

Colossians – The Glory of Jesus

Study 4 - The glory of Jesus defended – 2:6-23

Text:

⁶ And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptised. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

¹³ You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

¹⁶ So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. ¹⁷ For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. ¹⁸ Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, ¹⁹ and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body. For he holds the whole body together with its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God nourishes it.

²⁰ You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, ²¹ "Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!"? ²² Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. ²³ These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.

Background

Clearly, one of the reasons for Paul writing to the Colossians about the centrality, supremacy and glory of Christ is that the church there was coming under the influence of false teachers who were in danger of drawing them away from their focus on Jesus. And so in this section, he is *defending* the glory of Christ. To find out more detail about the actual 'philosophies' and teachings that were in danger of undermining their faith in Christ, you would have to consult a commentary, but they were essentially a combination of Jewish legalism and pagan mysticism. And they took the forms that such misleading ideas have taken throughout history: either obeying lots of rules and practising lots of disciplines to get right with God (legalism) or having lots of dramatic experiences, like visions and angelic visitations,

to prove how spiritual you are (super-spiritualism). We must not allow anything to distract us from the fact that God has revealed himself fully in Christ (see v.9) or from the new life and status we have by being united with Christ (see v.10, 12-14). Behind these false teachings, Paul reveals, are demonic spiritual powers which have been defeated and disarmed at the cross (v.15), and from whose power we have been set free (v.20).

To Think About:

- Notice the emphasis that Paul places on ‘you must continue to follow him’ (v.6) as he knows only too well that people can be distracted and led astray. And we continue in him ‘in the same way’ that we first accepted Christ – i.e. by turning to him and trusting in him. You carry on in the same way you started.
- People who get led into the ‘superspiritual experiences’ distraction often become proud and independent – they separate themselves from the body of Christ, and therefore from Christ himself (see vv.18-19). But Christ is committed to his body, the church. To guard against this, be fully committed to a local church; be teachable, be accountable, and stay connected.

To Discuss:

1. How do we make sure that our roots go down into Christ and we are building our lives on him (see v.7)?
2. What kind of subtle forms of legalism can we fall prey to, and how do we make sure that good spiritual disciplines we might practise don’t become legalistic?
3. What forms can super-spiritualism take in our day, and how do we make sure that genuine spiritual experiences don’t draw us away from the centrality of Christ?

To Do:

- Take time this week to examine yourself and consider whether there are any traces of legalism or super-spiritualism in you that shift the focus away from Christ and your new life in him. Recommit yourself to Jesus and to living in union with him, and with his body.