

**Introduction to Colossians**  
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**A. Overview**

1. Understand where Colossians falls historically with respect to Paul's other epistles.
2. Understand its thematic relation to the other epistles written about this same time.
3. Review the opening of the letter.

**B. Historical Background**

1. Correlate epistles with phases of Paul's Life
  - a) Book of Acts
    - 1) After First Missionary Journey: Galatians
    - 2) During Second: 1,2 Thess
    - 3) During Third: 1,2 Cor; Romans
  - b) Prison epistles (from Rome, AD 58-60): Eph (3:1; 6:20), Phil (1:7,13,14,16; 4:22), Col (4:18), Phm (9,10)
    - 1) Evidence relating these four to one another
      - a> Hope of release (Php 1:25; Phm 22) distinguishes these from later imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:6)
      - b> Names in greetings link Phm (10, 12, 23-24) and Col (4:10, 12, 14, 17)
      - c> Similarity in ideas and phrases, and role of Tychicus, link Col (4:7,8) and Eph (6:21,22).
    - 2) Cf. Acts 28:30-31 for Paul's activity while restrained.
  - c) Between imprisonments: 1 Tim, Titus
  - d) Second Roman imprisonment, AD 64: 2 Tim.
2. Relevance:
  - a) Effect of "spirit of antichrist" in Paul's experience. He is imprisoned through the devices of apostate judaism working together with the Roman government.
  - b) "You can't keep a good man down." Even while in Prison, he keeps ministering. Illustrates the notion of "overcoming" in Rev. 2-3.

**C. Comparison of Prison Epistles**

Notice the scope of Paul's concern and outreach, even from prison.

1. Place: Phil to Greece; the other three to Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
2. Two concern interpersonal issues

a) Philemon: relation between a master and a runaway slave who has become a believer in Rome (10-19). (Closely linked with Colossians; cf. Col. 4:7-9.)

b) Philippians: relation between two sisters in the Lord (4:2)

### 3. Two concern doctrinal issues in the church

a) Ephesians: "Quintessence of Paulinism." General summary of his teaching on salvation, Israel & the church, and the Christian life. Cf. Romans (same 3 themes, in same order).

1) Romans written ahead to a church he had never visited.

2) Ephesians written back to a place where he had taught over an extended period.

b) Colossians: focused on addressing a specific theological error that was inculcating the church. Judaizing + incipient gnosticism. Cf. the judaizing error in Galatians, but this includes pagan elements as well.

#### D. Epistolary Opening

Very much like his others; does not stand out as (say) Galatians, 1 Cor, Romans, or Titus (which emphasize or deemphasize one or another part of the opening).

##### 1. From (v.1)

a) Paul describes himself as "apostle of" (someone sent by) "Jesus Christ." Recalls Damascus Road; contrast the one apostle of the Father (the Lord Jesus, Heb. 3:1) and the multitude of apostles of the HS (missionaries, Acts 13 etc.). "By the will of God," not his own choice to be in this position. He writes from a position of authority, which is necessary in dealing with the error.

b) Timothy associated with him, though mostly he writes in the singular.

##### 2. To (v.2a): to those in Colossae who are

a) "saints," their relation to the world (set apart from it)

b) "brothers," their relation to other believers. Note emphasis on "faithful," those who have not succumbed to the false teaching.

c) "in Christ," their relation to the Lord.

##### 3. Greeting (v.2b): Standard Pauline greeting. Perhaps chiastic: "grace" emphasizes what the LJ has done, while "peace" replaces our previous "enmity" with God.

*"grace of God" 15x in Paul (excluding Hebrews); "grace of" the LJC 13x, commonly at the end of letters (Rom. 16:20,24; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; 1 Thes 5:28; 2 Thes. 3:18; Philemon 25). Fullest statements: 2 Thes. 1:12 ("grace of*

*our God and the LJC"); 1 Cor. 1:4 ("the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ").*