

# Colossians Bible Study

**Author:** Apostle Paul

**Date:** ~60 AD

**Colossae:** at the time, a declining city in Asia Minor (Turkey), in a Roman region named in the Bible as *Phrygia* (Act 2.10; 18.23). It's 9 miles southeast of Laodicea, and 100 miles east of Ephesus in Greece. It was home to a local angel cult.

**Historical setting (context):** Paul had been arrested in Rome (4.3, 17), and writes from there.

**Issue or theme:** You have been delivered in Christ, who is pre-eminent in all things: *act like it*.

**Key verse:** 1:13 God has *delivered* us from the power of darkness

**Key words:** faith, flesh, mind, preeminent, know/knowledge/known, mystery

**Repeated word or phrase:** in Him, by Him, with him, put off, put on

## Outline

### I. Greeting (1.1-12)

1. Author and audience (1.1-2)
2. Blessing of and gratitude for them (1.2-6)
3. Honoring the labors of Epaphras (1.7-8).
4. Expectations and prayers for them (1.9-12)

### II. The Person and Work of Christ (1.13-23)

1. His is the Kingdom of Light (1.13)
2. In him we have redemption, and forgiveness (1.14)
3. He is the image of the invisible God (1.15)
4. He is the firstborn (*protokos*, First Cause) of all creation (1.16-17)
5. He is the head of the Church (1.18)
6. In him all the fullness of God dwells (1.19)
7. By his blood we are reconciled to God, made holy & blameless (1.22)
  - a. If we continue in the faith (1.23)
  - b. If we don't shift from the Gospel Paul proclaimed (1.23)

### III. The labors of Paul for them – *how much he cares* (1.24-2.2)

1. His suffering is for their sake, “filling up what is lacking”?? (1.24)

“I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church.” (Col 1:24 <sup>NLT</sup>)
2. He became a minister to make known the Gospel (1.25-26)
3. To reveal the mystery of *Christ in them*, the hope of glory (1.27)
4. He proclaims and teaches Christ, that they may be mature in Him (1.28)
5. For this Paul toils, with all Christ's power at work in him (1.29)
6. Struggling on their behalf (2.1-3)
  - a. to encourage their hearts
  - b. to knit them together in love
  - c. to reach full assurance of understanding
  - d. to know God's mystery, which is Christ

### IV. His good intentions for them (2.4-8)

1. To protect them against delusions (2.4)
2. Rejoicing in their good order and firm faith (2.5)
3. That they may walk in Christ *as received* (2.6)

4. That they may be rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith (2.7)
  5. To prevent their being snared by philosophy, deceit, tradition, worldliness (2.8)
- V. Who they are in Christ (2.9-15)
1. Because the deity dwells in Him, they too are filled with God, in Him (2.9-10)
  2. He is their only rule and authority (2.10)
  3. They were circumcised in Him; *identified as God's* (2.11-14)
    - a. by putting off the body (*soma*) of sinful flesh (*sarx*) *cf.* Rom 8.13.
    - b. buried with Him in baptism
    - c. raised with Him through faith, by God's power (2.12)
    - d. made alive with Him (2.13)
    - e. having forgiven our sins, and cancelled our debt, by nailing them to the cross (2.14)
  4. He disarmed and triumphed over all other rulers and authorities (2.10, 15)
- VI. Their freedom in Christ (2.16-23)
1. Don't return to bondage under human laws or traditions (2.16)
  2. Why not? These were only shadows of Christ, who has now come (2.17)
  3. Don't mix false religions and practices with Christianity (2.18)
  4. Instead, hold fast to Christ alone, as a *body* of believers (2.19, *cf.* 1Cor 12, Eph 4).
  5. With Christ, we died to the world (2.20-22)
  6. Also avoid self-made religion, and the shackles of will-power (2.23)
- VII. Seek the things that are above (3.1-17)
1. Seek the things of heaven (Mat 6.33), where Christ is (3.1)
  2. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (3.2)
  3. Why? You died to them; your life now is hidden with Christ in God (3.3)
  4. Put to death whatever remains earthly in you, the old self (3.4-9)
  5. Put on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of Christ (3.10)
  6. All other earthly distinctions are gone; *Christ* is all, and in all (3.11)
  7. Put on the things of Christ, espec. love (3.12-14)
  8. Allow the things of Christ to rule the body of Christ (3.15-16)
  9. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it in the name of Christ, thankfully (3.17)
- VIII. Expressing the Lordship of Christ in various roles (3.18-4.1)
- Wives (3.18); husbands (3.19); children (3.20); fathers (3.21); slaves (3.22-25); masters (4.1)
- IX. Prayer requests (4.2-4)
- X. Conduct towards outsiders – *our witness to the world* (4.5-6)
- XI. Closing thoughts from Paul (4.7-18)
1. Delegation of Tychicus and Onesimus (4.7-9)
  2. Greetings from others (4.10-14)
  3. Greetings and admonitions from Paul, personally (4.15-18)

**I. Greeting (1.1-12)**

1. Author and audience (1.1-2)

Paul says the letter is from him and Timothy. But when Paul describes himself, he says he is “an apostle [a delegate or messenger] of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” Why do you think Paul describes himself this way? What is he trying to convey to them?

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He then describes them in a similar way, as “saints [holy ones] and faithful brethren.” Again, why describe them that way? What does he want them to understand about themselves?

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2. Blessing of and gratitude for them (1.2-6)

He blesses them with grace and peace, not from himself, but “from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He asserts that he has authority from God, like an ambassador. He may sound like a madman, *unless* it’s true. And if it is, what are the implications for them?

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He then lets them know how grateful to God he is for them, and he’s praying for them always. He then conditions it on what he’s heard about them: (1) of their faith in Christ; (2) their love “for all the saints” (not just those in their local church); (3) because it flows from their hope of heaven; (4) which is based on the gospel truth; and (5) it is producing fruit among them.

If he wrote that to you, how would you receive it? What impression would it make on you?

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3. Honoring the labors of Epaphras (1.7-8).

Why was it important for Paul to honor this man in the eyes of this church?

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4. Expectations and prayers for them (1.9-12)

**What** did Paul want for them? **Why** did he want these things for them? For **you**?

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## II. The Person and Work of Christ (1.13-23)

1. His is the Kingdom of Light (1.13)

What other kingdoms are there, and who possesses them?

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2. In him we have redemption, and forgiveness (1.14)

What difference does it make whether it is IN him, or THROUGH him?

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3. He is the image (*likeness*) of the invisible God (1.15)

Whuzzat mean?? Whuzzat mean for you?

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4. He is the firstborn (Gr. *protokos*, First Cause) of all creation (1.16-17)

Christ is infinite with the Father, not created. So how is He the "first born of all creation?"

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How well does the translation convey the meaning of *protokos*? Compare Joh 1.3.

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5. He is the head of the Church (1.18)

How does that affect your membership and participation in the church?

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6. In him all the fullness of God dwells (1.19)

How would you explain that "fullness" (*pleroma*) to a non-believer?

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Why did it please the Father? (Cf. Mat 3.17; 17.5; 2Pet 1.17-18)

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7. By his blood we are reconciled to God, made holy & blameless (1.22)

What is it about the blood, that reconciles us? How does it "make" us holy and blameless? (Lev 17.11; Joh 6.53)

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a. If we *continue* in the faith (1.23) (Gr. *epimeno* – to stay, remain, abide)

**And if you don't?** (Cf. Mat 13.21; 2Pet 1.10)

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b. If we don't *shift* from the Gospel Paul proclaimed (1.23)

(Word studies: Gr. *metakineo* – to move from a place) Cf. 1Cor 15.58, 2Cor 1.24, Eph 6.14, Col 4.12 – *histemi*: to stand firm, stay put; or 1Cor 16.13, Gal 5.1, Phi 1.27, 4.1, 2The 2.15 – *steko*: to persist, persevere; or *ametakinetos*, immovable; or 2Cor 1.21 *bebaioo*, **made firm**; or Jas 5.8 – *sterizo*, set fast, confirm one's mind, be constant.

How does such a mindset evidence a mature Christian? See Eph 4.14 How is it acquired by a faithful follower of Jesus Christ? Put it in context: Eph 4.11-16.

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**And if you do?** See Heb 6.4-6. So, how could that possibly happen? What does it indicate?

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### III. The labors of Paul for them – *how much he cares* (1.24-2.2)

1. His suffering is for their sake, "filling up what is lacking"?? (1.24)

*NLT: "I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for his body, the church."*

In what ways do (or could) you participate in the sufferings of Christ on behalf of his church?

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2. He became a minister to make known the Gospel (1.25-26)

God made Paul a steward of the church, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. How was Paul's ministry and calling any different than yours? In what ways are you a "steward" of God? See Luk 12.42; Luk 16.1-13; 1Cor 4.1-2; 1Pet 4.10.

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3. To reveal the mystery of *Christ in them*, the hope of glory (1.27)

How do you know whether Christ is in you, and therefore you can have the hope of glory? See Rom 8.9-14; Gal 2.20; Col 3.3; 1Joh 3.23-4.6

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4. He proclaims and teaches Christ, that they may be mature (or completed) in Him (1.28)

How would you distinguish a mature Christian from an immature one? Which are you?  
They have grown beyond the basic principles of Christ (Heb. 6:1-8; 1Cor. 3:2).  
They rightly divide the Word of Truth (2Tim. 2:15)  
They have learned to abide in Christ through personal obedience (Jn. 15:5, 10).  
They press on, letting go of what hinders them (Heb. 6:1; 12:1).  
They are not blown about by every wind of teaching (Jms.1:6).  
They have renewed their minds, now having the mind of Christ (Rom. 12:2; 1Cor. 2:16).  
They learn to love one another just as Christ loved them (Jn. 13:34).  
They walk by faith and not by sight (2Cor. 5:7).  
They learn to be content in every circumstance (Phil. 4:11).  
They are committed and faithful to the point of death (Rev. 2:10).  
They delight in God and in his Law (Ps. 119:35,70; Rom. 5:11; 7:22)  
They have become Salt and Light in the world, because *that* is their nature (Mat 5:13-16).

5. For this Paul toils, with all Christ's power at work in him (1.29)

Does it matter (and how could you tell) if you are toiling by Christ's power at work in you?

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6. Struggling on their behalf (2.1-3)

- a. to encourage their hearts
- b. to knit them together in love
- c. to reach full assurance of understanding
- d. to know God's mystery, which is Christ

What are you struggling for, or on whose behalf? Your family? Your employer? Your God? Paul was purposeful as he struggled, and lists four goals (a-d). If you were struggling to achieve those four goals on behalf of others (including your family, or fellow believers), what would it look like? What would you teach, and how would you teach it? If you need to learn those things first for yourself, how would you learn “the Way”?

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What’s the difference between reaching a full understanding of the Gospel, and reaching a full assurance of the Gospel?

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#### **IV. His good intentions for them (2.4-8)**

##### **1. To protect them against delusions (2.4)**

There are two key words in this verse. The first is to deceive, delude, or beguile: intentionally leading someone into error or a misunderstanding. The question is “How?” And the answer is, with fancy words. The Greek for fancy words is “*pith-anologia*,” from which we get *analogy*; but this is *mis-analogy*. It’s translated persuasive words, enticing or lofty words, or arguments that sound good.

How can you protect yourself and others from “fake news” and “bogus arguments” regarding the “mystery of God” in Christ? (see verse 2.2)

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##### **2. Rejoicing in their good order and firm faith (2.5)**

Paul isn’t physically there to see what’s going on, but he hears about them. And what he hears is (1) their good order, and (2) the steadfastness of their faith in Christ.

(1) What does “good order” look like in a church? (1Cor 14.33, 40, in context)

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(2) How can you tell if someone’s faith (such as yours) is steadfast (firm, immovable, patient)? See Col 1.23; 1Th 1.3; 2Th 1.4; Heb 6.19; espec. Jas 1.3, 12; 5.11.

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3. That they may walk in Christ *as received* (2.6)

What happens if you don't do that? See Eph 4.17-21.

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4. That they may rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith (2.7)

Whuzzat mean? Psa 1.3; Jer 17.8; Mat 7.24-25; 2Pet 3.15-18.

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5. To prevent their being snared by philosophy, deceit, tradition, worldliness (2.8)

These are things that distract us, that tempt us to leave the path and get lost in tall weeds.

Give some examples that tend to lure you away from following Christ:

Vain philosophy (deep discussions about nothing consequential):

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Empty deceit (falsehoods that gain nothing):

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Tradition (worldly habits/ways):

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Worldliness (the basic principles or assumptions on which the world operates):

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**V. Who they are in Christ (2.9-15)**

1. Because the deity dwells in Him, they too (we too) are filled with God, in Him (2.9-10)

We are being transformed into the image of Christ by the Spirit of Christ. It happens as we submit to be changed *because* of Christ; as we submit to the word of God which *reveals* Christ; and as we surrender ourselves to Christ who is God *incarnate*. This act of absolute submission, of *surrendering our self*, acknowledges and acts on a simple truth:

“I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in Jesus Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2.20)

How does your union with Christ (the image and mystery of God in you) affect your day-to-day activities, and your relationships, including your relationship with God?

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2. He is their only rule and authority (2.10) or “the head of all principality and power.”

If Christ is Head over all – every principality and power in this world – how could He not be Head over you? When we ride a horse full stride, we “give him his head.” But submission is letting someone else take hold of the reins and direct us. In what ways do you let Christ take hold of your reins (have reign over you)? In what ways have you kept that control from Him? What do you intend to do about that this week?

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3. They were circumcised in Him; *identified as God's* (2.11-14)

a. by putting off the body (*soma*) of sinful flesh (*sarx*) *cf.* Rom 8.13.

We feed the body when we eat. That’s not sinful. But our physical body is affected and driven by our sinful passions and desires, held in check only by the Spirit (Gal 5.16-23). Which of the fruits of the flesh do you still struggle to put off? Which of the fruits of the Spirit are becoming more evident in you? Which of those two kinds of fruit is more likely to be seen by others? And how are you going to nourish the fruits of the Spirit? They are HIS fruits, not yours. So how will you let HIS fruits be seen in you, and not be hidden?

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b. buried with Him in baptism

Baptism is more than the act or sign of baptism. It signifies being spiritually cleansed in a bath, once by Christ’s sanctification of you, but regularly by the Spirit’s work in you. How and where does that “cleansing” regularly take place for you, now? For example, Jesus presented himself to John for baptizing. How are you presenting yourself to Christ for cleansing?

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c. raised with Him through faith, by God’s power (2.12)

Read Romans 6.3-7. All of the verbs are passive (done to us), not active (what we do). It’s by God’s power, not ours. Nonetheless, we must exercise faith in Christ, to receive God’s power. We are raised to “newness of life.” That means we are freed from SIN’S power, because we are now under GOD’S power. Sin, however, is still present. How do you explain that?

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d. made alive with Him (2.13)

We were dead in sin, but that sin is forgiven, and therefore we are alive. Read Rom 6.11. What does that mean, to “reckon (or consider) yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ”? What effect does it have on your daily living, if any? Do you reckon it every day? When during the day are you doing that? If you’re not doing that, why not?

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e. having forgiven our sins, and cancelled our debt, by nailing them to the cross (2.14)

Roman prisoners had the charges against them posted above their prison cell door. When they were crucified, that list of charges was nailed to the cross above them. Jesus’ was charged with being the King of the Jews. But all our charges were nailed to HIS cross. How would you tie those two things together? You having no charges left against you, and Jesus being your king? How do you live accordingly? Describe it as best you can.

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4. He disarmed and triumphed over all other rulers and authorities (2.10, 15)

Jesus didn’t leave others in power, and rule over them, as if they had some power and authority, he had some power and authority (verse 10). Rather, he first *disarmed* them – the word means he stripped them of their power and authority – like tearing off the symbols of a soldier’s rank. He put them to “public shame” and “triumphed over them” in his crucifixion.

What does that mean for you?

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**VI. Their freedom in Christ (2.16-23)**

1. Don’t return to bondage under human laws or traditions (2.16)

This refers to the dietary and ceremonial laws of Israel, jubilee year, etc. (Num 16.13-21; 28.11; 2Kng 4.23)

We’re not under the law (Rom 6.14), but Christian liberty has its boundaries. Describe them. (Rom 13.1; 14.13-17).

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Name some do's and don'ts in today's *Christian* culture, where others try to get you to conform to non-essential standards. (see verse 2.21)

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Why should the Sabbath continue to be celebrated? Isn't it part of the Law? (Gen 2.3, Exo 20.11)

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Why did the church change the sabbath from the 7th day to the 1st? Is it only tradition? (Mat 28.1; Joh 20.19, 26; Act 20.7; 1Cor 16.2; Rev 1.10)

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2. Why not the law or traditions? These were only shadows of Christ, who has now come (2.17)

What could be wrong with Messianic Jews continuing to celebrate things like Passover?

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Are 7th-day Adventists likewise returning to the sign, instead of what it signifies?

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What then is the fulfillment of the law? (Mat 5.17; Rom 8.4; 13.8-10; Gal 5.14; 6.2)

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3. Don't mix false religions and practices (asceticism, worship of angels) with Christianity (2.18)

How might such people disqualify, cheat, or defraud you of your reward? (1Cor 9.27; Eph 2.8)

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4. Instead, hold fast to Christ alone, as a *body* of believers (2.19, cf. 1Cor 12, Eph 4).

How is the church involved in our union with Christ? Why must we hold fast as a body?

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5. With Christ, we died to the world (2.20-22) – that’s a plural you; we *all* died to the world.

What did we die to? (what are the “elemental spirits” or “basic principles” of the world?)

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What are the implications of that for the church? How does the church die to those?

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Is the church just a group of believers gathered together, or is it something more? Explain.

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If human commands and teachings will all be consumed, why is it important for YOU to live by the commands and teachings of Christ? Are you an eternal being? And therefore...

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6. Also avoid self-made (or self-imposed) religion, and the shackles of will-power (2.23)

If we set aside the liberty of Christ, and bind ourselves with needless rules and regulations to control our conduct, what effect does that have on our heart?

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Why is it true that such things have “no value” – are no help – in restraining us from indulging our fleshly desires?

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It's a *paradox*: self-control is commanded by God, but THIS self-control indulges the flesh. Explain the difference (Pro 25.28; 1Co4 7.5, 9; Gal 5.23; 2Tim 1.7; 2Pet 1.6).

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**VII. Seek the things that are above (3.1-17)**

1. Seek the things of heaven (Mat 6.33), where Christ is (3.1)  
Christ is not merely “above,” but seated at the right hand of God. Whuzzat mean?  
Act 2.33-35; Act 5.31 (“Prince”); Rom 8.34; Heb 1.3-14; Heb 10.12-14; 1Pet 3.22.

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2. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (3.2)  
How do you “set your mind” on something? The Greek is *phroneo*, to direct the mind or strive after something. Yes, but how can you “redirect” your mind and your thoughts?  
Psa 119.36-37; Mat 6.19-21; Mat 16.23; 1Joh 2.15;

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3. You died; your life now is hidden with Christ in God (3.3)  
How have you “died”? Died to *what*? Rom 6.2-4, 10; 7.4-6; Gal 2.19-20, 4.9.

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If *your* life is hidden, what then can be seen? Mat 5.16; Luk 8.15-16; 1Pet 2.12.

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4. Put to death whatever remains earthly in you, the old self (3.4-9)  
Many sinful things are listed “in which you once walked... having put off (*stripped or disarmed*) the old self with its practices.” *Past tense*. What does that mean?

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5. Having put on the new self, which is *being renewed* in the image of Christ (3.10)  
“PUT ON” is the Greek “enduo;” it means to *sink into* or *be clothed in*. It indicates that’s what you did; and having done that, your “new self” is being renewed – it is being done TO you. So first comes putting on the new self (a *choice* or *commitment* that you make), and THEN your image will be renewed. How do you explain that? (Eph 4.22-24; Rom 8.1) How do you *do* that?

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6. All other earthly distinctions are gone; *Christ* is all, and in all (3.11)  
If race, culture, nationality, social class, etc. are human inventions, and we’re all offspring of Adam (Cf. Gal 3.28), what does that mean for the local church and outreach?

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7. PUT ON the things of Christ, especially love, the “perfect bond of unity” <sup>NAU</sup> (3.12-14)  
How do all those things (elect, holy, beloved, compassionate, kind, humble, meek, longsuffering, forbearing, forgiving) reflect Christ’s love?

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The word for perfection is *teleiotes*. It’s a state of perfection, wholeness, or maturity. They reflect the image of Christ. How well do they reflect your own image? How do you intend to get the two images to match more closely? Why would you want to?

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8. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, and the word of Christ dwell in you richly (3.15-16).  
What does this say the evidence of that will be? Are these evident in you? Why?

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9. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it in the name of Jesus, thankfully (3.17)  
What does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus”? What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? baptize in His name? speak in His name? be justified in his name?

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**VIII. Expressing the Lordship of Christ in various roles (3.18-4.1)**

The lordship of Christ is a “vertical” relationship. It varies (it looks different) according to each horizontal relationship or role that we have. We don’t relate to our spouse as we do to our child; we don’t relate to our employer or employees, as we do with a fellow believer. Each relationship also varies with the circumstances – both ours *and* theirs. We need to adjust to the moment, and not just to the person – we need to consider what we’re each going through – so that Christ is glorified and honored in each setting.

**wives** (3.18); Wives, submit to your **own** husbands, as is **fitting** in the Lord.

What is fitting with regard to other women’s husbands?

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Whose responsibility is it to ensure it’s proper, *hers* or her *husband’s*? Why? (Consider that a husband and wife have individual relationships with Christ, each proceeding along its own path, as well as the path they travel *together*.)

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And if it isn’t fitting? What is her duty? And what is his?

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**husbands** (3.19); Husbands, love your wives, and do not be **harsh** with them.

The word for *harsh* means to embitter or exasperate someone. How might you as a husband, make your wife bitter, annoyed, frustrated, or even infuriated? Is it enough to just avoid that?

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What are opposite reactions to these? How might you *promote* those in your marriage?

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**children** (3.20); Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

When should a child *not* obey a parent?

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What then are your responsibilities to your children, as a godly parent?

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How then should you instruct your children with regard to imitating you? 1Cor 1.11.

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**fathers** (3.21); Fathers, do not *provoke* your children, lest they become discouraged.

The word for *provoke* means to stir up, excite, or stimulate. These responses are not evil in themselves. We *should be* stirred up for Christ. But we must not *discourage* a child, to provoke or frustrate our children in a way that breaks their spirit, and causes them to lose heart (*i.e.*, to lose hope of ever pleasing you, or God).

In what ways may you be *discouraging* your children? What will you do about that?

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In what ways are you *encouraging* your children? How do you know you're succeeding?

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Is there a middle ground? If you're not encouraging them, are you then discouraging them?

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**slaves** (3.22-25); "not as men-pleasers, but fearing the Lord, doing all as to the Lord."

We are *bondservants* (Gr. *doulos*) to Christ, who is our Master (Gr. *kurios*, Lord, Joh 13.13).

How do you serve others "as to the Lord"? What's going on in your head and heart?

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How should you react if you're not treated fairly? Mt 5.11-12; 8.9; Jo 15.21; He 13.5; Phi 4.12-13.

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**masters** (4.1); treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Any position we hold in life, from family to the workplace to our society, can be corrupted by pride, or by a lust for power and control. What biblical principles put restraints on that sinful inclination? Mat 11.29; 20.25-28; Joh 13.12-15; 2Cor 1.24; Phi 2.4-8.

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## IX. Prayer requests (4.2-4)

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 4:2** Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison-- <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

### **Word Study**

**Proskartereo:** translated “continue earnestly/steadfastly; devote yourselves”. The word means (1) To adhere to something, to be devoted or constant (faithful); (2) being attentive to, giving unremitting care; (3) continue all the time in a place; (4) persevere and not faint; (5) show that you are courageous; (6) be in constant readiness for someone, or wait on someone constantly.

This is Paul’s command to the Colossians concerning prayer. It’s being prepared at all times to *pray*. Considering all the ways that this *attitude* of prayerfulness is described by that one Greek word, what sorts of things actually get in the way of it *for you*? And what sorts of things might help you to be “constant” or “attentive” to pray?

**Gregoreuo:** translated “being vigilant/watchful/alert.” Having prepared yourself and being ready to pray, you now go to God in prayer; and *as you pray*, you are being “watchful.” The Greek word means to give strict attention to it, to be *cautious* as you pray, and to be *active* in it.

What are you watching out for? What are you being cautious against? In other words, what’s the danger? And how can you be *active* in your prayer, rather than *passive*?

Consider this description of praying:

Even when we launch into spontaneous prayer, we should consider our words and our ways. We are not to babble thoughtlessly, inconsiderately, hoping that our many words will impress God or vaunt our spirituality before men (Ecc. 5:7; 10:14; Mat 6:7). Yes, God is our Father; but He is also *God*. The child who interrupts his parent because he feels compelled to speak and to be heard, must learn to control himself, and to wait. Prayer is as much listening for the leading of the Spirit of His Word, as it is speaking. It responds to God’s word more than it initiates a novel conversation: *sola scriptura*.

Therefore, we do not want to come before God empty-minded, prayerfully waiting for some voice to give us direction. It’s true that we know God’s voice because we are his children. But if we are given some spiritual direction that runs counter to God’s word, it cannot be from God. *That’s why we talk to God through prayer, and why he talks to us through his word*. Expecting a two-way private conversation with God during prayer is potentially dangerous, and frankly, it can be presumptuous. If we’re not familiar with his word, then his Spirit cannot bring Scripture to bear as Christ brought it to bear during his temptation in the desert. In prayer, we enter into the spiritual realm where we need to wear our full armor, carrying both sword *and* shield.

Satan is ever watchful, especially when we pray, to find a way to twist and pervert it, by tempting us through our fleshly desires, and our prideful heart. How can those two things intrude on your prayers if you're not "watchful"? Or, how can you prevent that?

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**Logos:** translated "word." "To open to us a door for the **word**, to declare the **mystery** of Christ." Here the *word* is equated to the *mystery of Christ*. The Greek word *logos* is different from the Greek word *rhema*. There are many words, *rhema*, in a sentence; but the *meaning* of the sentence, the *idea* it conveys, the *teaching* it imparts, is the *logos*.

In this case, Paul wants an opportunity to **teach** the mystery of who Christ is, and what he did on the cross. And he doesn't want just a chance, but an *open door*. He wants to be received by others into an extended conversation – give and take, question and answer. He wants an open dialogue, so he can describe the *mysterious* things, the *supernatural* things that happened leading up to the cross; and then exactly what happened *on* the cross, and finally, what all of that means to his listeners in eternity.

He wants the Colossians to take every opportunity to pray for him to have THAT open door. He wants them to be vigilant about it – considering who Paul is, where he is, and what he's doing, so they'll pray continually ABOUT that, and FOR that.

What would keep you from praying that prayer for your elders, or CG leader, or deacons, or for *yourself*? And if someone (your wife or children) prayed for an open door for *you*, what would you say when that door opened? What price would you pay to have it opened? Paul paid with imprisonment. What price would you pay to *remain silent*?

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**Phaneroo:** translated "make it manifest/clear." The Greek means to make visible or make known what has been hidden or unknown – to *expose* something. In this case, Paul wants to "expose" the mystery of Christ. And that can be done in word or in deed, or both. It's not optional. Paul says, "as I ought to speak." The word for speak, **laleo**, isn't just uttering words and making noise. It means to make your mind known, to disclose your thoughts.

So there's a mystery about Christ, that Paul knows. And he wants to reveal that mystery. But to do that, it can't just be hearsay. He doesn't want to discuss what someone else thinks about it. He wants to be able to share what HE thinks, what HE believes, and what HE knows, so that the other person will receive Paul's eye-witness testimony, as if he's in a courtroom, taking oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It's up to the other person to *hear* the testimony, and conclude for himself – that is, to believe it or not. So Paul isn't going to give a canned speech. He's going to proclaim the Gospel with the aim to persuade his hearers of its truth. Read Acts 26.

Let's say the door has been opened to you to proclaim the Gospel. What things can you share that might persuade your hearer, not only that you believe what you're saying is true, but they too

should believe it? You say, “The sky is blue.” “OK,” says the other person, “but *prove* it to me.” What needs to happen? (Joh 3.3) Given that God opens this person’s heart, the way He opened the door to you, *you still need to persuade him*. How are you going to do that? What’s your evidence? How do you convince the person that your evidence is valid and trustworthy?

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**X. Conduct towards outsiders – *our witness to the world* (4.5-6)**

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. <sup>6</sup> *Let* your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. (Col 4:5)

Why does it require *wisdom* to deal with outsiders (non-believers)? The Greek word means filled with wisdom and knowledge about a broad range of topics.

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What would be the best use of your time when dealing with them? The Greek means to redeem the time, as if purchasing it for your own use. What sort of return on investment would make it worth your while to deal with them?

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**XI. Closing thoughts from Paul (4.7-18)**

1. Delegation of Tychicus and Onesimus (4.7-9)

Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. <sup>8</sup> I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, <sup>9</sup> with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one of you*. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.

Tychicus and Onesimus are representing Paul, letting the Colossians know how things are going in prison (how Paul is making the best use of his time there). But they are also to find out (for Paul) how the Colossians are doing, and to comfort them.

Why was it important for the Colossians to know about Paul’s situation?

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If you were one of these men, what would you say or do to comfort the Colossians? Why do you think they might *need* comforting? See Col 1.3-8, and 4.12-13 (below)

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2. Greetings from others (4.10-14)

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), <sup>11</sup> and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision [that is, fellow Jews]; they have proved to be a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup> Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup> For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup> Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Why do you think Paul is name-dropping here?

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What might he hope to accomplish by it?

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3. Greetings and admonitions from Paul, personally (4.15-18)

<sup>15</sup> Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his house. <sup>16</sup> Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

What does this tell you about the relationships between these churches?

<sup>17</sup> And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

What do you think Archippus was called to do? See Paul's letter to Philemon 1.2, written at about the same time as this letter to the Colossians.

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Who is Paul writing to, that would have the authority to say this to Archippus? What does that indicate about raising up leaders from within the local church?

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<sup>18</sup> This salutation by my own hand -- Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

Why is it important that Paul penned this part of the letter?

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When he says, "Remember my chains," what do you think he expects of them?

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