

Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians
Introduction
The Lukewarmites and Inclusivism

“¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. ¹⁸ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. ²⁰ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ²¹ I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ²³ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also*” (I John 2:15-23).

I am sure it must seem strange to start off a study in the epistle to the Colossians with a study in I John. The epistle to the Colossians was written during Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome. The primary subject matter of the epistle is to establish the eternal existence, pre-eminence and omnipotent Lordship of Jesus as the Son of God. The purpose of this epistle was to counteract a false teaching that had entered into early Christianity known as Gnosticism. This heresy is explained in Scofield’s notes on Colossians 2:18.

“The error against which Paul warned the Colossians later developed into the heresy called Gnosticism (from Gk. *gnosis*, meaning *knowledge*). This false teaching assigned to Christ a place subordinate to the true Godhead, and undervalued the uniqueness and completeness of His redemptive work. It insisted that between a holy God and this earth a host of beings, angels, etc., formed a bridge, of which host was Christ was a member. This system included the worship of angels (v. 18) and a false asceticism (vv. 20-22). For all of these errors, the apostle had one remedy, a knowledge (*epignosis*; i.e. *full knowledge*, 1:8-10; 3:10) of the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. Paul is not afraid of wisdom, or knowledge, and refers to them frequently, but he does insist that the knowledge be according to divine revelation. His devastating answer to this false teaching is in 1:19 and 2:9, in which the Lord is revealed as the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The word “fullness” (Gr. *pleroma*) is the very word Gnosticism used for the entire host of intermediary beings between God and man. The incarnate Lord, crucified, risen, and ascended is the only Mediator between God and men (I Tim. 2:5).” (Scofield Reference Bible)

Although most of Christianity rejected Gnosticism’s devaluation of Jesus as just one of the many intermediaries between God and man, some did not reject the idea of other intermediaries. Angels continued to be viewed as intermediaries between God and man. Later Mary, the mother of Jesus, became a mediator between God and man. Even various so called dead *Saints* could be prayed WITH and become intermediaries between God and man.”

“**Why did God Create Angels?** The Creator Himself is so powerful and glorious that He cannot be approached in person by human beings. He alone ‘hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see’ (1 Timothy 6:16). Angels do not have man’s shortcomings, and can therefore act for God and represent Him when communicating with men and women. They bridge the huge gap between the holiness and perfection of God in heaven and the shortcomings of dying people on this planet.” (www.catholic.org/saints/angel.php)

“Do Catholics pray TO saints? We pray with saints, not to them. . . Since saints led holy lives and are close to God in heaven, we feel that their prayers are particularly effective. Often we ask particular saints to pray for us if we feel they have a particular interest in our problem. For example, many people ask Saint Monica to pray for them if they have trouble with unanswered prayers, because Monica prayed for twenty years for her son to be converted. Finally her prayers were answered in a way she never dreamed of -- her son, Augustine, became a canonized saint and a Doctor of the Church.” (www.catholic.org/saints/faq.php#pray)

These heresies are serious in that they actually deny the work of Christ in removing all mediators between God and man, but Himself. In the Old Covenant there was a Sacerdotal system of Prophets and Priests through which God spoke and through which He was approached. That was ALL done away with in Jesus Christ. ANY perversion of that reality is a both a direct attack upon and denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His pre-eminence as the believer’s Prophet, Priest and King.

“For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . .” (I Timothy 2:5).

“¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

For centuries any form of Gnosticism was fully rejected as heresy by the majority of Protestant and Baptist churches (true Baptists are not Protestants in that they never were in Catholicism, therefore they could not come out of Catholicism). True Bible believing Christians rejected the “traditions of men” in any form and held to the absolute authority of the inspired Words of God to establish truth for life and practice. That absolute authority began to diminish under the onslaught of Theological Liberalism and its *birth child* New Evangelicalism giving way to various degrees of Inclusivism.

If we actually believe we have a verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God in the sixty-six books of Scripture, then we must also believe we have an instruction book from God with absolute commands that are to be understood and obeyed absolutely. Anything less is unbelief.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

When we do what God says in God’s way, we are submitting to the Lordship of Christ. When we are disobedient to what God says, or when we co-operate with those we believe to be disobedient, we are denying the Lordship of Christ. Inclusivism proposes to include into the fellowship of a local church those individuals who hold opposing beliefs to that local church. Inclusivism proposes toleration of those holding to doctrines or practices contradicting Biblical truth.

There are many people who leave independent, fundamental churches because independent, fundamental churches are not inclusive. They say they leave for many reasons. I have found there are **three basic reasons why people leave** independent, fundamental churches.

1. They believe the church is too strict (*therefore they do not like the Pastor*).
2. They disagree with what the church believes (*therefore they do not like the Pastor*)
3. They do not like the Pastor.

Let’s measure the first two reasons according to the Word of God (I John 2:19). There are many people who leave (dis-fellowship) with a local church because they believe it is too strict. *What does that mean?* That means that they have a practice of life that is being preached against or taught against that they are unwilling to relinquish. At some time they have come under conviction about that area of their life and have refused to recognize it as sin, have hardened their heart to the Lord and are ready to run away from home. They usually do just that. What has happened? I John 2:19 has happened.

Others leave a local church (dis-fellowship) because they disagree with the doctrine (doctrinal distinctives) of that local church. This usually involves its teachings on the charismatic movement, Ecumenicism, or separation. These things are theological *hot-potatoes* for today. What has happened? I John 2:19 has just happened.

Even though these first two reasons for dis-fellowship are frequently stated by the words, "I don't like the Pastor," there are some people who just don't like the Pastor. Let me ask you this, is hating someone ever a justifiable reason for doing anything? Of course it isn't. What is usually the real problem?

"¹¹ For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (I John 3:11-12).

Inclusivistic people often ask why separatist Christians will not include all other groups of Christians regardless of the doctrinal positions in their fellowship. They frequently make the statement, "After all they are good Christian people." I often ask them what it means to them to be a *good Christian*. The word Christian signifies a person that is a follower of Christ. A *good Christian* must mean a person who excels at following the teachings of Jesus Christ. Let me ask a few definitive questions.

1. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he has not believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
2. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he refuses to be baptized by immersion? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
3. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he practices fornication? How about social drinking? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
4. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he refuses to be separate from apostasy? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
5. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he does not tithe and give offerings? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
6. Can a person be a *good Christian* if he is a member of a local church that holds to beliefs contrary to the Word of God? So we can exclude these from the realm of being *good Christians*.
7. To what degree can a person disagree with the Word of God and still be considered a *good Christian*?

Most local church doctrinal statements define what that church expects of its members in beliefs and practices and by those perimeters define what they think it means to be a *good Christian*. Some of these are very broad and inclusive. Others are very definitive and exclusive.

There are many reasons why a local church must be exclusive rather than inclusive. Although Christ invited everyone to follow Him, His grounds for following Him were exclusive.

"He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke 11:23).

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

A local Church must be exclusive in order to establish doctrinal purity. There is only "one faith."

"¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

“⁴ *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

A local Church must be exclusive in order to maintain a pure gospel of grace and a common missional vision so that that local church can remain in cooperative partnership with God (“fellowship”).

“¹⁸ And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20).

“⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. ¹¹ But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. ¹² For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:6-12).

When Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land, the nation of Israel was surrounded by Ammonites, Moabites, Canaanites, Amalekites and many other assorted *ites*. However, the greatest threat to the security and safety of the Church of Christ are those from within our own ranks, the *Lukewarmites*. Christ sharply rebukes this type of professing believer in Revelation 3:14-19. They posed a great threat to the nation of Israel and this type of professing Christian poses an equal threat to local churches

These are the Inclusivists of our day. They are fence straddlers. They practice a convenience theology. They hold to whatever beliefs that do not require them to take a stand, lose a friend or be considered extreme. They love people more than they love God. Be careful you do not become a *Lukewarmite*.

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1. What is the responsibility of a person who claims to believe in a verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God? _____

2. When we obey God's Word by doing what He says in the way He wants, who are we submitted too? _____

3. Define Inclusivist Policy. _____

4. List the three basic reasons why people dis-fellowship with independent, fundamental churches.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

5. What is the reality (real spiritual problem) behind each of these reasons?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

6. In each of the above cases, what has happened according to I John 2:19? _____

7. Give seven things that would *exclude* someone from the realm of being a *good Christian*.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____
 - F. _____
 - G. _____

8. From your list of the above things, do you think that you are exclusive or inclusive? _____

9. What is a *Lukewarmite* (see Rev. 3:14-19)? _____

10. Why is a *Lukewarmite* such a dangerous person in a local church? _____
