

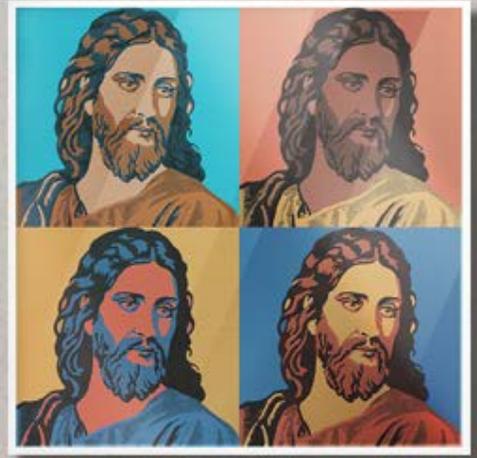
BAND OF BROTHERS

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

Devotionalary™ Reading: Pages 5-24

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

The mysterious ministry of spiritual maturity

Devotionalary™ 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

Devotionalary™ Reading: Pages 33-40

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

Live like who you are

Devotionalary™ Reading: Pages 41-52

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

Let's get practical

Devotionalary™ Reading: Pages 53-62

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

A prisoner of Christ

Devotionalary™ Reading: Pages 63-66

Let No One Disqualify You

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions,^[d] puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—

²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”

²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Footnotes

- a) Colossians 2:8 Or *elementary principles*; also verse 20
- b) Colossians 2:15 Probably demonic rulers and authorities
- c) Colossians 2:15 Or *in it* (that is, the cross)
- d) Colossians 2:18 Or *about the things he has seen*

The Sufficiency of the Gospel

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits 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 and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. – Colossians 2:8-15 ESV

Paul now warms to his primary task: warning the Colossian believers about the dangers of the doctrinal heresy threatening their congregation. He has established the preeminence of Christ and emphasized the foundational nature of His divinity and humanity. Now Paul presents a stinging indictment of the false teachers, labeling their rhetoric concerning Jesus as nothing more than a purely human-based philosophy based on tradition and filled with empty deceit. Paul's use of the term "philosophy" was not meant to refer to an academic or scientific study of thought but the teaching of "certain Jewish Christian ascetics, which busied itself with refined and speculative inquiries into the nature and classes of angels, into the ritual of the Mosaic law and the regulations of Jewish tradition respecting practical life" (The Online Bible: Outline of Biblical Usage).

Paul emphasized that the teaching infiltrating the Colossian church was purely speculative and not based on divine revelation. It was not according to or in keeping with the prophetic pronouncement concerning Christ in the Old Testament. Nor was it in line with Christ's teachings concerning Himself. No, these men propagated false doctrines based on "the elemental spirits of the world" (Colossians 2:8 ESV). The word translated as "spirits" is στοιχεῖον (*stoicheion*), which might be better translated as "principles." Paul seems to be juxtaposing Christ-centered teaching with worldly and man-centered teaching. According to Paul, the elemental or fundamental theories of a non-Christian, fallen world were insufficient to explain or guide the Christian life. The false teachers were attempting to use human reasoning to explain spiritual truths.

Paul addressed this lack of spiritual discernment in his first letter to the churches in Corinth. He informed his audience that the gospel's message was impossible to discern without assistance from the Holy Spirit.

When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's

Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. For,

*“Who can know the Lord’s thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach him?”*

*But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. – 1 Corinthians 2:13-16
NLT*

Paul explained that “the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV). He followed up this statement by quoting Isaiah 29:14.

For it is written,

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

Then Paul excoriated the false teachers and religious traditionalists of his day, exposing them as frauds and fools who pridefully rejected the message of the gospel.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. – 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 ESV

Some found the apostles’ teaching concerning Christ to be illogical and unacceptable. They found the idea that Jesus was the embodiment of divinity and humanity untenable and indefensible. For others, the belief in Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection was little more than wishful thinking or a fairy tale. But Paul refers to his teaching concerning Christ as the power and wisdom of God.

Paul considered the false teachers’ denial of Christ’s divinity a particularly egregious sin. That’s why he unapologetically stated, “In Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body” (Colossians 2:9 ESV). This was a foundational truth concerning the doctrine of salvation, and without it, the validity of Christ’s substitutionary death was rendered impotent. The sinlessness of Christ was based on His divinity. He was the unblemished God/man who was “tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV).

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. – 2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT

To deny Jesus' deity was to invalidate His entire ministry. He was the sinless and fully righteous Son of God who took on human flesh so that He might do what no man had ever been able to do before: Jesus fully obeyed every one of the commands of God found in the Mosaic Law.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh... – Romans 8:3 ESV

The deity and humanity of Christ were both non-negotiable aspects of His character. Jesus was fully divine and entirely human. He was not a phantom or a god masquerading as a man. Some taught that Jesus only *appeared* to be human, and this erroneous teaching led to a distorted understanding of Jesus' death on the cross. If He wasn't truly human, then His death was little more than theater — a clever form of play-acting that accomplished nothing. It would mean the substitutionary nature of His death was invalid. Not only that, if Jesus didn't die, then there was no resurrection, and if there was no resurrection, then mankind has no hope.

...if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. – 1 Corinthians 15:17-19 NLT

Paul assures the Colossians believers that the resurrection of Jesus was real and that its implications for their lives were substantial.

...you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. – Colossians 2:12 NLT

He wanted them to understand that they needed nothing more than Christ. Despite the claims of the false teachers, the believers in Colossae did not miss anything from their spiritual experience. They had been filled with the fullness of Christ. The Spirit of Christ indwelt them, making the nature of Christ available to them. The righteousness of Christ had been imputed to them. Unlike the Judaizers, who taught that Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be fully saved, Paul emphasized a spiritual form of circumcision.

When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. – Colossians 2:11 NLT

This was the same thought Paul had shared with the believers in Rome.

For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people. – Romans 2:28-29 NLT

Paul reminded the Colossians that, before encountering Christ, they had been spiritually dead because their “sinful nature was not yet cut away” (Colossians 2:13 NLT). But that problem had been taken care of by God.

God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. – Colossians 2:13-14 NLT

In doing so, God “disarmed the rulers and authorities” (Colossians 2:15 ESV). This is most likely a reference to “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12 ESV). Paul describes them as “the cosmic powers over this present darkness” (Ephesians 6:12 ESV). In conquering sin and death on the cross, God effectively silenced Satan and his minions, voiding the accusations of guilt and shame they level against God’s people. In Revelation 12:10, Satan is described as the accuser of the brethren, “who accuses them day and night before our God.” But, because of the atoning nature of the cross, Satan’s accusations carry no weight. His weapons lack any power against the children of God. But, just as Paul warned the believers in Ephesus, the Colossians were to “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11 ESV).

The false teachers were attempting to undermine the effectiveness of Christ’s death and resurrection by questioning its validity. These godless men were acting as pawns of the enemy by sowing doubts among the believers in Colossae. But Paul exposed their so-called truths as nothing more than cleverly disguised lies meant to deceive and destroy the faith of God’s people.

For Paul, the gospel was enough. No new teaching was required, and the power of the cross required no additional enhancement or improvement. As Paul told the believers in Corinth, the gospel’s message required no help from human reasoning and cleverly crafted rhetoric.

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn’t use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God’s secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified.

Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God. – 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, 4-5 NLT

The Subtle Allure of Self-Made Religion

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. – Colossians 2:16-23 ESV

Far too often, well-meaning but misguided individuals attempt to turn faith in Christ into a lengthy list of dos and don'ts intended to regulate behavior. They take James' simple premise that faith without works is a dead faith (James 2:17) and twist it into a legalistic and guilt-inducing set of rules and regulations designed to determine righteousness. Unable or unwilling to accept that a believer's right standing with God is based on grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, these purveyors of self-righteousness attempt to earn favor with God through rituals, rites, and fervent religious rule-keeping.

Entire denominations have been formed based on a doctrine that teaches that righteousness must be achieved the old-fashioned way: Through hard work and merit. Essentially, their teaching is based on the old maxim: There's no such thing as a free lunch. Some seem to have founded their works-based concept of salvation on the oft-quoted but non-biblical statement: God helps those who help themselves.

Humanity's pervasive pride problem lies at the core of this brand of false teaching, and it has been around since the fall. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, mankind has been attempting to assuage its guilt and amend its broken relationship with God through human effort. Over the centuries, countless religions have sprung up, each promoting its own unique set of rules and rituals for keeping its particular deity pleased and in a generous mood. While diverse in their doctrines and dogma, each of these religions shares one thing in common: A works-based form of righteousness. The adherents to these religions live under the repressive pressure of a performance-based system that demands constant and unwavering compliance to a set of rigid and unrelenting standards.

Paul and his fellow apostles had to constantly deal with the problem of legalism infiltrating the churches to whom they ministered. It was only natural for those who had converted to Christianity from pagan religions to carry the baggage of their former faith system into their

relationship with Christ. They were used to practicing a religion that was based on rule-keeping and rife with prohibitions of all kinds. So, they were naturally attracted to any form of teaching that provided them with a list of rules to follow and activities to avoid. This made them particularly susceptible to the teachings of a group that later became known as the Judaizers.

The word, Judaizer, first appeared in Paul's letter to the believers in Galatia. Paul describes an encounter he had with his fellow apostle, Peter. It seems that Peter had been freely associating with Gentile believers in Antioch until a group of Jewish believers from Jerusalem showed up. Paul states that "when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party" (Galatians 2:12 ESV). The presence of these Jewish Christians from Jerusalem caused Peter to avoid the Gentile converts because they were uncircumcised and, therefore, ceremonially unclean. The Jewish Christians were demanding that all converts to Christianity must submit to all the requirements of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision. Essentially, they were teaching that the Gentiles were not truly saved because they were living in violation of the law. But Paul, a Jew, and a former Pharisee would have none of it.

*"...when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles **to live like Jews?**" – Galatians 2:14 ESV*

The Greek word is *ioudaikōs*, and it means "after the manner of the Jews." Paul was appalled that Peter was demanding that Gentile Christians be required to "Judaize" or live according to Jewish commands and customs. The doctrine of the Judaizers was a mixture of grace (through Christ) and works (through the keeping of the Law). The Jews who had shown up in Antioch were teaching, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1 ESV). And this forced Paul and Barnabas to travel all the way back to Jerusalem to appear before the apostles and the elders. The matter for discussion was the teaching of the Judaizers, and Paul pulled no punches in confronting this dangerous heresy.

"Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus." – Acts 15:7-11 NLT

According to verse 16 of Colossians 2, this was the very same teaching that had infiltrated the church in Colossae. Paul lists a variety of different topics that have a decidedly Jewish feel to them: Teachings concerning the consumption of food and drink, rules concerning feasts and new moon celebrations, and the keeping of the sabbath. Someone had obviously been teaching the Gentile members of the local congregation that there was more to their newfound faith in Christ than just belief. They were going to have to alter their behavior to accommodate a whole host of religious rules and rituals.

But Paul strongly refuted the idea of adding anything to their faith Christ alone.

“...these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality.” – Colossians 2:17 NLT

As a Jew, Paul knew that these things had been designed by God to serve a vital but temporary purpose. Paul assured the believers in Galatia that the law had been given by God but that it had fulfilled its primary purpose. Now that Jesus had come, adherence to the law was no longer required to attain a right standing with God.

Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.

Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. – Galatians 3:23-25 NLT

And Paul wanted the believers in Colossae to understand that they were not subject to anyone’s teaching regarding additional requirements or rules concerning salvation.

Don’t let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. – Colossians 2:18 NLT

Their right standing with God was not based on what they did or didn’t do. It was based on the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Upon placing their faith in Christ, they had been imputed His righteousness. What was true for Paul was true for them.

I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith. – Philippians 3:9 NLT

Paul was a staunch defender of the faith, who was willing to hold all those who taught a different gospel or a different Jesus accountable for their actions. And he declared that those who were attempting to mislead the believers in Colossae of being “puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind” (Colossians 2:18 ESV).

Not only that, Paul insists that their errant teaching separated them from Christ and His church. Their false doctrines concerning salvation actually made them an enemy of the gospel. They were doing more harm than good and diminishing the unity of the body that Christ’s death had made possible.

Paul reminded his brothers and sisters in Christ, “You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world?” (Colossians 2:20 NLT). They were becoming distracted by rules that declared, “Don’t

handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!" (Colossians 2:21 NLT). But these kinds of prohibitions were man-made and destined to fail. Laws can regulate human behavior but are incapable of changing the heart.

These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires. – Colossians 2:23 NLT

Paul revealed the true purpose of the law to the believers in Galatia.

Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. – Galatians 3:19 NLT

And Paul went on to point out that the law was never meant to provide salvation. It declared the kind of righteousness God required and revealed mankind's incapacity to live up to God's holy standards. And Paul makes it painfully clear that rule-keeping had never been the means by which man could be saved.

If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ. – Galatians 3:21-22 NLT