



## **My Drift**

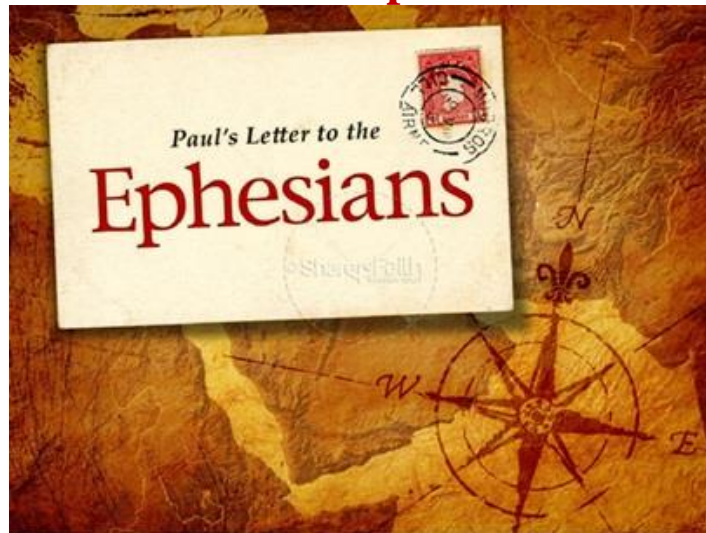
**Title: Bible – Books of Ephesians-Philippians-Colossians**

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## **Books of Ephesians**



**Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus and the churches in the neighboring cities to help them see all that God had done for them in Christ and how that should shape their life.**



**Map of the Area**

**In the first half of the letter (chapters 1-3), Paul paints a breathtaking panorama of how magnificent the church is as God's people in Christ: being blessed beyond measure, made alive, and formed into a new humanity and into the very dwelling place of God by the Spirit.**

**In the second half (chapters 4-6), Paul calls the church to “walk in a manner worthy” (4:1) of this magnificent identity they’ve been given: to live together in unity and be equipped for every good work; to put on the character of Christ; to embody the self-giving love of Jesus in their homes; and to stand firm against the spiritual forces of wickedness. All of this is crucial because, as the very dwelling place of God, the church is headquarters for God’s work in the world.**

### **Backstory to Ephesians**

**During the days of the apostle Paul, the city of Ephesus was one of the four largest and most influential cities of the Roman Empire. It lay on the western coast of what is modern-day Turkey (then called “Asia Minor”), near the Aegean Sea. Though today its harbor is silted up, in Paul’s day Ephesus was an important port city with a large harbor.**

**The estimated population was around 250,000 and second only to Rome as a cosmopolitan center of trade and culture. Its Temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. All roads in Asia Minor were measured in distance from Ephesus. In every way, its influence was felt all throughout western Asia Minor. And it’s for that reason that Paul made it a key part of his missionary endeavors.**

**Paul stopped by Ephesus at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Then on his third missionary journey (in the mid-50’s A.D.), he spent 3 years there, using it as a base of operations for the gospel. During this time, Paul’s coworkers and disciples spread the news about Jesus to the surrounding cities, places like Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, and thus “all Asia heard the word” (Acts 19:10), by which the author means all of Asia Minor.**

**About 4-5 years later, around A.D. 61, Paul found himself in Rome under house arrest. It’s during this time that Paul wrote Ephesians, and it likely came about like this:**

**While Paul was under arrest, Epaphras, one of Paul’s coworkers from the city of Colossae (which was near Ephesus and started out of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus), visited Paul in Rome and shared the progress of the gospel in the**

region around Colossae. He also shared some particular problems that were troubling the church there which were undermining their stability in Jesus. So Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians.

Having written a letter to the Colossians, Paul decided that much of what he said would be valuable for Ephesus and some of the other churches in the region. So he dictated a second, more general letter, the letter we call Ephesians, not dealing with the specific issues troubling Colossae but passing on some related critical teaching to help establish and strengthen the other churches throughout Asia Minor. In fact, Ephesians and Colossians (and Philemon) are all sent at the same time and delivered by a man named Tychicus.

So the letter to the Ephesians was most likely written to both Ephesus and a number of other churches in the neighboring cities. Scholars refer to this as a “circular letter” because it was meant to circulate through the churches in the area. And that fact explains several interesting features about the letter. It explains why in some ancient copies of the letter, the introduction doesn’t say “to Ephesus.” It’s also probably why, in a letter to a city he spent so much time in, there are no greetings to specific people and why the letter speaks about the church in such broad and general terms.

This broad approach to the church is actually central to one of the major themes of the letter, namely that God is carrying his plan for the world in Christ through the church. Or, as those in Christ, the Church is the headquarters for God’s work in the world.

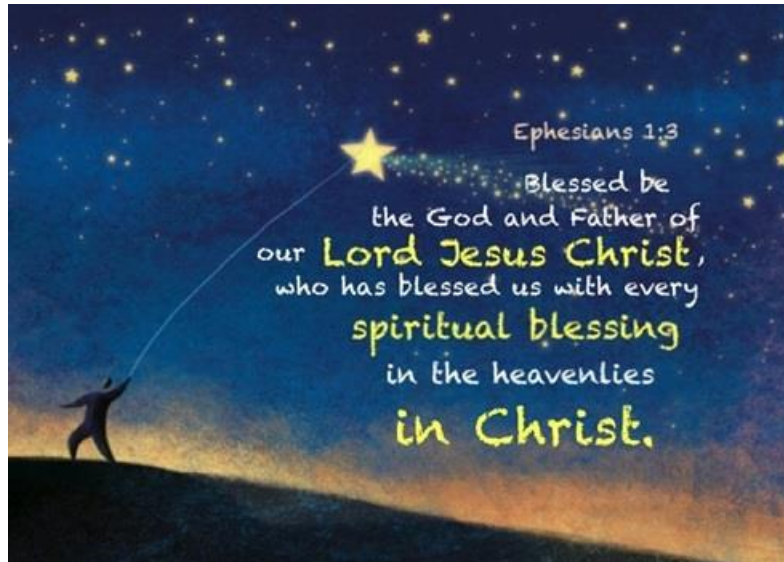
### **Overview of Ephesians**

Ephesians divides neatly into two halves: 1) chapters 1-3: theological considerations, and 2) chapters 4-6: lifestyle implications. The first half shows who we are as God’s people in Christ, and the second half calls us to live out who we are as God’s people in the world. By living out who God has made us to be, the church embodies God’s ways and furthers his work in the world.

### **Ephesians 1-3**

After the introduction and greeting in 1:1-2, Paul praises God with a beautiful prayer and reflection on God’s goodness to us in Christ in 1:3-14. God is to be praised because he has blessed his people with “every spiritual blessing.” Then Paul begins to list off some of those spiritual blessings. It’s important to note that all these spiritual blessings are “in Christ,” and Paul emphasizes this over and over by mentioning “in him,” “in Christ,” “through Christ,” and the like.

All of these blessings are to the praise of God's glory, and it all looks forward to the time when we will receive all that God has for his people in fulfillment of all of his promises.



In 1:15-22, Paul follows this up by praying that God would grant them wisdom so that they would know all that they possess in Christ. He asks that God through the Spirit would enlighten the eyes of their heart so that they would grasp the hope, riches, and power they have in Christ—the very kind of power demonstrated in Christ's resurrection and exaltation over all powers and authorities.

In 2:1-10, Paul describes how the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus have been experienced by those in Christ at the present time. Before coming to Christ, all people—both Jews and Gentiles—were dead in sin. But now, because of God's immense love and grace, they have been raised up with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. This new life and new status is sort of like phase one of their resurrection and glorification. (Phase two will occur at the resurrection of our body when Christ returns.)

All of this is because of God's grace, not because of anything they have done. It's all a gift. But it does give new motivation and new power to live out the good works that God's created his people for.

Ephesians 2:11-22 can feel like a hard shift because, all of a sudden, Paul begins talking about Jews and Gentiles. But the relationship between Jews and Gentiles has been in the back of Paul's mind in all of the preceding material

and now it comes to the fore because both groups of people are saved the same way: by God's grace. Even though Gentiles were far away from God, God reconciled them and the Jews to himself and to each other as one new family through Christ. In Jesus, God has torn down the wall that divided them, made peace, and united them together. As one, they are now the very dwelling place of God by his Spirit.

For Paul, the fact that God did this is absolutely breathtaking, and he is amazed that he gets to be a part of it. So, in 3:1-13, before he offers another prayer, Paul describes how God graciously gave him the privilege of proclaiming to the Gentiles the gospel of full participation in the people of God. Paul is stunned by this privilege because he knows he was so unworthy of it. So even though he's in chains for the gospel, he's not discouraged, and he doesn't want the original readers to be either.

In 3:14-19, as the culmination of the first part of the letter, Paul offers another prayer. The focus of this prayer is for Christ to dwell in and among them so that they would have the strength comprehend the love of Christ and to be filled with all God's fulness.

This leads to a doxology in 3:20-21 in which Paul praises God for God's power that's at work in his people so that he will be glorified in the church and in Christ. Having painted a breathtaking panorama of who God has made his people in Christ in chapters 1-3, Paul now shifts to calling us to live out who we are.

#### **Ephesians 4-6**

In 4:1-6, Paul calls them to live out the oneness that God has created when he joined them together in Christ. The church is one new people, formed around a seven-fold oneness: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. This oneness is God's doing. Our job is to maintain it, and Paul lists some character traits that make that possible: humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

As the body of Christ, the church needs to grow up to maturity. So, in 4:7-16 Paul explains how Christ gave gifts to his people that will enable them to be grow. These gifts turn out to be various roles people play in the church so that God's people can be equipped for the work of serving God in the world. As the church is equipped and each person does their work, the whole body grows to maturity.



## 10 Characteristics of a Christian's Walk

- 1) 4:1-3      **Worthy**
- 2) 4:4-6      in **Unity**
- 3) 4:7-11    in **Grace**
- 4) 4:12-16   in **Ministry**
- 5) 4:17-2    in **Righteousness & True Holiness**
- 6) 4:17-16   in the **Spirit**
- 7) 5:1-7      in **Love**
- 8) 5:8-13    in **Light**
- 9) 5:14-17   **Circumspectly**
- 10) 5:18-6:9 **Spirit-Filled**

### **Ephesians Chapters 4 and 5 "Walking in the Word"**

Next, in 4:17-24, Paul reminds them that they must not act like the pagan world around them which is blind to the truth and separated from the life of God. The way of Christ that they learned is completely different from the way of their surrounding culture. So they must put on the new man—the human way of life embodied in Jesus who is the true image of God.

Then Paul gets specific. In 4:25-5:5, Paul describes genuine Christian character. He does so by contrasting their old patterns of living (the way of life of the world around them) with the truly human way of living as seen in Christ. They must put off the old practices and put on the new virtues.

This leads Paul to restate that living this way is in keeping with who they are. When they put off the old and put on the new, they are living out who God has made them to be. He tells them in 5:6-14 that they are light in the Lord. As such, they must get rid of the deeds of darkness. And then in 5:15-20, he calls them to carry out their new life wisely, being filled with and controlled by the Spirit of God.

Paul applies all of this to the Christian household in 5:21-6:9. The family and household is one the key spheres where this new life in Christ needs to be lived out. The example of Jesus shapes the relationship between husbands and wives (5:22-33), children and fathers (6:1-4), and slaves and masters (6:5-9). One of the things that's important to note about this section is that Paul gives three

different instructions to the same person, namely to the head of the household. He's the husband, father, and master, and Paul's instructions to him are counter-cultural because the gospel transforms human relationships.

In 6:10-17, Paul calls them to stand firm against the powers of evil (notice the emphasis on standing firm in verses 10-12). This is the well-known armor of God passage, in which Paul uses the imagery of a Roman soldier's equipment to envision the "equipment" that Christians have been given to stand firm in this world: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God. All of this is set in the context of struggling not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of wickedness.

This, then, leads Paul to a call to be prayer-filled in 6:18-20. Notice the words "all" and "every" in these verses that emphasize how all-inclusive and all-encompassing our praying is to be.

Paul signs off the letter in 6:21-24 by noting that Tychicus will fill them in on the details of Paul's situation and with a benediction for peace, love, and grace to be with them all.



**Tychicus**

### **Book of Ephesians in 10 Passages**

1. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

—Ephesians 1:3

2. "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe."

—Ephesians 1:18-19

3. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

—Ephesians 2:4-5

**4. “But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall ...that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross.”**

**—Ephesians 2:13-14**

**5. “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.”**

**—Ephesians 3:9**

**6. “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”**

**—Ephesians 4:1**

**7. “We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of people, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ.”**

**—Ephesians 4:14-15**

**8. “You are to rid yourselves of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you are to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self.”**

**—Ephesians 4:22-24a**

**9. “Nevertheless, as for you individually, each husband is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”**

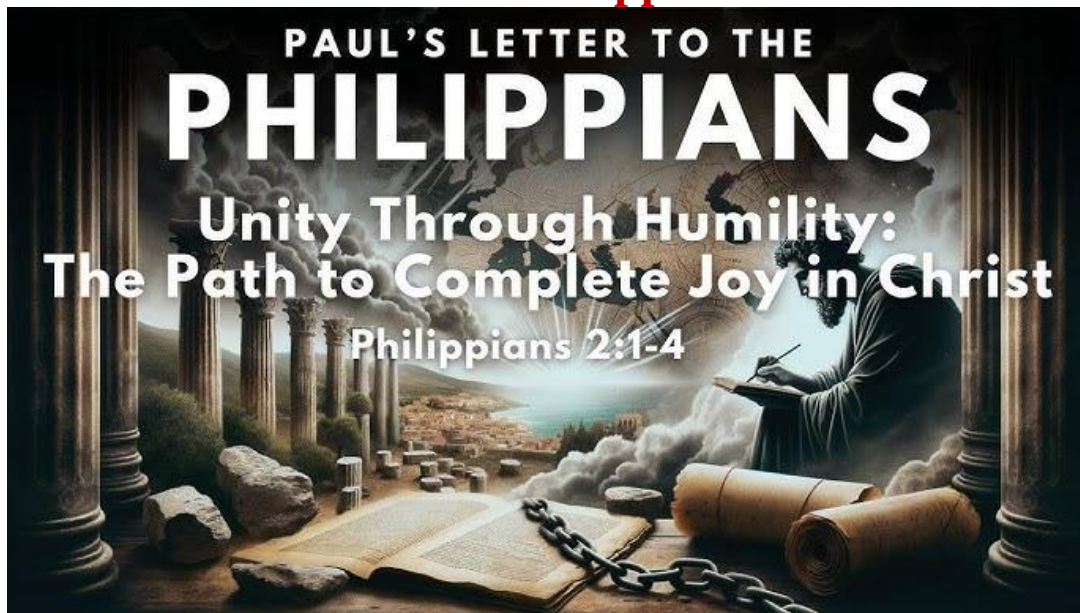
**—Ephesians 5:33**

**10. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”**

**—Ephesians 6:10-11**



## Book of Philippians



Philippians was written by the apostle Paul to thank the Philippians for the special offering they had sent him while he was under arrest in Rome and awaiting trial. In addition to thanking them for the gift, he updates them on his circumstances modeling how to evaluate one's life on the basis of the gospel.

### Why was Paul in prison?

According to the Bible, Paul was imprisoned multiple times for his religious beliefs and for proclaiming the gospel.

### Reasons for imprisonment:

**False charges:** Paul was accused of breaking a man-made taboo by bringing a gentile past a forbidden checkpoint in the temple compound.

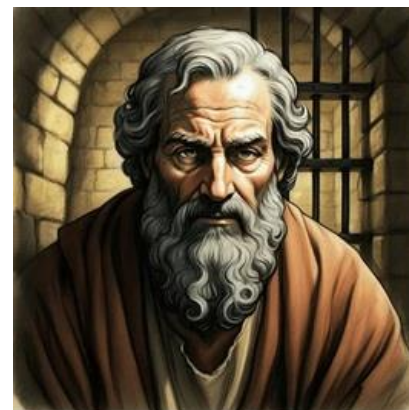
**Religious prejudice:** Paul was accused of disturbing the city of Philippi and advocating customs that were not lawful for Romans.

**Religious expression:** Paul was imprisoned for refusing to be silent in proclaiming the gospel.

**False accusations:** Paul was accused of distributing bibles door-to-door and making false promises to convert people.

**Disorderly conduct:** Paul was imprisoned for disorderly conduct.

**Where was Paul imprisoned?** Cities of Philippi and Rome.



Paul

**For Paul, what really matters is how the gospel is doing and that he honors Jesus, even while he's in custody. He calls the Christians in Philippi to deal with their circumstance the same way. So, they need to stand together in the face of the opposition they're experiencing in a manner worthy of the gospel. They need to live together in harmony by being humble, following the example of Jesus. They should follow Paul's example of considering everything as loss for the sake of Christ. In everything, their life and their joy should be found in Jesus and the gospel.**

### **Backstory to Philippians**

**It's the year A.D. 62. The Apostle Paul had been seized in the Jerusalem temple four years earlier and now sits in prison (1:7; 1:14; 1:17), chained to a soldier in an apartment in Rome (Acts 28:16). He is not 100% sure what the outcome of his trial will be, but he's optimistic (1:20-22, 25; 2:17; 2:23-24).**

**The apartment situation was better than prison, but the Roman penal system required him to pay for his own room and board even though he was in custody and couldn't work (Acts 28:30). So that meant he was dependent on the care of his friends. And that's where the church at Philippi comes in.**

**Philippi was an important city in Macedonia (Reference above map). It sat on a major east-west highway called the Egnatian Way and it had a special status based on its history. As the Roman civil war neared its climax, the forces of Octavian and Anthony defeated the army of Brutus and Cassius on the plains outside the city. When Octavian later defeated Anthony and became the heir to Julius Caesar's throne, he settled many veterans in Philippi and gave it the honor of being a Roman colony, even granting it the *ius italicum*, meaning it was like a little piece of Italy in Macedonia.**

**Philippi was very proud of this status, and it came with certain privileges, ones that favored Roman citizens over other residents of the city. All of this affected Paul's experience when he first visited the city, and it influenced the estimation and social position of the church in town as well.**

**Paul started the church in Philippi on his second missionary journey about 10-11 years prior to being in custody in Rome. You can read the story in Acts 16:1-40. Paul regularly travelled through Philippi on his journeys and developed a special relationship with the church there which is evident in the warmth of the tone of the letter to the Philippians.**

Now in the year 62, Paul, their beloved apostle and friend sat in custody, dependent on the care of friends like them. So, the church in Philippi took up an offering to send Paul a gift. There was no UPS or FEDEX back in those days, so the gift had to be sent in person, and a man from the church named Epaphroditus took the offering to Paul.

On the way, Epaphroditus became sick, so sick he almost died. Word of this got back to his church family in Philippi, causing them great concern (2:26-27). Once Epaphroditus had fully recovered, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi with the letter we call Philippians to thank them for their gift and to address a few issues facing the church:

- The church was dealing with opposition which was causing some tension (1:28-29; 3:2)
- The church was experiencing some mild disharmony, and Paul took this opportunity to encourage unity through humility (1:27-2:8).

Paul communicates both his thanks and his instructions in terms of participation in the gospel, encouraging the Philippians to make their life all about what's best for the gospel.

### **Overview of Philippians**

On one hand, Philippians is a letter of friendship and thanksgiving. Paul's dear friends had sent him a gift (financial support and a helper, Epaphroditus, to help him during his time of need) and he wanted to thank them appropriately and update them on his circumstances. But on the other hand, everything for Paul was theological and so even a thank you note, and update provided an opportunity to help his friends view their life more from the perspective of Jesus and the gospel. Therefore, one of the major themes of Philippians is living a gospel-centered life, so that all your circumstances and relationships are viewed through the lens of what's best for the gospel.

### **Philippians 1:1-26**

Paul begins the letter by thanking the Philippians and giving an update on his circumstances. But this is no bare news report on his situation. It offers a pattern for how to view your circumstances and where to find your life and joy.

Paul opens the letter in 1:3-11 by thanking the Philippians and recounting how he prays for them. Notice the language Paul uses for what he thanks them for their participation in the gospel. Their gift represents not merely financial help; it is sharing with him in the gospel. And the Philippians have done this for the

entire last decade, from “the first day until now.” In fact, Paul says, they are “partakers of grace with me,” and the word “partaker” is from the same root as participation. Paul wants them to see that their support, their help, their care, their prayers, and their generosity toward him are all about sharing in the work of God’s grace through the gospel.

Then in 1:12, Paul turns to give them an update on his circumstances but notice how he interprets his situation. He’s in prison, for sure, but the gospel is not. The gospel is still spreading, and that causes Paul to rejoice. There are even some people who are preaching Jesus in Rome from bad motives towards Paul, but once again, Paul rejoices because what really matters is that gospel is advancing. Paul’s joy is tied up with how well the gospel is doing, not so much how he’s doing. Why? Because for Paul, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Nevertheless, Paul does want to give some insight into his circumstances and upcoming trial. So, he does that in 1:22-26. But even that he explains in terms of Jesus and gospel ministry. He’s not sure what the outcome will be, though he tends to think he’ll be released. But either way—by life or by death—he can’t lose. Death, should that be the outcome, means going to be with Jesus. Release means faithful ministry to them and others.

So, when it comes to Paul’s circumstance, he’s doing well because the gospel is doing well...and that provides an example to the Philippians and us for how to view and evaluate our life and joy.

### **Philippians 1:27-4:9**

After updating them concerning his circumstances, Paul turns to matters related to the situation in Philippi, circumstances affecting the church. And Paul wants them to follow his example, so that the way they choose to respond to their circumstances is determined by what’s best for the gospel.

In 1:27-30, Paul calls them to carry out their life in a manner worthy of the gospel and then applies that to the situation they are facing from people outside the church who oppose the gospel. He urges them to remain unified for the gospel’s sake.

Then he points them to what key is to unity and harmony in 2:1-4. That key is humility, which entails considering others ahead of yourself. The ultimate example of that kind of humility is Jesus himself. So, in 2:5-11, Paul describes how Jesus lowered himself to serve others and urges disciples of Jesus to have this same mindset of humility.



**This leads him to call them in 2:12-18 to live out their salvation together, since they are God's people, and he lives in them. In this way, they can shine as lights in the world.**

**At first, 2:19-30 might feel a bit out of place. Paul talks about his plans to send Timothy to them in the near future and why he sent Epaphroditus back to them. But once again, these are not mere travel updates. The things Paul says about Timothy and Epaphroditus are very carefully chosen to reinforce the way Paul is calling the Philippians to live. Timothy and Epaphroditus provide concrete examples of what it looks like to carry out their life for Christ, others, and the gospel. So just as Paul provided himself and Jesus as patterns for living this way, he now offers two people the Philippians know well so they can see it lived out in clear concrete ways.**



**Paul and Epaphroditus**

**In chapter 3, Paul calls them once again to imitate his example of giving up everything for Christ and the gospel. He describes the privileges and achievements that were his prior to meeting Jesus in 3:1-6. Then he details the total re-orientation of his life that ensued once he met Jesus. Compared to knowing Jesus, everything else is loss and rubbish.**

**In 4:1-9, Paul wraps up the section about the Philippians' life and circumstances by giving some final exhortations for fixing their mind on Christ and finding their joy in him.**

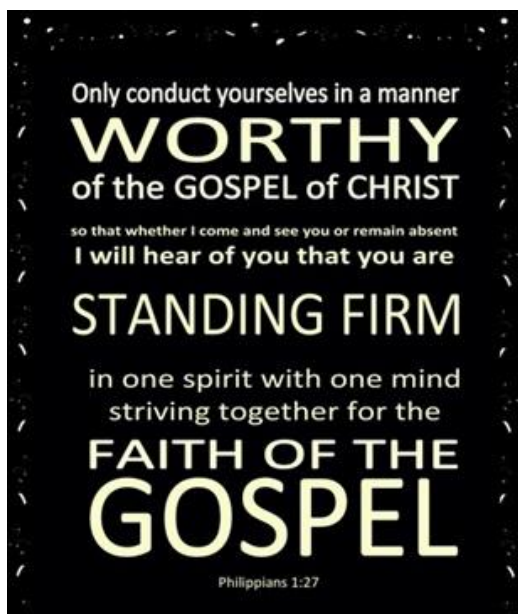
### **Philippians 4:10-23**

**Just as Paul opened the letter by thanking the Philippians for sharing in the gospel with him, he now concludes the letter by thanking them specifically for**



the gift they had recently sent him while in prison. He describes it as part of their faithful pattern of sharing in his ministry. Even here, however, he provides a bit of perspective on how he views his circumstances. Whether he has a little or a lot, he can do all things through Christ.

Although Philippians is a very personal letter, the message it conveys is so critical for anybody who is seeking to follow Jesus. Paul communicates clearly and powerfully that the fundamental motivation for followers of Jesus is what's in the best interest of the gospel. That's how we evaluate our circumstances. That's how we determine the best course of action. In short, the message of Philippians is this: find your life and your joy in Christ and the gospel.



### **Philippians in 10 Passages**

**1. “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”**

**—Philippians 1:3-5**

**2. “I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.”**

**—Philippians 1:12**

**3. “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”**

**—Philippians 1:21**

**4. “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”**

**—Philippians 1:27**

**5. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this mindset in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond servant and being born in the likeness of men.”**

**—Philippians 2:3-7**

**6. “For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.”**

**—Philippians 2:20-21**

**7. “But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”**

**—Philippians 3:7**

**8. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**—Philippians 3:21**

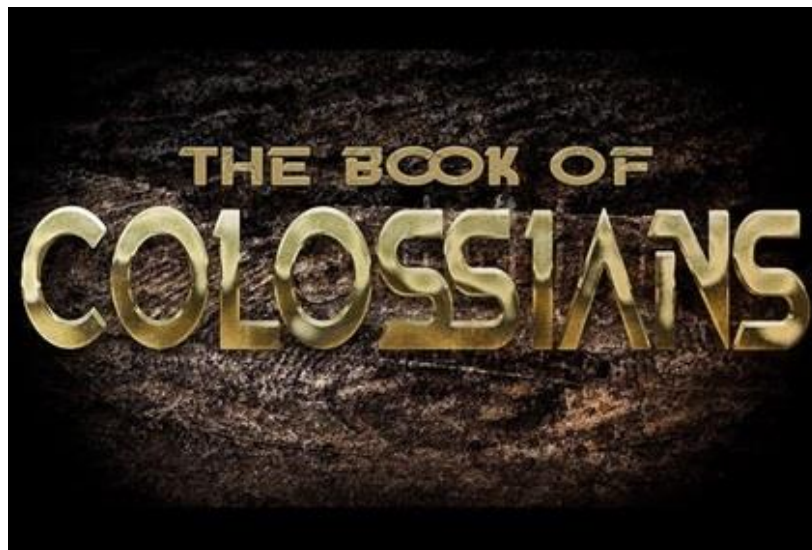
**9. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all people. The Lord is near.”**

**—Philippians 4:4-5**

**10. “I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”**

**—Philippians 4:12-13**

### **Book of Colossians**



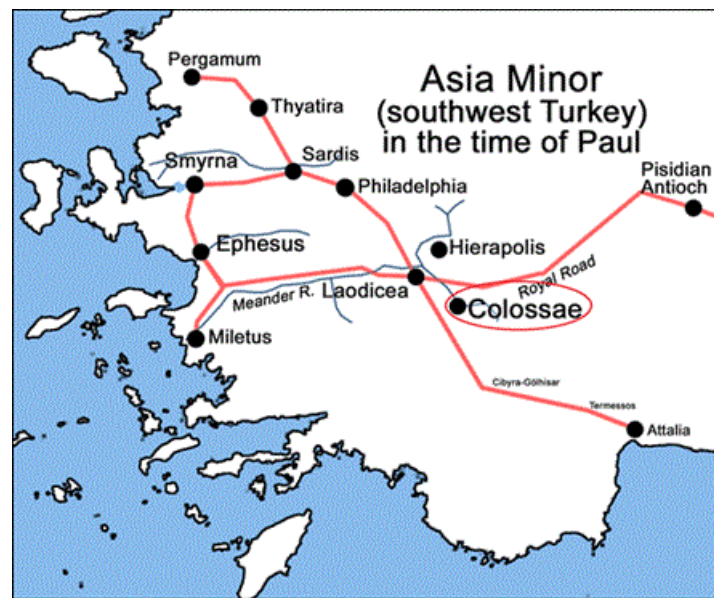
**Colossians was written by the apostle Paul to teach the Colossian church that Jesus is all they need to experience the fullness of God. Someone had infiltrated the church and was deceiving them into thinking that they needed to add Jewish rituals, harsh treatment of their body, and mystical experiences to really know and experience God.**

**Paul reminds them that Jesus himself is the very fullness of God and that in him they have been made complete. If they have Jesus, they already have experienced the fullness of God. They don't need all those other things. Entering into Jesus and being baptized into him reconciled them to God and gave them a brand new identity. Now they are the people of God, and they can live the way God created them to live.**

## Backstory to Colossians

The book of Colossians was originally a letter that the apostle Paul sent to a young church in the city of Colossae. When he wrote the letter, Paul was in prison, most likely the house arrest described at the end of the book of Acts.

The city of Colossae lies about 100 miles east of Ephesus to the western side of what is modern-day Turkey. In Paul's day, it lay within Asia Minor. In the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., Colossae was wealthy and large due to its wool industry, but by Paul's day it was described by a contemporary geographer as a "small town". There was a decent-sized Jewish population in the city, since approximately 2000 Jewish families settled in the area in the second century B.C.



Paul had never been to Colossae, but the church there began under the influence of his ministry. On his third missionary journey, Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus. During this time Paul's coworkers and disciples spread the news about Jesus to the surrounding cities and thus "all Asia heard the word" (Acts 19:10). One such co-worker was Epaphras who was a native of Colossae and was responsible for the founding of the church in there around A.D. 54.

While Paul was under arrest around A.D. 61, Epaphras visited Paul in Rome and shared the progress of the gospel in the region around Colossae, but he also shared some particular problems that were troubling the church there. They were being influenced by some sort of teaching that was undermining their stability in Jesus.

As we listen to what Paul says in the letter, we can piece together some things about the false teaching that was causing problems in the church at Colossae. He mentions circumcision, observing Jewish holy days, and dietary laws, which indicates that there was a Jewish element to the teaching. He also points out the foolishness of self-abasement and harsh treatment of the body in Colossians 2:23, which suggests that there was some sort of ascetic element as well. He also addresses some sort of mystical element by referring to visions and worship of angels in 2:18.

So, it appears the false teaching that was undermining the church involved spiritual visions, angels, keeping the Jewish calendar and food laws, and things like that in order to have a greater experience of the fullness of God. So, Paul writes Colossians to emphasize that Jesus is the fullness of God and that anyone who is in Jesus already has received that fullness in him (2:9-10). Paul's goal is to help the original readers and us realize that Christ is enough. We don't need Christ plus mystical experience or Christ plus any other thing in order to know God in all his fullness. All we need is Christ.

### **Overview of Colossians**

Colossians is a short letter with a powerful message. It all revolves around believing in the full sufficiency of Jesus and living in light of that.

#### **Colossians 1:1-2:5**

Paul first expresses his care and concern for the Christians in Colossae. He assures them that even though he's never met them face to face, he prays for them regularly and cares for them deeply.

Paul opens the letter by describing how he thanks God for their positive response to the gospel in 1:3-8. Then in 1:9-23, he records his constant prayer for their continued faithfulness to Jesus. This prayer leads to a profound reflection on the person and work of Jesus, implicitly showing that Jesus is all they need. In fact, as you read Colossians 1:15-20, notice the emphasis on "all" and "everything."

In 1:24-2:5, Paul describes his vocation as a minister of Christ and how that leads him to suffer on their behalf. He struggles for their spiritual growth. So even though they haven't met each other face to face, he cares for them deeply and wants them to come to know all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in Christ.

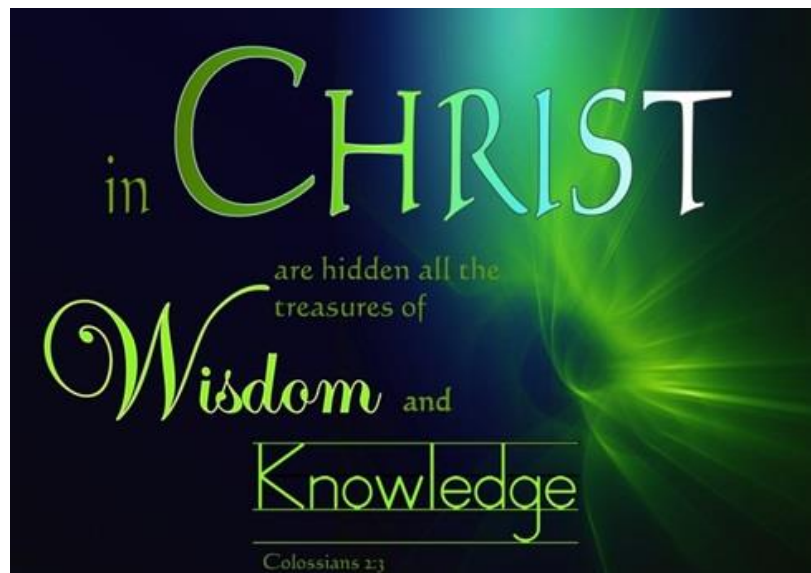


### **Colossians 2:6-3:4**

After expressing his care for them and their spiritual well-being, Paul directly appeals to them that they would stand firm in the truth about Christ that they were taught (2:6-7).

He reassures them that in Jesus they've already experienced all God's fullness (2:8-15). When they entered into Jesus and were baptized into him, they were made complete. Their sins were forgiven. They were buried with him and raised up with him and thus participate in his victory over all the spiritual powers. They don't need any other religious thing, Jewish or otherwise, to be truly spiritual (2:16-19).

In the next two paragraphs, then, he draws out the implications of their death and resurrection with Christ in baptism and calls them to live accordingly. Death with Christ makes ascetic practices and harsh treatment of the body unnecessary; they are empty religious rigors (2:20-23). Being raised up with Christ frees us to set our mind on the things above, the eternal things of Christ (3:1-4).



### **Colossians 3:5-4:6**

Since those things are now true about us and we have new life in Jesus, how should we live? Beginning in 3:5, Paul gives specific instructions on the Christian way of life. This is a call to live out the new identity we have been given in Christ.

He first calls us to put to death the old humanity's way of life: sexual immorality, anger, malice, and the like (3:5-11). But getting rid of vice isn't enough. We must put on the virtues of the new humanity being formed in Christ, things like compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, and love (3:12-17).

Our new identity in Christ also affects how we order our homes, so Paul also provides household instructions (3:18-4:1). Notice that the section that gets the most attention here is slaves and masters. The reason for that is the situation dealt with in the letter to Philemon since the Colossians church met in Philemon's house.

Paul then gives a series of exhortations that involve a call to prayer and encouragement to act wisely towards unbelievers (4:2-6).

#### **Colossians 4:7-18**

The last paragraph of Colossians is a number of greetings to Christians in Colossae and from colleagues of Paul. This is fascinating since Paul had never been there, but it's a way of establishing rapport.

Even though Colossians is a short letter, it's important not to lose sight of the main point as you read it. The big idea of the letter is: Christ is all; you need no supplements! If you are in Christ, you've received God's fullness and have everything you need for living fully for Him.

#### **Summary of Colossians in 10 Passages**

1. Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."  
—Colossians 1:15

2. "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."  
—Colossians 1:19-20

3. In Jesus "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments."  
—Colossians 2:3-4

4. "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."  
—Colossians 2:6

**5. “See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ.”**

**—Colossians 2:8**

**6. “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete.”**

**—Colossians 2:9-10**

**7. “And when you were dead in your wrongdoings and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings.”**

**—Colossians 2:13**

**8. “Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”**

**—Colossians 3:1**

**9. “Therefore, treat the parts of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”**

**—Colossians 3:5**

**10. “As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you.”**

**—Colossians 3:12-13**

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