

COLOSSIANS

*Jesus is enough!*

WRITTEN

60-62 AD

KEY VERSE

*"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority."*

2:9-10

Last updated April 28, 2023

To correct heresy and wrong perception of Jesus

PURPOSE

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## INTRODUCTION

Colossae was not so far from Ephesus, and there was probably a similar situation in these two churches. Therefore, there are many similarities between the letters to the churches in these two cities. Paul probably wrote both letters from the same prison in Rome in AD 60-62.

Paul goes against heresy in the letter to the Colossians, and from traces, especially in 2:4-23, it seems as if this "Colossian heresy" was a mixture of Christianity, Jewish mysticism, Greek philosophy, and mystery cults. The Colossians seem concerned with what would make them more spiritual and seek spiritual growth in several directions. Paul's main argument is that Jesus is enough - and that he is the source of all spiritual growth, and that all true knowledge and wisdom are found in him. Therefore, they do not need to look elsewhere, as "all the fullness of the Deity" is in Jesus; in him, they have been brought to fullness (2:9-10). They do not need to think about asceticism, chase after supernatural experiences, or adhere to the commandments of men to live a "spiritual" life. What counts is to keep focusing on Jesus, let him shape them, and be eternally grateful that he is everything.

Particularly characteristic of Colossians is 1:15-20, which exalts Jesus and explains who he is and his position in the universe.

### WHEN WAS THE LETTER WRITTEN?

This letter has some things in common with the letter to Philemon:

* He sends greetings from the same people: Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (Col 4:10-14).
* Philemon is addressed to i.a. Archippus (Philippians 2), and he receives a special greeting in Col 4:17.
* Tychikos comes with Onesimus to Colossae with a letter to the church (Col 4:7-9) and a personal letter to Philemon.

Traditionally believed to have been written in Rome around AD 60-62.

### THE SITUATION IN COLOSSAE (2:4-23)

A mixture of Christian faith, Jewish mysticism, Greek philosophy, and mystery cults.

*"I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. 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. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely 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."*

**Warnings against false doctrine:**

* *"…so that no one may deceive you"* (v. 4)
* *"See to it that no one takes you captive"* (v. 8)
* *"…hollow and deceptive philosophy"* (v. 8)

**Jewish influence:**

* Circumcision (v. 11)
* rules regarding what they can eat or drink (v. 16)
* religious festivals, New Moon celebrations, the Sabbath day (v. 17)
* law enforcement

**Greek thoughts:**

* *"the fullness of the Deity"* (v. 23)
* *"the elemental spiritual forces of this world"* (v. 23)

**Asceticism:**

* *"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”* (v. 21)
* *"self-imposed worship"* (v. 23)
* *"false humility"* (v. 23)
* *"harsh treatment of the body"* (v. 23)

**Something supernatural**

* *"what they have seen"* (v. 18)
* *"worship of angels"* (v. 18)

**Human "wisdom"**

* *"hollow and deceptive philosophy"* (v. 8)
* *"human traditions"* (v. 8)
* *"idle notions"* (v. 18)
* *"human commands and teachings"* (v. 22)
* *"have an appearance of wisdom"* (v. 23)

### MAIN THEME

Jesus is enough. He is the source of all spiritual growth. All true knowledge and wisdom are found in Him.

### STRUCTURE

1:1-14 Intro and prayer of thanksgiving

1:15-23 Jesus as the center of the universe

1:24-2:5 Paul's suffering and ministry

2:6-23 How to live out the faith and resist the pressure

3:1-4:1 The old and the new man

4:2-18 Summary and conclusion

## PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (1:3-14)

*"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 God’s people— the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. 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."* 1:1-8

* v. 5 *«the true message of the gospel»*
* Irenaeus: *“Originality is the last thing one should expect from a theologian. Heresy arises from the itch for something new.”*
* They already have the truth and don't need to look elsewhere.

v. 6 *"the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you"*

* They are not alone either. They have a global church to lean on when they are in doubt.
* It is the gospel that bears fruit, not them. The gospel is alive and cannot be stopped.

*"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to* ***fill you*** *with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* 1:9-14

Theme 1: Knowledge of God or knowing God, his will, and the gospel

Theme 2: Wisdom is only found in Jesus; beware of "wisdom"

The point of knowledge and wisdom is to live according to God's will!

Just the same as the gospel (v. 6)! The nature of the gospel also causes Christians to bear fruit and grow.

Past: God has already done all this once and for all. Be grateful instead of stressing!

**Just like the gospel (v. 6)! The nature of the gospel also causes Christians to bear fruit and grow.**

* The gospel brings spiritual growth!
* The gospel is alive and dynamic!
* The gospel is unstoppable!

*“The Church began with a handful of unlearned fishermen and tax collectors and spread throughout the known world over the next 300 years. This is an incredible story of a peaceful revolution unparalleled in history.”* Michael Green (the quote is translated)

The gospel bears fruit and continues to spread! The gospel is so universal that it is not too much hindered by a pandemic either... *“I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained.”* 2 Timothy 2:9

**Everything comes from them being filled with the knowledge of God's will. Correct theology → righteous life**

* How we think about God affects how we live.
* A life worthy of Jesus does not come from adding external "spiritual" things, but from knowing God and his will.
* Knowledge = familiarity! The relationship is the key.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it mean to you as a witness for Jesus that the gospel is unstoppable?
2. How much emphasis do you place on the power of the gospel versus your skills in communicating it?
3. What specifically can you do to be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that you can grow in knowing him?

## JESUS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE (1:15-23)

### 1:15-20: THE CORRECT JESUS

Jesus is the creator, sustainer, reconciler, and goal of the universe. God who became man.

*"The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."* 1:15-20

Verses 15-16 deal with creation. Jesus is the center of creation - *"in him all things are held together"* (v. 17) - he sustains everything. Verses 18-20 deal with the new creation.

Jesus is the beginning. Absolutely everything is created in Jesus, by Jesus, and for Jesus. All (political and spiritual) powers are under him. Since all spiritual powers were created by Jesus and are therefore under his authority, the faithful need not fear anything.

Jesus is *"The foremost"* (Ps 89:28). He is primarily both the old and the new creation. He is above and before all created things. He was the first to rise with an indestructible body.

God's plan of salvation is to reconcile everything to himself in Jesus (v. 20) – everything was created for Jesus (v. 16).

### 1:21-23: TRUE SALVATION - THE APPLICATION OF VV. 15-20

*"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”* 1:21-23

v. 21: They were heathen who knew nothing of God.

v. 22: They have surprisingly been reconciled, only because it was God's desire. The goal: That we can stand holy, without blemish, and free from accusation before God.

v. 23: Only condition: Keep believing. It may sound like they are moving away from this. Maybe because of their view of Jesus? Atonement happened through Jesus' physical death. Since he is God who became flesh, his sacrifice is enough - we only need to believe. A correct understanding of Jesus is the best protection against false teaching. In a heresy, Jesus is always degraded, and salvation is therefore never by faith alone.

*“No non-Christian can be logically consistent in his assumptions. Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has created, including what man is. Since this is so, every human being is in a tension… Humans may try to bury this tension, and you may have to help them find it, but somewhere there is an inconsistent point… Therefore, the first thing we must do in our apologetics for modern man is to discover the place where this tension is found... When we have discovered as best we can a person's point of tension, the next step is to push him towards the logical conclusion of his presuppositions.”* Francis Schaeffer (the quote has been translated)

*“It's not that this is the best answer to reality; that is the only answer. Therefore, we can stand for our Christian faith with intellectual integrity. The only answer to what exists is that God, the eternal and personal God, is really there.”* Francis Schaeffer (the quote has been translated)

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have you ever been confused about who Jesus is? What was difficult?
2. If you doubt or have doubted whether you are saved, can it be traced back to your view of Jesus?
3. Do you need to adjust your view of Jesus after studying this passage?
4. What do you think about spiritual powers receiving so little attention in our Western worldview?

## PAUL'S SUFFERING AND MINISTRY (1:24-2:5)

*"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."* 1:24-29

v. 24: *"what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions"*. Aren't Jesus' afflictions enough? This must be interpreted in light of the letter's context! The head suffered; therefore, the body will also suffer (John 15:18-21, 1 Pet 4:12-13). Paul's body suffers for Christ's body. Does Paul see the suffering as a fixed "measure" that he is happy to help to reach? Does he believe that the more he suffers, the less others will have to suffer?

v. 25: *"present to you the word of God in its fullness".* Make it known to the nations since Jesus has fulfilled the OT (Genesis 12:3)

v. 27: *"God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery".* The mystery is that all nations can be saved by faith alone! We know that God's will is for the gospel to be preached to all nations.

v. 28: The term "everyone" implies that they are on an equal footing; there is no elite. Paul wants their faith to mature so that they believe in Jesus alone, and not mix in heresy.

v. 29: *"I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me"*. Paul prays, writes letters, and is concerned for their spiritual condition/growth - while he is in prison.

*"I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is."* 2:1-5

v. 2: When we understand the gospel, we have the full riches of complete understanding. To understand the gospel is to understand that Jesus is ALL that is needed. "Greek" wisdom was about understanding reality and the universe. Jesus is the origin, center, and goal of the universe (1:15-20). "Jewish" wisdom was about knowing God's heart and living righteously. Jesus is the image of God, and all of God's fullness dwells in him (1:16, 19). Therefore, neither the Greeks nor the Jews needed to look elsewhere for answers; they just needed to know Jesus.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is there something in the gospel that you don't quite understand? How can you stand more firm?
2. We know that God's will is for the gospel to reach everyone. To whom can you explain this "mystery"? What do you need to do it?
3. Jesus said we should rejoice when we suffer for his sake. Even though Paul is in prison, he manages to enjoy his suffering. What does this tell you about Paul's joy? Is the meaning of life to be happy and thrive, or is there a deeper form of joy that is more important?
4. We usually want to help others, but preferably on our terms so that it doesn't become too uncomfortable for us. How can we sacrifice ourselves a little more for others?

## HOW TO LIVE OUT THE FAITH AND RESIST THE PRESSURE (2:6-23)

*"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. 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. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely 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.”* 2:6-23

vv. 6-8: Two commandments: Live in Jesus - and make sure that no one takes you captive through any other teaching.

v. 8: *"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."* They have received conflicting teachings.

v. 9: *"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form".* Therefore, there is no room for anything else.

v. 11: Circumcision was fulfilled in Jesus. Baptism is an expression of spiritual circumcision. The spiritual "circumcision" happens by faith. OT: *"Circumcise your hearts"* in e.g., Deuteronomy 30:6 and Jer 4:4. Jesus' physical death and resurrection → Your spiritual death and resurrection.

v. 12: Remembering what baptism represents helps to protect against heresy.

v. 14: Our legal indebtedness has been taken away. There is no debt to pay to rules, rituals, or spirits. Jesus paid it all.

v.15: Gives associations to a [Roman triumph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_triumph). There is nothing to gain or fear in the spirits.

v.16: They shall not let anyone judge them, since they have received the fullness of the Deity in Jesus, and he paid it all. They are not bound by merely human commands (about food?).

v. 18: *"worship of angels"* Folk beliefs? Invocation of angels for protection from evil spirits. Jewish mysticism? The Merkaba cult used, e.g., fasting to enter ecstasy and worship God with the angels.

v. 23: Their self-imposed worship and their harsh treatment of the body have no value. They just feel more spiritual, but are really "carnal". Such regulations *"lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence"* → No help with living righteously.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is it easy to give spiritual authority to someone who has had supernatural experiences? Why is this problematic? What is the difference between the supernatural and the spiritual?
2. What kind of "deceptive philosophy" or "human traditions" can capture us today?
3. What can make us feel more spiritual but, in reality, "lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence"?
4. What does the letter to the Colossians say about what kind of focus we should have?

## THE OLD AND THE NEW MAN (3:1 - 4:1)

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."* 3:1 - 4:1

Chapter 3 marks a transition. Paul brings together themes from chapter 2 and provides the theological foundation for what follows.

Since they have been raised with Christ in baptism (2:12), their minds should be set on what is above (vv. 10-17: The new self), not on what is on earth (vv. 5-9: The old self). They are dead after all, having been buried with Christ in baptism (2:12). Therefore, they should not be bound by merely human commandments (2:20-23). The natural thing now is to fix their eyes on Jesus and not on human rules that are irrelevant to the Christian life. The key to all spiritual growth: Fix your eyes on Jesus.

*"If asceticism and merely human commandments are useless, what does the Christian life look like? Christian "asceticism" consists in renouncing all sinful inclinations so that the new nature that is divinely planted within us can find an outward expression in the fruit of a holy life."* F. F. Bruce (the quote has been translated)

Reason: *"since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”* 2:9b-11

They are encouraged not to slip back into old habits that are completely incompatible with the new life! Verse 5 mentions five *“sinful inclinations”* and verses 8-9 add another six. These are representative lists, as in Mark 7:21-22. As a Christian, you are not in the old and the new self at the same time. You have taken off your old self, but you can feel/behave like the old self from time to time.

v. 12: *"Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."* They have already put on the new self (v. 10); therefore, it is also natural to put on that which characterizes it. The five character traits in blue replace the 5x2 sins in verses 5-8. All are characteristic of God/Jesus (e.g., Ps 25:6, Jer 33:1, Matt 9:36, Matt 11:29)

v. 13: *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* Bearing with each other and forgiving are practical consequences of the character traits in verse 12. They are in the present tense, which implies that we should always bear with each other and forgive. Translated word for word, it actually says, *"As the Lord forgave you, so you also"* (the verb is missing).

vv. 14-15: *"put on love"* and *"be thankful"*. Imperative: Commandment.

v. 15: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"*, *"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly"*. 3rd person imperative: Commandment.

v. 16: *"Teach and admonish one another"*. Present tense.

vv. 16-17: *"with gratitude in your hearts"*, *"giving thanks to God"*. Because Jesus is enough. This is a repeated theme that is mentioned 7 times in total in the letter. How to live as the new self? Look to Jesus and be eternally grateful!

vv. 18-25: Even the instructions for Christian households are Jesus-centered. E.g., *"as it befits the Lord"* (v. 18), *"it is pleasing to the Lord"* (v. 20), *"in reverence of the Lord"* (v. 22), *"for it is the Lord and not men that you serve"* (v. 23), *"The Lord will give you his inheritance as a reward. Serve the Lord Christ!"* (v. 24), *"you also have a master in heaven"* (v. 25).

*"Love"* (agape) is not used in Greek household rules.

The new thing is the restrictions given to the head of the house.

Aristotle: Justice does not concern slaves since it is not possible to treat one's possessions unjustly.

Closest parallel: Stoic household rules which were based on the "law of nature". Paul bases it on the NEW nature: Christ sets you free to be a true human, and you must now learn to express your true self according to this new pattern. Everyone in the household must behave in line with Christ and not according to the old pattern.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is your life with God about looking to Jesus and being thankful? What do you possibly need to do to get there?
2. Can you apply something from the last paragraph in your marriage, in your family life, or at your workplace?
3. What sticks with you from chapter 3?

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION (4:2-18)

Paul returns to the topics he brought up earlier:

* Prayer (1:3-14)
* Thanksgiving (1:3, 1:12, 2:7, 3:15-17)
* The Mystery (1:24 - 2:5)
* Suffering (1:24 - 2:5)
* Wisdom (1:9-10, 1:28, 2:3, 2:20-23, 3:16)

Paul asks for intercession for God to open a door to preach the Word. Does he mean when he is set free? The fact that he is in prison is also a testimony because everyone knows that it is because of Jesus (Phil 1:12-18). Others have become bolder in preaching the gospel as a result of his imprisonment. He also had the opportunity to preach the gospel when he received visitors (Acts 28:30-31).

vv. 5-6: He exhorts them to live righteously in the new self and use the moments and opportunities. They should not withhold the truth (Matthew 5:13) but grasp the mystery of God, which is Christ (2:2).

*"****Tychicus*** *will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with* ***Onesimus****, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. My fellow prisoner* ***Aristarchus*** *sends you his greetings, as does* ***Mark****, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)* ***Jesus****, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me.* ***Epaphras****, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend* ***Luke****, the doctor, and* ***Demas*** *send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to* ***Nympha*** *and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell* ***Archippus****: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.” I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.”* 4:7-18

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION - OPEN DOORS AND A PRECIOUS TIME

1. Covid has reminded us of our vulnerability and mortality. How do we use such opportunities to bring God back into the picture in the minds of unbelievers? Have any doors been opened for the gospel that we have not discovered?
2. What other opportunities do you have in your life to talk about the gospel? What prevents you from grasping these opportunities?
3. Are you spiritual enough? (Yes!)