

Don't Be Taken Captive

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Date: 03 May 2009

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[0 : 00] At the beginning of this year, that was the key instruction, a change actually from Israel's earlier army commands. The earlier ones were that they should try and disable those who are trying to take captives.

But now Hannibal Mode says, even be prepared to kill your fellow Israeli soldiers rather than let them be taken captive. Pretty strong stuff.

That's Hannibal Mode. Similarly, the first thing that the American GIs were told when they went to Iraq was don't get captured.

Because they knew that if they got captured, they would be tortured and possibly beheaded on video to be sent around the world. And so those soldiers were to fight to the death and at any cost, don't get captured.

For Israel, the logic was if they were taken prisoner, then the only way in which they could get them out from being in prison was by releasing hundreds, often, of Hamas-type prisoners in Israel.

[1 : 11] Something that Israel has had to do in times past. Well, Hannibal Mode is how we should live the Christian life. The key command that Paul gives us in this passage tonight is the very Hannibal Mode command.

The opening section of the letter to the Colossians has concluded.

It concluded with what we saw last week, up to chapter 2, verse 5. In effect, it's Paul's greetings and his prayer and why he prays what he prays.

And that's an extended opening all the way up to chapter 2, verse 5. Remember, Paul's basic prayer, as I in fact prayed for us at the beginning of the service tonight.

We find it in verse 9 and 10 of chapter 1. That the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of God's will so that they lead lives worthy of the Lord. And that's what this letter is on about.

[2 : 14] It's what Paul prayed for. It's why he laboured so hard in ministry, which is what we saw last week. It's why he gave the words of that hymn that we said together at the beginning of this passage, beginning of the service tonight.

And it's now where we get to the heart of the letter. Lead a life worthy of the Lord. It's what he prayed. It's what he laboured for.

And it's why he wrote this letter. And the heart of the letter begins with tonight's passage, chapter 2, verse 6, and goes all the way into chapter 4 before the final sort of farewells and greetings end the letter.

And in effect, it's a summary. The first command, actually, of the whole letter is in chapter 2, verse 6, the beginning of tonight's passage. Continue to live your lives in Jesus.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, something that's been made plain in the verses that have preceded, continue to live your lives in him.

[3 : 21] That's summarising, in effect, what he's prayed for, that you lead a life worthy of the Lord. He's not writing to people who are not doing that. Indeed, as we saw in the opening verses of the letter, he's giving thanks to God that their hope has produced faith and love in their lives.

That's why he says here, continue to live in him. They're under pressure not to, as we'll see more explicitly later tonight, but continue the way you are, growing and being steadfast.

It's not surprising that this first and summary command of the whole letter is so much like Paul's basic prayer. What he prays for, he's now writing for.

He's consistent. Notice the emphasis in verse 6. As you received Christ Jesus the Lord. It's a full statement about Jesus.

He could have just said, as you've received Christ, or as you have received Christ Jesus. But he says, Christ Jesus the Lord. It ties in with that hymn that we said together a few minutes ago.

[4 : 37] The lordship and supremacy of Jesus over all things, that Jesus is first above all, and in all, before all, and at the end of all. He is the Lord, the greatest one, the sovereign.

Without contest, without equal. Jesus is supreme. But what he's saying then, is as you've received Jesus Christ as Lord, in a sense, make sure he stays as your Lord.

Continue to live in him. For what we'll see in the challenge that the Colossians are facing in the verses that follow, is the possibility and their vulnerability to end up with some other Lord, not Jesus.

When Paul prayed in chapter 1, verse 9 and 10, that they lead a life worthy of the Lord, you may remember three weeks ago, there were four things that described that. Growing in knowledge, and bearing fruit, and enduring with patience, and giving thanks with joy.

Now, in verse 7, we get four things, again, that help us understand what it means to continue.

They're not quite the same, but they're very similar.

[5 : 55] Rooted, it's an agricultural metaphor. Plants being rooted in the ground so that they've got nourishment and strength and stability. Built up, it's a building construction metaphor on something on a firm foundation.

Established in the faith. Firm in the faith. That is, with your understanding of what is right in the faith. And we've seen over the last three weeks how important that is for Christians.

That we know the faith. He's prayed that they'll know God's will and know what is true. And here he's exhorting that again. Established in the faith.

The truth about Jesus. And indeed, that hymn summarizes the key elements of that Christian faith. And then fourthly, and just like chapter 1, verse 12, giving thanks or abounding in thanksgiving. It's a crucial mark of being firm and continuing as a Christian is that thankfulness is part of our life. Because where it's absent, we're actually living a pagan life in a relationship with some slightly unknown God.

[7 : 10] So what Paul prays for is what he's labored for and it's what he's writing for here in this heart of the letter. They're to continue because they are living well, but they're facing pressures not to, to divert away from that.

Continue, he says. Well, why the urgency and the concern? Why this command? Most commands in the Bible are there to address the high possibility of something different from the command.

That is, you don't usually get commands for something that they're doing perfectly and have got every likelihood of continuing to do perfectly. Commands are there because they're either not doing it or they're in danger of not doing it.

So why the urgency here? And the answer in one sense is actually crucial for an understanding of the Christian life. You see, we live in dangerous territory.

We may have the fullness of Jesus and have rock-solid hope, but we live in a world that is trying to bring us away, draw us away, divert us or deceive us away from the truth.

[8 : 24] That's what's happening for the Colossians. That is, the fullness of Christian living does not make us immune from the pressures to give up or abandon or divert or corrupt the faith.

That's an important thing to get right, I think. Sometimes people think that they've so made it as a Christian and they're so safe as a Christian that they think they're somehow immune to the pressures to deviate away from the Christian faith.

Paul's making it very clear here, that's not the case. We live in dangerous territory. Jesus may be Lord, he may be supreme over all things, all powers, thrones and authorities are under him.

And yet, though the enemy is weaker than Jesus, though the enemy in fact is defeated already, as we'll see tonight, the enemy still lurks and we're in dangerous territory.

We need to be aware, we need to be alert. When Paul says in that verse, in verse 8, see to it, he's saying, take watch, be careful, be very careful actually.

[9 : 38] And as we'll see, he goes on to talk about deceit. There are three commands in the rest of tonight's passage. They're all negatives, they're all warnings that is.

They all, in a sense, correspond with the command of verse 6, continue to live in him. If you continue to live in him, then you won't do any of the three things that are warned against in the rest of tonight's passage.

So see those commands or imperatives related to each other. The first positive, continue to live in him. That's a summary in effect of the letter. What that will mean negatively is, firstly, see to it that no one takes you captive.

Hannibal mode. Don't be taken captive. Why the danger? Because, as the rest of the verse says, you could be taken captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.

The danger comes because it's deceit. It's deceptive. It promises something that it doesn't give.

[11:01] The danger for the Colossians seems to be of something that an alternative form of spirituality that may be saying, this is really the best spirituality, this is the super spirituality.

If you want fullness of spiritual experience, then this is what you need. That's deceptive, if it's untrue, as it was. Paul says that this deception that's being taught, and remember what I said last week, these Colossians have not fallen for it, but they're pressured, and Paul is stealing them so that they don't fall for this deceit.

It's according to human tradition, or as he says, the elemental spirits of the universe, which may be simply saying something that's pagan, or put together from what follows, it may be then going back to a human tradition of laws and rules and regulations.

Paul's words are actually very broad here. We can't be exactly sure if he's got a precise meaning behind them, or if he's just simply warning them in general, first.

Certainly it seems from later verses that we'll see tonight, there were people who perhaps were trying to draw these Christians back into Jewish laws and Jewish legalism.

[12:20] Maybe that's the human tradition that Paul is talking about. The elemental spirits of the universe may be meaning just sort of general human made up pagan religion in broad terms.

Wrong spirituality is deceptive. It promises fullness of spiritual experience, but it doesn't deliver. Wrong spirituality is often flatter us, saying how good we are, how strong, or how inherently powerful we might be.

It's flattery. We like to hear things like that. The gospel, you see, doesn't flatter us. It tells us that we're weak and helpless and dead in our sins.

That's why they've got a C to it that no one takes you captive. It's not a full frontal attack that's very brazen and obvious all the time, but rather something deceptive that gets in unawares if we're not on alert.

And this false teaching is serious. Don't think that Paul is being pedantic about spiritual truth here. The implication is that if you get taken captive, you are under a different Lord.

[13:37] If you've received Jesus Christ as your Lord, as he says in verse 6, don't be taken captive so that you're somehow in the captivity of and subservient to or even perhaps serving another Lord.

You see, the human tradition may sound very plausible. That's what Paul described it as in verse 4 at the end of last week's passage. Plausible arguments, again with the word deceive.

Paul says don't be captured by another Lord. It may look Christian. It may refer to Jesus. It may say many truthful things about Jesus.

But in the end, it will somehow corrupt the statement about Jesus of chapter 1 that we've said already together tonight. Somewhere that statement will not be true for false teaching and heresy. We have to be careful. If Jesus is our Lord, don't be taken captive to another one. That's why this is so important.

[14:47] That's why this warning is here and why it's in such strong language. See to it that no one takes you captive because the end result of such captivity is worshipping in the end another Lord.

falsehood. Notice how Paul then contrasts the truth and the falsehood. He says in verse 9, in Jesus the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

Some suggest that he's countering the view that Jesus wasn't fully divine or maybe not even fully human or neither. Here's a full statement, a grand statement.

It matches what's in the hymn back in chapter 1 verse 19. For in him, Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. So Paul is taking the words of that hymn of praise and applying them now to their way of life.

That is, Jesus is the fullness of God. There is nothing fuller. If you want to know God, you know Jesus. There's an exclusivity about this claim as we saw two weeks ago from that hymn.

[16:00] And he says in verse 10, you have come to fullness in him. If Jesus is your Lord, if you come to him through faith, then you have fullness in Jesus. Something already, not to be attained in the future, but something that is already the reality.

Beginning of verse 10, and you have come to fullness in him who is the head of every ruler and authority.

Something again that Paul had said in that hymn of chapter 1, in verse 16, thrones, dominions, rulers and powers, all those have been created through Jesus and for him.

And Jesus, we're told in verse 8, might have the first place in everything. And he said similar things in the verses that follow.

there is no power or throne or ruler or authority that matches that of Jesus. If he is your Lord, the exchange by deception to another Lord that is being taken captive by human tradition or false teaching is at best foolish and unwise, because you've come to a Lord who is weaker, who's actually later we'll see defeated by the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 21] It's a ridiculous concept and thing to do. And that's why this warning is so strong. You see, that hymn is there as a statement of praise, but that hymn is also there as a statement to guide our lives, to guard us against falsehood, heresy and false teaching.

If Jesus is Lord, don't be taken captive by another. Well, verse 10 said, that you have come to fullness in him.

And the language of fullness in this letter, some suggest, means that the false teachers were using that language to deceive. We have got a better way of spiritual experience, full spiritual experience, in our way, not theirs, not Paul's.

So Paul goes on to explain, well, what does he mean and how is it that we have fullness in Christ? Christ? And he explains that in verses 11 to 15.

The explanation is all in the past tense. It's all something that has happened already for us or in us or to us. It's complete already.

[18 : 36] It's an action that's over and done with for the Christian. He's not talking about where they're headed, but where they already are as Christians.

The first thing he says that has happened is you've been circumcised. Jews would know what that was about. It was part of their laws of the Old Testament.

That's not precisely what Paul is referring to. He says in verse 11, in Jesus also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ.

This spiritual circumcision is not totally new here in the Bible. Paul used similar language at the end of Romans 2, but it's there in the Old Testament, the idea of the circumcision of the heart.

It's a metaphor for conquering sin. It's a metaphor for sin not only being forgiven, forgiven, but ultimately eradicated from the believer's life.

[19 : 43] Something that the Old Testament only ever anticipated in the future. But now Paul says in Jesus it is the reality and not just the future.

He's not saying that for a believer they're now sinless in their life, but that sin is conquered. He's talking about the change inside that's begun. Later on in the next chapter of this letter he'll speak about us being renewed as an ongoing thing through God's power.

Same idea in effect. The heart has been changed in Jesus Christ. It's past tense, it's happened already. The result of it is putting off the body of the flesh.

It's a way of talking about sinful lives. it's been put off in reality as you've put on a new spiritual life or body in effect.

Paul will apply that sort of language in the passage we'll look at next week and the week after as well about how we live morally because of who we are. The language probably suggests that the Colossians were in fact Gentiles not Jews circumcised and maybe part of the pressure on them is some people forcing them to Old Testament laws and maybe the men to be physically circumcised because that was a Jewish requirement.

[21 : 09] But Paul would have nothing of that. You're spiritually circumcised in Christ. Sin has been conquered in Christ and you're in him and therefore in you sin has been conquered is what he's saying here.

When did this occur? It occurred verse 12 when you were buried with him in baptism. There's a sense here that a Christian is in Christ.

We so much belong to Christ whose body we are and in whom we are as believers that when Jesus was buried after his death on the cross we were buried in him.

But Paul applies it metaphorically here. When you were buried in Christ in baptism and the balance of this, the complement of it, the rest of the verse, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.

When Jesus was buried we were buried in him, when he rose from the dead we rose in him. But Paul applies it to becoming a Christian. Buried with Christ in baptism, raised with him in faith.

[22 : 17] He's not setting at odds against each other the baptism and the faith, but what he's actually showing is that baptism isn't in itself a mystical, powerful experience, divorced from faith.

It's part of the whole package. Paul is in fact saying when you were converted, when you became a Christian, you died your old life and you rose a new life. You died your life to sin and you rose a new life to God.

You died the life of sins and immorality, that clothing's gone and you've risen to be a new person renewed in the image of Jesus. We'll see how he applies that in the rest of chapter 2 and 3 in the next two weeks.

One of the highlights of last year for me was this. On Easter day last year we baptised a number of folk in our Chinese congregation.

I can't remember how many last year. And the week after I was speaking to one of them, a young adult called Feng. He gave his testimony to our combined service last year for Trinity Sunday.

[23 : 21] And I asked him, how did you find being baptised last week? And he said to me, when I went under the water here, it felt like I was dying.

But when I came up, it was like a new life. And I had, I think, tears in my eyes. It was profound. I'm not sure that Feng had been taught this sort of idea in the Bible.

Maybe he had. But it was exactly, what Paul is referring to here. That when you become a Christian, which is symbolically marked by baptism, there's a sense in which going under the waters of baptism, you bury your old life and you rise to a new life.

And Paul is saying for these Christians, it's done. It's a reality. You're in Christ and that's the effect of it. We have it now, the fullness in Jesus.

We belong in him and we belong in his risen life now, is what he's saying. He says a similar thing in verse 13.

[24 : 29] In one sense, he's describing the same thing in slightly different language, but he's making a slightly different point as well. In verse 13, he says, and when you were dead in trespasses, that's before you were a Christian, before you were baptized, before you came to faith, when you were dead in trespasses, in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, that is, your heart had not been changed by God or Christ, then God made you alive together with Jesus.

When did this happen? In effect, that says much the same as what Paul's just said, but now he goes on to emphasize what's happened to our sins. Yes, they've been put aside, as he said earlier, the old body of the flesh through the spiritual circumcision.

We've died to that sinful life as we were buried in baptism. But now he reiterates it yet again, the end of verse 13, when he forgave us all our trespasses.

Forgiven. Forgiven, though we don't deserve it. We were dead in our sins, but they're forgiven by Jesus, by God.

notice, forgiven all our trespasses. The word all we've seen the last two weeks is very important in this book.

[25 : 56] Here it is again, easy to skip over, but what wonderful assurance. Forgiven all our trespasses. Not just some, not even just the important ones, but all of them.

Forgiven. In fact, in verse 13, the word you is emphatic. It's not just that God made you alive together with him when he forgave us all our trespasses, but you God made alive.

You Colossians, of course, Paul is speaking about. But for any Christian, you God made alive.

That's the emphasis in that verse. The beginning of 2007, I had a personal catastrophe.

My computer crashed. I lost eight months of work because I didn't know anything about what's called backups, which now, let me tell you, I do regularly.

Eight months of work, completely gone. all my sermon notes, lecture notes, articles that I'd written, everything. I still occasionally realise there was something I lost when I go looking for it and can't find it.

[27 : 16] Gone. The record of them was completely erased on the sort of bit in the middle of my computer. That was a catastrophe.

But God does exactly that with our sin. Verse 14, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands.

It's like a hard drive erasure, totally gone, wiped out. Our debt to God is torn up. The slate is wiped absolutely clean.

There's no sort of faint image, you know, on a whiteboard, if your pen is a bit hard or something, you can faintly see when it's been wiped out what was underneath. That's not the case with our sin. It's not that God sort of wipes off the top but underneath he can still see a faint impression of what it was.

No, it's gone, completely gone, absolutely wiped clean. The slate is as though it is brand new. as indeed in God's eyes it is.

[28 : 27] And what's gone is what stands against us, what will condemn us. Language that Paul pick up in a few verses time. It's gone. Paul actually dramatically depicts that at the end of verse 14.

He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. Slightly dramatic flourish in a way. But what Paul has in mind is that as Jesus was nailed to the cross, our sins were nailed there in him.

And when he died, he died for our sins. And we died to sin in him. It's all part of the package that Paul is talking about. No wonder you see that hymn writer said, my sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul. You see, Jesus' death entirely, completely, totally, fully, absolutely takes away all our sin.

What a wonderful, blessed, glorious thought that is. But more than that, not only did he die taking our sin, but at the same time he disarmed the rulers and authorities, the false gods, those opposed to God, defeated in the cross is what verse 15 says.

[29 : 59] To disarm them means to strip them of their power, denude them of their might and control in effect. And not only that, he made a public example of them, triumphing over them in the cross.

If you remember when Saddam Hussein was defeated, the great public example of that, or two really, one was that toppling of that great statue that symbolised the end of his regime and the other was the public execution of him sometime later.

Jesus' death has defeated the powers and authorities. That's why back in that hymn in verses 15 to 20, Paul can in effect sing in praise that Jesus is over all powers and rulers and thrones and authorities.

Because in his death on the cross they're defeated. When sin is defeated, the enemies of God are defeated, Satan is defeated in the cross. And therefore they've got no claim over this.

They're defeated. So don't be taken captive to them. That's the deceit, that somehow there is some better Lord. But not at all, there is no better Lord.

[31 : 13] So don't be taken captive to them. That's why this basic command is there in verse 8. You are foolish and indeed fatal if you follow them or serve them.

You Colossians have received Christ Jesus as your Lord. That means your hearts are changed when you are circumcised in Jesus. It means your sins are forgiven. You've been buried in him. You've been raised with him. You're part of the new life already in him. You have fullness in Jesus Christ. Why would you want to exchange that for anything else? Don't believe the promises of others that there is something better.

There is not, is what Paul is writing here. Because this Jesus is supreme over every ruler and authority. He is the Lord. So don't exchange his lordship for some other pretender.

It would be a fatal thing to do. Continue to live in him is what he's saying. The second negative command comes in verse 16.

[32 : 24] Don't let anyone condemn you. Now Paul is perhaps getting a bit more specific here. The general command is continue to live in Jesus. So don't let anyone take you captive.

Don't let anyone condemn you. That's part of the deceit. They want to condemn you because they suggest that your practices are not actually matching up to God's standards.

In particular the issues as verse 16 suggests are food, drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths. That list suggests a Jewish false teaching that is saying that even for Gentile Christians, that is non-Jewish Christians, you've got to obey the Old Testament laws.

So therefore you've got to abstain from eating pig, which may mean that you don't get swine flu, but actually is not a law that Christians should be obliged by.

The drink bit is not particularly an Old Testament law, but maybe their tradition that they might abstain from wine. The festivals are the festivals of things like Passover and tabernacles and so on,

as though they somehow needed still to be celebrated.

[33 : 33] The new moons were special days sometimes in the Jewish calendar and the Sabbaths of course every week. Very strict on Sabbath laws as you know from the Gospels when they speak of what Jesus did on the Sabbath and the opposition that he incurred as a result.

Paul is not saying they are bad laws, he's not saying they are bad things, but he is saying don't let anyone condemn you on these matters because we are not obligated under those laws.

It is a human tradition not according to Christ, is how he put it in earlier verses. This is what he says in verse 17, they are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

The shadow is actually a good thing in the way the Bible uses that expression. The Old Testament laws and regulations and practices and so on are shadows pointing to a reality or substance to come.

Like the Old Testament temple or tabernacle or priesthood or kingship are in a sense shadows of a greater temple which is the risen Lord Jesus and so to it with all these laws of food and so on.

[34 : 41] Why go backwards when the substance is Jesus? That's a shadow, the reality is Jesus. So don't let anyone condemn you on those matters trying to deceive you to go back to them, you'll end up serving a different Lord, even if they're Old Testament biblical laws.

You see the festivals of Passover are fulfilled in Jesus. We're not obligated to celebrate Passover, we're obligated to celebrate Jesus. The food and drink laws have been made redundant.

Jesus declared that in Mark chapter 7 for example. The Sabbath was meant to be a shadow pointing to the heavenly rest that would be ours for eternity.

That's what Jesus' own practices were demonstrating when he said, I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. So don't be obligated by Jewish Sabbath laws because Jesus is the substance.

He is the one who the weary go to for rest. So Paul is saying because you are in Christ and he is your Lord, don't let anyone impose on you some form of spiritual program, whether it's Jewish or something else, that doesn't have Jesus at its center.

[35 : 56] They might pretend that it's somehow spiritually superior but it's not. And how easy it is to be taken captive by legalism, by rules and regulations that somehow just sort of bring down to a fairly banal level what is spiritually glorious in Christ.

Continue to live in him, he said in verse 6, not by rules and regulations of shadows. And the third and final warning like verse 16 comes in verse 18, don't let anyone disqualify you.

Well you might as well say condemn again but Paul uses a slightly different word but in effect the same idea. Here now perhaps are not Jewish rules and regulations but general spiritual practices. Another set of rules though. The first is self-abasement. It's a sort of false humility, an asceticism. It's Uriah Heap's spirituality.

You remember Uriah Heap in David Copperfield I think. I think it's David Copperfield. I always muddle up my Charles Dickens books. But he was the one who said, oh I'm just your humble servant.

[37 : 05] He wasn't acting humbly at all. He was proud and arrogant. Twit. Well that's what this self-abasement is here that Paul's condemning. Worship of angels. Possibly something they were doing thinking that somehow worshipping angels was drawing them closer to heaven.

What garbage. You have the fullness in Christ. Paul is saying. They're dwelling on visions. And so somehow all the visions they've got and they're boasting in probably is somehow meaning that they're captured into heaven in a higher loftier spiritual plane.

Not at all Paul says. All of these are spiritual arrogance. That's what he says at the end of verse 18. Puffed up without cause.

By a human way of thinking. How different from what Paul will exhort in chapter 3 when he says clothe yourselves with humility.

Not being puffed up without a cause like these false teachers and their adherents here. You see there's no reason to be condemned and there's no reason to be disqualified because all our sins are forgiven.

[38 : 15] They are nailed to the cross in the triumphant death of the supreme lord Jesus Christ. We are taken captive.

We are condemned and we are disqualified when we don't hold fast to the head. That's what Paul goes on to say in verse 19.

He's saying it about the false teachers. They're not holding fast to the head. That is Jesus, the head of the church. The language of head for Jesus was used in that hymn in chapter 1. Suggesting that they're not holding fast means the false teachers may have begun as Christians but are now sort of drifting away from the truth.

The head, Jesus, is the one from whom the whole body, the whole church universal, is nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews and grows with a growth that is a mature growth not in numbers, that is from God.

That's why Paul said that hymn back in chapter 1, so that it will encourage and inspire his readers then and now to hold fast to Jesus, the head.

[39 : 27] Paul is advocating Hannibal mode Christianity. Don't be taken captive. The supreme, majestic Jesus Christ is greater than all authorities, all powers, all rulers and dominions.

And to be captive to another is foolish and fatal. But you see, the deceit continues. It didn't end in Colossae in the first century AD.

There is much deceit under the guise of Christian spirituality all around us, in pulpits throughout this city and land, in books that you find in Christian bookshops as well as secular.

It's easy to be deceived. Spiritualities that promise too much too soon. Christians or spiritualities that promise some greater spiritual experience to move on from just the basic of the gospel of Jesus death.

But they're outside Christ in the end. The spiritualities that promise fullness, that promise heaven here and now without the moral ethical obligation.

[40 : 33] don't be deceived. Don't be taken captive. Don't be condemned and don't be disqualified. Because we have fullness here in Christ now. We're in him.

If you're a believer in him, hearts are changed. Sin is conquered. They've been nailed to the cross and forgiven. And what's more, we've been buried with him and we've risen with him to the new life already.

We're not free from the pressure of deceit. We're to hold fast to Jesus the Lord, the head.

That's why Paul says continue to live in him. Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

It's why Paul prayed at the beginning of this letter. It's what Paul had laboured for. for years. It's why he wrote the hymn in chapter 1 and it's why he writes the guts of this letter here.

[41 : 39] See to it that no one takes you captive. Continue to live in him, Jesus, just as you've received Christ Jesus as Lord.

Let's pray before we sing our praises to him. our God, we give you thanks and praise that when we were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of our flesh, you made us alive together with Jesus when he forgave us all our trespasses.

Thank you that you have erased the record that stood against us with its legal demands. thank you that this is set aside and is nailed to the cross of Jesus. Thank you that you've disarmed all the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them and that Jesus triumphed over them in his death on the cross.

Lord God, strengthen us to continue to live our lives in Jesus, rooted and built up in him, established in the faith, abounding in thanksgiving.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.