

**New Testament Survey**  
**(Part Seven: Philippians and Colossians)**

**I. Philippians.**

**A. Title.**

1. Takes its name from the city in which the church was situated (1:1).
2. History of the church: “The church at Philippi was the first-fruits of European Christianity. Their attachment to the apostle was very fervent, and so also was his affection for them. They alone of all the churches helped him by their contributions, which he gratefully acknowledges (Acts 20:33-35; 2 Cor. 11:7-12; 2 Thes. 3:8). The pecuniary liberality of the Philippians comes out very conspicuously (Phil. 4:15). ‘This was a characteristic of the Macedonian missions, as 2 Cor. 8 and 9 amply and beautifully prove. It is remarkable that the Macedonian converts were, as a class, very poor (2 Cor. 8:2) and the parallel facts, their poverty and their open-handed support of the great missionary and his work, are deeply harmonious. At the present day the missionary liberality of poor Christians is, in proportion, really greater than that of the rich’ (Moule's Philippians, Introd.)” (Easton).

**B. Author.**

1. Paul identifies himself as the author (1:1).
2. “The Pauline authorship has never been seriously doubted. External evidence is both early and strong. Some find allusions to it in the letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians (c. A.D. 96). Toward the middle of the second century Polycarp wrote to the Philippians, ‘Paul . . . when he was absent wrote letters to you’ (iii.2)” (Introduction).

**C. Date and Occasion:** The letter to the Philippians “was written by Paul during the two years when he was ‘in bonds’ in Rome (Phil. 1:7-13) probably early in the year A.D. 62 or in the end of 61. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus, their messenger, with contributions to meet the necessities of the apostle; and on his return Paul sent back with him this letter. With this precious communication Epaphroditus sets out on his homeward journey. ‘The joy caused by his return, and the effect of this wonderful letter when first read in the church of Philippi, are hidden from us. And we may almost say that with this letter the church itself passes from our view. Today, in silent meadows, quiet cattle browse among the ruins which mark the site of what was once the flourishing Roman colony of Philippi, the home of the most attractive church of the apostolic age. But the name and fame and spiritual influence of that church will never pass. To myriads of men and women in every age and nation the letter written in a dungeon at Rome, and carried along the Egnatian Way by an obscure Christian messenger, has been a light divine and a cheerful guide along the most rugged paths of life’ (Professor Beet)” (Easton).

**D. Content.**

1. “The contents of this epistle give an interesting insight into the condition of the church at Rome at the time it was written. Paul's imprisonment, we are informed, was no hindrance to his preaching the gospel, but rather ‘turned out to the furtherance of the gospel.’ The gospel spread very extensively among the Roman soldiers, with whom he

was in constant contact, and the Christians grew into a ‘vast multitude.’ It is plain that Christianity was at this time making rapid advancement in Rome” (Easton).

2. “The doctrinal statements of this epistle bear a close relation to those of the Epistle to the Romans. Compare also (Phil. 3:20) with (Eph. 2:12, 19) where the church is presented under the idea of a city or commonwealth for the first time in Paul's writings. The personal glory of Christ is also set forth in almost parallel forms of expression in (Phil. 2:5-11) compared with (Eph. 1:17-23; 2:8) and (Col. 1:15-20). ‘This exposition of the grace and wonder of His personal majesty, personal self-abasement, and personal exaltation after it,’ found in these epistles, ‘is, in a great measure, a new development in the revelations given through St. Paul’ (Moule). Other minuter analogies in forms of expression and of thought are also found in these epistles of the Captivity” (Easton).

### **E. Structure and Themes.**

1. Salutation (1:1-2).
2. Thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-11).
  - a. Thanking God for every remembrance (1:3-5).
  - b. Confidence that God will complete the work (1:6-8).
  - c. Desire that their love will grow even more (1:9-11).
3. Gospel furthered by Paul’s imprisonment (1:12-20).
4. To die and be with Christ very much better (1:21-26).
5. Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30).
6. Regard one another as more important than yourself (2:1-4).
7. Christ: our example of servanthood (2:5-8).
8. Christ exalted for His abasement (2:9-11).
9. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (2:12-18).
10. Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30).
11. Counting all things loss for the sake of knowing Christ (3:1-16).
12. Follow my example (3:17-21).
13. Concluding exhortations (4:1-9).
  - a. Stand firm in the Lord (4:1).
  - b. Live in harmony with each other (4:2-3).
  - c. Rejoice in the Lord always (4:4).
  - d. Be patient with one another (4:5).
  - e. Do not worry, but pray (4:6-7).
  - f. Dwell on things worthy of praise (4:8-9).
14. Paul’s appreciation for their generosity (4:10-20).
15. Concluding greetings and benediction (4:21-23).

## **II. Colossians.**

**A. Title:** again, takes its name from the city in which the church was located (1:2).

**B. Author.**

1. Paul identifies himself as the author (1:1).
2. “The Pauline authorship continues to be denied in some quarters, but not the majority of opinion. That one-fourth of Colossians is found in Ephesians, is adequately and most easily explained as the – conscious or unconscious – working of the mind of the Apostle himself as he writes on similar themes” (Introduction).

3. Relation between Ephesians and Colossians: “The letters of the apostle are the fervent outburst of pastoral zeal and attachment, written without reserve and in unaffected simplicity; sentiments come warm from the heart, without the shaping out, pruning, and punctilious arrangement of a formal discourse. There is such a fresh and familiar transcription of feeling, so frequent an introduction of colloquial idiom, and so much of conversational frankness and vivacity, that the reader associates the image of the writer with every paragraph, and the ear seems to catch and recognize the very tones of living address. Is it then any matter of amazement that one letter should resemble another, or that two written about the same time should have so much in common and so much that is peculiar? The close relation as to style and subject between the epistles to Colosse and Ephesus must strike every reader. Their precise relation to each other has given rise to much discussion. The great probability is that the epistle to Colosse was first written; the parallel passages in Ephesians, which amount to about forty-two in number, having the appearance of being expansions from the epistle to Colosse. Compare: (Eph 1:7 Col 1:14 ) (Eph 1:10 Col 1:20 ) (Eph 3:2 Col 1:25 ) (Eph 5:19 Col 3:16 ) (Eph 6:22 Col 4:8 ) (Eph 1:19-23, 2:1-5 Col 2:12,13 ) (Eph 4:2-4 Col 3:12-15 ) (Eph 4:16 Col 2:19 ) (Eph 4:32 Col 3:13 ) (Eph 4:22-24 Col 3:9,10 ) (Eph 5:6-8 Col 3:6-8 ) (Eph 5:15,16 Col 4:5 ) (Eph 6:19,20 Col 4:3,4 ) (Eph 5:22-33, 6:1-9 Col 3:18-25, 4:1 )” (Easton).

### C. Date and Occasion.

1. The letter to the Colossians “was written by Paul at Rome during his first imprisonment there (Acts 28:16, 30) probably in the spring of A.D. 57, or, as some think, 62, and soon after he had written his Epistle to the Ephesians” (Easton).
2. “The Colossian heresy combined Jewish and Hellenistic elements. Dietary and Sabbath observances, circumcision rites, and probably the mediatorial function of angels are reminiscent of Jewish practice and belief (Col. 2:11, 16, 18); the emphasis on ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge,’ the *pleroma* of cosmic powers, and the abasement of the body reflect Greek thought (2:3, 8, 23). Some Jewish converts probably brought this mixture from a heterodox Judaism and developed it further after they became Christians.”
3. “Paul takes the terminology of the errorists to attach their teaching, and develops the doctrine of the ‘cosmic Christ.’ In Christ, the one mediator, dwells all wisdom and knowledge; in His death and Resurrection all powers of the cosmos are defeated and subjected to Himself (2:3, 9, 10, 15). Any teaching which detracts from the centrality of Christ under the pretense of leading men to maturity and perfection is a perversion of the faith. The apostle thus identifies and exposes the root of the error at Colosse” (Introduction).

### D. Structure and Themes.

1. “(1). The doctrinal part comprises the first two chapters. His main theme is developed in chapter 2. He warns them against being drawn away from Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and who was the head of all spiritual powers. Christ was the head of the body of which they were members; and if they were truly united to him, what needed they more? (2.) The practical part of the epistle (3-4) enforces various duties naturally flowing from the doctrines expounded. They are exhorted to mind things that are above (Col. 3:1-4) to mortify every evil principle of their nature, and to put on the new man (Col. 3:5-14). Many special duties of the Christian life are also insisted upon as the fitting evidence of the Christian character. Tychicus was the bearer of the letter, as he was also of that to the Ephesians and to Philemon, and he would tell

them of the state of the apostle (Col. 4:7-9). After friendly greetings (Col. 4:10-14) he bids them interchange this letter with that he had sent to the neighbouring church of Laodicea. He then closes this brief but striking epistle with his usual autograph salutation. There is a remarkable resemblance between this epistle and that to the Ephesians (q.v.). The genuineness of this epistle has not been called in question” (Easton).

2. Detailed outline:

- a. Introduction (1:1-2).
- b. Paul’s prayer for them (1:3-12).
- c. The excellencies of Christ (1:13-23).
  - (i) Redemption in Christ (1:13-14).
  - (ii) Image of the invisible God, first-born of all Creation (1:15).
  - (iii) Creator and sustainer of all things (1:16-17).
  - (iv) Head of the church (1:18).
  - (v) All fullness in Him (1:19).
  - (vi) All things reconciled through Him (1:20-23).
- d. Paul’s struggles for the Colossians (1:24-2:5).
- e. As you received Christ, walk in Him (2:6-4:6).
  - (i) Be built up in Him (2:6-7).
  - (ii) Reject the philosophies of man (2:8).
  - (iii) All fullness of deity in Christ (2:9).
  - (iv) Completeness in Christ (2:10).
  - (v) The flesh removed in the circumcision of Christ (2:12).
  - (vi) Made alive in Christ (2:13-15).
  - (vii) Let no one judge you by the ceremonial law (2:16-17).
  - (viii) Hold fast to Christ (2:18-19).
  - (ix) Do not submit to worldly principles (2:20-23).
  - (x) Set your mind on the things above (3:1-2).
  - (xi) Your life is hidden in Christ (3:3-4).
  - (xii) Put off the old man, put on the new (3:5-11).
  - (xiii) Love one another (3:12-15).
  - (xiv) Let the Word dwell in your richly (3:16).
  - (xv) Do all in the name of Christ (3:17).
  - (xvi) Wives, submit to your husbands (3:18).
  - (xvii) Husbands, love your wives (3:19).
  - (xviii) Children, obey your parents (3:20).
  - (xix) Fathers, do not exasperate your children (3:21).
  - (xx) Slaves, obey your masters (3:22-25).
  - (xxi) Masters, grant justice to your servants (4:1).
  - (xxii) Devote yourselves to prayer (4:2-4).
  - (xxiii) Make the most of your opportunities to evangelize (4:5-6).
- f. Plans to send Tychicus (4:7-9).
- g. Final greetings (4:10-18).