



Colossians: *Christ the Builder*
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“BODY BUILDING vs. FLESH BUILDING”
November 12, 2023

Key Verses: Colossians 2:6-23, NASB

Key Thought: BODY BUILDING results from embracing the “problem-solution complex” of the gospel as ultimate; FLESH BUILDING results from captivity via any alternative.

Points to Consider:

- BODY BUILDING and FLESH BUILDING are incompatible (cf. Galatians 5:16-17, 24-25). ← BODY BUILDING refers to Christ growing His church; FLESH BUILDING refers to investing in a manner of human existence that is severed from the enlivening grace of God in Christ.
- While there are unresolved questions among scholars related to some of the particulars of this passage (e.g., whether Paul envisions mysticism, asceticism, or even polytheism), there is a general consensus among scholars that Paul addresses Judaism. ← He refers to circumcision (11-15), as well as diet and the observance of holy days—including the Sabbath, which Paul characterizes as a “shadow” of Christ (16-17).
- It seems that the recipients of this letter, the Gentile Christians in Colossae, had been told that they were under condemnation because they were Gentiles, and—therefore— needed to take up some of the defining practices of Judaism in order to identify themselves with the Jewish ethnic group so as to be saved.
- 11-15, 19: Paul, however, affirms that they have— indeed— been saved through Christ as Gentiles and incorporated into the multiethnic body of Christ. | | | 16-17, 23: Paul, therefore, commands them to reject the illegitimate problem that had been imposed upon them (i.e., condemnation as Gentiles), as well as the impotent solution that had been offered to them (i.e., salvation via identification with the Jews). → In other words, Paul commands them to reject an alternative to the ultimate “problem-solution complex” of the gospel: **our ultimate problem is that we are separated from God— our life-source, and our ultimate solution is for God to enliven us in Christ.**



- Here are a few examples of alternative complexes that can usurp the influence of Christ in our lives:
 - i. **Appearance:** “I need to be more attractive to be wanted.”
 - ii. **Relationships:** “I need a (change in) relationship to be fulfilled.”
 - iii. **Performance:** “I need to perform to be celebrated/significant/respected.”
 - iv. **Possessions:** “I need [X] to be happy.”
- As with what the Colossians had been offered, “solutions” from these complexes are impotent to resolve our ultimate problem. Further, when we embrace these complexes as ultimate, we become enslaved and exiled (8). (**Although, there is nothing wrong with these pursuits—in and of themselves, when in submission to the lordship of Christ.*)
- The essential difference between BODY BUILDING and FLESH BUILDING has to do with whether or not Christ is truly our Lord—regardless of what we claim or suppose about ourselves.

Discussion Prompts:

- What was the alternative “problem-solution complex” that tempted the Colossians?
- How could that complex be portrayed by Paul as a dangerous rival to Christ?
- Describe the “problem-solution complex” that most rivals the ultimate complex of the gospel for control over your heart.
- Explore the consequences of allowing that rival to become your ultimate complex.
- How might the gospel address, undermine, illuminate, or expose that rival complex?
- Close with prayer, asking for God to deliver you from the power of those alternative complexes (i.e., FLESH BUILDING) and to give you fullness of life in Christ.