

View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — *John 12:21*

April 19, 2020

You have been reading my stories and thoughts for almost a month. Instead of writing another article, let's read a letter from a man who was literally inspired, the apostle Paul. Remember, he was an unbeliever who became a believer and his words have rocked the world. I've selected roughly the first half of Colossians and highlighted a few of my favorite passages. — *dp*

Colossians 1:1 — 2:15

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

And so, from the day we heard, **we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him:** bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 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.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.** Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. **For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.**

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

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. **For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.** In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

— *The Apostle Paul, AD 60*

Quotes & Notes

“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.” – C.S. Lewis

“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.” 1 Cor. 1:26

- Adam was a gardener,
- Ruth was a foreign field laborer,
- Nehemiah was a cupbearer,
- David was a shepherd,
- Joseph was a carpenter,
- Peter was a fisherman.

Question: why do you suppose “simple” people seek God more than “noble” people? If you’re more “noble,” in a socio-economic sense, than “simple,” what should you learn from this?

Speaking as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11)

Or, as we used to say, “speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where it is silent.”

Think about it...

- Am I speaking about [this subject] in the same way God speaks about it?
- Do I downplay what he emphasizes?
- Do I qualify what is unqualified?
- Do I put law where there is grace?
- Do I abuse grace to do what I want?
- Do I put a comma where God puts a period?
- Do I dull that which has a fine point?

How to be a rebel in 2020:

Get married and have a family,

Don’t do drugs or get drunk,

Go to church,

...and, if you are really a rebel, be like Jesus

REST

“Christ’s invitation to the weary and heavy-laden is a call to begin life over again upon a new principle—upon His own principle. ‘Watch My way of doing things,’ He says. ‘Follow Me. Take life as I take it. Be meek and lowly, and you will find Rest.’” – Henry Drummond

“He who cannot rest, cannot work; he who cannot let go, cannot hold on; he who cannot find footing, cannot go forward.”

– Harry Emerson Fosdick

“If there were no tribulation, there would be no rest; if there were no winter, there would be no summer.”

– John Chrysostom



We are not the first generation to experience closed doors. This is from 1918, during the Spanish flu epidemic

CULTURE COLUMN

Socializing, Not Screens

What it is: Now that teenagers are being forced to do everything via screens, one researcher says it verifies what she’s been saying all along: Teens aren’t addicted to screens; they’re addicted to socializing.

Why it’s probably true: After spending years fretting over how much screen time is too much, how screens affect development, and how to get kids off their devices, parents are being forced to change their tune now that screens have become teens’ only connection to normalcy. Yet how teens are reacting to doing *everything*—school, sports, friendships, romance, church, concerts, shopping—via technology is telling. They’re not leaping for joy at the chance to escape to their digital world; rather, they’re going absolutely crazy. Not only might this change their feelings toward and dependence on screens in the future, it also means we need to create ways for them to have meaningful in-person interactions right now.

Was Life Ever Really Normal?

Media outlets are speculating, politicians are hoping, and Madison Avenue is begging for life to return to normal, to forget the lessons we are learning about slowing down, unplugging, spending less, caring for the planet, and being fully present with one another.

But unlike a dog returning to its vomit (II Peter 2:22), may we never get back to normal. Because if we’re honest, a significant amount of normative society was toxic. We knew it, we were just too busy to do anything about it. Whether it’s our obsession with sex and violence, our dependence on pharmaceutical drugs, our constant need for anesthetizing entertainment, our struggling educational system or our wanton desire for more of everything, we’re slaves to a system that normalizes dehumanization, a system of commodification and consumption, where everything and everyone is up for sale. Do we really want to get back to that kind of normal?

One preacher asked, re: post-coronavirus, “Will we fall back into old habits, old assumptions, and old patterns of corrosive behavior, or will we finally do something fundamentally different to reshape our world for the betterment of all?” Like our spiritual ancestors, this is the real challenge before us today: “Listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death (Dt. 30:15), between prosperity and disaster.” And in contrast to the Israelites who longed to return to the normalcy of Egypt, may we choose liberation. May each of us choose to enter a new land and a new way of being human. Nobody knows what the world will look like in the days and weeks to come; we just hope it is anything but normal.

— Cultural Translator