

“Word on Wednesday Bible Study”

“HOLINESS IN ACTION!”

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Chapter 2

Paul is conflicted and concerned for both the Christians at Colossae and Laodicea. He readily admits that he has not seen them face to face (verse 1). This verse further buttresses the argument for Epaphras being the one who helped to establish the church in Colossae.

His conflict involves various issues at the church in Colossae which could hinder their spiritual growth. Paul wanted them to be knitted together in love. It is the same type of love that he speaks of in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13).

Practicing this kind of love will allow their hearts to be comforted and experience the full assurance of understanding which should lead to acknowledgment of the mystery associated with the Godhead (the Father & Son)- verse 2.

The mysteries of God include treasures of wisdom and knowledge (verse 3). Paul is laying the foundation for his argument against false theological teachings. Paul warns the church against allowing themselves to be deceived by enticing words.

Enticing words signify language which may sound eloquent but are spiritually destructive. False teachers know how to mix a bit of truth with lies. This dangerous spiritual mix will ultimately lead to pain.

Paul’s warning to the Colossian church is consistent with the rest of Scripture. The following passages instructs us about those who come with enticing or flattering words:

They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:-
Psalm 12:2-3

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.-Psalm 5:9

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.-Psalm 55:20-21

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.-Psalm 62:4

We learn from this passage that Paul was not physically with them. However, he would like the Colossian church to remain steadfast in their faith (verses 5-6).

As a result of them receiving Christ, Paul encourages the following:

1. _____ (verse 6).
2. _____ (verse 7).
3. _____ (verse 7).
4. _____ (verse 7).
5. Be aware so no one spoils you _____ (verse 8).

Paul explains the origins of this vain philosophy and deceit. It is a product of human tradition (worldly) and not emblematic of Christian conduct. Paul is not saying that philosophy is bad. The word philosophy actually comes from two Greek words *phileo* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom). In short, the word philosophy means a lover of wisdom. Philosophy practiced outside of God's will is foolish. However, philosophy is beneficial if practiced within a Christian worldview. Paul is warning the church of Colossae about listening to erroneous teachings based on worldliness or humanism.

In Christ we are complete. We are able to utilize our reasoning for the glory of the Lord (verse 9-10).

They (the church of Colossae) like all believers have been spiritually circumcised (verse 13). Circumcision for Israelite men signified a covenant with God. Similarly, the New Testament does not advocate physical circumcision but a spiritual circumcision (Romans 2:25-29; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 2:13).

The word propitiation best describes Paul's statement in verse 14. It is defined as the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift. The atonement of Christ blotted out (erased) the ordinances that was against us. This is the message that Paul wanted the Christians in Colossae to hear. Moreover He (Jesus) by the resurrection triumphed over all principalities and powers (verse 15).

It does not matter what the issue may be because Christ has already conquered it due to the atonement. In other words, we no longer need to do the following as Christians:

1. Participate in _____.
2. Use _____ boards.
3. Make an appointment with a _____.
4. Live in accordance to astrological signs.

Paul continues to warn the Colossian church about giving heed to erroneous teachings. There were certain people who were preaching and teaching doctrine that was contrary to the gospel. As a result, Paul admonishes them about the following:

1. Don't let anyone judge you regarding what you _____ (verse 16).
2. Don't let anyone judge you in regard to what you _____ (verse 16).
3. Don't let anyone judge you as it relates to a _____ (verse 16).
4. Don't let anyone judge you as it relates to the new _____ (verse 16).

Believers run into people who attempt to place religious yokes around their necks. They teach a form of pseudo-Christianity disguised as righteousness. They argue that to be a true Christian you must follow some kind of ritual or perform some specific act. In addition, there are some who teach they have secret knowledge that only they possess from God. This was the case with the gnostic cult of the 1st Century.

This type of teaching is contrary to the truth of the gospel. Salvation is genuinely free. Christians do not work to get saved. They work because they are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). False teaching produces a type of spiritual cancer that negatively affects the body. Paul used a similar analogy in his second letter to Timothy:

Their teaching will spread like a deadly sickness. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two of those teachers-2 Timothy 2:17.

This type of divisiveness should not exist within the church. However, it does exist, and he tells the church of Colossae to expect it (verse 17). Furthermore, the apostle identifies some of the false doctrines faced by the church:

1. The worship of angels (verse 18).
2. Introduction into spiritual matters based on hubris (verse 18).

Paul paints a picture of a healthy church by comparing it (the body of believers) to a real body. Furthermore, just like the physical body is controlled by the head, the metaphorical Christian body is controlled by the head (Jesus Christ)-verse 19.

Paul makes a distinction regarding those who follow the basic spiritual powers of the world in contrast to those who seek spirituality from a Christian perspective (verse 20). He challenges the church of Colossae to not walk in the patterns of the world as it relates to spirituality.

Theologians differ in their conclusion as it relates to the specific issue Paul was attempting to address. The following heretical teachings were prominent during the 1st Century:

1. Gnosticism
2. Judaizers (Legalism)
3. Syncretism
4. Essene Movement

The great theologian F.F. Bruce writes the following regarding this subject:

“While the Colossian heresy was basically Jewish, it is not the straightforward Judaizing legalism of Galatians that is envisaged in Colossians, but a form of mysticism which tempted its adepts to look on themselves as a spiritual elite.”¹

Paul exhorts the church to not handle nor taste false teachings. These types of false teaching because they are not of God will not last (verse 21-22). Paul attempts to further illustrate his point by reminding the church of the dangers associated with yielding to false teaching.

The false teachings are based on human teachings and are not wise (verses 22-23). As a result of these rules, people that are misled give themselves over to inauthentic worship (verse 23). Paul cares deeply for the Colossian church. He wants them to be blessed and experience true worship based on sound doctrine. In contrast, the worship based on false teaching yields the following:

¹ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles To The Colossians, To Philemon, And To The Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984), 22.

1. They give themselves over to their type of worship.
2. There is a pretense of humility.
3. They treat their bodies very badly.

However, according to Paul, rules like these do not work. They do not help with the insatiable nature of sin. The most beneficial way for individuals to change is to avail themselves of the power of the Holy Spirit. Through His power, we can experience the love of God which produces strength to overcome.