

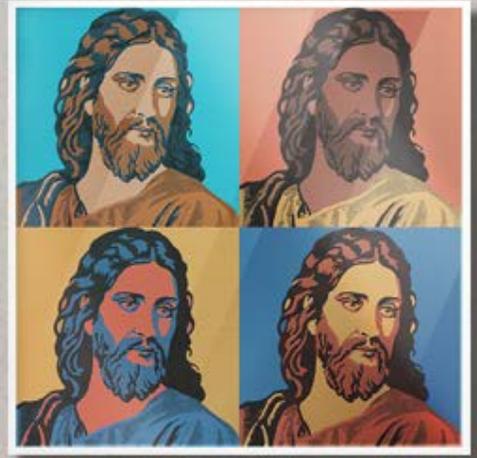
BAND OF BROTHERS

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

Rules for Christian Households

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^[f] not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

Footnotes

- a) Colossians 3:4 Some manuscripts *our*
- b) Colossians 3:5 Greek *therefore your members that are on the earth*
- c) Colossians 3:6 Some manuscripts add *upon the sons of disobedience*
- d) Colossians 3:9 Greek *man*; also as supplied in verse 10
- e) Colossians 3:11 For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface; likewise for *Bondservants* in verse 22
- f) Colossians 3:22 *Or your masters according to the flesh*

4 Masters, treat your bondservants^[a] justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Final Greetings

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant^[b] in the Lord. ⁸ I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, ⁹ and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

¹³ For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke the beloved physician greets

Let's Get Practical

¹⁸ *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* ¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.* ²⁰ *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* ²¹ *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* ²² *Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.* ²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,* ²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* ²⁵ *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

¹ *Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* – Colossians 3:18-4:1 ESV

Paul now takes those other-oriented, selfless, and love-motivated character traits and applies them to everyday life. And since he was writing to believers living in Colossae, he customized his words for their particular context. He wanted them to know what seeking and setting their minds on things that are above would look like on a daily basis. He wasn't promoting some kind of ethereal and impractical brand of religious pietism and asceticism. No, he was recommending a highly practical brand of faith that revealed the transformative nature of the gospel in everyday life. They were to "put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:10 ESV). As chosen ones of God, they were to put on "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience" (Colossians 3:12 ESV). But none of these "add-ons" would be effective without love.

...put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony... – Colossians 3:14
ESV

And since God is love and He best expressed that love through the gift of His Son, Paul called the Colossians to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17 ESV). But what does that look like? How were they supposed to make these powerful admonitions practical? Well, Paul makes it plain and simple for them. And he begins with the family unit, one of the most foundational and universal arenas of relationship in this life.

The family was God's idea. It was He who originated and ordained the union of one man and one woman, creating an indissoluble bond between them as husband and wife. The creation account found in the opening chapters of Genesis records God's creation of the first marriage.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

*"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;*

*she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."*

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. – Genesis 2:21-24 ESV

And Jesus Himself confirmed the validity of the Genesis account by stating, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6 ESV).

So, Paul begins at the beginning, with the family unit. He calls believing wives to submit to their believing husbands. But he adds an important, yet often overlooked, distinction: "as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18 ESV). *The New Living Translation* puts it this way: "as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord."

For Paul, the use of the word "submission" was directly linked to his call that all believers conduct themselves with compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. If ever there was ever a relationship where those characteristics were necessary, it was that of a husband and wife. So, he calls wives to lovingly, humbly, meekly, and patiently relate to their husbands in such a way that honors their role as the God-appointed head of the household. Paul provided additional insight into the headship role of the husband when writing to the church in Ephesus.

...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. – Ephesians 5:21-24 NLT

The biblical concept of submission has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Paul is not suggesting that women are somehow second-class citizens. He is simply articulating the divinely ordained concept of headship within the family unit. Just as Christ is the head of the church, the believing husband is given responsibility for the well-being of his family. And that responsibility comes with a heavy dose of accountability.

Paul made it painfully clear that one of the primary leadership responsibilities of a godly husband was to selflessly love his wife. And, once again, Paul provides further clarity in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

*...this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. – Ephesians 5:25-26
NLT*

In order to lovingly, graciously submit to her husband, a wife would have to surrender her pride and natural desire for autonomy. In other words, she would have to “put off the old self with its practices” (Colossians 3:9 ESV). Submission doesn’t come naturally or easily. It requires a sacrifice of the human will. In order for anyone to submit in a way that “is fitting for those who belong to the Lord” (Colossians 3:18 NLT), they will have to “put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within” (Colossians 3:18 NLT). And according to Peter, submission isn’t something that is reserved for wives alone.

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God... – 1 Peter 2:13-15 ESV

The life of a believer, regardless of their gender, is to be marked by an attitude of humble submission to others – for this is the will of God. And, according to Paul, one of the greatest displays of death-to-self was to be a husband’s selfless expression of love for his wife. He was to put his wife’s life ahead of his own. He was to be willing to die on her behalf.

At the core of Paul’s teaching on submission was the idea of humility versus pride. There was no place for self-aggrandizement in the life of a believer.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. – Philippians 2:3-4 BSB

Even children had a part to play in God’s divine order for the home. They were to obey their parents in everything. Why? Because this was pleasing to the Lord. It was in keeping with His divine will. And a child’s obedience was a form of submission to the God-ordained authority of their parents. Again, this is not normal or natural. As the proverb states, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child...” (Proverbs 22:15 BSB).

And it’s interesting to note that disobedience to children was one of the characteristics Paul listed when describing the future state of the world in the last days.

*You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, **disobedient to their parents**, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. – 2 Timothy 3:1-4 NLT*

But, according to Paul, an obedient child is the byproduct of a loving and godly father.

Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged. – Colossians 3:21 NLT

That same proverb goes on to say, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, **but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.**” Yet, too much discipline, done in an unloving and heavy-handed manner can do more harm than good. It can cause a child to become discouraged. Discipline that is unloving and lacking in compassion can lead a child to become disinterested in trying to obey. It can actually result in rebellion rather than submission. So, Paul warns fathers to use their role as heads of their households with care.

Next, Paul moves from addressing the family unit to dealing with another relationship that was a ubiquitous part of the Colossian community: Slavery. While we find this topic uncomfortable and somewhat off-putting, it was a normal part of everyday life for the citizens of Colossae.

“Scholars estimate about 10% (but possibly up to 20%) of the Roman empire’s population were enslaved. This would mean, for an estimated Roman empire population of 50 million (in the first century AD) between five and ten million were enslaved. This number would have been unequally distributed across the empire, with a higher concentration of enslaved people in urban areas and in Italy.” – © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Slavery was an everyday part of daily life in Colossae. Yet Paul doesn’t attempt to address the moral implications of slavery. Instead, he tried to show the Colossian believers how their new identity in Christ should impact every area of life. The reality was that slaves were coming to faith in Christ and becoming a part of the local congregation of believers. It was highly likely that the church in Colossae had slaves attending worship services with their own masters. And this presented a particularly difficult problem for Paul and the leadership of the church. How were these people supposed to relate to one another? How was their mutual relationship with Christ to impact their interpersonal relationship with one another?

Paul addresses both parties. He tells slaves, “Obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord” (Colossians 3:22 NLT). And he tells masters, “be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven” (Colossians 4:1 NLT).

Notice his emphasis on God. Both parties were to recognize that their earthly relationship with one another had been dramatically altered by their new identity in Christ. While nothing had changed regarding their earthly status, Paul wanted them to know that God viewed them in a whole new light.

In this new life, it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. – Colossians 3:11 NLT

There is an invaluable and universal lesson to be learned from Paul's words to slaves. These were individuals who had no choice regarding their condition. Their position as slaves required that they submit, whether they wanted to or not. But Paul challenged them to take a different attitude.

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. – Colossians 3:23-24 NLT

And this applied to every believer in the local church in Colossae. It's what Paul meant when he wrote, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2 ESV). A slave was to live his life with an eternal perspective, knowing that his current circumstance was temporal. There was a reward awaiting him that made his present suffering pale in comparison. And that heavenly-minded, future-focused perspective was to motivate the life of every believer in Colossae, regardless of their gender, race, or social status.

Thy Will Be Done

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. – Colossians 4:2-6 ESV

Paul has emphasized the believers' relationship with one another. He encouraged them to "make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you" (Colossians 3:13 NLT). They were to patiently and lovingly respond to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, forgiving as they had been forgiven, and seeking to promote an atmosphere of Christlike peace and harmony.

Now, Paul calls on the Colossian believers to make prayer a priority in their lives. And Paul practiced what he preached. He opened his letter with several statements concerning the ongoing prayers that he and Timothy prayed on behalf of the Colossian church.

We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. – Colossians 1:3 NLT

...we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. – Colossians 1:9 NLT

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. – Colossians 1:11 NLT

Prayer was a vital part of Paul's ministry. With responsibility for the spiritual well-being of so many congregations spread over such a large geographic area, Paul was limited in his ability to make personal appearances. So, he utilized prayer as the means by which he called on the power of God to protect and provide for his far-flung flocks. Paul understood the power and necessity of prayer. He considered it the most vital relationship a Christian could cultivate in their lives. The author of Hebrews, whom many believe to have been Paul, wrote, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16 BSB). Paul wrote something similar in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. – Ephesians 3:12 NLT

Paul was committed to cultivating the interpersonal relationships of the Colossians believers. He wanted them to live out their Spirit-transformed lives by displaying Christlike behavior toward one another. But he also desired that the Colossians maintain a healthy and ongoing dialogue with their heavenly Father. For Paul, prayer was the primary way for a believer to express their dependence upon God. He viewed it as far more than a means of getting what we want from God. Prayer was a way for the believer to align their will with that of the Father. It was to be an ongoing form of two-way communication between the Heavenly Father and His child. Through prayer, petitions could be shared, and directions could be received. For Paul, prayer was an expression of faith. It displayed the believer's dependence upon and trust in God. It was a privilege provided by a gracious God that allowed His children to call upon Him at any time. It was to be a delight, not a duty.

Paul was familiar with the proverbs that promoted the efficacy of prayer.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him. – Proverbs 15:8 ESV

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. – Proverbs 15:29 ESV

He would have known what King David had written concerning God and the prayers of His people.

*The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them. – Psalm 145:18-19 NLT*

And he would have concurred with the words of James.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail. – James 5:16 BSB

So, Paul begins to close out his letter to the Colossians with an emphasis on prayer. He urges them to devote themselves to the practice of prayer. And he warns them to be "watchful" (*grēgoreō*), a word that carries the idea of being alert and ready to see how God will answer their prayers. And when God does answer, they are to express their gratitude for His gracious intercession. Prayer requires faith but not blind faith. It has God as its object and, therefore, answers to prayer should come as no surprise. Prayer and thanksgiving should go hand in hand because God is a faithful God who longs to fulfill the desires of His people.

That's why Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him. He understood the power of prayer and was not ashamed to request their prayers on his behalf. But Paul was specific in terms of his prayer request. He wanted them to pray that God would open up additional opportunities for

him and Timothy to share the good news concerning Christ. At first glance, this seems like an unnecessary prayer. The spread of the gospel was God's will. He didn't need to be coerced or cajoled into opening up new opportunities for unbelievers to hear the news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. According to Paul's letter to Timothy, God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4 ESV). So, why was it important that the Colossians pray this prayer on Paul's behalf?

It seems that Paul wanted them to pray in keeping with the will of God. It was clearly God's will that many would be saved, and the Colossians had the opportunity to align themselves with God praying for His will to be accomplished. In doing so, they would be setting their minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Colossians 3:2). They would be praying in keeping with God's revealed will.

What makes Paul's prayer request even more fascinating is that he shared it while under house arrest in Rome. He didn't ask them to pray for his release. He didn't covet their prayers for protection or provision. They would have known about his predicament. And by focusing their attention on the spread of the gospel, Paul was helping them to understand that God's will trumped his own. If God deemed it necessary for Paul to be released in order for the gospel to be spread, He would make it happen. But Paul's prayer request was selfless in nature. He wanted the good news to go out and for God to get the glory.

Paul also wrote a letter to the believers in Philippi while imprisoned in Rome. And rather than requesting that they pray for his release, he declared God's sovereign will concerning his imprisonment.

I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear. – Philippians 1:12-14 NLT

And Paul went on to express the tension he felt regarding his ongoing imprisonment and possible death and the thought of release and continued ministry.

For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. – Philippians 1:20-24 NLT

Paul longed to be with Jesus, but he was also committed to the work to which he had been commissioned by Jesus. So, for Paul, it boiled down to the will of God. The gospel must go out

and if God wanted Paul to be an ongoing participant in that mission, God would orchestrate Paul's release. And if God should set Paul free, he asked that the Colossians pray for him to have clarity when proclaiming the message of the gospel.

And he reminds them that they too must live out their faith, constantly mindful of its impact on "those who are not believers" (Colossians 4:5 NLT). As they prayed for God's will to be done, they must also live their lives in accordance with God's will for them. They must be salt and light. They must live wisely and circumspectly, always recognizing their role as Christ's ambassadors on earth. That is why Paul encourages them, "Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone" (Colossians 4:6 NLT). Their words were just as important as their works. Their daily interactions with the unsaved would be vital to the continued spread of the gospel. And their patient and loving treatment of one another would go a long way in demonstrating the life-changing nature of the good news.

In a sense, Paul is encouraging his flock in Colossae to practice the model prayer that Jesus gave His disciples.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." – Matthew 6:10 ESV

Their petitions and their actions were to be in keeping with the will of God. They were to pray and behave in ways that aligned with God's revealed will for the world. So, that the gospel could continue to spread and the lost be restored to a right relationship with God.