

## **Christ's Sufficiency Defended : Against Empty Philosophies**

**TEXT : Col 2: 1- 8**

*Illustrate* - Chiru Gatende's carjacking.

Some of us live out our Christian lives this way – sitting by the roadside crying to be taken advantage of;

- Waiting to be held captive
- Sitting ducks to be kidnapped

We hardly know what we believe, we are not rooted in the Word of God, and couldn't for the world discern truth from falsehood. Let me tell you of some of the amazing teaching I have heard going on in churches in Nairobi

- Anointing the inner man
- Slain in the Spirit

Well, the Colossians were facing the same type of teaching; and in this second part of Colossians, Ch 2, Paul moves on from Displaying the sufficiency of Christ as seen in the testimony of the Colossians, and as seen in God's action for God chose him to be the firstborn among all creation and all the fullness of Deity dwells in Christ. Paul moves on from showing the sufficiency of Christ as displayed by his own life; and now seeks to Defend the sufficiency of Christ from these false teachers. He gives the Colossians 3 warnings about false teachings

1. A warning against Empty Philosophies
2. A warning against Fake Religiosity
3. and a warning against Human Legalism

and in each he gives them a clear graphic command to guide them :

- **Vs 1-8** his warning against empty philosophies, in Vs 8 he says "DO NOT BE KIDNAPPED" or "...see to it that no-one takes you captive".

- **Vs 9 – 17**, his second warning, this one against fake religiosity, he says in Vs 16 "DO NOT LET ANYONE JUDGE YOU".
- and then in **Vs 18 – 23**, his 3<sup>rd</sup> warning, this time against human legalism, he says in Vs 18 "DO NOT LET ANYONE DISQUALIFY YOU".

Today's text concerns the first of these 3 warnings – do not let anyone kidnap you. So how do we avoid being sitting ducks waiting to be kidnapped. Presumably we all know our 'mother' very well. If some imposter came along claiming to be your mother, how would you know her to be a fake? Well, there are 2 principle ways to do so

- First is to study all the women of this word so well, that you could easily name her and show she is someone else. Hypothetically, this can work, but the amount of work would drive you crazy.
- The second way is to know your mother so well, that there would never be a shadow of doubt who she is – know her voice so well that even in a room full of women you could distinctly pick out her voice – as the Lord Jesus said "My sheep know my voice and follow me . . ."

How do you discern false teaching? The bible teaches this 2<sup>nd</sup> way - not by studying all the cults and their multitude teachings, but by knowing our Lord, and his character, and his teachings, and his commands, and his values so well, that you could easily point out what is not of God. The Bible teaches us to focus on Christ, his Word, his person, his teachings. This has become my own approach to Spiritual Warfare and the demonic – I am concerned about the growing industry on Spiritual Warfare that is experientially based on what I have seen or heard or experienced INSTEAD of what the scriptures teach.

This too is Paul's approach in our text, for he begins in Vs 1 – 5 by teaching the 7 marks of Christian maturity. Marks that should be evident in a mature church or mature Christians. In Vs 6,7 he focuses on "How to attain maturity", and only in Vs 8 does he point out the False teaching, but even then does not say too much about it.

What then are the marks of maturity? What do we look for? What do we aspire to become? Let me begin by noting that the 7 marks Paul gives us here are not exhaustive, they are specific to the Colossians need. Other parts of scripture add onto this list (for eg Heb 6:1 – 3).

**Mark 1 : Encouraged In Heart : Vs 1** - In Col 1:28, 29 Paul says that he labors, he struggles, he agonizomai's, to present every man mature in Christ. In 2:2 he gives us the goal of that struggle : <sup>2</sup> *My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart* . and so right there he gives us Mark No 1 "Encouraged in heart" or strengthened in heart – in other words that you may be a people who face life's challenges with the courage of knowing that the Lord is on your side; looking at life on the positive side, seeing things from God's perspective – this is a mark of maturity. The word translated "encouraged" in the NIV is actually the word "Parakaleo" in Greek. it means *to come alongside, to strengthen, to walk alongside*. Paul also uses the word *heart*. Heart, unlike today where we understand the heart to be the seat of emotions, was understood in Paul's days to be the seat of volition, the ability to choose, the will. And so Paul's meaning here when he talks about being "encouraged in heart" is that you may have **the strength to make god choices and to follow them thru**. Another way we could read this passage is that a mark of maturity is that one is not beaten down by life's circumstances and trials, but even in discouraging times, their heart is still strong in the Lord.

**Mark 2 : United in love . . . vs 2 – <sup>2</sup> *My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love***, an obvious one for there is no real church where there is no love. It is love that knits us

though we come from different nationalities, different tribes, different social status, different church backgrounds.

**Mark 3 – Displaying wisdom & Knowledge : Vs 2 - 3 - Wise** behavior, wise counsel, wise decisions. Wisdom is played out in many different ways. Paul here uses 3 words for wisdom –

*so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, (sunesis) in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom (sophia) and knowledge.(gnosis) I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*

(i) Vs 2 – “sunesis” or “**complete understanding**” or better still “insight”. ‘sunesis’ is a practical kind of wisdom – the capacity to distinguish between truth & falsehood, and to choose the right path. It’s the same word used in Col 1:9 where he says *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the **knowledge** of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Sunesis).* . . .

(ii) The 2<sup>nd</sup> word for wisdom is in Vs 3 “**all the treasures of wisdom . . .**” the word translated wisdom there is - ‘sophia’.

(iii) The 3<sup>rd</sup> word is “knowledge” or ‘Gnosis’. Sometimes Greek scholars differentiate these two words ‘sophia’ and ‘gnosis’ as ‘sophis’ is the wisdom to intelligently defend and argue out a truth; while ‘gnosis’ is the power to see or grasp it that truth. So in a conversation I may express ‘sophia’ as I try and explain a point, and you express ‘gnosis’ as you grasp, comprehend the point. In actual fact I’m not sure that such clear cut distinction can be made between the words, but if we accept this, then Paul’s use of the 3 words could indicate that the 3<sup>rd</sup> mark of maturity is the wisdom to choose the right path and action, & the ability to articulate & defend that path. This is wisdom