

# Colossians: Jesus Our All In All

## Colossians 2:1-5

### Colossians 2:1

*(KJV) For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;*

*(NIV) I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.*

Paul's whole mindset as he writes to the Colossian believers is one of encouragement! Oh, that we as the Body of Christ would be a people of encouragement!

### **Hebrews 3:13**

*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

If you ever thought that spiritual growth is a merely a sideline in the Christian walk, think again:

### **Romans 13:14**

*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

### **2Peter 1:3-11**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Even in the context of prayer, Paul rejoices in the present and future spiritual growth of his young church. For the Colossians, and indeed for each one of us that follow Jesus, our growth depends greatly on our simple walk with the Lord, which the writer of Hebrews here describes as a race:

### **Hebrews 12:1-2**

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the*

*joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So, our walk with the Lord in its totality could be called a race, a race in which our victory depends on an uncompromising focus on Jesus. *Looking unto Jesus*. It makes sense then that the Evil One would exert most of his power in taking our focus off of Jesus and onto his worldly delights:

**Matthew 4:8-9**

*Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

The worldly kingdom of the Evil One itself can also steal our affection and attention for Jesus:

**1John 2:15-17**

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Also, our own fallen flesh will make its demands known daily, and will come up against the Holy Spirit within us:

**Galatians 5:16-17**

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

So then, it is not our walk/race that is complicated, but rather all the forces that come against us. Paul is contending in the Spirit for all of these challenges and more that he knows will come against the Colossian believers, and in particular, he is addressing the false teachers that seek to infect their faith and divert their walk with the Lord.

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Identify for yourself ten areas of distraction, physical and/or spiritual, that seem to consistently interfere with your time with the Lord. What offensive action steps could you take to reduce these distractions?

We know that Paul is praying in accordance with the Word of God, and the heart of God. Jesus Himself, in His high priestly prayer, clearly reflects the heart of God and His will for all believers. I have included the whole passage from John 17 here for both context and for your meditation:

**John 17:1-26**

*These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And*

now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Since we can read and see and discover what is the will of God for His people - His household - we can also pray, as Paul does, right in alignment with God's Word, for our brothers and sisters locally and abroad. What an honour and privilege to do so!

The Colossians were excelling in the most important of the fruits of the Spirit, love! This delighted Paul's heart, and calls to mind the famous passage penned by Paul 1 Corinthians 13:

### **1Corinthians 13:1-13**

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when*

*completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Now for Paul to love and pray for believers he has never seen or met (see Colossians 2:1b), we have to call it a supernatural event! Beloved, each of us can pray effectively for believers all over the globe, whom we have never met. Wow! Let's take advantage of this wonderful privilege today through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Colossians 2:2**

*(KJV) That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*

*(NIV) My goal 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,*

*Together.* What an important word in this verse. Paul prays for the Colossians to be encouraged and comforted together - because he knows they may be unsettled and therefore divided by false teachings from false teachers. There were those among the brethren - as there are today - who would sow discord with their strange doctrines and divisive teachings:

## **Proverbs 6:16-19**

*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.*

We each play a part in maintaining unity in the Body of Christ by understanding who we are in Jesus, and keeping a watch on our own walk:

## **Colossians 2:6-15**

*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

Also, we maintain unity by keeping watch over our fellow brethren in Christ:

**Jude 1:22-23**

*Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

Remember that real agape love, as we have received it through Christ, esteems others ahead of ourselves:

**Philippians 2:3-4**

*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

This love is unconditional and looks out for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, physically (1 John 3:17) and spiritually, and compels us to pray as Paul is praying for the Colossian believers.

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What part do you think you play in maintaining unity in the local church family? Could you identify a few new intentional actions that would result in cultivating love and unity in *your* church?

**Colossians 2:3**

*(KJV) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

*(NIV) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Jesus Christ has come to live in those who have invited Him to be Lord and Saviour of their lives. Mystery solved! Do we understand this truth in all of its fullness? No! But in a sense, very much *yes!* Because with the indwelling Holy Spirit, God is illuminating *wisdom* and *knowledge* so that we may begin to grasp what is this hope of glory (Colossians 1:27) who has come to live in us.

**Colossians 2:4**

*(KJV) And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*

*(NIV) I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.*

Perhaps we could regard Satan as the first false prophet:

**Genesis 3:1-5**

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Satan's two strategies to disrupt Eve's perfect walk with God were:

1. To create doubt (Genesis 3:1).
2. To introduce falsehood (Genesis 4-5).

It is interesting that Satan is so uncreative as to use the same two strategies of deception all through the ages, right up to today in 2020. We know that he has used and continues to use many false teachers to carry out his deception. Also, how tragic that we as a fallen people through Adam have consistently allowed Satan to divide and conquer God's church through these same strategies. Our subsequent recovery of the territory Satan has stolen from us will begin with the awareness that there is a battle raging, and we must be suited up for this battle to be victorious in our every day life:

### ***Ephesians 6:10-20***

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Deception abounds, beloved, and we need to be constantly in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night (Psalm 1:2), so that when a counterfeit gospel reaches for our eyes and ears, we will be able to immediately identify it, take it captive (2 Corinthians 10:3-6), and replace it with the true gospel according to God's Word.

Have you ever thought to put to the test your discernment? While some believers - my wife Sheri specifically - have a supernatural gift of discerning spirits, God gives us each His Word against which we can test the spirits:

### ***1John 4:1***

*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

### ***Acts 17:10-11***

*And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

Interestingly, the context of the above verses is the same in both 1 John and Colossians! False teachers, mainly the Gnostics, could not reconcile God's grace through a fully human and fully divine Jesus, so they added human philosophy and "secret knowledge" to fit with their mindset.

Read this excellent description from Lawrence O. Richards about how the Gnostics sought to answer the most common inquiries about God and mankind:

*"What is God like? The Gnostics were dualists. They saw all things in terms of two contrasting principles. On the one side was good, which was associated with the spiritual and the immaterial. On the other side was evil, which was associated with the material universe. God Himself was perfectly good, spiritual, and totally disassociated from the material. He would not pollute Himself by any such contact! The material universe was an accident or, at worst, the error of the last of a long series of supernatural beings — intermediaries — ranked between God and matter. To God, the pure Spirit, the world was alien and despicable. To the Gnostics how jolting was the idea of an Incarnation! God become man? God take on human flesh? Never! Christ must be a lower intermediary or an "appearance" — a shadow of God cast on a screen. But God in human flesh? Unthinkable! It was also unthinkable that God might wish to enter believers' lives. Instead the Gnostics saw the human being as trapped; a spark of the divine held captive in a fleshly prison. Salvation meant release from bondage to all that was material, including our own bodies! Resurrection? God's life, lived out in a corporate body shaped of loving men and women, in whom Christ now walks this world? Ugly! Horrible! How does a human being gain access to God? The Gnostic saw God as remote and inaccessible. God might be approached through the long chain of intermediaries that stretched between Him and matter. Jesus Christ might even be one of these intermediaries. But since Jesus had contact with this world, Christ's rank within the chain must be low. Here is a partial explanation of Paul's reference to the worship of angels (Col 2:18): people were striving to gain the attention and support of beings who form a chain leading to God. These powerful spirits should be placated, the Gnostics taught, for human destiny lay in their hands, not in God's. How does a human being find fullness of life? The Gnostics said, by practicing the way of life they propounded. That way of life stressed asceticism and rigid regulations, abstinence and self-punishment. For liberation from the evil, fleshly body must be good. The angelic intermediaries were honored by ritual and self-discipline. In this way, the fullness might be found. So some at Colossae were imposing this approach to spirituality on the church there. And Paul wrote this letter to refute the false teaching that warped both faith and Christian experience."*

So, beloved Christian, in light of all the deception and false teaching out there, we need to *learn to discern!*

\*STUDY POINT: Look up the words *try* (KJV) or *test* (NIV) in your concordance, and check out each of the passages listed. Note every instance in which believers are exhorted to exercise discernment.

## **Colossians 2:5**

**(KJV)** *For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.*

**(NIV)** *For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

Paul is adjoined with the Colossian believers via the Holy Spirit and prayer. It matters not that he is in chains in a Roman prison, it is as if he is with these new Christians, cheering them on from the bleachers in their new walk with Jesus!

He applauds their discipline, and oh yes, believer, there is discipline needed as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). And what does spiritual discipline look like?

- Meditate In God's Word: **Psalm 1:1-2** *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*
- Give Thanks: **1Thessalonians 5:18** *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*
- Pray: **1Thessalonians 5:17** *Pray without ceasing.*
- Fast: **Matthew 6:16-18** *Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*
- Give: **2Corinthians 9:6** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2Co 9:7* *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*
- Serve: **Mark 10:42-44** *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.*

Of course, this is not a list that we simply check off daily. These are disciplines or habits that God will cultivate in us over time to position us for spiritual success. And what is spiritual success in God's kingdom?

### **Matthew 6:33**

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

### **John 15:7-8**

*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

Amen!

- Reverend Darren McClelland