



Colossians - Lesson 2A

Chapters 1:24-29, 2:1-8

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Col. 1:20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Col. 1:21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,

Col. 1:22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

Col. 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

- Paul transitions away from a discussion of the person of Jesus Christ to a discussion of the work of Jesus Christ
 - False teachers were teaching a new Gospel for being saved – Christ plus something
 - But Paul talks of Christ's work on the cross as the saving work of creation
 - Whether things on earth or things in heaven = broad scope

Rom. 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

Rom. 8:21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Rom. 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

- It is not just that you and I were born into sin, but when Adam sinned he put the whole world into bondage
 - By the curses God pronounced in response to his sin
 - God did not curse man (or woman)
 - He cursed the ground, and the enemy
 - To be cursed is to be forever condemned to Hell
- So what happens to the creation?
- Paul alludes here (and elsewhere) that eventually this world will be burned up by fire
 - But will be replaced, as a function of God's need to provide a dwelling place for His children
 - He has to provide a corrupt free environment for His corrupt free children He is producing by the work of Christ on the cross
- Given that Jesus is pre-eminent in all these things, Paul concludes in verse 21 that the Colossians can offer nothing in support of their own salvation
 - There is nothing they can do to prompt, ensure, hold on to, enhance or make better their salvation

- It was done once for all on the cross
- Paul is about to make an interesting point, that you are to continue in your salvation the way you received your salvation
 - But entering into salvation, we start as enemies of God
 - In another parallel with the Ephesian church, Paul made a similar statement on this point:

Eph. 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

Eph. 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Eph. 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Eph. 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Eph. 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

- Grace means that before you deserved it and before you knew it, He was already making us a child of God
 - In using the analogy of baptism, we were dead and now we're alive
 - No more could a physical corpse bring itself back to life, than we could do spiritually
- I received a letter from a listener in New Zealand who wrote to tell me about a conversation between her 13-year old daughter and a schoolmate who was an unbeliever

My 13 yr old daughter, Georgia, (who was just baptized) came home from school the other day. She told me she had a conversation with her friend which went something like this....

Georgia: Ashley, do you know that you hate God?

Ashley: I don't hate God!

Georgia: Well actually, the Bible says that if you are not with Him, then you hate Him, even if you don't personally feel like you do.

- What a bold conversation for a newly baptized 13 year old to have with a friend, but her words were truth
 - Do we sometimes forget the truth of that statement?

- It sounds like Paul was concerned that the false teaching in Colossae must have included some kind of teaching that personal achievement – obtaining some kind of special knowledge – was a part of obtaining or maintaining our salvation
- But then Paul in verse 23 says this assurance is only true for someone who holds to the true gospel
 - Close doesn't count
 - There is nothing more dangerous than something close to the truth that is not in fact the gospel
 - But if you have not held to the true gospel, you have no right to share in the promises he is giving out to the church
 - He's trying to differentiate the two groups up front as he begins to teach
 - Not to say anything about someone who has already believed the truth and is in some way in jeopardy
 - Paul is making this dramatic turn to emphasize the seriousness of this church tolerating false teachers who present a false gospel
 - It leads people astray
 - It becomes a stumbling block
 - For a true believer, it stunts their maturity
 - To the unbeliever who falls prey, it becomes a diversion to finding the path for truth
- Paul's concern is that this church has abandoned its responsibility to protect the flock
- At the end of verse 23, Paul made a reference again to his authority
 - He calls himself a minister of the gospel – *diakonos*, servant
 - This leads Paul to spend another moment establishing his credibility with this church
 - And he's doing this because of where he is preparing to go next
 - Paul is acting on the principle: What you think of me, has a lot to do with how you will receive my criticism
- As an aside, the reason we teach verse-by-verse is to avoid accusations of false motives in our teaching
 - We're just teaching what God wrote
 - Paul is trying to establish his own motives to be pure, honest, and good intentioned
 - Let's look at what he says about himself

Col. 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Col. 1:25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the

preaching of the word of God,

Col. 1:26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints,

Col. 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Col. 1:28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

Col. 1:29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

- Verses 24-29 are again one sentence, so let's take it apart in pieces
 - To begin, the whole point of this sentence is to communicate Paul's credibility
 - But even more than credibility, it explains his motives
 - First, he says he is not taking a privileged place in the Body of Christ, but rather he is doing his part
 - Specifically, he's doing his part to suffer for Christ
 - This verse is one of the most controversial in all of Paul's writing
 - Filling up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings
 - Some use it to suggest we have more work to do in accomplishing our salvation
 - A sense of works on top of grace
 - Paul is actually saying that the Body of Christ is appointed to suffer at times
 - That suffering began when our Lord suffered Himself while on the cross
 - And we are the body of Christ now, and we continue his suffering

Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

- This is not to suggest this additional suffering is the atonement – that was done through Christ's physical death on the cross
 - But it is God's purpose that there continue to be suffering so that we identify with Christ
 - We share in His inheritance and His suffering
- Paul says that he is doing his part to fill up the afflictions that are lacking in the body of Christ until the appointed suffering has reached its end
 - Paul was writing from jail, whereas I doubt the false teachers were taking the same persecution
- Second point – Paul was to preach the mysteries of God's word
 - Paul was granted the privilege of revealing certain mysteries to the church
 - The word mystery, in Biblical terms, is any truth that was revealed in the Old Testament, but its meaning was hidden until a later date

- And chief among these mysteries was that God would bestow His grace upon the gentiles
 - The fact that God planned to save Gentiles through Christ was revealed in Genesis (to Abraham), but not understood until after the resurrection
 - So the mystery Paul has to tell the Colossians is about God's plan to redeem them, Gentiles
- So Paul's motive is for their good, to bring them good news that God has prepared beforehand
- Then Paul shifts in v.28, to say with that responsibility comes the necessity of preparing men to stand before Christ
 - Admonishing and teaching
 - The work of ministry is first and foremost about shaping lives
 - Correcting wrong behavior and thinking
 - Teaching truth from scripture
 - Paul is going to so much effort, laboring on their behalf, so they are brought up in the right way
- Now he is going to go a little further...

Col. 2:1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,

Col. 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Col. 2:3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Col. 2:4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument.

Col. 2:5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ.

- Paul says I struggle over you and Laodicea, the other church in the region he never visited (and all others that had not seen his face)
 - As the mention of Laodicea in the Book of Revelation attests, they were suffering from the same problems of false teachers
 - In fact, Laodicea becomes a symbol of the apostasy threatening the church in the end times
- In v.2, Paul explains his purpose in writing
 - The NIV captures the verse better:

Col. 2:2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that

they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,

- He says
 - My Purpose is to encourage them
 - So that they may have complete understanding
 - In order that they may know Christ
- Then Paul gets to the point in v. 4
 - I say this so that no one will delude you with a persuasive argument
 - False arguments can sound persuasive
 - There is a misconception at times that "we will know false teachers when we see it"
 - Forgetting that the enemy can come in disguise
 - Judaizers, Mormons, Gnostics, Jehovah's Witnesses all take the truth, cloud it with additions or subtractions, and end up with a false Gospel
 - Instead we test what we are told against Scripture
 - And though Paul wasn't there, he says I'm on your side hoping that you have good discipline in the stability of your faith in Christ
 - Spiritual discipline of the believer includes:
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 - Study of the word
 - Not forsaking gathering together
 - It doesn't happen because we will it, but because we make it a priority

Col. 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

Col. 2:7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Col. 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

- Paul is about to juxtapose what it means to depend on Christ, with what are hollow, empty, deceptive human philosophies
 - Let's finish today by looking at how he describes depending on Christ
 - First, v.6 says as you received Christ, continue to live in Him
 - What worked at first is always enough
 - Live in Him refers specifically to new life, being born again
 - On the same basis you were saved in the first place, continue to be saved in an ongoing way

- Paul said the same to the Galatians:

Gal. 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Gal. 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Gal. 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

- Paul is asking, if faith was good enough to save you on Day 1, why was it not good enough on Day 2? On Day 10?
 - If you were susceptible to teaching that you need more now, you would've needed it then
- Verses 9-15 are a concise doctrinal thesis of what it is to depend on Christ
 - And this is where we will start next week