

Sunday, February 13, 2022—Saying Goodbye To Colosse

Introduction

- We began this series on Sunday, November 3, 2019 BC—Before COVID.
- This is the 89th study in the series.
- We were interrupted numerous times to address current events and church life issues because of COVID.
- Today we are going to say goodbye to Colossians.

The Church at Colosse

- Colossians 1:1-2—Paul is writing to “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.”
- Verse 2 is the only time in scripture that the city of “Colosse” is mentioned.
- Colossians 2:1—the reason for this is that Paul never meet the Colossians in the flesh i.e., he never visited the city on any of his Apostolic journeys. There is no record in the Acts chronology of Paul ever having gone to Colosse.
 - Colossians 1:4, 9—at the Colossians was written Paul had merely “heard” of the faith of the Colossians.
- Understandably, this raises questions as to how and whom was the church at Colosse established.
- Colossians 2:1, 4:13, 15-16—these three cities are mentioned in connection with each other in the book of Colossians.
- Given that Paul never visited Colosse himself, it seems reasonable to infer that the church was established there via converts from Paul substantial ministry in the province of Asia.
 - Acts 20:31—Paul spent three years teaching in Ephesus the capital of Asia.
 - Acts 19:8-10
 - Acts 19:14-17—the working of God in Ephesus was well known throughout the province of Asia.
 - Acts 19:26—Demetrius says that Paul’s ministry in Ephesus reached “throughout all Asia.”

- Therefore, we conclude that the church in Colosse was established through Paul’s mighty ministry in the Roman province of Asia.
- Colossians 1:7-8—Epaphras appears to be the prime evangelist of the city of Colosse.
 - Colossians 4:12—Epaphras is from Colosse.
- Colossians 4:13—his ministry seems to have extended to Laodicea and Hierapolis as well.
- Colossians 1:7—presumably, Epaphras got saved under Paul’s ministry in Ephesus who then carried the contents of Paul’s preaching to Colosse. Paul calls Epaphras his “dear fellow servant.”
- We can also infer from the verses that the church at Colosse met in the house of Philemon.
 - Colossians 4:9—Onesimus was from Colosse.
 - Philemon 1-2—Philemon had a church meeting in his house.
 - Philemon 10—Paul beseeches Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.
- Now a number of years later, Baxter says “about 6 years later” Epaphras has traveled to Rome to visit Paul who is under house arrest (Acts 28:30-31). While the report is generally favorable (Col. 1:8) Epaphras shares with Paul his concern regarding some doctrinal concerns he sees rearing their ugly head within the assembly (Col. 2:8-23).
- Colossians 4:7—after hearing the report of Epaphras, Paul penned the letter to the Colossians and sent it to them via the ministry of Tychicus and Onesimus.
- Ephesians 6:21—Tychicus probably carried the letter to the church at Ephesus on the same journey.

Doctrinal Error in Colosse

- The specific error of doctrine that Paul is addressing in Colossians is characterized by the following components:
 - Colossians 2:8—philosophy & a high regard for tradition.
 - Colossians 2:18—it involved angel worship and intermediaries and did not hold Christ as the head.
 - Colossians 2:23—it possessed a “show of wisdom” thereby appealing to Gentile propensity to worship wisdom, higher education, and intellectualism (I Cor. 1:22).

- Colossians 2:8—it paid a high regard to “tradition”
- Colossians 2:23—it also practiced asceticism false humility thereby giving it the appearance of superior sanctity and piety.
- “This strange mixture of Jewish traditionalism and Greek Philosophy stressed two things: reverence for angelic powers (Col. 2:18), and contempt for the body (Col. 2:20-23).” (Baxter, 200)
- The names of this egregious error containing a mixture of Greek philosophy, Jewish traditionalism, and Eastern mysticism, asceticism, was Gnosticism.

Outline of the Book

- The book of Colossians is a four-chapter powerhouse. The first of its four chapters are doctrinal and the second two are practical.
 - “In its doctrinal half the one is polemic, for Paul is combating the semi-Judaistic mysticism and asceticism which we have described, with its false cosmogony, angel worship, and supposedly penetrative insight into spiritual secrets. . . The dominant theme is the fullness and pre-eminence of Christ, and the full completeness of Christian believers in Him, against the mysticism and asceticism enjoyed by the philosophies and tradition of men.” (Baxter, 202)
- Colossians 1:9-10—present the outline and structure of the book.
 - Verse 9—“that ye **might be filled** with the knowledge of his will”
 - Verse 10—“that ye **might walk worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing”
 - Knowledge of what God is doing produces a worthy walk in the believer. Therefore, Colossians is both doctrinal and practical. It presents the doctrine of what God is doing in the most pointed manner and then instructs us how to walk that doctrine out in our lives.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Christ the fulness of God to Us

Introductory thanksgiving (1:1-8)

Opening prayer for “fulness” and “worthy walk” (1:9-14)

- DOCTRINAL—“THAT YE MIGHT BE FILLED” (Cps. 1-2)
 - Christ the fulness of God in the creation (1:15-18)
 - Christ the fulness of God in redemption (1:19-23)
 - Christ the fulness of God in the Church (1:24-2:7)
 - Christ the fulness of God versus heresy (2:8-23)
- PRACTICAL—“THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY” (Cps. 3-4)
 - The new life—and believers individually (3:1-11)
 - The new life—and believers reciprocally (3:12-17)
 - The new life—and domestic relationships (3:18-21)
 - The new life—and “them that are without” (4:1-

Personal addenda (4:7-18)

The Christology of Colossians

- Regarding the view of Christ presented in Colossians J. Sidlow Baxter states the following:
 - “However spiritually superior the heretical compound of incipient theosophy and Judaism and ascetism may have seemed outwardly, its actual effect was to depose Christ from his solitary all-supremacy and all-sufficiency as Lord and Savior. It was this which called forth, in our Colossian epistle, its superlative presentation of the all-pre-eminent God-man Savior who is the very “fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (Baxter, 203)
- Colossians 1:15-18—give a glorious full-length portrait of the real Christ who became our Savior by setting forth seven super-glorious features.
 - Image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)
 - First born of every creature (Col. 1:15)
 - Creator of the universe (Col. 1:16)
 - He IS before the universe (Col. 1:17)
 - In Him the universe consists (Col. 1:17)
 - He is the head of the body the church (Col. 1:18)
 - He is the first born from the dead that he might be the preeminent one in all things (Col. 1:18)

- Colossians 1:19-27—the sevenfold identified of the true Christ is followed up by three simply tremendous aspects of His person, passion, and purpose.
 - Colossians 1:19—all fullness dwells in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - Colossians 2:20-23—the cross of Christ has both a cosmic and universal comprehensiveness. Sin was in the universe before ever it entered the human race through, Adam. If all the universe centers in the Lord Jesus Christ, so then the peace-making or His cross has a universe impact and application.
 - Colossians 2:24-27—with the revelation of the mystery in min, what they were are the petty “mysteries” of the Gnostics and their philosophical theorizing? The mystery revealed to Paul pertaining to the church the body of Christ spans all the ages and generations.
- “Mark well, then, these three titanic aspects. First, the “fulness” of Christ comprehends the whole Godhead (verse 19). Second, the “cross” of Christ comprehends the whole universe (verse 20). Third, the “mystery” of Christ comprehends all the ages (verse 26).” (Baxter, 205)
- See now the sevenfold salvation that God the father was pleased to give us through the work of “his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).
 - Inheritance—“. . . partakers of the *inherence* of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12)
 - Deliverance—“Who hath delivered us form the power of darkness. . .” (Col. 1:13)
 - Translation—“. . . and hat translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Col. 1:13)
 - Redemption—“In whom we have redemption through his blood. . .” (Col. 1:14)
 - Forgiveness—“. . . even the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. 1:14)
 - Reconciliation—“. . . yet now hath he reconciled.” (Col. 1:22)
 - Presentation—“. . . present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.” (Col 1:23)
- Regarding all this Baxter states the following:
 - “Oh, how could those Colossians every turn away from, or try to add to, such a full Divine eternal salvation as that? Or how can enlightened minds in our own times be dazzled away from it by vain vagaries of human philosophy—“ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (II Tim. 3:7)? Yet still today, alas, there are the superior intellectuals, ritualists, traditions, who insist on holding up their paltry little

tapers to help the glorious sun to shine! What fools are the wise! How wise are the simple!” (Baxter, 206)

Practical Section

- The order of teaching in all of Paul’s epistles is doctrine first then practice. How we live is always determined by what we believe. Doctrine is the basis of practice.
- Paul begins the practical section of Colossians by presenting Christ as the highest of all inspirations for the believers conduct and the basis for a worthy walk.
 - Colossians 3:1—“. . . seek those things which are above. . .”
 - Colossians 3:5—“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . .”
- Notice the three tenses in Colossians 3:1-3 that serve as the basis for our life and service to Christ.
 - Past Tense—“If ye then be risen with Christ. . .”
 - Present Tense—“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
 - Future Tense—“When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”