

Colossians Notes

No part of human existence remains untouched by the loving and liberating rule of Jesus. Suffering, temptation to compromise, moral character, power dynamics in our homes - all must be re-examined and transformed.

We are invited to live in the present as if the New Creation arrived when Jesus rose from the dead.

Chapter 1:1-23 The Exalted Messiah	1
Chapter 1:24-25 The Suffering Apostle	2
Chapter 2:6-23 The Pressure to Turn Away	2
Chapters 3-4 The Resurrection Life	3
Chapter 3:1-17 The New Humanity	3
Chapter 3:18-4:1 The New Roman Household	3
Chapter 4:2-18 Conclusion	4

Written during one of Paul's many imprisonments ([4:18](#))

Letter addressed to a group of people that he never met, nor did he start

Church started by Epaphras and who was actually from Colossae. (see [1:7-8](#), [4:12-13](#))

Updated Paul that the Colossians are doing awesome, but they're under cultural pressures tempting them to turn away from Jesus.

So Paul wrote this letter to address the issues Epaphras raises and challenges them to a greater devotion to Jesus.

Chapter 1:1-23 The Exalted Messiah

Opens with two prayers: Showing that the Colossians have been totally faithful to Jesus showing love to God and their neighbors:

We thank God for your Faith, Love, and Hope ([1: 3-5](#))

He moves on to pray for greater wisdom and Spiritual Understanding about Jesus ([1:9-10](#))

Poem all about the crucified and exalted Messiah ([1:15-20](#))

1st Stanza:

- Full echoes of Genesis 1, Psalms 2, 8, 68, Exodus 40, Proverbs 8
- Shares the identity of the one creator God
- Jesus is the author and King of creation

2nd Stanza:

- Also bringing about a new creation
- He's the Head of a new body - Jesus people and his resurrection is the prototype
- Through Jesus's death and resurrection that God has reconciled himself to humanity to all spiritual powers to all of creation

Paul will keep reflecting back to this poem

Chapter 1:24-25 The Suffering Apostle

He is being punished by announcing to the Greek and Roman world that Jesus is the resurrected king and Lord of all.

So his suffering he believes is not a sign of defeat, but his way of participating in Jesus' own suffering done as an act of love.

His hardships are actually a cause for joy. He's imprisoned for the surprising news that Israel's resurrected Messiah is creating a new multi-ethnic family. Just as the divine glory dwelt in Jesus, so does Jesus dwell in and among his international family ([1:27](#))

Chapter 2:6-23 The Pressure to Turn Away

Two Influences to Resist:

- 1) Mystical Polytheism



- 2) Observe the Laws of the Torah (see Galatians)
Eating kosher diet, sabbath sacred days, and circumcision

Paul says giving into any of the 2 temptations above is compromise; it's a failure to grasp who Jesus is and what He has done on our behalf.

The Colossians used to live in fear of spiritual powers and elemental spirits, but Jesus triumphed over all Spiritual powers ([2:15](#)) - Jesus freed the Colossians through his death and resurrection.

Jesus fulfilled all of the laws of the Torah on our behalf, which never had the power to transform the selfish human heart anyway, his life, death, and resurrection lacks nothing. It doesn't need to be supplemented by following the laws.

Jesus is the reality to which all of the laws of the Torah were pointing to anyway.

Instead of the laws, followers of Jesus have the power of his resurrection to change them.

Chapters 3-4 The Resurrection Life

Chapter 3:1-17 The New Humanity

Following Jesus means joining his new humanity because their lives have been joined to his.

“Set your mind on things above, where the Messiah rules.” (3:1)

- Not about one day leaving earth and going to Heaven, but that the Heavens are the transcendent place where Jesus now rules over all creation, and from there he will return here to transform all things. ([3:4](#))

Paul's Challenge: Live in the present as the kind of human you will become

Old humanity - distorted sexuality and destructive speech

For Christians:

That humanity died with Jesus and has been replaced with his own **new humanity!**:

Characterized by Mercy, Generosity, Forgiveness, and Love - this humanity transcends the ethnic and social boundary lines of our world to create a people who no one who is greek or Jew...(3:11)

Chapter 3:18-4:1 The New Roman Household

Paul gets practical and explains to the Colossians through the 1st century Roman household:

- Highly authoritarian institution
- Male patriarch held the power of life and death over his wife, children, and slaves

Not so in the Christian household:

- Here Jesus is the true Lord
 - So in the Lord:
 - The **Wife** allows her Husband to become responsible for her

- The **Husband** is subject to Jesus by loving his wife and placing her well-being above his own
- **Children** are not objects, but are called to maturity and respect
- **Parents** are to raise their children with patience and understanding
- Christians who are slaves are to honor their human masters because they are not the real master, but Jesus is
- Christians who have slaves are to understand that this slave is not their property, but rather a fellow member of Jesus' body to be honored and embraced in love

Paul is walking a very fine line here: He reshapes the most basic Roman (institution) Household around Jesus, who rules with self-giving love.

He doesn't abolish the household structure outright but the Messiah demands that it is transformed, almost beyond the recognition for any Roman living in Colossae.

Chapter 4:2-18 Conclusion

After a request for prayer, Paul applies these instructions about Christian slaves and masters.

We discover that Tychicus is the one who is carrying and reading this letter to the Colossians and he is accompanied by Onesimus who was a former slave to a Colossian Christian named Philemon.

We discover from another letter addressed to Philemon that Onesimus had escaped from his master which was a crime worthy of imprisonment, but Paul asks the whole church to greet Onesimus as a faithful and beloved brother in the Lord. ([4:9](#))

In the letter to Philemon Paul says that he should receive Onesimus no longer as a slave, but as a brother(vs. 16). - Wow!