

CHRIST  
SUPREME

COLOSSIANS

Bathurst Presbyterian Church 2022

## Setting the Scene

Paul's letter to the Christians in Colossae is bold, controversial, and shockingly politically incorrect. Paul happily and bluntly asserts that Christ Jesus is supreme in everything, no exceptions. Christ towers over all else, the universal king.

As we read Colossians we discover the supremacy of Christ is wonderfully good news, and profoundly life-changing. For us, for our relationships with each other, and for the world. Nothing stands in the way of Jesus reconciling people to God by his blood. For those who have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son, this letter leaves us in astonishment and overwhelming thankfulness.

Jesus is **supreme**. That changes everything.

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.

Colossians 2.6-7 (NIV)

## Colossians 1.24-2.5

Before we start, what have we read so far in Colossians? Let's refresh our memory.

### Growing

For the apostle Paul, there's nothing more exciting than people hearing the gospel and trusting in Jesus, and nothing more exciting than seeing church families living lives of faith, love, and hope together. Colossians starts with an overflow of thankfulness for the gospel growth God is bringing about in the church in Colossae and around the world.

*We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you...*

*(Colossians 1.3-6, ESV)*

How did the gospel come to you? Do you see the gospel bearing fruit in faith, love, and hope, as people at BPC trust in Jesus and live for him? How can you express your thankfulness for these things?

### Enduring

If we've been saved from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Jesus, there's nothing better we can pray for each other than that we would continue to trust in Jesus with joyful endurance.

Here's a prayer—it's a close paraphrase of Colossians 1.9-14:

*God thank you for qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, having delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of your beloved Son Jesus, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Please fill us all with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so we might walk in a manner worthy of our Lord Jesus, fully pleasing to him and bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in our knowledge of you; being strengthened with all power, according to your glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy. Amen.*

When will you pray this prayer for your Small Group and your church family?

## **Supreme**

There is nothing and no one more impressive than Jesus. Jesus towers above all else, he is cosmically big, he is breath-takingly greater than we could possibly imagine, he is the unrivalled supreme king of all.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And 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, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

*(Colossians 1.15-18, ESV)*

When is it a comfort to remember Jesus is eternally, absolutely, gloriously, and graciously supreme? When is it a challenge?

## **Reconciled**

Chapter 1 finishes with a before-and-after picture. It's specifically a before and after of people who now belong to Jesus. Once strangers to God, now reconciled. It's a reminder of the extraordinary things Jesus has done for us.

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...*

*(Colossians 1.21-22, ESV)*

*...if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.*

*(Colossians 1.23, ESV)*

How do verses 21-22 encourage you to do verse 23?

Paul has reminded the Colossians of some incredibly wonderful and valuable truths so far. Based on chapter 1, why do you think Paul is writing this letter?

The apostle Paul has so far painted an immense picture of Jesus for us. For Paul it is impossible there is any worthy alternative to Christ. That conviction is put in sharp focus as Paul starts to talk about his own life and ministry.

**Read Colossians 1.24-29**

What do we learn about how Paul came to be involved in the work of the gospel?

What do we learn about the content of Paul's message?

What does Paul say is the goal of his ministry (verse 28)?

It's not immediately clear what verse 24 means. In light of the way Paul has described Jesus so far in this letter, what does verse 24 *not* mean? What might it mean instead?

What does Paul say about the 'mystery' in verses 26 and 27?

How does this mystery fit into Paul's understanding of his job? Check out Acts 26.13-18 for a big hint.

Re-read verse 28. Who is 'everyone'? What might it look like for us to share Paul's *priority* of 'presenting everyone fully mature in Christ'?

Re-read verse 29. Whose energy is at work? What might it look like for us to share Paul's *commitment and effort* in 'presenting everyone fully mature in Christ'?

**Read Colossians 2.1-5**

What does Paul want his readers to know (verse 1)?

Why does he want his readers to know this (verse 2-3)?

Why does Paul tell his readers all this? (verse 4)?

What is the danger of being 'deceived by fine-sounding arguments'?

What fine-sounding arguments might cause people to drift away from Jesus in our world and in our churches today?

**Think it over**

What is the link between chapter 1 verse 28 and chapter 2 verse 4?

How does this part of Colossians

a) help you remember the supremacy and value of Jesus Christ above all else?

b) challenge you to follow Paul's example and ministry priorities?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for saving us from the domain of darkness and transferring us into the kingdom of his son.

Thank God for revealing this gospel mystery to us and including us in the riches of Christ.

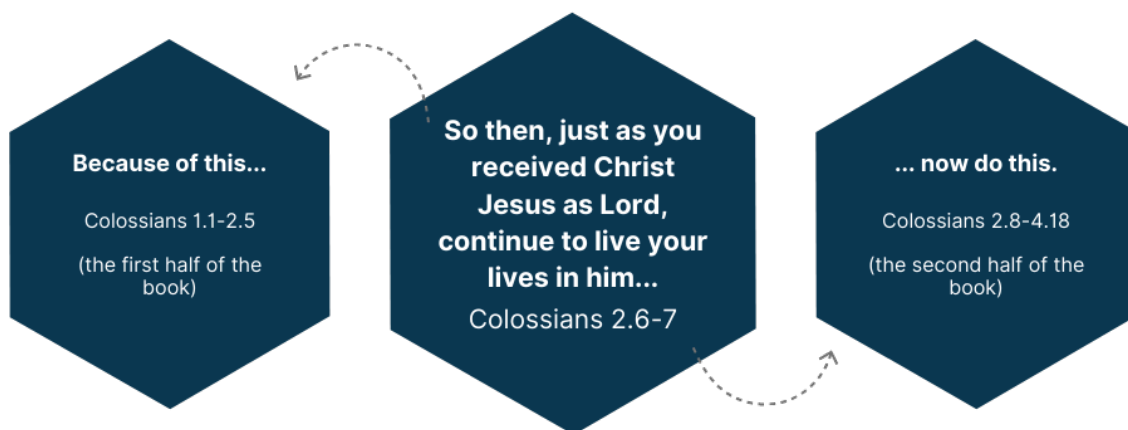
Pray that we would work hard to present everyone mature in Christ.

## Colossians 2.6-23

Can you think of an example of someone who gave up on a good thing?

In this part of Colossians the apostle Paul reminds us Christ Jesus is so good we don't ever want to give up on Jesus, be distracted from Jesus, or move on from Jesus.

Colossians 2.6-7 is important in the flow of Colossians. We could picture the book like this:



### Read Colossians 2.6-7

These two verses show us that to understand all that comes next, we need to hold in our minds what has come before. Glance back at Colossians 1. What have we heard about how the Colossian Christians received Christ (1.3-8, 1.12-14, 1.21-22)? What have we heard about how qualified Jesus is to save them (1.15-20)?

Why do you think Paul first tells us how impressive Jesus and his rescue are *before* telling us how to live?

### Read Colossians 2.8-15

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians not to do?

What reasons does Paul give to back up this instruction?

What similar dangers and distractions do we face today that might take our focus away from Jesus? How does this warning help us?

### Read Colossians 2.16-17

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians not to do?

What reasons does Paul give to back up this instruction?

What similar dangers and distractions do we face today that might take our focus away from Jesus? How does this warning help us?

### **Read Colossians 2.18-19**

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians not to do?

What reasons does Paul give to back up this instruction?

What similar dangers and distractions do we face today that might take our focus away from Jesus? How does this warning help us?

### **Read Colossians 2.20-23**

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians not to do?

What reasons does Paul give to back up this instruction?

What similar dangers and distractions do we face today that might take our focus away from Jesus? How does this warning help us?

### **Think it over**

Re-read Colossians 2.6-7. If Jesus is Christ the Lord—the fullness of God, the supreme universe king, the one who has given us redemption and forgiveness of sins and reconciled us to God by his death, then there's no one better to live for.

- What things distract you from Jesus?
- What things are you most tempted to add to the gospel?
- What things push you to move on from Jesus?
- What pieces of the world's wisdom are you likely to turn to instead of Jesus?
- How can we help each other continue to live in Jesus?
- How can we help each other grow in Christian maturity, so as not to be distracted from Jesus?

### **Prayer ideas**

Praise God for saving us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his son.

Thank God for reconciling us to himself through Jesus

Pray that we would continue to live in Christ, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as we were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.



## Colossians 3.1-14

If we're saved by grace, and the good or bad things we do are not what saves us, does it matter how we live? What might be the arguments for and against this idea?

In this part of Colossians the apostle Paul wants us to see that belonging to Jesus has a profound effect on the way we live.

### Read Colossians 3.1-4

What realities does Paul describe for people who belong to Jesus?

past realities	present realities	future realities

In light of these realities, what is the instruction in these verses?

What is the logic flow of these verses? What would be the danger of getting the logic backwards?

### Read Colossians 3.5-11

Make a list of the areas of behaviour Paul talks about. What things are the Colossian Christians told to not do?

What motivations and reasons do we see for these instructions?

### Read Colossians 2.12-14

What does Paul tell the Colossian Christians to do?

What motivations and reasons do we see for these instructions?

**Think it over**

Take another look at the list of things Paul tells Christians to put off (3.5-11). Make a private list of the old self things you need to put off.

Take another look at the list of things Paul tells Christians to put on (3.12-14). Make a list of the new self things you need to put on.

What will help you obey God's word here? Come up with a list of specific things.

Which Christians brothers or sisters can help you obey God's word here? Come up with a list of specific people.

Remember Paul's logic: we've been raised with Christ. *We live life like Christ* because *Christ is our life* (verse 4)! In light of this, how can we most helpfully encourage each other to put off the old self and put on the new self?

Sometimes it's hard to put off the old self and put on the new self. How is it possible (check out Colossians 2.6)?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for raising us with Christ and making our lives safe with him.

Thank God for Christ's compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and love.

Pray that we would put off the old self and put on the new.

## Colossians 3.15-4.1

What relational roles do you have in life (eg, friend, sibling, child, colleague, church family member). Make a list.

In this part of Colossians the apostle Paul wants us to see that belonging to Jesus has a profound effect on the way we live with others.

### Read Colossians 3.15-17

Check back on Colossians 3.12-14. How does this fit with what we read in the previous study?

Paul gives at least six instructions in verses 15-17. Can you identify them?

What reason or motivation does Paul give for doing these things (verse 12)?

Why does Paul keep stressing for us the reality of who we are now that we belong to Jesus before he gives instructions on how to live as people who belong to Jesus?

What will it look like for you to live the way Paul describes? Be specific.

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body."	
"And be thankful."	
"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..."	
"teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."	
"singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."	
"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."	

Do any of these instructions overlap with each other? How does this help us understand how we go about them?

**Read Colossians 3.18-4.1**

Fill out this table.

role	instruction	reason

Think of some specific roles in your life that are not listed here. How do the things we learn here apply to those roles?

**Think it over**

How has this part of Colossians challenged you? What steps do you need to now take?

Sometimes living this way seems impossible. How is it possible (Colossians 3.12)?

What is the importance of each other in all this? What responsibility do we have to one another?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for making us his chosen and holy and dearly loved people.

Thank God for bringing us into a family and community of believers.

Pray that we would reflect and honour Jesus in the way we live and relate to each other.

## Colossians 4.2-18

Would you describe your Small Group as 'inward-looking' or 'outward-looking'? What about your church family?

In this part of Colossians the apostle Paul wants us to see that belonging to Jesus has a profound effect on the way we think about the world around us.

### Read Colossians 4.2-6.

What is the instruction in 4.2? How does Colossians 2.2-4 help us understand this instruction?

How does this shape how we pray?

What is the request in 4.3-4? How does Colossians 1.27-29 help us understand this request?

How does this shape how we pray?

What is the instruction in 4.5-6? How does Colossians 2.6-15 help us understand this instruction?

What does it mean for our words to be "full of grace"? What do the words "seasoned with salt" add to the picture?

### Read Colossians 4.7-18

Fill out this table.

person	information about them	what they have done or will do
Tychicus		
Onesimus		
Aristarchus		
Mark		
Justus		
Epaphras		

Luke		
Demas		
the brothers at Laodicea		
Nympha		
Archippus		

Paul's description of his friends focuses on their hard work and service of the gospel. Why do you think Paul includes this?

**Think it over**

How can your church family work together to serve the gospel and make Jesus known in Bathurst?

Some people read phrases such as, "pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message" and "make the most of every opportunity" as passive, as if we can simply wait until a chance to talk about Jesus falls into our laps. Do you think this is a fair reading of this part of Colossians?

Re-read Colossians 1.15-22 and Colossians 2.6-7. Paul has taken us on breathtaking journey, showing us Jesus the eternal universe king, and the implications of belonging to him. How do you think the end of the letter fits with these central ideas of the letter?

What part of Colossians has encouraged you most?

What part of Colossians has challenged you most?

**Prayer ideas**

Praise God for Jesus, the eternal and universal creator, ruler, and king.  
 Thank God for qualifying us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, having delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son Jesus, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Ask God to fill us all with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so we might walk in a manner worthy of our Lord Jesus, fully pleasing to him and bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in our knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.