

Colossians 2

Summary

- In this chapter, Paul gets to the heart of the problem and of the letter as he denounces the false teachers and their evil doctrines.
- He asserts clearly the sufficiency of Christ for every need. He sounds three warnings, and these warnings can apply just as much to us today as in his day.

Beware Of Empty Philosophies (2:1-10)

- The metaphor of the arena is implicit in this verse as Paul again uses the word "conflict" (a Greek word built on the same root as "striving" in 1:29). The powers that wrestled with Paul for the ruin of his work were real and resolute; he therefore had to meet them with full force.
- All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. The false teachers claimed to have, through their relation with a supposed hierarchy of supernatural beings, a higher knowledge than that possessed by ordinary believers. "Hid" does not mean that they were concealed but rather that they are laid up or stored away as a treasure.
- Paul now expresses the reason for his anxious concern. His previous words have been written so that the false teachers will not "beguile" the Christians and lead them away from their convictions about Christ. "Beguile" implies leading astray by false reasoning.
- Paul wants their present conduct to conform regularly to the doctrine taught them at the beginning, the doctrine they had committed themselves to at their conversion. Verse 7 uses four participles to describe their "walk" with Christ.
- He now first warns against the danger of being taken captive through a false philosophy. This pointed to a real, not a supposed, danger. This verse records the only occurrence of the word "philosophy" in the New Testament. This philosophy was based upon the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world. This was not a system according to Christ. It did not agree with the truth as revealed in Christ. He is the standard by which all doctrines are to be measured.
- In Christ the fullness of deity permanently resides, finding a settled home in him. "Fullness" means not just divine qualities and attributes but the complete, inner essence of God that lives in Christ. Because Christ is fully God and fully human, Christians are

made full, or share in His fullness. In possessing Him, we possess all. Whatever powers there are in the universe, whatever ranks and orders of authority and government, they all owe their being to Christ and are under His lordship.

Beware Of Religious Legalism (2:11-17)

- Paul now expands on the idea of Christ's sufficiency. By being "in Christ," Christians have a true "circumcision." This occurs by putting off the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Elsewhere in Scripture, this is called "circumcision of the heart" (Romans 2:28; Philippians 3:3).
- Baptism is a burial and it is the cause of us being able to rise with Him (Romans 6:3-4). The death is spiritual and so is the resurrection. We are made alive because through forgiveness everything that had once alienated us from God has been removed.
- When Jesus died on the cross, the Old Testament was "blotted out" and "nailed to the cross." It no longer stands against us. The Old Law was like a promissory note which had our signature attached to it as evidence that we acknowledged its claim and our debt. Because we could not meet the claims of the Law, it was hostile to us or was an obstacle in our way. It has been permanently removed so it can never again alienate us from God.
- Christ has stripped the principalities and powers just as a conquered antagonist was stripped of his weapons and armor and put to public shame. The picture, quite familiar in the Roman world, is that of a triumphant general leading a parade of victory. Christ is the conquering general; the principalities and powers are the vanquished enemy displayed as the spoils of battle before the entire universe.
- The false teachers at Colosse laid down rigid restrictions with regard to eating and drinking and with regard to "religious" observances. All these things were merely a shadow of what was to come. The reality belonged to Christ.

Beware Of Man-Made Disciplines (2:18-23)

- The context of these verses suggest that someone was seeking to impose these matters on the Colossians, and that this was the means by which he was attempting to disqualify them for their prize. "Voluntary humility" may be a technical term for fasting, since in the Old Testament this was the usual way for one to humble oneself before God. "Worshiping of angels" is an allusion to the deference the heretical teachers paid to the hierarchy of angels who, in their belief, filled the whole universe.

- Each Christian is thought of here as forming a vital connection with Christ the Head. Joined to Him, we all become the joints and ligaments by which the church is supplied with energy and life. The false teacher, without this contact with Christ, has cut himself off from the source of spiritual vitality for God's people and cannot contribute to growth.
- Asceticism is not in keeping with the nature and circumstances of the new life in Christ. Christians have died to the rules and requirements of asceticism. They must not permit life to become a series of rules again.
- The "rules" Paul had in mind are such decrees as mentioned in vs. 21. Paul added that all such restrictions were to perish with use. Dietary restrictions have to do with things made to be used; and with their use they perish, for food ceases to be food once it is eaten. They are temporary and unimportant.
- On the surface, such "rules" seem to be wise. In reality these "rules" are expressions of "will worship" and spurious "humility." They do nothing to curb desires of the flesh.

Thought Questions

- How can people spoil us through philosophy today?
- Explain "through the faith of the operation of God" in vs. 12.
- How is the ascetic lifestyle integrated into religion today?