

The Book of  
*Colossians*  
The Supremacy of Christ

Sunday Morning  
Bible Class



*Lord of the Lakes*  
LUTHERAN CHURCH



# Colossians 1:1–8

## Paul thanks God for what he has done among the Colossians

### Look

Colossae was located in a beautiful valley in Asia Minor on an important trade route between Ephesus and the Far East. We don't know when the congregation there was started. It was probably started while Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.

Paul wrote this letter from prison. A member of the congregation, Epaphras, had traveled from Colossae to Rome to ask Paul to help the Christians in Colossae with a doctrinal problem. It seems that the church was being troubled by a new philosophy. This philosophy did not deny Christ outright, but from what Paul says, it robbed Christ of his place in the Christian's life. To some, Christ was no longer all the Christian needed. This is the error Paul corrects in this letter.

Verse 7      *"Epaphras"*—Epaphras was the missionary who started the church in Colossae. He had made a trip of over a thousand miles one-way (probably on foot) to visit Paul on behalf of the Christians in his congregation.

### Discuss

1. When we write letters to people who are doing good, we are prone to thank them for their work. The Colossians were doing good. But whom does Paul thank? Why is this the best place to start?
2. We sometimes say that we hope something will happen. In verse 5 the word *hope* is used in a different way. Explain.
3. Why do faith and love spring from hope?
4. Where does the gospel fit into this beautiful picture?

### Apply

5. Paul said that the gospel was growing. Give examples of how the same is happening today.

*Paul thanked God for what he had done for the Christians in Colossae.*

# Colossians 1:9–14

## Paul requests blessings for the Colossians and for us

### Discuss

1. At the beginning of this letter, Paul offers two prayers. What did he do in the first prayer? (verses 3–8)
2. Paul continues with a second prayer (verses 9–14). What is the nature of this prayer?
3. Verses 9–14 are one long sentence in the original. All the thoughts are joined together, one flowing out of the preceding and into the next. It is a beautiful sentence that encompasses all of faith and life. Work on grasping Paul's entire thought by filling in the blanks.

We know God's will when we possess \_\_\_\_\_.

When we have spiritual wisdom and understanding, we are able to \_\_\_\_\_.

As we grow in being able to do these things, we will also do the following:

1. \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_.

4. God has given us an inheritance in the kingdom of light. Contrast this kingdom with the kingdom of darkness we were in before we came to faith.
5. To whom does Paul give the credit for all the blessings we have received? What has this person done so that these blessings are ours?

### Apply

6. Someone addressed a Lutheran Christian and said, "You Lutherans are just concerned about true doctrine. In our church we are concerned with deeds." How would you answer that person based on this section of Colossians?

*Paul prayed that the Colossians would grow in knowledge and in their lives of service to the Lord.*

# Colossians 1:15–23

## Jesus Christ is all a person needs

### Look

- Verse 15 *“The firstborn of all creation”*—This does not mean that Christ is the first of the created beings. Rather, he is before all things and, therefore, over all things.
- Verse 16 *“Visible and invisible”*—One of the problems in Colossae seems to have been the false worship of angels. Note 2:18.
- Verse 18 *“The firstborn from the dead”*—This is similar to the expression in 1 Corinthians 15:20: “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Jesus’ resurrection proves that he is true God (Romans 1:4).
- Verse 20 *“Whether on earth or in heaven”*—What in heaven needs to be reconciled? Commentators propose various explanations. It is probably best to say that there is peace in heaven and on earth through the blood of Jesus.

### Discuss

1. Make a list of all Paul says Jesus is.

Verse 15 He is the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 16 \_\_\_\_\_ were created by him. (See the list that Paul adds. Is there anything that is left out?) All things were created \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 17 He is \_\_\_\_\_. All things \_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 18 He is the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_. He is the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. He is supreme.

Verse 19 In Christ, all the \_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 20 Through Christ, God reconciled \_\_\_\_\_. The tool he used to make peace between himself and all creation was \_\_\_\_\_.

2. After talking about the all-encompassing greatness of Christ, Paul draws us into the pictures. What change did Jesus make in our status before God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How can we be sure we will never lose these blessings?

*Paul presents us with one of the most extensive treatments of Jesus found in Scripture. There is nothing above him, nothing he cannot do, and no power for faith and life he cannot give us. Everything we have as God’s people and everything we need for life and godliness can be found in him. We need nothing else.*

# Colossians 1:24–2:5

## In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

### Look

- 1:24      *“What is lacking in Christ’s afflictions”*—Paul is not saying that Christ’s suffering is incomplete. Jesus told his disciples they would suffer for the gospel’s sake. Paul is rejoicing that he is privileged to experience his fair share of that suffering.
- 1:26      *“Mystery”*—In scriptural terms, *mystery* refers to something hidden that has to be revealed. How we are saved is a mystery because we can’t figure it out with our reason. God has revealed this mystery to us in Christ and in the gospel.
- 1:27      *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”*—Compare this section with Romans 8:10–17. There Paul describes the relationship between Christ living in us and our hope of the glory we will receive in heaven.

### Discuss

1. When Paul left a congregation or was no longer nearby to help it, false teachers invariably tried to win over the congregation. Often they slandered Paul’s calling, his person, and his message. Paul often had to defend himself and his message. Skim through this section from that standpoint. How does Paul defend himself in the following verses?
  - 1:24a
  - 1:25
  - 1:28
  - 1:29
  - 2:1
  - 2:2, 3
  - 2:5
2. The false teachers in Colossae were saying that Christ was not enough. Paul says he is. Which word in 1:28 tells us that in Christ we have everything we need for faith and life?

### Apply

3. In our day and age, it is popular to look to human sources to find wisdom and understanding on how the church can be made to grow. Where would Paul direct us?

*Paul defended his ministry and pointed the Colossians to Christ alone.*

# Colossians 2:6–15

## All our sins were nailed to the cross

### Look

- Verse 8      *“Elemental spirits of the world”*—This refers to the kind of religion natural man would come up with. These principles center on trying to earn one’s way into God’s favor. Various forms of offering sacrifices, various devotional practices for beating down lusts, and various patterns of observing holy days in order to become more pure are all parts of the principles of the world. They look good, but they can do nothing to put down the sinful flesh.
- Verse 11     *“The circumcision of Christ”*—Paul compares the cutting away of the flesh in Old Testament circumcision to what happens to our sinful flesh when we are renewed in Baptism.

### Discuss

1. What encouragement does Paul give the Colossians (and us) in verse 6?
2. Against what does Paul warn them in verse 8?
3. What gifts do we have in Jesus that the world’s philosophies and religions can never give us?
4. How did God give us life when we were dead in transgressions and sins?

### Apply

5. Do you ever feel that Satan has a right to accuse you of sin and demand that God punish you? Do you ever feel you must follow his work-righteous suggestions to get right with God? If so, what help does verse 15 give you?

*There is nothing lacking in Jesus Christ. His death frees us from sin and from the power of our sinful nature.*

# Colossians 2:16–23

## Jesus is all we need for godliness and godly living

### Look

Verse 17      *“These are a shadow”*—Old Testament worship laws pictured the promised Savior. They were like a shadow you first see when the sun shines behind someone approaching you around the corner of a building. You see the shadow first, but when the person comes around the building and you see him or her, there is no need to look at the shadow.

### Discuss

1. The false teachers in Colossae proposed a potpourri of Jewish customs, pagan rituals, and new ideas. Paul deals with three general areas of false teaching the Colossians were being exposed to. What was the error in each of the sections below? How does Paul lead them away from the error?

Verses 16–17

Verses 18–19

Verses 20–23

### Apply

2. How are people today tempted to use the same kind of practices the Colossians were tempted to use?

*The world’s kind of worship and piety does not help us in our relationship with God or in our living godly lives. Jesus is all we need in a Savior.*



# Colossians 3:1–11

## Jesus is all the treasure we will ever want

### Look

Verse 4      *“You also will appear with him in glory.”* This is an unusual but wonderful way of thinking. Usually we think of being on earth and meeting the Lord when he comes. Because we live spiritually with the Lord right now in heaven, when he comes again, we will come with him.

### Discuss

1. When were we raised with Christ?
2. What are the “things that are above” (verse 2) on which we are to set our hearts?
3. Where are you right now? What implications does that have for your life?
4. The world offers various methods and techniques for suppressing the lusts and temptations that plague us. But there is only one way to put to death the acts of our sinful nature. How does a Christian do this? (The most complete discussion of this is found in Romans 6:1–7:6.) Why can only those with a new self serve the Lord?
5. Why do we need to hear that the wrath of God will come on those who continue in the sins Paul lists?
6. Look at the list of sins that belong to our sinful nature and discuss each. Pick some that you are particularly tempted to commit.

*Paul reminds us that we are citizens of heaven and that God wants us to live as such. We have put off the old self and put on the new self. As new people we are to put off the deeds of the body. And we have the power to do this through our death and resurrection with Christ.*

# Colossians 3:12–17

## How our Lord wants us to live

### Discuss

1. There are motivational seminars on all kinds of subjects. How does Paul's motivation for Christian living differ from what you have seen in the world? What is Paul's appeal?
2. Paul tells us how we should "wear" our Christianity ("put on"). Discuss each of the items that Paul mentions in the Christian's wardrobe.
3. Whatever we do for God and for our fellow Christians, we do because of what God has done for us. How does Paul bring out that truth in verse 12? in verse 13? in verse 15?
4. What does Paul mean when he says we should do everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus"?

### Apply

5. Paul tells us to be thankful. How does this contrast with a life of complaining and dissatisfaction? Why can we be thankful?
6. Why is it important for Christians to gather together in worship?

*As God's holy people, we want to be what God has made us. We will clothe ourselves with attitudes and actions that give glory to Jesus.*

# Colossians 3:18–4:6

Jesus makes a difference in all our human relationships

## Discuss

1. What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband?
2. What does it mean for a husband to “love” his wife?
3. How should children treat their parents?
4. Find the gospel motivation in Paul’s words to slaves and to masters.
5. Paul encourages the Colossians to continue in prayer. He also asks them to pray for him. What prayers does he request?

## Apply

6. Is it fair to compare what Paul says to slaves and masters to employers and employees today? Why or why not?
7. After Paul had asked the Colossians to pray for him—that he would have ample opportunity to preach about Jesus and ample courage to do so boldly—he encourages the Colossians in their own evangelism efforts. What does he say about their opportunities (and ours)? What does he say about their way of speaking (and ours)?

*Paul encouraged the Colossians in their family relationships and in sharing their faith.*

# Colossians 4:7–18

## All the saints send their greetings

### Look

Verse 16      *“The letter from Laodicea”*—The letter from the church in Laodicea could be a letter of Paul’s that was lost.

### Discuss

1. The end of Paul’s letter sounds almost like the personal column in a newspaper. Find out more about Paul’s missionary team by looking up the following verses. Note what role each played in Paul’s work.

Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12)

Onesimus (Philemon 10)

Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Philemon 24)

Mark (Acts 12:25; 15:36–40; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Peter 5:13)

Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 15:36–40; Galatians 2:9, 13)

Jesus, also called Justus (only mentioned here)

Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; Philemon 23)

Luke (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; see also Paul’s journeys in Acts)

Demas (2 Timothy 4:10; Philemon 24)

Nympha (only mentioned here)

Archippus (Philemon 2)

2. What does the fact that these letters were being shared with other congregations tell us about how the New Testament came into being?

### Apply

3. What makes Christian friendships so extraordinary?

*Paul treasured his Christian friendships and sought to strengthen the bond of Christians.*