

PRELIMS. I am always **amazed** at how readily Paul accepted the Xn profession of pagans without anything like an ‘examination’ regarding the genuineness of their profession! To the Corinthians he said they were *sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...who were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord* [2,9]. But he then proceeded to call them to **repentance** for quarreling among themselves, committing incest, getting drunk at communion, disbelief in the resurrection! Its the same with the Cols - he **challenges** them regarding the their **walk** with the Lord!

It is as if he says ‘Now that you *have received Christ* let me see the change that Christ has made in you!’ I have often said that a Xn does **not** need to have a **dramatic conversion** experience, but he **does** need to have a changed life! Every Xn experiences the **power of God** in his life - without God’s power there will be no change!

Jesus said to the Sadducees who pretended religion but had serious error, *Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?* [Mat 12:24] Paul said the gospel was the **power of God** for salvation to everyone who believes [Rom 1:16] and *to us who are being saved it is the power of God* [1Cor 1:18]. Paul told the Cors that when he first came to them he was in fear/weakness/trembling and that his speech and message *were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God* [1Cor 1:1-5] Paul reminds them what he was like when he first came – **weak and unimpressive** – yet his message carried an **authority and power!**

When **Margaret Thatcher** became Prime Minister and first walked into 10 Downing Street, they all lined up to greet her. Then she said ‘I would like, this and I would like that...’ Everyone **responded immediately** and did **exactly** as she wanted! Everyone was eager to please her - she was now the Prime Minister! She had **authority and power**, which she did not have before! When she was in the **Opposition** she did not have the power or authority, but now she had! She had a **respect** which she did not have before.

**APP** It is the same with the Xn - when X comes into the heart, he has respect that He did not have before. There is an **eagerness to respond** and to **please Him!** There are **great changes made!**

Jesus tells us that *When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, **swept, and put in order*** [Mat 12:43,44] That is what Jesus does when He comes into our lives - He **puts it in order!** That is **why** He came! **\*\*But that story has a very solemn context!** Jesus is actually **warning the Jews** about their treatment of Him. He has come to His Temple, and they are about to put Him out! So He says that then that evil spirit *goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation* [Mat 12:45]

**APP** That is why it is so vital that those who **profess faith** in Christ **do no forsake Him!** Because the **last state** will be **worse** than if they never heard the gospel! That is why Paul here is so concerned that the Cols are ***rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith!***

As soon as something is planted, the gardener takes great care to **nourish** and **guard** and **cherish** the plant. So it is **vital** that there is some **means provided** for Xns to be **protected** and **grow** in the Lord. The first thing new Xns are very often asked to do is get involved in **evangelistic** work! Well, the **first** thing should be **rooting** and **establishing** the young Xn in the faith. If Xns are not **established** in the faith, they will soon drift away from the faith!!

Now we all know that as time goes on, that **eagerness to serve Christ wanes!** That is why in all epistles to the churches there are **warnings** to take care! Here we have Paul saying ***so walk in Him...See to it...***

Paul knows that Satan, the invisible enemy of the human soul, man's arch-enemy, is subtle, and spends his whole life seeking who he may deceive and devour with his fraudulent lies!

You see, people are not misled and mistaken about the afterlife by

default. No, people are deceived through the **deliberate/purposeful** work of Satan. Peter says to believers ***Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*** [1Peter 5:8]

So, Paul, as a true pastor, sets about explaining to them the **essentials** of the faith! Now the Scriptures speak of a body of teaching which is called ***the faith*** [7]. Paul refers to it here. It was the gospel which the Colossians were taught by Paul. He says they were ***established in the faith just as you were taught*** [6] Jude wrote *I found it **necessary** to write to you...to contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints* [Jude 3] To the Galatians Paul preached ***the faith** which once he destroyed* [Gal 1:23] To Tim in latter times some will depart from ***the faith** giving heed to deceiving spirits* [1Tim 4:1] James do not hold ***the faith** of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality* [James 2:1] So all the Biblical writers refer to this body of teaching called **'the faith'**! The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to realise this, because there are today a growing number of 'faiths' that sound like the real faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, but is not. Our generation have tried almost everything possible to find peace and rest for their souls – but have not found it.

Sex, money and materialism have not satisfied the human 'longing' in the soul. So, many are turning to religion! Film stars, Tom Cruise, Will Smith, etc have turned to Scientology! Cruise 'insists that Scientology can save drug addicts, rehabilitate criminals, and even bring about world peace. He issued a rallying call to other Scientologists to change the world, saying 'Now is the time', and confessed he was 'dedicated' to taking Scientology to the masses'! [Daily Mail 17/1/09]. Cruise realises, that in himself, he doesn't have the answer to life's problem. Because he has problems of his own! His fame and fortune have not brought contentment and has only revealed to him that there is still a lack of some vital ingredient in mankind! This 'missing part' cannot be filled with wealth/sex/power/fame or success! Needs true spirituality!

Friends, do not be deceived, many false religions have a **vocabulary** and **terminology** which **sounds Xn**, but is **not**! They can talk of God

faith, prayer, the Christ, but they mean something completely different from Biblical Xnity! There is a spirituality which is not valid in the sight of God. Many religions can refer to all of these – but unless the God referred to is the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, it is not the true God. Unless prayer is made to the Father of our LJC it will amount to nothing. Unless the **Christ is the Son of God** *who gave Himself for our sins* [Gal 1:4] and *who gave Himself a ransom* [1Tim 2:6] and *who gave Himself for us to redeem us...and to purify for Himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works* [Tit 2:14] that X is not the X of the Bible!

Unless the Cross of Jesus Christ is central to the faith, unless the atoning death of the LJC is the foundation and centre of your faith, it is not the real thing, it all, it is not Xn! Thus... Paul insists here that we must be **established in the faith** and are **rooted and built up in Him**, ie Jesus Christ! Now, if that is so.....

...we will be **abounding in thanksgiving** for salvation! Isn't that marvelous? If we are not thankful for Christ, we have not **received** Christ! The Christ that you/I need, and must have, is a Christ that has paid the price of our sins and can usher us straight into the presence of God His Father - without spot or blemish of any kind. That is why Paul says **See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ** [8]

**...so walk in Him** [6] So Paul is saying 'Do not be content in **knowing about** Xn theology - you must walk each day with Christ and enjoy His fellowship and draw out of His fullness! *and of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace* [J1:16] There is a **bottomless pit of treasures** in Christ!

Paul prayed the same kind of prayer for the Ephs *that you, being rooted and grounded in love you may comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God* [Eph 3:17cf] as we had at the Bible Study on Wednesday!