

We Have to Begin with Jesus

by Bob Young

Text: Col. 1:15-28

Introduction

Reading one side of correspondence is like listening to one side of phone conversation. Have answers, but not questions. Have advice, but not situation.

Here is a church in trouble, threatened from within and without. They needed to act. What was nature of trouble that threatened life and faith of church at Colosse? Information from two sources: (1) negatively in rebukes, (2) positively in what he stresses with passion and intensity.

Colossae was about 80 miles inland from the city of Ephesus, in the Lycus River Valley, in what is today the western part of Turkey. The tributaries of the Lycus River brought a deposit of a peculiar kind that choked up the streams and made arches and fantastic grottoes. In spite of this there was much fertility in the valley. At one time Colossae was one of the prominent towns of the valley. Herodotus describes Xerxes' march westward in 480 B.C. writing that "He came to Colossae, a great city of Phrygia situated at a spot where the river Lycus plunges into a chasm and disappears. By the NT era Colossae was a small town in the shadow of its nearby neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis. Apparently the Colossian church came into being during Paul's ministry in Ephesus, because [Acts 19:10](#) says that Paul remained in Ephesus "for two years, so that **all who lived in Asia** heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." Thus a new, thriving church sprouted in Colossae though Paul had never been there himself.

Although the specific word is not mentioned by Paul, most scholars agree that Paul wrote to Colossae to counter the growing influence of **Gnostics (Gnosticism)** who considered themselves of superior knowledge who could help "lesser" ones attain deeper spirituality. **Gnosticism** is from **gnosis**, "to know" and thus Gnostics were the "people in the know" who considered themselves the spiritual elite. According to them, it was by knowledge as opposed to faith, that humanity was to be regenerated. They are characterized by the belief that Jesus Christ, if he really was the Son of God, could not have taken on a human body because matter is evil. This delusion spawned the Gnostic lie that Jesus was only a ghost-like phantom. To the Gnostics, Christ was **not** Creator, the Incarnation was **not** real, and Christ was **not** enough! So the Gnostics built a system by which one could begin with Christ and work one's way up the series of emanations to God.

Colosse was a church beguiled, fascinated with Siren Songs, intrigued by philosophy, following human traditions, making religion into rules and regulations, externalizing piety, legalistic in ascetic isolation, devotion to special observances, and self-abasement; a church needing to hear about Jesus, stress on inclusiveness of Christian gospel, every man, global cause; the all-sufficiency of Jesus.

When a church forgets Jesus, it is always in danger. But this forgetting is subtle, for may be misdirection. Long before Christianity came into world, some loathed the physical body. Saw the human body as a tomb. Plato wrote of the prison house of the body; Seneca, the detestable habitation of the body. This resulted in a distinct dualism, separation of body and spirit, as seen in the Monastics, Ascetics, Stoics, Epicureans, and Cynics.

Where does evil come from? Our answer has a serious effect on our Christology. For example, it is impossible to believe in incarnation if body is evil. Gnostics held to limited incarnation. This wrecks morality, fellowship, Christian joy.

Church is always in peril when misunderstandings of Jesus occur, alters faith and life. Paul could have taken the negative method of arguing and contradicting false teachers, but instead took method of stating Christian gospel in its entire splendor! So do we this day.

Paul's whole emphasis is the point to people back to the sufficiency of Christ. The church at Colossae's problem was that they might get their focus off the Lord Jesus. Jesus is enough. We are complete in Him! So many do not find that Jesus is enough and seek some experience, some method, some program. Rather than submitting and bowing to Jesus as a bondsman to his Master, they refuse to surrender their rights. Paul counteracts this "empty deception" by telling them that Jesus is enough and that they need to keep focused on Him.

In this book, Paul describes Jesus as our peace, redeemer, reconciler, hope, treasure, and life.... This is only a partial list.

Let me tell you about Jesus our peace! 1:15-20, perhaps an early Christian hymn.

Background—

1:5 Faith, Hope, Love

1:5,23 The gospel bears fruit everywhere

1:9ff Prayer for the church—knowledge, wisdom, understand

Desired result is to live worthily, which has four aspects:

1. bearing fruit

2. growing

3. strengthened

4. giving thanks

1:13 Dominion vs. kingdom. Delivered, transferred, redeemed=forgiven.

See in 1:14 and 20: bookends, redeemer/peace

1. V.15--Consider his person.

He is the very REFLECTION of God. The image/character of God, the visible manifestation of the invisible. Before all things--by position, in point of time. Firstborn, preeminent, creator--thus God. He is the cohesive, adhesive. In response, we worship.

2. V. 18--Consider his position, preeminence.

He is the REIGNING one. He is head of the church, the beginning/firstborn, overcoming death. He is the bonding power as we share loyalty/allegiance. He is supreme. He is the fullness of God in physical form. In response, we share fellowship, with one another and with him; we seek to grow in him and he in us.

3. V. 19--Consider his power, purpose.

He is the RECONCILING one. Redeeming, reconciling, making peace, through his blood. He is eliminator of alienation, the undoer of enmity, the solution to evil. He reconciles us, raises us to be God's, presenting us holy/blameless. In response, we share good news.

Jesus is our peace, redeemer.

"**Peace**" is derived from the verb "**eiro**" which means to "*join together*". Thus the picture inherent in the Paul's greeting is that of binding or joining together what is broken or divided setting the divided parts at one again. Webster defines **peace** as a state of tranquility or quiet, freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, harmony in personal relations, a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity, state of repose in contrast with or following strife or turmoil.

MacDonald says that the combination of "**grace & peace**" is in one sense "*in miniature, the gospel for the whole world.*" The essence of the gospel is "grace, therefore peace". Through the gospel we are all brought under His grace and therefore have peace with Him & peace within. The gospel is not so much about "not fighting" but about wholeness of life (shalom) as God intended it. The **peace** flows out of the **grace**, and both together flow from God our Father and were made effective in human history through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Col. 1:23, "If you hold on, continue." Hold on to faith, to hope, hold on to the gospel, glorious, global, hold on to Christ. The mysterious is now known. The glorious riches of the gospel are for all. The reflecting, reigning, reconciling one is present in our lives.

Not only so, but our very hope of glory is that Christ is in us, among us, through us. This we proclaim, for all, admonishing, teaching, seeking wisdom, presenting all in Christ, struggling with total energy from him working in/through us.

Jim Walton was translating the NT for the Muinane people of La Sabana in the jungles of Colombia. But he was having trouble with the word peace. During this time, Fernando, the village chief, was promised a 20-minute plane ride to a location that would have taken him 3 days to travel by walking. The plane was delayed in arriving at La Sabana, so Fernando departed on foot. When the plane finally came, a runner took off to bring Fernando back. But by the time he had returned, the plane had left. Fernando was livid because of the mix-up. He went to Jim and launched into an angry tirade. Fortunately, Walton had taped the chief's diatribe. When he later translated it, he discovered that the chief kept repeating the phrase, "I don't have one heart." Jim asked other villagers what having "one heart" meant, and he found that it was like saying, "There is nothing between you and the other person." That, Walton realized, was just what he needed to translate the word peace. To have peace with God means that there is nothing--no sin, no guilt, no condemnation--that separates us. And that peace with God is possible only through Christ (Romans 5:1).

Do you have "one heart" with God? Are you at peace with God? Without separation? In Christ, you can be. He paid the price so we can be at peace. Your sins can be washed. You can be cleansed, renewed, and whole.