

COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER TWO

1. For whom did Paul bear conflict?

“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” (Colossians 2:1). Still referring his *“striving”* (Colossians 1:29), he was specifically concerned for the brethren under his influence whom he had not personally met. Face-to-face teaching can be much more beneficial than writing alone (2nd John 12; 3rd John 13-14).

2. To what end was he conflicted?

“That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Colossians 2:2). This is a continuation of his previously referenced *“striving”* to *“present every man perfect in Christ”* (Colossians 1:28-29). Their maturity would be proven by their encouraged hearts, by their growth together in love (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), and by the confidence that comes from understanding and knowledge.

3. Where are knowledge and wisdom hidden?

“The knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3). Wisdom and knowledge are in God (Proverbs 1:7). Knowing Him forms the basis for all necessary understanding.

4. What was the apostle trying to avoid?

“Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Colossians 2:4). He reminded them to go to the Lord for knowledge because he feared they might fall for some scheme of the devil (2nd Corinthians 11:3-4).

5. How was Paul with the Colossians?

“For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit” (Colossians 2:5). He had similar encouragement for brethren elsewhere (1st Corinthians 5:3-4; 1st Thessalonians 2:17), but seemed intent on encouraging these Christians he was unacquainted with.

6. Why was he joyful?

“Rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ” (Colossians 2:5). The Colossians were exemplary Christians in that the church was orderly (1st Corinthians 14:40) and established (Acts 16:5). He could rejoice to observe this church had it all together.

7. How are Christians to “walk?”

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). Their conduct was to be consistent with their conversion. Having repented of the works of the flesh, they weren't to turn back to the worldly elements.

8. Is Christ in the Christian or is the Christian in Christ?

Yes. Both must be true. *“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of*

glory" (Colossians 1:27) and "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk *in Him*" (Colossians 2:6) indicate Christ must be in us and we must be in Him.

9. Describe the condition Paul expected of them "in the faith."

"Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:7). Lacking root is what causes the seed sown on stony ground to wither away (Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21). Christians need to be rooted and established in faith to prevent eventual departure.

10. What did he warn them against?

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). He warned them that philosophy, tradition, and worldliness could cheat them out of Christ.

11. Why must Christians be so focused on Christ and wary of everything else?

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9-10). We need to be on guard of all else because only Christ makes us complete (John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3)! He does that because He has the fullness of deity within Him (Hebrews 1:3; Philippians 2:6; Matthew 1:23) and that makes Him head of all principality and power (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:4; Revelation 1:5).

12. What kind of circumcision do Christians undergo?

“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” (Colossians 2:11).

There had been a *“circumcision made in the flesh by hands”* (Ephesians 2:11) which definitely applied to the Israelites (Genesis 17:9-14), but it is no longer relevant (Galatians 5:2, 6). Now, the only circumcision that matters is of the heart (Romans 2:28-29; cf. Philippians 3:3).

Although many brethren conflate this *“circumcision made without hands”* with the *“baptism”* mentioned in the following verse, that does not fit because baptism is very much a hands-on procedure. Rather, the explanation is that this circumcision is done *“by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.”* That is a description of repentance, which is what precedes baptism.

13. How is baptism described?

“Buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12). Burial describes the method by which baptism is carried out, a going down into water and a coming up out of it (Acts 8:38-39). Burial also describes baptism’s goal of dying to sin and rising to new life (Romans 6:1-14).

14. How is one *“raised with”* Christ?

“In which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is still the answer! To rise with Christ, one must first die and be buried with Him; that’s why Paul can say, *“In which you also were raised,”* referring to baptism. While God gets the credit for raising us (Ephesians 2:4-6), we must choose to rise (Ephesians 5:14).

15. What is the outcome of having been *“made alive together with Him?”*

“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” (Colossians 2:13).

The result of having died, been buried, and risen with Christ in repentance and baptism is that sins are forgiven. Until one experiences this full process, sins are retained.

16. What got nailed to the cross?

“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”

(Colossians 2:14). The Old Testament was, literally, God’s handwriting (Exodus 31:18). It was against us and Christ did put it to death at the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16). Although it can be said and sung that our sins were nailed to the cross, that specific phrase is employed in Scripture to describe the end of the Old Law. Whereas Christ left the cross and the grave thereafter, the Law of Moses remains crucified, never to be revived.

17. What did Christ triumph over?

“Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15).

Principalities and powers on earth combined forces to eliminate Jesus (Acts 4:25-27), but the cross could not keep Him dead (Acts 2:24). In that He arose, He disarmed those political powers opposed to Him, making a grand show of it, and thereby not only triumphing over them, but doing so in *“it,”* that is *“the cross.”* This is evident in that Christians now *“boast... in*

the cross of our Lord” (Galatians 6:14) because its message saves us (1st Corinthians 1:18).

18. What is no longer relevant for judging others?

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths” (Colossians 2:16). Inasmuch as the requirements against us have been nailed to the cross, that law can no longer be rightly used as any standard of judgment whatsoever. That includes dietary restrictions and holidays. None of it applies anymore.

19. Why have those things become irrelevant?

“Which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). The object that casts a shadow must be more important than the shadow, itself (Hebrews 10:1). The dietary restrictions of the former covenant (Leviticus 11) merely foreshadowed the food and drink which Jesus provides (John 4:14; 6:27, 32-35, 48-58). The Sabbath-keeping of the Law of Moses (Exodus 20:8-11) also foreshadows the rest still awaiting us in heaven (Hebrews 4:1-11).

20. How could a Christian be cheated of his reward?

“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” (Colossians 2:18).

“False humility” would include fasting to be seen by men (Matthew 6:16-18), restricting food, and vows of celibacy (1st Timothy 4:1-5).

“Worship of angels” is senseless because the angels of God plainly refuse to be worshiped (Revelation 22:8-9). Effort has been taken to demonstrate that they have no authority like Christ’s (Hebrews 1:5-14). Ultimately, they will be subject to judgment by the saints (1st Corinthians 6:3).

“Intruding into those things which he has not seen” (NKJV/KJV) is inaccurate as the word “not” is an insertion. Correct renderings include: *“dwelling in the things which he hath seen”* (ASV), *“taking his stand on visions he has seen”* (NAS), and *“going on in detail about visions”* (ESV). Whether or not the person saw what they claimed is beside the point. It did not need to be discussed, regardless. Some visions are the result of mind-altering substances (Proverbs 23:31-33). Psychosis is real (Deuteronomy 28:28). Dreams usually are not revelatory (Ecclesiastes 5:3). Not even every revelation needed to be expounded upon ad infinitum (1st Corinthians 14:26-33). Not every revelatory vision was lawful to relate to others (2nd Corinthians 12:1-7).

21. Why would doing those things deprive one of the reward?

“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” (Colossians 2:19). By those false manifestations of religion, one is separated from Christ who is Head of the body, and, therefore, from the body, too. A different path has been chosen and it leads away from the Lord.

22. Why are “regulations” – such as *“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle”* – unimportant?

“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 — ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using —

according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 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” (Colossians 2:20-23).

The regulations are irrelevant because they focus on what is so temporary that it is eliminated as it is used, and, most seriously, because these regulations were instituted by man, not God. All of this was directly addressed by Jesus (Mark 7:1-23).

This is the first remark from Paul in this epistle which appears critical of the Colossians: *“Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations?”* Either they were starting to get involved in these errors or they were being exposed to them and he was warning them to keep away.