

Today we pause for a brief consideration as to how the Christian community was turned away from the hope given by our Lord through the apostle Paul.

We are now scripturally assured of the hope before all Christians today which is that, in Christ, we have been raised and seated together in the heavenlies where our Lord and Head is seated at the Father's right hand. [Eph.2:4-7](#).

We are also aware that this glorious hope will be realized when our Lord is manifested or revealed in that place, [Col.3:1-4](#). In other words, when the Lord is manifested at the Father's right hand in the heavenlies, we will be literally raised and seated together and manifested with Him there. The Head and the Church which is His Body will be revealed at the same time and in the same place.

When we examined Ephesians we saw that Paul's prayer for them was that the Father would grant them knowledge in Christ to know the hope of His calling;

[Eph 1:15](#) Therefore I also, hearing of your [faith](#) in the Lord Jesus and [love](#) to all the saints,

[Eph 1:16](#) do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,

[Eph 1:17](#) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

[Eph 1:18](#) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, [that you may know what is the hope](#) of His calling,

We notice something different in the opening of Colossians. The Colossians had heard about this wonderful new hope and so Paul did not need to pray that the Father would give them the "spirit of wisdom" so they would know it;

[Col 1:4](#) since we heard of your [faith](#) in Christ Jesus, and of the [love](#) you have to all the saints,

[Col 1:5](#) for the [hope](#) which is laid up for you in Heaven, of which you heard before in the Word of the truth of the gospel,

[Col 1:6](#) which has come to you as it has also in all the world,

In Ephesians, Paul encouraged them to walk worthy of the calling and the worthy walk included the maintenance of a watchful eye on the "one hope" of our calling. The Ephesians had to guard the one hope given by grace;

[Eph 4:1](#) I therefore, the prisoner in *the* Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling with which you are called,

[Eph 4:2](#) with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love,

[Eph 4:3](#) endeavoring to keep (guard) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[Eph 4:4](#) *There is* one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling,....

A casual reading of Colossians will show a marked difference in tone since Colossians contains a number of warnings. The new dispensation of the grace of God had been proclaimed and the enemy was sowing seeds of doubt and confusion through the human agencies which had been opposing Paul from the beginning of his ministry. Notice these warnings;

[Col 2:1](#) For I want you to know what a [great conflict I have for you and those at Laodicea](#), and *for* as many as have not seen my face in *the* flesh,

[Col 2:2](#) that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and to all riches of the [full assurance](#) of the understanding, to *the* full knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

[Col 2:3](#) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[Col 2:4](#) And I say this that [not anyone should beguile you](#) with enticing words.

[Col 2:8](#) **Beware** lest anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

[Col 2:16](#) Therefore [let no one judge you](#) in food or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths.

[Col 2:17](#) For these are a shadow of things to come, but the body *is* of Christ.

[Col 2:18](#) [Let no man rob you of your prize](#) by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, (ASV)

Why these warnings?

Imagine if your government changed the constitution and introduced a whole new set of conditions. There would be confusion as folks tried to adjust and clarify the changes. In such an environment of change, opportunities would exist for malevolent folks to further muddy the waters and take advantage of and exploit many people who could be confused by the changes.

There was an incredible change of conditions brought about by God at the end of the book of Acts. The Kingdom on the earth administration was postponed and the Mystery of Ephesians 3 was introduced. Email me if you are unsure of the differences.

It is difficult for us today to appreciate the dramatic changes that had overtaken the Christian community back then. The Christians Paul wrote to in Ephesians and Colossians had been previously living in the powerful Acts period which was a foretaste of the coming millennium. There were prevalent and widespread mighty signs and wonders, every sick person was healed, the dead were raised and those believers who sinned were judged, made sick and even died. The expectation that the Lord was going to descend out of heaven to the earth in the foreseeable future meant they were to avoid marriage and distribute their possessions to the poor as they saw the day approaching.

Among this widespread teaching by all the apostles of that time came word that Paul had received a new dispensation. God, who never changes as to virtue and character, changed the dispensation after providing Israel with nearly forty years of opportunity to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. They were “let go” at Acts 28 and the foretastes of the millennial kingdom on the earth ceased and the imminent return of the Lord was postponed.

As Paul wrote and unfolded the new set of conditions the Christians saw differences. Paul now wrote that the young widows were to marry (1Tim.5:14), he left behind friends who were sick (2Tim.4:20) and advised Timothy to take a little wine for his illnesses (1Tim.5:23). Very few Christians are healed today and we are certainly not judged and made sick because of sins. No reference to the imminent return of the Lord can be found in Paul’s seven post Acts letters and in fact he wrote about a new hope where believers were raised and seated together in the heavenly places in Christ. This hope was completely different to Paul’s Acts period letters.

Such a dramatic change of dispensation certainly gave opportunity for Paul’s opponents to further ridicule the man and his God given ministry. Instead of embracing the changes God had introduced through Paul, Christians were confused into retaining elements of the previous administration.

We need not turn to history to prove that the majority of Christians had been moved away from Paul not long after the change of dispensation;

2Ti 1:15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

These Christians were not casting aside their faith in Christ; many were to die at the hands of the Romans for their faith. They were turned away from Paul and the message for today. When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy he was very concerned the younger man would hold fast to the truth for today in the face of this widespread apostasy;

2Ti 1:8 Therefore you should **not be ashamed** of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner.

2Ti 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the eternal times.

2Ti 1:13 **Hold fast** the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

2Ti 1:14 **Guard** the good Deposit given through the Holy Spirit indwelling in us.

Those Christians turning away from Paul were not faithless but they were not faithful to the changes God had made. Indeed, Paul instructed Timothy to seek out these faithful believers and commit the “good deposit” to them so they could pass it along.

2Ti 2:1 Therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2Ti 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit the same to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2Ti 2:3 Therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

When the Christian community began to realize there would be a literal return of Christ to the earth they embraced the hope of the Acts period (1Thess.4) because they had inherited the legacy of confusion left by the majority who had turned away from Paul centuries before. Not noticing the differences in Paul’s letters, and to accommodate the Acts period hope with heavenly places instead of the earth, they developed “the rapture” theory. The rapture is misinformation and a subtle misdirection to the wrong hope and sadly, the rapture theory holds a powerful place in the Christian community today. The groundwork for the rapture was laid by the enemy while Paul was still alive; he turned Christians away from Paul.

Returning to the letter of Colossians we read a significant appeal of Paul regarding the new hope. They had heard of this new hope and he wanted them to hold fast to it and be not turned away from it:

Col 1:23 However, you must remain firmly established and steadfast in the faith, **without being moved from the hope** of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. (ISV)

My appeal to each reader is the same. Having seen this new hope; the appearing of glory, let us guard and treasure it with all our strength. The day of our Lord's appearing is not in the foreseeable future yet we know every day is another day closer to that moment when our Saviour will be revealed in the light of God and every eye will see Him. Not only will those on the earth see Him but those aristocracies in the heavenly places will behold Him in glory as well.

Ponder this once more friends, the created beings on the earth and in the heavenly places will see you and me revealed in that same place and moment of glory. What an honor to be revealed with Him. Praise God from whom all wonders of grace flow!