

COLOSSIANS

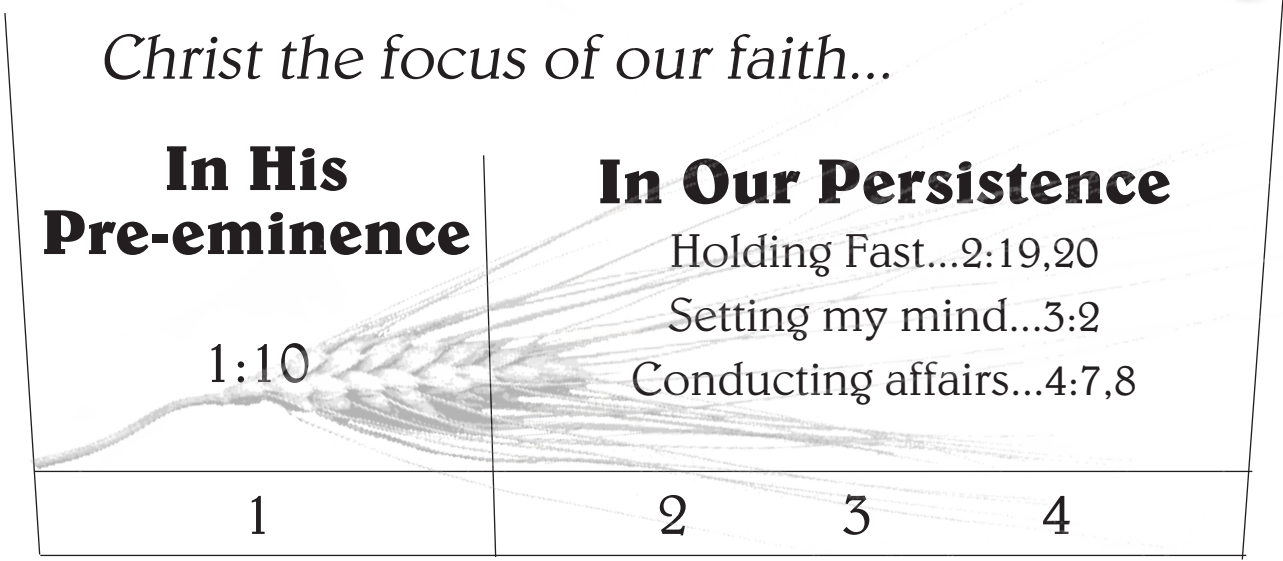


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Welcome to the Book of Colossians!

To begin your study of Colossians, meditate upon the contents of the book reflected in the overview chart below. Use these verses as guideposts to unlock the message of Colossians. How do each of the four sections reflect the theme of Christ's Headship? We have chosen 1:17,18 as key verses for this book. Investigate each one and determine how they relate to the overview and theme of Colossians. An understanding of Christ's headship over all things is critical to understanding the ultimate purposes of God. God clearly establishes the pre-eminence of the Son. He is the reason and the effective reason for all that is good and gracious from God to men!

COLOSSIANS Christ's Headship



"That He Himself might come to have firstplace in everything." 1:17,18

Open Your Heart as You Read!

The book of Philippians gave us clear insight that Christ alone can motivate us to a life filled with the true joy of living. Colossians gives us more depth on why this is true. It is the Father's good pleasure for all of the fullness to dwell in His Son, and that the summing up of all things would revolve around Him alone! What are your indications that Christ is becoming number one in your life? In what ways does His pre-eminence in all things impact your lifestyle? Are you persistent in the things that God considers truly important? Would you consider yourself reasonably submitted to God's will (above your own will)?

THE AUTHOR OF COLOSSIANS

Paul - even though it seems he never visited Colossae (2:1). On his third missionary journey he spent three years at Ephesus which was located just 120 miles from Colossae. Apparently Epaphras was converted there and sent back to Colossae and he evangelized the area where Colossae is located (4:12-13). In 62 A.D. Epaphras came to Rome to report a vicious error which was creeping into the churches. He was not able to answer the heresy so he sought Paul's help. This letter is Paul's answer to Epaphras' concern.

DATE

62-63 A.D.

HISTORY

Ephesians focuses on the Body - Colossians on the Head of the Body. Paul's purpose is to demonstrate that Christ is supreme in everything and over everyone. He is totally sufficient for the needs of the world. Paul shows that Christ preceded all things, designed all things, and holds all things together. In short, "Christ is all, and in all" (3:11). And that means He wants to be in ALL we say, do or think.

It is quite possible Paul wrote the books of Ephesians and Colossians about the same time. Notice the many striking similarities: Both letters were delivered by the same "postman," Tychicus; both were written from prison; the salutations are similar; the structures of the books are remarkably alike; and there is a striking correspondence between pairs of verses:

EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS
1:7	1:14
1:15-17	1:3-4
1:18	1:27
1:19-20	2:12
1:21-23	1:16-19

Why Study the book of Colossians?

1. Christ's headship tells us that Jesus will come to have first place in everything (1:18). As you study this book it would be good to ask yourself the question, "Is Christ merely present or prominent in my life OR is He pre-eminent?"

2. The reason for Christ's Headship is seen in the essence of who He is for all the fullness of God dwells in Him (1:19). A study of this book can't help but give us a greater appreciation and adoration of the incomparable Christ whom we serve. Nothing and no one can compare with Him!



Colossians Chapter Chart

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Questions	Chapter	Title	Verse
Why is Christ the head of the body? Why is the Father's good pleasure centered upon Him? What did Paul's prayer for the Colossians include? What is love in the Spirit (vs 8)? What was Paul's goal for the Colossians?	1		
How is someone's heart knit to that of another? What was the problem that was apparently taking the Colossians captive? What was the prize being referred to in 18? What was becoming these believer's focus, and what was it meant to be?	2		
What does being thankful have to do with Paul's teaching on unity? What were they to put aside in order to be free to put on? What was to be the guiding principle to all of these believer's relationships, including those within the family?	3		
What did the salt of verse 6 accomplish? What did Paul desire to be prayed for himself? What kind of communication and relationship did Paul have with the people who are mentioned here?	4		

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

Someone once said "If Christ be not valued above all, he is not valued at all." This was a living reality for the Colossians. Christ-followers have the unique opportunity to place Christ pre-eminent NOW, long before the world will be judged by our King. It doesn't take much imagination to catch the impact of this value between the King and His subjects.

The enthroning of the Christ will be a joyous occasion for the devoted members of His kingdom. What an incredible opportunity we have to choose to glorify God while we live in this imperfect, distracted environment



FIXING OUR EYES

The book of Colossians clearly defines the pre-eminence of Christ in all things (1:16-19) because He has created all things and all things were created for Him (1:16), He alone holds all things together (1:17), and as the Head of the body He will come to have first place in everything (1:18) and over everyone.

For the Christ-follower this reconciling will indeed happen as God has spoken (Philippians 2:9-11) and this future reality has huge implications for us now. If He will have first place in the consummation of all things, why shouldn't that first place of honor be in our hearts right now!?

Hebrews 12:2 instructs us to "fix our eyes upon Jesus" and in so doing give Him first place now. This fixing of the eyes is exemplified by the example of Christ who fixed His eyes upon the Father. Meditate on each phrase listed from the following passage from the book of Hebrews and ask yourself the question "How can this help me fix my eyes?"

The example of Christ...

How it can help me...

(vs 1)	The witnesses surrounding us Laying aside every encumbrance Running with endurance	
(vs. 2)	The author and perfecter... Endured the cross for joy Sat down at the right hand of God	
(vs. 3)	Endured hostility Don't lose heart	
(vs. 4)	Strive against sin	
(vs. 4-11)	Accept discipline	
(vs. 12-14)	Have care for others	

How can these passages help me to fix my eyes upon Jesus?

SETTING OUR MINDS

The mind of a man is a powerful thing. In our minds we can balance perceptions, conceptualize our morality, live out our dreams (and nightmares), and plan our steps. Responses to our circumstances and relationships are processed in our mind and mold our conscience - and make us what we are.

The Scriptures speak often of the concept of "setting our minds on things above." The proper use of the mind can deeply influence the heart, which in turn determines our attitudes toward God and our actions toward others. The following study helps us to capture this concept. Look up these passages and record what each one teaches you about setting your mind!

Passage:

What does it teach me about setting my mind!

Romans	8:6,7,27	
Philippians	1:27 2:2,3 3:4 4:8	
Ephesians	2:3 4:17,23	
Colossians	1:21 2:18 3:2	
1 Timothy	6:5	
Hebrews	10:16	
2 Peter	1:15 3:1	

1 Corinthians 2:16 makes it clear that we have the mind of Christ. What are the implications of this statement?

May the Lord bless our minds and hearts through a full knowledge of the truth, and may we passionately set our minds on things above!



PRISONER OF THE LORD

The Apostle Paul carried on a great and extensive missionary ministry to both Jews and Gentiles. It is chronicled for us in the Book of Acts. His letters to the various churches he founded give added insight into Paul the man, as well as the further development and progress of the gospel of Jesus.

Paul's writings make use of many potent literary images which helped his readers understand his message. One especially vivid phrase describes Paul as a bond-servant or slave (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Galatians 1:10) of Jesus Christ. Another one similar to it has Paul labeling himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus (Philemon 9; Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). These terms have a very broad background and great depth of meaning. So what did they mean to Paul and how should they be understood for our mutual edification and growth today?

A careful reading of the above-mentioned passages as well as the Book of Acts reveals several important facets regarding these terms and their present-day application. First, they have to do with our conversion from sin, self, and Satan to belong to God our Father. Paul's conversion was not necessarily typical; but, in outcome, it was no different than anyone else who has been born by the Spirit of God. Paul was taken away or delivered from one master and placed in chosen slavery to another. The Bible describes this process as being "purchased" or redeemed by God. No longer do we belong to ourselves, no longer do we have to be slaves of sin, no longer are we captivated by Satan, but now we belong to God. We have been bought with a price and have a new Master. We now follow the highest possible calling: that of a bond servant and prisoner of Jesus Christ.

For Paul, being a prisoner and bond-servant was directly related to carrying the gospel wherever God directed him. It was his consuming burden and his ever-present joy. In the process of preaching the gospel, he started many churches, as scores of people throughout Asia became believers in the same Christ whom Paul served. For each new believer the calling was the same. As prisoners and bond-servants, they were to carry the gospel message wherever and whenever they had opportunity. God gave fruitfulness to the message and the church continued to grow until the world had been confronted by this marvelous message of hope which "turned the world upside down."

For we who are alive in the present age, our position and calling are still the same. You and I do not belong to ourselves, but are possessed by God to serve Him (1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Romans 6:15-23). The practical result should be clearly seen in our relationships here on earth as we begin to obey our new Master. Here again, under the Spirit's leading, Paul writes to the Galatian church that we should "serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13). He takes this one step further by saying that "while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Christians belong to no one but God. Our only obligation in life is to please God through heartfelt worship and obedient actions. We must demonstrate the love of God in Christ Jesus through our speaking and living. Those who know Christ and desire to follow Him in this way will "ensure salvation" for themselves and for those who hear them (1 Timothy 4:16). This defines maturity in Christ for us. It is the goal of the Church. This is the call of the bond-servant!

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

Make a specific list of ways that you can choose to "enslave yourself" to Christ. Use the passages listed above to form your list. Do you consider yourself a bond-servant of Christ? Why or why not?