

“I’D RATHER DO IT MYSELF”

Colossians 1:1-8

“I can do it myself!”

Since the world began, people have wanted to demonstrate we can save ourselves.

We don't want to acknowledge dependence on anyone; not even God.

We want to believe we’re self-sufficient.

This attitude is one of Satan's favorite traps!

He loves to see people achieve great things without God.

He tries to convince us that, with a little effort, we can earn our way to heaven,

or live well enough to please God.

Things are no different today than they’ve ever been!

This is as old as the human race!

There is nothing new under the sun!

WORLD RELIGIONS still buy into this lie.

Although there are many variations, religion teaches us we have to *DO something* to satisfy God!

They can never guarantee peace;

it's impossible to fulfill 100% of what's required—no matter who designs the requirements.

CULTS present the same concept, although they too take different forms.

For them, the work of Christ by itself can't guarantee eternal life.

We have to add *something*, at least *some* good deeds.

No one can be sure whether we've done enough to earn eternal life until we die, so you're left in fear and uncertainty about the future (Heb. 2:15; cf. 1 Jn. 5:13).

It even shows up in **BIBLE-TEACHING CHURCHES** –emphasis on what we have to *DO* to be saved, or at least to be spiritual– to stay in fellowship with God we must to live by *some rules*. This problem was present in **Colosse** also. *There's nothing new about it!*

The problem in the Colossian church is the same old problem: “*I'd rather do it myself!*”,

The problem with legalism is still here.

People want to go on living the world's way:

- * We try to live a good enough life to please God.
- * We follow men's rules.
- * We trust our ability to please God

Paul's response–same response WE should imitate: it's *always* been true . . .

THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE

Counterfeit experts become experts

NOT by studying the counterfeits

BUT by studying the real thing carefully

We have to know what we believe and why.

As Elders deal with people who desire to identify with our church family, we're often reminded that people who truly love God don't always have a clear concept of what the Gospel is about.

Therefore it's critical that we periodically deal with the basics, to remind us of what we believe.

Colossians is a great place to examine the foundation—to be sure we understand what distinguishes the gospel from other voices around us.

In Colossians, Paul proposes **God's answer to legalism: it's found in Jesus.**

It's impossible for us to fulfill all of God's righteous demands.

When we submit to any system of rules, the result is *always* condemnation.

Solution: [good news!] recognize that God has provided a way, through His own Son.

We can't add *anything* to what Jesus has already done for us.

FOUR AREAS WHERE THE GOSPEL DIFFERS from groups we lump together as "cults."—problem identifying “cults”—they all agree on these four areas in one form or another!

1. **Another Authority**

They build on another source of authority apart from God's Word as revealed in the Bible—either another written work, a special translation, “inspired” notes, or the authority of tradition controlled by church.

Something besides the Bible has the final word!

2. **Another Jesus**

Christ is seen as different in at least one of two ways:

His Person—in some way less than God, just a man, or somehow inferior to the omnipotent God of the universe.

His work—His work by itself is not enough to obtain eternal life.

We have to add something.

[3rd area derived from 2nd . . .]

3. **Another Salvation**—

DO something to earn our way.

We must add *something* to picture.

4. **Another Church**—

Our group is the only *true* church.

If you want to get to heaven, or at least "go first class," you must enter by our group.

Problem Paul faces in Colosse is same one that hounded him everywhere he went: **JUDAIZERS**

They always tried to devour new believers in congregations he started.

Commentators: "incipient gnosticism" => same old Judaizers!

Judaizers were the **first "Christian" cult**. They have all the marks of it:

1. Authority—Like Pharisees, follow human traditions and man-made rules, rather than Christ.

Sounds good from human perspective!

Paul's message comes from God (1:25-26; 3:1-2).

2. Christ--No clear evidence what they believed.

Paul's focus that He is fully God implies a weakened view of Who Jesus is!

Later generations developed scheme of lower beings between God and man.

This generation clearly has a weakened view of Who He is, as well as of His work.

Christians have to add obedience to law to what He has done to qualify for salvation.

[This of course, relates to their view of . . .]

3. Salvation--Never got away from concept that works are involved in "making it" with God.

To satisfy God who gave O.T., we must somehow get back to law.

4. Church--Though door was eventually opened to Gentiles, to be totally acceptable to God, pagans have to become identified with them and their traditions.

God has a special spot in His heart for Jewish people and they would have to join their exclusive fellowship to be fully accepted by Him.

In different epochs, there were

THREE KINDS OF JUDAIZERS:

1. **Key issue: Salvation**

Key question: WHO can be saved?

Answer: *Only Jews!* Dealt with in Acts 10-11

Like Peter earlier, these Judaizers believe salvation is only for Jews.

2. **Key issue: Salvation**

Key question: HOW can they be saved?

Answer: "*Keep the law.*" Dealt with in Acts 15

To be saved, "you must keep Law; add something to Christ's work."

3. Key issue: Sanctification

Key question:

HOW do we walk with God and please Him?

Answer: Live by the law.

Dealt with in Gal., Col., Phil. 3

To be "spiritual" you have to keep law.

The Christian life is lived by works.

Colossian problem is the same old trap Satan always tries to set.

In spite of being a solid church, they're still struggling over this issue.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Little is known about origin of the Colossian church. Various evidences demonstrate that Paul has never been there personally.

It may have been a daughter of the Ephesian church with which he worked extensively.

He knows some of the people and may have led them to the Lord while in Ephesus.

Those folks may have gone back to Colosse to start the church.

However the church was formed, Paul feels special relationship with them.

He's alarmed to receive reports the Judaizers have invaded!

He writes in response to that threat.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Judaizers proclaim sanctification by law, similar to problem in Galatia.

LEGALISM: People who want to walk —by the flesh
—by man-made rules

Galatians: it's impossible to be saved by faith and walk by law.

Two concepts contradict each other.

Law brings condemnation and recognition of sin,
not the power to overcome it.

If we put ourselves back under law, we're in trouble!

Gal. 3:10-12—we're under a curse!

Colossians: Paul approaches issue from the positive side:

God's complete provision in Christ:

Summarized in 2:6-10

ALL THAT GOD IS IS FOUND IN CHRIST

The totality of God

He lacks nothing. 2:9

WE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM 2:10

∴, WE LACK NOTHING!

God has provided all we need for successful Christian living in Christ.

Thus the spiritual life is life in Christ, NOT legalism!

WE WALK THE SAME WAY AS WE RECEIVED HIM

2:6-7 => **BY FAITH!**

ORGANIZATION

Doctrinal issue controls organization of the book.

Other matters surround central issue.

On periphery we find Paul's greeting (1:1-2) and prayer for them (1:3-23)

Concludes with personal notes to people he knows there (4:7-18)

In center, Paul presents **the ministry God gave him:**

TO PROCLAIM THE COMPLETE PROVISION GOD HAS GIVEN TO US IN CHRIST ALONE 1:24-4:6

I. PROVISION God made for us IN CHRIST 1:24-2:15

Big idea: Christ has provided all that we need.

II. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES of God's provision 2:16-4:6

If He has provided all we need, true spiritual life is life IN HIM, NOT legalism!

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS lead into subject:

PAUL'S GREETING 1:1-2

Paul greets the church, introducing himself and his colleague Timothy.

He affirms he received apostleship directly from God; NOT attempting to prove it.

He identifies recipients, with indicators to help understand their condition:

He refers to them as "holy" and "faithful."

It's clear he considers them to be believers.

In calling them "holy," he indicates they've been "set apart" by God to enjoy a relationship with Him which ought to produce a change in their lifestyle.

In addition to calling them "holy," or "set apart," he considers them "faithful."

Root meaning refers to someone who "believes" or who "trusts."

In greeting, recipients are identified in general way, to identify them as true believers.

He considers them **true brothers in Christ, who placed their trust in Him and were set apart by God to enjoy a relationship with Him as His children.**

PAUL'S PRAYER for them 1:3-23

We learn how to pray for one another from his model.

His thanksgiving 1:3-8 . . . for them.

He thanks God for them because of evidence of God's work in their lives.

Alexander Whyte, a famous Scotch preacher, was grateful to God for other people.

He liked to send postcards, thanking people for some kindness or favor they had done.

His notes frequently arrived just when they were needed most, as an encouragement to keep going.

Paul does that with those to whom he's ministering.

He acknowledges thanks to God for fruit of the gospel in their lives.

Colossian church is a mature church 1:3-5

Paul is grateful because of evidence of maturity in them.

He sincerely complements them over these (characteristics)

Their faith 1:3-4a

He heard about their faith in Christ and thanks God for it.

It is faith "in Christ"—a saving trust in Him.

Colossian church has learned to trust Him.

Judaizers have closed in and forced them to take a closer look at implications of their faith.

Their love 1:4b

The love of a mature church is founded on a personal relationship with God, and includes our love for one another that grows out of our love for God.

Paul is especially thankful for their love for one another, and for all the saints.

Their hope 1:5-6a

Hope of a mature church is founded on doctrinal understanding, especially in relationship to Christ's finished work on the cross.

This kind of hope gives us confidence

–to draw near to God,

–to confront difficult problems we face in daily living, and

–to wait for culmination of God's plan

In his thanksgiving he underlines the hope we have (and they shared):

Our hope is stored up in heaven.

We are NOT going to lose our possession.

Mature church like Colossian church is product of 3 key ingredients:

1. **Teaching of Scriptures**, with application to daily living.
2. **Intimate fellowship**, between believers and with God
3. **Sharing testimony with others**, through transformed lifestyle and verbal sharing of our personal faith in Christ.

Three elements should be present, in a balanced way for a church to become a mature church, manifesting faith, hope and love.

They demonstrate characteristics of mature church:

Their **faith** is apparent

They demonstrate **love** for others

They have **hope** on the basis of doctrine they have received
1:3-5

Their **hope** is **producing fruit** and growing **1:5-6**

Colossian church is a fruitful church 1:6-8

The Gospel produces its fruit.

They trusted Christ, and the good news began to grow and produce its fruit in their lives (1:6).

Their acceptance of the Word isn't a dry, sterile, intellectual, head knowledge.

The gospel produces fruit, not like grain, but like a tree.

Corn dies, all the way to the root, when it's done producing.

A tree gives its fruit and keeps growing.

That's how the gospel is working among them.

Faithful ministers shared the gospel with them. 1:7

They had a good foundation because they loved God and they loved their brothers and sisters in Christ.

This was a good, solid, Bible-believing church.

Therefore, Paul thanks God for them. 1:8

In spite of good teaching and the good fruit they produce, the problem of false doctrine arises

Epaphras is worried enough to travel to Rome to find Paul and get his help.

Satan is delighted to set his favorite trap: legalistic idea that tells them: *"You can do it!"*

Paul reaffirms God's message: He alone can transform lives and make us what He desires us to become.

In fact He's already done it all in Christ.

We lack nothing!

What lessons should we learn from Colossian church?

It's possible to be a mature, fruitful church and still

* struggle with uncertainty about what we believe and why.

* try to establish our own efforts to please God.

* not understand that in Christ God has provided everything we need

* not understand that we're already COMPLETE because we're IN CHRIST.

THE TOTALITY OF ALL THAT GOD IS IS IN CHRIST

WE ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST!

WE LACK NOTHING!

Trying to add to what Christ has provided by trying to obey a list of rules will only lead to greater frustration.

There's nothing left to add!

We are complete in Christ! *We lack nothing!*

So, when are we going to stop TRYING to be good enough to make it with God?!!