

Colossians

About Colossae	Colossae was located on the great east-west trade route that went from Ephesus on the Aegean Sea to the Euphrates River. A town on a trade route would have attracted all different types of individuals from a variety of places. That's important information for understanding <u>how</u> the main problem in the church in Colossae took root.
The Main Problem in the Church of Colossae	The church was the target of a heretical attack. The word "heresy" denotes a denial and/or rejection of core doctrines of the Christian faith and an insertion of new doctrines that radically redefine the substance of the faith itself. That was what was going on in the church at Colossae
The Difference Between Doctrinal Issues vs Doctrinal Heresy in Paul	(1) Most of Paul's letters to churches deal with doctrinal issues and problems related to the church: Examples: (a) Galatians and the Mosaic Law; (b) Romans and Relational Ethics; (c) Corinthians and licentious behavior and questions about the resurrection. (2) In Colossians, however, Paul deals with outright heresy; an outright denial of the core doctrines of our faith that make us Christians. From the context of Colossians, the heresy taught there had many different tentacles.
The Colossian Heresy	(1) <u>Secret Knowledge/Gnosticism</u> : "Gnosticism" comes from the Greek word for knowledge. The idea is that the Gnostics in Colossae deemed themselves to be "smarter" than others and had secret knowledge as to the "real" Jesus that others did not. They denied Jesus came in a bodily form, only spirit. (2) <u>Angel Worship</u> : They evaluated angelic messages and deemphasized Jesus as he really was. When you deny the historical confession, you replace it with something else. (3) <u>Reliance on their Wisdom</u> : They worshiped what they said they "knew" that others did not. In that sense, they were not unlike many well-educated individuals inside the church or outside it that deemphasize the historical confession of our faith and replace it with what they think (secret knowledge). That's heresy.
Theme	Paul writes Colossians to say "no, church. It's not about your secret knowledge. It's about Jesus. He really lived in bodily form, died, rose again and is supreme over all things, most especially your church.
Colossians in a Phrase	The Supremacy of Christ
Key Verse	<i>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. (1:19-20)</i>

Correcting Heresy: Principle #1 – Restoring the Right View of Jesus (ch 1)

The heretics in Colossae taught the church that Christ didn't exist in bodily form and that he was "second" to God the Father. Paul corrects this first with an orthodox explanation of the Gospel of Jesus

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ 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. ²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of ²² your evil behavior. ²² 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— ²³ 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. (1:15-23)

Correcting Heresy: Principle #2 – The Problem with Secret and Special" Knowledge (ch 2)

Part of the heresy in Colossae was some form of Gnosticism where individuals rely on what they think (essentially) rather than what has been proclaimed. Paul corrects this in a variety of ways in ch 2

Moves away from what they were taught and attaches to a deceptive philosophy	<i>6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. 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^[a] of this world rather than on Christ. (2:6-8)</i>
Denying that Jesus came in a physical body means the cross gets removed.	<i>9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the <u>flesh</u> was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12 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. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your <u>flesh</u>, God made you^[d] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, <u>nailing it to the cross</u>. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, <u>he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross</u> (2:9-15)</i>
Being influenced by heretics disconnects you from Jesus and connects you to false things instead.	<i>18 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. 19 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. (2:18-19)</i>

Restoring Right Christianity: Principle #1: Proper View of Jesus Leads to Proper Ethics (ch3)	
It wasn't enough for Paul to correct where the church in Colossae had gone wrong. As a pastor, he must restore them to proper fellowship with Jesus and one another. In ch 3, Paul makes the connection between a proper view of Jesus and proper ethics (behavior	
Since You've Been Raised with Christ, Set Your Mind on Heavenly Things and You'll Behave Properly	<i>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your^[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.^[b] 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (3:1-10)</i>
If You See Yourself As Chosen by God, You Will Emulate His Character	<i>12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 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. 17 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. (3:12-17)</i>

Restoring Right Christianity: Principle #2: Proper View of Jesus Leads to Prayer, Evangelism and Restoring Others (ch 4)	
Prayerfulness and Evangelism	<i>2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (4:2-6)</i>
Restoring Others	<i>16 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. (4:16)</i>

“There is but one good; that is God. Everything else is good when it looks to Him and bad when it turns from Him.” – CS Lewis