

several reasons. **First** it was the tradition of men and not the truth of God's Word. The word "*tradition*" means "that which is handed down"; and there is a true Christian tradition (2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:3ff). The important thing about any teaching is its origin: did it come from God or from man? The religious leaders of Jesus' day were very zealous for their man-made traditions (Matt. 15:1-20; Gal. 1:14).

Secondly the false teacher's traditions were vain and deceitful because they involved "*the rudiments of the world*" (v.8). In ancient Greece this word meant the spirits or gods that influenced the heavenly bodies (planets and stars). It was one of the words in the vocabulary of the religious astrology of that day.

The Gnostics believed that "angels" (spirit beings or lesser-gods) controlled the heavenly bodies and influenced people's lives. Paul's warning to the Colossians about "new moon" and other superstitious practices determined by the calendar (2:16) may be related to this Gnostic teaching.

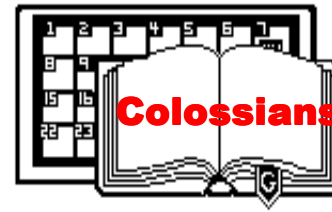
The fact that this teaching is not after Christ is sufficient to warn us against horoscopes, astral charts, Ouija boards, and other spiritualistic practices. Astrology and the zodiac system is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. The Christian who dabbles in mysticism and the occult is only asking for trouble.

Why follow empty philosophy when we have all fullness in Christ? This is like turning away from the satisfying river of life to drink at the dirty cisterns of the world (Jer. 2:13). Of course, the false teachers did not ask the Christians at Colossae to forsake Christ, they just asked them to make Christ a "part" of the complex human tradition. But this would only remove Christ from His rightful place of preeminence.

Paul affirms in verse 9 that Jesus Christ is the fullness of God. The word "*fullness*" means "the sum total of all that God is, all of His being and attributes". And that fullness dwells in Christ "*bodily*".

Paul further declares in verse 10 that in Christ we are *complete*; that is, we need nothing more. And Christ is preeminent, head over all forces, whether they be angelic and demonic spirits, or human governments and powers.

In chapter 1 Paul "**declares**" Christ's preeminence,
In chapter 2 Paul "**defends**" the Lord's preeminence.



COLOSSIANS

Lesson # 2

THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST DEFENDED

Text: Colossians 2:1-10

Introduction

Colossians 2:1-23

1. Beware of empty of philosophies 2:1-10
2. Beware of religious legalism -- 2:11-17
3. Beware of man-made disciplines -- 2:18-23

A good study of the apostle Paul can be outlined as: Paul the persecutor, Paul the preacher, and Paul the prisoner. In this epistle we see Paul in prison suffering and striving for the saints at Colossae.

v.1 Here is a poignant glimpse into the heart of Paul. Paul is going through a struggle for these Christians whom he had never seen, but whom he loved.

The word "*conflict*" means "*struggle*", and comes from the Greek word "agon" from which we get our word "agony". Paul is fighting a hard battle for his friends. It was a struggle in prayer, and against false teachers who would wrestle these faithful brethren away from the truth and into philosophical error and legalism (Col. 2).

The Marks of the Faithful Church 2:2-7

1. It should be a church of "courageous" hearts (v.2a). Paul prays that their hearts might be "*comforted*" or "*encouraged*". One of the Greek historians uses this word in a most interesting way. There was a Greek regiment which had lost heart, lost courage, and which was utterly dejected. The general sent a leader to talk to that regiment, and he talked to it in a way that courage was reborn, and a body of dispirited men became a body of men fit again for heroic action. It is Paul's prayer that the Colossian church may be filled with that courage which can cope with any situation.

2). It should be a church in which the members are "*knit together in love*" (v. 2). Where love for Christ and the brethren abound, you'll find a strong church.

3. It should be a church "*equipped with every kind of wisdom.*" Paul uses three words for wisdom.

a. In v.2 he uses a word which is translated "*understanding*" which speaks of the ability to apply practical knowledge of what to do whenever action is called for.

b. He says that in Jesus are hid all the treasures of "*wisdom*" and "*knowledge*". Wisdom here is "*sophia*" and knowledge is "*gnosis*". These two words do not simply repeat each other, there is a difference between them. "*Gnosis*" is the power to grasp the truth when we see or hear it. "*Sophia*" is the power to support, confirm, and present it to others with wise and intelligent arguments.

Paul says that all this wisdom is "*hidden*" in Christ (hidden from the common gaze). The very words that Paul uses in this section attack the false teachers known as "Gnostics" who believed in secret, elaborate knowledge, and "inside" information.

4. The faithful church must have the "power to resist seductive teaching" (v.4). The Greek word for "*enticing words*" belongs to the law-courts and was used for the persuasive power of a lawyer who could make the worse criminal appear as a good man and whose words enabled the criminal to escape the just punishment he deserved. Such "*enticing words*" meant the power to sway a jury, or entire assembly, into mistaken ways or course of action.

The Lord's church is to have such a grip of the truth that it can recognize false and seductive arguments.

5. The faithful church must be "*steadfast*". Several vivid word are used by Paul to describe and picture the church's stability.

a. "Like and army" (v.5). The words "*order*" and "*steadfastness*" are military terms and describe an army that is solidly united against the enemy. "*Order*" describes the arrangement of the army in ranks, with each soldier in his proper place. "*Steadfastness*" pictures the soldiers in battle formation, presenting a solid front to the enemy. Christians are to be a picture of discipline and obedience just like soldiers on the battlefield.

b. "The Pilgrim" (v.5) The Christian life is compared to a pilgrimage in which we must learn to walk. Paul had already encouraged his readers to "*walk worthy of the Lord*" (1:10), and later he uses this image again (3:7; 4:5). In the book of Ephesians, the companion letter to the book of Colossians, Paul used the image at least seven times.

Paul says "You started with Christ and you must continue with Christ." This is the only way to make spiritual progress.

c. "The tree" (v.7a). "*Rooted*" and an agricultural word. Christians are not to be tumbleweeds that have no roots and are blown about by "*every wind of doctrine*" (Eph. 4:14). Roots draw up nourishment so that the tree can grow and roots give strength and stability.

d. "The building" (v.7b). "*Built up*" is an architectural term. It is in the present tense, "being built up." When we "build" our lives on Christ we are building on a sure foundation. Paul frequently uses the word "*edify*" which simply means "to build up" and speaks of the continued spiritual progress every Christian should be making in his daily life.

e. "The school" (v.7c). We should always be grateful for the Word of God which we have been "*taught*" and remain faithful to our teaching. False teachers seek to undermine the doctrine given by Christ and His apostles. Christians must "*study*" the Word to become established in the faith. Satan has a difficult time deceiving "Bible-taught" disciples.

f. "The river" (v.7d). The word "*abounding*" is another word often used by Paul. It suggests the picture of a river overflowing its banks. Jesus speaks of the water of life abounding from an artesian well (John 4:10-14), and it becomes a "river of living water" (John 7:37-39) that grows deeper and wider. Sad to say, many of us are making no progress-- our lives are shallow trickles instead of mighty rivers.

Watch Out For Spiritual Perils (2:8-10)

Paul continued the military image with this warning: "Beware lest any man carry you off as a captive" (literal translation). The false teachers didn't just go out and win the lost to their doctrines, but they "kidnaped" converts from Paul and the preachers of the Gospel.

The philosophy of these false teachers is "*hollow and deceptive*" (v.8, NIV) for