means his mind, his heart, his thoughts were on them and their affairs. What Paul "saw" (understood from the information he had received about them) made him hopeful that they would not be deceived by fine-sounding arguments.

"Order" – 1 Cor 14:40.

"Firmness of your faith in Christ" – this is what enables us to stand against deceptive teaching and every device of Satan (2 Cor 1:24; Eph 6:16; 1 Pet 5:9; 1 John 5:4).

2:6 Notes on "Christ" and "Jesus" at Matt 1:1. Notes on "Lord" at Luke 2:11. They had received the truth about the Jesus of history. They had not received some mystical idea, some Christ of speculation and imagination. They believed in a flesh and blood Jesus who was the God-anointed one and the Lord from heaven. Observe carefully that by faith they had received "the Lord." This is the truth they had been taught and they had believed it and submitted themselves to Him. Now by that same faith they must continue to live (2 Cor 5:7).

"Go forward" – or "walk" – note at Eph 2:10.

2:7 "Rooted and being built up" – compare Eph 3:17. Believers can be compared in some ways with plants or trees – Matt 12:33; 13:1-30; Ps 1:3. Christ is like the good ground where their roots are. They are already rooted, but gradually developing. They are like a building and Christ is the foundation where they are being built up – Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4,5; 1 Cor 3:11.

6 Therefore *just* as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* continue to go forward in him, 7 rooted and being built up in him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, overflowing in it with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man despoil you through

"In the faith" – they should be more and more established in the truth of Christ, believe it more and more firmly.

"Thanksgiving" – Eph 5:4,20; 1 Thess 5:18.

2:8 "Beware" or "be very careful" – a subtle danger was there – the danger of being captured by a false system of thought. In vs 16-23 Paul speaks of the system which the Colossians faced. Those we face today may be similar or different, but we too need to be on our guard. One thing is certain in every generation – any philosophy, or system of religious thought that leaves out the Lord Jesus Christ is hollow and deceptive.

Philosophy is the pursuit of what men regard as wisdom, an attempt to find out truth and the nature of reality by logic and reasoning. Christ is the truth, and all spiritual wisdom is hidden in Him. The methods of philosophy will never lead men to Him. The Bible is a revelation of the nature of reality, and all the truth about spiritual matters which God wants men to know is contained in it. Philosophy is speculation. It never leads to the true God (1 Cor 1:20,21). The Bible leads us to Christ who is true God. Philosophers in general contradict one another, and make statements which cannot be proved. They are dealing with things they do not know, things too high for them.

Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24), stands before us. In him alone are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It is interesting that the word "philosophy" is used just this once in the whole Bible. The word "philosophers" also is used just once in the Hebrew and Greek Bible (Acts 17:18), but they appear under different words once more – 1 Cor 1:20. In this way God, the Author of the Bible, reveals the uselessness of philosophy in the field of spiritual wisdom. If God ignores something, or fails to speak approval of it, then we may be sure it has no contribution to make to those things God wants most to teach us.

"Despoil you" – or the Greek could be translated "make a prey of you" or "take you captive."

"Traditions of men" – the philosophy troubling the Christians at Colosse was based on human traditions (either spoken or written down), and on certain basic lessons men thought they had learned from the world. Those philosophers were dealing with only the ABCs of things (but probably prided themselves on their deep thought). Their philosophy was not based on Christ and therefore was "empty deceit." Since it was not based on Christ all true wisdom was left out. So it promised something it could not

philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men according to the rudimentary things of the world, and not according to Christ.

9 For in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. 10 And you are complete in him, who is the head of all sovereignty and power. 11 In him also you have been circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh in the circumcision *done by* Christ, 12 *and have been buried with him in baptism*, in which you have also been raised with *him* through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 And *when* you were dead in your sins and the lack of circumcision in your flesh, he made you

give. This is as true today as it was then. There are many systems of philosophy and of religious thought based on certain traditions, or ancient religious writings, or on pure human speculation. Since they leave out Christ, who is the wisdom of God, these systems also are hollow and deceptive.

2:9 See 1:19. This means that Christ is the incarnation of the one true God, the Creator of the universe. All the fullness of the divine nature dwells in His body. See references at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11.

2:10 Believers are "in Christ", united to Him by God's Spirit - John 17:20-23; Rom 6:5; 1 Cor 12:12,13; Eph 1:4,7,11,13. Therefore in Him they have all they need for a holy, wise, and spiritual life. The "completeness" God has given them is not, of course, the fullness of deity. Human beings can never become God and receive God's attributes (see Gen 1:26; Ps 9:20; Isa 40:6-8,12-26). But God has given to believers fullness of grace and power and wisdom in Christ. They are to understand this and appropriate these things to themselves and use them. Compare John 1:16-18; Eph 3:19; 5:18.

"Head" - Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11.

2:11 "Circumcised" - Paul is speaking of the true spiritual meaning which the religious ceremony of circumcision pointed to. See Rom 2:28,29; Phil 3:3. The flesh (in Greek "sarx" - see note at Rom 7:5) cannot be improved in any way. It deserves to die, and Christ by dying in our place has put it to death. He has cut believers off from any connection with it - 3:3; Rom 6:6; 7:17; 8:9. They have a new heart, a new nature; they are separated from the old life - 3:9,10; 2 Cor 5:17. This does not mean that the actual sinful nature within them is inactive - Rom 7:17,18; Gal 5:17.

2:12 "Buried with him in baptism" - see Rom 6:3,4.

"Raised with Him" - Eph 2:6.

"Through faith in the working of God" - compare Rom 4:20,21,24. When we believe the God who revealed His power in raising Christ from physical death, He raises us from spiritual death. Compare John 5:24; Rom 10:9,10.

alive together with him, forgiving you all trespasses, 14 *and* blotting out the handwriting of decrees that was against us, which was opposed to us, and took it away, nailing it to his cross. 15 *And* having plundered principalities and powers, he made an open spectacle of them, triumphing over them by *the cross*.

16 Therefore let no one judge you in *the matter of* food or drink, or regarding a festival, or new moon *observance*, or sabbath days. 17 These are a shadow of things *that were* to come, but the substance *is* of Christ. 18 Do not let anyone keep you from receiving your reward, by a self-willed humility and worshipping of angels, entering into things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by

2:13 "Dead. . . alive" - Eph 2:1,5.

"Forgiving" - 1:14; Eph 1:7.

2:14 Eph 2:15. "Against us" - the law of God was opposed to people because all are sinners and have broken it, and the law demanded punishment and death - Gal 3:10; Rom 3:19; 4:15; 7:12-14.

"Nailing it to His cross" - Christ took our place and endured all the punishment and curse of the law against sin - Gal 3:13. He died under the curse of the law and all believers died with Him (in God's reckoning). Because they are dead to the law, it is as though the law was crucified and dead to them - Rom 7:1-6.

2:15 "Principalities and powers" - here Paul means Satan and other evil spirits (Eph 6:12). They tried to destroy Christ by the cross - Luke 22:53. Instead, Christ by His cross and resurrection gained the victory over them, and freed His people from their power - John 12:31; Heb 2:14,15.

2:16-23 Paul now speaks of some ways false teachers tried to deceive the Colossians by "persuasive words" (v 4).

2:16 "Let no one" - here he is referring to the Jews who still held to the "written code with its regulations" (the whole law of Moses) - v 14.

"Food or drink" - see note at Lev 11:1; Mark 7:18,19; Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:1-4.

"Festival" - he means Jewish observance of special days and times. Believers now are not under such Old Testament rules and regulations. See notes on "Sabbath" at Rom 14:5-8; Gal 4:10,11. These regulations are part of the written code Christ nailed to the cross - v 14.

2:17 "Shadow" - Heb 8:5; 10:1.

"Substance" - the rules and regulations of the Old Testament were shadowy pictures of spiritual truth found in Christ.

2:18 Paul now speaks of another danger. Some people in Colosse were in a false religious path. They were proud of what they considered their humility, and they worshiped angels. This worship and their so-called humility went hand in hand. They may have argued something like this: human beings cannot go to God directly - He is too high above them, too holy, too unapproachable;

his carnal mind, 19 and not holding to the Head, from whom the whole body is supplied and knit together by muscles and ligaments, *and* grows with the increase God *gives*.

20 Therefore if you died with Christ to the rudimentary things of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you submit to rules 21 (do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, 22 all of which are to perish with the using), according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These

so men should worship Him only through mediators and these mediators are angels. Some religious people today use a similar argument. But instead of worshipping angels or through angels they venerate those they call the "saints" who have died. They regard them as mediators, and ask them to intercede with God in their behalf. Besides these there are a great many people who worship various "gods", not God the Creator. All of this is contrary to God's Word and will revealed in the Bible - Ex 20:1-6; John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 10:19-22.

"Reward" - see 1 Cor 9:24; 2 Tim 2:5. Believers should not let anyone cause them to stumble in the spiritual race they are running. If they do they may lose the prize they could otherwise have received.

"Self-willed humility" - not the kind of humility produced in a believer by the Holy Spirit.

"Puffed up" - this is the result of self-willed humility. Such "humility" is only pride in disguise.

"Carnal mind" - the mind of the flesh, the fallen nature - see Rom 8:5-7. The people described here were controlled by their sinful nature and their worship, religion, and philosophy came out of that, but they may have considered themselves very spiritual.

2:19 "Not holding to the Head" - the NIV here has "lost connection with the Head." This is an unnecessary and misleading translation. It implies that these false teachers once were connected with the Head (Christ), but somehow lost that connection. This strikes the author of these notes as something very unlikely. The phrase may possibly be translated "not taking hold of the Head" or "not united to the Head" (The Jerusalem Bible). The false religious teachers at Colosse were not controlled by Christ. His teachings did not rule their lives. That is why they went astray. Probably they professed to be His followers, but proved by their teachings that they were not.

"Grow" - Eph 4:16.

2:20 "Died with Christ" - Rom 6:6,8; Gal 2:20.

"Rudimentary things" (v 8; Gal 4:3) - things that are related to the old creation, not the new spiritual creation in Christ.

2:21,22 Some people thought then (and think now) that laws and rules and regulations about food, drink, etc are at the heart of spiritual life. Believers in Christ have, in

things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in their self-chosen worship, and humility, and bodily austerities, *but have* no value against fleshly indulgence.

3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in

Christ, died to all that.

2:23 "Appearance of wisdom" - this is quite enough to satisfy most people on earth. The true wisdom that comes from God they do not have and do not try to obtain.

"Self-chosen worship" - many people try to worship in their own way and ignore God's appointed way. Compare Matt 15:7-9; John 4:23,24; Ex 20:1-6; Ps 29:2; Prov 14:12.

"Bodily austerities" - some think that they can become spiritual by ill-treating the body, and forcing it to obey them by ascetic practices. Self-control and subjection of the body are certainly good (1 Cor 9:27). But not all methods men practice to accomplish this are good. But neither that alone, nor the other things Paul mentions here, can make anyone spiritual or enable him to overcome his sinful nature. There is only one way to do this, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul takes this matter up in the next chapter.

3:1,2 What men need is new, spiritual life, not the things false teachers tried to impose on Christians at Colosse (2:4,8,16-23).

"Raised with Christ" - 2:13; Rom 6:4,5; Eph 2:4-6. Believers died in Christ who is their representative and substitute, and they were raised in Him. This became a living experience when they received Him by faith and were born again - John 1:12,13. Christ is at the right hand of God - Eph 1:20; Phil 2:9; Heb 1:3. That is where every believer's thoughts and desires should be. This is the only way to live a holy life worthy of Him. Compare Phil 4:8; Rom 8:5; etc.

"Affection" - or "mind", or both.

"Things. . .above" - these are the things of Christ and God, spiritual things, the truth God has revealed, the true wisdom, the blessings He has given us in Christ (Eph 1:3). We should seek those things with all our thoughts, desires and strength. This is the way to continued peace and joy and assurance and power and holiness and power and growth in the Christian life.

"Things of the earth" - Phil 3:19; 1 John 2:16,17.

3:3 "Died" - Rom 6:2-4,8; Gal 2:20.

"Life" - the new, spiritual life that God has given to believers.

"Hidden" - no one on earth can see it, no enemy can come at it to destroy it (John 10:28,29). Though this treasure in Christ may seem far away, it is very near, and very safe.

God. 4 When Christ, *who is* our life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Therefore put to death your members which are upon the earth: sexual immorality, uncleanness, bad passion, evil cravings, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience. 7 Once you also spent your life in these things, when you lived in them. 8 But now you must also put off all these: anger, rage, malice, blasphemy, filthy language from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have put off the old man with his deeds 10 and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator, 11 where there is neither Greek nor

3:4 Christ is the life of all believers – that is, they have this new, spiritual life because He is in them (1:27; John 11:25; Rom 8:9,10; 1 John 5:11,12,20). They are united to Him (John 17:20-23), and His life flows through the whole body of believers.

"Appears" – 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2.

"In glory" – John 17:24; Rom 5:2; 8:17,18; 1 John 3:1-3.

3:5 "Put to death" – Paul bases this command on the great truths he has set before us in vs 1-4. Compare Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1; 5:1. Since God has given believers new life in Christ, since they have a glorious future, they should behave accordingly. They must set out to remove sinning from their lives. And this is possible (though it is not possible for us to eradicate the sinful nature within us). If it is not possible, Paul by the inspiration of God's Spirit would not have told believers to do it. They will not accomplish it by any methods of the false teachers (2:23). But they can do so through Christ, by His Spirit, using the strength He gives. See Rom 8:4,13,14; Gal 5:22-25; Eph 3:16-20.

"Members" – "parts of the body." The sins Paul now lists are as closely connected to our nature by birth as eyes, hands or feet are to the body. They must be dealt with harshly, drastically. See Matt 5:29,30.

"Covetousness" – or "greed" "desiring more" – a sin very common even among Christians.

"Idolatry" – Eph 5:5. Idols in the heart are detestable and destructive just as exterior idols are. See Ezek 14:3,4.

3:6 "Wrath" – Eph 5:6; Rom 1:18; Ps 90:7-11; Num 25:3.

"Children of disobedience" – this expression means those who are disobedient, those whose nature and practice is disobedience.

3:7 Eph 2:1-3; Rom 3:9-19.

3:8 "Put off" – Eph 4:22-32.

3:9,10 "Do not lie" – Eph 4:25; Ps 15:2; Prov 12:22.

"Have put on" – when people repent (Matt 3:2) and believe in Christ they are putting

Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian *nor* Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all, and in all.

12 Therefore, as the chosen of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe *yourselves* with tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and patience. 13 Bear with one another, and forgive one another, if anyone has a quarrel against another. Just as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. 14 And above all these things *clothe yourselves* with love, which is the perfect bond.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, for you were called to this in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one

off the old way of life and putting on a new. They obtain a new nature, they become new people – 2 Cor 5:17. This new nature is in the "image" of God – that is, it is spiritual, holy and righteous (Eph 4:22-24). It exists in believers side by side with their sinful nature – Gal 5:16,17; Rom 7:14-25; etc. So each believer has to deal with the faults, sins, bad habits, evil desires, etc., of the old nature. And the way to deal with them is to put them to death, to put them off.

3:11 Gal 3:28. All who believe in Christ have the new nature and all are united with Christ. Christians should not make distinctions where God has made none.

3:12 "The chosen of God" – 2 Cor 6:16-18; 1 Pet 2:9,10.

"Holy" – notes at John 17:17-19; etc.

"Dearly loved" – Eph 1:5; 3:18,19; 5:25,26; 1 John 3:1.

"Put on" – or "clothe yourselves" – Rom 13:14.

"Tender mercies. . . patience" – Phil 2:1; Gal 5:22,23.

3:13 Eph 4:32; Matt 6:12,14.

3:14 "Above all. . . love" – John 13:34; Rom 12:10; 1 Corinthians chapter 13; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:2; 1 John 3:18; 4:7,8. Only love can make perfect unity among believers. Without it there will be selfish ambition, quarrels, factions, etc.

3:15 "The peace of God" – John 14:27; Phil 4:6,7. Peace should sit on the throne of our hearts and direct our actions. We should avoid doing anything that strikes against inner peace, that is a traitor to peace, that makes us uneasy and fearful. Peace in the heart is a tender flower and sin will cause it to wither.

"One body" – 1 Cor 12:12,13. So we should behave toward one another in the light of this – 1 Cor 1:10; Phil 2:2.

"Thankful" – 1:12; 2:7.

3:16 Compare Eph 5:18-20. There is a close connection between being filled with God's Spirit and letting the word (teachings) of Christ dwell richly in the mind and heart.

"Dwell" – compare Eph 3:17; Ps 119:11. See the importance of the word of Christ to believers. Compare Ps 1:2; Deut 6:6,7; Josh 1:8.

another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and do not be bitter toward them.

20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this pleases the Lord well.

21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they will not be discouraged.

22 Slaves, in everything obey *those who are your* masters according to the body, not serving *because he is* watching, *not* as pleasers of men, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do *it* heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong he did, and there is no favoritism *with God*.

4 Masters, give *your* slaves what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

"Teaching and admonishing" – all believers are to be teachers of one another. But this can happen only as Christ's word richly lives in them.

3:17 Compare 1 Cor 10:31.

"In the name of the Lord Jesus" – on His authority, according to His nature and teachings, as those who represent Him on earth. Here is a rule that should govern our every action and word. If we cannot do or say something by the authority of the Lord Jesus we should not do it or say it. Believers are His people on earth, members of His body. They are to present Him to the world. They are not here to speak and act as they please.

3:18-25 See Eph 5:22-6:8 and notes. "Slaves" – or "servants" or "bondservants".

4:1 Eph 6:9.

4:2 Eph 6:18; Luke 18:1.

"Thankful" – 1:12; 2:7; 3:15,17; 1 Thess 5:18.

4:3 Eph 6:19,20.

"Mystery of Christ" – 1:25-27. Paul, an example to us all, was always looking for opportunities to tell others of Christ. He prayed for opportunities and asked others to pray for him.

4:4 "Speaking as I should" – in the variety of situations we face, and with the variety of people that we meet, it is not always easy to speak as we ought. To be ready to speak in every situation, to every kind of person, requires much prayer and thought and study.

4:5,6 Believers must always consider what effect their words and actions have on unbelievers. Outsiders may know nothing

2 Persevere in prayer, and be alert in it with thanksgiving, 3 and be praying for us also, that God would open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, 4 that I may make it clear, speaking as I should. 5 Behave with wisdom toward outsiders, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you should answer everyone.

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. *He is* a dear brother, and a faithful servant and fellow worker in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for the same purpose, that he might learn how you are and encourage your hearts, 9 with Onesimus, a faithful and dear brother, who is *one* of you. They will tell you everything that *is happening* here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as *does* Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (you received instructions about him. If he comes to you, receive him), 11 and Jesus, who is called Justus. These *are* the only *ones* of the circumcision who work with me for the kingdom of God, *and* they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, greets you. *He is* always striving earnestly for you in prayer, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a

more of Christianity than what they see in us or hear from us. If we are not wise we may offend them unnecessarily. If we do not take the opportunities God gives us to speak to them of Christ, their blood may be on our hands – Acts 20:25-27. When we do speak to them our way of speaking should be gracious, courteous, pleasant. And, of course, our message to them should always put emphasis on God's grace. Compare Ps 45:2; Luke 4:22.

The word "salt" may suggest two things. Salt makes things tasty. Our way of speaking should make people want to hear more. Salt preserves from corruption. We do not need to adopt the corrupt way of speaking common among men. Compare Eph 4:29.

4:7 "Tychicus" – Eph 6:21.

4:8 "Encourage" – 2:2.

4:9 "Onesimus" – Philemon 10-12,16.

4:10 "Aristarchus" – Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Philemon 24.

"Prisoner" – v 18; Eph 3:1; Phil 1:13.

"Mark" – Acts 12:12,25; 13:5,13; 15:37,39; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Pet 5:13.

4:11 "Jesus" is the Greek form of Joshua and was not an uncommon name among Jews in those days.

"Of the circumcision" – or of the Jews. The rest of his fellow workers were people of other nations or races.

"Kingdom of God" – notes at Matt 4:17; Rom 14:17.

4:12,13 "Epaphras" – 1:7.

"Striving earnestly. . . in prayer" – 2:1. This was not for himself but for others. He

great zeal for you, and for those in Laodicea and *for* those in Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that *meets* in his house.

16 When this letter is read among you, see that it is read in the church of the Laodiceans also, and

wanted to win spiritual victories for them. Spiritual wrestling is often necessary because of the weakness of the flesh, and the opposition of enemies in the spiritual world – Matt 26:40,41; Eph 6:12. Compare also Gen 32:24-32. Epaphras wanted very important things for those believers – things believers still need today. He wanted them to have the ability to know God's will and stand firm in it (1:9,10), and to enjoy spiritual maturity (Eph 4:13-15). Notice the word "always."

"Laodicea" – vs 15,16; 2:1.
4:14 "Luke" – Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11. Luke was a Gentile (compare v 11) and the author of Acts and the Gospel of Luke. This

likewise that you read the *letter* from Laodicea.

17 And say to Archippus, "See that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

18 This greeting I, Paul, *am writing* with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

is the only place he is called a physician.

"Demas" – Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:10.
4:15,16 This was one way Paul's letters (and other portions of the Bible) became known to the churches. Remember that in those days there were no printing presses and no copying machines of any kind.

4:17 "Archippus" – Philemon 2. One of the major concerns of every believer should be to finish the work the Lord Jesus has given him or her to do. Compare Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7.

4:18 "Own hand" – 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17.

"Chains" – v 10.