

Colossians

Paul and Timothy are named as the authors of Colossians (1:1); Written roughly the same time that Paul wrote to Philemon and the Ephesians. All three letters were sent with Tychicus (Eph. 6:21) and Onesimus.

Theme: Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm.

The Church at Colosse: While Paul was teaching in Ephesus a Colossian citizen (Epaphras) became a believer. This new convert returned to his hometown and began sharing the good news of Christ, beginning the Colossian church. At the time of this writing, Epaphras is with Paul in Rome and has likely shared the bad news that there was a dangerous teaching threatening the church.

The Main Issue: A shaman-like figure within the church was presenting himself as something of a Christian spiritual guide (2:18). This person probably claimed to have superior insight into the spiritual realm and was advising the Colossian Christians to practice certain taboos and rituals for protection from evil spirits and relief from afflictions.

Paul's Message: Christians are to hold fast to the one way of salvation in Christ, in contrast to false teaching.

Chapters 1, 3 & 4 – These chapters have similar remarks to Galatians, Ephesians, & Philippians. They are: greeting and prayer (1), putting on the “New Self” (3), relating to one another and a final greeting (3 & 4).

Chapter 2 – This is the *meat and potatoes* of Colossians.

v.4 - Paul warns that threats to their faith and to the church may come in seemingly reasonable and persuasive arguments.

v.8 - The term “philosophy” (*tēs philosophias*), was used much more broadly in the ancient world than it is today. Even a magician could be called a philosopher. Paul makes the specific claim that this teaching is not only empty deceit but that it has been inspired by the spirits of the world.

v.9-10 - Paul states that believers share in Christ's power and authority by virtue of their union with him. The divine “fullness” is in Christ (v. 9), and believers are “filled in him.” They have everything they need in Christ. They do not need any other teaching to become like God.

v. 18 & 23 – The ESV uses the word: asceticism. The word came to mean restraint from various worldly pleasures, often with the aim of pursuing religious and spiritual goals, this why the NIV uses the phrase: *false humility*. The original word *askēsis* however originally referred to the physical training required for such activities as athletic events.

The NIV's use of the words *false humility* however minimizes the forms of self-mutilation that were included in this physical-preparedness; similar to what was being practiced in local cults (v.23).