

## THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

### II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

#### E. Nurture In Heeding God's Broad Apostasy-Proof Orientation

(Colossians 2:1-7)

#### I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. An early form of Gnosticism afflicted churches in the Lycus Valley of the Province of Asia (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 668, 676), troubling believers and Paul who was unable to minister to them in person.
- C. To meet the need of his era despite his prison restriction, Paul wrote of comprehensive apostasy-proof insight in Colossians 2:1-7, and since the lure to go into heresy has plagued the Church since the days of the Apostles, that information was profitable not only for the Early Church, but it is also profitable for us. We thus view it:

#### II. Nurture In Heeding God's Broad Apostasy-Proof Orientation, Colossians 2:1-7.

- A. Paul began his direct treatment of the heresy the Colossians faced by expressing how great a "concern" (*agon*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 14) he had for them and those in their sister church of the Lycus Valley at Laodicea, and for all such believers who had similarly not seen his face, Colossians 2:1.
- B. He wanted them to be encouraged in heart, being knit together in love about the great truth of all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of the mystery of God, namely, of Christ, Col. 2:2 NIV.
- C. That **great truth is that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**, Colossians 2:3.
- D. Paul wrote of this great truth to counter the "persuasive speech" (*philanologia*, Ibid., Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 676) of those who would "deceive" (*paralogizomai*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 625) them, Col. 2:4.
- E. From what we note in the epistle was the particular form of heresy the Colossians faced, we can **broaden the application** of this **great** truth to conclude it is also a **broad** truth, **countering all kinds of errors (as follows)**:
  1. In Colossians 2:8-10, we see the heresy was **Gnostic**, opposing Christ's deity, Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 677:
    - a. The heretical view point Paul countered at Colossae undermined the deity of Christ as seen in his statement in Colossians 2:9 that in Christ lived all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.
    - b. The Gnostics viewed the body as innately evil, so belief that God would indwell a body was intolerable to the Gnostics, making the incarnation of Christ repugnant opposite the truth, Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1690.
  2. In Colossians 2:11-17, we see the heresy was **legalistic**, putting believers under the Law, Ibid., p. 677-678:
    - a. Paul countered the ideas that the believer in Christ was under the Law's stipulations (Colossians 2:16) because the believer in Christ had died to the Law's jurisdiction, Colossians 2:11-14.
    - b. Yet, Jewish legalists kept wanting to put Christians under such laws opposite the truth, cf. Gal. 5:1-3.
  3. In Colossians 2:18-19, we see the heresy was **mystical**, promoting vain concepts, Ibid., p. 678-679:
    - a. The Colossian heresy promoted a false humility, the worship of angels and such vain thinking that Paul opposed since they detracted from the believer's need to hold to his Head, Jesus Christ, Col. 2:18-19.
    - b. Hence, mysticism also detracted from the centrality and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, Colossians 2:19.
  4. In Colossians 2:20-23, we see the heresy was **ascetic**, reveling in rules of self-denial, Ibid., p. 679:
    - a. The Colossian heresy delved into self-denial rituals of touching not, tasting not and handling not after the rules and regulations of man, Colossians 2:21-23.
    - b. Accordingly, Paul countered them since they represented the rules of men in the world to which the believer had positionally died in Jesus Christ, Colossians 2:20.
  5. Thus, the **great** truth that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3) is **also** the **broad** truth that counters Gnostic, legalistic, mystical and ascetic, or **all kinds of errant teachings!**
- F. Paul rejoiced to hear that in his absence his readers lived orderly lives, firm in their faith in Christ, Col. 2:5. However, due to their need to focus on the centrality of Christ opposite the Colossian heresy, he willed that as they had focused on Him at salvation, they might keep focusing on Him in their walk, being rooted and build up in Him and established in the faith as they had been taught, abounding in thanksgiving, Col. 2:6-7 ESV.

Lesson: *The GREAT truth that also BROADLY counters all kinds of errant beliefs like Gnostic, legalistic, mystical or ascetic errors is that in Jesus Christ are hidden all of God's treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Application: *May we retain a Christ-centered focus in life and service that we might stay theologically sound.*