

Colossians

Primary Teaching theme: *Restatement and Review of Faith- (Doctrine of Faith)*

The letter was written to the Church at Colosse, located 100 miles from Ephesus in Southwest Asia, alongside the seven Churches highlighted in the book of Revelation.

In reference to “his bonds,” mentioned in the final line of the letter, it was likely written during his incarceration, in the latter years of the Apostle's ministry, about 62 AD.

Tychicus and Onesimus are sent as emissaries to bring the Apostle's letter to the Church at Colosse. They were instructed to fully share the Apostle's status while also reviewing the estate of the local church. (4:8) The Church was instructed to pass the letter on to be read by the nearby Church in Laodicea and for Colossians to read the letter sent to the Laodiceans. (4:16)

The primary theme of the letter is a restatement and review of the Christian faith. The subject is universal, which is why they were instructed to share the same letter with their sister Church. The theme of the letter makes apparent the need for a renewed understanding of the core tenets of faith to ensure alignment with the original teachings of Christ and the first Apostles.

The Apostle has not visited the Churches at Colosse or Laodicea in person; this is stated in the epistle, along with a clear admonishment that his physical absence should not diminish the significance of the message. He assures them that his spirit, as written in the epistle, is with them to hold them accountable for the order and steadfastness of their faith in Christ. (2:4)

The Apostle is writing to address specific issues brought to his attention. These issues were likely presented to him by one of his proteges, Epaphras, who visited him during his incarceration. Epaphras was a mentee of Paul during his time in Ephesus; this student is most likely to have voiced concerns about the heretical teachings he witnessed from false teachers presenting themselves to the Colossians and Laodiceans. Epaphras is also the implied founder of both church congregations. (1:6-7)

Hope in the Truth of the Gospel cp 1

The Apostle opens the epistle, recognizing the hope that the church demonstrated in the truth of the gospel they received from Epaphras, their first teacher and the founder of the church. The Apostle affirms Epaphras as a faithful minister of Christ. The validation of their first teacher is important to consider in the event of any failure by the Church to continue embracing the truth that founded the ministry. The Church is admonished to be fruitful in every good work and to increase in their knowledge of God. (1:10)

Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints cp 1

The Church is reminded that they are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light who have been delivered from the power of darkness. Their spiritual destiny was upgraded from the damnation and separation from God to be translated into the Kingdom of His dear son.

The redemption of the saints was through the blood of Christ; in Him, they have forgiveness of sins forever. (1:12-14)



The Pre-eminence of Christ the Redeemer cp 1

Christ, the redeemer, is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn (life giver) of all creation, for all things seen and unseen. His position is first and preeminent among all thrones, dominions, and principalities. He is before all things, and all things exist because of Him. (1:16-18)

Because He is preeminent, above all positions in the heavens and on earth, He is first above all things spiritually appointed in the Church. Christ the Redeemer is the Head of the Church body. There is no person or appointment in a higher position than Christ.

He is the *firstborn* from the dead, just as He is the *firstborn* (life-giver) of creation. It pleased God that all the fullness of the Godhead was present in Him, as the Redeemer of humanity. He has made peace through the blood of His cross to reconcile all things in heaven and earth unto Himself. (1:19-20)

Continue in the Faith cp 1

All who were once alienated, out of reach, and disconnected from the God of creation because of their wicked works have been reconciled by the work of the Redeemer. In His resurrected body, the unholy and blameworthy are made holy, and the unrighteous are made righteous.

The faith of the believer is founded and settled in the Redeemer's work. The redeemed should not be moved away from the hope of the gospel, which is embedded in the Redeemer. This is the gospel that was preached in the beginning, which the Church has heard, and the gospel that is preached to every creature. (1:21-23)

The Apostle Paul declares himself to be the minister of this gospel, warning every man and teaching all men wisdom and truth so that all may be presented as perfect (complete and finished) in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer. (1:25-28)

The Great Conflict cp 2

The Apostle formally addressed his great conflict and concern for the Church at Colosse and Laodicea. He is aware that neither Church had a public audience with him, but he wants them to know what he expects from them.

Although absent in person, the Apostle affirms his presence among them in spirit. He has poured himself into open letters so they can feel the depth of his love and concern for both Churches.

In his absence, he expects the two assemblies to retain the spiritual order initiated at the launch of their ministries and remain steadfast in their faithfulness to Christ. They are admonished to continue walking in the ways Christ taught them and to establish a firm foundation in the faith. He warns them against being led by the empty philosophies of deceitful men who apply Jewish or secular traditions in contradiction to the way of Christ.



Circumcision was an issue raised against Gentile believers in Colosse as in many other Churches founded by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle reviews the doctrine that should be applied to circumcision in all Churches. The Gentiles are redeemed from sin and the uncircumcision in their flesh. The two issues were exonerated together through the work of the cross, which blotted out (erased) the handwritten ordinances (laws) that stood in opposition to all people.

The Church was instructed not to allow anyone to judge them regarding adherence to dietary laws and eating rituals. Celebrating the new moon and other sabbath rituals served as placeholders, pointing to the fulfillment of future events. The Tabernacle and the Temple were the physical structures God marked as the place to meet with His people. (Exodus 25:22/IIChrn 3:1)

The work of redemption has removed all barriers to access to God, including tearing down the veil within the Holy Place. Removing the veil established made it possible for Jews and Gentiles to come together as one in the Body of Christ. The temple and tabernacle were physical foreshadows pointing towards the spiritual Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is *the living temple*, a gathering place for Jews and Gentiles connected at the joints and muscles (bands) to be nourished by the head of the body, Jesus Christ. (2:16-17,19)

The Church is further cautioned not to worship angels or be coerced into chasing after unseen mysteries used to inflate the ego of the human intellect. Those who have surrendered their lives to Christ are not bound by the world's order and principles. (2:20)

New Life/ New Man in Christ cp 3

Everyone who has been resurrected (risen) with Christ seeks the things above, setting their affections where Christ sits and not settling for the world's offerings that are within arm's reach below.

The believer is dead to their past life, and their new life is hidden within the example and character of Christ. When Christ appears at the end of time, the believer whose life is hidden in Him will appear with Christ in glory.

Awaiting the day of glory when believers will appear with Christ, they must strive to subdue (mortify) all desires for fornication, uncleanness, inordinate desires (lustful sexual desire), evil concupiscence (long for what is forbidden), covetousness (fraudulent desires/misrepresentation), inspired by idolatry and false teaching. These are the characteristics of the children of disobedience, the sinful lifestyle that is part of a believer's past.

The believer chooses to put off and discard the behavior of their past, including anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy (disgraceful) communication. Discarding the old man makes room for believers to put on the characteristics of the new man. (3:9-10) The new man is fashioned and modeled after the image of Christ, removing the genetic markers that limit an identity to ethnic references like Jew or Gentile, circumcision or uncircumcised. In Christ, there is no social hierarchy, no distinction between bond or free persons. Christ is all and in all. (3:11)



The Spiritual Garment of the Church cp 3

There is a spiritual garment that every Church should adorn. The elect of God should be covered in the fullness of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness (withholding strength), and long-suffering (patience). The Church garments must be strong enough to hold up and sustain one another and forgive one another for any quarrel or disagreement in the manner Christ has forgiven all.

Above all, the chief garment that must be adorned is the apparel of love, which is charity. Love will empower the peace of God to reign in the hearts of believers who are called to reside in one body spiritually. (3:12-14)

Guidance for Relationships and Families in the Church cp 3

Wives in relationships with their husbands must live and respond under (submit) obedience. Obedience is defined as one with the ability to hear and listen. Hearing defines the meaning of “*submission*” in a relationship between the wife God has joined to a husband as his help meet (to surround and protect). A wife is subject to hearing her husband's voice first to learn (hear the oration of Torah, the Word of God; I Corinthians 14:34) and second to listen and understand her husband's needs to appropriately surround and protect him as a help meet.

Husbands are charged with the duty to love their wives in the manner that Christ loves the Church, demonstrated by giving all His life. (Ephesians 5:25) The single duty of a husband in a relationship with his wife is to love her with all his life. A husband's life is fully surrendered to love the woman God has permanently joined to him in marriage. Joining two separate parts as one is the covenant of marriage that binds both the husband and wife. The wife is expected to fully submit herself to her husband, who fully gives his life to her.

Obedience in children reflects the order and obedience within the marriage household. Obedience will be hard to enforce in a home where obedience and love are not respected between the wife and the husband. Fathers provoking children to obey in a household where obedience is not modeled will cause children to live in anger. They will be discouraged from practicing or conforming to obedience when it is not witnessed in the home where they reside.

The reference to servants in the Apostle's letter should not be mistaken with the terminology used for a slave or bondservant. The Greek word translated in the passage only identifies an enslaved person. However, the context is correctly deciphered in understanding the Hebrew-Jewish culture on the topic in Old Testament scripture text.

Providing instructions on how servants should respond to their master indicates an established order or system that provides clear guidelines. Any guidelines that exist for servants must be balanced with complementary guidelines for their masters. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 25:39-55 outlines the various classifications of servants. There are self-imposed servants who dedicate their skills and services to a specific household. Others become servants, resulting from accumulated debt, which forces them to work off their obligations as a hired laborer or employee. In both classifications, a form of compensation or provision is required.



The bondservant is also mentioned in Leviticus and is defined as forced labor, a type of slavery initiated generally by a more significant household taking control of the assets of a lesser household resulting from warfare or debt.

The Servant in the Apostle's letter provides instructional guidelines that place servitude outside the realm commensurate with forced labor or slavery. The guidelines that define expectations for a servant to not respond to the master with eyeservice, meaning acting in obedience only in the line of sight of his master; or to be pleasing with sincerity fearing God and not just to please men, were conditional to the master living with integrity in relationship with the servant.

Whatever is done, whether speaking to the servant or the master, should be done as if to the Lord. Knowing that God will reward those who do right or wrong, regardless of a person's status, whether they are a servant or a master.

Redeeming the time cp 3-4

Time was lost in all the moments, days, or years that the Church failed to comply to remain faithful to the way of Christ. The Apostle Paul challenged the Church to redeem the lost time by immediately taking heed of the directives established in the letter.

They should walk with wisdom in the way of Christ as a testimony to the world around them. The conversation of believers should be characterized by grace and spiritually seasoned with salt, which preserves the truth of the gospel. The believer should know and be prepared to answer every man concerning their defense of the gospel and its truth.

The epistle to the Church closes with an acknowledgment of faithful servants, Tychicus and Onesimus, whom the Apostle salutes. It was important to identify reliable sources that were true teachers of the gospel. Epaphras is included as one that lives among them to emphasize the authority and respect that should be given to him as their first teacher and Church founder.

The Apostle is careful to mark them as the only fellow workers in the kingdom of God that should be relied upon in their region. (4:11)

The brethren in Laodicea are mentioned, as well as Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Archippus, perhaps a new respondent to the ministry, who eventually establishes a house Church along with Philemon and Apphia (Philemon 1:1), is encouraged to fully embrace his calling.

