

# WHAT PAUL MIGHT WRITE TO THE CHURCH AT OKC?

## Paul's letter to the church of Jesus Christ at Oklahoma City The Admonitions-Colossians

### Outline

- Where was the city of Colossae?
- How was the church founded?
- What was causing Paul to have a great conflict about these disciples?
- Why did Paul say the Jewish laws are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh?
- How does Paul say we avoid indulging the flesh?



These cities were in Asia Minor which is currently the Western region of modern day turkey. Paul had never visited Colossae when this letter was written. It appears that another disciple of Paul's founded the churches in these cities. His name was Epaphras. Epaphras also founded the church at Laodicea and Hierapolis. These churches were probably founded during Paul's third missionary journey, when he preached in Ephesus for two years. Paul said this in Acts 19:10 "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10 KJV).

### Colossians 2:1

1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. NKJV

When Paul wrote this letter, he was experiencing a great conflict in his soul over these disciples. He was concerned.

His concern was the threats to the faith of these disciples. Paul felt he had something to offer them by way of instruction and his spiritual gift that would help them with the challenges. But he was not able to visit them. The best he could was write a letter.

What were the threats to these disciples?

- Some in the church were tempted to abandon their faith in Jesus and return to their pagan religion.

Colossians 1:21-23

21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight —

23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. NKJV

The city of Colossae was not unlike many other cities that were filled with pagan religions that had their roots in Greek mythology. If you were a gentile and you converted to Christ, you were not just adopting a new religion, you were forsaking the religion of your family and friends. You were under enormous peer pressure to return to former beliefs and practices.

This was also true for the Jews that converted. There was a strong Jewish population in this city that rejected the messianic claims of Jesus and the message of Paul. If you converted to Christ, your faith would be opposed by your Jewish brethren. You were not just converting to another faith, you were practicing anti-nationalism.

Paul was concerned that some would forsake their faith in Jesus.

In Colossians 1:15-2:3, Paul proclaimed the preeminence of Jesus Christ to encourage these disciples to stand firm in their faith.

- Jesus is the image of the invisible God
- Jesus created all things
- Jesus is before all things
- Jesus holds all things together
- Jesus is the first born from the dead
- Jesus is the fulness of the Godhead bodily
  
- Jesus reconciles all things to God
- Jesus is the hope of glory
- Jesus has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Paul understood that their faith in the deity of Jesus was critical to their ability to stand firm when there was so much opposition.

He concludes his discourse on the preeminence of Jesus by saying...

Colossians 2:4-5

4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.  
NKJV

Another concern that caused the great conflict in Paul was that....

- Some were being tempted to follow false Jewish teachers and add Jewish regulations to their faith.

Colossians 2:11-19

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

There were from the Jews false teachers called the concision that preached Jesus but they also tried to persuade gentile and Jewish converts that they had to obey the laws of Moses if they would be made acceptable to God. They emphasized keeping the law of circumcision, dietary laws, and the sabbath laws.

Apparently, some disciples in the church had already adopted some of the Jewish regulations regarding circumcision, foods, and sabbath days.

Paul said these things were shadows of things to come but the substance was Jesus. Paul admonished them by saying having received the substance which is Jesus, do not return to the shadows. In Jesus, you have the substance.

- You have been set apart to a new life by the circumcision of Jesus
- You have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus
- You have entered Jesus's rest

In Jesus, you are complete. There is nothing that needs to be added.

Paul builds his case for rejecting these false teachers by sharing that keeping these Jewish laws would not give them freedom over the indulgences of the flesh.

### Colossians 2:20-23

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations —

21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"

22 which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

NKJV

Paul did not say that all regulations were of no value. Regulations, ordinances, commandments, rules, moral laws are of great value. By them we know right from wrong. Rules and consequences are necessary to establish order in any society or organization.

Paul argued that regulations like being circumcised, following a strict diet, or keeping the sabbath laws are of no value against the indulgences of the flesh. There is no power in regulations to empower anyone to overcome fleshly indulgences.

Paul frequently used the word flesh to describe that part of our being that desires to fulfill any appetite in a way that God forbids.

The word indulgence means gratification or satisfaction or filled up.

From the beginning, sin has been an act of rebellion against God in which Adam and Eve sought gratification or satisfaction or to be filled up with something that God forbids.

After the fall of the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve's descendants continued to sin by pursuing self-gratification through murder, fornication, sexual perversion, greed, anger, filthy language, lying, etc.

There is no question that every bite Adam and Eve took from that fruit tasted good. I am pretty sure they ate the whole thing.

Sin tastes good! It feels good!

- It feels good to fornicate.
- It feels good to be greedy.
- It feels good to get even.
- It feels good to curse someone.
- It feels good to deceive someone.

Sin feels good. But it is not good. It hurts other people and it makes you its slave. The end of sin is always guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, grief, despair, and death.

Paul argued that regulations like being circumcised, following a strict diet, or keeping the sabbath laws are of no value against the indulgences of the flesh. There is no power in regulations to empower anyone to overcome fleshly indulgences.

So, what does have value? What works?

What are the most common sin issues I personally see in disciples of Jesus?

- Self-centeredness
- Addiction
- Sexual immorality
- Angry outbursts
- Filthy words
- Complaining
- Greed
- Laziness

If rules and regulations do not have value over fleshly indulgences, what works?

Colossians 3:1-17

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,

10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. NKJV

Here is my summary of what Paul said.

- When you receive Jesus, you die with Jesus and you are raised with Jesus. You put off the old man and you put on the new. You are the new man.
- As the new man, you have been renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created you. This occurs because Christ is all and in all.

This is hard to see because you died and your new life is hidden with Christ in God. Your new man is in the spirit and what is in the spirit you cannot currently see with your physical eyes. When Jesus appears and transforms our bodies, not only will you see Him, you will see you!

- Just as you currently see Jesus by faith, you must also see yourself by faith.
- Seek self-gratification in God

When God created the Adam and Eve, he created them with the drive for self-gratification.

When you were the old man, dead in your transgressions and sins, you sought self-gratification in things that God forbid.

As the new man, what gratified, satisfied, and filled you will no longer gratify, satisfy, and fill you.

As the new man, seek self-gratification in God. Set your affections on things above. Put to death the flesh and its desires and put on the new man because you are the new man.

(ex: The caterpillar and butterfly; Tarzan the ape man or John Clayton Lord of Greystoke)

How do you live in this reality?

1. Repent for your unbelief in Jesus and the Word of God
2. Renew your mind with the truth of the Word of God
3. Rehearse the Word of God
  - When you are tempted
  - When you are tormented
  - When you are tested