

Applying Colossians to the Trials of Life

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I. Introduction

Colossians, can the truth contained in the letter of Colossians deliver us from the trials we face today? To answer this, we should start by asking, “Did the letter deliver the Colossians when it was written to them?” The Colossians faced an onslaught of religious do’s and don’ts that promised deliverance from their former sins, 3:5–9.

However, there was a problem with these do’s and don’ts. They were based on the world’s dogma, the same dogma that once enslaved them to sin, only now it also wanted to rob them of their future reward, 1:12; 2:8, 18.

What is Paul’s response to this onslaught? He clearly and vividly reminded the Colossians of the truth that set them free from their former life of sin and transformed them into saints in Christ. Christ, the God of the universe, bled and died for them in order to set them free of the world’s body of sin and its dogma so that one day they would stand blameless before Him, 1:14–22; 2:11–13, 14, 20; 3:4.

Thus, the letter would’ve delivered the Colossians because the moment they read it, they would realize: (1) the truth behind those enticing religious do’s and don’ts: they were born out of the dogma that once enslaved them to sin, and (2) they had no need for an empty religious system because now that they were part of Christ, 2:11–13, they had access to true wisdom and knowledge, 2:2–3.

What about today, can the letter of Colossians deliver you and me today?

II. You’ve Lost Your Job During a Terrible Economy (Col. 1:15–17, 24; 3:12–17, 22–25)

Economically our nation is suffering. The unemployment rate is effectively 15%–18%. In the face of such terrible news, what are you supposed to do? “Trust in the Lord,” is that the answer? Yes! Though you face terrible news, you must remember who God is: He’s the Creator and Sustainer of the ENTIRE universe, Col 1:15–17.

Does the God of the universe control your little corner of it? Yes, the God who controls a supergiant star like Antares (which is 603,680,000 miles in diameter) and billions like it, is the one who watches over your jobless situation (Mtt. 10: 27–31).

You’re part of the Body, use your suffering to bring it glory. You are forever united to the God of the universe; you are part of Christ’s Body, the Church, and this is not a part-time job. If the God who controls “all things” has decided to take you through a jobless situation, guess what you’re supposed to do with it? Continue to stay grounded in the Body and bring it glory, 1:23; 2:6–7. Use your suffering like Paul did to bring glory to the Body, 2 Cor. 11:22–27; Col. 1:24.

Take God's advice on how to get a job. Colossians reveals that Christ holds all wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2:3. We have access to this knowledge because the Bible is the "mind of Christ," 1 Cor. 2:16. Thus, whatever we need to know about life, it's there. Specifically, Col. 3:22–25 tells you what kind of an employee you should be: diligent, respectful, and trustworthy. This type of an employee is a tremendous asset, especially in a difficult economy.

What does God say to your fellow Body parts about your unemployment? God not only has something to say to you about your joblessness, He also has something to say to your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. As you are suffering, He expects the rest of the Body to support, admonish, and encourage you, Col. 3:12–17.

III. You're Facing a Deadly Illness that may Take Your Life (Col. 1:15–17, 24; 3:12–17)

The human body when it is at the peak of fitness is a wonder to behold. We can run, jump, and do every physical activity we wish. However, sometimes our bodies develop diseases and illnesses that take away the use of our bodies. We may end up bed ridden and unable to perform the simplest of tasks. Sometimes these illnesses take away our lives. How is a believer supposed to find hope in the face of such adversity?

Who controls life? The fact that God gives life and takes it away, Deut. 32:39, because He's the source of it, Jn. 1:1–4; Col. 1:15–17, should bring you comfort in the midst of your illness. Why? Because your illness is under His control; it cannot affect your life or take it without His say-so.

How am I supposed to glorify God through this? If God's allowed a disease to affect your life, the question you need to ask is, "How am I supposed to glorify God through this?" And like Paul answer, "I [will] take pleasure in [my] infirmities, ... for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong," 2 Cor. 12:10 (Col. 1:24).

What does God say to your fellow Body parts about your illness? God says to the rest of us, "Comfort those who are weak among you. Love them and show compassion toward them," Col. 3:12–17.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Colossians found hope in Paul's letter; so can we. Whether we're facing unemployment or a deadly illness, we have hope because the God who oversees the entire universe is the One who oversees every aspect of our lives, including our health. He has made us part of His Son's Body, the Church, and as such we are to continue to glorify Him and cause the Body's growth, especially through our trials, as we show love and support for one another.