

Col 1:3-8 *“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints- the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.”*

Col 1:21; 2:13-14 *“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior....When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”*

Philemon 1:23 *“Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.”*

Col 2:6-7 *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”*

Col 2:8-10, 16, 18, 20-23 *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority....Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.... Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.... Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!?! These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

Col 4:3, 18 *“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”....“I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.”*



The Core of Christianity

# The letter to the Colossians

## Introduction to Colossians

### MELBOURNE & COLOSSAE?

- A walk through Queen Vic
- Leisurely life on Southbank
- Students of the Arts in Brunswick St Café's
- Off to Daylesford's Hot Springs for the weekend
- A blend of religions and cultures in a tolerant environment
- Of lesser importance and significance as a city in its region
- But what of their views on authority compared to ours?

Study No. 1

In pairs discuss:

- What the Colossians used to be like?

(1:21; 2:13)

- What they are like at time of writing?

(1:3-8)

- What Paul's situation was?

(4:3,18; Philemon 23)

- What "heresies" seems to be present?

(2:8-10, 16, 18, 20-23)

**Towns of the Lycus Valley**  
 Several of Paul's later letters were written to Christians in this area (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon). Colossae stood in the broad fertile valley, near Laodicea. This area is located in modern day Turkey



## Background

The message of Jesus Christ came to the region through the ministry of Paul, the Apostle, but not directly. It was through Paul's converts: Epaphras (1:7), and Philemon in whose house the church met (Phm. 19). Paul's far-reaching ministry in Ephesus on his third missionary journey, far from Jerusalem, led Luke to write in Acts 19:10 that....

*....all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*

We know that Paul was in prison when writing this letter (4:10, 18). But which prison at what time? There is broad agreement that Epaphras arrived in Rome with disturbing news of heretical teaching in Colosse that was threatening the health of the church (1:8). Thus, Paul is well-developed in his theological thought at the time of writing, about AD 62. It may have been written before the letter to the Ephesians, but not much separates them. The letter to Philemon relates closely to it.

## The Central Theme

Let's start at the very beginning. Well, that is, in the very middle!

Colossians 2:6-7 summarize the main theme of Paul's letter and within these verses we find the important elements that Paul wants his readers to concentrate on. Let's take them bit by bit...

Col 2:6-7 ***“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”***

- **“So then”**- Paul's aim is to present every person (especially Gentiles) “perfect in Christ” (1:28)

- **“Just as you received”**- “received” means to have a teaching passed on to you (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:1)
- **“Christ Jesus as lord”**- the word “Christ” is a title (Hebrew = Messiah) from Old Testament reference to king or ruler of Israel, meaning “anointed” or “chosen one”. The prophets looked forward to a future, all successful and eternal king who would establish a worldwide kingdom. “Lord” = master in common use but more significant here (see 1:13-20)
- **“continue to live in him”**- As opposed to moving on to other beliefs and practices. Christ is the beginning, centre, and end of all Christian growth and living. Not to be diminished, not to be added to
- **“rooted”**- like a tree deeply embedded in the ground weathering all storms, so we are to be grounded in our relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ
- **“built up”**- Like a building (usually a corporate image- this letter is addressed to Christians together, not to an individual alone e.g. Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5)
- **“strengthened in the faith”**- that is, the same body of teaching they had received (Col. 1:4-6)
- **“overflowing with thankfulness”**- A sign of a true understanding of what Christ has done for us

When reading the Bible it is important to read the text in the context of the big picture. At what point in Biblical history does this text stand? From what point of view do we read? The asterisk represents our position, looking backwards to the cross and forwards to Jesus' return with the help of the Holy Spirit.

