

#5 Colossians

Tom Tillman

Verse: 2:1 'For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,'

Colossea and Laodicea were two churches which Paul had not personally started or visited; the conflict he felt for them was expressed in his letter to the Ephesians. He wrote: *'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.'* Eph 6:10

His conflict was with demonic forces, attempting to bring in destructive lies and heresies through false teachers and false prophets. To Timothy, he wrote: 'Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.' 1 Tim 4:1 Paul struggled to bring them to maturity in correct doctrine. He had written to these Colossians, just a few verses previously, *'we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;'*

He struggled to teach them the truth, that they would be filled with the knowledge of the Truth in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Satan was working hard to derail these early churches, thinking he could quickly snuff out this nascent religion, never realizing that it was the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, Who was at work building, growing and protecting His Bride and His Body; Satan would never be successful in even slowing its growth, no matter what weapon he brought to bear: 'No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue *which* rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* from Me," Says the LORD.' Isa 54:17

(We can't simply claim just any promises in the Old Testament for ourselves, we must always consider the context and to whom it is written but this particular one, we can. It says that ***this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord...*** not just Israel and notice that even here, hundreds of years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, it says, ***our righteousness is from God...*** not any works... 'For by grace you have been saved, through faith... not as the result of any works, lest anyone should boast.' Eph 2:8)

Satan was trying to use false teachers to bring in the lies and deceptions of *Gnosticism* which taught there was secret knowledge available only to the select few who were initiated, available only to spiritual adepts, those with wisdom from the 'light-bringer,' able to understand the 'deeper doctrines.'

Gnosticism teaches that humans are divine souls trapped in the ordinary physical (or material) world. They say that the world was made by an imperfect spirit. The imperfect spirit is taught to be the same as the God of Abraham. The perfect spirit is the 'light-bringer,' the source of all true wisdom: Lucifer. They teach that mankind is on the verge of an evolution to a higher plain, a higher existence and when those resisting this knowledge and evolution, Christians, are removed, mankind will suddenly initiate and inaugurate the long awaited paradise, the New Atlantis. (If you read the news, deeply enough, you'll find that the real World leaders, those behind the scenes and pulling the strings, that they see the current World upheaval to be leading to what they call, 'The Great Reset.' Their intent is that when the greatest disruption occurs in this country and around the World, probably during and just after our next election, they will be free to unleash their evil plans. Don't take my word for it... look it up: 'The Great Reset' but don't use Google; Google will rarely give you the truth about anything important. Even Microsoft's Edge is better than Google and Chrome.) Gnostics teach that Jehovah is the lesser, the selfish and peevish god who desired to keep man ignorant and enslaved to him. Lucifer, on the other hand, was the wise and beneficent one who brought knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment to Adam and Eve, inviting them to know the *deeper things of God*; he instructed them (tempted them) to break free from His shackles, to live life to its fullest, to live their best life now. And, of course, to those refusing, or thinking they can refuse to submit to the Holy God, this sounds like the perfect religion... no responsibility, no accountability and no humbling of self; like their master, Lucifer, pride overall.

Verse 2: 'that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

The full assurance Paul sought to impart was their assurance of Salvation which is proven, primarily, by their love for each other. The mystery of God, he told us, last chapter, is that the Lord Jesus Christ actually lives within every believer (Christ in you, the hope of Glory) and that in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; there is no secret knowledge available to a select few but is for every child of God. The Gnostics denied that the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient; Paul wrote to convince them, and us, that Jesus Christ is, in fact, completely sufficient; no other knowledge, no other person and no other work is necessary for Salvation, and that is for every child of God.

Verse 4: 'Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.'

Paul was warning the Colossians and Laodiceans against the smooth, persuasive and deceptive words of false teachers, bringing in Gnosticism, but he was also warning us against the smooth, persuasive and deceptive words of false teachers of the past 50 years who fill television, radio and internet airwaves and who fill countless pulpits today. The only way we, or any other child of God, can know we're being taught by a true and faithful shepherd is if we are studying and knowing God's Word for ourselves.

Verse 5: 'For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.'

We know Paul was writing these same words of encouragement to the Church at Laodicea because later in this letter, he instructs that the two churches, Colossae and Laodicea, should trade and read each other's letters. He was in prison, in Rome, when he wrote his letters to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Laodiceans. We have two of them but not his letter to the Laodiceans; we can only wonder what, exactly, he wrote to Laodicea. I wonder what his letter to the Laodiceans said... I'd really like to be able to read it. We always want what we can't have; we imagine so much important information that must have been in that letter but one thing we can know for certain, every word in it lined up exactly with the doctrinal truths he set forth in all his other letters. We don't need his letter to the Laodiceans. Perhaps one of the reasons God never intended for the letter to the Laodiceans to be preserved was because of what He would tell John, in The Revelation, concerning the Church at Laodicea just 30 years later and also how His description of Laodicea would be what described much of the Church in these Last Days, just before the Rapture and the Tribulation. It might have been confusing if he had sent a glowing letter to the Laodiceans considering what Jesus Christ told John to write to the church at Laodicea being the exact opposite: 'And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.' Rev 3:14

Jesus Christ is describing much of the Church in our day, but then He offers, again, to enter into the heart of anyone who humbles himself and invites Him in and then tells them, the very worst church of the seven, and the terrible church of today, such a glorious promise, that we can actually sit on His Throne with Him.

In the early '60's AD, the churches were still doing pretty well. Thirty years later, when John received The Revelation, and today in the Last Days, not so much.

Verse 6: 'As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,'

By 'walk in Him,' Paul means, as our habitual, daily way of life, walk in harmony and fellowship with Him by the leading and strengthening of the Holy Spirit brought about by faithfully seeking Him through prayer and studying His Word. It has nothing to do with doing good works, it has everything to do with allowing His good work within us: 'being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;' Phppns 1:6

Then, as the fruit of His good work in us and its outworking through us... our doing good works will follow: 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.' Eph 2:10

Verse 7: 'rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.'

But our growth and our walking in Him can only happen rightly as we are being taught and learning true and correct doctrine and as we are cultivating a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving, always remembering that apart from God's election of us from before the foundation of the World, we would be headed to hell, as well.

Verse 8: 'Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.'

So many young people are cheated and led astray by evil, godless professors and teachers in public education. So many Christians believe the foolishness of Evolution and the Big Bang Theory, seeing no contradiction between that and the Bible which is the result of its not being corrected by the teachings from evil, godless and faithless false teachers in the Church. Again, the only way we can guard against any of this is through studying and knowing God's Word for ourselves.

Verse 9: 'For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ **and you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power.'

Greek philosophical thought, along with Gnosticism, taught that the spiritual is good and the material is evil; obviously, evil spirits would want that to be believed. They taught that the good God, the Son, would never inhabit evil flesh, that God would never take on human form. Of course, God circumvented that problem by having our sinful nature, inherited from Adam, to be transmitted down to every one of us through our fathers, through the male line. Every human has a direct hereditary line through our forefathers, back to Adam. Adam was our natural federal father. Jesus Christ did not inherit a sin nature, not having had a human father. Through faith in Jesus Christ, God then becomes our federal father; everyone else remains lost in sin and, as Jesus told the Pharisees, children of the devil until God calls them to Himself.

Paul rebutted false teaching by stressing that the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. He is the only One Who could have represented us to take our deserved Wrath, from God, upon Himself.

All the fullness of God is in Jesus Christ... nothing is missing or in lesser measure; He never laid aside any part of His Deity; He has always remained fully God eternally. **And in Him, we are complete.** Nothing is lacking for our Christian life, now and forever. There is never any more of God that we can ever possess and there will never be any less of Him in us or around us.

We should always have the courage to address false teaching: about 114 years ago, in Los Angeles, there was a little church on Azusa Street. Supposedly, there came another filling, by the Holy Spirit, like He had done at Pentecost, in the Upper Room, with the early Church. From that beginning grew the Worldwide Charismatic and Pentecostal churches and denominations, most notable, The Assemblies of God, Foursquare and the Pentecostals. They call their teaching and worship, 'Full-Gospel,' as if anything else is less than the full Gospel. They teach that sometime, after being born again, if a person 'tarries' and prays, they, too, can receive the 'baptism with the Holy Spirit, just like they did in Jerusalem, 50 days after Jesus' Crucifixion and then, that the believer's life should mirror the lives of the Apostles with signs and wonders in abundance... never mind the fact that the signs and wonders never do materialize beyond the phoniness of Benny Hinn types and are limited to supposedly speaking in other tongues, which, in themselves never match what happened at Pentecost when the other languages spoken were genuine human languages meant to draw unbelievers to Christ. So, they claim that the 'new language' which a person now receives, is, instead, a 'heavenly language'

or a personal prayer language. I'm not mocking that, I know many believers do believe in its veracity but that doesn't make it true.

Another crucial teaching of Charismatics/Pentecostals is that it's normative for believers to receive special, personal revelation from God through a voice, a dream or vision or just a mental impression. This is the thing that has, above all else, led to countless false and heretical teachings throughout the Church for the past Century; the Prosperity Gospel heresy comes directly out of Charismatic excesses. The literally billions of dollars in the pockets of Prosperity preachers fleecing God's flock... think of the multiplied thousands if not millions of pastors, churches and missionaries around the World that were never even begun because of these charlatans... all from Charismatic teachings... and not all, by any means, of these heretics are from charismatic backgrounds... they come from both sides of the aisle; they are the direct descendants of Demetrius, the silversmith in Acts 19. When Paul's teaching threatened to destroy his business and wealth from making silver idols to Diana: '...a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, you know that **by this business we have our wealth.**' Prosperity preachers all say the same thing today.

I am not saying that Charismatics are all wrong and 'we' are all right; false teaching is everywhere in these last days but just for discussion, let's split the Church evenly in two. Half the Church believes that these things, Charismatic/Pentecostal teachings, are true and should be a regular part of every believer's life while the other half believes that they were meant, by God, for a specific time and purpose to verify His Word while the New Testament Bible was still being written. After His Word was available in written form, the signs, wonders etc were no longer needed or provided and so, according to God's will and purpose, they ceased after the time of the Apostles and, also, if these kinds of things were meant, by God, to be so important for the Church, Paul, Peter, James and John would have been careful to teach these things throughout their letters. They (we) maintain, finally, that the Book of Acts is descriptive History and not prescriptive instruction and Doctrine. Both cannot be true. Both cannot be correct. One or both of these must, necessarily, be false.

Let's look at in light of these last two verses from Colossians 2: '**For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**'

First, in Christ dwells the fullness of God. Then, it says, '**in Him**' we are complete. When do we become, in Him... at the moment of Salvation. How can we be complete, at the moment of salvation, being in Christ, and still be lacking some ministry of the Holy Spirit? And, if you've had any experience in Charismatic circles, you'll remember that, in practice, the most important member of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. They would quickly deny that but their practice belies that assertion. They are taught that their Christian walk and experience is lacking and inferior until they achieve the all important 'baptism of the Holy Spirit.' And, most of them teach, the initial proof of a genuine baptism in the Holy Spirit is, *speaking with other tongues* while in reality, their other tongues are never known tongues, as was the case in Acts 2. The truth is, the Holy Spirit's foremost ministry is to lead and comfort us and to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ... never Himself.

Why am I going through all this... I know Debbie is certainly squirming and wondering that... after all, we have a number of friends, even family, who are dyed in the wool Charismatics.

We can see how, from a little church in Los Angeles, in 1906, something can fill the Earth... and again... the truth is, either what they believe and teach is true or it's not... both cannot be true. The Word teaches that it's not true and so, we see, how far and wide a teaching, in error, can go throughout the Church in so short a time. Experience and feelings are far more important to that side of the Church than is correct Doctrine. Their Doctrine follows experience. Ours does not. Our Doctrine is carefully built on the Word of God, not the word of a teacher or prophet or prophetess which then brings us to another problem with Charismatic and Pentecostal denominations; they are filled with women pastors which is directly contrary to God's Word and that makes it sin.

Paul was trying to guard against false teaching; we are commanded to do the same.