

(Colossians) Introduction to Colossians

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon introduces the book of Colossians, highlighting the importance of starting with the Bible and avoiding the dangers of philosophy in the church.

Duration: 22:40

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:15-20, Colossians 1:27, Colossians 2:6-10, Colossians 3:1-2

Topics: "Apologetics", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor emphasizes the importance of addressing the modern philosophies that are infiltrating and undermining the church. He acknowledges that as a pastor, he relies on God to guide him in delivering the message that God wants to speak to his people. The pastor shares his struggle in deciding to study the book of Colossians, but ultimately follows God's leading. He highlights that the epistle serves as a warning against the danger of philosophy, specifically human reason and speculation over spiritual matters, which has historically been the church's greatest enemy.

Transcript

You know, it's really great to be a pastor and to serve the Lord, and especially when you realize that the church is not your responsibility, but it's the Lord's responsibility. And in that, you realize that God has, He has a message for His people. God wants to speak to us, His people.

And what I always try to do is to tap into what the Lord wants to say to us. I fear getting off on my own kind of a tangent or getting off into something that I want to do. And I'm always asking the Lord, Lord, show me what you want to do, because this is your church, and these are your people, and you know them much better than I do, and you know what the needs really are, more so than I do.

And you know, God is so faithful to show me what it is that He has for us as a body. And as we were beginning to wind down in our study of the Sermon on the Mount, I began to feel that Colossians was where the Lord would have us to go. And yet, as I usually do, I wrestle with that, and I go back and forth on it, and I think of all the reasons why that probably isn't what God has for us.

And then inevitably, I always come back to that place of just saying, Lord, this is what you spoke to me, and this is what we're going with, and it proves always to be what God had for us. I shared these kinds of things with you before, but you know, it's just so interesting to me how, you know, I go through these things, and I think to some degree, it maybe has something to do with warfare, although I don't always

realize it. But I had been planning, you know, just in the back of my mind that Colossians is where we needed to be, but this past weekend, I just became convinced in my mind that this was not it.

And mainly because I just wasn't all that excited about it myself. And I could think of so many other things I wanted to teach, and yesterday, oh, I tried with everything in me to come up with a series of studies on the life of Christ. And all day long until 9 o'clock last night, I plotted, and I schemed, and I thought through this great study on the life of Christ.

And as I was lying there on my floor at 9 o'clock last night, I thought, you know, I want with all my heart to teach on the life of Christ, but I have absolutely no inspiration whatsoever to do it. And as I was lying on the floor just thinking, you know, how ridiculous all of this was, you know, it was so clear to me that what I had felt a few months ago and what I felt the Lord had been saying to me all day was that Colossians is where I want you to be. This is what I have for my people at Vista right now.

And if you want to do what I want you to do as you tell me you do, that's why I tell, Lord, I really want to do what you want me to do, but I don't want to do Colossians. If you really want to do what I want you to do, the Lord said, then you're going to do Colossians because that's it. And so the thing that's great for me really is to be able to stand up here today and to know that I am in the will of God and that we are going to embark on a study that the Spirit of God is leading us on.

And because the Spirit of God is leading us to it, we can be confident that he is going to speak to us and that we are going to come through this epistle greatly enriched and blessed exceedingly because this is the word of the Lord for us at this time. So with that, let's pray. Father, we pray now as we embark on this study of Paul's epistle to the Church of Colossae, we pray, Lord, your blessing.

We pray, Lord, that we would be enriched. We pray, Father, that all that you have for us in this epistle, God would be unfolded to us. And I pray, Lord, that each and every week that there would be a sensitivity on my part to just seek the Holy Spirit and what you would have, Lord, not to go through it at my own pace, but Lord, to go through it at your pace and Lord to draw from it all the richness that you have for us.

We thank you for this great epistle and we pray, Lord, for many blessings as we study through it in Jesus name. Amen. The church in Colossae was geographically located about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

The church of Laodicea was in the general vicinity as well as the church of Hierapolis. And these were churches that were either directly or indirectly established through the ministry of the apostle Paul. No one is certain whether or not Paul actually went to Colossae, but what we are certain of is that it was Paul's ministry that birthed the church in this city.

So Paul had a special interest in this fellowship. It seems from the epistle that this was a wonderful church, a church of committed people, but yet a church that was under siege by the enemy and subtly being assaulted by false teaching that was creeping in. And so this epistle is really one of warning.

Paul is warning them about these teachings that are potentially destructive to the fellowship. He's seeking to make them aware of these things and to steer the church away from these false doctrines. The problem in Colossae was one of seeking to merge certain philosophical views with the Christian faith.

So those who were coming in, these false teachers, they were seeking to merge certain philosophical views with the Christian faith. The motive for this merger was to obtain the favor of the intellectual community and to produce a superior Christianity. They were seeking to obtain the favor of the intellectual

community and to produce a superior Christianity, a Christianity in which knowledge is the ultimate and redemption is from ignorance, not from sin.

So this was the problem that the church was being faced with. Paul wrote this epistle to combat these ideas and to bring the Colossian church back on course with Christ at the helm. The message of this epistle is twofold.

It is first a proclamation of the supremacy and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. And we'll find as we go through chapter one, some of the most profound teaching on the person of Christ in all of the Bible. Some of the most glorious statements declaring to us who Jesus Christ is and the continual reminder throughout the epistle that Jesus Christ is sufficient.

In other words, that he is all that we need. We need nothing but the Lord. Anything added to the Lord is a subtraction from his glory and from his sufficiency.

That's what Paul is going to remind us of. Secondly, this epistle is a warning against the danger of philosophy, a warning against the danger of philosophy. Historically, philosophy has proven to have been the church's greatest enemy.

Historically, philosophy has proven to have been the church's greatest enemy. What I mean by philosophy is this human reason and speculation over spiritual matters, human reason and speculation over spiritual matters as contrasted with divine revelation found in the scriptures. So the great enemy of the church throughout the ages has been human reason and speculation over spiritual matters, human reasoning concerning things like the origin of man, the purpose of man's existence, how man is to behave himself in this life, and finally the destiny of man.

It's these kinds of issues that have been speculated on that have caused the great problems in the history of the church. Philosophy is thriving within the evangelical community today. Philosophy is still the greatest enemy of the church.

Churches, colleges, and seminaries among the evangelical community bear greater resemblance today to Mars Hill in Athens than they do to Jerusalem or Antioch, which were the early centers of the Christian faith. Churches, colleges, and seminaries today have more in common with Athens. They're more enamored with and impressed by philosophy than they are by the word of God.

It is not uncommon today to hear pastors and professors challenging the very things that the Bible teaches. It's not uncommon today to hear pastors and professors calling into question the validity of the Genesis account of creation. They're calling it into question.

They're doubting the validity of it. It's not uncommon to hear pastors or professors criticizing the apostle Paul for being sexist. It's not uncommon to hear pastors and professors touting psychology as God's greatest gift to mankind.

These and many other things are the effects of philosophy on the modern church, and these are the things that we are going to be dealing with. Now, in my studying, the thing that I found interesting is that most of the commentators seem to miss the modern application of this epistle. They deal extensively with the philosophies that Paul was combating in the first century.

They deal quite extensively with that, but they fail to deal with the philosophies that the church is combating today. You see, Paul warns us against philosophy, period, not just a certain form of it. He warns us against human reasoning and speculation, and the human reasoning and speculation that is affecting the church today is not the same, at least identically the same, as it was in the first century.

There are similarities, but it is different, and it seems to be that many of the commentators have failed to address the modern philosophies that are attacking the church, that are invading the church, that are dominating the modern church, and that's really what we need to do with this epistle, and that's why I believe God wants us to go through it, because philosophy is undermining the church of Jesus Christ today, and there's a great danger that we ourselves could be swept up in it. There's a high probability that many of us already have been influenced by philosophy to some degree or another, and so as we go through this epistle, this will warn us against the philosophies that would seek to undermine our faith. You see, the church has always been enamored with philosophy because the church has always wanted to impress, impress the intellectual community.

That's been a great battle in the history of the church. The church, after the apostolic age, wanting to be seen as intellectual, began to embrace philosophy. They sought to bring Christianity up to the par of the various schools of philosophy, and that's been the curse on the church, and that's the problem today.

What pastors and professors are trying to do today is make Christianity palatable to the unbelieving world, make it acceptable, make it respectable, and so embracing human reasoning, embracing human speculation under the banner of intellectualism. Now, I am not denying that Christians are intelligent. Christians are actually the most intelligent people in the world, and the Christian faith is not anti-intellectual.

The Christian faith is brilliant, but the Christian faith is a wisdom that's on a whole nother level, and the moment we try to make the Christian faith compatible with human reasoning, we reduce its glory. Paul said to the Corinthians, he said, we speak wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world. Yeah, we have a wisdom, but it's a greater wisdom than man could ever hope to have.

It's the wisdom of God. We make no apologies for what we believe. We don't need to apologize to anyone for believing the Bible.

It's the height of wisdom to believe the Word of God. It's the height of folly to reject it, so we need make no apologies, but so many are doing that today. They're apologizing.

Oh, well, we know that the Bible says this, and yet it doesn't seem to line up with the scientific facts, so we must understand that the Bible isn't a scientific declaration, and therefore, you know, it's not to be taken literally in this area or that area or whatever the case. You know, we find that all the time today. Oh, yes, the Bible's good, and it's wonderful, and it'll help you to know more about heaven and about Jesus and about prayer and things like that, but for the deeper problems in life, for the more serious matters, of course, the Bible is insufficient to address those issues, and we have this wonderful gift of psychology that's come to us now, come directly by God through the hand of infidels, and this, you know, is where we stand and so forth.

It's tragic. It's sad. I picked up a book in a bookstore over in England, and it was a book dealing with creation and so forth, and much of what it said was good, but right toward the end, the man got off into this whole thing where he was saying that, you know, the Genesis account is not a scientific account, and

therefore, you know, we shouldn't take it literally, and of course, you know, the literal six days of creation is probably not what it's actually referring to, because we know now through science that the earth and the universe are much older than the six to ten thousand years that we have recorded in the Bible, and he said something that just absolutely blew my mind.

He said, now, we know that God would not deceive us. This was his basis for rejecting a literal six days creation. God would not deceive us, he said, and the universe appears to be millions of years old, and God would not deceive us, and so if the universe appears to be millions of years old and is actually only a few thousand years old, then that's deception, and God would never do that, so actually, what we need to understand is that the Genesis account is not a scientific record, and it's not to be taken literally as six days.

You see, because we've concluded that the universe is millions of years old, if it's younger, then God's actually deceiving us, because it looks to be older, but you see, the problem in that is starting from the wrong point. And that's where so many people are today. They're starting from the wrong point.

I don't start from science. That's not my point of reference. My point of reference is the Bible.

I start from what the Bible says, and if so-called science is in conflict with that, then guess who's wrong? It's not the Bible. The Bible hasn't been changed, but scientific theory changes weekly. I mean, that's a fact.

So you see, the fallacy of taking and starting with science or philosophy or something like that, right away, you're doomed to failure, because those theories, those things are constantly in flux, but the Bible remains steadfast. So I look at the Word of God, and the Word of God tells me that the universe was created in six days. Well, how come it appears to be older? Well, it appears to be older because our reasoning is off, because we're starting from the wrong point, because we don't want to believe that God could create the universe full-grown.

We don't want to believe that, you know, that light could travel here instantaneously instead of taking the millions and millions of years to get here from certain distant stars and so forth. So we know that for the light from this star to reach us, you know, traveling at the speed of light, it would take X amount of millions of years, or maybe even billions of years. And therefore, the universe must be billions of years old, because after all, how could we see the light from this star if the universe wasn't that old? The light would have never reached us yet, failing to see that God created the universe in a mature state.

And when he said, let there be light, it didn't take this time for the light to travel. Let there be light, and then billions of years later, it'll arrive. You know, no, God said, let there be light, and there was light.

It was light. It arrived instantaneously. But you see, it's starting from the wrong point.

We've got to start from the word of God. That's where we start. And that was the danger in Colossae.

They were not starting with the word of God. They were starting with philosophy, and they were trying to merge the two together. Let's make the Bible fit with philosophy.

So yes, the Bible tells us about Jesus. But this is what we know through human reason and speculation. So let's merge the two.

And you see, that's happening today. That's the problem today in the church. And so this epistle is going to help us to avoid being entangled in those philosophies that will ultimately destroy our faith.

You see, that's what happens. The faith is subtly undermined for many. You know, I heard recently...

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