

LESSON NINE

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS - PART TWO

Scriptural Reference: Colossians Chapters 2-4.

A. CHAPTER TWO:

1. LAODICEA:

Scriptural Reference:

"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" (Colossians 2:1).

Paul desired that the Colossians and Laodiceans would understand the battle that he had fought for them.

Laodicea was ten miles away and this Epistle to the Colossians was to be read there. Also at approximately the same time, Paul wrote a letter to the Laodicean church, which he desired to be read in the church at Colosse. Apparently at both places, there were those who had never seen Paul. It was for these that Paul was especially concerned that they would understand Paul's conflict for the preaching of the Gospel.

2. MYSTERY OF GOD:

Scriptural Reference:

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

Paul's concern for these churches was that they might be united in love, that they might have a clear understanding of the deity of Jesus. Let us quote a portion in The Amplified New Testament beginning with the last clause of verse 2: *"May know more definitely and accurately and thoroughly that mystic secret of God which is Christ, the Anointed One. In Him, all the treasure of wisdom, and knowledge and enlightenment are stored up and lie hidden."*

If it were essential for the Colossians to receive the revelation that Jesus is very God, it is still essential that every Christian receive this revelation today!

3. WARNING AGAINST GNOSTICISM:

Scriptural Reference:

"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" (Colossians 2:8).

In warning the Colossians against Gnosticism, Paul wrote to them to beware lest philosophy, man's tradition, vain deceit, and elementary notions of the world deceive them. These expressions describe the error of Gnosticism and were to be avoided.

4. WARNING AGAINST LEGALISM: (Colossians 2:11-17).

False doctrine is generally mixed with that which has the appearance of being the truth. Such was the case with the error at Colosse. Judaistic teachings were mixed with Gnosticism.

At Calvary, Jesus triumphed over these which were shadows pointing forward to Christ. Now that He had come and fulfilled these types, they were no longer necessary. This is certainly true of both the rite of circumcision and the Sabbath. Paul states that now water baptism has taken the place of circumcision.

5. WARNING AGAINST MYSTICISM:

Scriptural Reference:

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:18-19).

Here the worship of angels is condemned. As members of His body, we do not need the mediatorial ministry of angels; this includes the worship of Virgin Mary. Each member of the body receives strength directly from the Head, Jesus Christ.

6. WARNING AGAINST ASCETICISM: (Colossians 2:20-23).

The final warning in this chapter is against asceticism. If we are dead to the teaching of the world, then there is no merit in self-affliction.

B. CHAPTER THREE:

1. WITH CHRIST IN GOD: (Colossians 3:1-4).

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Colossian church to set their love on things above. This reveals the ability that one has to control his love as seen in Psalms 91:14, *"Because he has set his love upon me: therefore will I deliver him."*

The phrase "right hand of God" means, the same as it does elsewhere, the place of power and authority. The old life is dead, but the new life is hid with Christ in God. This place of salvation and blessing only can be if the old life is dead. What a wonderful comfort it is to know that one's life is hid with Christ in God.

2. EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS: (Colossians 3:5-14).

In Paul's exhortation to holiness, his emphasis is upon what the Christian has to do. Firstly, he has to kill the desires of the flesh; secondly, he has to rid himself of certain things; thirdly, after he has died to the flesh and laid aside the works of the flesh, he has to clothe himself with the beautiful attributes of holiness. It is important to see the Christian's own responsibility in this.

We shall list the things that must be killed as given in The Amplified New Testament: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness for that is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Paul stated that it was because of these things that God's anger would come upon the disobedient.

Let us again turn to The Amplified New Testament to list the things that the Christian must rid himself of: anger, rage, bad feeling toward others, curses and slander and foulmouthed abuse and shameful utterances from your lips (Colossians 3:8). It should be noted that lying is another work of the flesh that must be laid to one side.

A list of the beautiful attributes of holiness is given which the Christian must cloth himself with according to Colossians 3:12. Tenderheartedness, forgiveness and love are outstanding among these.

3. EXHORTATION TO WORSHIP: (Colossians 3:15-17).

The child of God should sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with grace in his heart. Worship has a very important place in the life of every true Christian. Worship should take place with great thanksgiving in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. ADMONITION TO THE FAMILY: (Colossians 3:18 thru 4:1).

Your home has a very important part to play in Christian living. The admonition to wives, children and servants is for submission and obedience. The admonition to husbands and masters is for love, patience, understanding and justice.

In most cases, the wives and children will be happy to submit and obey IF husbands and father will love and show proper understanding. In verse 19, the expression "be not bitter against them" means that husbands must not be harsh with their wives.

C. CHAPTER FOUR:

1. PAUL'S REQUEST FOR PRAYER:

Scriptural Reference:

"Don't be weary in prayer; keep at it; watch for God's answers and remember to be thankful when they come. Don't forget to pray for us too, that God will give us many chances to preach the Good News of Christ for which I am here in jail. Pray that I will be bold enough to tell it freely and fully, and make it plain as, of course, I should" (Colossians 4:2-4, The Living Bible).

Paul always laid great emphasis upon prayer. He was concerned that the Colossians would not forget him, that he might have many opportunities to preach the Gospel.

2. PAUL'S FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS:

Paul closes this epistle with reference to ten friends and co-workers. They are listed here:

- a. Tychicus, one of Paul's companions and the bearer of this letter.
- b. Onesimus, a runaway slave from Colosse who was converted under Paul's ministry at Rome and returned to his master, Philemon.
- c. Aristarchus, a Thessalonian who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey and was later Paul's fellow prisoner at Rome.
- d. Marcus. John Mark's mother was Mary, a sister of Barnabas. "Marcus" was the Roman form of "Mark." He accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, but turned back at Perga. He was the writer of the Gospel that carries his name.
- e. Epaphras, a teacher in the Colossian church and a faithful minister of Christ.
- f. Justus, one of Paul's friends.
- g. Luke, a converted Gentile who was born at Antioch and who studied medicine. He joined Paul at Troas. He wrote two books of the New Testament.
- h. Demas, a companion of Paul's during his imprisonment, but forsook Paul because of his love for the world.
- i. Nymphas, a wealthy Christian in Laodicea. The church worshipped at his house.
- j. Archippus, a Christian teacher in Colosse.

LESSON NINE

SELF HELP TEST

- A. Write out the Scripture in full in which Paul warns against each of the following errors:
1. Gnosticism:
 2. Legalism:
 3. Mysticism:
 4. Ascetism:
- B. Who were the following:
1. Demas:
 2. Nymphas:
 3. Marcos:
 4. Tychicus:
 5. Onesimus:
- C. What was Paul's prayer request for himself?
- D. In your own words, write out Paul's exhortation to the family.
- E. Why did Paul mention Laodicea in Colossians 2:1?