

Great Conflict

Colossians 2:1-9



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FOCAL Colossians 2:1-9 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; {2} That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; {3} In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. {4} And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. {5} For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. {6} As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: {7} Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. {8} 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. {9} For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The supposedly unsinkable Titanic became shipwrecked, killing hundreds of people, because it ran into a submerged but very hard iceberg. The local Church, God's Highest Authority on the earth, can also become shipwrecked. In Colossians chapter two the Apostle discusses two ways we can be destroyed - and how to avoid that destruction.

1. Two Dangers That Can Destroy Any Local Church

FOCAL Colossians 2:1 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;

The Apostle addressed this letter to both the *Colossian Church* as well as the *Laodicean Church*. In fact, in chapter four we read:

Colossians 4:15-16 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. {16} And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Now its true that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete accurate translation, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16). It is true that all Scripture, whether written to Colossae or Laodicea, applies to all Christians. But there was a specific reason that God required the letter to the Church at Colossae to be read at Laodicea. These two local Churches were close together, and both Churches were being affected by something that endangered their existence. The Apostle said:

FOCAL Colossians 2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict¹ I have for you, and for them at Laodicea ...

¹ ἀγών, agōn, *ag-one'*; From G71; properly a place of *assembly* (as if *led*), that is, (by implication) a *contest* (held there); figuratively an *effort* or *anxiety*: - conflict, contention, fight, race.

The Apostle literally says "I want you to know what a great struggle I'm having - both for you and for those in Laodicea". Both Colossae and Laodicea were in great danger. Not from martyrdom nor from attacks from *without* the local Church, but from terrible attacks that came *within* the local Church. The Apostle said:

FOCAL Colossians 2:8-9 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. {9} For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The local Church can become **spoiled** or **taken captive by the world** when it stops letting its worldview be influenced by Christ and His Word and starts letting the world dictate how we believe.

The local Church can be captured by Satan and by his evil forces when we accept the word of man over the Word of God. The slide into destruction never comes immediately, but the slide is always gradual. The Church backs away from one of God's truths in favor of one of man's truths. Having compromised once the local Church decides - for the sake of peace - to compromise once more. One after another the local Church fails to advance to the high ground of Christ likeness and becomes more and more like the world. In the end the local Church that follows this path cannot be distinguished from the world.

When we become *comfortable* in this life, and begin to make concessions for comfort's sake rather than for God's sake, we begin to lose the battle.

If we lose enough battles then we *will* lose the war in America. Our hope is to stay firmly in step with Christ!

Look at what God said to the **local Church of Laodicea** in the Book of Revelation:

Revelation 3:14-20 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; {15} **I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.** {16} **So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.** {17} **Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:** {18} **I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.** {19} **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.** {20} **Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.**

The local Church of Laodicea became *comfortable* with

the world, and *apathetic* in their walk with Christ. Jesus said to them, "**I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot**". They were neither **cold** - fully committed to Satan - nor **hot** - fully committed to Christ. They had **become spoiled by philosophies and vain deceit (empty delusions)**. Rather than worship Christ they began to worship the world. Rather than look toward the Kingdom of Heaven their eyes were fixed on earth. Rather than going about doing what Christ commanded they were lolling about, doing nothing. They were **neither hot nor cold**, but were **lukewarm**. The Laodiceans were *comfortable*, and unconcerned about telling others about Jesus. They were happy where they were.

Jesus told the Laodiceans to **be cold or hot, or He would spew them out of His mouth. When something is spewed out of the mouth it usually hits the ground, and becomes absorbed by the earth.**

The Laodiceans rejected His Word and His authority. What eventually happened to the Laodiceans? **Albert Barnes** writes²:

"These {Laodicean} ruins, and the ruins of Hierapolis, were visited by Mr. Riggs, an American Missionary, in 1842, who thus speaks of them: "These spots, so interesting to the Christian, are now utterly desolate. The threatening expressed in Revelation 3:16 {spew thee out of My mouth}, has been fulfilled,

and Laodicea is but a name. In the midst of one of the finest plains of Asia Minor, it is entirely without inhabitant."

The local Church of Laodicea - designed by Christ to *withstand the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18)*, perished along with the world it compromised with. The Apostle John tells us:

1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. {17} And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

When the local Church loses its desire to follow Christ and ceases to be *uncomfortably missional in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom* then the Church loses its power to function. **Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).**

Our power is in Christ and in *dangerous obedience to His command.*

2. The Church Is In The World, But Not Of The World

FOCAL Colossians 2:2-4 ..That **their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love,** and unto all

riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; {3} In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. {4} And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

What comforts the hearts of believers? What knits us together in love? Isn't it the Gospel of Jesus Christ that saved us? The world didn't save us. In fact, the world made our salvation necessary.

The word of the world and the worldly has never benefited any of us. The world whispers nothings that do nothing into the ears of those who will never be nothing. The word of the world doesn't elevate us, nor does it bless us. The word of that fool **Richard Dawkins** doesn't comfort anyone. The word of **evolution** tells me that the person who was killed by the chimpanzee just the other day died justly, for doesn't that fool **Charles Darwin** teach *survival of the fittest*. Obviously, based on the nothings that the world speaks, the chimp did no wrong. Why was it put to death? How does the foolishness of **atheism** or **fatalism** or **existentialism** do anything to comfort the hearts of anyone? If these things are true then there is no such thing as right and wrong, no such thing as good and evil, and no need for laws, lawyers, and courts.

Away with all this nonsense!

The heart cannot be comforted nor knit together in

love following the foolishnesses of this world. **We must follow Christ.** The local Church following Christ *cannot be defeated*, cannot be overthrown, cannot be diminished, and it's members will work together *for the glory of God to build the Kingdom of God on this earth.* **In Jesus Christ is hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** In Him and in His Word is all that we need to live, work, and have our being. What does Paul tell us?

Galatians 4:3-7 Even so we, **when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: {4} But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, {5} To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. {6} And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. {7} Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.**

There was a time when "**philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ**" was attractive to us. **When we were CHILDREN OF ADAM** we followed after these things. I remember when I was unsaved when I chased after the same things that the world chases after today. You, perhaps, remember the same thing. **We were in bondage under the elements of the world.** But now, dear Christian, we are not. **In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law.** If you have been born again you have been redeemed from

philosophy and vain deceit. You have been redeemed from **Satan and worldliness.** You have been redeemed from **darkness and despair.** You have been redeemed and are now - by the Blood of Christ and by the power of His Spirit - **under the adoption of sons.** A Son of God does not live his or her life according to the dictates of a stranger. A Son of God lives his or her life according to that which God the Son tells us. Look further in our Colossians text:

FOCAL Colossians 2:6 .. **As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord ...**

Focus on this text for a moment. **As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.** Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Lord of Heaven and of earth. He is Lord of all things visible and invisible. Jesus Christ is Lord of every situation that comes our way. He is Lord of the local Church, and whether he wants to admit it or not, He is Lord of the unbeliever as well.

Romans 14:11 For it is written, **As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.**

The unbeliever who rejects Christ shall one day be made to bow the knee to Christ. He shall confess the Name of God, though his confession will do no good. He shall descend into the lake of fire that burns forever because he would not **take hold on eternal life.** The Christian, however, is commanded to flee from the ways of this world.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. {12} Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

You who are believers are **Sons of God**. As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Lie in Him. Do as He commands. Read His Word. Pray to Him without ceasing. **Surrender to His Lordship, and obey His command**. Jesus told His disciples:

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

If you love Jesus, obey Him.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

2. The Church Must WALK In Christ

FOCAL **Colossians 2:6** As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him ..

Walk in Him. Do the things that Jesus bids you do. Remember that Judas Iscariot followed Jesus for over three years, but in the end he died a grisly death. Why? Because he would not **walk in Christ**. The Church is in the world, but not of the world. The Christian is in the world, but not of the world. Most countries have what

they consider *diplomatic immunity* for those officials who visit their country from another country. The diplomat is considered to be a visiting dignitary who is *not under the laws* of the country he visits. Though the Christian must obey the laws of the land (**see Romans 13:1ff**), he should nonetheless *not* be influenced by this world in how he serves the Lord.

As you have received Christ, walk in Him. How did you receive Jesus? You received Him by faith. So *walk* in Him by *faith*, not by *feelings* or by *opinions*. The Scripture says:

2 Corinthians 5:7 (For **we walk by faith, not by sight**.)

The day we were saved we believed that the Blood of Jesus Christ cleansed us from all sin. We believed the promise of Scripture, that

Romans 10:9-13 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {11} For the Scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.** {12} For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. {13} For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Secondly, as Christians we received Jesus Christ as

Lord. We are to walk before Jesus Christ, living for Him and loving Him. He is Lord.

ILLUSTRATE Two high school students were discussing their report cards. One of them asked, "What did your parents say when you brought home all F's?" "They didn't say anything to me," the other replied. "They were too busy arguing about which side of the family I took after."

We should all - if we are Christians - take after our *Father's* side of the family. We are to be like Jesus. The local Church that will win the world for Christ is the local Church that is filled with believers living like Jesus.

May God touch your hearts with His Word!

