

BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH
 CNR THOMPSON & MARCUS RDS., LWR TEMPLESTOWE VIC 3107
 "The Supremacy of Christ - Studies in Colossians"

Sunday, September 12, 2004 : Study 7 (Colossians 2 : 6 - 15)

"The Triumphant Gospel - Not Vain Human Philosophies" Part 2

Notes by Rev. Gary Lockyer

CONTEXT : Where are we in the Series?

We are in the second section of Paul's Colossian letter, from 1: 24 to 2 : 23 It's sub-structure is :

1. The Universal Gospel - Centred On Christ (1:24 - 2:5)
2. The Triumphant Gospel - Not Vain Human Philosophies (2:6-15) Today's Study
3. The Effective Gospel - Not Empty Religious Worship & Practices (2:16-23)

CONTEXT .. of the Passage in Colossians

Last Sunday we considered the pivotal verses of our Study Passage, verses 6 & 7.

"Just as you received Christ, continue to live in him"

The message the Colossians had heard through Epaphras was *the "word of truth"* (1:5b-6a). In accepting it they had *"understood God's grace in all its truth."* This "word" was the teaching about Jesus :

- a. Who he is - God himself (1:15-19, 2:9)
- b. What Jesus came to do - rescue his people (1:13-14; 20-22, 2:11-15)

To "continue in Christ" is to hold firmly to all that they first heard and accepted. The message was complete; there's nothing left out and nothing to add. Therefore, the man-made beliefs and rituals of those in Colossae who criticised the Christians' insistence of both the Supremacy and Sufficiency of Christ could be ignored

Today, we'll examine the rest of this passage (2:6-15) as Part 2 of the same topic

Paul sets out the STANDING of a Christian before God
 based on the FACTS of Jesus Death and resurrection
 and our INCORPORATION with him.

TEXTUAL NOTES

REPEATED THEMES

The verses 2:8-15 repeat certain "key phrases" from the first Chapter (the first three lines of the table) and contain vividly warnings about the dangers of looking outside the Gospel (the last three lines) Note how each warning ties in with a facet of Jesus saving work on our behalf - also from the first Chapter.

COLOSSIANS 1

"He is the image of the invisible God." (1:15)
Christ is "over all thrones, powers, or authorities. (1:15-16)
"We have forgiveness of sins." (1:14)

"You are citizens of his Kingdom." 1:13
"You are reconciled with God, free from accusation." 1:22
"You are qualified to share the inheritance of the saints." 1:12

COLOSSIANS 2

"in Christ is all the fullness of deity." (2:9)
"Christ ... is ... the Head over every power and authority." (2:10 and also 2:15)
"He forgave all our sins." (2:13)

"Don't let anyone kidnap you." 2:8
"Don't let anyone condemn (judge) you." 2:16
"Don't let anyone disqualify you." 2:18

A. The FLAWED PHILOSOPHY - 2 : 8

This verse provides the first direct description of the threat that the Colossae Christians faced. Paul characterised it as a Philosophy that was *"hollow and deceptive"* :

Appearing to have the answers to life's big questions or issues, but as it depended on
"human tradition and the elemental spirits of the world, rather than on Christ"
it had no SUBSTANCE & no TRUTH (note the contrast with *"word of God"* in 1:25)

B. The "FILLED" PHILOSOPHY - 2 : 9 - 10

By comparison, the Gospel is of Christ - *"the fullness of God"* -
and of its effect in our life. - *"you have been given fullness in him."*

The Gospel is not just *"fine sounding arguments"* but effective and lasting CHANGE :
in our PERSONAL lives (1:6, 10) & in SPIRITUAL realities (1:13-14, 21)

C. The "FILLED" PHILOSOPHY FILLED OUT - 2 :11 - 15

These verses use concepts that are strange to our ears and repulsive to our senses. These concepts were readily understood in Paul's day and have their modern counterparts today.

Then, and now, people argue the merits of various aspects of spirituality and religious ceremony and observance. We still want to know what's REAL and what WORKS.

1. Firstly Paul argues that what matters is not what we do, but what God DOES.
"... not done by the hands of men ... but ... done by Christ" (v11)
2. Secondly, he tells us that what God has done is to INCORPORATE us in Christ, identifying us with Christ's death and resurrection,
with the end result that we are granted NEW LIFE (12-13a)
"Buried with him ... raised with him ... God made you alive with Christ"
(12-13a)
3. Paul then explains how God has solved the base problem between man and himself. Earlier Paul spoke of this problem and solution as once ...
"alienated from God ... and enemies" now "reconciled." (1:21-22)
In these verses he characterises this enmity as being *"dead in your sins"*
and parallels *"being made alive" with "forgiveness."* (13a)
4. Finally, Paul uses two ancient metaphors to explain forgiveness.
Negatively, forgiveness is the payment of a DEBT :
"cancelled the written code." (14a)
Positively, forgiveness is a new future of FREEDOM :
"disarmed ... public spectacle ... triumph" (15)

SUMMING UP

The Colossian Christians had been "rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of Jesus." (1:13). Paul warns that buying into any system of belief and ritual, instead of "continuing in Christ" is to be taken captive again after being rescued! For the Colossian Christians, these verses would have had a far more powerful affect than they may now have on us ... after all, not too many people are pressing circumcision on us as a necessary religious ritual.

But the thread of the argument is just as powerful today. There is a whole market place of self-help therapies and alternative religious practices and philosophies. None go to the heart of the human dilemma : Alienation from God and a load of resulting and crippling guilt. Only Jesus effects lasting and real change as only he has carried our sin and our guilt.

The Gospel that the Colossians received is still the same today. Nothing left out. Nothing to add.