

CONTINUING FIRMLY IN THE FAITH

An Overview of the Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Why did the Apostle Paul write this letter to the Colossians?

- 1. To provide a foundation of sound doctrine that would allow them to continue firm in the faith and to not shift their hope away from the gospel.**
 - (Colossians 1:23 ESV) If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.
- 2. To strongly urge them to live in the stability and firmness of the true gospel so that they may fend off the ever present threat of captivity and deceit by human tradition.**
 - (Colossians 2:6–8 ESV) Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Simply put ... there is a battle raging and they needed to be ready ... good versus evil ... right versus wrong ... God versus the devil ... a battle within—their own sinful, human tendencies ... and a battle without—the invasion of false teaching and false teachers.

Most people ... maybe everyone ... will acknowledge in some way the war between good and evil ...

The problem emerges when we humans define the terms apart from the word of God ... you've heard it ... the really bad people are the abusers and murderers of this world ... or the dictators and tyrants ... everyone has their list ... but none of us ... none of us ... understand the extent of the battle unless we are paying close, close attention to the teaching of Scripture.

A recent survey by Ligonier Ministries and Lifeway informs us that 52% of people who profess to be evangelicals ... people who state that the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe ... agree that “Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.”

Someone is not connecting the dots because over half of those who state that the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe either do not know ... or they disregard ... what the Bible teaches ...

- (Romans 3:10–12) As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

An Overview of the Extent of the War

1. We learn from Genesis chapter one that God created the heavens and the earth and that everything was very good ... but only briefly ... because then we learn from the third chapter of Genesis that soon after everything was very good that the entire population of earth—both of them—rebelled against their

Creator and disobeyed his clear instruction.

2. In Genesis four we see the early roots of man-made religion as Cain demands that God accept his terms of worship. When God rejected Cain's false worship, he became so enraged against God that he murdered his brother.

And things didn't get better ...

3. Genesis six describes the great wickedness and evil that filled the earth in the following years as the population exploded and the world saw the development of mighty men and mighty kingdoms ... but wickedness so great that in chapter seven God destroyed the entire population—probably hundreds of thousands, possibly millions by this time—except the eight people in Noah's immediate family.
4. After the flood and the fresh start, the ancient Israelites then struggled through the time of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and served as slaves to the Egyptians for four hundred years until God commissioned Moses before a burning bush to bring them to the promised land.
5. Moses was declared by God to be the most humble man on the earth. He was powerful and highly educated and chosen by God himself to lead his people to freedom. But even mighty, wonderful, humble Moses was overcome by the aggravation of the rebellion of the wayward people of God.

And exasperated by the complaining and bitter rebellion of the people, he disobeyed God and struck the rock to bring forth water for the rebels.

From Moses to Joshua the stubborn, stiff-necked majority rebelled against their God-King. So much so that even after many years of the strong, godly leadership of Moses and Joshua, they were still dragging around foreign gods from Egypt.

6. Samuel the priest and others ruled during the up and down time of the judges during which time there was no king—God or otherwise—so opinion ruled the day as each person did what was right in their own eyes.
7. And following the judges came the kings ... as the people rejected the leadership of the Lord God the Almighty thinking that an earthly king would solve their problems.

So kings they got ...

First there were three kings over the united kingdom ... Saul, David and Solomon who reigned from about 1049 to 931 BC. Then after the death of Solomon the kingdom split between Israel and Judah.

From approximately 931 to 722 BC there were twenty kings in the northern kingdom of Israel—none good, and variously described as rebellious, bad, wicked, evil, sinful, extra bad, abysmal, full of vice, horrible, idolatrous ... you get the picture.

Things were better but not really that great with the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. Only eight of the twenty kings of Judah who served from 931-586 BC were noted in any good way. If you are into percentages, then sixty percent of the kings of Judah have been noted

as bad, terrible, devilish, treacherous, dreadful, foolish ... again, you get the point.

Jeremiah the prophet gives us this commentary on the times of the kings and the prophets of Israel ...

- (Jeremiah 5:1 ESV) Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her.
 - (Jeremiah 5:21–23 ESV) Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. 22 Do you not fear me? declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it. 23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away.
 - (Jeremiah 5:30–31 ESV) An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: 31 the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?
8. The majority of the religious leaders at the time of Christ—those who were to be the spokesmen and representatives of the people of God—opposed the Messiah of whom their holy Scriptures prophesied and ultimately sanctioned his death on a Roman cross.
 9. The true gospel—the gospel that Paul preached—was opposed by those in the professing church and was subverted by false teachers and false teaching from the very beginning. In some cases, such as the churches in southern Galatia, a false gospel had taken a stronghold within merely a year.
 10. We learn from the historical precedent of Christ’s evaluation of seven churches at the end of the first century that five of the seven churches—71%—were under the condemnation of Christ.
 11. Continuing into modern times we observe that since the late 1800s churches and denominations have broken away from the spiritual mooring and foundation of God’s word by what is called higher criticism—a field of study by which God’s word comes under the scrutiny and judgment of humans.

And as the natural mind of humans cannot comprehend the things of God, then belief in such things as the deity of Christ, the authority of Scripture and the biblical miracles is destroyed.

- **SO YOU WOULD THINK THEN ... LOGICALLY, IT WOULD SEEM ... THAT THESE GROUPS—THESE CHURCHES AND DENOMINATIONS—WOULD ABANDON THE BIBLE IN ITS ENTIRETY. AND YOU WOULD BE WRONG BECAUSE THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMANKIND DOES NOT SHOW ITSELF TO BE LOGICAL AND REASONABLE.**

No Clear Choice Allowed ... No Black & White ...

The devil works through confusion. Don’t discard the Bible ... that gives people too clear of a choice ... too black and white ... keep using the Bible for your purposes ... subvert the message but keep the Bible out front like a signboard on the interstate, a neon sign in the dark night ... a calling card identifying yourself as angels of light ...

but do not give them a clear—for or against—choice.

The Great Deception

And we have now arrived at the great deception that so many people cannot wrap their minds around ... people who cannot accept or who refuse to accept *WHY* the Bible is still used by denominations who have abandoned the authority and inspiration of Scripture ... but have not abandoned the Bible ...

They have not abandoned the Bible ... because now that humans have assumed the authority ... and now that humans sit in the place of judgment over God’s holy word ... with humans picking the “good” parts ... what we should and shouldn’t believe ... and with those who think they are wise but are actually fools having stripped Scripture of its authority and its divine, miraculous character ... well ... now ... the Bible is quite ready to serve their purposes.

The survey that I cited earlier tells us that ... 51% of those who profess to be evangelicals—who state that the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe—agree that ... “God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.”

So, howdy partner, and welcome to the wide gate and the easy road that leads to destruction.

WHY DID THE APOSTLE PAUL WRITE THIS LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS?

SHORT ANSWER: TO STRONGLY URGE THE SAINTS AT COLOSSAE TO NOT SHIFT THEIR HOPE AWAY FROM THE GOSPEL AND TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE INVASION OF FALSE TEACHING AND FALSE TEACHERS IN THE PROFESSING CHURCH.

CONCLUSION: How do we do that?

Preach the word and endure sound teaching.

- (2 Timothy 4:1–5 ESV) I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

THE PREACHER’S OBLIGATION ...

- To call us into the presence of God.
- To make us mindful of the coming judgment of Christ Jesus.
- And to preach the word ... before God ... to “come at you” week after week, in season and out of season ... reproving, rebuking, exhorting with complete patience and teaching.

YOUR OBLIGATION ...

- To endure sound teaching and to continue listening to the truth so you do not fall prey to myths.