

JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY ONE

A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

We look at the truth recorded in the first century, and we realize it may have been written then, but it has everything to do with how we live now.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

BEFORE bank tellers can detect a *counterfeit* twenty-dollar bill, they must first fully acquaint themselves with a *genuine* twenty-dollar bill. Only then can they guard against deception. Christians, too, must follow the same steps of learning and upholding God’s truth before they’re able to recognize and reject falsehood . . . *and how urgent is to the call to do so!* The consequences are far more drastic than losing a few bucks.

The apostle Paul always felt this urgency—especially so with the fledgling church in Colossae where false teachers immediately crept in to corrupt what God had started. These false teachers assaulted the church with doctrines of mysticism, asceticism, and legalism—empty philosophies that give no spiritual profit, only false pride.

After hearing of this attack on truth, the apostle Paul composed a short letter exhorting the Colossian believers back to ground zero: the supremacy of Jesus Christ who is sufficient to be our all in all. In other words, Paul equipped them to reject corrupting falsehoods by returning them to the heart and center of God’s truth and plan.

The effectiveness of Paul’s little letter reaches beyond the borders of that small town, stretching across time to equip Christians today to engage in the same activity. There’s always an urgent need for Christians to revisit the basics of biblical truth, understand them, and gain discernment to reject what’s phony and dangerous.



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A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

For this reason, Pastor Chuck Swindoll turns our attention to Paul’s penetrating epistle, Colossians. This initial study kicks off a ten-part series to help you establish afresh Christ as Lord in your heart so you can live wisely, freely, and confidently in Him.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, pray for the Spirit to illuminate your mind and strengthen you through His Word. Think seriously about what you hope to gain from this study and series, and write your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In these *Searching the Scriptures* studies, we use the same four-step Bible study method Pastor Chuck has used for more than fifty years—whether in his private devotions, research for an article, or preparation for a sermon. These steps include:

1. *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
2. *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
3. *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics, whether they be historical, theological, or applicable.
4. *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus’ commands, believing Jesus’ promises, and walking with Jesus always.



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

If you do not have these books authored by Pastor Chuck—*Searching the Scriptures*, *The Swindoll Study Bible*, or the *Insights on Colossians* commentary—now would be the perfect time to add these resources to your library to enrich your study of the book of Colossians.

Before we grab our magnifying glass for verse-by-verse observation, Pastor Chuck recommends getting the big picture of the book’s message as well as the author’s motivation for writing it. Take a look at Pastor Chuck’s article on Colossians at insight.org as well as his overview chart of Colossians below.

COLOSSIANS

	Christ Is Our Lord		... Our Life	... Our Love
	Lord of creation <hr/> Lord of the church <hr/> Lord of ministry <hr/>	Lord of our walk <hr/> Lord of our salvation <hr/> Lord of our growth <hr/>	Our mind <hr/> Our body <hr/> Our attitude <hr/> Our actions <hr/>	Love for “outsiders” <hr/> Love for believers <hr/>
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Subject	Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
Christ	His person and work		His peace and presence	
Emphasis	Doctrinal and corrective		Practical and reassuring	
Theme	Christ is our supreme Lord and sufficient Savior.			
Key Verses	2:9–10			
Christ in Colossians	Jesus is the supreme Lord of the church and the world, the all-sufficient Savior in whom the fullness of Deity dwells (1:13–20; 2:9).			

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The better you get to know the truth, the clearer you will see counterfeit information that’s given out and falsely called truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8



Observation: A Warm Greeting

Begin observation by carefully reading *Colossians 1:1–8*.

Who wrote the letter with Paul? _____

What words did Paul use to give a warm and encouraging greeting to the Colossian church?

In our fast-paced world, it's easy to forget a gracious conversation opening and just get right to the point. Before jumping into other matters, remember to bring a few words of encouragement. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Who proclaimed the gospel to the people in Colossae (*Colossians 1:7*)? How did the gospel change their lives (1:4–5)?



A Letter for Then and Now
Colossians 1:1–8

How did Paul connect the lives of the Colossian believers with the global church and universal story of God?

Even though Paul had never stood face-to-face with those who received his letter, he expressed genuine gratitude for what had taken place among them. Even more, Paul prayed for them.

When you begin to pray for people, it does something to you. You feel closer to them. There's a love bond that begins to form between you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Faith, Love, Hope

During interpretation, we consult our Bible study resources to help us better understand the biblical text. Often these resources bring to life what we read. Take as much time as you've allotted and read Bible dictionary articles written about the people and places mentioned in Colossians 1:1–8. Jot down at least one new thing you learned about each.

If you do not own a Bible dictionary, Pastor Chuck suggests adding *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* to your library.

Do some research on *Paul*. Why did Paul, a Jew, care so deeply about a seemingly random group of folks living in Greco-Roman Colossae?



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

What is significant about *Colossae's* location and cultural background? What happened to Colossae in the early AD 60s?

Why were *Timothy* and *Epaphras* important in Paul's ministry?

In *Colossians 1:4–5*, what three Christian virtues were active among the Colossians? (Hint: Paul expressed thanksgiving for them.) What is the connection among these three virtues in the life of the believer?



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

Paul mentioned the source of a Christian's love for others in *Colossians 1:8*. What is that source, and why is it significant for all Christians?

When our lives are anchored in a solid faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be a love for others that begins to grow. It'll surprise you how soft your heart will become toward others. You will see them as people like you, people with needs, people who are facing situations that are beyond them, just like you. And that'll help build that love and harmony and unity.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

No one enters this world with the good news of Jesus Christ already imbedded in him or her. Like the people in Colossae, everyone needs an Epaphras to share the gospel with them so they, too, can understand the grace of God in truth. God does not give us His Word to keep it for ourselves but to richly offer it to others.



Correlation: Saved by Grace through Faith

In just two verses (*Colossians 1:4–5*), Paul gave the Colossian believers a summary of the salvation they experienced: how they heard of God's grace, put their faith in Christ, looked up in hope, and looked out in love. *Ephesians 2:1–10* reveals more detail about Christ's redeeming work, which nicely complements our study above.

Read and summarize *Ephesians 2:1–10*. What truths in this passage correlate with *Colossians 1:1–8*?



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

A changed life . . . a new outlook . . . a new way to relate with people . . . hope in the one who defeated the grave. These are just a few of Jesus' great gifts to us—all because of the riches of God's mercy displayed in the great love with which He loves us.



Application: Filled with the Word of Christ

Now, let's root God's Word in our lives by looking at Pastor Chuck's three application principles for Colossians 1:1–8.

As I've learned over the years, God did not give us His truth to merely satisfy our curiosity. He gave us His truth to change our lives. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Principle One: Read Colossians Repeatedly

Pastor Chuck recommends you read through the entire letter once per study in this ten-part series. Ideally, then, you'll read through the letter ten times. Make a plan below of how you would like to accomplish this exercise. It might be once per sitting, a chapter a day, and so on.

Principle Two: Discuss Colossians Frequently

Chat about what you read! Tell your friends what you're learning. Discuss it with your family at the dinner table. Use its truths in your prayers, and let it preach truth to your heart. What is one way you hope to discuss Colossians during your study?



A Letter for Then and Now

Colossians 1:1–8

Principle Three: Accept Colossians Personally

Each time you read, look for promises to believe, truths to embrace, exhortations to follow, and warnings to heed. What is one thing you want to remember and accept from this study?

Paul did not begin his letter to the Colossians by pointing out their errors. Instead, he had them recall their taste of God's grace, their changed lives, their new hope, and the loving community God had planted right there in Colossae. The same divine gardening has continued through the centuries into our own era extending to us the same benefits received by them.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your Word that lives and abides forever. May this letter become a love letter to me because I know this letter was not written only for the church in Colossae but for all believers for all time. May we—through the patient, comforting truth of the Scriptures—glean hope and a reason to persevere. Make me stable, confident, and assured of the truth as You teach it in this letter. Please bless the time I have set apart for this study—that I might use it in a very special way for Your glory. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY TWO

A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14

False teachers promise you a kind of knowledge and wisdom and understanding, but it isn't the knowledge of God's will. It's their new doctrine that is stimulating, and they deliver it with great charisma and persuasion. Some of the best communicators on the planet are false teachers.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE late Bible teacher and pastor Warren Wiersbe hit the nail on the head when he summarized the nature of false teaching: “Satan is so deceptive! He likes to borrow Christian vocabulary, but he does not use the Christian dictionary!”¹

Erroneous teaching sprouted throughout the Colossian church. It sounded intriguing, even wise, on the surface—using terms new believers would have been familiar with. Yet, at its heart, this teaching downplayed Jesus and distorted the will of God. After learning the news of this heresy from Epaphras, Paul quickly dropped to his knees in prayer and then rushed a letter to kill the doctrinal weeds in this newly planted garden of God.

So what did Paul pray? In fact, he told them in his letter, and it has been preserved for us all these years. We have it in Colossians 1:9–14, and it's that very subject that we focus on in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. Paul perfectly models how Christians should pray for other Christians—even those whom you haven't even met.



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A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling
Colossians 1:9–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before delving into the pool of Scripture, we should pray for the Spirit's aid. Use the prayer below to help you prepare your heart and mind for this study.

Father, I cannot thank You often enough that I have Your Word of Life translated so clearly for my understanding and working in me so profoundly for my transformation. I dedicate this time to You that You may use it for Your glory as You increase my knowledge of Your will and mold me into the image of Your Son, Jesus, in whose name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul had already mentioned his prayers for the Colossians in 1:3. He then shared the specifics of how he had prayed for them in verses 9–14. Paul's cosmic and lofty language flagged to the recipients that their embrace of Jesus had drastic effects . . . and that their new spiritual threat, tempting them away from Jesus, posed a danger of the highest level.



Observation: We Have Not Stopped Praying for You

During observation, we carefully think over the words of the text and how they relate to one another—not aimlessly but with purpose and direction. We want to know what the text says.² To do this effectively, we need to look for key components like:

1. The who, what, where, when, why, and how
2. What we can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell
3. The logical connections, flow of thoughts, and range of subjects
4. What's repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike
5. What's written before and after



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14

Of the components listed above, those in categories three and four hold the most prominence in Paul's letter, followed by those in category one. Using these categories, observe *Colossians 1:9–14* and record what's noteworthy.

What spiritual blessings did Paul ask God to give to the Colossians (*Colossians 1:9, 11*)?

Don't just pray for someone else's health or success or material needs or social connections or relationships. Pray for these specific things that are mentioned right here . . . because I need to warn you, ours is a culture of deception. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to *Colossians 1:10*, what spiritual outcome did Paul want for them?



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14

Colossians 1:12–14 states why Paul prayed for them. What spiritual realities had happened to these new believers which led Paul to pray on their behalf?

Paul did not say God *would* deliver the Colossians from the kingdom of darkness. *God already had!* When people place their faith in Jesus, God immediately transfers them into the kingdom of His dear Son. Though they remain in the system of the world, darkness no longer enslaves them. Christians walk as children of the light. Already the sun is dawning. Soon, evil will pass away.



Interpretation: Producing Every Kind of Good Fruit

During interpretation, we seek to understand the text. Understanding the historical, cultural, and linguistic context of the passage helps us discern its theological truth. That truth is precisely what God wants us to believe and follow today.

For this study, you will need your commentary. Pastor Chuck's *Insights on Colossians* is a must-have for your library if you don't own a copy. An excellent online tool for this study is *Constable's Notes*. Before you consult these resources, however, formulate in your own words the meaning of the phrases discussed below and then compare them with the study tools. Then prepare for those lightbulbs to start flashing!

Looking at *Colossians 1:9*, distinguish and define what Paul meant when he said, “knowledge of his will” and “spiritual wisdom and understanding.”



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14

Distinguish and define “endurance” and “patience” as used in *Colossians 1:11*. Paul referred to these traits as outcomes of our being strengthened with God’s glorious power. Why do we need God’s strength to endure and have patience? What spiritual attacks do Christians normally face that require endurance and patience?

Colossians 1:11–12 states that Paul wanted the Colossians to live with joy and gratitude. *Verse 11* mentions how we receive this joy, and *verses 13–14* mention the *cause* for our gratitude. Summarize these logical connections below.

Such radical living flows out of an act of God on our behalf and the work of God in our hearts. We rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy because He did exactly that—Christ died for sinners and gave us a faith more precious than gold.



Correlation: On Guard against False Teaching

False teaching did not confine itself to Colossae in the early church. Nearly every book in the New Testament, in some way or another, mentions this invasive problem. Jude, like Paul, also felt compelled to address it by writing a short, twenty-five-verse letter that describes the lives of false teachers, explains their teaching, and counsels us on how we can guard against their errors.



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14

Read through *Jude* and summarize what he said on these three topics.

False Teachers

False Teaching

Guarding against False Teaching

*Watch out for any teacher or any ministry that encourages exclusivity, regularly criticizes good teachers and reliable ministries, or engages in nonstop self-promotion.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling

Colossians 1:9–14



Application: Pray like Paul

To help you incorporate into your life the truths of this biblical passage, Pastor Chuck shares three simple guidelines to use when you pray for others.

1. *Pray faithfully*: Stay at it! Don't lose hope on lost friends or family. Don't accept Satan's lie that "so-and-so will never change." You worship the God of limitless possibilities.
2. *Pray specifically*: Toss out vague, complacent, lifeless language. Name your request. Specify the spiritual outcome you want in the lives of those you pray for.
3. *Pray confidently*: God can do it! Yes, He is able to do "infinitely more than we might ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Plus, it delights our Father to give good gifts to His children.

Reflect on how you have prayed in the recent past. In what areas has your prayer life been strong? In what areas has it been weak?

How can you better follow Pastor Chuck's guidelines?

Only with the Spirit's power and illumination can a person embrace the gospel that gives life and cling to the same gospel that sustains life. That was the goal of Paul's praying back then. That is the goal of our praying today.



A Prayer Worth Remembering and Modeling
Colossians 1:9–14



A FINAL PRAYER

Choose one person for whom you can pray using Paul’s model and Pastor Chuck’s tips. Record your intercession below.

ENDNOTES

1. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 664.
2. Visit [sts.insight.org](https://www.sts.insight.org) to learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY THREE

Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

God is not reconciled to humankind; we are reconciled to God. It's very important that we see it that way. We are the ones who have sinned. We are the ones who have caused the disharmony, and if there is to be harmony, then sin must be dealt with. As a result, the initiative and the action for reconciliation must come from God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A letter from Pliny the Younger offers us a non-Christian glimpse into the early Christian church. Roman Emperor Trajan commissioned Pliny as a governor of Bithynia from AD 111–113. There, Pliny encountered Christians and wrote about them to Trajan, asking how he should deal with their refusal to worship Roman gods.

According to Pliny, the Christians “were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god.”¹

Members of the early church habitually met to hear from God through Scripture, to pray, to take the Lord's Supper, and to sing hymns. These hymns united, strengthened, and educated them because of the songs' ornate combination of memorable melodies and rich theology. These hymns shaped their hearts and minds around the glory of Christ . . . just like many hymns today.

Remarkably, we still have access to one of these early hymns! It's our focus for this study, which is Colossians 1:15–23. This short poem stands as one of the highest theological peaks in the New Testament, so pack your gear because we're hiking to the top!



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Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer is always the first step of our spiritual climb. Pray that this study brings you into a greater appreciation of Christ's work on your behalf as you gain a deeper understanding of His eternal nature and plan. Record your prayer below.

Hymns are deep and worshipful. They remind us of the great truths of the faith. They communicate a definite message, and when written well, they have singable tunes where there is a progression of truth taught throughout. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The false teachers minimized the person and role of Jesus. They sought to lure the believers in Colossae away from the truth, singing: “He’s a god among many—acknowledge them all, so you don’t anger any. No touching this, stop tasting that. And never forget your holy-day list.”

But as you’ll see, Paul sang a much better tune . . . that Christ’s supremacy in *all* things makes Him—and Him alone—sufficient for *our* lives.



Observation: An Ancient Hymn Exalting Christ

Begin observation by reading through *Colossians 1:15–23* several times. Read it aloud to yourself. Use a couple of translations to really cement its words in your mind. Pastor Chuck’s favorites are the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.

Next, simply write down what each verse claims about Christ’s person, His status compared to creation, and His actions within and upon creation.



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

Three claims in *Colossians 1:15*:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Two claims in *Colossians 1:16*:

1. _____
2. _____

Two claims in *Colossians 1:17*:

1. _____
2. _____

Jesus is supreme in the act of creation. We are not to worship the earth or anything in it. We're to worship the one who created the earth, Jesus, the one through whom and for whom it was created. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Four claims in *Colossians 1:18*:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

One claim in *Colossians 1:19*:

1. _____

It is Christ who is to be exalted. Christ is the one who is to occupy first place in our thinking, in our motives, in our preaching, in our gathering together, in our commitment to missions. Christ is first in the church. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Two claims in *Colossians 1:20*:

1. _____

2. _____

Now briefly summarize how Paul applied his cosmic statements about Jesus to the local believers in Colossae (*Colossians 1:21–22*).

What responsibility did Paul assign to the Colossians as participants in God's grand story (*1:23*)?



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

New Testament scholar David Garland precisely summarizes this dense passage:

Paul anchors Christ’s cosmic supremacy in salvation history and in his Lordship over the church. The image of the invisible God entered the plane of human experience in order to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth by means of his humiliating death. Christ establishes his Lordship in house churches, prison cells, and families, as well as in the furthest reaches of the heavens.²



Interpretation: Defining Supremacy

When we interpret a passage, we ask certain questions and examine additional *Bible study resources* to gain clarity regarding the following categories:

1. The cultural, biblical, and historical context
2. The literary genre and use of language
3. The author’s intent for writing
4. The author’s beliefs, assumed and stated, about God and life

Item 4 is always the most important and our goal in interpretation. For this study, item 1 is especially important to help us reach that goal. What did Paul mean when he said, “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God” (*Colossians 1:15*), and what significance does this statement hold for the rest of *1:15–17*?



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

What did Paul mean when he said, “Christ is also the head of the church” (*Colossians 1:18*), and what did Jesus do to claim this position? How did the blood of Christ create peace? What kind of peace?

Don't let anyone tell you that Christ's shed blood isn't important. It is the divine detergent that washes away the sins of the world. Without the blood, you have no hope of having your sins washed away. But because Jesus gave His blood on our behalf, God acknowledges the blood as that which brings reconciliation and, now, we are right with God, rather than living fearful of Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Lastly, describe what Paul meant in his exhortation to the Colossians in [1:23](#). What does it look like in everyday living to “believe this truth” and “stand firmly in it”? What is significant about Paul’s command to the Colossians not to drift *from the assurance* they received when they heard the good news?

When you believe in Christ as Savior, you become united with Him in His relationship with the Father. God counts you as His own in Christ. His blamelessness becomes yours. His holiness becomes yours. His eternal inheritance becomes your eternal inheritance. His access to the Father becomes your access to the Father.



Correlation: Every Knee Shall Bow

We read another hymn to Christ in Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi—a letter which he probably wrote at the same time he wrote to the church in Colossae. Paul recorded the hymn for his readers’ instruction like he did with his hymn in Colossians.



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

Read *Philippians 2:1–11*. The first five verses contain the life-lesson, and the last six verses contain the song. What key life-lesson did Paul draw from the hymn? How did Paul get that life-lesson from the hymn?

Jesus is coequal, coeternal, coexistent with the Father and with the Spirit. In the form of the Godhead, before any of what we call today's world or the surrounding galaxies around us existed, He was there. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: Taking Responsibility

Two applications come from today's passage. We receive them after learning from Paul how Jesus reconciled the cosmos to Himself. In *Colossians 1:21–22*, he highlighted the salvation they received. In *Colossians 1:23*, he highlighted their need to hold fast to the one who saved them.

First, *recall the path and outcome of your life prior to believing in Jesus*. Perhaps you believed from a young age and God graciously prevented you from shipwrecking your life. Or, perhaps, you were destitute of happiness and hope—at the very end of yourself—and all kinds of evil thoughts and actions directed your course of life.

Regardless of your past, now you have been brought near to God by faith in His Son who died and conquered the grave for you. Simply record a prayer of thanksgiving listing what He saved you from and how He gave you new life and hope.



Crowning Christ as Lord of All

Colossians 1:15–23

Second, *examine the strength of your faith*. Are you standing firm in the truth which you have believed from the day you were saved? What temptations do you encounter that might cause you to drift? Record below your plan to keep the gospel central in your heart and mind, hands and mouth. This kind of planning helps you combat any deception from false teaching or even self-deceit.

Today, we continue in the same habit as Christians have done from the beginning—singing hymns “to Christ as to a god.” Because He is God—maker of all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Yet, He’s not only maker, He’s our reconciler who spilled His own blood that we might have eternal union with Him and peace in Him. *That’s something worth singing about!*



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for sending Your Son and creating peace between us. You harnessed all that is divine, namely Yourself, to pave the way for our union together. In You, I have fullness of joy. I simply ask that You firm up my faith in You and help me to stand strong in the truth without drifting. The gospel of Your Son is good news indeed! In His strong name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Pliny the Younger, “#102: Pliny’s Letter to Trajan,” ed. Dan Graves, Christian History Institute, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/pliny>.
2. David E. Garland, *NIV Application Commentary: Colossians and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 90.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY FOUR

A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29

How valuable it is when we teach the truth to include exhortations regarding things that need to be corrected. People not only need the Lord. They also need to know the truth concerning the Lord. People in ministry not only need to be engaged in evangelism. We also need to be engaged in edification.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WORDS, like knives, often grow dull from constant use. This has occurred in words commonly used in Christian circles—like the word *ministry*. Its sharp, spiritual edge is beginning to blunt.

At its core, *ministry* means “service.” So, believers often use *ministry* because Jesus teaches us to value all people and consider them worthy of aid no matter the kind of aid: spiritual, physical, mental, emotional. A medical practice, teaching post, and caregiving vocation could each be a Christian *ministry* when a Christian improves others’ lives through useful, God-honoring service.

But Paul and the other New Testament writers had something more specific in mind with the word *ministry* when used in connection with Christ. In this narrow sense, *a Christian ministry serves Christ by proclaiming His message and helping His people grow in Him.*

Paul gets into the details of this kind of ministry in Colossians 1:23–29, our focus for this study. Pastor Chuck Swindoll carefully walks us through this passage because he doesn’t want us to thoughtlessly toss around the term and, as a result, dull its meaning. All Christians need a precise yet comprehensive understanding of this concept so we can improve our participation in it.



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A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In our passage, Paul claimed his dependence upon Jesus for gospel ministry: “That’s why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.” (Colossians 1:29). We not only depend upon God for our energy to accomplish His work but also to understand His Word. So take a moment now to request the Spirit’s help in this study.

How gracious of God to give us His Book that is timeless and true. We can always count on this: When we open His Book, we will hear truth. Truth to learn and truth to live by. It’s no exception as we turn to this little letter written to the Colossians. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible, like nothing else, can bring stability to our lives, providing us a rock to stand on. God channels His divine power, via the Holy Spirit, to give us the benefits of knowing Him: comfort, peace, perseverance, joy, wisdom, and hope . . . to name a few. But acquiring these benefits requires us to learn His Word. Like Pastor Chuck says, “There is no shortcut to maturity. It comes slowly but surely to those who search the Scriptures.”¹

That’s why we take the time to learn just a small piece of God’s Word in each of these *Searching the Scriptures* Bible studies.



Observation: The Minister

Observation requires patience and steadiness but not stillness. Like fly-fishing in a mountain river, we must wait for the fish to bite, but must constantly pull back the rod and recast the fly to the perfect position.



A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29

Observation, too, requires intentional, constant effort to see afresh and receive anew what God has to say through His Word. With that in mind, observe *Colossians 1:23–29*. Do so using multiple translations and by reading the passage aloud. Jot down your key observations from this passage.

Paul said God had appointed him to be His servant to proclaim the good news. What feature of that good news did Paul explain in *1:26–27*?

No message is truly complete if it does not include the name of Christ—the name that is above every name. Christ lives in you. Let Him be your identifying mark, Christ in you.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Toward what end did Paul’s proclamation serve (*Colossians 1:28*)?

As an apostle appointed by God, Paul zeroed in on his gospel stewardship, his mandate from God to “tell others about Christ” (1:28). Proclaiming, teaching, and warning became the top priorities of Paul’s life soon after the Lord called him into the ministry on the Damascus Road.



A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29



Interpretation: A Ministry of Proclamation

Pastor Chuck highlighted five essentials of Paul’s ministry, requiring both our understanding and execution, if we want to follow in the apostle’s footsteps.

Suffering

Paul did not dodge suffering or count it an evil to be avoided at all cost. In his online commentary, Thomas Constable helpfully *summarizes* differing interpretations of Paul’s enigmatic words, “participating in the sufferings of Christ” (*Colossians 1:24*). Review how scholars have understood Colossians 1:24, and record what you think the verse means along with its significance for Christians today.

Proclaiming

In *Colossians 1:3–23*, Paul summarized the *divine message* he proclaimed throughout his ministry. God had made Paul’s priority the task of proclamation. What did Paul have in mind by using the word *proclaimed*? Consider to whom he made this proclamation and in what contexts (*Colossians 1:25*).



A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29

Teaching and Warning

Paul followed his proclamation with consistent *teaching* and *warning*. Distinguish between these two terms. What did Paul mean by them (*Colossians 1:28*)? Consult netbible.org or Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*.

A ministry that does not include reproof, admonition—a kind of warning—is not a complete ministry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Depending

Paul knew he did not work alone nor depend upon his own cunning or physical strength. God empowered him. Explain the meaning of *Colossians 1:29* and how this empowerment is significant for Christian ministry today.

Suffering. Proclaiming. Teaching. Warning. Depending. Five essential elements of faithful, authentic Christian ministry. Not only are these actions necessary to do the work, but they are sufficient to complete the work. Never doubt it!



A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29



Correlation: Paul in Action

The evangelist Luke’s second volume, Acts, comes to us as the first record from early church history—detailing the acts of God’s Spirit through His apostles, with more than half of the book devoted to Paul’s ministry. Acts 20:13–37 offers us a window to see Paul in action—how he performed his ministry.

Simply read through [Acts 20:13–37](#) a time or two. Note how Paul recounted his faithful stewardship. How did Paul model the five essentials we learned from [Colossians 1:23–29](#)?

When you read your Bible, pay attention to words. They are the building blocks of thought. And true thoughts lead to an understanding of God’s truth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Depending on Christ’s Power

No matter your vocation, you are called to participate in Christian ministry at some level because you are a child of God. So, Pastor Chuck crafted four principles to help every Christian minister well.

1. *We’re appointed as servants, not hired to hold a job.* Renewed lives and divine applause give us enough reward for our work.
2. *We’re thankful for suffering, not resentful.* Suffering produces perseverance and proven character. In eternity, Christians will look back at their sacrifices and say, “Worth it!”
3. *We’re telling everyone the secret, not keeping it to ourselves.* God has acted. He has spoken. The grace revolution happened on the cross. Now all are welcome to enjoy its benefits. God has chosen you to do the inviting.
4. *We’re giving it our all, not holding back.* Fight sloth—ministry’s great enemy. Service entails exertion, sometimes agonizing labor. Your work in the Lord is not in vain.



A Precise Explanation of Ministry

Colossians 1:23–29

Do any of these principles call you to action? If so, record below how you can strengthen your personal ministry by detailing your plan to better follow one or all of Pastor Chuck’s biblically based principles.

The beauty of God’s Word lies in its ability to speak to us personally. Do you sense the Spirit giving you a specific principle to follow? If so, write it down. Then, summarize how you want to implement it.

Paul kept a keen edge on the meaning of the word *ministry*. He spoke with precision and gave us an example to follow so we can do ministry with similar verve and effectiveness as the great apostle himself.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for making me come to know the great secret—that a man scourged and crucified endured such agony for me that His pain might lead to my joy, that His death might lead to my life. With the demonstration of the Spirit’s power, He rose victorious. Now, the life I live, I do so by faith in the Son of God. Increase my faith that I might proclaim the gospel as Paul proclaimed it. Let my heart be like Yours. In Christ’s name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 14. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY FIVE

Counsel from a Concerned Apostle

Colossians 2:1–12

You do not need more if you have Christ. You are not missing anything because, with Christ, you have the very essence of God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE cult leaders who intruded the Colossian church not only assaulted the faith of each Christian but, consequently, threatened cutting the church's bond of love. False teaching does that. It corrupts right practice. It breaks apart communities. Paul could not stand idly by to let this happen to the Colossian believers, so he wrote the letter we're focused on in this series.

After expounding the gospel, the supremacy of Christ, and his own ministry labors for the church in general, Paul addressed the erroneous doctrines in Colossae. False teachers had introduced mysticism, asceticism, legalism, and even astrology, which implied Jesus alone wasn't enough for salvation. Paul knew all too well that the added weight of "empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense" (Colossians 2:8) would deluge their simple faith in Christ and drown out their love for each other.

In this first of two sermons on Colossians chapter two, Pastor Chuck Swindoll details Paul's counsel that leads his readers back to Christ in whom the Christian has all he or she needs spiritually. Learning how Paul dismantled the falsities in his day will prove instructive for us to do the same in ours.



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Counsel from a Concerned Apostle

Colossians 2:1–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, reflect on Pastor Chuck’s prayer below. Make it your own. A soft heart and open mind, which can come only from the Spirit’s prompting, must accompany our study. Bring these requests forward, knowing that the Lord delights in giving such gifts.

Father, thank You for the privilege of learning Your Word. May it mean something very significant to me as the days pass and times get hard and nights grow long. Remind me, Lord, that I am in Christ, and with Him I have “all things richly to enjoy.” In His matchless name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Colossians needed each other more than ever during the time when Paul wrote them. Paul cringed over Satan’s scheming in their midst. He wished he could be with them, but Rome had locked him down under house arrest. Even so, Paul *could* visit them through his pen.

At the beginning of chapter two, the Colossians learned they were receiving counsel from a man who had agonized for them even though they had not seen him face to face. Surely *that* got their attention!



Observation: Personal Encouragement

Begin by observing *Colossians 2:1–12*. Read slowly and thoughtfully, and note below your important finds.



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Colossians 2:1–12

Colossians 2:1–5

How did Paul express his emotional and spiritual attachment to the Colossians?

What outcome did Paul want his letter to produce among them? He mentioned this outcome in both positive and negative terms.

What could make that outcome a reality among the believers?



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Colossians 2:1–12

Colossians 2:6–7

What responsibility did Paul lay upon his readers in *Colossians 2:6*, and how did he further explain it in *2:7*?

What did Paul say would mark the life of one who obeyed his command to “continue to follow” Jesus (*Colossians 2:6–7*)?

A marked sign of good health and strong growth is an overflow of thanksgiving.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Colossians 2:8–12

Specify Paul’s two descriptions of the false teachings and the two sources of these doctrines that threatened the church in Colossae (*Colossians 2:8*).

Descriptions

1. _____
2. _____



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Colossians 2:1–12

Sources

1. _____
2. _____

How does *Colossians 2:9–10* clue us into the idea that the false teachers sought to enhance Christianity by adding to Christ?

How did Paul explain to the Colossians their completeness in Christ in *Colossians 2:9–12*?

Paul turned his audience's attention to the basics. By believing in Jesus, they were born anew. Next, they were not to swerve from the truth but stay on the spiritual path—centered on Christ, united in love.



Interpretation: Doctrinal Warnings

Now let's define more clearly what Paul meant with his references to false teaching and how our connection to Christ precludes the need for spiritual supplements. Remember to consult your Bible study tools. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* is Pastor Chuck's favorite dictionary. If you do not own a commentary on Colossians, Pastor Chuck has published *one* that would be a great addition to your library.



Counsel from a Concerned Apostle

Colossians 2:1–12

Do a little research on [Colossians 2:8](#). Explain the substance of these false teachings Paul addressed, where they might have come from, and their worldview that stood contrary to the gospel. Consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#) on Colossians if needed.

If you haven't learned it yet, learn, starting today, that those who would lead you astray do not do so by insulting you. They don't use words that are harsh and offensive. They're very persuasive. They appear to be very loving. They use words that describe "caring for you" and "interested in you" and "concerned that you may be missing what life is all about." They're here to tell you in their smooth and persuasive manner that "this is what you're missing." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Next, let's review what role circumcision had among the Jewish people and describe what Paul meant when he used it in reference to Christ and Christians ([Colossians 2:11–12](#)). Do so by looking up [circumcision](#) in your Bible dictionary. Paul wrote, "Christ performed a spiritual circumcision" (2:11). To what spiritual act was Paul referring (2:12)?



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Colossians 2:1–12

One commentator aptly summarizes Paul's intent for writing Colossians 2:1–12:

All the fullness of Deity dwells in Christ, and in him believers have been given the fullness of salvation through his death and resurrection. There is nothing we can do or need to do to achieve it for ourselves. No self-imposed discipline, solemn rites, or otherworldly visions will make us fuller members of the community of the saints (1:12), will deliver us more fully from [our] sins, or will more fully secure a better hope.¹



Correlation: Our Crucifixion with Christ

In Christ, we have all we need! All “the fullness of God” lives in Christ and *we are complete in Him* (Colossians 2:9). We are fully accepted by God, freed from sin's control, and absolutely secure both now and forever. When God joins us to Christ through faith, we share in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Consequently, our old life is dead, and our new life has begun!

Read Paul's declaration of our marvelous and mysterious union with Christ in [Galatians 2:20](#). In the space below, write down what it means to be crucified with Christ and the benefits of our co-crucifixion.

Before our conversion, sin dominated our lives, but after conversion, the Spirit removes sin's power. ***What a grand truth to remember every day!***



Counsel from a Concerned Apostle

Colossians 2:1–12

Application: Watering Our Roots

How do we harness Paul’s teaching about Christ to help us today? Pastor Chuck wrote four tips for applying the Scriptures to your life.²

1. *Think*: “When you apply the Scriptures, reflect on what is going on in your life.”
2. *Acknowledge*: “Identify any personal trouble spot in your life.” It could be sin or temptation, illness or loss, anxiety or depression.
3. *Ask*: “Bring up specific questions as you invite the Lord to probe within.”
4. *Pursue*: “Seek out paths that lead you to wholeness and spiritual health.”

Use these four tips now and create your own, specific application for Colossians 2:1–12. This, too, requires prayer, meditation, and sensitivity to God’s Spirit. Don’t lose heart if it’s difficult. Applying God’s Word takes patience and practice, and it’s worth it!

In his sermon, Pastor Chuck ends with three application points to help us remain grounded in gospel truth and knit together in gospel community.

1. *Once every week, affirm and encourage someone.*
2. *Once every day, think of something for which you are grateful.*
3. *Through the hours of the day, pause and remind yourself, “I am complete in Christ.”*

Keep these in mind as you go about your week. Perhaps you need to reach out to a friend right now. Go ahead. You’ll be glad you did.



Counsel from a Concerned Apostle

Colossians 2:1–12



A FINAL PRAYER

To complete this study, record a prayer below. Thank Christ for your connection to Him, and ask Christ to strengthen you in your walk with Him.

ENDNOTES

1. David E. Garland, *Colossians and Philemon*, NIV Application Commentary Series, gen. ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 139.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 175, 176, 178. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY SIX

Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Living forgiven opens the door for us to live our lives with freedom.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERY Christian must leap over two hurdles at some point on the path of spiritual growth. First, Christians must take God at His Word that they are *fully* forgiven of their sins—past, present, and future. Second, Christians must unburden themselves from the nitpicky, religious scruples of legalistic Christians.

Both happen only by the Spirit's power. Both must happen before we can live freely and confidently in Christ. Have you taken these two steps in your Christian journey?

Many struggle with at least one. Some have incriminating memories from their non-Christian past. Such thoughts spring to mind creating guilt, shame, and humiliation. Others struggle to achieve freedom from the judging eyes of modern-day Pharisees who enslave them with rules that are impossible to keep.

Wherever you find yourself on the spiritual path, this study of Colossians 2:13–23 will help you conquer those obstacles. Pastor Chuck Swindoll wants you to live freely in Christ, assured that your sins are completely forgiven and that you are released from others' expectations that poison your spiritual growth instead of nourishing it.



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Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Spiritual growth does not happen by human strength alone. Yes, it requires our effort, but it depends upon God. We dig, till, plant, and water, but “God makes the seed grow” (1 Corinthians 3:7). Considering that truth, begin this study in prayer, asking God to make the seed of His Word grow in your heart and produce fruit in your life. Write your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In Colossians 2:13–23, Paul continued detailing the doctrinal errors and unprofitable practices the false teachers in Colossae taught.



Observation: God Made You Alive with Christ

During observation, we walk through the garden of Scripture slowly so we can see the ornate, colorful designs and taste the spiritual food God has given us. Read *Colossians 2:13–23* with that in mind. Do so a few times. Allow its main ideas and logic to stick in your brain. Note below the fresh observations you find.



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

What purposes did Jesus' death accomplish (*Colossians 2:13–15*)?

Logically, Paul reasoned from three theological truths:

- “You were dead because of your sins” (2:13)
- Christ “disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities” (2:15)
- “You have died with Christ” (2:20)

How are these theological truths connected to Paul's commands, “So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink” (2:16) and “Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial” (2:18)? Hint: the answer is in Paul's analysis of these rules in [2:17](#) and [2:19](#).

It's impossible to please everyone else. So, my goal is to please the Lord Jesus Christ, and in doing so, He teaches me to be kind, to be gracious, to be loving, to be understanding. Not to be harsh in my freedom, not to be proud of the fact that I am free but to walk in humility and not use it as a tool to take advantage of others. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Lastly, list the specifics of the false teachings in Colossae and how Paul described their futility (*Colossians 2:20–23*).

Self-made, do-it-yourself religion cannot bring you to God, improve your relationship with Him, nor even increase your spiritual power. What God wants from us, He provided for us in Christ and gives to us through His Spirit when we approach Him in faith.



Interpretation: Don't Let Anyone Condemn You

Like high-pressure salespeople, false teachers promoted their wisdom and ways as superior, but *Jesus Christ is our all in all!* His saving work makes spiritual add-ons superfluous. We need only Christ to be forgiven and to live free.

Understanding and Accepting Forgiveness

In *Colossians 2:14*, Paul explained how Christ forgave our sins. What did Paul mean when he said Jesus “canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away?”



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Understanding and Claiming Freedom

In *Colossians 2:20*, Paul claimed you are free as a Christian because Christ has “set you free from the spiritual powers of this world.” What did he mean by this statement, and how is it significant for us today?

The reason you are forgiven is because of the death of Christ on the cross. The reason you are free is because His grace has set you free. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In his commentary on Colossians, Pastor Chuck summarizes Colossians 2 by emphasizing the same subject Paul himself emphasized: Jesus Christ, our all in all.

Paul’s defense against the triple threat of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism in Colossians 2:16–23 was the same: the person and work of Jesus Christ. Against legalism, Jesus is the Liberator who forgave our sins through the Cross and freed us from the Law. Against mysticism, Jesus is the One in whom the fullness of Deity dwells bodily; He alone is the sole Mediator between God and humanity and the One through whom we have all wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual insight. Against asceticism, Jesus is the One who sprung us—through our association with His death—from the prison of worldly rules and regulations that can’t please God.¹



Correlation: Walk Humbly with Your God

Micah 6:6–8 complements Colossians 2:13–23 because of the contrast between true and fake spirituality. In the 700s BC, God raised up Micah in the village of Moresheth and called him to be a prophet. Micah prophesied with the prince of prophets, Isaiah.

Micah 6 tells of a dispute between God and His people. God presented His case against His people in *Micah 6:1–5*. Then, in *Micah 6:6–8*, a dialogue arose. In 6:6–7, Micah iterated how people accused God of burdening them with orders. God replied in 6:8 with what He actually required.



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Review *Micah 6:6–8*. What similarities of false piety do you find between *Micah 6:6–7* and *Colossians 2:13–23*?

What does the life of faith look like according to *Micah 6:8*, and how does that image correlate with Paul's teaching explored above?

God invites us to walk with Him! Never forget to be awed by the fact that the God who created the universe wants you to walk with Him in an everlasting relationship of reciprocal love and ever-increasing joy.



Application: He Has Set You Free

By this point in our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we hope the Word has deepened your assurance of Christ's forgiveness and boosted your sense of freedom. To help you on the path, Pastor Chuck provides three application principles from his study of *Colossians 2:13–23*.

1. *Be strong in God's Word.* Keep worshiping Christ, making Him Lord of your heart.
2. *Refuse and resist all other substitutes.* Keep choosing Christ, reminding yourself He's all you need and that your life is eternally secure with Him. One day, you will see Him as He is and be like Him.
3. *Don't be afraid to risk living unshackled.* Your master is Christ. More than anyone else, He cares for your good. And better than anyone else, He can achieve your good.



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23

Do you struggle believing Christ has forgiven *all* your sins? Hiding His Word in your heart and confessing His Word in your prayers cultivates assurance of His promise. Record below a verse or two from Colossians that will help you with assurance, and plan how you want to internalize its truth in your living and praying.

Do you need to have a conversation with someone who's imposing his or her self-made, religious rules on you? Pray for wisdom to approach the discord gently, explaining your freedom in Christ. Record a plan below and even schedule the best time to talk with that person. Remember, pray for his or her heart to soften and for grace and respect to guide your demeanor.

As a follower of Christ, you've already attained the victory. He forgave all your sins—past, present, and future—and released you from your former chains. At the resurrection, you and all who have placed their faith in Jesus will be released completely from the bonds of corruption and decay.



Living Forgiven . . . Living Free

Colossians 2:13–23



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are my guide, my light, my comforter, my provider. Free me from being dominated by the shame and guilt of my past sins and empower me to live as You have called me to live—as it is written, “For freedom Christ has set us free.” His name be praised. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights: Insights on Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017), 157. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY SEVEN

Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

The apostle says, “Set your sights on the realities of heaven.” So next time you’re in a slump or a funk and you can’t seem to pull out of it, look at your sights. Look at your focus. Turn it in a vertical direction and get out of the horizontal frame of mind. I don’t know that there’s anything more valuable regarding attitude than the right perspective. How we look at things makes all the difference.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE often picture coaches as those fanatics on television holding clipboards, yelling at referees, jumping up and down when their team scores, scolding the recalcitrant, spurring on the disheartened, and giving orders to everyone. Teams with the best coaches often enjoy the sweetest successes. Conversely, failure often finds the team without a good coach.

To the surprise of some, the role of coach is not limited to sports arenas. Bosses act as coaches as do parents, consultants, teachers, and the list goes on. These coaches succeed when they do more than correct and instruct. They must also inspire and encourage.

Such a posture we find in Paul as his tone transitioned in Colossians 3. He became the coach—an experienced coach qualified to instruct. He relayed words brimming with inspiration and encouragement. It’s to these words we turn in this study on Colossians 3:1–14.



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Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before sitting under the apostle Paul’s coaching, quiet yourself. Pray to God that His Spirit would help you see as never before, so you would receive from Scripture exactly what you need in this season of life.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Don’t handle! Don’t taste! Don’t touch!” (Colossians 2:21). Even today, Christians fall into the trap of negation—focusing only on those things we should avoid.

“NO!” said Paul. After spotlighting the errors in Colossae, Paul gave them the Christian game plan: where to look, what to stop, what to restart, and even what to wear, spiritually speaking.



Observation: Receiving the Game Plan

Look for those categories as you read *Colossians 3:1–14*. Remember not to rush. Observe it slowly.¹ Record below any observations you find especially important and interesting.



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach
Colossians 3:1–14

What to Think About—Colossians 3:1–4

Why did Paul want the members of the Colossian church to set their minds on Christ (*Colossians 3:3*)?

How would the truth in *3:4* have motivated the Colossian church?

What to Stop—Colossians 3:5–9

In this section, Paul defined what he meant by “the things of earth” in *Colossians 3:2*. How many things or vices did Paul list? Write a single statement summarizing them.



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

For which two reasons did Paul want the Colossians to put aside these practices? (*Colossians 3:6, 9*)

Paul refers to this all-consuming drag of materialism that is everywhere, all around us, and his concern is that it comes to live within us, and we begin to worship the things of this world. “You used to do that,” and now he says, “Don’t go there. Don’t go there.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What to Do to Start Over—Colossians 3:10–11

Before telling the Colossian church what to practice, Paul addressed their identity. How had their identity changed?

How did Paul compare their new identity in Christ with their old life before Christ?



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

What to Wear—Colossians 3:12–14

According to Paul, new practices accompany the new identity Christians have in Christ. How many practices did Paul list? Summarize these practices in a single sentence.

In just fourteen verses, Paul gave spot-on advice for thriving in the Christian life. The Christian has been redefined in terms of Christ's death, victory, and love. Our old sinful identity and its deadly habits no longer control us. We are new. So, we live new in Christ, our all in all.



Interpretation: Understanding the Game Plan

Here we will gain a clearer understanding of what Paul meant, why he wrote what he wrote, what it teaches us about God, and how to live as a Christian today.

Notice in *Colossians 3:1–4* how Paul connects our past (Colossians 3:1), present (3:3), and future (3:4) with Jesus. Why did Paul do this, and why is this significant for Christians today?



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

Using your resources, explain what Paul meant by, “Put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you” (*Colossians 3:5*). Describe how you can follow this command in a practical way.

How does *3:10–11* relate to *3:1–4*?

You now act on the fact that there’s a new nature within you with a new power and the ability to become like our Master, like our Savior. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

If you read multiple translations, you will notice an interpretive difficulty in *3:14* regarding the word translated “love.” Some define *love* as that which binds together the virtues of *3:10–11* while others translate *love* as that which binds together the church, the body of Christ.

While both are true, which do you believe Paul meant here? Why is Paul’s statement important for Christians today?



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14

Christ has restored our true identity as God’s image bearers. Only through this God-given power can we reflect God’s patience, kindness, mercy, and love. These new spiritual clothes radiate the light and joy of our King, foreshadowing the light and joy that will saturate every speck of dust and breath of air on this earth when His kingdom comes in full.

Correlation: Enriching the Game Plan

From the very beginning, God made us to be like walking mirrors reflecting His nature and representing His presence. By refusing to obey God, humanity shed its divine mandate and privilege, leaving itself impoverished of God’s presence.

All salvation history testifies to God’s restoration of our identity in Him as well as our fellowship with Him. Psalm 15 captures this picture perfectly, complementing Colossians 3:1–14 by connecting our fellowship with God with our reflection of Him.

Read *Psalm 15*. Explain how Psalm 15 ties our relationship with God to behaving like God.

Meditate on this psalm, and then write a brief reflection on how it affects you.

God swore a blessing to Abraham, involving the whole world, in Genesis 12. We realize the fulfillment of that blessing through Christ—God’s own Son—who lived, died, and rose again in order that God’s people might enjoy a personal relationship with Him. That’s remarkable!



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14



Application: Doing the Game Plan

Applying this passage begins with your perspective. Scripture tells us how things will end. Your connection to Jesus positions you on the winning team. Living victoriously can happen today if we live in light of that truth.

What about this section of Scripture especially relates to your own perspective? Choose one aspect about your own thinking that must change based on your identity in Jesus.

What new habit from the virtue list would you like to work on? Which one do you think you are weak in and would like to develop? Write a brief game plan mapping how you will do so.

Coach Paul made it clear. He presented the Christian life in a nutshell—one we can easily put in our mental pockets and take with us from morning to evening. As the Word of God whispers to us, the power of God flows through us, and Jesus is magnified in us. Thank you, coach Paul.



Spot-On Advice from a Seasoned Coach

Colossians 3:1–14



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, how incredible that my life rests in the hands of Jesus who sits at Your right hand awaiting Your command to return! Thank You that He intercedes for me, that He pleads on my behalf, and that You see both Jesus and me with the same eyes of love. Help me to walk in His ways, to shed my old habits and earthly desires, and to live in newness of life in the power of my new nature which You have given me. In Christ's holy name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Visit sts.insight.org to learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY EIGHT

Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1

Let the Word of Christ run and have free course in your life. Let it fill your life. Let it fill your thoughts. Let it be on your tongue. Let it be in the focus of your eyes. Let it shape your attitude about your situation and your circumstances. You see, the Word of Christ covers all of life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PREVIOUSLY, Paul told the Colossians to live as they are in Christ: *NEW!* With new identities and new natures, they had new power to live in the image of their Creator. But Paul didn't end his instruction there.

Like a master artist training a protégé, Paul did not leave the Colossians guessing about how to paint their new lives. He took up his theological brush and daubed a few strokes of what life in Christ looks like—wherever we are, whatever we do, whenever the time, however we feel.

We look at those strokes in this study of the book of Colossians. Pastor Chuck Swindoll teaches us the wondrous truths of Colossians 3:15–4:1 that we ourselves might affirm with Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).



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Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Let Pastor Chuck's prayer below become your own as you prepare your mind and heart for God's Word.

Our Father, we invite You to invade every part of our lives. Deep within our hearts, begin there. Into our minds, fill our thoughts with those things that will ultimately bring us peace and direction, courage, encouragement. And as these things work together through the power of Your Spirit, we pray that You will serve as the ruler of our lives. Wherever, whatever, whenever, however—may Christ be preeminent, occupying first place in what we say, what we think, and what we do. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Paul wrote with a logical progression in Colossians 3. In the latter part of this chapter—the focus of this study—he explained *how* we set our minds on Christ, the giver of *new life*. Then Paul zeroed in on the Christian's home . . . a very difficult yet very important arena for the Christian to live out that new life.



Observation: Ruled by Peace

Observe *Colossians 3:15–4:1*. Note a few observations below as you do.



Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1

Colossians 3:15–17 addresses all Christians. Record a picture of what life looks like when one follows Paul's directives in these verses.

In *3:18–4:1*, Paul addresses specific life roles. List the five roles below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You cannot name a circumstance, a situation, something you're facing, a decision you need to make, that is outside the bounds of something His Word speaks to. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In a culture that dehumanized slaves and trivialized the value of women and children, Paul ascribed to them dignity as God's image-bearers. In Christ, all stand equal. In Christ, all stand free. In Christ, all have moral responsibility. In Christ, work carries divine weight. In Christ, the home receives an ordered unity motivated not by law or tradition or intimidation but by allegiance to King Jesus, by gratitude for His grace, and by love for one another.



Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1



Interpretation: Christ's Representative

During interpretation, we cultivate the garden of our mind, having received the seed of God's Word, that His words might bloom colorful thoughts of understanding and clarity with roots reaching deep into the soil of the heart. This aids our spiritual maturity. Also, as we move on, don't forget to grab those Bible study resources!

First, consider why obedience to Paul's commands in *Colossians 3:15–17* fosters our flourishing in the earthly roles we inhabit (*3:18–4:1*). How do these two paragraphs relate?

Even though Paul's command to wives (*3:18*) may sound like his command to children (*3:20*), he used different verbs for the commands and qualified them differently. How do these two commands and their qualifications differ, and why is that difference important?

The presence of Christ is to be seen in my home and with my family. The presence of Christ is to pervade, is to permeate my home, my family. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL
A Study of Colossians
STUDY EIGHT

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1

Note Paul's commands to husbands (*Colossians 3:19*) and masters (*4:1*). What was he concerned about for them? Husbands and masters generally interacted with their wives and slaves with dictatorial authority in Paul's day. How did Christ transform the responsibility and attitude for these Christian husbands and masters?

Slaves receive the most attention from Paul, including commands (*3:22–23*), encouragement (*3:24*), and warnings (*3:25*). First, summarize Paul's statements for each category.

During Paul's time, slaves had no legal rights but existed as property and had little moral culpability. They lived in a realm beyond the reach of justice—but not according to Paul. Explain the significance of Paul's words to slaves based on this cultural insight.



Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1

Regarding Paul's exhortations to slaves, think how such theological principles might apply to employees in the workplace in our day. Record one or two below.

Workers, do as you're instructed to do without complaining. Be diligent even when you're unobserved. Realize that your employment reveals your commitment to Christ.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In summary, what does the life of Christ look like in us? In this passage, Paul presented four ways we portray the image of Christ:

- The peace of Christ ruling our hearts (*Colossians 3:15*)
- The message of Christ occupying our minds (*3:16–17*)
- The presence of Christ permeating our homes (*3:18–21*)
- The life of Christ guiding our work (*3:22–4:1*)

Jesus steps into every aspect of our lives. He purifies us with the fires of divine love. He burns away the dross that once corrupted how we treat other people. The life of God takes on a clearer display in our refined nature.



Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1



Correlation: The Household in Ephesus

Paul wrote similar instructions for Ephesian households in *Ephesians 5:21–6:9*. Read this passage a time or two, and consider how it relates to what Paul taught in Colossians. Record below three ways it complements what we learned above.

It is amazing to think how God designed marriage to symbolize Christ's union with the church! It's a good reminder that no random particle exists in our universe without reflecting the glory of God.



Application: Christ at the Center

Paul told the Colossians that Christ is their life, the very center of their existence. After a deep study of this passage, Pastor Chuck encourages you with two applications to cling to as you make Christ the center of your life.

1. *Wherever and whatever*—Christ will eliminate the obstacles preventing you from doing His will. You need not fear or doubt because God is holding you.
2. *Whenever and however*—Christ will enable you to change. Remarkable wonders occur when you make Him preeminent in your life.

Let those truths encourage you. In what way is one or both important for you to remember and embrace?



Wherever, Whatever, Whenever, However . . . Christ!

Colossians 3:15–4:1

Now consider the role or roles you occupy which Paul addressed. For “masters,” think *boss*, and for “slaves,” think *employee*. Based on your study, in what area is Christ transforming you? How is the Spirit moving you to better reflect the Son? Consider this in terms of your attitude, speech, or actions.

Christ has given you a fresh canvas and equipped you with spiritual paint and a theological brush to design a beautiful and unique life—no matter your age or role—that exalts the Master Artist Himself who is making all things new.



A FINAL PRAYER

End this study with a prayer of petition and praise reflecting the truth you learned in Colossians 3:15–4:1.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY NINE

A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

There's a lovely interlude toward the end of the letter to the Colossians. It provides sort of a checklist, if you will, for those of us who know the Lord Jesus. These are simple but profound words that appear in these five verses. They address our life with fellow believers as well as our life among those who are on the outside—literally, the Greek says, “outside,” in verse five where we're told to live wisely among those outsiders.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PILOTS need them. Doctors need them. Teachers and parents need them. For many, checklists have become more than a self-help tip. Some professions require checklists as a policy while busy families cling to them like a lifeline in the crashing waves of day-to-day life . . . and rightfully so.

Checklists help us order our thoughts. They clarify priorities, keep us focused, and aid productivity. They teach us which road to take when life puts a dozen before us.

As we see in Colossians, the use of checklists spans time and cultures. Paul offered a quick, little checklist before closing his letter to the church of Colossae. Pastor Chuck Swindoll takes us through this brief passage, Colossians 4:2–6, to help us walk according to God's priorities.



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A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin by reading *Colossians 4:2–6*. Do so only once and in your favorite translation. Afterward, record a prayer below asking God to bless your time in His Word. Pray for the Spirit to instruct your mind and to anchor His Word in your heart.

Thank You, Father, for the joy of Christ coming into our lives. Thank You for the difference He makes. Thank You for the model of Paul, who though chained to a soldier, of all things, had such a positive outlook and could exhort us who are free to live in a way that is attractive to those on the inside and the outside. May there be a difference in our relationship with outsiders as a result of what we have heard and learned and will do. In Christ's name we pray. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you study *Colossians 4:2–6*, note especially what Paul wrote regarding prayer and the Colossians' relationship with those outside the church.



Observation: Little Things Mean a Lot

Observe *Colossians 4:2–6*. Jot down your findings below.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

What attitude did Paul tell the Colossians to have (*Colossians 4:2*)?

What did Paul tell the Colossians to pray for (*4:3–4*)?

Passion is in Paul's pen as he writes these words. Prayer is to be active, not passive. Bold, not weak. It's to be constant, not casual. It requires alertness, not a dreamy sort of wandering through thoughts and words. In today's terms, Paul is saying to us, "When it comes to prayer, get with it! Get with it!" There's vigilance in the command. No need for a long, drawn-out series of words but short, punctuated, to the point.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How did Paul want the Colossians to live among non-Christians (*4:5*)?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

According to Paul, what characteristics should accompany the Colossians' speech (*Colossians 4:6*)?

Simple, short, unambiguous—but if just one word could describe this checklist, perhaps it would be *vigilance*. Christians live their lives spiritually awake, alive, and eager. They walk in freedom from sin and eternal death, seeing every situation as an opportunity to express Christ's love and to attract others with Christ's message.



Interpretation: Ministry Opportunities and Obstacles

During interpretation, we dig our way to clarity with the tools of Bible study to unearth the theological gems found in the words of the text.

Prayer for Insiders

Explain what Paul's command in *Colossians 4:2*, "Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart," means. Alert to what? What would this act look like in the routine of life?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Paul did not hesitate to ask for prayer. Did you see that Paul *did not* ask for his own prison release? He aligned his life goal around the gospel of Jesus. How does Paul's prayer teach us to be specific and visionary in our own praying (*Colossians 4:3–4*)?

Devote yourself to prayer. Do it with alertness. Do it with a thankful heart. Often, prayer accompanies a thankful heart. Get away from the routine, habitual prayer which some of you have been linked to long enough. You need to learn to pray. And the best way to learn is to teach yourself. Break the habit of longstanding, familiar words, and bring in words that are fresh—that are original. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The New American Standard Bible follows closely Paul's Greek phrasing in *4:3*, "that God will open up to us a door for the word." Likely, Paul meant the hearts of non-Christians when he said *door*. How does this instruct our prayers for non-Christians today?



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Living among Outsiders

Why is it important and what does it mean to live wisely among outsiders? What did Paul refer to specifically when he said to make the most of every opportunity?

Paul wanted our speech toward outsiders to be gracious, attractive, and informed. How do these characteristics support spreading the gospel? What do we lose if we neglect these characteristics?

Paul's finger-length checklist contains truckloads of theological depth. Such depth connects us with *why* we do what we do—praying for others and sharing the gospel. That way we not only focus our minds on God's priorities but align our hearts with God's vision.



Correlation: You Are the Light of the World

In the greatest sermon ever preached, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He uttered remarkable words about our role as His followers in this world. Matthew 5:13–16 correlates well with our study of Colossians 4:2–6.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

Take time now to read and study *Matthew 5:13–16*. What two images did Jesus use to describe His followers in this world? What do they mean, and why are these important for our identity as Christians?

How does Matthew 5:13–16 complement Colossians 4:2–6?

When you are wise . . . you size people up. You pay attention to who they are and how they think. You learn from the signals they give you. Wisdom doesn't come across as being unbecoming or rude. People are not coerced or forced or embarrassed into believing the gospel. They are charmed into righteousness. No one wants to be made to look foolish. Wisdom wears well. It's winsome. It's convincing. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Living Vigilant

Pastor Chuck created four application principles for our consideration. Reflect on them, and let them help you live by Paul's checklist.

1. *Strengthen your commitment to pray.* Be watchful, specific, visionary.
2. *Ask for greater wisdom in your Christian walk.* Cultivate tact. Use common sense. Think before you respond.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

3. *Pay closer attention to outsiders.* They certainly have their eyes and ears on you. Study how to better love them and how to communicate with them more clearly.
4. *Work on becoming more winsome and charming.* Your words matter. Speak intentionally. Consider how you will be heard.

Which of the areas above do you already focus upon? Which seems to come more naturally to you?

Which area do you need to improve? In what way specifically do you need to do so?

Take a moment now to pray for at least one non-Christian you know. Ask God to open his or her heart, to give you the words to say to this person, and to create an opportunity for you to start a gospel discussion. Record below how the Spirit is leading you and how He wants you to broach that conversation.



A Brief Checklist for Believers

Colossians 4:2–6

We just studied Paul’s checklist of little things. By now, we can affirm this statement: “Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things . . . I am tempted to think . . . there are no little things.”¹ Paul certainly believed it. He taught it to the Colossians, and God preserved it for our instruction so we can do what matters.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for being devoted to me, for putting someone in my life to share with me the mystery of Christ, and for leading me to Yourself. I pray for wisdom. Guide my speech to be winsome for outsiders. Help me speak boldly and clearly as I ought. Keep me vigilant and expectant, knowing that Your reigning Son, Jesus our Lord, might split the skies at any moment. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Bruce Barton, as quoted in Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Kindle ed. (New York: RosettaBooks, 2004), 287.



JESUS CHRIST, OUR ALL IN ALL

A Study of Colossians

STUDY TEN

A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

There is no book like the Book of God. No other book can read your intention; can penetrate to your soul, to your spirit. No other book remains alive, regardless where you may turn in its pages. It is relevant. It is in touch. It is penetrating. It is real. We are learning in our study of the Scriptures how valuable these pages, these writings, these truths can be.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DRIVEN. *Single-minded. Undeterred. Accomplished.* Just a few words to describe the apostle Paul, famous for his gospel-zeal and risky travels to proclaim the gospel of Christ where it had not been heard. With these personality traits, some might think of Paul as a lone ranger . . . but he wasn't.

Many of Paul's letters end with specific greetings. Not in a stiff, cold manner but in a fond, warm one, revealing his affection and dependence upon close friends who were his co-laborers.

We arrive at such an ending in this tenth and final study of the book of Colossians. Pastor Chuck Swindoll emphasizes the immense importance of friendships—how they help us like a sheltering tree, shading us from the blistering heat of life and blocking us from biting winds of the world.



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A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin with a request to your Father in heaven. Ask Him for His spiritual provision. Pray that the theological seeds of Colossians might mature you into producing spiritual fruit for many more seasons beyond the weeks you have spent in Colossians.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Before examining the details of Colossians 4:7–18, read through the *whole letter* once more. Do so slowly. Recall what you learned earlier in this series. Reflect on how your perspective has changed, the old practices you shed, and the new habits you picked up.

When I think of friends, I think of companionship. I mean a circle of friends that meets many needs in the realms of your life that a family member can't meet. Individuals who get to know you because you allow that, and you in turn get to know them. They know your weaknesses, and they know your struggles. They understand the times when you can't put thoughts into words and other times when you say more than you should, and you don't want anyone else to hear. A friend hears all of that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Paul's Close Circle of Friends

Using your observation skills, determine the location and significance of the friends Paul mentioned in *Colossians 4:7–18*.

Who were the two individuals Paul sent with his letter to the Colossian church?

1. _____

2. _____



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Who were the six individuals who remained with Paul in Rome?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Who were the two individuals Paul addressed in Colossae?

1. _____
2. _____

How did Paul characterize Epaphras in *Colossians 4:12–13*?

How valuable is a friend who is that kind of prayer warrior! In every circle of Christian friends I've observed, at least one is known as a person of prayer. We look to him or her. We rely on him or her. When some great need occurs, these prayer warriors are the ones we contact. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Paul ends the letter with three statements in *Colossians 4:18*. What three components make up these statements?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What a special insight into Paul's social circle as well as the man himself! We read his comments, concerns, and requests. These glimpses show us how the high-minded apostle kept his feet on the ground and his heart on his sleeve.



Interpretation: Traits Worth Modeling

During interpretation, we discover the significance of what Paul wrote. This process helps us build a bridge between past and present, allowing the timeless, biblical truths to travel across the ages.

In this study, we pay close attention to the role Paul's friends played in the early church, and we note those traits worth emulating. For this exercise, you will need your Bible dictionary.

Begin by looking up the article on *Tychicus*. Summarize his importance in Paul's ministry. Then record one timeless principle we see in the relationship between Paul and Tychicus—especially from what we read in *Colossians 4:7–9*.



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Next, look up *Demas* (*Colossians 4:14*). What tragic change occurred in Demas' life that we can see in the New Testament story? How is Demas' life an important warning for Christians today?

Not all friends remain loyal. Not all friends stay strong. I could name some who were once very close, but for various reasons they turned on the things of God. And today, they wouldn't even want to be named alongside the things of God. They are the Demases of our times. Be careful dealing with people like this. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

From Paul's comments about *Epaphras* (*4:12–13*), what Christian traits do we find in Epaphras worth modeling in our own lives? List two or three that you find most significant.

When Paul commanded, "Remember my chains" (*4:18*), he likely wanted the Colossian church to pray for his circumstances. Based on your reading of Colossians, what specifically did Paul want the Colossian church to pray for? Why is this important for the church today, as some church members enjoy freedom while others suffer imprisonment?



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Paul ended this letter the way he began—with an extension of grace. Paul knew personally the power of grace which had radically transformed him and then sustained him. Paul wanted the church in Colossae to abide in grace, to never forget the benefits available to us in Jesus Christ.



Correlation: A Story of Grace

The apostle of grace did not always keep his anger at bay. As you will read, Paul felt like young John Mark had deserted him, that John Mark had proven himself unworthy of Paul's gospel-spreading mission. Their relationship, highlighted in *Colossians 4:10*, demonstrates the power of grace to change a heart.

First, review *John Mark* in a Bible dictionary.

Summarize the conflict in *Acts 13:13–14* and *15:35–41* that arose between Paul and John Mark during Paul's first missionary journey between AD 47 and 48.

Based on Paul's statement in *Colossians 4:10* (circa AD 61) and *2 Timothy 4:11* (circa AD 66), how had the relationship between Paul and John Mark changed? How is this change instructive for Christians today?



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Through the years, John Mark matured. He became reliable. He saw the failure of his early decision when he abandoned these wonderful friends. And he probably came full circle and maybe even made it right with Paul. So much so, Paul said of Mark, “Welcome him if he comes your way.” Isn’t that great? Here’s a man who had been abandoned by Mark now saying, “I speak in his behalf.” By the way, next time you read the gospel by Mark, remember John Mark. He’s the one who wrote it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul never stopped growing in grace. He did not let the root of bitterness take hold of his heart toward a co-laborer in the gospel. Paul knew the value of spiritual partnerships, not only for the special support they provide but also for the unique delight they bring. That’s why he nourished these relationships. That’s why we must follow his example.



Application: Grace Be with You

First, consider the spiritual partnerships you enjoy. Whether your letter would end with many names or just a few, jot those names down below. Give thanks for them. Pray for their needs and spiritual strength. Model Epaphras’ prayer requests from *Colossians 4:12*.

Now consider one timeless truth and one application you learned from the book of Colossians that you would like to keep with you and cultivate more fully in your life. Write those down below and make a plan for incorporating them into your attitude and habits.



A Fond and Friend-Filled Farewell

Colossians 4:7–18

Paul cared more for the spiritual maturity of local churches than for his own ease. He could endure the chains because he surrendered the outcome of his life to God. He trusted in God's grace no matter what God chose for him—even if it meant chains. End this study by praying Horatius Bonar's hymn below that you might have the same heart and mind as Paul.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thy Way, not Mine, O Lord

I dare not choose my lot;
I would not if I might:
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.
Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.
Not mine, not mine, the choice
In things both great and small;
Be Thou my guide, my strength,
My wisdom, and my all!¹

ENDNOTE

1. Horatius Bonar, "The Way, not Mine, O Lord," [hymnary.org](https://hymnary.org/text/thy_way_not_mine_o_lord) (1857), https://hymnary.org/text/thy_way_not_mine_o_lord.

