

Colossians 2 v 6-19 St Michael's 9.30

Fulness of life in Christ

Today we continue with the series of Sermons on the letter to the church in Colossae. Let's start with a little recapitulation of the facts. This letter was supposedly written by Paul, but some scholars contend that another writer closely associated with Paul contributed to its authorship. It was written to a church which Paul had not founded or visited but was established by Epaphras a disciple of Paul, who had originally taken the good news of the Gospel to Colossae. Subsequently Paul had received reports about them from Epaphras. The letter indicates that there is a crisis situation in the Colossian church and its purpose is to combat various heresies, false

teachings, and practices which had grown up within its Christian community.

Today we move on from the opening chapter with the words of greeting, thanksgiving and prayer to a new section which contains the nub of the letter.

There seems to have been a problem within the Colossian church community. We are not told the precise nature of this but there are several clues which lead us to suppose that a number of the church members were adopting certain customs in the belief that in doing so it would make them better people. It mentions circumcision, so some of these customs may have come from Judaism but equally the reference to food and drink and

festivals may have been taken from Pagan rites and practices. The implication is that the false teachings are encouraging the Colossian church members to undertake and accept practices and worship of things in addition to Christ and to place their trust and reliance on practices and superstitions as a sort of supplement to their Christian beliefs.

While the letter doesn't elaborate on what the false teachings are specifically, it addresses them as a whole by emphasising the centrality of Christ who is all sufficient. In him is embodied the "fulness of God", the abundance of life and full salvation for those who believe. There is no need or necessity for anything else. Christ alone is the sole foundation of the Christian life.

Pagan idols and practices may seem a bit strange in our 21st Century society but the people of today also appeal to astrologers and philosophers for guidance and there are many objects to which the world pays homage.

A disabled athlete was interviewed on the television yesterday morning he was in the lead in a race at the Commonwealth games, when his wheelchair got a puncture. He told the interviewer that he doesn't usually take a spare with him but that he had thought about doing so this time, as a sensible precaution but decided not to as he thought it might put a jinx on his performance in the race. So, he left the spare behind as a result he lost the race. A sad example of superstition's influence on his life.

Our daily newspapers have star sign predictions for the day which many

read and have faith in. There are many superstitions which people strictly observe.

Football heroes and pop idols abound and influence many peoples' lives not always for good, and one of the biggest problems of our age is putting our trust in money and possessions.

The gospels tell of an encounter between Jesus and a rich young man.

Jesus perceives that the young man's love of wealth and his trust in it, is being a hinderance to his spiritual wellbeing and development. "Go sell all that you have and follow me" Jesus says

Few of us are called to give up our possessions, our families, or our homes but we are called to put Christ first in our lives. This is not fundamentally

about money and possessions although our love of these things has an important influence on our reaction to Christ's call to follow.

It is about our response to his great redeeming Love. Are we willing to give our whole selves to Him and His service?

Or

Is there a corner of our lives which we want to keep for ourselves and not let God into?

Oswald Chambers said this "To be faithful in every circumstance means that we have only one loyalty and that is our Lord.... The idea is not that we do

work for God, but that that we are so loyal to Him that He can do His work through us”¹

There are many things which can lead to false independence, selfishness and being bound to the things of this world.

These things are not wrong but can be a very real danger because it can mean that we look to them for security and happiness, rather than recognising and acknowledging our need of God.

¹ *From Oswald Chambers My Utmost for His highest*

So you see it is about anything which comes between us and our recognition and acceptance of God our creator, redeemer, and sustainer, and the grace He freely offers to us through Christ Jesus.

When the letter to the Colossians was written it addressed the recipients as holy and faithful, and the is focused on the desire that they should grow into full maturity as Christians. “Seek the things which are above not on the earth.” They were being called to address their problems with love and forgiveness, and to focus on becoming more Christ like in all they thought and did.

Here is a reminder to us, that our journey of faith is not without temptations and distractions, and we are continually under pressure to conform to this world's standards. To put our trust in worldly things and our hope in superstition and misconceptions.

In our 21st Century, western society, there is considerable pressure to be successful, and in many instances, success is measured in monetary terms.

As Christians our priority, in all things, and at all times, is to seek the kingdom of God and to be transformed by his grace into the people, He wants us to be, an Easter people, rooted and built up in Christ.

That requires us to think very carefully where our love and loyalties lie and in what or who we put our hope and trust.

For as the letter to the church in Colossae is trying to convey

In Christ alone my hope is found

He is my light, my strength, my song

This cornerstone, this solid ground

Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love, what depths of peace

When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My comforter, my all in all

Here in the love of Christ I stand.

Stuart Townend

