

**Episode:** Paul's Letters Series No. 12

**Narrator:** Onesimus

**Primary Scriptures:** Colossians 1-4

**Story Summary:** Paul's letter to the churches in Colossae

**Location:** Roman Empire; Asia; Colossae

**Time:** AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives  
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts  
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.  
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey  
 AD 61 Paul writes *Colossians* while imprisoned

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Colossians 1:10, 15-17, 27; 2:2, 8, 23; 3:1-2, 5, 9-11, 14-15, 17

This episode presumes Paul wrote *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon* at the same time, and sent them by Tychicus and Onesimus. *Colossians* may have been written to all of the churches in the Lycus Valley, not just one particular church among them. Based on Colossians 4:2, Paul probably wrote and sent a letter to the church at Laodicea at the same time, but no copy of that letter is known to exist.

Paul lived in Ephesus for three years during the Third Missionary Journey, so he personally knew most people in the church of that large city. It is possible the church at Colossae was started during that period by one of the people working with Paul. The Bible doesn't say whether Paul had been to Colossae or if he personally knew its leaders.

Based on Philemon 1:1-2, Philemon was a leader in the church at Colossae. Onesimus was a runaway slave owned by Philemon, and Paul was sending him back to Philemon. You can rightly guess Paul's instructions about slaves and masters in both *Ephesians* and *Colossians* were pointed straight at Philemon while also intended for all other Christians. For this reason, it is profitable to read those passages and *Philemon* at the same time to get better context.

Colossians 2:8 and 2:16-28 are indications the church at Colossae was being influenced by false teachers. In response to this, and in an effort to make sure the Colossians knew the true Gospel, Paul spends much of the first part of the letter explaining the Gospel and the supremacy of Christ while refuting false teachings. One of the most powerful of Paul's statements is found in Colossians 1:15, which says Jesus is the exact image or representation of God, the firstborn over all creation. This verse would be instrumental throughout the coming centuries as theologians tried to understand the true nature of Christ.

As you read Chapters 3 and 4, remember the Christians in Colossae needed to learn the fundamentals of living with Christian morals. They grew up in a society where people worshiped false gods, and participated in drunkenness and sexual immorality as normal behavior. They needed to learn to behave properly as individuals and as family members.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did Paul personally establish the church at Colossae?
  2. Colossians 1:6 says the gospel is bearing fruit all over the world. What did Paul mean by that?
  3. Colossians 1:15 says Jesus is the exact image of God. What does that mean to you? How can you harmonize Colossians 1:16 with Genesis 1?
  4. Read Colossians 2:8. What do hollow and deceptive philosophies look like in the modern world?
  5. Colossians 2:20 says you died with Christ to the principles of this world. Dead people are not attracted to anything. Is it possible for you to act as a dead person to the attractions of the world? Have you ever really wanted something, and then quit wanting it? Did it have any attraction to you after you quit wanting it?
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1. Epaphras probably established the church while Paul was at Ephesus during the Third Missionary Journey (1:7, 1:12-13, 2:1). 2. He meant at least their world, which would be Asia (Turkey) and that part of the Roman Empire. We have no information about how much of the world had been evangelized by 60 AD.

### Application Questions:

1. Paul continually prayed for the Colossians. He prayed they would: be filled with the knowledge of God's will, live a life worthy of the Lord, please the Lord in every way, bear fruit in every good work, and grow in knowledge of God. Pick some people and pray that for them every day this week.
2. Colossians 1:21-23 is an exciting passage about salvation for Christians. Do you perceive you were separated from God because of your evil behavior? What does it mean to be reconciled to God? Have you ever been reconciled to another person? How can you encourage others to continue in their faith?
3. Colossians 2:13-15 is another exciting passage about salvation. What does it mean to be alive in Christ? Who provides salvation?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Colossians 2:8. What hollow and deceptive philosophies do our modern cultural figures promote? Study the philosophy of the Epicureans and list the similarities and differences between it and Christianity.
2. Many people are challenged with conflicts between what science sometimes says and what they think the Bible says. If you feel conflicted, who can you talk to about those things? Do you think God designed the Bible to provide answers to all of your questions, or does it have another purpose?
3. What would Colossians 3:2 look like in your daily life? Is that something you want?