

TITLE: CONTINUE IN CHRIST

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2

INTRO: Polycarp in approx. AD 115 was told to deny Christ or die. He refused & was burned alive. Amazingly, through this type of physical persecution, the church was actually strengthened (purified). The Roman Empire would intensify this persecution into the 4th century, with heavy persecutions under Emperors Decius and Diocletian. However, Constantine recognized the futility of this type of persecution, and by accepting Christianity, brought in a new, more effective type of persecution...one from the inside out. Paul warned the Colossians of this type of persecution.

I. EXHORTATION TO CONTINUE IN CHRIST (v. 1-7):

- A. Paul's great conflict (struggle, anxiety, fight – used in relation to Greek games/competition)
- B. Paul's desire for them:
 - 1. Hearts comforted, being knit together in love
 - 2. Understanding Christ, the mystery of God (1:27); in whom (Christ) are ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (v. 3). Again, Paul is cementing in their minds the fact that Christ is the true source for all their pursuits.
- C. (v. 4) Paul's purpose in writing - to encourage them to continue in Christ, *in spite of false teachers w/persuasive words*
- D. (v. 5) Although they were being presented false teachings, apparently the majority wasn't yet giving in.
- E. (v. 6) Walk (live; conduct your life) in Christ...in the same manner that you received Him (lit. "received near")
All Christians need to recognize that the last step in the plan of salvation is to *remain faithful!* "Once Saved, Always Saved" is a horribly deceiving false doctrine that will cost many souls eternal life!
- F. How? Being rooted and built up (cf. grounded and settled -1:23)

II. REASON TO CONTINUE IN CHRIST (v. 8-15) "Alternatives vs. Authentic":

- A. Verse 8- an intro to the rest of the chapter (beware of philosophy ("love of wisdom") and vain (empty) deceit). Specifics will be given in v. 16-23, but Paul is already here labeling it for what it really is!
- B. In 1:15-23, we saw how *Christ* is complete. Now we see **how we are complete in Christ (v. 9-15)**
 - 1. 1st, because in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (spirit) bodily (He is the *image* - 1:15).
He is the only physical person we can look at to see spiritual God (God in the flesh, but without sin – **Heb 4:15-16**).
 - 2. 2nd, because you are in Christ. You are in the complete One, so you are complete...have been made (perfect passive).
 - 3. 3rd, you are *spiritually* circumcised (circumcision of the heart) (**v. 11-12**)
 - a. Why bring up circumcision? because of Judaizing teachers (v. 16-17) and their syncretism of old with new.
 - b. How are we circumcised w/the circumcision of Christ? Through our baptism
Physical circumcision was the removal of skin/flesh; spiritual circumcision is the removal of the *sins* of the flesh (v. 11). It is done through baptism!
 - c. **Buried** with Him in baptism (Christ died, was buried & resurrected). These Colossians were Christians (had been baptized). So Paul is reminding them what happened when they were baptized. You were *reconciled* (1:21). Why would you turn to something else (new philosophies, or back to Judaism)?
 - 4. 4th, you are *made alive!* How? By having your sins forgiven! (**v. 13**)
 - 5. 5th, by blotting out the old law, which was against us (because it exposed sin, but could not save us by itself)
 - 6. 6th, by triumphing over all powers (Jew & Gentile). How? RESURRECTION!! They dished out the worst that they had, a brutal crucifixion, but he defeated them by coming back to life! What else can they do to Him?

III. OBSTACLES TO CONTINUING IN CHRIST (v. 16-23):

- A. (v. 16-17) Judaism (some specifics given re: the "handwriting of ordinances" –v. 14) – Don't let people judge you in:
 - 1. Food and drink (clean & unclean distinctions in the old law) – 1 Cor 8, 1 Tim 4:3-4
 - 2. Holy days [feast days], new moons and Sabbaths (observances / festivals of the old law)
Don't let anyone judge you for not participating in these old religious activities that have now been done away with.
- B. (v. 18-19) Self-centeredness
 - 1. Don't let people beguile [rob] ("decide against you"; "steal your prize"). How?
 - 2. Voluntary humility – voluntary comes from **θελω** - 'want, desire,' delighting or taking pleasure in humility.
These philosophers were faking humility. Humility is good, but not if it is done with the wrong reason.
 - 3. Worship of angels - probably part of the Gnostic view (angels were multiple gods / emanations from the "Great God")
- C. (v. 20-23) Doctrines of men
 - 1. Since you're dead with Christ (baptism-dead to the old law, the old life), why submit to these useless man-made laws?
 - 2. (v. 22) They are the commandments and doctrines of men, not God. These should be rejected (Mk 7:7-13).
Sometimes this verse is used to say that all commandments were under the old law, & we have none today (**Jn 14:15**).
 - 3. (v. 23) Ascetic practices may *look* like wisdom & piety, but have no value as remedies against sensual indulgences.

CONCLUSION: (*Counterfeits*) Paul has strongly urged this congregation to continue in Christ, so they will be able to recognize the counterfeits. It has been said that the IRS, when training their people to recognize counterfeit money, doesn't show them every counterfeit bill they've ever recovered. Instead they show them the authentic, and they study it. Because when you know the real thing inside and out, then you'll recognize *any* counterfeit. We must continue to study God's word, then we'll recognize *any* false teaching.