

"THERE'S HOPE!" Colossians ch. 2

In 2008 Oprah devoted all of her radio shows to teach *A Course in Miracles*, a book by an atheist. It claims (1) Jesus is not God, (2) Satan, evil and sin do not exist and (3) the Bible cannot be trusted. The author insists that Jesus dictated the book to her. Note her instructions:

"Some of the ideas the workbook presents you will find hard to believe, and others may seem to be quite startling. This does not matter. You are merely asked to apply the ideas as you are directed to do. You are not asked to judge them at all. You are asked only to use them. It is their use that will give them meaning to you and will show you that they are true."

Can you say "brainwashing?" Shades of David Koresh, Charles Manson and Jim Jones. In 62 A.D. Colossae in ancient Turkey is riddled with religious scams. Blurring Judaism with pagan cults, hoaxsters preach that faith in Christ is not enough. This prompts Paul to write this letter. **Let's read Colossians 2:1-29 (p. 1071).**

***"Eat Your Heart Out, Sherlock"* Colossians 2:1-7**

Paul affirms his readers' courageous faith in Jesus and unveils perks, hidden until now, which are ours thanks to the cross. He wants us to go deep into the "secret" which is "Christ in us!" This means we have the very character of God (**Ephesians 1:4-10, p. 1061; 1 John 4:1-6, p. 1117).**

Being "born again," as Jesus put it, is not a matter of *doing* but of *believing*, with thanksgiving, letting Him guide all you are, think, say and do. Paul wants us to tenaciously rely on Christ unlike the churches in Corinth and Galatia who were misled by flawed human thinking (**2 Corinthians 11:1-6, p. 1052; Galatians 1:6-20, p. 1055).**

DISCUSS: How can you avoid being spiritually deceived?

***"Can't Buy Me Love"* Colossians 2:8-19**

In *The Message*, the late Eugene Peterson updates Paul's original Greek:

"Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread ideas through the empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions

of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ. Everything of God gets expressed in Him, so you can see and hear Him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ and the emptiness of the universe without Him. When you come to Him, that fullness comes together for you, too. His power extends over everything."

When you commit to Jesus, you get "spiritually circumcised," i.e., the "fleshly" layer of inconsequential, holier-than-thou do's and don'ts is removed, vaulting you from *spiritual death to spiritual life* (**Galatians 6:12-15, p. 1060; Romans 2:28-29, p. 1017; Ephesians 2:11-16, p. 1062, 4:17-24).**

Overnight the world has been thrown into a catatonic state of panic by the coronavirus. How do we respond? Certainly not with fear, but with power, love and a sound mind. Jesus calls us to fear those who can destroy our soul, not just kill our body (Matthew 10:28; 2 Timothy 1:7). "Situations that contain opportunities to be anxious are actually a test of our peace," writes Graham Cooke. Each problem has God's provision.

DISCUSS: Cooke writes, "God wants to show us more and more of His character and nature every day, so He allows opportunities for us to rely on Him." What are you learning from this coronavirus experience?

"Bread That Builds Strong Bodies" Colossians 2:20-23

When by faith you said "yes" to Christ, He deleted the record of *all* your sins – past, present and future (**Titus 2:11-14, p.1088).** You're now equipped to *be* and *do* all He put you on earth for, with access to His unlimited resources. Christ's inheritance and standing with His Father have been credited to your spiritual account (**Galatians 3:23-26, p. 1058!**)

In his *Mysteries of the Apostle Paul* author Henry Klopp sums up what the risen Christ disclosed to Paul: "*No one gets into heaven because of their good deeds, and no one is excluded from heaven because of their bad deeds. The issue is not what we have done, but what we have believed and whom we have chosen to serve*" (Romans 4:1-16).

Whether asceticism (physical deprivation) or monasticism (ecclesiastical exile), God ascribes no eternal worth to human efforts to achieve holiness (**Matthew 7:21-23, p. 858).**

Cooke writes in his booklet, *Living in Dependence and Wonder*:

"...we were in sin, and He loved us. Why is this important? Because it proves that His love is not conditional on our performance as Christians. Instead, His love is based on His own nature. Nothing we can do can make God love us less. Nothing we can do

came make Him love us more! He loves us because He is love. Being beloved is our identity in Christ; it's the name by which God calls and accepts us." See how Paul magic-markers this: "He (God) made us accepted in the Beloved."

"There's Always HOPE"

Refusing God's offer is choosing unending torment in a place made NOT for sinners but for Satan (Matthew 25:41). God desires hell for no one! So He sacrificed His Son to rid you of the eternal consequences of your sin.

"God gave us eternal life; the life is in His Son. So whoever has the Son has life; whoever rejects the Son rejects life. My purpose in writing is simply this: that you who believe in God's Son will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life ..." (1 John 5:11-13).

What could you do *today* with God's gift of eternal life?

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