

## Through Many Dangers 2: Protection from False Teaching.

Colossians 2: 8 - 15

*2:8: See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,*

*10: And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the Head over every power and authority.*

*11: In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

*13: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Protection from False Teaching comes through Christ.

Last week I heard about an intruder breaking into a house and threatening to kidnap the person inside. She would have been taken captive, a prisoner. Paul talks about being taken captive, not by a person but by wrong ideas, by hollow and deceptive philosophy.

One of the things that we constantly face is a battle of ideas, a conflict between what we believe and what may be the current predominant philosophy of our world and our society. For example, there has been uproar this week because an Italian citizen who murdered a head teacher is to be allowed to stay in this country rather than be extradited. The standards that influence such a decision are derived from a liberal philosophy that often has nothing to do with the things of God or the Christian faith.

For us, we have to safeguard what we believe and not let it be taken over by less sure ideas and thoughts. We are helped in that process when we remember that:

1. Christ is our standard
2. Christ is our sufficiency
3. Christ is our covenant; and
4. Christ is our Saviour

Let's look at what this passage says about each of these in turn.

### 1. **Christ is our Standard:** (vv 8,9)

Spiritual discernment needs to be alert. The idea here is that we are to

be constantly on our guard in order to make sure that we are not deceived. In the spiritual battle that goes on around and within us, there is an attempt to take us away from the things of God. The way to fight that battle is to stay near to Jesus and hold on to His teaching and His truth. We need to hold on to the faith, hope and love that is ours in Christ.

Spiritual discernment recognises deception. It comes in many forms: For example: There is the false wisdom of this world that has 'soaked in' so many people who look for value, worth and purpose in the empty cisterns of this world. There are those who are under the influence of false authority.

There is a bias against the Christian faith that seeks to portray it as something peculiar and for the weak minded. (In contrast, I am sure many will be enjoying the programme Amazon Heartbeat: but the thing that amazes me is that it is on T.V. at all.)

There is also a false logic - that deceives so many into having no spiritual understanding or even desire for understanding. (Standing at the crematorium gives an incredible insight into the human situation and the lot of mankind. There one can see that the logic of this world often seems bankrupt and without hope.)

Christ is our ultimate standard. The reason we need to trust in Christ and have Him as our supreme standard is because He is God Incarnate.

So, here, Paul talks about the danger of depending on human traditions rather than on Christ.

## **2. Christ is our sufficiency (v10)**

Not only is Christ externally our standard but, by His indwelling, He brings that standard into our lives - if we let Him. There is fulness in Christ that gives reason and meaning, purpose and peace. That is expressed in a number of phrases and statements found in our Bibles and hymnaries such as: "*life more abundant*"; "*peace that passes all understanding*"; "*O Christ in Thee my soul has found, and found in Thee alone, The peace and joy I sought so long; That bliss till now unknown.*"; "*Thou O Christ art all I want; All I need in Thee I find*".

It is like nothing else that this world with all its wisdom and philosophy can offer. It makes sense. He is sufficient because He is God and has authority over all things.

## **3. Christ is our Covenant: (vv 11, 12)**

There is an analogy here in this passage with the Jewish rite of initiation

into the family - circumcision, that outward sealing of commitment, belonging and identity. If we are '*in Christ*', and have made that clear commitment to renounce the old and trust the new life in Him, then we have been 'circumcised'. We have been made part of the family of God through Jesus Christ. Circumcision was the sign whereby the individual is brought into the covenant relationship with God through faith. (In our church, baptism is the equivalent sign. Parents present their babies for baptism, a commitment which must be endorsed by conscious affirmation if it is to be valid and meaningful). The significance of circumcision is that of putting off the sinful nature. Similarly, baptism is an expression of being cleansed from the old sinfulness, and being brought into a new life in Christ, dying to self and being born to a new life in Jesus.

#### **4. Christ is our Saviour: (vv 13 - 15)**

To know Christ as our Saviour is a real - not a superficial - experience. By that knowledge, we have been rescued from death.

Formerly, we were dead in our sins and separated from God.

But there is also the miracle of resurrection in that we are made alive with Christ. The law that condemns us is nailed to the cross with Christ. More specifically, the consequences arising from the transgression of that law are gone. The law remains but the consequences are annulled for those who are '*in Christ*'. There is also the disarmament of Satan's power. Christ's Sacrifice is a triumph and victory over the rulers and authorities of this world and the power of Satan.

We do not need to be deceived, for we have been "*translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son*". Being '*translated*' we have become "*citizens of heaven*" with a new life. As Paul puts it in Galatians 2: 20: "*I live, yet not I, Christ lives in me*". By our distinctive behaviour as believers we declare ourselves to have left the old life and embarked on the new. Temptations will come for us to return to the old life and follow the old ways, to become captivated by outmoded thinking. But, resisting that temptation - however '*politically correct*' - we remember the truth that sets us free and we should signify that by our testimony and example.

Thus we are protected from false teaching. But some false teaching can sound very plausible.

We turn to that next.