

# Prison Mission Association

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## COLOSSIANS

### CHAPTER ONE

*“In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”  
(Colossians 1:14).*

The Apostle Paul’s ministry can be easily divided into two parts: his pre-prison ministry and his prison ministry. During the pre-prison ministry of the Apostle Paul, the revelation of the *Mystery* concerning the Body of Christ was in the process of being revealed. However, it is not until you come to the prison epistles of the Apostle Paul that you find the instruction based upon the completed revelation of God concerning the Body of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians during his confinement in a Roman prison and it is therefore a prison epistle. The epistle of Colossians teaches us about the Body of Christ as it was fully revealed to the Apostle Paul. We find, therefore, in the book of Colossians some very important doctrines of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Of all the cities to which the Apostle Paul sent letters, Colosse was the only one that Paul never had the opportunity to visit. His information concerning the needs of the church at Colosse came through the word of others. It seems evident that Epaphras was one of the key members of the church at Colosse and possibly even the founder.

It is evident that the theme of the epistle of Colossians is the preeminence of Christ as the Head of the church, the Body of Christ. From this the Apostle Paul develops the words of encouragement and exhortation to the people at Colosse. Because of Christ’s preeminence and their position in Christ, nothing was lacking; rather, they were “complete in Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

We would suggest that you begin by reading the epistle of Colossians through at least once before you start to answer the questions in this lesson. Remember to begin in prayer and to continue in prayer as you study these lessons.

1. (v. 1) How did Paul become an apostle? By the will of God
2. (vv. 3-4) What was the outstanding characteristic for which Paul commended these people? Their faith in Christ Jesus and their love for all the saints
3. (v. 5) Where is the believer’s hope? In heaven

**Note:** The hope of these believers had been declared to them as the very heart of the truth of the Gospel, as you see in verse five. When the Gospel was originally preached to them, they evidently had been informed of that special hope which was theirs as members of the Body of Christ. It was this hope that characterized them as

believers as well as their love for all the saints. What a testimony it would be if believers today were known by their hope. Our expectation is looking for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly bodies to be fashioned like His glorious body.

4. (vv. 5-6) What does the Gospel bring forth? **Fruit**

5. (vv. 7-8) How is Epaphras described in this verse? **a faithful minister of Christ**  
**Paul's dear servant and faithful fellow minister of Christ**

**Note:** Evidently, Epaphras was saved under the ministry of the Apostle Paul, possibly in Ephesus. After receiving instruction from Paul in Ephesus, he returned to Colosse to preach the Gospel. Certainly this man is a real blessing to the Apostle Paul and a real example to us as believers to share our faith with others.

6. (v. 9) Paul prayed that these people at Colosse would be filled with what? **That they may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding**

7. (v. 10) How are these people to walk? **In a manner worthy of the Lord**

8. (v. 11) When we are strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, what is the result?  
**We attain all steadfastness and patience and joy**

9. (v. 12) Why are we to give thanks unto the Father?  
**Because he has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light**

10. (v. 12-14) In whom do we have redemption and in what does it result?  
**Jesus Christ (the Son) and the forgiveness of sins**

11. (v. 15-18) List seven descriptive characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ:

(1) (v. 15) **The image of the invisible God**

(2) (v. 15) **The firstborn of all creation (creature)**

(3) (v. 16) **By Him all things were created**

(4) (v. 17) **He is before all things**

(5) (v. 18) **By Him all things hold together (consist)**

(6) (v. 18) **The head of the Body of Christ**

(7) (v. 18) **He is the firstborn from the dead**

“Christ, was before all things, for he was the Son, begotten, not created. Not only was he before all things, he was the Author of all things. What he is to the universe, he is, in a special sense, to the church (the Body of Christ), with which he has an even more intimate relation. By his death and resurrection, the church has been

called into being, and from the bosom of his glory, he imparts to it his glorious life, as the head gives life to the body.” (F. Godet, Commentary on Colossians)

12. (v. 19) Where does “all fullness dwell”? In Christ Jesus

13. (v. 20) How has God reconciled all things to Himself? \_\_\_\_\_

By making peace through His blood shed on the cross

14. What three results of reconciliation by Christ are listed in verse 22?

(1) Holy

(2) Without Blemish

(3) Without accusation

**Note:** The first term refers to inner consecration and the purity which it creates and fosters; the second shows the development of this purity in the life; the third expresses the result, that heart and life are therefore alike unchangeable.

15. (v. 24) In what did the Apostle Paul rejoice? In what Paul suffered for them

16. (v. 25) The dispensation (stewardship) God gave Paul did what, as far as the Word of God was concerned? Fulfill the Word of God

17. (v. 26) How long was the mystery hidden? For ages and generations

18. (v. 27) What is “the riches of the glory” of this mystery? \_\_\_\_\_

Christ in you (me) the hope of glory

**Note:** Many people believe that Revelation is the book that completed the Bible. However, Revelation simply is an expansion of the prophecy that God had already given in the Old Testament concerning the Tribulation and the Kingdom. In reality, it is the revelation of the mystery concerning the church, the Body of Christ, which God revealed through the Apostle Paul that completed the Word of God. With the revelation of the mystery, the Word of God was made complete in the sense that his total plan for the ages has been made known. The Bible is a completed book, and therefore all of men’s claims that they have a particular revelation given from God are contrary to what we find in Colossians 1:25.

19. (v. 28) What was the desired result of Paul’s preaching? \_\_\_\_\_

That we may present every man perfect (complete) in Christ Jesus

## CHAPTER TWO

*“In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9-10).*

Paul has just reminded the Colossians of who Christ is and what He has done. It only remains for them to understand what they possess in Him and in His work, that they may see the futility of the things which some are urging them to add to this perfectly complete salvation.

The Apostle Paul begins the epistle by expressing his concern for Colossians, for though he has never seen them, he is nevertheless their apostle. He has heard that a doctrine is being preached to them which is called philosophy but which is in reality only vain deceit, because it is based upon the traditions of men, and points to outward observances (works) as having the attributes of salvation instead of to the work and teaching of Christ.

In this second chapter the Apostle Paul strongly condemns any system of man that would suggest we need something for our salvation other than the saving work of Christ, or in addition to the person of Christ. He condemns the vain traditions of men and the systems and principles of the world. This chapter speaks out against all of the religions of men, which lead people away from Christ instead of to the wondrous and blessed truth that we are “complete in Him.”

1. (vv. 1-2) Describe what Paul desired for these believers and for those in Laodicea **That their hearts may be comforted (encouraged), knit together (united) in love, having complete understanding**

2. (v. 3) Where are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? **In Christ**

**Note:** The apostle is speaking of the mystery, and here he speaks of it as worthy of fuller and further insight. He places it in sharp contrast with the false and hollow error, which was the cause of doubt among them. That system which was ‘not after Christ,’ might boast of its stores of philosophy, but they were not to be captivated by its pretense. They needed not to go in quest of higher truth and loftier science, for in that mystery proclaimed among them were deposited all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

3. (v. 4) How is it that many people are deceived? **Through enticing words (KJV)**  
**Fine sounding arguments (NIV)**

4. (v. 5) What was it that gave the Apostle Paul such great joy and cause for rejoicing? **Their orderliness and firm faith**

5. (v. 6) How are we to walk in Christ? **As we have received Him (through faith)**

6. What words in verse seven give the idea of permanency and strength? **Rooted, built up established (strengthened)**

7. (v. 8) How is it that we might be spoiled (taken captive – NIV)? **Through hollow and vain philosophy**

**Note:** The Apostle Paul uses the word “spoil” in verse eight and suggests that it is possible for a believer to be spoiled through the various means described in this verse. This very pointed term describes what happens to an individual who becomes involved in traditions, legalism and human religion and moves away from the person of Jesus Christ. An individual who finds his contentment in the systems of the world instead of in Christ can definitely be called someone who is “spoiled.”

8. (v. 9) What is it that dwells in Christ? **The fullness of the Godhead**

9. (v. 10) In whom are believers complete? **In Christ**

10. (vv. 11-12) Who performed the spiritual circumcision, baptism and resurrection mentioned in these verses? **God**

**Note:** The phrase “in which” in verse 11 must be understood from its usual significance as union with Jesus Christ. This union is created by the Spirit and effected by faith. These believers, through their living union with Christ, had enjoyed the privilege and were enjoying the results of spiritual circumcision. These show the real position of the believer in Christ and how the external rituals and traditions of men had nothing to offer. The believer is already in Christ circumcised, baptized and raised in newness of life.

11. (v. 13) What is the result of having been “quickenened (made alive) together with him”? **Our trespasses have been forgiven**

12. (v. 14) What did Christ do to the ordinances of the Law? **Blotted them out**

13. (v. 15) What did Christ do to the principalities and powers? **He spoiled (disarmed) them made a public spectacle of them and triumphed over them**

14. (vv. 16-17) Why should we not let men judge us in meat, drink, or in observation of holy days? **They were a shadow of things to come, namely Christ**

**Note:** How wonderful it is to live in a day when God’s message is not in shadowy figures and forms, but rather we have the completed revelation of God (Col. 1:25). The statement, “but the body is of Christ,” suggests that in the person of Jesus Christ we have the full reality of all that we need or will ever need. Why search any further when we have Christ. How important it is for Christians today to realize that if by faith they are in Christ, they have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Him (Eph. 1:3).

15. (v. 19) What is the important work of the Head of the body? **Supports and holds the body together**

16. (vv. 20-22) What is our standing in regard to the rudiments (principles) of the world? **We have died to them in Christ**

Are these the principles of men or of God? Of men

17. (v. 23) Do these worldly rules have any spiritual value? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

**Note:** For centuries men have been imposing upon other men, as well as themselves, regulations, rules and traditions that bind and bring them into bondage. In these man-made systems there is self-gratification, which glorifies the flesh. One of the purposes of the second chapter of Colossians is to show that self-gratification does not honor God and, in fact, detracts from the reality that is in Christ. The completeness that we have in Christ does not gratify the flesh or the world but is the only way that a man can stand before God and be accepted. We trust that you have personally received Jesus Christ as your Savior and realize that as a result of your faith in Christ, you have been made complete in Him. God would simply have us acknowledge the completeness we have in Christ and live within the blessedness of such completeness.

## CHAPTER THREE

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”  
(Colossians 3: 1).

**Note:** Chapter three of Colossians is strongly practical in nature. The apostle is actually suggesting to these believers that they should act in accordance with the privileges outlined in previous chapters. We suggest that you read carefully chapters one and two again before you begin this chapter. You might also read Ephesians, chapter five, and notice the similarity between it and chapter three of Colossians.

1. (v. 1) Where is Christ seated? At the right hand of God the Father

2. (v. 1) What are we to seek? Things that are above

“Seek those things which are above” indicates that we have been raised up with Christ, and therefore we ought to seek things above. Any other search or desire would be inconsistent.

3. (v. 2) On what are we to set our affections? Things above

**Note:** The Christian is not to despise the comforts he may meet with in life, but he is not to give them first priority. ‘Things on earth’ are inferior. ‘Things above’ are supreme and final. Attachment to things on the earth is unworthy of one who has risen with Christ, for they are beneath him, and the love of them is not in harmony with his position and where he is going. What can riches achieve for him who has treasure laid up in heaven?

4. (v. 3) Where is our life hid? With Christ in God

5. (v. 4) What will happen to us when Christ appears? We will appear with Him in glory

6. (v. 5) What are we to do to our members which are upon the earth? Put them to death

7. (v. 6) Why does the wrath of God come on the children of disobedience? \_\_\_\_\_  
Because of the evil behavior listed in verse 5

8. (vv. 7-8) What are we to put off? Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication

9. (vv. 9-10) What are we to put on? The new man

The image here of “putting off” and “putting on” is that of changing garments. What is our clothing? What do people see on the outside of our life?

10. (v. 11) Are there any distinctions in the Body of Christ? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

Why? Christ is all and in all

11. (vv. 12-13) What is to be the believer’s attitude towards forgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_

Forgive even as Christ forgave you

Christians are to forgive one another because Christ has forgiven them, for His example has all the force of a formal command. They are also to forgive one another as He has forgiven them----fully and freely, once and forever.

12. (v. 14) What are we to put on above all things? Love

13. (v. 15) To what have we been called and how? We are called to live in peace as members of one body

14. (v. 16) What are we to let the Word of Christ do? Dwell in us richly

15. (v. 17) What attitude are we to take toward everything we do in word or deed? \_\_\_\_\_

Do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God

What a difference in our lives there would be if we put verse 17 into effect. We so often are willing to do “something” to his honor and glory, but we keep back certain things for our honor and glory. What this verse is talking about, among other things, is taking self out of the picture and placing Christ as the purpose, motive, and object of all that we do.

16. (vv. 18-20) What is the instruction to wives? Submit to their husbands

What is the instruction to husbands? Love your wives

- What is the instruction to children? Obey your parents
17. (v. 21) What is the result of fathers provoking their children to anger? \_\_\_\_\_  
They will become discouraged
18. (v. 22-23) What is the attitude of the believing servant? They are to obey their masters, not to  
please men but to honor God
19. (v. 24) From whom shall we receive the reward of the inheritance? From the Lord
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## CHAPTER FOUR

*“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”  
(Colossians 4:6).*

This last chapter of Colossians is the most personalized of all the chapters in this book. People sometimes pass over these sections, thinking that they are not as practical as some of the other portions. However, we should realize that some of the most practical and blessed promises and possessions are spoken of in this section.

We must also realize that the greetings and personal notes to individuals give us insight into the nature and personality of the Apostle Paul.

1. (v. 1) What overruling principles are human masters to keep in mind when dealing with others, who also work for them? They have a Master in heaven
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2. (v. 2) How does Paul encourage these believers to pray? Continue in prayer, watching with  
thanksgiving
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3. (v. 3) Why had Paul been put in prison? For proclaiming the mystery
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4. (vv. 3-4) For what did Paul want these people to pray on his behalf? That a door would open and  
that he would proclaim the gospel clearly
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**Note:** If the Apostle Paul wanted others to pray for him that he might have boldness in preaching the mystery of the Gospel, how much more should we ask for boldness. We see Paul’s life and we find him one hundred times bolder than most of us; yet he prayed for boldness. Let us also pray for a holy boldness to speak for Christ!

5. (v. 5) How are we to walk toward those who are outside of the church Walk in wisdom
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6. (v. 5) What are we to do with our time? **Redeem the time**

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**Note:** Possibly the most precious possession we have is our time, yet how often we waste it. We would think a person out of his mind if we saw him throwing money into the trash. But what of a person who throws his time away as if it would never run out? We need to make the most of every opportunity to serve the Lord and others.

7. (v. 6) What is our speech to be like? **With grace, seasoned with salt**

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8. (v. 7) How is Tychicus described? **A beloved brother and faithful minister**

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9. (v. 8) What was Tychicus' purpose? **To know the condition of the Colossians (KJV)**  
**That the Colossians would know Paul's condition (NIV); To comfort their hearts**

Paul realized that believers needed to be encouraged by one another. Tychicus was evidently a man who was blessed with the gift of encouragement. Consider Hebrews 3:13 on how we are to act toward one another.

10. (v. 9) What was the hometown of Onesimus? **Colossae**

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11. (v. 10) What did Paul call Aristarchus? **His fellow prisoner**

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12. (v. 12) What did Epaphras do for these believers? **Labored for them in prayer**

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13. (vv. 13-14) What was Luke's profession? **A physician**

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14. Compare 2 Timothy 4:10-11 with Colossians 4:14 and give the two differing future reactions of Luke and Demas to Paul. **Demas left Paul and Luke stayed with him.**

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15. (v. 17) What was Paul's advice to Archippus? **To pay attention to the ministry God gave him**

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16. (v. 18) What were they to remember about Paul? **Remember his chains**

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