

Christ's Redemptive Work Defended As Sufficient Against Fake Religiosity.

Col 2:9 - 17

INTRODUCTION : Have you ever been unjustly judged? I have. . .

III – Punishment in High School for misjudgment.

Nothing hurts more than to know that one has been unjustly judged! I tried to defend my honor in the situation, but I was angry, and in my anger I resolved to become the very thing I had been accused of. What I did not realize then was that in so doing I was giving over power to my tormentors to influence and shape my reaction. I was handing over power to them to negatively shape me into the very thing I did not want to be.

We do the same many times over when it comes to spiritual things – we walk into a situation where people show their spirituality by some outward form that we do not display or even necessarily agree with; but few of us have the moral strength of character to be ourselves, and therefore to be different, in the situation. Instead many of us pretend to be what we are not, we take on phrases and behavior that does not stem out of our convictions, but stems out of our cowardice instead BECAUSE we do not have the courage to be who we are. We therefore hand over power to others to shape us negatively and even sometimes against our own convictions. This, my friends, is what “fake religiosity” is about – pretending to be what we are not because we feel pressured to conform so that we may be perceived as being “spiritual”.

III – Reading Biographies as a young believer.

“Oh, a real Christian gets up at 4:00 am in the morning to pray! The concrete on the floor of a real believers bedside is worn out because of the hours he spend there in kneeling prayer”

The Colossians knew this sort of pressure! Their spirituality was being judged, not against the standard of Christ, but against the standard of these false teachers by what they ate or drank; what days they celebrated God or by what festivals they kept –.

But, you know, this sort of religiosity, even when it is well meant and has an element of truth in it, does not lead to the deeper fullness our hearts long for; it only leads to a sense of emptiness and disillusionment about our faith BECAUSE it is not based on our conviction about Christ, but on our desire to copy others so we may be “acceptable” in their eyes.

Paul calls it a “shadow”; in other words it faintly resembles the real thing, BUT it is NOT the real thing, it has no substance! Like legalism, fake religiosity delivers only a joyless Christian life, and a judgmental spirit – not deliver the deep fulfillment it promises! If you want the real thing however . . . it is found in Christ! How so? Well, Paul gives us 3 clear reasons why all fake religiosity is just a shadow of the real thing, while the real thing is Christ.

1. YOU HAVE FULLNESS IN CHRIST (2:9 – 10)

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

III – Man on Atlantic Ship with ticket.

For in the ticket all the fullness and privileges of the ship dwell and you have been given this fullness in your ticket, which allows you every power and authority.

There are 3 important things that Paul says here

a. **All the fullness** of deity dwells in Christ – what does all “the fullness of deity” mean? It means that all God the Father’s power, miraculous creativity, authority, ownership, design, will, vision and prerogative dwells in Christ. Everything the Father has or owns is Christ’s!

The false teacher’s promise was for deeper fullness, but if it’s fullness you really want – the place to find it is in Christ! The world tells us today that real fullness or real fulfillment is found in alcohol, or drugs or sex or love. Here in Kenya we are told that it is found in success and wealth, or in travel – possessing an NBK cashcard, or in having the right sort of girl hanging on your arm, or in Citizen Larger . . . In the Christian community we are told attending a certain church, being anointed by a certain prophet of God, following a certain sort of teaching brings real fulfillment, but Paul says REAL FULFILLMENT is found in Christ alone.

b. But the **second** amazing thing Paul says is **YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN FULLNESS IN CHRIST**. In other words, like that man on the ship, you already have “all the fullness” you so long for because you already have Christ! Stop going to look for morsels of food in the garbage heaps of fake religiosity when there is a sumptuous dinner laid out for in Christ!

c. **And not only that**, but in case anyone claims to have a deeper fullness and better deal, remember that all authority and power belongs to Christ, you can’t go further than him – the buck stops here! Stop chasing after empty promises and hold onto Jesus’

one promise in Jn 10:10 “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*”

2. YOU HAVE FELLOWSHIP THRU CHRIST (2:11 – 13) : The second reason why we do not go after fake religiosity is not just because Christ has all the fullness, but also because we have fellowship with Christ! And this fellowship has been forged thru pain, death and trust. You can’t have a deeper fellowship than this. It is your right.

III – Bondmates thru circumcision.

¹¹ In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ . . . This circumcision marked a transition in life and it bound together. We too have been circumcised, not the circumcision of the flesh, but the circumcision of the heart. We are therefore bondmates with Christ. We are **the fellowship of the circumcised**.

But we are also **the fellowship of the baptized**.¹² having been buried with him in baptism . . .

III – Aborigines girl puberty rite.

We are also **the fellowship of faith**, for not only did we go thru the death experience together, but we also went thru the “**resurrection experience**” with him and were “raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” These 3 experiences have given us a very deep fellowship with Christ – a fellowship that gives us access to him, that gives us a natural friendship, that makes us “equals” with him, that bonds us together, that means we can ask for help without shame. Why then would you want a religiosity that only **pretends**

closeness with Christ? There is no deeper fellowship with Christ than the fellowship of circumcision, baptism and resurrection.

3. YOU HAVE FREEDOM THRU CHRIST (2:14 - :
Christ has not only given us fullness, he has not only given us fellowship, but he has also given us freedom. Vs 13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.*

There are 3 beautiful things that God has done thru Christ for us :

(a) **Firstly**, he made us alive in Christ. The Bible says we were dead in our sins – we were insensitive to the things of God, even opposed to them. We couldn't see or hear what God was calling us to. We were so given to our sinful ways that we were deaf. Now maybe you don't think you fall in this category, you were always favorable towards the Bible and the church; but my friend, the root of all evil and rebellion is the decision to live your life under your own rule as opposed to giving over your life and ways to Christ. This is what the Bible calls rebellion, this is the mother of all sins.

Now, because our hearts have been circumcised, we can hear the will and desire of God, and we have a willingness and desire to obey because we have been made alive to his ways. It is always so beautiful to hear the testimony of a young believer because they share with joy that they now read the bible and can understand it, they hear God, prayer is no longer the seemingly empty ritual it used to be, bible reading is a passion, and sharing their faith is a cause of great joy – why? They have been made alive to the things of God.

(b) **Secondly**, vs 14 *He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.* Have you ever seen the ceremony of debt clearance that some organizations have? When they have finally cleared their loan, they

have a signing ceremony to prove they are no longer under debt, and then they take the loan forms, gather outside and light up the papers, cheering as it burns. When finally only the ashes exist, they crumple this and deposit it in some bin. Why this little ceremony – it is to get rid of any evidence that they are still under debt. In the same way, Christ has taken your charge sheet and burned it, nailed it to the cross, because in that cross, he paid for your sins. You are no longer under the charge, it has been dealt with!

(c) **Thirdly** "having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." Not only has he made us alive, not only has he forgiven us, but he has also dealt decisively with our tormentors. The "powers and authorities" are the demonic powers arrayed against Christ and his church. He has defeated and shamed them on our behalf, so they dare not raise a finger at us. The imagery¹ that Paul has in mind can be seen in Plutarch's description of the 3 day triumphal festival celebrated in Rome for Aemilius Paulus upon his victory on capturing Macedonia. *The whole of Rome turned out, dressed in festive white. On the first day, 259 chariots displayed the booty, the pictures, statues and colossal images taken from the enemy.*

On the second day, innumerable wagons displayed the armor of the Macedonians. As Plutarch tells it

"All newly polished and glittering; pieces of which were piled up and arranged purposely with the greatest art, so as to seem to be tumbled in heaps carelessly and by chance: helmets were thrown upon shields, coats of mail upon graves; Cretan targets and Thracian bucklers and quivers of arrows lay hurled against horses' bits, and through these there appeared the points of naked

¹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (NY The Modern Library, n. d.), pp 340-342. As quoted in Hughes.

swords, intermixed with long Macedonian sarissas. All these arms were fastened together with just so much looseness that they struck against one another as they were drawn along, and made a harsh and alarming noise, so that, even as spoils of a conquered enemy they would not be held without dread.”

Following the wagons came 3,000 carrying the enemy’s silver in 750 vessels. On the 3rd day came the captives, preceded by 120 sacrificial oxen with their heads gilded and their heads adorned with ribbons and garlands, next Macedonian gold, then the captured king’s chariot, crown and armor. Then came the king’s servants, weeping, with hands outstretched, begging the crowds for mercy. Next came his children, then the king himself, dressed in black, followed by endless prisoners. Finally came the victorious general clad in gold and purple.

CONCLUSION : In view of all this – **WHY** would you want to follow a fake form of spirituality which is just a dim shadow of the real thing. You have already been plugged into the real thing. All the fullness in Christ is yours, you have deep, deep fellowship with him; and all the freedom through Christ has been won for you **THEREFORE**, Paul says, **DO NOT LET ANYONE JUDGE YOU!** . . . by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

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1. You Have Fullness In Christ (2:9 – 10)

- (a) Christ has all God’s Fullness (9)
- (b) You have been given this fullness in Him (10)
- (c) He is head over all (10)

2. You Have Fellowship with Christ (2: 11 – 12)

- (a) The Fellowship Of Circumcision (11)
- (b) The Fellowship Of Baptism (12)
- (c) The Fellowship of Resurrection (12)

3. You Have Freedom Thru Christ (2:13 – 15)

- (a) Alive In Christ (13)
- (b) Forgiven In Christ (14)
- (c) The Captors Disgraced (15)

4. THEREFORE – Don’t Let Anyone Judge You. (2:16 – 17)