

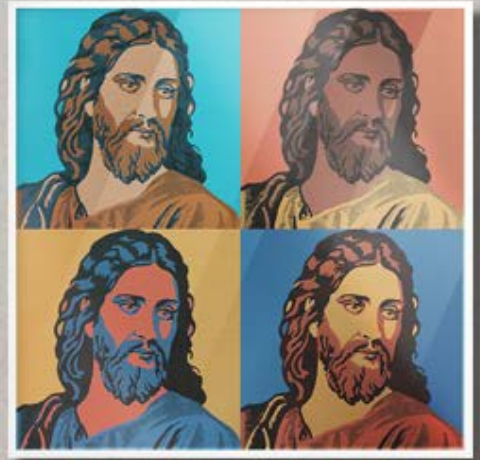
BAND OF BROTHERS

No Other Jesus

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

Rediscovering the Sufficiency and Superiority of Christ

SUMMER 2025



Summer Series Teaching Schedule

May 6, 7, 8 – WEEK 1: **Colossians 1:1-23**

The supremacy of Christ

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 5-24

May 13, 14, 15 – WEEK 2: **Colossians 1:24-2:7**

The mysterious ministry of spiritual maturity

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 25-32

May 20, 21, 22 – WEEK 3: **Colossians 2:8-23**

The sufficiency of the gospel and the allure of self-made religion

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 33-40

May 27, 28, 29 – WEEK 4: **Colossians 3:1-17**

Live like who you are

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 41-52

June 3, 4, 5 – WEEK 5: **Colossians 3:18-4:6**

Let's get practical

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 53-62

June 10, 11, 12 – WEEK 6: **Colossians 4:7-18**

A prisoner of Christ

Devotionary™ Reading: Pages 63-66

walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks^[d] to the Father, who has qualified you^[e] to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Preeminence of Christ

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by^[f] him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation^[g] under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Paul's Ministry to the Church

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in

according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known,²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Footnotes

- a) Colossians 1:2 Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*
- b) Colossians 1:7 For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *sundoulos*, see Preface
- c) Colossians 1:7 Some manuscripts *our*
- d) Colossians 1:12 Or *patience, with joy giving thanks*
- e) Colossians 1:12 Some manuscripts *us*
- f) Colossians 1:16 That is, by means of; or *in*
- g) Colossians 1:23 Or *to every creature*

2 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Alive in Christ

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits^[a] of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities^[b] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.^[c]

The Mysterious Ministry of Spiritual Maturity.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. – Colossians 1:24-29 ESV

As a faithful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there were times when Paul found his ministry to be difficult, but he was pleased to be able to suffer on behalf of His Lord and Savior. He viewed the trials and tribulations that accompanied his mission to be in keeping with the suffering experienced by Christ as He carried out His own earthly mission. Paul was well-acquainted with suffering. In fact, he wrote his letter to the Colossians while under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before the Emperor. He was able to share with the believers in Corinth a long and far from exhaustive list of painful encounters he had endured as a messenger of the gospel.

I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. – 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NLT

But Paul wasn't complaining about his lot in life. No, far from it. He was expressing his right to be treated as a legitimate spokesman for Jesus Christ. Like His Savior, Paul had faced a barrage of persecutions and personal attacks and, on top of all that, he had been forced to carry "the daily burden of my concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28 NLT). He was a faithful shepherd and caretaker for the flock of Jesus Christ who took his role seriously and faced persecution joyfully.

"I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake..." – Colossians 1:24 ESV

Paul saw his sufferings as an opportunity to experience in some small measure “Christ’s afflictions” (Colossians 1:24 ESV). He was eternally grateful for the pain that Jesus endured on his behalf so that he might be freed “from this life that is dominated by sin and death” (Romans 7:24 NLT). And Paul was more than willing to suffer “for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Colossians 1:24 ESV). It was the least he could do.

Paul understood that he had been made a minister of the gospel and given the responsibility of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. His job, while far from easy, was accompanied by great joy because he was able to witness firsthand the transformative nature of the message of salvation. Paul states that his message to the Gentiles was a mystery to God’s chosen people, the Israelites. The people of Israel had no concept that their long-awaited Messiah would be the Savior of the entire world, not just their own people. Even the disciples of Jesus found it difficult to watch Him minister to Samaritans, Syrophoenicians, and even Romans. They had no category in their concept of the Messiah that accommodated a ministry to the Gentiles and yet, Jesus had told them, “I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:14-16 NLT).

This mystery had remained hidden for generations and had not been revealed until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Even on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they began to minister to those who had gathered in Jerusalem for the annual feast. The crowd was made up of “Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5 ESV). Luke goes on to describe them as “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians” (Acts 2:9-11 ESV).

The crowd consisted of native Jews as well as converts to Judaism from a wide range of nations and ethnic groups. And when they heard the gospel message presented by Peter, they responded en masse.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. – Acts 2:41 ESV

Many of those individuals who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost would return to their native countries, carrying the gospel message with them. And the apostle Paul would later join their forces and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the Gentile world. On his missionary journeys, he would encounter converts to Christianity who had heard the message of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone from their converted friends and neighbors. As Paul later told the believers in Ephesus, the mystery of Gentiles being grafted into the family tree of Abraham had been revealed and was making an impact on the world.

God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. – Ephesians 3:2-5 NLT

God had always intended to redeem people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. His Son would be the Messiah of Israel, but as God had promised Abraham, his offspring would prove to be a blessing to the “nations.”

*“And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” – Genesis 12:2-3 ESV*

Jesus, a son of Abraham, had been the fulfillment of that promise. Paul made that point perfectly clear to the Gentile believers in Galatia.

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. – Galatians 3:9-11 ESV

It was through Christ, a Jew, that “the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14 ESV). And Paul was proudly declaring that message of hope to the Gentile world and gladly enduring suffering in order to do so. It was his privilege and honor. Jesus had died to make salvation possible, so the least Paul could do was suffer to make it available and accessible. And Paul wanted the Colossian believers to know that their hope was based on the reality of Christ’s presence within them. He had died, been raised to life, and now was seated at the right hand of God the Father. But following His ascension, Jesus had sent the Spirit of God to indwell His followers. In that sense, Jesus would not only be with them, but in them.

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.” – John 14:16-17 NLT

Paul’s life mission was to proclaim this life-altering mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:28 ESV). And he did so, “struggling with all his energy,” knowing that “he powerfully works within me” (Colossians 1:29 ESV). And Paul’s ministry and message were comprised of both warnings and teachings. There were dangers to be avoided and lessons to be learned. There were false teachers who could undermine the hope of the gospel and there were constant temptations that could derail and diminish the witness of God’s people. Paul’s

goal for the Colossian believers was nothing less than spiritual maturity. He would not settle for mediocrity or partial transformation. Since glorification was the ultimate goal of salvation, Paul remained committed to the ongoing sanctification of all those under his care. His lifelong objective was to one day be able to “present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28 ESV). That lofty goal will never be achieved in the believer’s lifetime, but we have a firm promise from God that it will take place one day.

Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. – 1 John 3:2-3 NLT

According to Paul, it is inevitable and unavoidable because it is the work of God.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. – Philippians 1:6 NLT

Rooted, Built Up, and Established

¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. – Colossians 2:1-7 ESV

In verse 29 of chapter one, Paul speaks of his ongoing “struggle” to proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The Greek word *agōnizomai* carries the idea of strenuous effort driven by intense zeal. Paul was obsessed with the idea of spiritual formation and expressed his own desire to do whatever was necessary so that every believer achieved full spiritual maturity.

...we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. – Colossians 1:28 NLT

He poured out every ounce of his being to accomplish that goal. Here in chapter two, he uses the root word *agōn* to describe the ongoing “conflict” in which he finds himself engaged, and he confesses that his efforts are on behalf of all those congregations living in the Lycus Valley. The errant teachings concerning Christ had impacted not only the church in Colossae but the one in Laodicea as well. Likely, the nearby community of Hierapolis had also come under the influence of teachers making false claims that denied either the deity or humanity of Jesus.

The members of these three congregations had never met Paul face to face because, at the time he wrote this letter, he had not yet set foot in the Lycus Valley. His knowledge of their situation had come to him through Epaphras and others. But like a true shepherd, Paul expressed his loving concern for these distant flocks, declaring his intense desire “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ” (Colossians 2:2 ESV).

Paul was the consummate encourager. Yes, he often displayed a blunt, in-your-face style of confrontational leadership that could be withering in its intensity. Still, his ultimate goal was correction, which led to further spiritual growth. Even in these verses, Paul displays the loving concern of a pastor who longs to see his congregants experience the full measure of their salvation. For Paul, coming to faith in Christ was not a one-time event but an ongoing experience that included the believer's initial reconciliation to God and their ongoing sanctification and ultimate glorification.

The apostle Peter described this full-orbed approach in his first letter, encouraging his readers to “crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation” (1 Peter 2:2 NLT). Paul warned Timothy that “in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons” (1 Timothy 4:1 NLT). In a second letter to Timothy, Paul reiterated his concern about the danger of a feeble and stagnant faith.

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. – 2 Timothy 4:3-4 NLT

That’s why Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2 NLT). And Paul practiced what he preached. He patiently corrected, rebuked, and encouraged the church in Colossae so that they might stand firm against the faith-deflating lies of the false teachers.

Throughout his ministry, Paul strived to keep Jesus Christ as the central focus of all his teachings. In his first letter to the church in Corinth, he referred to the doctrine of Jesus as the foundation upon which every other doctrine or teaching must rest.

I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ. – 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 NLT

The *teachings* of Jesus were not the foundation; it was Jesus Himself. The deity, humanity, sacrificial death, Spirit-empowered resurrection, and promised return of Jesus formed the firm foundation on which every believer’s faith must rest and remain. But Paul had been forced to confront the Corinthian believers about their propensity to embrace false doctrines about Jesus.

I am afraid, however, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may be led astray from your simple and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims a Jesus other than the One we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit than the One you received, or a different gospel than the one you accepted, you put up with it way too easily. – 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 BSB

Paul did not want the believers in Colossae to make the same mistake, so he reminded them that in Jesus, “lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3 NLT). Anyone preaching a non-deified Jesus was proclaiming a lie and disseminating foolishness rather than wisdom. Anyone who refuted Jesus’ humanity and discounted His sacrificial death on the cross was to be viewed as a liar and not as a messenger from God.

But Paul realized that many of these false teachers were highly persuasive, using well-crafted and lofty-sounding arguments that seemed to make sense. To make matters worse, these men were operating within the context of the local church in Colossae, while Paul was hundreds of miles away in Rome. He had been placed under house arrest by the emperor and denied the freedom to travel. So, while the false teachers mingled with the flock in Colossae, Paul was restricted to writing a letter. But he reminded them, “Though I am far away from you, my heart is with you” (Colossians 2:5 NLT). They were out of sight but not out of mind. And Paul expressed his joy when Epaphras informed him of their firm commitment to the faith – even in the face of false teaching.

So, Paul exhorts them to remain steadfast and unwavering in their faith. Despite everything happening around them, they had all the truth they needed to survive and thrive. A new version of the gospel was unnecessary, and a different take on Jesus was not required. The key to their survival was not some new doctrine or novel take on Jesus’s identity but a continuing faith in the One who had made their salvation possible. Paul pleads with them to stay the course.

...as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him... – Colossians 2:6 ESV

They had received Jesus by faith, and they needed to continue living their lives according to faith. Once again, Paul insists that faith is not a static, one-time act that results in salvation but an ongoing lifestyle of complete dependence upon the saving work of Jesus. True saving faith results in our ongoing transformation into His likeness, which will ultimately result in a future state of sinless perfection that will take place upon His return. Paul firmly believed that his faith in Christ was active and alive, determining every facet of his earthly existence. That is why he told the Galatian believers, “The life I live in the body, *I live by faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20 BSB).

The author of Hebrews describes faith as “the **assurance** of things hoped for, the **conviction** of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 ESV). Faith is not wishful thinking or some baseless, unfounded desire for that which has no substance or chance of fulfillment. He uses two powerful words to describe the nature of faith. The first is *hypostasis*, which means “confidence or assurance.” It carries the idea of something being substantive, real, and having actual existence. The second word is *elegchos*, which means “proof.” Our faith is based on the belief that God’s promises are real, even when invisible to the human eye. Our faith is based on the trustworthiness of God, not our ability to see or touch what was promised. The Old Testament saints listed in chapter 11 of Hebrews displayed faith because they “died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it” (Hebrews 11:13 NLT). Christians don’t operate by the old adage “Seeing is believing.” Instead, they live by faith. As Paul said, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7 ESV).

In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul reminded them that God had promised them new bodies – “a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2

Corinthians 5:1 ESV). In their earthly lives, they struggled with pain, sorrow, and affliction. But God promised they would one day put on their “heavenly dwelling” and experience new life in His eternal kingdom. Then he assured them: “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, **for we walk by faith, not by sight**” (2 Corinthians 5:5-7 ESV).

That is why Paul called the Colossians to remain focused on Jesus, “rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” (Colossians 2:7 ESV). They were to keep their eyes fixed on “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2 ESV). Paul did not want them to get distracted or dissuaded from the truth regarding Jesus. They were to remain “rooted” in their faith. Like a healthy, fruitful plant, they were to sink their roots deep into the promises found in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Rootedness results in fruitfulness or, as Paul puts it, being “built up.” Paul uses a word associated with architecture, portraying the steady, sound construction of a structure built on a solid foundation. Finally, Paul uses the term “established” to describe the final outcome of our faith. The Greek word means “to make good the promises by the event.” It conveys the idea of the promise being fulfilled. The assurance and conviction of our faith will become reality.

Faith has an *object*: Jesus Christ. But faith also has an objective: our future glorification. That is why Paul wanted them to remain firm in their faith. Saving faith is an enduring faith that focuses on the unwavering promises of God despite the vicissitudes and difficulties of this life. The apostle John provides us with a timeless word of encouragement that points us to the day when all the promises of God will be established.

Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. – 1 John 3:2-3 NLT