

hands on its head. <sup>19</sup>Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled the blood against the altar on all sides. <sup>20</sup>He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. <sup>21</sup>He washed the inner parts and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire, as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>22</sup>He then presented the other ram, the ram for the ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. <sup>23</sup>Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. <sup>24</sup>Moses also brought Aaron's sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. Then he sprinkled blood against the altar on all sides. <sup>25</sup>He took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, both kidneys and their fat and the right thigh. <sup>26</sup>Then from the basket of bread made without yeast, which was before the LORD, he took a cake of bread, and one made with oil, and a wafer; he put these on the fat portions and on the right thigh. <sup>27</sup>He put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and waved them before the LORD as a wave offering. <sup>28</sup>Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. <sup>29</sup>He also took the breast—Moses' share of the ordination ram—and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering, as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>30</sup>Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments.

<sup>31</sup>Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, "Cook the meat at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the bread from the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying,<sup>a</sup> 'Aaron and his sons are to eat it.' <sup>32</sup>Then burn up the rest of the meat and the bread. <sup>33</sup>Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for your ordination will last seven days. <sup>34</sup>What has been done today was commanded by the LORD to make atonement for you. <sup>35</sup>You must stay at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days and do what the LORD requires, so you will not die; for that is what I have been commanded."<sup>b</sup> <sup>36</sup>So Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD commanded through Moses.

### *The Priests Begin Their Ministry*

**9** On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. <sup>2</sup>He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Then say to the Israelites: "Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb—both a year old and without defect—for a burnt offering, <sup>4</sup>and an ox<sup>b</sup> and a ram for a fellowship offering<sup>c</sup> to sacrifice before the LORD, together with a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you."

<sup>5</sup>They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the LORD. <sup>6</sup>Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

<sup>7</sup>Moses said to Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

<sup>8</sup>So Aaron came to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself. <sup>9</sup>His sons brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. <sup>10</sup>On the

<sup>a</sup>31 Or *I was commanded*.

<sup>b</sup>4 The Hebrew word can include both male and female; also in verses 18 and 19.

<sup>c</sup>4 Traditionally *peace offering*; also in verses 18 and 22

altar he burned the fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver from the sin offering, as the LORD commanded Moses; <sup>11</sup>the flesh and the hide he burned up outside the camp.

<sup>12</sup>Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. <sup>13</sup>They handed him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. <sup>14</sup>He washed the inner parts and the legs and burned them on top of the burnt offering on the altar.

<sup>15</sup>Aaron then brought the offering that was for the people. He took the goat for the people's sin offering and slaughtered it and offered it for a sin offering as he did with the first one.

<sup>16</sup>He brought the burnt offering and offered it in the prescribed way. <sup>17</sup>He also brought the grain offering, took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning's burnt offering.

<sup>18</sup>He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the fellowship offering for the people. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. <sup>19</sup>But the fat portions of the ox and the ram—the fat tail, the layer of fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver—<sup>20</sup>these they laid on the breasts, and then Aaron burned the fat on the altar. <sup>21</sup>Aaron waved the breasts and the right thigh before the LORD as a wave offering, as Moses commanded.

<sup>22</sup>Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down.

<sup>23</sup>Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. <sup>24</sup>Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell face-down.

### *The Death of Nadab and Abihu*

**10** Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. <sup>2</sup>So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:

"Among those who approach me  
I will show myself holy;  
in the sight of all the people  
I will be honored.'"

Aaron remained silent.

<sup>4</sup>Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the

#### DISCOVERING GOD

##### **10:1–3** **Life with God**



We all have heard people flippantly call God names such as "the big guy upstairs." Surely such offhand comments don't bother God—or do they?

The problem with such comments is that they distort and minimize God's authority and character. God wants people to know him as he is—the all-powerful creator and ruler of the universe.

This passage shows God's strong response to a disrespectful attitude. As leaders of the people, Aaron's sons had a high degree of responsibility for maintaining a high view of God. When they failed to follow God's specific instructions for worship, they set a negative example for the rest of the nation—and received God's punishment for doing so.

Yes, God is personal and wants a relationship with you. But do not think that the creator of the galaxies is simply a passive spirit in the sky. In the words of author C. S. Lewis, God "is not a tame lion." We must approach him, therefore, with utmost respect.

- <sup>17</sup>He will not enjoy the streams,  
the rivers flowing with honey and cream.
- <sup>18</sup>What he toiled for he must give back uneaten;  
he will not enjoy the profit from his trading.
- <sup>19</sup>For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute;  
he has seized houses he did not build.
- <sup>20</sup>Surely he will have no respite from his craving;  
he cannot save himself by his treasure.
- <sup>21</sup>Nothing is left for him to devour;  
his prosperity will not endure.
- <sup>22</sup>In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him;  
the full force of misery will come upon him.
- <sup>23</sup>When he has filled his belly,  
God will vent his burning anger against him  
and rain down his blows upon him.
- <sup>24</sup>Though he flees from an iron weapon,  
a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him.
- <sup>25</sup>He pulls it out of his back,  
the gleaming point out of his liver.  
Terrors will come over him;
- <sup>26</sup> total darkness lies in wait for his treasures.  
A fire unfanned will consume him  
and devour what is left in his tent.
- <sup>27</sup>The heavens will expose his guilt;  
the earth will rise up against him.
- <sup>28</sup>A flood will carry off his house,  
rushing waters<sup>a</sup> on the day of God's wrath.
- <sup>29</sup>Such is the fate God allots the wicked,  
the heritage appointed for them by God."

## Job

# 21

Then Job replied:

- <sup>2</sup>Listen carefully to my words;  
let this be the consolation you give me.
- <sup>3</sup>Bear with me while I speak,  
and after I have spoken, mock on.
- <sup>4</sup>Is my complaint directed to man?  
Why should I not be impatient?
- <sup>5</sup>Look at me and be astonished;  
clap your hand over your mouth.
- <sup>6</sup>When I think about this, I am terrified;  
trembling seizes my body.
- <sup>7</sup>Why do the wicked live on,  
growing old and increasing in power?
- <sup>8</sup>They see their children established around them,  
their offspring before their eyes.
- <sup>9</sup>Their homes are safe and free from fear;  
the rod of God is not upon them.
- <sup>10</sup>Their bulls never fail to breed;  
their cows calve and do not miscarry.

<sup>a</sup>28 Or *The possessions in his house will be carried off, / washed away*

- 11They send forth their children as a flock;  
 their little ones dance about.  
 12They sing to the music of tambourine and harp;  
 they make merry to the sound of the flute.  
 13They spend their years in prosperity  
 and go down to the grave<sup>a</sup> in peace.<sup>b</sup>  
 14Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone!  
 We have no desire to know your ways.  
 15Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?  
 What would we gain by praying to him?'  
 16But their prosperity is not in their own hands,  
 so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.  
  
 17'Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out?  
 How often does calamity come upon them,  
 the fate God allots in his anger?  
 18How often are they like straw before the wind,  
 like chaff swept away by a gale?  
 19It is said, 'God stores up a man's punishment for his sons.'  
 Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!  
 20Let his own eyes see his destruction;  
 let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.<sup>c</sup>  
 21For what does he care about the family he leaves behind  
 when his allotted months come to an end?  
  
 22'Can anyone teach knowledge to God,  
 since he judges even the highest?  
 23One man dies in full vigor,  
 completely secure and at ease,  
 24his body<sup>d</sup> well nourished,  
 his bones rich with marrow.  
 25Another man dies in bitterness of soul,  
 never having enjoyed anything good.  
 26Side by side they lie in the dust,  
 and worms cover them both.  
  
 27'I know full well what you are thinking,  
 the schemes by which you would wrong me.  
 28You say, 'Where now is the great man's house,  
 the tents where wicked men lived?'  
 29Have you never questioned those who travel?  
 Have you paid no regard to their accounts—  
 30that the evil man is spared from the day of calamity,  
 that he is delivered from<sup>e</sup> the day of wrath?  
 31Who denounces his conduct to his face?  
 Who repays him for what he has done?  
 32He is carried to the grave,  
 and watch is kept over his tomb.  
 33The soil in the valley is sweet to him;  
 all men follow after him,  
 and a countless throng goes<sup>f</sup> before him.

<sup>a</sup>13 Hebrew *Sheol*      <sup>b</sup>13 Or in an instant      <sup>c</sup>17–20 Verses 17 and 18 may be taken as exclamations and 19 and 20 as declarations.      <sup>d</sup>24 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.      <sup>e</sup>30 Or man is reserved for the day of calamity, / that he is brought forth to      <sup>f</sup>33 Or / as a countless throng went

ing to which you were entrusted. <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

<sup>19</sup>I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in<sup>a</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.

### ADDRESSING QUESTIONS

#### 6:1-14 Human Experience



The idea that salvation is a free gift may have raised this question in your mind: *If I don't have to do anything to win God's favor, what's to keep me from living a wild life after I accept Christ?*

Paul anticipated that question and gave a profound answer. When people trust Jesus to rescue them from their sin, an amazing transaction occurs: They are spiritually identified—tied together—with Christ. Since sin has no power over Christ, those who are united with Christ have also been delivered from the power of sin.

Paul also points out that it doesn't make sense to come to Jesus with the intention of disobeying him. That's like getting married with the intention of regularly committing adultery—possible, but utterly foolish and completely at odds with the purpose of the relationship.

Imagine a ceiling fan with blades driven by a belt connected to an electric motor. If someone disconnects the belt, the electric motor will still operate, but it won't be able to turn the blades. Similarly, when we come to Christ, the belt on the motor that drives us to sin gets disconnected. It's still there, and we unfortunately choose to reengage it at times, but we don't have to sin the way we did before we became Christ-followers.

The more we realize that we've been liberated from the power of sin, the more we want to live free from its destructive effects. Jesus' gift of salvation sets us free *from* sin, not free *to* sin!

#### An Illustration From Marriage

**7** Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? <sup>2</sup>For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. <sup>3</sup>So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup>So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. <sup>5</sup>For when we were controlled by the sinful nature,<sup>b</sup> the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

#### Struggling With Sin

<sup>7</sup>What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."<sup>c</sup> <sup>8</sup>But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. <sup>9</sup>Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. <sup>10</sup>I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded

<sup>a</sup>23 Or *through*

<sup>b</sup>5 Or *the flesh*; also in verse 25

<sup>c</sup>7 Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21

by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.  
<sup>12</sup>So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

<sup>13</sup>Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

<sup>14</sup>We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup>And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup>As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup>I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.<sup>a</sup> For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

<sup>21</sup>So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup>For in my inner being I delight in God's law; <sup>23</sup>but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

<sup>a</sup>18 Or my flesh

## REASONS TO BELIEVE

### 7:1–25 The Incomparable Jesus

Perhaps one thing that has kept you from following Christ is your belief that you could never live up to God's expectations. You don't want to be a hypocrite, so you don't even bother trying to live up to standards that you know you'll never achieve.

In a way, you're right. Only one person has ever lived the Christian life perfectly—Jesus. So you're not alone in your belief that you can't hack it. God's commands are impossible to follow—not because he is unreasonable, but because we're so sinful. In fact, Paul says that one of the reasons why God gave us his commandments is so we'll stop believing that we're "good." Through the law we see that we can't fully obey God. That's why we need to rely on Jesus for forgiveness.

Paul notes three purposes for the law. First, *it reveals sin* (verse 7). A driver doesn't know he's speeding until he passes a speed-limit sign and compares it with his speedometer. Similarly, we don't know that some things are wrong until God points them out.

Second, *God's law provokes sin so that it comes into full view* (verses 8–13). To illustrate: What's your first response to a sign that says "Wet Paint—Do Not Touch"? Making something off limits actually increases our desire to disobey. That doesn't make God's law evil. It just points out how evil we are—how ready we are to do wrong.

Third, *God's law spells out the consequences of sin* (verse 13). If we're caught speeding, we get a ticket—that's the law. If we continually refuse to admit our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness, we pay the penalty and die spiritually.

Even the apostle Paul, as spiritually mature as he was, despaired that he ended up doing the very things he didn't want to do (verses 15–23). His cry in verse 25 and his immediate response in verse 26 demonstrate the principle that he discusses in this chapter: Even though we live in a sinful world and experience sin's effects, we can look to Jesus for release from our bondage to sin. When we give our lives to Christ, we trust him to change us from the inside as we mature spiritually. It's a matter of growing into obedience—*training* to be like Jesus over time instead of *trying* to be like him in our own power.

## Introduction

### THE BOTTOM LINE

**O**ur culture’s appetite for self-improvement is voracious. Many different venues—from Eastern religions to infomercials—offer programs that either guide you to discover your inner self or help you to drastically alter it. The apostle Paul says in this book that there’s only one way to rise above the chaos in our world and fully realize our potential as individuals. It’s through following Christ, “who is head over every power and authority” (chapter 2, verse 10 [p. 1553]).

#### CENTRAL IDEAS

- Jesus Christ is God, and he rules over the universe.
- Don’t let man-made philosophies confuse you—hold fast to Jesus.
- Some kinds of “religious” behavior actually interfere with true spiritual living.

#### OUTLINE

- 1 Introduction (1:1–14)
- 2 Christ is supreme (1:15–23)
- 3 Paul’s work for the church (1:24–2:7)
- 4 Freedom through Christ (2:8–23)
- 5 Guidelines for Christ-like living (3:1–4:6)
- 6 Final greetings (4:7–18)

#### TITLE

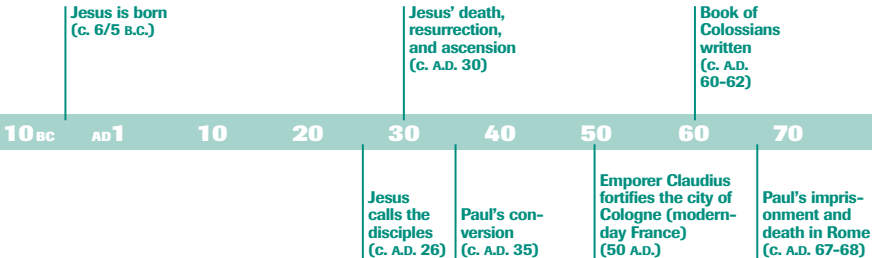
This book is named after the people of the church at Colosse, to whom it was addressed.

#### AUTHOR AND READERS

Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Colosse during a time when first-century religions threatened to undermine the Christian faith. His discussion of the supremacy of Jesus Christ was meant to keep these believers faithful to Christ and his saving work.

LINE

TIME



**D**id you ever get the feeling that the experts aren't really all that expert? For instance, the managing director of the World Monetary Fund in 1959 concluded, "In all likelihood, world inflation is over."

Or, how about the MGM executive who warned Louis B. Mayer regarding *Gone with the Wind*, "Forget it Louis, no Civil War movie ever made a nickel!"

The fields of business and technology are crowded with similarly error-prone experts. One such authority was a former president of Digital Equipment Corporation. He declared in 1977 that "there is no reason for any individual to have a computer in the home."

Another high-tech expert who missed is the *Business Week* pro who in 1968 judged, "With over fifty foreign cars already on sale here in America, the Japanese auto industry isn't likely to carve out a big share of the market for itself." Oops!

And finally, this prediction made by Henry Ford III in 1955: "The Edsel is here to stay!"

### ***"The Edsel is here to stay."***

If there's one lesson these bold declarations teach us, it's that experts can be wrong. That's also the message Paul wanted to communicate to the Colossian people. Some so-called spiritual experts had infiltrated their church and were telling them that there were certain

foods they couldn't eat, certain days they needed to regard as holy, certain religious rituals they had to observe, and certain things they couldn't touch. Since these people sounded knowledgeable, many of the Colossian Christians followed their advice.

But these teachers ignored what Jesus had accomplished through his death and resurrection. One of the main reasons the apostle Paul wrote this letter was to correct the misinformation these teachers were spreading.

Maybe you've encountered similar "religious experts." They intimidate people with Bible knowledge and try to convince them that other experts are wrong. They teach people that their own list of specific do's and don't's are necessary steps toward getting in line with God. Virtually every cult today smothers God's grace by choking it with some performance-based behavior or procedure without which, they claim, a person cannot be in a right relationship with God.

If you've ever been frustrated and confused by the "experts," you'll find the words of Paul helpful. Turn to Colossians chapter 2, verses 8-10 (page 1553), where you'll discover God's response to such teaching.