

9/15/20 Col. 2 vs. 4-8

First, a quick update:

America is currently under God's judgment – partly due to the democrat party's agenda of death (through abortion, immorality, and the lawlessness and violence in our cities) and partly through their ongoing agenda of the removal of all that represents the values and influence of God in our nation (it's called "Cancel Cultue").

We have passed the point of no return; we don't know yet whether the fall of our nation will be by foreign invasion, absorption into a global government or another plan the Lord may have. All we know for sure is that it will happen.

History gives us a clear understanding of what Paul calls, "(the enemy's) devices" as related to nations. Bringing order out of chaos is the modes operandi of government takeovers. And the destruction of a nation's economy is normally followed by an invasion or a coup. Either way, the governing body of that nation is replaced.

Now, a couple of reminders related to apostasy in the church.

The falling away that Paul predicted is founded on creating vulnerability in believers by conditioning people to believe milk is meat which stunts their spiritual growth.

Heb. 5:13; "For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Where there is no advance from milk to meat, there is no discernment. And where discernment is absent, deception will fill the vacuum. Which leads us to the predominate spiritual condition of the church in the West.

2 Tim. 4:3; "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. . ."

Pastors who teach this way are simply tools of the enemy being used against their own people.

Matt. 24:4 tells us that deception will be the greatest danger in the last generation. But the enemy's deception is not as simple as the NAR, Bethel, Social Justice, dominion theology or Christian patriotism, it goes much deeper.

It involves the theft of true spiritual growth and spiritual life from God's people.

And as for those who *are* going on with the Lord:

Global persecution (whether directly from principalities and powers, or indirectly through people and governments) will be used to purify the faith and separation from the world of the elect remnant.

God has not left us to walk in darkness, that what's coming should take us by surprise. He has graciously kept us informed so we can prepare for what's ahead and make sure we are in sync with His purpose for us at the end of the age.

I'll close this update with the following comments on our place in history from a book I'm reading:

"We are being led at this time to take note of the fact that we are at an end-time, and that God does a peculiar work at such a time. Things become very strange and very difficult; everything seems to be thrown into a state of disturbance, upheaval, intense pressure and conflict. The great conflicting forces in this universe register very terribly and intensely upon that which is of God and upon those who are of account to Him, so that there often arises the sense that this is an *actual* end, and a question as to what more is possible. Inwardly we feel that the way is becoming exceedingly hedged up: 'frustration' is the word which seems to prevail, and outwardly everything is in a state of serious and great question as to the future. Indeed, it becomes more persistently the experience of the people of God that they could give up and abandon everything. The ways in which this works out are numerous, but the whole effect is to paralyze and put out of commission that which is of God and bring it to a complete standstill. In end-times the work of God takes a particular form and is of a peculiar nature. It obviously becomes supremely important and necessary

for the Lord's people to know precisely the time in which they live, what the real issues are, and what it is that God would do at such a time.”

Now, let's look at our passage in Col. 2:4-8;

“I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

We have already spent some time on Paul's personal struggle in vs's 1-3, what he calls his “anguish”, his passion of desiring to see those under his care move into a full understanding of the eternal purpose of God in Christ.

Without a growing comprehension of the mystery of Christ, not only is spiritual growth extremely limited, but we become vulnerable to “empty deception”.

Truth is the only safeguard we have from being deceived, and because of the subtly and power of end-time deception, our knowledge of Christ has to go way beyond the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith.

So, I want to begin by establishing a Biblical reality that we need to move into as completely as possible.

The following are comments from a book called, “Sovereign Head – the Unveiling of Jesus Christ”,

“The movement and purpose of God in Christ gives character and purpose to definite cycles of time and phases of eternity; that in various ages the one supreme purpose of God is being developed progressively. The basic principles and heavenly laws of the Divine intention are the same in all ages. Ages represent phases and parts and forms of the entire purpose, but it will be in the "ages of the ages" that the parts and phases will have become one whole and clear thing: everything seen thus to be not two or

more things, but one thing, and Christ will be "All in all." To this end was the universe created, and this is the motive of creation. What will be the supreme feature of the eternal ages? It will be a glorified humanity, sharing our Lord's glory, life and likeness. It will be the universal Sonship of God in all its meaning, nature, and purpose; the "many sons" in *The Son*, sharing the inheritance and fulfilling the yet unrevealed intentions of God in an eternal vocation."

We are currently at the end of the 2000-year segment of history from Pentecost to the Rapture. The next age, unlike this one, is when faith becomes sight – the millennial age of the reign of Christ physically, visibly, on earth ruling this world from David's throne in Jerusalem.

As the author I read noted, all of the ages of human history have a divine purpose unique to each age, but it will take all of them brought to completion in the eternal state to finalize God's plan of Christ filling creation; of Him becoming "all in all".

We have an unfortunate tendency to fix our eyes on Christianity as a way of life instead of seeing that true Christianity is Christ's own life being birthed in us and then expressed through us as we grow into Him in all things.

To reaffirm the cliché, "one is a religion; one is a relationship".

We live in the age when the relationship God has established with His people is as far above all prior relationships as heaven is above the earth.

We are not simply God's covenant people (as Israel was in the previous age), we are "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh."

This shows us that God's work in history is progressive. His revelation of Himself is progressive.

As Peter puts it in 1 Pet. 1:10-13 (I will paraphrase as I go through these verses so we can see the connection to Colossians);

"As to this salvation (the "so great salvation" brought to us in this age), the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the

Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (which glories, we now partake of). It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which even the angels long to look into. Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep alert in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

As we saw in a previous study, God had hidden His ultimate plan (the mystery of Christ) from past ages, but He has now opened heaven to us and brought His revelation to us. We now have in our possession the “full council of God” from eternity past to eternity future.

Even the prophetic sections of the Bible, which God told Daniel to “seal up” until the time of the end, have been unsealed in our generation so we can know exactly where we are in history and what events will soon come to pass.

This is why I’ve become a broken record on the fact that only those believers who understand our place in history have their ears open to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Because of where we are, at the end of this age, the Spirit of Christ is proclaiming His coming, shouting it from the rooftops – revealing the meaning and *implications* of all the current world events to anyone who is awake and listening.

And I probably should add – to anyone who cares, because most in our nation could not care less. Their lives are rooted here, just as Israel, in the wilderness, began to long for the life they had in Egypt.

Because of how hard things had become, they wanted to “return to normal” rather than fight their way into Canaan. And believers who don’t realize that their citizenship is not of this world are not setting their eyes on things above, but they also want everything to return to normal as soon as possible – which, of course, it never will.

These things are what Paul is addressing in our passage in Colossians 2 when he writes,

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of *this* world, rather than according to Christ.”

Regardless of where we personally stand in this regard, all of us will give an account of our lives to God as to whether our heart, our affections, are set above or below; whether our ears are open or closed; whether we are growing in Christ (awake, alert, hungering for His return) or stagnating in Laodicea.

God has the right to be listened to, whether or not we like how His speaking affects our plans, our world, or our agendas. He has the right to be trusted; He has the right to be obeyed. These are God’s rights in His creation.

The entire earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth was a battle to establish and maintain God’s rights in a world where those rights were under constant challenge from Satan.

This challenge to God’s rights and honor, especially when that challenge is integrated into the spiritual fabric of the Church, is the spirit of Antichrist.

To help us understand Paul’s warning of deception through buying into the spirit of this world, listen to this quote from Spark’s book on the Antichrist and the Church;

Everybody who has eyes to see and ears to hear recognizes that the full, final manifestation of the Antichrist is very near. The whole thing is being narrowed down, concentrated. The final issue looms upon the horizon. What does that say to me? I do not want just to be a student of prophecy, just to know what the Bible teaches about the Antichrist. No, what is the *spiritual* value to me, to you, if we can in any way discern the development of the spirit of Antichrist, the intensification of this thing in God’s universe, the heading up of this thing to a climax: and we are blind if we cannot see that today. . . and, if I am not mistaken, there is something in the cases of multitudes of the Lord’s own children, that they are being pressed and pressed and pressed, almost out of measure, as to whether they are going to believe and trust God despite everything that seems to contradict God; whether God is going to be trusted for His own sake, believed in for what He is, not for what He does; not for the deliverance which He works, not for the help that He brings, not for the manifestations of Himself in any way,

but because He is. We must stand our ground and not move, simply because we believe that God is, and that He is what He is; and that is the test which comes, that is the test which is being pressed home. He allows all sorts of things to happen which look like contradictions of Himself. He takes us by ways which are more than human nature can stand. We are conscious of coming again and again to the point where our ability to go on and to endure is at an end. We are in the final test (of this age). It is the whole question of faith. It is a terrific battle with the spirit of Antichrist, so that the saints, the very elect, if it were possible, would be moved from their ground and carried away.”

We won't now - but we could easily tangent off from here and talk about how the Bible teaches that Christians are being led away from the truth and have become deceived propogandists of the enemy's agenda in our generation leading up to the appearance of his Antichrist.

I just want you to see why Paul, who was shown all of these things, was in such agony when he wrote to the Colossians about the nature and power of the deception we are facing.

The Lord will protect those who abide in His Son; but we must be willing to turn our backs on what is not of Him if we want to be a part of what He is doing in our generation.

Listen again to the first part of Paul's warning in Col. 2;

“I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive. . . .”

The Colossians were disciplined, stable, rooted and built up in Christ and established in the faith – and note, “as you were instructed”.

Through Paul's teaching and their willingness to submit to his authority in Christ, all these things were true of them. There is no more important character quality

that a disciple can possess than ‘teachability’; the willingness to both listen and apply what they are taught regardless of personal cost.

As our Lord said in John 8:31-32,

“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

And in Matt. 16:24,

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

And finally, in Prov. 29:1;

“The man who is often reprovved but refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be broken and that without remedy.”

A disciple is not just a person who learns; he’s a person who “leaves all to follow”; who acts on what he learns. I guess we could say, a disciple is someone who is taking all this seriously, overjoyed that he has access to the Truth in a generation of deception.

Not arrogant or condescending, just extremely grateful. As Paul said in our passage, “overflowing with gratitude.”

There is obviously a massive amount of truth that we don’t yet fully know or understand, but what the Lord *has* given us is keeping us from drifting blindly into becoming a tool of the enemy and it can keep us from standing before the Lord on completely false spiritual ground at His return.

Also, there is an absolute gem of practical wisdom tucked inside these verses in Colossians, in vs. 6 we read,

“Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. . . .”

If we remember how we received Christ (purely by trusting Him to be to us what He promised – our Savior), we are now to “keep on” trusting Him in the same way to be our Life. The spiritual reality is that we received *Him* at salvation and we are to keep on receiving Him as our life after salvation.

We didn't offer Him anything at initial salvation other than our need. That was an event, a moment in time. Our "walk" is to be, not an event, but an ongoing trust – the same kind or type of trust we took to Him when we first believed.

It might be good for each of us to go back to our first contact with the Lord, our 'first love', and remember what we did, and what He did in response.

We trusted, He forgave and regenerated us. Now, we walk by trusting, not for salvation, but for the progressive increase of His life in us.

By faith we drew from Him for new birth; now we draw from Him daily for spiritual life and growth.

Even though a childlike faith is what He is looking for; because of the conflict and deception of the enemy, that faith is challenged intensely and constantly.

I'm going to read something that I'm pretty sure many of you have heard, but in this context, it would be an encouragement for us and help renew our perspective of the kind of faith the Lord responds to. It's a writing called, "Who Can Be Saved?" written by a member of Barachah Church in Houston.

### Who Can Be Saved?

The accessibility of the gospel is the greatest wonder of the world. Salvation is offered to those who believe (those who put their trust in Christ to save them) - it is by faith only. No strings attached.

The examples of Mary Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, Peter, and other Biblical writers show us our bankruptcy so that we would enter our relationship with God on honest ground. When we reach that point, God can begin to fashion us into something beautiful.

The faith required is no greater than the least faith we can muster - as a mustard seed, the smallest seed. . .

Jesus said, "I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved." (Jn. 10:9). The gate is always open!

Let's say one hundred people enter that gate in the next ten minutes.

One may come hopping on one foot, tired out and wondering if she can make it, but she hops through the gate at last into the arms of the Lord.

Another, his head up and shoulders straight, does a little march through the gate.

One comes with purpose and vision for a lifetime of serving Christ.

Another comes with the bare thought, "Just don't let me burn in hell."

One hears the invitation, and runs for the gate.

Another loiters around outside for years, and finally steps across the line, not entirely sure she made the best decision.

Still another starts for the gate, turns back, changes his mind, starts for the gate again, and repeats this process numerous times before realizing he needs help getting through the gate. "Lord, help me decide," he prays. A compassionate, tender hand reaches through the gate and helps him through.

A mother won't go in without her children. She gets them ready and as they pray to receive Christ together; they enter the faith-gate to eternal life.

Another stands restlessly outside the gate. "He doesn't want me like He wants the others," she bemoans. "Maybe if I stand here, he'll notice me." "Come," Jesus cries out to her. "It was for you I died." With awe she passes through the gate.

Still another, hurt by the years, stands at the gate, angry with the Master for the way his life has gone. "I don't want you," he thinks, "but I have no other place to go; so, I must go through the gate."

Jesus takes them all, because that's how we come - as needy, blind, hungry, angry, frightened, confused, Satan-dominated, lost human beings. Jesus is the only One who can save us. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

I don't know if any of these experiences matches your initial faith in the Lord, but I suspect at least one of them does. Like the author said, "Jesus takes them all". This is both how He wanted us to come to Him and how He wants us to walk in Him.

The biggest difference between the faith of a new child of God and the faith of Abraham is not that the vessel has become perfect and no longer has fears or doubts, but that there is a lessening of the demand for an explanation of circumstances from the One being trusted.

I'll close with some final comments from a commentary on Hebrews which addresses the heroes of faith in Heb. 11; building on the verse in Heb. 11:1 which says,

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"God does not tell us what He is doing when taking us through dark experiences. If He did, they wouldn't be dark experiences. If He said, "I am going to lead you into a bad time, it is all going to be dark and strange and confusing and bewildering and helpless, but it is all right, I am working a tremendous thing in you, this is what I am going to bring out of it . . ." If He said that, the faith element would fade out.

If He would only tell us He's doing something, and what He's doing, instead of leaving us in the dark and seeming to be so far away and without any interest in us! If only! But He didn't do that, and we know He doesn't do that, He doesn't explain. But this is the challenge.

This is what is meant by Hebrews 11 and the men of faith. And thank God we have that heritage, we actually have more than they had. These men did not have a Bible, it was not written when they were going through it. We have their histories. We see the issue, we have the sequel, but is it really helping us? When you're suffering and feel that all has gone wrong, read the story of Joseph again. Or of Abraham. You may be able to understand that these men, these

stories or not simply stories in a book. They were real people in real life with real feelings and fears. What Abraham was prepared to do, God the Father did to His only begotten Son; but infinitely worse. All for us. Our Lord was a voluntary sacrifice but the Father was also torn up inside. Just remember, the God of resurrection is working literally everything to our glory; whether or not we understand the means He is using to get us there.”