

## Background of the Book of Colossians sermon notes

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### 1 Author

The Book of Colossians is a New Testament letter written to a young church in **Colossae**, a small market town in the Roman province of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The letter identifies the author as the Apostle Paul.

The letter is unique because it was written to a congregation he had never personally visited and did not start.

#### **Colossians 1:1 (NLT)**

“This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus...”

Paul likely dictated the letter while in prison (see 4:18).

#### **Colossians 4:18 (NLT)**

“Remember my chains. May God’s grace be with you.”

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### 2 Date Written

Approximately **A.D. 60–62**, during Paul’s first time in prison in Rome.

It is often grouped with:

- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Philemon

These are commonly called the “**Prison Epistles.**”

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### 3 Recipient: The Church at Colosse

#### Location

Colosse was a small city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

It was not a major city like Rome or Corinth — it was smaller and declining in influence.

Paul had likely never visited personally.

### **Colossians 2:1 (NLT)**

“I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea...”

The church was probably started by **Epaphras**.

### **Colossians 1:7 (NLT)**

“You learned about the Good News from Epaphras...”

### **Epaphras**

- **Church Founder:** Epaphras is credited with planting the churches in the Lycus Valley, including **Colossae**, **Laodicea**, and **Hierapolis**. He likely heard Paul’s teaching in Ephesus and carried the message 100 miles inland to his hometown.
- **The "Prayer Warrior":** Paul describes him as "always wrestling in prayer" for the Colossians. The Greek word used, *agonizomai*, suggests an intense, athletic-like struggle for their spiritual maturity.
- **A "Fellow Prisoner":** In the letter to **Philemon**, Paul calls Epaphras his "fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus," indicating they were either literally jailed together in Rome or that Epaphras chose to share Paul's captivity to support him.
- **Ambassador to Paul:** Epaphras traveled to Rome to update Paul on the church's spiritual state and to seek advice regarding the "Colossian Heresy"—a dangerous blend of false teachings spreading among the believers.
- **Martyrdom (Tradition):** While not in the Bible, later church tradition suggests he eventually returned to Colossae, served as its first bishop, and was later **martyred** for his faith.

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## **4 Purpose of the Letter**

The main reason Paul wrote Colossians was to combat **false teaching** that was threatening the church.

### **The Problem:**

A mixture of:

- Early Gnosticism (secret spiritual knowledge)
- Jewish legalism - Pressure to follow dietary laws, religious festivals, and circumcision.
- Mysticism - The worship of angels and a focus on ecstatic visionary experiences.
- **Philosophical Speculation:** "Empty deceit" based on human traditions rather than the teachings of Christ.
- Asceticism (harsh treatment of the body) - Strict self-denial and harsh treatment of the physical body as a means to achieve spiritual purity.

## The "Colossian Heresy"

Paul wrote the letter in response to a report from Epaphras about dangerous "false teachings" infiltrating the church. This "Colossian Heresy" was a syncretistic blend of several influences:

Some were teaching:

- Jesus was not fully God.
- You needed extra spiritual knowledge beyond Christ.
- You needed strict rules to be spiritually complete.

Paul responds by declaring:

**Christ is supreme and sufficient.**

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## 5 Major Themes of Colossians

### 1. The Supremacy of Christ

Colossians contains one of the highest Christological passages in Scripture.

#### **Colossians 1:15–16 (NLT)**

“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God... For through him God created everything...”

Paul emphasizes:

- Jesus is fully God.

- Jesus created all things.
  - Jesus sustains all things.
  - Jesus is head of the church.
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## 2. The Sufficiency of Christ

### Colossians 2:10 (NLT)

“So you also are complete through your union with Christ...”

You don't need:

- Extra rituals
- Extra knowledge
- Extra rules

Christ is enough.

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## 3. Freedom from Legalism

### Colossians 2:16–17 (NLT)

“So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink...”

Paul warns against spiritual performance-based religion.

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## 4. The New Life in Christ

Chapters 3–4 shift from doctrine to daily living.

### Colossians 3:1 (NLT)

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven...”

Paul explains:

- Put off the old self.
- Put on the new self.

- Let Christ rule your home, work, and relationships.
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## **6** Key Verses of the Book

### **Colossians 1:15–16 (NLT)**

“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God... For through him God created everything...”

### **Colossians 1:18 (NLT)**

“Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body... He is first in everything.”

### **Colossians 2:9–10 (NLT)**

“For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ...”

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## **7** Cultural & Spiritual Context

It was a spiritual “blend culture.”

Colossians is incredibly relevant today because modern culture also mixes:

- Spirituality without truth
- Religion without relationship
- Self-help instead of surrender

Paul’s message still stands:

Christ alone is supreme.

Christ alone is sufficient.

Christ alone is Savior.

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## **8** Structure of the Book

### **Chapters 1–2: Doctrine**

Who Christ is

What Christ has done

Warnings against false teaching

## Chapters 3–4: Practice

How believers should live

Christian homes

Christian workplaces

Christian witness

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### 9 Why Colossians Matters Today

Colossians answers modern questions like:

- Is Jesus enough?
- Do I need something “more spiritual”?
- Can I be complete in Christ?
- How should I live differently?

Its message is simple but powerful:

**If Christ is supreme, then He must also be central.**

**UNSHAKEN FAITH: Former U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse says he's at peace with his terminal cancer diagnosis.**

**"We felt amazingly blessed that Melissa, my wife, and I immediately were at peace about all this," he said. "But because one of our three kids is still at home — our girls are 24 and 22, and my son's 14 — you felt like you had an obligation to try to fight a little bit."**

**"The foolishness of our works are pretty apparent to you when you try to really look at the accounting of a life," Sasse says. "Jesus did everything on the cross to fulfill the whole law. I fulfilled none of it. He fulfilled all of it."**