

# Route 66

## *Colossians: Bombarded With Lies*

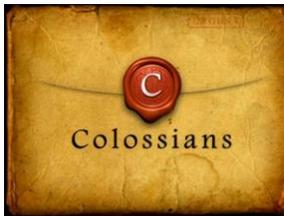
Part 51 – February 20, 2011



Colossae was a small city in modern day Turkey. But, a thriving textile industry nearby produced a popular, dark red wool, known as “colossinium”.

Colossae became wealthy, and attracted a diverse mix of traders, cultures, and belief systems.

The small city was like a far-left college town. New believers were pounded and picked off by a barrage of man-centered and mystical ideals and were buying into a “mix-and-match religion”.



They received this letter, *not* because of their size or prominence, but because of the insidious doctrinal errors bombarding them on every side!

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy ... – *Colossians 2:8a NIV*

Paul is writing to a faithful remnant that he has never met.

... I am struggling for you ... and for **all who have not met me personally**. ... I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. – *Colossians 2:1b; 5b NIV*

A convert named Epaphras [EP-uh-frass] founded the Colossian church.

... we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus ... You learned it from **Epaphras**, our dear fellow servant ... – *Colossians 1:3b-7a NIV*

Epaphras made his way to Rome, secured this *letter-of-defense* for his people, and stayed to aid Paul (who was under house-arrest). In the signoff, Paul says:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. – *Colossians 4:12a NIV*



There have been *no* archaeological excavations at Colossae. Although remains of a defensive wall, theater, and cemetery are evident, the mound that held the city is intact and untouched and holding its secrets!

Colossae was destroyed by an earthquake perhaps only a few months after receiving this letter (circa 62<sup>AD</sup>). And knowing this underscores the significance and timeliness of Paul's words.

Like our own culture, there were simply too many perversions and distortions against the faith, for Paul to debate or debunk each of them point by point. But, there was one common denominator: All heresies devalue the supremacy of Christ.

And since the best defense is a good offense; Paul's objective is to arm the Colossians with an emphasis on the supremacy of Christ.

He is the image of the invisible God ... all things were created by him and for him. ... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him ... For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form ... - *Colossians 1:15a;16b;19;2:9 NIV*

Jesus was and is the *absolute* fullness and completeness of God.

... in [Christ] we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. - *Colossians 1:14 NIV*

The only way we'll stand firm and not be taken captive by talk-show philosophies, pseudo spirituality, secular self-helpers, and imposing authors is to know who Jesus is and what *only* He can offer.

This is how you test *every* high-sounding credo, whether it comes from Oprah, Deepak, Dr. Phil, or Dan Brown: does it affirm that Jesus is God, and forgiveness comes only through His blood?

It's pretty much an all-or-nothing deal. A believer's background has no bearing - Jesus is equally all-sufficient for *everyone*.

... there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, [SITH-ih-uhn] slave or free, but **Christ is all, and is in all**. - *Colossians 3:11 NIV*

Not much middle ground. I accept it and embrace it ... or I don't.

- And in my life, if Christ is not all, He is nothing.



And when He is all, there will be physical, visible evidence.

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have **taken off your old self** with its practices and have **put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. - *Colossians 3:8-10 NIV*

Imagine a soldier changing into a new uniform; but instead of removing his old clothes, he tries to force it on over them.

We do this when we try to walk in relationship with Jesus, but refuse to “take off” unsuitable practices that dishonor Him, like: “anger”, “rage”, “malice”, “slander”, “filthy language”, and “[lying]”.

Paul reminds us that it’s a process: “put on the new self, which is being renewed”.

And then he goes on to offer examples of what this new, suitable “uniform” that we’re putting on looks like.

... clothe yourselves with **compassion**, **kindness**, **humility**, **gentleness** and **patience**. ... **Forgive** as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on **love**, which binds them all together in perfect unity. - *Colossians 3:12-14 NIV*

These are the types of visible “clothes” that’ll be changing in my life if and when I accept and embrace the supremacy of Christ.

Some believers live in fear that God wants to take away all the “fun stuff”; when, in reality, He just wants us to stop poking ourselves in the eye with a stick!



Christianity isn’t a series of “giving-ups”; it’s a sequence of maturing, conquering, and moving on! Kids don’t “give up” playing with toys - they *outgrow* them. “Toy Story” made millions on the fact!

- It’s not about giving up; it’s about growing up.

Paul wants them not only grounded in Christ, but growing in confidence and conviction, which comes through learning His Word.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live 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*

The more personally, intimately, and *doctrinally* we know Christ, the more we’ll find ourselves losing interest in all those things that end in pain, for ourselves and/or others.



And as they’re being replaced with a deep and growing sense of peace and joy and fulfillment, the more we’ll want to help others find it. And Paul says that we should keep a Kingdom-advancing perspective. You may be volatile and explosive, but Jesus will grow you into a gentle, Godly “guided missile”.

Paul tells the Colossians to be sensible, sociable, and ... salty.

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. - *Colossians 4:5-6 NIV*

Our speech should first and foremost be: “full of grace”. That means our only agenda should be sweet, selfless compassion. But, our conversations are *also* to be: “seasoned with salt”. God wants us to be like pretzels and pickles to this world.

Pretzels and pickles represent the two aspects of our salt-seasoning mission:



1. To make others thirsty for Jesus

We’re not to push it on ‘em, shove it down ‘em. We mustn’t overdo it. A little salt goes a long way. And too much raises the blood pressure!

If the people around you see for themselves how soul-quenching the “living water” of Jesus is in *your* life, they’ll get thirsty.



2. To purify and preserve others in Jesus

In the old days, salt was the main way to purify and preserve foods. Meats were dry-cured with it; and fruits and vegetables were pickled in it.

If we’re going to “pass the salt” to others, we have to have a firm Biblical grasp on how Jesus purifies and preserves *us*, so that we can “know how to answer everyone”, anywhere, anytime.



We must strive to find that perfect blend of the sweetness of grace with the salt of truth.

- An appealing believer is sweet *and* salty.

The sweetness of grace comes from a heart-change, displayed through attitude and action. The saltiness of truth comes from a head-change, displayed through insight and understanding.

Epaphras craved both for his people. And though he remained in Rome, his heart was with those beloved, bombarded believers back home.

[Epaphras] is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. – *Colossians 4:12 NIV*

And this means knowing Jesus both personally *and* doctrinally.