

# NOTES FROM SAM GORDON'S SERMON June 11<sup>th</sup> am Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ" Pt 6 "The ultimate safeguard"

Text: Colossians 2 verses 8-15

Scripture references from the ESV

## Colossians 2:8-15

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits<sup>[a]</sup> of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, <sup>10</sup> and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. <sup>13</sup> And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities<sup>[b]</sup> and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

No matter what is going on, Paul excels in the art of encouragement, and he wants the people of Colossae to walk closely with the Lord. Already, he has called them to be grounded, growing and thankful. Now he goes on to warn them to be careful and cautious, as we all need to be in the times we are living in. Paul gives us three truths to live by.

1. **There is freedom in Christ (v8).** There is a very real danger that we can be sucked into some weird and wacky false teaching because we fail to stay close to the plain truth of scripture. People may be highly intelligent or pillars of the community, but if their faith is shallow and they do not have a good grasp of biblical truth, they are an easy target for the enemy. The devil is no fool and is adept at pulling the wool over people's eyes.

Paul is not knocking philosophy (**v8**), which simply means the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, but he is warning against **hollow and deceptive** philosophy – a manmade religion which is merely a blending of various ideas from the world. This sort of 'faith' has no depth to it. It might sound good and feel good but it is empty on

the inside. People buy into it because it sounds like just what they need, but after a period of time, it leaves a bad taste.

- It does not satisfy or meet any spiritual hunger.
- It does not quench one's spiritual thirst for a vibrant relationship with the living God.

However, it is like a drug. Having taken one dose, you want more, only to discover that then you can't live without it. It lulls you into a false sense of hope and security, but deprives you of that which is lasting and gives you spiritual enrichment. The person is 'captive' (v8) and it is really hard to break free.

Just talk to someone who has got involved with any sort of cult philosophy – it is easy to get into and tough to get out of. Such a regime ties people up and ties people down. They were sincere in their religious quest and pursuit, but have been taken for a ride.

### **There is freedom in Christ**

**2. There is fulness in Christ (vv9-12)** These words are Paul's antidote to all the false teaching propagated by the devil and his minions. The bottom line is:

#### **Jesus Christ is all we need in time and in eternity**

Paul's message in this letter to the Colossians is exactly that. No matter what powers are ranged against you, no matter what authorities seek to imprison you, no matter what philosophies seek to trick you, no matter what traditions want to enslave you, the reality is that Jesus Christ is a sufficient Saviour. Our God is enough.

- Jesus Christ is a sufficient Saviour because of who he is (v9). This verse means just what it says – one look at Jesus and you see God in a body! That is what the incarnation is all about.
- All of God is in Jesus and all of Christ lives in every one of us who know him personally (v10). We are filled with his fulness – that is astonishing!
- We are filled full with Jesus and we are fulfilled in Jesus. We do not need anything else or anyone else.

Paul shows us how it works out in our lives (vv11-12).

It seems likely that these false teachers were advocating that all new Gentile Christians should be **circumcised**, but Paul is having none of that. In Christ, a whole new meaning has been given to circumcision. Physical circumcision is just that – physical, a thing of the flesh.

- Paul has his eye on something internal that impacts the heart and brings about an inner transformation.
- That is the grace of God at work in our lives.

Circumcision was an act of initiation for a Jewish boy. It gave him a sense of identity and made him a member of the covenant people of God with all the privileges and obligations that entailed. However, it was only an outward ceremony with no spiritual benefits attached to it.

Paul teaches us that, when a sinner comes to faith in Jesus Christ, he is spiritually circumcised in these ways:

- He is brought into the global family of God
- He is given a passport for heaven
- He is recognised as one with all his fellow pilgrims in transit to another world

Just like a Jewish boy, we have been circumcised, but our circumcision is a matter of the heart. It is not an action carried out by man but it is all done by Christ (v11). The ethos of biblical Christianity is that

### **It is a heart relationship with the living God**

How does **baptism** work out in the rough and tumble of life (v12)?

- Being baptised means that we share the spiritual benefits and blessings of our Lord's death as well as his resurrection.

Paul is touching on the Christian's union with Christ in his death, and he does so in terms of burial with Christ. The implication is that we shared with Christ in his death on Calvary. That is when the judgement of God fell upon Christ, and, in him, those who are his died too.

- In other words, the old sinful man was judged condemned and finally sentenced.

**Yet, in Christ, he is raised to a new life and that is a miracle of matchless grace.**

- For this new man, there can be no further condemnation, because the link between sin and death has been broken.

Paul is reminding us that, in spite of what the false teachers might offer, we don't need it. We are forgiven and free, and we have fellowship with the Lord of heaven and earth. Jesus saves and Jesus satisfies, and nothing the false teachers offer can compare.

**We have all that we need in the risen glorified Christ**

**We have in him all that we need for life, death and for eternity.**

**All we need is Christ alone.**

**3. There is forgiveness from Christ (vv13-15).** It is the cross that makes the difference. The Colossians (and we)

were all dead in our sins. When Jesus Christ redeemed us all and drew us to himself, we became recipients of new life. As Paul says: **God made you alive with Christ.** He is the only one who could do it, such is the potency of resurrection life.

They were powerless to help themselves, as are we, but our God specialises in doing what no one else can do, for nothing is too hard for him.

**It is a miracle of marvellous grace.**

Our past is gone, our sins have been dealt with once and for all and there is no need for us to worry about the dark cloud of condemnation. We are living in the light of God's love – we take one look at him and he smiles back. Such is reconciliation:

**The Lord made a way for us when there was no way.**

**That is what the cross is all about.**

Paul gives us two illustrations.

- a) Our sin is seen as a debt that we owe. The bill, which records the amount, takes the form of a '**written code**' and, until it is paid off, it points an accusing finger in our direction. We cannot pretend that it does not exist! Paul seems to be referring to the law with all its regulations. One look at it and we know that we are guilty. The bottom line is that sin costs and a price has to be paid for it.

The wonderful news is that the IOU of sin has been '**cancelled**'. The document that recorded our debts has been taken away and ripped up by Jesus Christ.

- All that we owed has been paid by someone else and that person is God in the Lord Jesus

We stand amazed at how he did it. Paul says that on that nail above the thorn-crowned head of Jesus, he sees a different indictment to the one put there by Pilate. It reads:

**This is Jesus who dies to pay the price for the sins of the people.**

The debt is paid. What is ours becomes his, and what is his becomes ours!

**Jesus assumes our debt and we receive the riches of his grace.**

**Jesus assumes our sin and we receive his righteousness.**

**We are forgiven!**

b) Paul paints a picture of a military victory (v15). Jesus is the one who roundly defeats our enemies. It is the picture of a victorious Roman general returning home from the field of battle. He marches in triumphal procession and behind him are the spoils of war, including the defeated soldiers and generals. They are rendered powerless, publicly humiliated and held up to contempt. It is a crisp and concise commentary on the ability of Jesus Christ to deal effectively and efficiently with sin, and with our enemy, the devil himself.

The language Paul uses should convince us that no one is stronger than our God. All our enemies have been rendered powerless, because of our Lord's death and resurrection. Such is the majesty and triumph of the cross.

**We have been liberated, so we can live as free people. Our sins are gone and we are on the winning team.**

**We thank God for that!**

**In Christ, all the fulness of God dwells and Christ lives in each one of us.**

**He is all that we need.**