

## ***‘The hollow and deceptive philosophies’*** Colossians 2:9-23

In his letter to the church in Colosse Paul outlines eight *‘hollow and deceptive philosophies’* that are developing or have already developed. The same eight *‘hollow and deceptive philosophies’* were alive and kicking in Ephesus!

	<b><i>The hollow and deceptive philosophies’</i></b>	<b>Colossians Reference</b>	<b>Paul’s Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	One must adhere to human wisdom, tradition, and philosophies	2:8-10 2:4 3:15-17	By themselves, these can be misleading and shallow because they have human origin; instead God’s word should be our ultimate authority
<b>2</b>	Christ could not be both human and divine	2:9-15 1:15-20 2:2-3	Jesus was both fully human and fully divine.
<b>3</b>	It is even better to combine aspects of several religions (syncretism)	2:10	Christ is all sufficient
<b>4</b>	One must follow ceremonies, rituals, and restrictions in order to be saved or perfected	2:11 2:16-23 3:11	Christ is all we need to be saved
<b>5</b>	One must obtain ‘secret knowledge’ in order to be saved or perfected (gnosticism) – and this was not available to everyone	2:18 2:2	God’s secret is Christ, and he has been revealed to all
<b>6</b>	Spirit is good, matter is evil	1:15-20	God created heaven and earth for his glory
<b>7</b>	One must deny the body and live a life of strict abstinence from worldly pleasures (asceticism)	2:20-23	Living a life like this can lead to pride and is no answer to conquering evil thoughts and desires
<b>8</b>	There is nothing wrong with immorality	3:1-11	We need to get rid of sin and evil because we have been chosen by God to live a new life as a representative of the Lord Jesus

Matthew Street 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019



## **The Parish of Foxcote with Shoscombe**

### **Ephesians 1:15-23 - Missionary Musings**

#### **Passage, Talk Notes and Questions**

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

#### **1. Talk Passage – Ephesians 1:15-23**

*15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.*

#### **2. Talk Notes**

##### **2.1 Introduction**

- How often in our busy lives do we stop and reminisce? Do you find sometimes that you think about that colleague at work, that school friend, that member of the extended family who you have not seen for sometime and wonder what they are doing now.
- Paul was under house arrest in Rome between 60-62AD: *‘For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles’* (Ephesians 3:1). Paul had founded the church in Ephesus in 53AD at the end of his Second Missionary Journey and returned to stay in Ephesus for three years at the start of his Third Missionary Journey in 54AD.
- Ephesus was the New York of its day:
  - Not the capital city of the Roman Empire, but the capital city of its Asian conquests.
  - With a population of circa 80,000 (the size of modern day Bath) it was slightly smaller than Alexandria which was on one end of an all important trade route that moved grain from Egypt to Rome via Ephesus.
  - It was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: The Temple of Diana. It boasted the Library of Celsus and a theatre capable of hosting 25,000 spectators.
  - It had one of the most advanced aqueduct systems in the ancient world and a water powered marble sawmill.
  - It was however a melting pot for religious beliefs: Greek Gods and Mythology, Roman Gods and Mythology, The cult of Diana, Emperor Worship, Spiritism, Syncretism, Gnosticism, Asceticism as well as Judaism and Christianity. (*see back page for further details*)

- In this period of forced inactivity in Rome Paul writes to Ephesian church and reminds them that he has been praying for them regularly *'I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.'* (Ephesians 1:16)
- As we reminisce about that colleague at work, that school friend, or that member of the extended family who we have not seen for sometime are we moved to pray for them?

## 2.2 Paul's Prayer

- The pressure to conform to the cultural norms of the day were there for the Ephesian Church then, just as they are with us today. Paul prays that the Ephesian church will grow in:
  - a) **Wisdom** - 'know Jesus better': *'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.'* (Ephesians 1:17)
  - b) **Hope** - 'know where they are going': *'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people'* (Ephesians 1:18)
  - c) **Power** - 'know who is inside them': *'his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms'* (Ephesians 1:19-20)
- Notice that Paul's prays about the fundamentals of their Christian's lives, not about detailed specifics. Do we pray in this way, or are our prayers often a shopping list of detailed specifics?

## 2.3 Wisdom - 'know Jesus better' (Ephesians 1:17)

- Paul knew that the church families in Ephesus, Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, were suffering from false teaching and teachers who had infiltrated each of the church families. At their core these teachers and their teaching were suggesting that the members of each church family needed Christ plus. Christ plus more 'secret knowledge'. Christ plus more ceremonies, rituals and restrictions. Christ plus a life of strict abstinence from worldly pleasures.
- Paul states emphatically however that Christ is all sufficient: *'And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.'* (Ephesians 1:22-23)
- How do we get know Jesus better? By spending time in the word. We get to know Jesus better by reading and learning God's word, the Bible. If we do not know what scripture says about certain views and behaviours then of course, like the Ephesian church back then, we can be easily swayed by false teaching and teachers.

## 2.4 Hope - 'know where they are going' (Ephesians 1:18)

- One of the big questions then and one of the big questions today is about what happens when we die? Where are we going?
- There would have been three conflicting views about what happens when people die in Ephesus. In essence these views continue to this day.
  1. Nothing beyond the grave - NO Eternal life – Our bodies decay and our souls cease to exist.

2. Something beyond the grave - Eternal Life WITHOUT our body but ONLY with our Soul.

3. Something beyond the grave - Eternal Life that starts with our soul but will eventually include our body as well - RESURRECTION

- Paul prays that the Ephesians, and by inference us, will be crystal clear about where we are going and what will happen in the future: *'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people'* (Ephesians 1:18)
- Paul recognised that when God exercised his power and brought Jesus back to life in his resurrected body that Jesus was the first person in history to do this: *'That power is the same as the mighty strength God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm'* (Ephesians 1:19-20)
- Jesus is the prototype or first fruit of what all of us have to look forward to – That we too will be resurrected and given new bodies.

## 2.5 Power - 'know who is inside them'

- It was not easy then, and it is not easy today, to swim against the prevailing culture of the day. It would have been a real struggle for the Jewish Christian not to revert back to performing various ceremonial laws and customs that had been outdated by Christ's death on the cross. It would have been equally difficult for the Greek, Roman or Egyptian Christian to not revert back to the customs and beliefs of their childhood.
- Paul knows that to remain firmly fixed on the 'narrow way' requires God's power. Paul prays that the Ephesian church and by inference us, will: *'know his incomparably great power for us who believe.'* (Ephesians 1:19)
- How often do we pray in a similar vein, either for ourselves, or others? Praying to be strengthened with God's power should be something we regularly do.
- Paul would argue that the power we have to change things comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Again, how often do we pray, either for ourselves, or others to be filled with the Holy Spirit? This too should be a regular part of our prayer life.

## 2.6 Conclusion

- In this amazing prayer we get a glimpse of Paul's prayer life. He prays that the Ephesian Church will grow in Wisdom, that they will know Jesus better. He prays that they will fully understand the enormity of their future, their hope and finally prays that they will be filled with God's power.

## 3. Questions to consider at home

- 1) How do we get to know Jesus better?
- 2) What is the 'hope' (Ephesians 1:18) that Paul wants the Ephesians to know?
- 3) Why does Paul pray that the Ephesians need to *'know his incomparably great power'* (Ephesians 1:19)
- 4) What are *'the hollow and deceptive philosophies'* (Colossians 2:9-23) of our day?
- 5) Using your own church as an example. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how strong is the prayer life of your church? How would you improve things?
- 6) A friend of yours asks you 'How do you pray?'. How would you respond?