



# The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and Philemon

## *Introduction*

### I. INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

#### A. The Authorship of Colossians

##### 1. The proof of Pauline authorship

###### a. Paul's salutation

###### (1) The common thought

- a) Paul's salutation confirms his writing (2 Thessalonians 3:17).
- b) A salutation, by definition, is thought to be the greeting at the beginning of a letter (see Scofield's Bible Outlines).
- c) Paul's salutation always included his name and was found at the beginning of each epistle.
- d) Epistles not opening with Paul's name were not his.

###### (2) The truth

- a) Paul did not personally pen most of his epistles (see Romans 16:22; compare with Galatians 6:11; and see postscripts of first and second Corinthians).
- b) This allowed a letter to be written to the Thessalonians falsely claiming to be written by Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
- c) Due to this, Paul hand-wrote the salutation (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 16:21-24; Colossians 4:18).
- d) However, his salutation was not at the beginning, but at the end of his epistles. It was like us signing a letter that has been typed for us by someone else. The final signature gives authenticity to the letter. This is proven by the fact that all references in the epistles of Paul to the words *salute*, *saluteth* or *salutation* occur in the last chapter.
  - i) Salute (i.e., Romans 16:5, 7, 9-16, 21-22)
  - ii) Saluteth (i.e., Romans 16:23)
  - iii) Salutation (i.e., 1 Corinthians 16:21)
- e) Paul's salutation included a blessing of **grace** (see Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25; Hebrews 13:25).

###### b. Paul's name

- (1) Even though Paul's name was not part of his salutation, its inclusion in the epistle was of great import.
- (2) Paul was initially introduced as one of the men present at the authoring of the epistle (Colossians 1:1).
- (3) Later in the epistle, Paul was specifically identified as the human author (Colossians 1:23; Colossians 4:18).



2. The timing of its writing
  - a. Paul's letters have hints revealing the timing and location of authorship.
    - (1) Externally—in the postscript
    - (2) Internally—in the text of the epistle
  - b. External hints
    - (1) One means by which the timing of an epistle's authorship is gleaned involves the *postscripts*.
    - (2) Each *postscript* provides pertinent information, such as the location from where the epistle was sent. This noteworthy external information, along with the epistle's actual contents, helps to understand the general circumstances prevalent at the time of the writing of the epistles.
    - (3) According to the postscript, Colossians was written from Rome. If this is true, and we believe it to be so, Paul did not write Colossians until sometime after Acts 28:16.
  - c. Internal hints
    - (1) Making it later
      - a) Paul's mention of and association with Timothy (Colossians 1:1) clearly indicates that the epistle was written after Acts 16:1-3 when Paul first met Timothy.
      - b) Paul plainly declared that the gospel of the grace of God had been preached in the known world (Colossians 1:5-6).
      - c) It was written in a time when Paul was considered a prisoner (Colossians 4:3, 10, 18). Further strengthening this truth is the mention of Onesimus (Colossians 4:9) who Paul led to Christ while imprisoned (Philemon 1:10).
    - (2) Making it clearly before his final epistles—Paul's positive reference to Demas (Colossians 4:14) indicates that it had to be before Demas forsook Paul (2 Timothy 4:10).
    - (3) All of this points to Paul's first imprisonment which would:
      - a) Make it after
        - i) First and Second Corinthians, written during Paul's second missionary journey
        - ii) First and Second Thessalonians, written during Paul's second missionary journey
        - iii) Romans, written during Paul's missionary journeys
        - iv) Galatians, written during Paul's missionary journeys, but not completed and sent until Rome
      - b) Make it a companion with
        - i) Ephesians, written during initial imprisonment
        - ii) Philippians, written during initial imprisonment
        - iii) Philemon, written during initial imprisonment
      - c) Make it prior to
        - i) Titus
          - (a) Written from Nicopolis of Macedonia and began with a reminder to Titus concerning why he was left in Crete (see Titus 1:5; Acts 27:12)



- (b) This correspondence to Titus took place after Paul's initial imprisonment, which is confirmed by no mention of Paul's bonds in the epistle to Titus.
- ii) First Timothy
  - (a) During Paul's journeys post-initial imprisonment, he visited Laodicea.
  - (b) From this location the apostle wrote his first epistle to his son in the faith.
- iii) Hebrews
  - (a) Written when Paul returned to Rome
  - (b) Written when he either had been or was imprisoned
- iv) Second Timothy
  - (a) Paul's final epistle (2 Timothy 4:6)
  - (b) According to the postscript, "written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time"

## B. The Recipients of Colossians

1. To the saints at Colosse (Colossians 1:2)
  - a. Notice that this was addressed, not to a church or a group of churches, but, to saints and faithful brethren.
  - b. This manifests a shift from previous epistles
    - (1) First and Second Corinthians addressed a church (1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1).
    - (2) First and Second Thessalonians addressed a church (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).
    - (3) Romans addressed "all that be in Rome" (Romans 1:7).
    - (4) Galatians addressed churches (Galatians 1:2).
    - (5) Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians addressed saints (Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2).
  - c. Note: These believers had been influenced by the apostle Paul, but most likely indirectly.
    - (1) Paul had "heard" of their faith and love (Colossians 1:4).
    - (2) The saints "learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant" who "declared" unto Paul their love (Colossians 1:7-8).
    - (3) These believers had likely "not seen my [Paul's] face in the flesh" (Colossians 2:1).
    - (4) Tychicus would declare Paul's state to them (Colossians 4:7).
2. The church of the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16)
  - a. This epistle was also to be read in the church of the Laodiceans and the Colossians were to read the epistle from Laodicea.
  - b. It was a common thing for epistles to be read aloud to the people and even passed along to others to read (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27).
  - c. Yet, we do not have an epistle to the Laodiceans.
    - (1) Some deal with this problem by suggesting that it was the epistle we know as Ephesians.



- (2) Paul might have written something that we do not have in our New Testament canon of scripture. After all, Paul was not inspired, but rather, the scripture was inspired. In fact, there is a reference to an epistle written by Paul that most certainly is not contained in the canon of scripture (1 Corinthians 15:9).

### C. The Location of Colosse

1. Situated on a rocky ridge overlooking the valley of the Lycus River
2. Located approximately 100 miles east of Ephesus
3. Located approximately eleven miles east and slightly south of Laodicea
4. Located just over ten miles southeast of Hierapolis
5. The triangle of cities known as Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse had a very unique connection.
  - a. Colosse had a good source of cold drinking water.
  - b. Hierapolis, commonly known as Pammukale, was known for its hot springs where people would come to heal ailments of the flesh.
  - c. These waters met in Laodicea.
    - (1) The water had minerals from Hierapolis, making it undrinkable.
    - (2) The water had lost the heat from Hierapolis, because it met the waters of Colosse.
    - (3) This explains the stated illustration in Revelation 3:16. The waters in Laodicea were good for nothing.
      - a) They could not quench the thirst like the waters of Colosse.
      - b) They could not offer healing like the waters in Hierapolis.
      - c) If one drank these waters, they would spue them out.



### D. The Breakdown of Colossians

1. The basic statistics
  - a. Chapters = Four
  - b. Verses = Ninety-five
    - (1) Twenty-nine in chapter 1
    - (2) Twenty-three in chapter 2
    - (3) Twenty-five in chapter 3
    - (4) Eighteen in chapter 4
  - c. Sentences
    - (1) One asking sentence (Colossians 2:20-22)
    - (2) Fifty-three telling sentences
  - d. Words = 1,979
    - (1) Key words



- a) Wisdom—6 times
  - b) Know
    - i) Know—2 times
    - ii) Known—2 times
    - iii) Knowledge—4 times
    - iv) Acknowledgment—1 time
    - v) Knowing—2 times
  - c) Understanding—2 times
  - d) Faith—5 times
  - e) Mystery—4 times
  - f) Hid—3 times
  - g) Rich
    - i) Richly—1 time
    - ii) Riches—2 times
  - h) Note: Comparatively, the word *all* is found at a high percentage in this epistle appearing thirty-two times.
- (2) Unique words
- a) Beguile
  - b) Blotting
  - c) Handwriting
  - d) Nailing
  - e) Neglecting
  - f) Nourishment
  - g) Philosophy
- (3) Key phrases
- a) Lest any man (Colossians 2:4, 8)
  - b) Let no man (Colossians 2:16, 18)
  - c) All things (Colossians 1:16, 17, 18, 20; Colossians 3:14, 20, 22; Colossians 4:9)
2. The position of the book
- a. Order
    - (1) Fifty-first book in the Bible
    - (2) Twelfth book in the New Testament
    - (3) Seventh epistle to a church or churches of nine in order as they appear in the canon of scripture; chronologically it would have been among Paul's last
  - b. Location
    - (1) Colossians is the seventh of Paul's fourteen epistles.
    - (2) Although the epistles are not necessarily grouped accordingly, Paul's letter to the Colossians was among his Prison Epistles.
3. People mentioned
- a. Timotheus (Timothy) (Colossians 1:1; Acts 16:1; Acts 17:14-15; Acts 18:5; Acts 19:22; Acts 20:4; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1, 19; Philippians 1:1; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 6; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 1:1; Hebrews 13:23)



- b. Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12; Philemon 1:23)
  - c. Tychicus (Colossians 4:7; Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12)
  - d. Onesimus (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 1:10)
  - e. Aristarchus (Colossians 4:10; Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4; Acts 27:2; Philemon 1:24)
  - f. Marcus (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 1 Peter 5:13)
  - g. Luke (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11)
  - h. Demas (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:10; Philemon 1:24)
  - i. Nymphas (Colossians 4:15)
  - j. Archippus (Colossians 4:17; Philemon 1:2)
4. The purpose of the book
- a. To correct false doctrines
    - (1) Philosophy (Colossians 2:8)
    - (2) Legalism (Colossians 2:16-17)
    - (3) Angel worship (Colossians 2:18)
    - (4) Asceticism (Colossians 2:23)
  - b. To magnify our treasures and position in Christ
    - (1) We are saints (Colossians 1:2).
    - (2) We have redemption (Colossians 1:14).
    - (3) We are perfect (Colossians 1:28).
    - (4) We are complete (Colossians 2:10).
    - (5) We are dead (Colossians 2:20).
    - (6) We are buried (Colossians 2:12).
    - (7) We are quickened (Colossians 2:13).
    - (8) We are risen (Colossians 3:1).
    - (9) We are hid (Colossians 3:3).
    - (10) We shall appear (Colossians 3:4).
5. The theme of the book
- a. The person of Jesus Christ
    - (1) Image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15)
    - (2) Firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15)
    - (3) Before all things (Colossians 1:17)
    - (4) The Head of the body (Colossians 1:18)
    - (5) The beginning (Colossians 1:18)
    - (6) Firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18)
    - (7) Preeminent (Colossians 1:18)
    - (8) In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9)
    - (9) Sitteth on the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1)
    - (10) Our life (Colossians 3:4)
    - (11) All and in all (Colossians 3:11)
  - b. The work of Jesus Christ
    - (1) Redemption (Colossians 1:14)
    - (2) Created all things (Colossians 1:16)
    - (3) By Him all things consist (Colossians 1:17)
    - (4) Made peace (Colossians 1:20)
    - (5) Reconciled all things unto Himself (Colossians 1:20)



- (6) Present us holy and unblameable in His sight (Colossians 1:22)
  - (7) Quickened us (Colossians 2:13)
  - (8) Forgiven all trespasses (Colossians 2:13)
  - (9) Blotted out handwriting of ordinances against us (Colossians 2:14)
  - (10) Spoiled principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15)
  - (11) Gives the reward of the inheritance (Colossians 3:24)
6. The comparison of the book
- a. Arrangement of epistles
    - (1) Ephesians (emphasizes the body and its relation to the Head)
      - a) The book of Ephesians seems to have more references to the Christian's position, walk, and relationships on earth.
      - b) It is almost like an earthly view of the body of Christ.
    - (2) Philippians (emphasizes the relation of the body to the body)
      - a) The words mind, minds, or minded occur ten times in Philippians (Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:2, 3, 5; Philippians 3:15, 16, 19; Philippians 4:2, 7).
      - b) The mind controls ones thoughts, actions, moods, etc.
      - c) This book was written to teach the Philippians how to deal with and work with the rest of the body.
    - (3) Colossians (emphasizes the Head and His relation to the body)
      - a) The book of Colossians seems to have more references to Christ as the Head and less dealings with our walk here.
      - b) It is almost like a heavenly view of the body of Christ.
  - b. Similarities between Ephesians and Colossians
    - (1) Similar verses
      - a) Out of the ninety-five verses in Colossians, seventy-eight resemble verses found in Ephesians.
      - b) Out of the 155 verses in Ephesians, seventy-eight resemble verses found in Colossians.
    - (2) Word or phrase occurrences
      - a) Mystery
        - i) Six times in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:3, 4, 9; Ephesians 5:32; Ephesians 6:19)
        - ii) Four times in Colossians (Colossians 1:26, 27; Colossians 2:2; Colossians 4:3)
      - b) The church as the body of Christ
        - i) Eight times in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 3:6; Ephesians 4:4, 12, 16, Ephesians 5:23, 30)
        - ii) Five times in Colossians (Colossians 1:18, 24; Colossians 2:17, 19; Colossians 3:15)
      - c) Christ as the Head of the body
        - i) Three times in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23)
        - ii) Two times in Colossians (Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19)
7. The outline of the book



- a. The opening remarks (Colossians 1:1-2)
- b. The report of Epaphras (Colossians 1:3-8)
- c. The prayers given for the Colossians (Colossians 1:9-29; Colossians 2:1-7)
- d. The believers' doctrinal treasures in Christ (Colossians 2:8-23; Colossians 3:1-4)
- e. The believers' practical calling in Christ (Colossians 3:5-25; Colossians 4:1)
- f. The prayers requested for the apostle (Colossians 4:2-6)
- g. The report of Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9)
- h. The closing remarks (Colossians 4:10-18)

## II. INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON

### A. The Authorship of Philemon

1. The proof of Pauline authorship
  - a. Paul's salutation (see the introductory notes on Colossians)
  - b. Paul's name
    - (1) Paul was introduced as one of the men present at the authoring the epistle (Philemon 1:1).
    - (2) Later in the epistle, Paul was specifically identified as the human author (Colossians 1:23; Colossians 4:18).
2. The timing of its writing
  - a. Paul's letters have hints revealing the timing and location of authorship.
    - (1) Externally—in the postscript
    - (2) Internally—in the text of the epistle
  - b. External hints
    - (1) One means by which the timing of an epistle's authorship is gleaned involves the *postscripts*.
    - (2) Each *postscript* provides pertinent information, such as the location from where the epistle was sent. This noteworthy external information, along with the epistle's actual contents, helps to understand the general circumstances prevalent at the time of the writing of the epistles.
    - (3) According to the postscript, Philemon was written from Rome. If this is true, and we believe it to be so, Paul did not write Philemon until sometime after Acts 28:16.
  - c. Internal hints
    - (1) Making it later
      - a) Paul's mention of and association with Timothy (Philemon 1:1) clearly indicates that the epistle was written after Acts 16:1-3 when Paul first met Timothy.
      - b) It was written in a time when Paul was considered a prisoner (Philemon 1:1, 9, 10, 13, 23). Further strengthening this truth is the mention of Onesimus who Paul led to Christ while imprisoned (Philemon 1:10).



- c) Paul referred to himself as “Paul the aged” (Philemon 1:9).
- (2) Making it clearly before his final epistles
  - a) Paul’s positive reference to Demas (Colossians 4:14) indicates that it had to be before Demas forsook Paul (2 Timothy 4:10).
  - b) Paul asked Philemon to prepare lodging, trusting that he would get to visit Philemon (Philemon 1:22).
- (3) All of this points to Paul’s first imprisonment which would:
  - a) Make it after
    - i) First and Second Corinthians, written during Paul’s second missionary journey
    - ii) First and Second Thessalonians, written during Paul’s second missionary journey
    - iii) Romans, written during Paul’s missionary journeys
    - iv) Galatians, written during Paul’s missionary journeys, but not completed and sent until Rome
  - b) Make it a companion with
    - i) Ephesians, written during initial imprisonment
    - ii) Philippians, written during initial imprisonment
    - iii) Colossians, written during initial imprisonment
      - (a) The postscripts of both Colossians and Philemon mention Onesimus and his involvement in the writing of them.
      - (b) In Philemon, Onesimus was not only being sent home to Philemon, but he was carrying the epistle. According to Colossians, Onesimus was a Colossian.
      - (c) Several saints are mentioned in both epistles (i.e., Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12; Philemon 1:23) and Archippus (Colossians 4:17; Philemon 1:2).
      - (d) All things considered, it would appear that Colossians and Philemon were written and delivered at the same time.
  - c) Make it prior to
    - i) Titus
      - (a) Written from Nicopolis of Macedonia and began with a reminder to Titus concerning why he was left in Crete (see Titus 1:5; Acts 27:12)
      - (b) This correspondence to Titus took place after Paul’s initial Roman imprisonment, which is confirmed by no mention of Paul’s bonds in the epistle to Titus.
    - ii) First Timothy
      - (a) During Paul’s journeys post-initial imprisonment, he visited Laodicea.



- (b) From this location the apostle wrote his first epistle to his son in the faith.
- iii) Hebrews
  - (a) Written when Paul returned to Rome
  - (b) Written when Paul either had been or was imprisoned
- iv) Second Timothy
  - (a) Paul's final epistle (2 Timothy 4:6)
  - (b) According to the postscript, "written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time"

## B. The Recipients of Philemon

1. Philemon (Philemon 1:1)
2. Apphia (Philemon 1:2)
3. Archippus (Philemon 1:2)
4. The church in Philemon's house (Philemon 1:2)

## C. The Breakdown of Philemon

1. The basic statistics
  - a. Chapters = One
  - b. Verses = Twenty-five
  - c. Sentences
    - (1) One asking sentence (Philemon 1:15-16)
    - (2) Thirteen telling sentences
  - d. Words = 430
    - (1) Key words
      - a) Brother—4 times
      - b) Beloved—3 times
      - c) Bowels—3 times
      - d) Receive—3 times
      - e) Servant—3 times
    - (2) Key phrases
      - a) Receive him (Philemon 1:12, 15, 17)
      - b) Mine own (Philemon 1:12, 19)
2. The position of the book
  - a. Fifty-seventh book in the Bible
  - b. Eighteenth book in the New Testament
3. The outline of the book
  - a. The opening remarks (Philemon 1:1-3)
  - b. The praise of Philemon (Philemon 1:4-7)
  - c. The request of Philemon (Philemon 1:8-19)
  - d. The expectations of Philemon (Philemon 1:20-22)
  - e. The closing remarks (Philemon 1:23-25)