**Metadata**

* + One of three cities of Phrygia in Asia Minor located within miles of one another. (Laodicea - 2:1; 4:13,16; and Hierapolis - 4:13). Known as “cities of the Lycus Valley.”
  + Was an important city in 6th century B.C., but by the time a church as established there, it was only a small town.
  + There is good evidence that many Jews lived in the area.
  + Phrygia was one of the regions represented by the multitude on Pentecost (Acts 2:10), giving only hint of how the church in Colosse came about.
  + Epaphras may have been responsible for the establishment of the church there. He was certainly influential to the brethren there (1:6-8; 4:12-13).
  + Congregation may have been predominately Gentile (1:12,21,27; Gentile vices, 3:5-7). Few references to the issue of the Judaizers (3:11; 4:11).
  + Paul self-identifies as the author (1:1; 4:18). He wrote the letter while imprisoned in Rome (1:24; 4:10,18). The letter was probably delivered by Tychicus (4:7-8) at the same time he and Onesimus delivered Paul’s letter to Philemon.
  + The letter is relatively short, consisting of 4 chapters, and 95 verses.

**Concise Outline of Book**

*(Adapted from an outline by Walton Weaver,  
in his Truth commentary on Colossians)*

1. **Introduction (1:1-14)**
   1. Greeting and Prayer (1:1-8)
   2. Paul’s intercession for the Colossians (9-14)
2. **The Preeminence of Christ (1:15-23)**
   1. Christ in relation to Deity (1:15a)
   2. Christ in relation to Creation (1:15-17)
   3. Christ in relation to Church (1:18-23)
3. **Paul’s Sufferings and Labor in the Gospel (1:24-2:5)**
   1. As an apostle to the Gentiles (1:24-29)
   2. As one who is deeply concerned for all of them (2:1-5)
4. **Paul’s Defense of the Faith (2:6-3:4)**
   1. Exhortation to continue in Christ as they had received Him (2:6-7)
   2. Reasons for being steadfast in the Faith (2:8-15)
   3. Reasons for not submitting to the vain Philosophy (2:16-3:4)
5. **Guidelines for the Christian’s Life (3:5-4:6)**
   1. Things to be put to death and put off (3:5-11)
   2. Things that must be put on (3:12-17)
   3. Family responsibilities (3:18-4:1)
   4. Final admonitions on some basic religious concerns (4:2-6)
6. **Personal Greetings and Instructions (4:7-18)**
   1. Tychicus to be sent to Colosse with Onesimus (4:7-9)
   2. Greetings from some who are with Paul (4:10-14)
   3. Final salutations and directions (4:15-17)
7. **Paul’s Personal Signature (4:18)**

**Paul’s Purpose in Writing [Book]**

* There apparently was a philosophical influence that was endangering the faith of the Colossians (2:1,8).
* This philosophy apparently included a challenge to the primacy of Jesus Christ, as Paul made special reference to it (1:19; 2:9-10).
* Paul’s letter was primarily a defense (apology) for the Christ and the Christian faith.

**Chapter Synopsis**

1. After Paul greets the church, he expresses thanksgiving for their faith, steadfastness, and work in the gospel. He immediately addresses the central purpose of his writing, extolling Jesus Christ as Preeminent as the Divine Creator, and Head of the church. He notes their faithfulness as the cause of their reconciliation with Christ, and calls on them to continue steadfastly. He expressed pleasure in the sacrifices he made as a minister of the Lord, in service to them.
2. In this chapter, Paul directly addresses the evil influence among the Colossians. An empty philosophy, though proclaimed with persuasive words. He warns them not to be cheated from the perfection which comes through their relationship with the Christ. He notes that any man made religious commandments and restrictions have no authority and no value to the one who would serve God. They are mere shadows of the preeminent Christ.
3. He calls upon them to refrain from immoral actions, and instead to live righteous lives. He enumerates aspects of a Christian character, and calls upon them to live under Christ’s authority. He specifically gives instructions to wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves (and masters, 4:1).
4. He closes his epistle with further admonitions to prayer, faithful living, and righteous speech. He then ends with final greetings and instructions, including their responsibility to share the letter with the Christians in Laodicea. Interestingly, he signs the letter with his own hand.

**Suggested Memory Work**

**(1:13-14)**, *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”*

**(1:15-17)**, *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*

**(1:18)**, *“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*

**(1:19-20)**, *“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”*

**(1:27-28),** *“To them* [His saints] *God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

**(2:6-7),** *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”*

**(2:8-10),** *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”*

**(2:13-14),** *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

**(3:1-3),** *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

**(3:4),** *“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”*

**(3:12-14),** *“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

**(3:16-17),** *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one 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.”*

**(3:23-24),** *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”*

**(4:2),** *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”*

**(4:6),** *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

**(4:17),** *“And say to Archippus, ‘Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.’”*

**Difficult Passages**

* How is Jesus the “*image of the invisible God*”? And, what does *“firstborn”* indicate? (1:15,18)
* What does Paul mean, *“in Him all things consist”* (1:17)?
* What does Paul mean, *“in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* (2:9)?
* Explain the circumcision *“made without hands*” (2:11)
* How did Christ disarm *“principalities and powers”* (2:15)?
* What false doctrine is described in chapter 2?
* What are *“tender mercies”* (3:12)
* In what way is love *“the bond of perfection”* (3:14)?

**Doctrinal Considerations**

* **The Preeminence of Jesus Christ (1:9-18)**
* The Kingdom of Christ was in existence at the time of Paul’s writing (1:13-14)
* Christ is our Redeemer (1:14)
* The Church is the Body of Christ (1:18,24; 2:19)
* Reconciliation in Christ (1:19-23)
* Conditional nature of Salvation (1:23)
* The mystery of Christ (1:24-27; 2:2-3)
* **The Superiority of Christ over the ideas of men (2:1-22)**
* Baptism is a burial & resurrection (2:12-13)
* The old law is no longer in effect (2:14)
* The second coming of Christ (3:4)
* Reconciliation of men in Christ (3:11)
* The character of the new man in Christ (3:12-17)
* Singing *“in the name of the Lord”* (3:16-17)

**Practical Considerations**

* The basis of our steadfastness is the hope and love we secure in Christ Jesus (1:3-8, 3:1-11)
* Paul is a wonderful example of a Christian who makes intercessions on behalf of others (1:9-12)
* God shows His mercy to us **if** we continue, steadfast and grounded in the faith (1:23)
* The Purpose of Preaching (1:28-29)
* False teaching is deceptive. It is almost always appealing in some form (2:4,8,17,18,23)
* Our walk must match our relationship with Jesus Christ (2:6-7)
* Consider the importance of being on guard against error (2:16,18,20-23)
* The call to put away worldly lusts (3:5-11)
* It is necessary to forgive to be forgiven (3:13)
* Domestic admonitions (3:18-4:1)
* Admonitions to prayer, a wise walk, and seasoned speech (4:2-6)

**Questions to Consider**

* Upon what basis does Paul contend for his own apostleship? (1:1,25)
* Who are the *“saints”* in Colosse? (1:2)
* How does (1:13) refute the doctrine of Premillennialism?
* Are there any present day equivalents to the efforts to “cheat” us of our reward? (2:18-19,23)
* Considering the deceptive nature of error (chapter 2), upon what basis can we identify a false teacher?
* How is covetousness idolatry? (3:5)
* Is the common use of profanity something a Christian should avoid? (3:8)
* Contrast the filthy language of (3:8) with the seasoned speech of (4:6)
* Why did Paul call Onesimus *“one of you”* (4:9)
* Identify Tychicus (4:7), Aristarchus (4:10), Justus (4:11), Epaphras (4:12), Luke (4:14), Nymphas (4:15), and Archippus (4:17).
* Does Paul’s instructions for the Colossians to share their letter with the Laodiceans indicate anything regarding the inspiration of his letters? (4:16)
* Is there significance to Paul’s personal signature? (4:18)

**Student Questions**

*(Use the back of the page to prepare questions and comments for class discussion. Since this is not a “verse by verse” study, make sure that all your questions concerning the text are answered).*