

# Colossians

## 1

**Summary:** *Paul writes to the Colossian church, which he has never visited, expressing gratitude for their faith and love and praying for their spiritual growth. The chapter builds to the magnificent Christ Hymn (1:15-20), which declares Christ as the image of the invisible God, firstborn over all creation, the agent and goal of creation, the head of the church, and the one through whom God reconciles all things. Paul then describes his own suffering as completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of the church, and his commission to make known the mystery hidden for ages — 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The Christ Hymn (1:15-20) is among the highest christological statements in Scripture. It makes claims about Christ that the Old Testament reserves for God alone: creating all things, sustaining all things, being before all things. The phrase 'image of the invisible God' (eikōn tou theou tou aoratou) does not mean a mere representation but the visible manifestation of the invisible deity — Christ makes God seeable. The dual declaration that 'all things were created through him and for him' (v. 16) and 'in him all things hold together' (v. 17) gives Christ a cosmic role that extends far beyond salvation history. The reconciliation of 'all things' through the blood of the cross (v. 20) is one of the broadest soteriological claims in the New Testament.*

**Translation Friction:** *The phrase 'firstborn of all creation' (prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs, v. 15) has been debated since the Arian controversy. It does not mean Christ was created first but designates his supremacy and preeminence over creation, as the following verses make clear ('all things were created through him'). Paul's statement about 'completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions' (v. 24) is notoriously difficult — it cannot mean Christ's atoning work was insufficient. We render the Greek without resolving the systematic theology, noting the options in the translator notes.*

**Connections:** *The Christ Hymn echoes Proverbs 8:22-31 (Wisdom as agent of creation), Genesis 1:1 (the beginning), and John 1:1-18 (the Logos hymn). The 'image of God' language connects to Genesis 1:26-27 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. The 'mystery' (mystērion) language anticipates Ephesians 3:3-9. The reconciliation theme extends Romans 5:10-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 to cosmic scope.*

<sup>1</sup>Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, <sup>2</sup>To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. <sup>3</sup>We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup>And of the love which you have to all the saints,, and since we heard of your faith in Christ

Jesus. <sup>5</sup>For the hope which is placed up for you in heaven, whereof you listened to before in the word of the truth of the gospel. <sup>6</sup>Which is come to you, as it is in every one of the world. And brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you listened to of it, and recognized the grace of God in truth: <sup>7</sup>You learned the gospel from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so that you may live in a way that is worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every respect: producing fruit through every kind of good work and growing in the knowledge of God. <sup>11</sup>Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, to all patience and patience with joyfulness; <sup>12</sup>Give thanks with joy to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints who live in the light. <sup>13</sup>He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>In whom we have redemption by way of his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>And, possessing fashioned wholeness by way of the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself. By him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. <sup>21</sup>And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup>Indeed, in the body of his flesh by way of death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: <sup>23</sup>If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have listened to, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven. Whereof I Paul am made a minister; <sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, <sup>25</sup>Whereof I am appointed a minister, in keeping with to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; <sup>26</sup>Indeed the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is appointed manifest to his saints: <sup>27</sup>To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. <sup>29</sup>For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Unlike Philippians, Paul leads with his apostolic title — necessary when writing to a church he has not personally founded or visited. The phrase 'by the will of God' (dia thelēmatos theou) grounds Paul's authority not in personal ambition but in divine appointment.
2. Colossae was a small city in the Lycus Valley of Phrygia (modern Turkey), overshadowed by neighboring Laodicea and Hierapolis. The church was likely founded by Epaphras (v. 7), not Paul. The SBLGNT omits 'and the Lord Jesus Christ' found in the KJV's Textus Receptus, ending the greeting with 'from God our Father' alone.
3. The plural 'we' includes Timothy (v. 1). Paul identifies God specifically as 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' — God's identity is defined in relation to Christ. The adverb pantote ('always') modifies their thanksgiving, indicating habitual prayer for a church they have never visited.
4. Paul has 'heard' about them — confirming he has not visited Colossae. The twin report of faith and love forms the classic Pauline triad when combined with hope in verse 5. Their love extends to 'all the saints' — not a clique but the entire body of believers.
5. Hope here is not a feeling but an objective reality — something 'laid up' (apokeimenēn, 'stored, reserved') in heaven, waiting to be received. The Colossians first heard about this hope through 'the word of the truth of the gospel' — a threefold description emphasizing the reliability and saving content of the message.
6. The gospel is described as a living, growing organism — 'bearing fruit and increasing' (karpophoroumenon kai auxanomenon) echoes the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28 and the parable of the sower (Mark 4). The phrase 'understood the grace of God in truth' (epegnōte tēn charin tou theou en alētheia) implies genuine, deep knowledge (epignōsis) as opposed to the false 'knowledge' the Colossian heresy may have been promoting.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 1:28. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Epaphras is the likely founder of the Colossian church (cf. 4:12-13). Paul calls him syndoulos ('fellow slave') — placing Epaphras on equal footing with himself under Christ's lordship. The SBLGNT reads 'on your behalf' (hyper hēmōn has the variant hyper hymōn, 'on your behalf'), indicating

Epaphras served the Colossians as Christ's representative.

8. Epaphras serves as the communication bridge between Paul and the Colossians. Their 'love in the Spirit' (agapēn en pneumati) is love produced by the Holy Spirit — the fruit of the Spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22. This is the only explicit reference to the Holy Spirit in Colossians.
9. Paul's prayer is for epignōsis ('full knowledge, deep understanding') of God's will — a pointed term in a letter that will combat a rival 'knowledge' system (the Colossian heresy). The adjective pneumatikē ('spiritual') modifies both wisdom (sophia) and understanding (synesis), indicating that this knowledge comes from the Spirit, not from human speculation or esoteric tradition.
10. The verb peripatēsai ('to walk') is the standard Pauline metaphor for daily conduct (Hebrew halakh). The purpose of knowledge is ethical living, not intellectual attainment alone. 'Bearing fruit and increasing' (karpophorountes kai auxanomenoi) echoes verse 6, creating a parallel: as the gospel bears fruit in the world, so believers bear fruit in good works.
11. The accumulation of power language — dymamei, dynamoumenoi, kratos — emphasizes divine empowerment. But the goal of this power is surprising: not miraculous feats but 'endurance' (hypomonē, 'steadfast perseverance') and 'patience' (makrothymia, 'long-temperedness'). God's power enables believers to hold firm under pressure rather than escape it.
12. The verb hikanōsanti ('who qualified, who made sufficient') emphasizes that believers' share in the inheritance is God's doing, not their achievement. The 'inheritance' (klērou, 'lot, portion, allotment') echoes the land inheritance of Israel in Joshua — believers receive a spiritual allotment in the realm of light. The contrast between light and the 'domain of darkness' in verse 13 reflects the dualistic language common in Second Temple Judaism (cf. the Dead Sea Scrolls' 'sons of light' vs. 'sons of darkness').
13. The verb errysato ('he rescued, he delivered') is the language of military liberation — God has extracted believers from enemy territory. The verb metestēsen ('he transferred, he removed') was used for the deportation of conquered populations; here God 'deports' believers out of darkness and into Christ's kingdom. The phrase 'the Son of his love' (tou huiou tēs agapēs autou) is an unusual construction meaning 'his beloved Son' — the Son who is the object of the Father's love.
14. The word apolytrōsis ('redemption, release through ransom payment') is a slave-market term — the price paid to free a captive. Paul defines this redemption as 'the forgiveness of sins' (tēn aphesin tōn hamartiōn). The SBLGNT omits 'through his blood' (dia tou haimatos autou) found in the parallel passage in Ephesians 1:7 and in some Colossians manuscripts. This verse serves as the transition into the Christ Hymn.
15. The Christ Hymn begins. The word eikōn ('image') in Greek means not a mere picture but a manifestation that participates in the reality it represents — Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God. The term prōtotokos ('firstborn') does not mean 'first created' but denotes supremacy and rank — the firstborn son held preeminence and the right of inheritance. Psalm 89:27 uses 'firstborn' for David's royal status: 'I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.' Christ holds that rank over all creation.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 1:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 89:27 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. Three prepositions define Christ's relation to creation: en autō ('in him,' the sphere), di' autou ('through him,' the agent), eis auton ('for him,' the goal). Creation exists in Christ, was made through Christ, and aims toward Christ. The four terms for spiritual powers — thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities — may address the Colossian heresy's preoccupation with angelic hierarchies. Whatever powers exist, Christ created them and outranks them all.
17. The phrase pro pantōn ('before all things') asserts both temporal priority (he existed before creation) and positional supremacy (he ranks above all things). The verb synestēken ('hold together, cohere, are sustained') is a perfect tense indicating ongoing reality — the universe's coherence at this moment depends on Christ's sustaining power. Without him, creation would disintegrate. This is one of the strongest statements of Christ's cosmic significance in the New Testament.
18. The hymn pivots from creation (vv. 15-17) to new creation (vv. 18-20). Christ's headship (kephalē, 'head') of the church parallels his supremacy over creation. The word archē ('beginning, origin, first principle') echoes Genesis 1:1. As 'firstborn from the dead' (prōtotokos ek tōn nekrōn), Christ holds the same rank over the new creation that he holds over the original creation. The purpose clause — 'that in everything he might be preeminent' (prōteuōn) — states the hymn's thesis: Christ holds first place in absolutely everything.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 1:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. The word plērōma ('fullness, completeness') is a key term in Colossians. It may have been a term used by the false teachers to describe the totality of divine powers; Paul claims it entirely for Christ. 'All the fullness' of God — not a fraction, not a partial manifestation, but the complete divine reality — permanently resides in Christ. The verb katoikēsai ('to dwell, to take up permanent residence') indicates not a temporary visit but an abiding presence.
20. The verb apokatallaxai ('to reconcile fully') is an intensified form found only in Colossians and Ephesians. The scope is staggering: 'all things' (ta panta) — the same phrase used for creation in verse 16 — are reconciled through Christ. The means is specified: 'the blood of his cross' (tou haimatos tou staurou autou), anchoring this cosmic vision in a brutal historical event. The hymn that began with creation's origin in Christ ends with creation's restoration through Christ.

21. Paul applies the cosmic reconciliation of verse 20 to the Colossians' personal experience. They were 'alienated' (apēllotriōmenous, 'estranged, made foreign') and 'hostile' (echthrous) — their minds were actively opposed to God, expressed through evil deeds. The transition from 'once' (pote) to 'now' (nyini, v. 22) marks the before-and-after of redemption.
22. The phrase 'in his body of flesh through death' (en tō sōmati tēs sarkos autou dia tou thanatou) emphasizes the physicality of Christ's atoning work — against any tendency to spiritualize or mythologize the cross. Three adjectives describe the intended result: 'holy' (hagious), 'blameless' (amōmous, a sacrificial term for animals without defect), and 'above reproach' (anengklētous, a legal term meaning no charge can be brought). The language spans temple, courtroom, and daily life.
23. The conditional 'if indeed' (ei ge) is not expressing doubt but emphasizing the necessity of perseverance. Three architectural metaphors reinforce stability: 'grounded' (tethemeliōmenoi, 'having a foundation laid'), 'steadfast' (hedraioi, 'firmly seated, immovable'), and 'not shifting' (mē metakinoumenoi). The claim that the gospel 'has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven' is hyperbolic, expressing the gospel's universal scope and unstoppable advance.
24. This is one of Paul's most debated statements. The verb antanaplēroō ('I fill up in turn, I complete in response') is found only here in the New Testament. Paul does not mean Christ's atoning death was insufficient — that would contradict verse 20. Rather, the Messianic afflictions that must precede the end times (a Jewish eschatological concept) still have a 'quota' to be filled, and Paul's sufferings contribute to completing that quota. His suffering is vicarious ('for your sake') and ecclesial ('for the sake of his body').
25. The word oikonomia ('stewardship, administration, management of a household') frames Paul's apostleship as a trust — he has been given responsibility for God's household, specifically to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (including the Colossians). The verb plērōsai ('to fulfill, to make fully known') means Paul's task is to ensure the complete proclamation of God's word.
26. The word mystērion ('mystery') in Paul does not mean something mysterious or unknowable but a divine secret that was hidden and has now been disclosed. The temporal contrast is dramatic: 'hidden from ages and generations' versus 'now revealed' (nyn ephanerōthē). The long concealment heightens the significance of the revelation — what God planned from eternity is now made known.
27. The mystery is now named: 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Christos en hymin, hē elpis tēs doxēs). The pronoun 'you' (hymin) is plural and addressed to Gentiles — the shocking content of the mystery is that Christ now dwells among and within Gentile believers, making them heirs of eschatological glory. This was the great scandal of Paul's gospel — that God's Messiah would take up residence in non-Jewish communities.
28. The threefold repetition of panta anthrōpon ('every person') emphasizes the universal scope of the gospel against any elitist tendency in the Colossian heresy that offered 'advanced' knowledge to a select few. Paul's goal — presenting everyone 'mature' (teleion) in Christ — is available to all, not a spiritual aristocracy. The word teleion means 'mature, complete, fully developed,' not sinlessly perfect.
29. The verb kopiaō ('I toil, I labor to exhaustion') and agōnizomai ('I struggle, I contend') describe intense effort — Paul does not coast on grace. Yet the energy (energeia) behind his effort is not his own but God's, 'powerfully working' (energoumenēn en dynamēi) within him. The paradox of divine empowerment and human exertion — identical to Philippians 2:12-13 — closes the chapter.

## 2

**Summary:** *Paul describes his struggle for the Colossians and Laodiceans, urging them to find all treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. He warns against being deceived by persuasive but empty philosophy, declares that 'in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' and that believers have been filled in him. He describes baptism as spiritual circumcision and co-burial with Christ, proclaims that God has canceled the record of debt that stood against them by nailing it to the cross, and warns against submitting to regulations about food, festivals, or angel worship that are merely shadows of the substance found in Christ.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *This chapter contains Paul's most direct engagement with the 'Colossian heresy' — a syncretistic system combining Jewish regulations (food laws, sabbath observance), mystical practices (angel worship, visionary experiences), and ascetic disciplines. Rather than refuting each element individually, Paul makes one devastating argument: Christ is the fullness of God, believers are complete in Christ, therefore nothing needs to be added. The image of God nailing the 'record of debt' (cheirographon) to the cross (v. 14) is one of Paul's most vivid atonement metaphors. The disarming and public shaming of cosmic powers (v. 15) portrays the cross as a Roman triumph in reverse — the crucified one is the conquering general.*

**Translation Friction:** *The exact nature of the Colossian heresy is reconstructed from Paul's polemics, since we have no independent description of it. Scholars debate whether it was Jewish mysticism, proto-gnostic speculation, syncretistic philosophy, or local Phrygian religious practice. We render Paul's warnings without committing to a single reconstruction. The phrase 'worship of angels' (thrēskeia tōn angelōn, v.*

*18) could mean 'worship directed to angels' or 'worship performed by angels (which humans try to join)' — both readings are noted.*

*Connections: The 'fullness' (plērōma) language continues from 1:19. The circumcision/baptism connection (vv. 11-12) parallels Romans 6:3-4. The 'record of debt' (cheirographon) echoes the cancelled debt imagery of Matthew 18:23-35. The shadow/substance contrast (v. 17) resonates with Hebrews 8:5 and 10:1. The triumph over powers (v. 15) connects to the principalities and authorities of 1:16 and Ephesians 6:12.*

<sup>1</sup>For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, <sup>2</sup>My goal is that their hearts would be encouraged, being joined together in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding and may know the mystery of God, namely Christ. <sup>3</sup>In whom are hid every one of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. <sup>4</sup>I say this so that no one may deceive you with persuasive arguments. <sup>5</sup>For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, <sup>7</sup>Let your roots grow deep in him. Build your lives on him. Grow stronger in the faith you were taught, and overflow with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup>For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup>You are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and authority. <sup>11</sup>In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup>Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him by way of the faith of the operation of God, who has brought him back to life. <sup>13</sup>And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>He erased the record of charges that stood against us with its legal demands. He set it aside by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. <sup>16</sup>Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. <sup>18</sup>Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, <sup>19</sup>Not holding the Skull, from which all the physical body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit as one, increaseth with the increase of God. <sup>20</sup>If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still living in the world, do you submit to regulations — <sup>21</sup>"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" — <sup>22</sup>Indeed, which all are to perish with the using;) following the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup>These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

#### TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The word agōna ('struggle, contest') echoes 1:29 and the athletic imagery found throughout Paul's letters. The mention of Laodicea (a neighboring city about 10 miles west of Colossae) confirms that Paul's concerns extend to the broader Lycus Valley. The phrase 'have not seen my face in the flesh' confirms Paul has never visited these churches.
2. The verb symbibasthentes ('being knit together, being united') pictures the community being woven into a unified fabric through love. The goal is epignōsis ('deep knowledge') of God's mystery — and that mystery is identified simply as 'Christ' (Christou). The SBLGNT text is shorter than the Textus Receptus, which reads 'of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' The critical text identifies the mystery directly as Christ himself.
3. The adjective apokryphoi ('hidden, stored away') may be a deliberate counter to proto-gnostic claims of secret knowledge. Paul does not deny hidden wisdom — he locates it entirely in Christ. All (pantes) the treasures are in Christ, leaving no wisdom to be sought elsewhere. This verse undercuts any supplementary 'philosophy' (v. 8) that claims to offer what Christ lacks.
4. The verb paralogizetai ('to deceive, to reason falsely, to delude') literally means 'to reason alongside' — to lead astray through plausible but ultimately false reasoning. The noun pithanologia ('persuasive speech, plausible argument') appears only here in the New Testament. The danger is not crude error but sophisticated-sounding teaching that draws people away from the sufficiency of Christ.
5. The military metaphors taxis ('order, battle formation, rank') and stereōma ('firmness, solid front, fortification') picture the Colossian church as a well-ordered army holding its defensive position. Paul commends them before warning them — the church is currently standing firm, but threats are approaching.

6. The verb *parelabete* ('you received') is a technical term for receiving authoritative tradition (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3). What they received was not merely teaching about Christ but Christ himself — 'Christ Jesus the Lord.' The imperative *peripateite* ('walk!') commands them to continue in the same Christ they originally received, not to supplement him with additional spiritual systems.
7. Three metaphors describe spiritual stability: agricultural ('rooted,' *errizōmenoi* — a perfect participle indicating a past rooting with continuing effect), architectural ('built up,' *epoikodomoumenoi* — a present participle indicating ongoing construction), and legal ('established, confirmed,' *bebaioumenoi*). The foundation is Christ; the standard is the original teaching; the overflow is thanksgiving (*eucharistia*).
8. The verb *sylogōgōn* ('taking captive, carrying off as plunder') pictures the false teaching as a raiding party that captures believers and carries them away. The 'philosophy' (*philosophia*) is not Greek philosophy in general but the specific Colossian syncretism. The *stoicheia tou kosmou* ('elemental spirits/principles of the world') is debated: it may mean basic cosmic elements (earth, air, fire, water), elemental spiritual beings, or rudimentary religious principles. The final phrase — 'and not according to Christ' (*ou kata Christon*) — is Paul's decisive criterion: any system not grounded in Christ is empty deceit.
9. This verse intensifies 1:19. The word *theotētos* ('deity, divine nature, Godhead') is stronger than *theiotētos* ('divinity, divine quality') — it denotes the full essence of God, not merely divine characteristics. The adverb *sōmatikōs* ('bodily, in bodily form') insists that this divine fullness has taken permanent physical form in the incarnate Christ. The present tense *katoikei* ('dwells') indicates an ongoing reality — the risen Christ still possesses a body in which deity fully resides.
10. The verb *peplērōmenoi* ('you have been filled, you are complete') uses the same *plērōō* root as *plērōma* in verse 9. Because all divine fullness dwells in Christ, and believers are 'in him,' they share in that fullness. Nothing needs to be added — no angelic mediation, no dietary regulations, no ascetic practices. Christ is the 'head' (*kephalē*) of every cosmic power, making these powers subordinate rather than supplementary to him.
11. Paul redefines circumcision as an act accomplished 'in Christ' — not by human hands (*acheiropoiētō*) but by divine action. The 'putting off' (*apekdysēi*, 'stripping away') of 'the body of the flesh' means the removal of the old sinful nature, not physical circumcision. The 'circumcision of Christ' may mean the circumcision Christ accomplished (through his death) or the circumcision that belongs to the Christian community. The SBLGNT omits 'of the sins' (*tōn hamartiōn*) found in some manuscripts.
12. Baptism is the visible enactment of the believer's union with Christ in death and resurrection. The *syn-* prefix ('with') appears in both verbs: *syntaphentes* ('co-buried') and *synēgerthēte* ('co-raised'). Unlike Romans 6:4-5, where the resurrection dimension is future, Colossians affirms that believers have already been raised with Christ — the emphasis is on present reality, not only future hope. Faith is directed toward God's *energeia* ('powerful working, operative power') — the same power that raised Christ is the basis of the believer's new life.
13. The Colossians' pre-conversion state was spiritual death — 'dead in trespasses' (*nekrous ontas en tois paraptōmasin*). The 'uncircumcision of your flesh' marks them as Gentiles, formerly outside the covenant community. The verb *synezōopoiēsen* ('he made alive together with') is another *syn-*compound — their new life is inseparable from Christ's resurrection. The shift from 'you' to 'us' (*hēmin*, 'having forgiven us') broadens the scope to include all believers.
14. The *cheirographon* ('handwritten document, certificate of debt, IOU') was a signed acknowledgment of debt in the ancient world. The metaphor is vivid: humanity's debt before God — the accumulated record of our violations of his righteous requirements (*dogmasin*, 'decrees, ordinances') — has been cancelled (*exaleipsas*, 'wiped away, erased'). The image of nailing the debt certificate to the cross may reflect the Roman practice of posting the charges against a crucified criminal above his head (cf. John 19:19-20). Christ's cross is the display of our cancelled debt.
15. The verb *apekdysamenos* ('having stripped, having disarmed') pictures Christ stripping the cosmic powers of their weapons and authority. The verb *edeigmatisen* ('he made a public spectacle, he exposed to shame') and *thriambeusas* ('having triumphed over') are drawn from the Roman triumphal procession (*triumphus*), where a victorious general paraded defeated enemies through the streets. The supreme irony: the cross, Rome's instrument of shame, becomes God's vehicle of cosmic victory. The phrase *en autō* ('in him' or 'in it') could refer to Christ or to the cross.
16. Paul now applies the theological argument of verses 9-15 to specific practices. The three categories — festivals (annual), new moons (monthly), Sabbaths (weekly) — cover the full cycle of Jewish calendar observance (cf. 1 Chronicles 23:31; Hosea 2:11). Paul does not condemn these practices in themselves but forbids anyone from using them as standards by which to judge believers in Christ.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Chronicles 23:31. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Hosea 2:11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The shadow-substance contrast (*skia / sōma*) is a powerful image: a shadow proves something real is casting it, but no one mistakes the shadow for the object itself. The Jewish regulations were real — they pointed forward to Christ — but now that Christ has come, clinging to the shadows while ignoring the substance is a fundamental confusion. The word *sōma* ('body, substance, reality') contrasts pointedly with *skia* ('shadow').
18. The verb *katabrabeuetō* ('let no one disqualify you, let no one act as umpire against you') is an athletic term — an unfair judge ruling against a competitor. The 'worship of angels' (*thrēskeia tōn angelōn*) could mean worship directed to angels or participation in angelic worship. The phrase *ha heōraken embateuōn* ('entering into what he has seen' or 'going on about visions') may describe mystical experiences claimed by the false teachers. The SBLGNT reads 'what he has seen' (*heōraken*) against the negation 'has not seen' in some manuscripts. Despite claims of deep spiritual insight, this person is 'puffed up by the mind of the flesh' — their supposed humility is actually arrogance.

19. The fundamental problem with the false teaching is disconnection from Christ, the Head (kephalēn). The body imagery uses medical terminology: haphōn ('joints, connections'), syndesmōn ('ligaments, sinews'), and epichorēgoumenon ('being supplied, being nourished'). A body severed from its head cannot grow, no matter how impressive its spiritual practices appear. The growth is tēn auxēsīn tou theou — growth that comes from God, not from human religious effort.
20. Paul's argument is from baptismal reality: you died with Christ (apethanete syn Christō). Death severs all obligations — a dead person owes nothing. If the Colossians died to the stoicheia ('elemental spirits/principles'), why do they let these defeated powers dictate rules for daily life? The verb dogmatizesthe ('you submit to decrees, you let yourselves be regulated') suggests voluntary submission to a system they have been freed from.
21. Paul quotes the slogans of the false teachers in descending order of contact: handle (hapsē, 'grasp, take hold of'), taste (geusē, 'eat, experience by tasting'), touch (thigēs, 'touch lightly'). The progression from major to minor contact underscores the ever-increasing restrictiveness of the legalistic system. These rules treat physical contact with certain substances as spiritually defiling.
22. Paul's argument echoes Jesus's teaching that what enters the body cannot defile a person (Mark 7:14-23). Food and drink are consumed and destroyed (phthoran, 'decay, destruction, perishing') — they have no lasting spiritual significance. The phrase 'commandments and teachings of humans' (entalmata kai didaskalias tōn anthrōpōn) directly quotes Isaiah 29:13 (LXX), which Jesus also cited against the Pharisees (Matthew 15:9).
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 29:13. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. Paul's devastating conclusion: the entire system of regulations has a 'reputation for wisdom' (logon sophia) — it looks impressive — but it fails at the one thing it claims to accomplish. The rare word ethelothrēskia ('self-imposed worship, voluntary religion, self-made piety') describes religion invented by human will rather than revealed by God. Ascetic severity to the body (apheidia sōmatos, 'unsparing treatment of the body') may look holy but has no actual power against fleshly indulgence (plēsmonē tēs sarkos). External regulations cannot transform the inner person — only union with Christ can.

### 3

**Summary:** *Paul pivots from theological argument to ethical exhortation, grounding the moral life in the believer's union with the risen Christ. He commands the Colossians to 'set your minds on things above, not on earthly things,' because they have died and their life is hidden with Christ in God. He lists vices to put to death and virtues to put on, climaxing with love as the bond of perfection. He instructs them to let the word of Christ dwell richly, to sing psalms and hymns, and to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. The chapter closes with a household code addressing wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The 'put off / put on' metaphor (vv. 8-14) pictures moral transformation as changing garments — the old self is stripped away like soiled clothing and the new self is donned like a fresh outfit. This imagery may reflect the early Christian baptismal practice of removing garments before immersion and putting on new white robes afterward. The declaration that 'there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all' (v. 11) is one of Paul's most radical equality statements. The household code (vv. 18-25) addresses relationships within the Greco-Roman family structure while subtly transforming them through the repeated phrase 'in the Lord.'*

**Translation Friction:** *The household code has generated significant debate. Paul appears to accept the existing social structures (including slavery) while introducing Christian modifications. Some scholars see this as accommodation to the surrounding culture; others see it as subversive transformation from within. We render the Greek without resolving this interpretive tension. The instruction to wives to 'submit' (v. 18) uses the middle voice hypotassesthe ('arrange yourselves under'), which carries different nuances than a simple command to obey.*

**Connections:** *The 'set your minds above' command (v. 2) echoes Philippians 3:20 (heavenly citizenship). The put off/put on language parallels Ephesians 4:22-24 and Romans 13:12-14. The 'image of the creator' (v. 10) echoes Genesis 1:26-27 and Colossians 1:15. The household code parallels Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and 1 Peter 2:18-3:7. The 'whatever you do' principle (v. 17, 23) anticipates 1 Corinthians 10:31.*

¶If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ¶Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ¶For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ¶When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ¶Put to death therefore what is

earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup>On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup>In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup>But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>Have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge following the image of him that created him: <sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>Indeed, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel opposed to any — even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. <sup>18</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. <sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. <sup>22</sup>Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, <sup>24</sup>Knowing that of the Lord you will accept the reward of the inheritance — for you serve the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup>For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

## TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The conditional 'if' (ei) assumes the reality: 'since you have been raised with Christ.' The verb *synēgerthēte* ('you were co-raised') picks up from 2:12. Because believers have already been raised with Christ, their orientation must shift upward. 'The right hand of God' (en dexia tou theou) is the position of supreme authority and honor, quoting Psalm 110:1 — the most frequently cited Old Testament text in the New Testament.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 110:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The verb *phroneite* ('set your minds on, think about, be oriented toward') is the same key verb from Philippians. This is not escapism or indifference to earthly life — the practical instructions that follow (vv. 5-25) are thoroughly engaged with daily existence. Rather, it means that the believer's fundamental orientation, values, and loyalties are determined by heavenly realities rather than by the world's value system.
3. The perfect tense *kekryptai* ('is hidden and remains hidden') describes an ongoing state of concealment. The believer's true life is not visible to the world — it is tucked away 'with Christ in God,' doubly secure. The phrase carries both protection (hidden from harm) and mystery (not yet fully manifested). What the world sees is not the whole story.
4. The hidden life of verse 3 will be revealed (*phanerōthēsēste*, 'you will be made visible, you will be manifested') when Christ himself is revealed at his return. The astounding identification — Christ is 'your life' (*hē zōē hymōn*) — echoes Philippians 1:21 ('to live is Christ'). The SBLGNT reads 'your life' (*hymōn*) rather than 'our life' (*hēmōn*) found in some manuscripts.
5. The imperative *nekrōsate* ('put to death, kill, make dead') is violent and decisive — not 'manage' or 'minimize' but kill. The list of five vices moves from external act to internal desire: sexual immorality (*porneia*), impurity (*akatharsia*), passion (*pathos*, 'uncontrolled desire'), evil desire (*epithymia kakē*), and covetousness (*pleonexia*). The final identification of covetousness as idolatry (*eidōlōlatria*) reveals that greed is fundamentally a worship disorder — it gives to things the devotion owed to God alone.
6. The SBLGNT omits 'upon the sons of disobedience' (*epi tous huious tēs apeitheias*) found in the Textus Receptus and in the Ephesians parallel (Ephesians 5:6). God's wrath (*orgē*) is not capricious anger but his settled opposition to everything that destroys human flourishing and dishonors his name.
7. The past tenses — 'walked' (*periepatēsate*), 'were living' (*ezēte*) — firmly locate these behaviors in the Colossians' pre-Christian past. They once lived in these sins; they no longer do. The 'once... but now' pattern is central to Paul's understanding of conversion.
8. The verb *apothesthe* ('put off, strip off, lay aside') is the clothing metaphor — strip off these behaviors like dirty garments. This second vice list focuses on sins of speech and relational hostility: anger (*orgēn*), wrath (*thymon*, 'explosive fury'), malice (*kakian*, 'ill will'), slander (*blasphēmian*, 'abusive speech'), and obscene talk (*aischrologian*, 'shameful language'). The progression moves from internal attitude to verbal expression.
9. The prohibition against lying targets community-destroying speech. The participle *apekdysamenoi* ('having stripped off') uses the same verb applied to Christ's stripping of the cosmic powers in 2:15. The 'old self' (*ton palaion anthrōpon*) is not merely bad habits but the entire pre-conversion identity — the person shaped by the world's values and the flesh's desires.

10. The 'new self' (ton neon) is not merely improved behavior but a new creation being progressively renewed (anakainoumenon, present passive — ongoing renewal) in deep knowledge (epignōsin). The phrase 'according to the image of its creator' (kat' eikona tou ktisantos) echoes Genesis 1:27 — the new creation restores the divine image marred by the fall. The same word eikōn ('image') was applied to Christ in 1:15; believers are being renewed into the image that Christ perfectly embodies.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 1:27 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. In the new humanity, the fundamental divisions of the ancient world are abolished: ethnic (Greek/Jew), religious (circumcised/uncircumcised), cultural (barbarian/Scythian — the Scythians were considered the most uncivilized of all peoples), and social (slave/free). This does not mean differences disappear but that they no longer determine identity or status. The concluding declaration — 'Christ is all and in all' (ta panta kai en pasin Christos) — is breathtaking: Christ occupies every position and permeates every person in the new community.
12. The imperative endysasthe ('put on, clothe yourselves') completes the clothing metaphor. The motivation comes from identity: they are 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved' (eklektōi tou theou hagioi kai ēgapēmenoi) — these are Old Testament titles for Israel now applied to the church. Five virtues are listed: compassion (splanchna oiktirmou, literally 'intestines of mercy'), kindness (chrēstotēta), humility (tapeinophrosynēn), gentleness (praūtēta), and patience (makrothymian). Each virtue is relational, oriented toward others.
13. The verb anechomenoi ('bearing with, putting up with') acknowledges that community life involves friction. The verb charizomenoi ('forgiving, granting grace') shares the root of charis ('grace'). The standard for forgiveness is not human capacity but divine precedent: 'as the Lord has forgiven you' (kathōs kai ho kyrios echarisato hymin). The SBLGNT reads 'the Lord' (ho kyrios) where some manuscripts have 'Christ' (ho Christos).
14. Love (agapē) is the outer garment that holds all other virtues together. The phrase syndesmos tēs teleiotētōs ('the bond of perfection/completeness') pictures love as the belt or clasp that unifies the entire outfit. Without love, the other virtues are disconnected pieces; with love, they form a coherent whole. This echoes 1 Corinthians 13's declaration that without love, all other gifts are nothing.
15. The verb brabeuetō ('let it rule, let it act as umpire, let it arbitrate') is an athletic term — the same root as katabrabeuetō ('disqualify') in 2:18. Christ's peace serves as the internal umpire that adjudicates disputes and determines the proper course of action. The SBLGNT reads 'the peace of Christ' (tou Christou) rather than 'the peace of God' (tou theou). The call to thankfulness (eucharistoi ginesthe) is a constant refrain in Colossians.
16. The 'word of Christ' (ho logos tou Christou) — the gospel message — is to 'take up rich residence' (enoikeitō plousiōs) in the community. The three types of song — psalmois ('psalms,' likely Old Testament psalms), hymnois ('hymns,' compositions praising God or Christ), and ōdais pneumatikais ('spiritual songs,' Spirit-inspired singing) — suggest a rich variety in early Christian worship. Teaching and worship are intertwined; singing is a form of mutual instruction.
17. This verse serves as the comprehensive principle governing all Christian conduct: every word and every action is to be performed 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' — under his authority, as his representative, for his honor. The phrase covers the totality of life, leaving no secular realm untouched by Christ's lordship. Thanksgiving (eucharistountes) flows through Christ back to the Father — Christ is the mediator of both prayer and praise.
18. The household code begins. The verb hypotassesthe ('submit, arrange yourselves under') is in the middle voice, indicating voluntary self-ordering rather than forced subjugation. The qualifier 'as is fitting in the Lord' (hōs anēken en kyriō) places the instruction within the sphere of Christ's lordship — the submission is 'in the Lord,' not absolute or unconditional. This is notably shorter than the parallel in Ephesians 5:22-24.
19. The command to husbands is love (agapate), not authority. The verb pikrainesthe ('be bitter, be harsh, be embittered') prohibits the kind of resentful domination that characterized many ancient marriages. In a culture where husbands had virtually unlimited legal authority over wives, the command not to be harsh was a significant constraint on patriarchal power.
20. The verb hypakouete ('obey, listen to and comply with') is stronger than the 'submit' (hypotassesthe) used for wives — children are commanded to obey, not merely to arrange themselves under authority. The qualifier 'in everything' (kata panta) is broad, though 'in the Lord' provides the governing framework. That children are addressed directly indicates their presence in the worship gathering where this letter was read.
21. The verb erethizete ('provoke, irritate, stir up') addresses the abuse of paternal authority. The Roman paterfamilias had absolute legal authority (patria potestas) over children, including the right to punish severely. Paul limits this power: parental authority that crushes a child's spirit defeats its own purpose. The verb athymōsin ('become discouraged, lose heart, become spiritless') describes a child broken by harsh treatment.
22. The phrase 'earthly masters' (kata sarka kyriois, literally 'masters according to the flesh') subtly relativizes their authority — they are masters in the fleshly realm only, not in the ultimate sense. The compound ophthalmodoulia ('eye-service,' working only when watched) appears only in Paul. The contrast is between external performance (working to impress humans) and internal sincerity (haplotēti kardias, 'singleness of heart') motivated by reverence for the true Lord.
23. The phrase ek psychēs ('from the soul, heartily, with your whole being') demands wholehearted effort. The transformation is in perspective: the same task performed for a human master is reconceived as service to the Lord Christ. This does not legitimize the institution of slavery but transforms the slave's inner experience and ultimate allegiance.
24. The promise of an 'inheritance' (klēronomias) to slaves is revolutionary — in Roman law, slaves could not inherit property. Paul declares that these disinherited people will receive the ultimate inheritance from Christ himself. The phrase 'You are serving the Lord Christ' (tō kyriō Christō douleuete) can be read as indicative ('you are serving') or imperative ('serve!'). Either way, the slave's true master is Christ, not the human owner.

25. The warning against wrongdoing (adikōn, 'acting unjustly') applies to both slaves and masters — the lack of partiality (prosōpolēmpsia, literally 'face-receiving,' showing favoritism) means God judges everyone by the same standard regardless of social status. This is a veiled warning to masters that their position will not protect them from divine judgment, preparing for the explicit command to masters in 4:1.

## 4

**Summary:** *Paul concludes the household code with a command to masters, urges the Colossians to devote themselves to prayer and wise conduct toward outsiders, and sends a series of personal greetings that reveal the network of co-workers surrounding him. He names Tychicus and Onesimus as letter-bearers, sends greetings from Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, gives instructions about sharing this letter with Laodicea (and vice versa), charges Archippus to complete his ministry, and closes with a handwritten greeting from prison.*

**What Makes This Remarkable:** *The closing greetings of Colossians provide a remarkable snapshot of the early Christian network. The list includes Jews (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus — described as the only Jewish co-workers), Gentiles (Epaphras, Luke, Demas), a former slave (Onesimus, identified as 'one of you'), and a physician (Luke). The mention of Mark's potential visit is significant given his earlier falling out with Paul (Acts 15:37-39) — reconciliation has occurred. The instruction to exchange letters with Laodicea (v. 16) reveals that Paul's letters circulated among churches from the beginning, a practice that would eventually lead to their collection as Scripture.*

**Translation Friction:** *The 'letter from Laodicea' (v. 16) is lost — or may be the letter we know as Ephesians, which some scholars regard as a circular letter. The identity of Nympha (v. 15) and the gender of the name is debated; the SBLGNT reading supports a feminine name with 'her house' (autēs). The charge to Archippus (v. 17) is enigmatic — we do not know what ministry he received or why he needed encouragement to complete it.*

**Connections:** *Onesimus connects this letter to Philemon, where he is the central figure. Tychicus appears also in Ephesians 6:21 as letter-bearer. The house-church of Nympha (v. 15) reflects the standard meeting pattern of early Christianity before dedicated buildings existed. Paul's handwritten closing (v. 18) parallels Galatians 6:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, and 1 Corinthians 16:21.*

<sup>1</sup>Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. <sup>2</sup>Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup>At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, <sup>4</sup>That I may make it manifest, as I anything to speak. <sup>5</sup>Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. <sup>7</sup>Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, <sup>9</sup>Indeed, with Onesimus, a faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will make known to you all things which are done here. <sup>10</sup>Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions — if he comes to you, welcome him), <sup>11</sup>Indeed, Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers to God's reign, which have been a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup>For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas. <sup>15</sup>Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. <sup>16</sup>And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>And say to Archippus, "See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord." <sup>18</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

1. The command to masters uses two significant words: *dikaion* ('what is just, what is right') and *isotēta* ('equality, fairness'). The word *isotēta* is striking — it pushes toward equitable treatment even within an institution built on inequality. The theological leverage is powerful: masters have a Master (*kyrion en ouranō*), and that heavenly Master will hold them accountable for how they treat those under their authority.
2. The verb *proskartereite* ('continue steadfastly, persist, devote yourselves') implies sustained effort against the tendency to neglect prayer. The participle *grēgorountes* ('being watchful, being alert') adds urgency — prayer is not passive but vigilant, attentive to both spiritual realities and the present moment. Thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) appears yet again as the characteristic posture of the praying community.
3. Paul asks for prayer not for release from prison but for opportunity to proclaim the gospel — the 'open door' (*thyran tou logou*) metaphor pictures gospel advance, not personal comfort. The 'mystery of Christ' (*to mystērion tou Christou*) echoes 1:26-27. Paul's imprisonment is directly connected to his proclamation: he is in chains 'on account of' (*di' ho*) the mystery he preaches.
4. The verb *phanerōsō* ('I may make clear, I may manifest, I may reveal') uses the same root as 'revealed' in 1:26. Paul's prayer request is not for eloquence but for clarity — that the mystery of Christ would be made transparent and accessible. The phrase 'as I ought to speak' (*hōs dei me lalēsai*) indicates a sense of divine obligation.
5. The phrase 'those outside' (*tous exō*) is the standard early Christian term for non-believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:12). The verb *exagorazomenoi* ('buying up, redeeming, making the most of') pictures time or opportunity as a commodity in a marketplace — believers must seize every moment for wise witness. The same phrase appears in Ephesians 5:16.
6. Gracious speech (*en chariti*, 'with grace') and salt-seasoned speech are complementary: grace makes words kind, salt makes them interesting, preserving, and penetrating. Salt in the ancient world prevented decay and enhanced flavor. The phrase 'each person' (*heni hekastō*) emphasizes that wise speech is not formulaic but adapted to the individual — each person deserves a thoughtful, tailored response.
7. Tychicus is the letter-bearer, entrusted with both delivering the written letter and providing oral updates about Paul's situation. He is described with three titles: beloved brother (*agapētos adelphos*), faithful minister (*pistos diakonos*), and fellow servant (*syndoulos*) in the Lord. Tychicus also carried the letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:21-22) and appears in Acts 20:4, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12.
8. The dual purpose of Tychicus's visit: to inform ('that you may know how we are') and to encourage ('that he may encourage your hearts'). The SBLGNT reads 'that you may know how we are' (*hina gnōte ta peri hēmōn*) rather than 'that he may know how you are' found in some manuscripts — the information flows from Paul to the Colossians, not the reverse.
9. This Onesimus is almost certainly the runaway slave of the letter to Philemon. Paul introduces him to the wider Colossian church as a 'faithful and beloved brother' (*tō pistō kai agapētō adelphō*) — the same elevated language used for Tychicus. The phrase 'who is one of you' (*hos estin ex hymōn*) identifies Onesimus as a Colossian, connecting this letter to the personal appeal of Philemon.
10. Aristarchus is called *synaichmalōtos* ('fellow prisoner of war, co-captive'), suggesting he shares Paul's imprisonment. Mark (Markos) is identified as Barnabas's cousin (*anepsios*, not 'nephew' as KJV). This is likely John Mark, who had deserted Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13, 15:37-39). Paul's instruction to 'welcome him' indicates the breach has been healed — a quiet testimony to reconciliation.
11. Jesus (Iesous, the Greek form of Joshua) called Justus bears the same name as the Lord — a common Jewish name in the first century. The note that only these three (Aristarchus, Mark, Justus) are Jewish co-workers (*ek peritomēs*, 'of the circumcision') reveals Paul's isolation from the broader Jewish-Christian community. The word *parēgoria* ('comfort, consolation') appears only here in the New Testament.
12. Epaphras, the probable founder of the Colossian church (1:7), is described as 'always struggling' (*pantote agōnizomenos*) in prayer — the athletic *agōn* metaphor applied to intercessory prayer. His prayer goal mirrors Paul's prayer in 1:9-10: maturity (*teleioi*) and full conviction (*peplērophōrēmenoi*, 'fully assured, completely convinced') in God's will. Prayer is depicted as strenuous spiritual labor, not passive meditation.
13. Paul personally vouches for Epaphras's labor. The word *ponon* ('toil, hard work, pain') emphasizes the costliness of his efforts. The three cities — Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis — are all in the Lycus Valley, within about 12 miles of each other. Epaphras appears to have been the evangelist for the entire region.
14. Luke (Loukas) is identified as a physician (*iatros*) — the only mention of his profession in the New Testament. He is traditionally identified as the author of Luke-Acts. That he is not listed among the Jewish co-workers (v. 11) confirms he was a Gentile. Demas is mentioned without any commendation — a silence that becomes significant in light of 2 Timothy 4:10, where Paul writes that 'Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me.'
15. The SBLGNT reads *autēs* ('her'), identifying Nympha (Nymphan) as a woman who hosts a house church. Other manuscripts read *autou* ('his'), making the name masculine (Nymphas). The house church was the standard meeting place for early Christian communities — purpose-built church buildings did not appear until the third century. Nympha's role as host of a church suggests significant social standing and leadership.
16. This verse reveals the circulation of Paul's letters among churches — a practice that contributed to their eventual collection and canonization. The 'letter from Laodicea' (*tēn ek Laodikeia*) is unknown. It may be a lost letter, or it may be the letter we know as Ephesians (which some scholars view as a circular letter). The verb *anagnōsthē* ('be read aloud') indicates that Paul's letters were read publicly in the worship assembly.
17. Archippus is mentioned also in Philemon 2 as a 'fellow soldier.' His ministry (*diakonian*) was received 'in the Lord' — a divine commission, not a human appointment. The fact that Paul delivers this charge through the congregation rather than privately suggests it is a matter of communal accountability. The nature of his ministry is unspecified.

- 18.** Paul takes the pen from his amanuensis (secretary) to write the final greeting in his own handwriting — a practice that authenticated the letter (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:17). The brief imperative 'Remember my chains' (mnēmoneuete mou tōn desmōn) is both a prayer request and a reminder of the cost of the gospel he has proclaimed throughout this letter. The closing — 'Grace be with you' (hē charis meth' hymōn) — is characteristically brief. The SBLGNT omits the final 'Amen' found in the Textus Receptus.