

OpenTheo

Colossians (Overview) - Part 1



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

Explore an insightful overview of the book of Colossians by renowned Bible scholar Steve Gregg. Covering the historical context of the Lycus River area, the cities near Colossae, and the early Christian community, Gregg sheds light on the possible time period when the book was written. He delves into the theme of the letter, emphasizing the preeminence of Christ and warning against false teachings which may have been related to Judaism or mystery cults. Gregg also provides background information on the author, the recipients, and their geographical locations, offering a comprehensive understanding of the book's context.

Transcript

All right, we're going to be looking at the book of Colossians tonight. Each month we take a different book of the Bible. We started back in the beginning in Genesis many years ago.

We're now getting very close to the end of the New Testament, at least very close to the end of the Pauline epistles. So we're in Colossians, and what we do each time is we have an introduction and a survey over the book. The city of Colossae has actually never been seen by anyone alive.

It's extinct. It's never even been excavated. Actually, nothing of it has ever been seen in modern times.

The only reason we know where it was and that it existed and any history of it is that there are writings, ancient writings about it. It was in an area in Turkey called the Lycus River Valley. And the I have to admit I wasn't really very familiar with Lycus River.

I had to look online and apparently there's a river running through Turkey, apparently from the West Coast, called the Meander River. And there's a little branch of it called the Lycus River that branches off of it heading west. And there were three cities that had churches in them, not very far from where the Lycus River branched off of.

One of those was Colossae. One was Laodicea, famous because of it receiving a letter

from Jesus in the book of Revelation, the church of Laodicea. And then there was a church called Hierapolis.

These churches, these cities were close enough to each other to actually see each other. One of them was, I believe it was Hierapolis and Colossae were right across the river from each other and could see each other. And Laodicea, I believe, was about 10 miles northwest of there.

So these cities were close to each other. In Colossae, Paul specifically tells the Colossae to give his greetings to the church in Laodicea also, which, as I said, is only about 10 miles from there. He doesn't mention Hierapolis in this letter, but we know that there was a church there as well.

The book of Revelation is addressed to seven letters, or I should say seven churches in Asia, Asia meaning the Roman province of Asia, which is essentially the same as Turkey today. And yet the seven churches of Asia are not the only ones we know of. Colossae was a church of Asia and it's not mentioned in Revelation.

Likewise, Hierapolis is a city where there's a church in Asia and not mentioned in Revelation. And also Troas had a church and that was in Asia and Revelation didn't mention that one either. So there were the seven churches plus these other three.

How many others there were, we don't know. Asia was evangelized during a period of time when Paul was in Ephesus. The book of Acts tells us that Paul lived in Ephesus for about three years.

And during that time, the book of Acts tells us all of Asia heard the gospel. Now, Paul apparently didn't travel all through all of Asia. He was in Ephesus most of the time.

But he had companions, co-workers, and some of these went out and evangelized other cities. Now, Colossae was a city that Paul apparently never visited at the time he wrote this. We have no record in Acts of him having gone to Colossae, though he could have during those three years that he lived in Ephesus.

Colossae was about 120 miles from there. He could have gone there and started the church and come back. But in the book of Colossians, he speaks to them as if he's only heard of them.

He talks about how he's heard of their faith and how since he heard of it, he rejoices and so forth and prays for them. He also speaks in Colossians, chapter two, verse one. He says in verse one, I want you to know what great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.

So he's saying he apparently had not been to Colossae or Laodicea, and those were seen as among the places that had not seen him in the flesh. So how did Colossae get

evangelized? Well, a man named Epaphras met Paul probably when he was in Ephesus. And then Epaphras was from Colossae and he went back there and must have been the one who started the church.

He became a messenger of Paul's and probably led his family to the Lord. And through that, maybe some other friends and family were converted. Eventually, a church was started there.

One of the people that church we know about was Philemon and his servant Onesimus. The book of Philemon is written to that man about the other man. It's written to Philemon about his slave Onesimus.

But that Philemon had a church in his home. And in fact, it may be that the entire church in Colossae met in his home. Depends on how big it was.

I mean, some of these cities had small enough churches. They would all fit one home, I'm sure. But in other places, too many Christians, a town would have multiple home churches.

But we know of Philemon as having a home church. And there's also another person mentioned at the end of Colossae named Nymphos, who had a home in her church. But it's not clear from the way Paul mentions her at the end of chapter four, verse 15, whether she is in Colossae or in Laodicea.

Because even though he tells the Colossians to greet her and the church in her house, he does so immediately after he tells them to greet the Laodicean church. So we don't know if, you know, greet the Laodiceans and say hi to Nymphos and the church in her house. I was curious to know whether she was in Laodicea or in Colossae.

And I have two sets of Bible encyclopedias, and I looked Nymphos up in both of them. We know almost nothing about her at all, except that she's mentioned by Paul as having a house church. And one of them said she was a Christian in Laodicea who had a house church.

The other said she was a Christian in Colossae that had a house church. We know nothing about her except that Paul sends greetings to her in the Colossian epistle. But since he also is sending greetings to the Laodiceans, we don't know.

There's just no way to know. But if she did have a house church in Colossae, we know there were at least two house churches in that city. One in Philemon's house and one in Nymphos' house.

If hers was in Laodicea, then that changes that picture. We don't know how many Christians then were in Colossae. Colossae in Paul's day was not a very important city.

It had been important back 400 and something years before Christ. Colossae had been a very major city in the region. It had basically declined in importance.

And it was probably, scholars say, the most unimportant city Paul wrote a letter to. And yet the letter is an important letter. Paul said some very important things to them.

But as far as the city is concerned, it was not a major city. And of course, as I said, it's not in existence today. But that's true of lots of these churches and cities in Asia.

Ephesus isn't there today either. And many of the other cities that were there are not with us to this day either. But that was the geography of the time.

And Paul writes these people a letter, though he has not met them. He does mention Epaphras, who was the man who apparently had evangelized them and who told Paul about them. Now, the church there was planted, as I said, during the Ephesian mission.

We can assume that to be true because Acts tells us that during those three years that Paul was in Ephesus, the whole of Asia was evangelized. That would include Colossae. So we can assume that it was during that time.

That would be between 52 and 55 AD. And that is mentioned in Acts chapter 19, verse 10. And I said Paul apparently had not been to the city, but he was evangelized by Epaphras, who's mentioned in chapter 1, Colossians 1.7. And that's in chapter 4, verse 12.

It tells us that Epaphras was a Colossian himself. So he was a native of that city or at least lived in that city. Had apparently come to meet Paul wherever Paul was.

We'll discuss that in a moment. And then he went back and evangelized the city. Then he also apparently brought back news to Paul.

Remember, they couldn't send emails or telephone for Paul to even know that a church had started in Colossae. So, apparently, Epaphras would have had to not only have made his first trip to Paul, but the trip back to evangelize the city, then another trip back to Paul to let him know. If Paul was in Ephesus at this time, when the letter was written, which is one opinion some have held, that was about 120 miles each way, each trip.

On foot, that's a long trip. On the other hand, the traditional view is that Paul was in Rome, which is even further for that many back and forths to take place. But I suppose a lot of these people who are in the ministry just spent a lot of their time traveling.

So we can't really be surprised if they traveled from Rome to Asia and Jerusalem and places like that and back and forth. It would appear from chapter 2, verse 13, that the Colossians were in a church were mostly Gentiles. Of course, it was a Gentile city, but that doesn't always mean that the church will be mostly Gentiles because there were

Jews in every city too.

And Paul, at least when he came to a city, would evangelize the synagogues first. But if Epaphras was a Gentile Colossian, he wouldn't necessarily go to the synagogues. He'd probably go to his own Gentile family and so forth.

And Paul does refer in chapter 2 and verse 13 to the fact that the church was understood by him to be a Gentile congregation. It was a young church at the time of writing. Paul had just heard of it, but was happy to hear of it and wrote back to encourage them.

They were apparently showing good signs of spiritual health. We can see, for example, in chapter 1, verses 3 through 8, he describes them. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you as it has in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit as it also is among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.

As you also learned from Epaphras, our dear brother, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit. So they heard about Paul from Epaphras, and Paul heard about them from Epaphras. That's what he tells us there.

And they were a church that was one that he was encouraged to hear the good news, how they'd received the grace of God in truth. So this is the church we're talking about. Now, most commentators believe, or at least more of the older commentators believe, that the Church of Colossae was vulnerable to a particular heresy.

It's not clear exactly what that heresy was, and the entirety of that theory is derived essentially from chapter two of Colossians, where Paul warns them about certain false teachings. However, from what he warns them, it's not clear what these false teachings were. Certainly part of it, at least, was a tendency of Judaizers to try to get them to come over to Jewish ways.

We can see this, for example, in Colossians chapter two, where he actually tells them in verse 11, in him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands. Now, he says that, no doubt, because the heretics, if they're Judaizers, would try to persuade them to be circumcised with Jewish circumcision. And his answer is, no, you've already been circumcised with the more important circumcision of the heart.

But then at the end of that chapter, he says, also he says this in verse 20, therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourself to regulations? He gives examples. Don't touch, don't taste, don't handle. Very Jewish kind of regulations.

Don't eat this, don't touch that, you're unclean. Which all concern things which perish with the using, meaning food isn't eternal. According to the commandments and doctrines of men.

Now, he did say that what they were submitting to were according to the doctrines of men. And so some scholars think, well, he's not talking about Judaism then, because Judaism isn't the doctrines of men. But Jesus said it was.

Jesus said the Pharisees kept the doctrines and the traditions of men at the expense of keeping the scripture. Remember, the Jews had added a lot of traditions and commandments of men to what actually Moses had originally said. And so embracing Judaism, if it was coming from Pharisee type Judaizers, would be something that was part scriptural and a great deal human tradition.

And so he says, these people who tell you this, that's that's traditions of men. But also we have some very non-Jewish sounding things that he mentions in chapter two. He says, verse eight, beware, lest anyone cheat you.

Chapter two, verse eight, beware, lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. Now, many scholars think that this is referring to philosophical Greek or Roman philosophical religion, sometimes called mystery religions. And sometimes they think there's asceticism involved, such as was practiced by mystery religions.

Now, we don't know much about mystery religions. That's why they're called mystery religions. They're not real well known.

They're better known now than when I was a young teacher and we studied Colossians. A lot of our commentators didn't know as much about mystery religions as are known now. But this is like this worship of Mithras, for example.

You can learn a lot about Mithraism and so forth, other place. But a mystery religion was essentially a cult. And there were lots of them in the Roman world that said that you have to be initiated into the mystery in order to be saved or part of the in-group or whatever it was.

It had to do with learning things most people don't have access to. And the teachers or the prophets or the sages of these mystery religions, they knew them and they would teach you. But you had to pay a fee and be committed to a certain degree.

And so there were all these mystery cults in the Roman world. So I'll tell you, a lot of older commentators on Colossians believed that there was a mixture of Judaism, maybe some Gnosticism, maybe some Roman mystery religions, all kind of mixed into a big pot that were being taught in Colossae. Because there's kind of in Chapter two, the things he

warns about, there's kind of elements of all these different things.

But I've never been fully persuaded. And not all scholars are a lot of modern scholars, actually, like N.T. Wright, for example, or F.F. Bruce, have thought that it was really just Judaism. It's just Judaizers.

And that referring to it as philosophy of man and commandments of man, this had to do with the traditions of the Jews, not not the law of Moses per se, but they were trying to get them to be circumcised. He does mention that. And he certainly is mentioning Judaism in Chapter two, verses 16 and 17.

When he says there, so let no one judge you in food or drink or regarding festivals or new moons or Sabbaths. And he says those were a shadow. Now, Sabbaths, new moons, festivals, those are Jewish.

And so many modern scholars believe that it is simply Judaism or Judaizers that he's warning about. There's also, of course, another possibility, and that is that there are just a variety of wrong ideas around that new Christians should be warned about. Not that there is that older commentators spoke about the Colossian heresy, which they thought was a conglomerate of some Judaistic tendencies and some Gnosticism and some pagan mystery religions, all kind of mixed together into one weird religion.

But why couldn't he, if he's referring to mystery religions at all, just be warning them in those verses about mystery religions and when he's warning about Judaizing, he's worrying about that, not not some mixture of them, but they're all those religious movements existed in the area. So he might just be referring to any number of them, just like I might tell a new Christian, beware of the Jehovah's Witnesses when they come to your door. And by the way, the Mormons, too, they could be watch out for them, too.

I mean, it doesn't mean there's some religion out there that's a mixture of those two, just as I mentioned both of them. So we don't really know if there was a Colossian heresy per se, but we know that in Chapter two, Paul is concerned to warn them about heretical tendencies. And it does not look as if they've gotten very far into them.

Unlike the Galatians, Paul wrote Galatians when the Galatian churches have pretty much succumbed to the Judaizers. In this case, Paul doesn't really say they have at the very end. There's this.

Why do you why are you subject to ordinances might be a rhetorical thing, or it might even be that some of them were accepting Jewish ordinances. But he doesn't write the letter as if the whole church has gone off into error. In fact, he has said for the most part, they're a healthy church.

He's pleased to hear what's going on there. He apparently is not alarmed by the Colossian situation as he was by the Galatian situation. He's alarmed.

Galatians is one is probably the most alarmed letter Paul ever wrote. And Colossians, we don't see that that alarm. We see warnings.

But I have to say that it doesn't seem that these false teachers have really taken a root much. Not yet. And he's warning against them.

Now, the theme of the letter is the preeminence of Christ. And so Colossians, as I've told you before, is very similar to Ephesians. I mentioned that when we're studying Ephesians.

Some people have found as many as 78 verses that they have in common. Not verbatim, but almost. I mean, there's Paul apparently wrote these two letters around the same time with the same thoughts, even the same phrases in his head as he wrote both letters.

The difference being, though, that Ephesians focuses on the subject of the church, the body of Christ, whereas Colossians focuses on Christ, the head of the church. Now, in Ephesians, Paul's talking of the church. So he uses different metaphors besides body of Christ.

He calls it the bride. He calls it the family of God. He calls the church the temple or the habitation of God through the spirit.

He calls the church, of course, the body. These are different terms for the church that Paul uses in Ephesians. Likewise, Paul, when he saw what Christ was the head of the church, he he talks about very various aspects of Christ, but mostly is emphasizing the preeminence of Christ.

And twice he indicates that all the fullness of deity dwelt in Christ. And that is to say he was God without subtraction in human form. So the letter was apparently carried not by a papyrus, although Paul had heard from a papyrus.

He must not have been going immediately back to Colossae. And so Paul sent the letter by two men, Onesimus, who would also be carrying back the letter to Philemon at the same time. These letters went to the same town, but also Tychicus.

Now, if Onesimus was going back anyway, carrying the letter to Philemon, why couldn't he just carry Colossus? Why would Tychicus have to go? Well, one might argue that Philemon, you know, he's bringing a letter to his former master who could bring charges against him for being a runaway slave. And, you know, the letters urging clemency on the part of Philemon toward Onesimus. And if he brought it himself, one might wonder, is this authentic? How do we know Paul really wrote this, you know, but for Paul to send it by Onesimus and Tychicus, of course, Tychicus could verify that that letter was from Paul and that Paul was really requesting that of Philemon.

And it wouldn't be left to just trust Onesimus about that. This epistle is one of four that are called prison epistles. I've told you about that category before.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Those are that's of course, we covered Ephesians and Philippians are previous two sessions, Colossians and then Philemon. Those are the four prison epistles.

However, traditionally, they were all written from Paul's Roman imprisonment, his first Roman imprisonment, which began around 60 AD. Many scholars have begun to wonder, though, if that's true. It's not even clear if all of them are written at the same time.

For example, some have doubted that Philemon, I assume that Philippians was written at the same time as Ephesians and Colossians. It seems obvious Ephesians and Colossians were written at the same time. The Philippians, all we have no reason to know because it doesn't resemble those others very much.

But I will say this, that Paul had many imprisonments when he wrote to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians. In Chapter 10, he was cataloging many of the things he had suffered for his ministry. And one of the things he mentions that he'd been in prisons often.

Now he wrote Corinthians from Ephesus. During that three years that he was in Ephesus, evangelizing Asia, he wrote 1st and 2nd Corinthians. And at that time, he mentioned that he had had many imprisonments.

Now, we don't know very many in the book of Acts. Not many were mentioned. But that whole three years in Ephesus is skipped over in a single verse in Acts pretty much.

And so how many times Paul might have been imprisoned there? We don't know. In three years time could have been several. Many people think Ephesus could be the imprisonment.

The imprisonment he's writing from instead of Rome. And that argument is largely based on proximity. When Paul sent the letter to Colossians and Philemon, he mentions to Philemon, prepare a room for me because I hope soon to be released to come to you.

Now, if Paul was in Rome and was released, did he plan to go all the way back to Asia to visit Philemon? I mean, that's like hundreds of miles. It'd be weeks of journey. And of course, for a path for us to travel from Colossi to Rome would be again hundreds of miles and weeks of traveling.

And then to go back to evangelize and then come back and tell Paul all these trips. It just seems much more difficult to picture this, all this travel happening between Colossi and Rome because of that great distance. And the fact that Paul said to Philemon, I plan to come to you, that is to Colossi, if I'm released from here.

Now, that might be reasonable if he was in Ephesus. He's at least on the same continent, you know, and it's only 120 miles. He might make the trip in a week and could possibly be planning to do that.

But if he was in Rome, we know that before Paul got to Rome, he was on his way to Spain. We know this because in Romans 15, he tells that was his travel plans. He planned to deliver a gift from the Gentile churches to the church in Jerusalem when he wrote Romans.

In chapter 15, he says, now, when I've delivered that, I plan to go to Spain. I plan to come to you, Romans. I'll visit you on my way to Spain.

Now, he didn't know he was going to be arrested in Jerusalem and that he'd be imprisoned for two years in Caesarea. And then he'd be traveling to Rome and imprisoned there for two years when he got there. But unless his plans changed after he got to Rome about going to Spain, then he wouldn't be talking about going east again to Colossi.

If he got out of the Roman prison, we assume unless Paul had changed his plans, he felt like, if I get out of jail here in Rome, I'm going to go on to Spain like my original plan, which was west of Rome. But Colossi was hundreds and hundreds of miles east of Rome and Turkey. And so was Paul writing from Rome saying, I hope to be out of this soon and I'll come to visit you Colossi.

If so, he had changed his plans about about Spain. We have to say that because there'd be no reason for him to go that far back east when he was planning to go much further west. So the idea that Paul was running from Rome has been questioned by a number of people, both Ephesians and Colossians have always been held to have been written from Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

But there are many scholars. Is that really realistic? Maybe there was an imprisonment we don't read about that took place in Ephesus. And that's not impossible.

Because, again, he had many imprisonments. Some of them probably was there. So if he is writing, we know he's running from prison, but he doesn't say from where.

If he is writing from prison in Ephesus, he might be saying, you know, it might not be too surprising that Epaphras had had comings and goings because Ephesus was actually the principal city of the nation or of the province, I should say. And so people would be traveling there from lots of parts of the province. And so that if Ephesus might be where he wrote it from is seriously conserved by many now.

One other theory is that he might have been written writing it from his Caesarean imprisonment. He was in prison for two years in Caesarea when he was arrested in Jerusalem. This would have been after he left Ephesus.

We don't know if he ever went to Ephesus again after he was imprisoned in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea. Caesarea is in Israel. It was the Roman capital in Israel.

We know that Paul was held there for two years. He could have written letters from there. But again, when he was in Caesarea, he was still hoping to go to Spain.

He had gone to Jerusalem to drop off a gift with the mind of going right to Spain. But when he got to Jerusalem, he got arrested and put in prison for two years in Caesarea. So as far as we know, he was still planning to go to Spain.

And so, again, he wouldn't be writing to Colossae and saying, I hope to visit you when I get out of here, because it just wouldn't be on the flight path. So I think Ephesus is a good suggestion. Rome is a more traditional suggestion.

We know Paul was in prison twice in Rome, multiple times before that in different places, including we know he spent a night imprisoned in Philippi. We read about in the Book of Acts and in Caesarea and probably in Ephesus. So it's not too important.

But as far as the logistics of the whole backstory, if he was in Ephesus, it makes a lot easier to picture how he might run into a path. First, I run into an essence when an onus was fled. It's not unlikely that fleeing from Colossae, a servant might go to Ephesus before going.

He might be planning to take ship to somewhere else or just hide in a big city. But if Paul was in Ephesus, it's more likely that he would run into Fleeman there than in Rome. I mean, what are the chances? I mean, it'd be very providential.

Otherwise, what are the chances that a servant from running away from his master in Colossae would go all the way to Rome and run into Paul, who happened to have converted his master, you know, happened to be connected to him? I mean, small world, six degrees of separation or something. There's only like one degree of separation between Onesimus, Paul, and Fleeman. So, again, just logistically, Ephesus sounds like it could be maybe a more likely theory, though it's not important in terms of the content of the letter, except for the personal notices of his plans and travels and things like that.

I mentioned there's quite a few affinities between Ephesians and Colossians. I don't need to say more about that. That comes up later in the notes I've given you.

But we don't have to say more about that, except that several people are mentioned in several of the prison epistles. Timothy, Aristarchus, Archippus. Archippus, by the way, is greeted at the end of this book.

And he's also greeted at the beginning of Fleeman. It would appear that Archippus might have been the son of Fleeman and his wife, Athea. Just from the greetings at the beginning of Fleeman, Paul greets Fleeman and Athea and the church in their home.

Now, Athea is a female name. And he also says, and he says also Archippus, my fellow soldier, which was very possibly an adult son in the home. He is Archippus is mentioned at the end of Colossians also.

Now, one thing, Colossians mentions Luke. And it is from the book of Colossians that we actually learned that Luke was a Gentile. We know almost nothing about Luke, though he writes about his own travels with Paul.

And actually never mentioned himself by name. The name Luke never appears. He just says we.

And he doesn't identify who he is. But it is deduced from all kinds of evidence that it was Luke. But the only place Luke is actually mentioned is in like the end of Colossians.

I think the end of a couple other epistles. But it's from Colossians that we find out who Luke was. Because Paul mentions Luke, the physician, because of the beloved physician, he also refers to as not being among the circumcision that were Paul named some Jewish Christians that were with him.

And he says these alone of the circumcision with me. And then he says, now here's some others. And he names Luke among them.

So this is in a long list of things here. If you look at verse 10, chapter four percent, air starkest. My fellow prisoner greets you with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

We know of him from X about whom you received instructions. If he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called Justice.

These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision. These are my only Jewish Christian partners. They have proven to come a company.

This is the path. Chris, who obviously is not one of the circumcision, because he's named some other names now that are not among those who are the only ones. A path versus one of you on turn of Christ, greet you always laboring fervently for you in his prayers that you may stand perfectly complete and all the will of God.

For I bear him witness that he is great zeal for you. And through those who are in Laodicea and those at Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician and Demas, greet you.

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Memphis and the church that is in his house. There's been some conjectures, whether it's a man or woman, but almost all scholars believe it's Memphis or Nympha is a woman's name. Anyway, the point here is.

That Luke is mentioned in the group that are not of the circumcision, and it's from that and that alone that we say Luke was not a Jew. And, you know, you may have often heard Luke was the only Gentile who wrote any part of the Bible. And we know he's a

Gentile because of this and from no other information given to us.

All right. So. I want to talk about a few words that Paul uses, but I guess I might hold off on those to get to the actual passages therein.

Let's do a basic outline of the book. And before I do what I think I'll do, because we're going to take a break, as we often do. What I think I want to do is what I did last week.

And that is read the book. Just read the whole book. So you get the whole flow of thought.

And then we'll take a break and come back and I'll give you the outline of the book and I'll make comments about important and sometimes difficult things that are that fall within the. Discussion of the book. So what I want to do is just do what they did in the early church.

Just read through the book. That's what these letters were written for. Somebody in the church get up front and read them to the congregation.

So I'll read it right now. And then we'll take a break and come back and have the comments I'm going to make. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, who are in Colossae.

Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you as it has also in all the world. And is bringing forth fruit as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God and truth.

As you also learn from a path for us, our dear fellow servant who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the spirit for this reason. We also since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power for all patients and long suffering with joy.

Giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the life. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the son of his love in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

It says over in the New King James, but in the Greek, it's of comment about that later. The firstborn of all creation for by him, all things were created that are in heaven and

that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions and principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence for a pleased God, the father. That in him all the fullness should dwell and by him to reconcile all things to himself by him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works. Yet now he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death. To present you wholly and blameless and above reproach in his sight, if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in this afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church. Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God. The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints to them.

God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him, we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end, I also labor, striving according to the working, his working, which works in me mightily.

Chapter two, for I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea. As many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged, be knit together in love and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the father and of Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now, this I say, lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words, for though I am absent in the flesh, yet I'm with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him. Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith. As you have been taught, abounding in it with Thanksgiving.

Beware, lest any man cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in

him who is the head. Of all principality and power.

In him, you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your trespasses and uncircumcision of your flesh. He has made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.

And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross, having disarmed principalities and powers. He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or drink or regarding a festival or new moons or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come.

But the substance is of Christ. But no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Not holding fast to the head.

From whom the whole body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why is the living in the world? Do you subject yourself to regulations? Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle. Which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men.

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom and self-imposed religion and false humility and neglect of the body. But I have no avail. There's no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Chapter three. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.

For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ was our life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory. Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Because of these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him.

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering, bearing one with another and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body to be thankful. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives submit to your own husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. Bond servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

And whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done. And there's no partiality.

Chapter four, masters, give your bond servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it and with Thanksgiving. Meanwhile, praying also for us that God would open to us a door for the word to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt. That you may know how you ought to answer each man, each one.

Ticket, kiss a beloved brother, faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord will tell you all the news about me. I'm sending him to you for this very purpose and he may that he may know your circumstances and comfort your heart with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you. They will make known to you all things that are happening here.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greet you with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, about whom you received instructions. If he comes to you, welcome him. And Jesus, who is called justice.

These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision. They have proved to be comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a bond servant of Christ, greets you always laboring fervently for you in prayers that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

For I bear him witness that he has great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician and Demas, greet you. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Memphis and the church that is in his or her home.

Now, when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of Laodiceans and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to our Kipis, take heed to the ministry. To what you have been called.

Or what you've received in the Lord, excuse me, that you may fulfill it. This salutation by my own hand. Paul, remember my chains.

Grace be with you. Amen. So that's the whole book.

Takes about 12 minutes or 13 minutes to read through. And so I wanted to take that period of time to do that. I want to take a break now.

And in about 7 to 10 minutes, we'll come back here. I'm going to give you an outline of the book and I'm going to go through and pick out some of the salient passages that no doubt would repay deeper consideration.