

An Open Letter to Pastors / Continued ~

Colossians 1:2 – 14

~ Our Spiritual Safari will bear down so strongly emphasizing the Person of Christ in this letter that we're at risk of tearing the paper and breaking the quill of the pen in these reports. This is written to believers only – faithful saints. If that's not you, then there is nothing here for you, thank you. These believers were *AT* Colosse, but they were *IN* Christ Jesus. They knew their position in the body of Christ, so they experienced the peace of God as a result. In order to know our position in and the peace of God, we must first know the *grace* of God. Well, challenging that peace was the rank heresy of Gnosticism, which permeated Colossian society. The church contended endlessly against acute narcissism and intellectual pride. Gnosticism was the first heresy to creep into church doctrine. Throughout the ages, it has fractured the modern church, and reflects on Christianity like a shattered mirror.

Gnosticism ultimately relegates God – if He exists – to be very far removed from mankind. Several emanations of internal self-enlightenment sparks are required to experience the “*real*” God of the universe — if that is even possible — and if there even is a God — according to Gnostic philosophy. Most self-professing “*atheists*” today are really agnostics – they just don't know the difference. Almost all heathen religions, apostate denominations, and cults have some sort of “*open sesame*” gimmick – usually gleaned from some wild misinterpretation of Scripture – whereby they deny the deity of Christ Jesus and believe they discover some mysterious other “*pathway*” to a hazy and vague idea of whatever they personally consider their “*destination*” to be. It's never defined with them; always subjective and elusive. So, Paul is making it clear in this letter that we come directly to God the Father through faith in His Son, the True and Living God – the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way to God. There is no other True and Living God....

***2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse:
Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

~ One of the benefits of being justified by faith is having direct access to God the Father through Christ. I hasten to add that confession of our sins to Christ, our Holy High Priest, in prayer is critical at this point. There are sins of omission; things we knew we should have done, but didn't. We have sins of commission; which is tantamount to deliberate and willful disobedience. We all have sin in our lives. Paul said anything not done in faith is sin. How's that going in your life, Christian friend? Only if we confess our sins is Christ faithful and just to forgive us our sins. That's a pretty big "IF" for most believers. Recognizing our place and accepting reality is when our fellowship with God the Father in the mind of Christ is renewed; and our prayer life becomes effective. This is critical doctrine. And Paul had an extraordinarily long prayer list, apparently....

4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

~ Faith, love, and hope are set before us; followed by the Word of Truth of the Gospel. The Truth of the Gospel means the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Paul was teaching, friends. Paul's doctrine encompasses all of the great truths within the Gospel of the grace of God, too. It's also important to understand that Paul is highlighting their good attributes here – and rightly so; because they had real and genuine faith towards God. If you are reading this report, your faith – and mine – rests on historical facts. Historical facts are what the church at Colosse believed. God has the world completely shut up to the cross of Christ. Until we believe and accept God when He says Jesus died for our sins, and was raised again from the dead for our justification, then God has literally nothing else to say to us.

Now, one has not heard the Gospel until they have heard something that requires them to make a decision and believe or reject. There is nothing for us to do for salvation – only believe. And the death of Jesus on the cross is still an irrefutable historical fact, by the way. Faith is not a leap in the dark – it believes God in the light. What we must believe is that He was the sacrifice for the sins of the world when He took our place on the cross; and that He arose from the dead, and ascended bodily back to the right hand of God the Father. So, faith also represents the past. Do you believe? Do you rest on these truths?

Love is for the present. Instead of constantly finding fault with the brethren, let's expose and convey all that is *right* about the Lord Jesus Christ together! It's too easy to think we are wonderful and super-duper saints when we ain't; and telling other people they just haven't attained to some elusive high and holy spiritual plane as we have is a holy lie. No one believes you. God laughs at you. The world isn't interested in that approach anyways. No, the world wants to see some people who genuinely *love each other* — for no other reason than for the sake of love itself. The love of Christ is so easy — and yet so difficult — to find. Oh, the hypocrisy we easily propagate; like weeds in the garden — just doing nothing — the place becomes overrun. Thank God the church in Colosse truly loved each other!

That gives hope for the future of this world — and that hope is our Beloved Christ Jesus in Heaven! We just learned all about Him in the Song of Solomon that we just completed on this so-called safari. See, out of faith, hope, and love — love is the only one that will abide. We won't need faith in Heaven, because we'll actually be with Christ. We won't need hope in Heaven, because Christ is our Hope! Love, however, abideth throughout eternity; and that's what this world really needs in this present hour, my beloved. Of course, that sounds wonderful — because it is — but our love must start with a love for Christ and for the Word of God and branch out from there in Spirit and in Truth. It never, ever, *N-E-V-E-R* works the other way around. Genuine love cannot exist otherwise....

6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

~ Some people have a difficult time accepting that Paul says the Gospel has come unto all the world. Well, that's what he said from prison. Naturally, this means the known world at the time in which we are studying. It would mean the entire extent of the Roman Empire. Where the Gospel is preached, fruit will come forth. Where the content of the Gospel is given out faithfully, it will bear fruit. It isn't easy to have faith in the simple and raw Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ — it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the True and Living God — but He is always faithful to bless His Word; and He only ever does so for His Own Names sake. I cannot stress to you the importance of getting that processed properly in your thinking. There have been myriad times I expected to fall into the sludge-pond of this life and drown in this so-called safari. Sometimes I feel like the children of Israel must have felt running up that hill presumptuously; but I just cling to His promises. I just happen to know God blesses His Word. You can count on that, too. His Word bringeth forth fruit.

Frankly, I'm not even compelled to argue with the unbeliever about whether or not I believe the Bible is the Word of God. Trying to convince me that the Bible is not the Word of God would be like someone coming along and saying, ".... Andrew, I have several philosophical arguments which cannot be refuted and which state that you do not love your children." Well, you can argue and insult me until you turn blue in the face and fall over dead, and it won't change the fact that I love my children very much. See, I don't need the cogent, sophisticated yet sophomoric, astute, esoteric argument for the simplest of matters. There are some things we can just know are truth. That true wisdom, understanding and spiritual discernment is only found in the Word of God. I know this. I hope you know it. If you don't — or aren't sure, then I doubt you are reading this reports anyways, so, let's move on....

7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

~ The woman who had been caught in adultery in Jesus' day deserved to be stoned according to the Mosaic System of Levitical Law. He who was without sin according to the sacrificial system would have had every right to throw stones. But the Lord was so gentle, gracious, and merciful with her – and with the Pharisees. Then, there was a contemptuous and arrogant Pharisee named Nicodemus who feigned a compliment to Jesus, so piously saying, “.... we know Thou art a Teacher come from God.” What he meant was, we Pharisees know everything there is to know about God! When Jesus got done with Nikki, he went home defeated; but Jesus had still been gracious and loving by telling him the truth. We have so many people trying to be somebody they aren't. We have too many religious robots jumping through ritualistic hoops. We need reality today.

This epistle doesn't emphasize the Holy Spirit at all. Total attention is on the Person of Christ Himself. We learned in Proverbs that “wisdom” can always be translated “Christ Jesus” in Scripture. Well, “wisdom” occurs forty times in this four-chapter epistle. That's a lot of wisdom coming up. It's a whole lotta love. Jesus is going to actually travel with us Personally on this leg of our Spiritual Safari through the entire Word of God in Colossians. All of the things of Him that we see will, of course, be revealed to us by the Spirit of God in and through the Word of God. It's all very wonderful in this

section of Scripture. Supernatural? Sensational? You ain't seen nothing yet. We need to spend some good time in prayer along with these Bible studies. We need to be careful, though; because too many people are praying for things that God has already given them – and that will get us absolutely nowhere. We'll see what that means next time....

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ~

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