**Doctrinal Captivity**

“You shall know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus is offering us freedom from the burden of sin; freedom from the temporal and eternal consequences of believing lies and misinformation. In his letter to the saints in Colossae, Paul impressed on their minds the only reliable source of spiritual truth and warned them of those who would rob them of their liberty by deluding them with persuasive argument.

In Colossians 1:9-10, Paul told those Christians that he prayed on their behalf, “That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects.” Paul’s prayer for the Colossians should be our fervent desire as well.

Paul then identified the source of the knowledge necessary to walk in a worthy manner: In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:2-3). His divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) and seeking spiritual wisdom anywhere else will only enslave us to the doctrines of men.

Throughout this letter, Paul warns of those who would rob Christians of their spiritual liberty. Notice the language he uses: “No one is to act as your judge…” (2:16); “See to it that no one takes you captive…” (2:8); “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize…” (2:18); “Why do you submit yourselves to decrees…” (2:20). To accept doctrines without the authority of Christ is to forfeit the liberty that can be found only in Christ. Paul identifies two sources of danger.

**Proponents of Mosaic Law.** God gave a written Law through Moses to the Israelite nation exclusively. It served as a “school master” to lead them to Messiah and, once it served its purpose, it was removed to make room for the new covenant (Hebrews 8:13). But some first-century Jews believed Gentiles had to become good Jews if they hoped to be good Christians. Besides binding physical circumcision, they judged Gentile Christians in regard to food and drink and in respect to festivals and new moons and Sabbath days, things which were a mere shadow of what was to come; “but the substance belongs to Christ” (2:16-17).

**Any doctrines of human origin**. Paul warned the Colossians not to submit themselves to decrees that were in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men (2:20-21). He listed some examples that were relevant then: “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch” (v 21); self-abasement and worship of angels (v. 18). While many human doctrines “have the appearance of wisdom”, any teaching without Christ’s authority amounts to “self-made religion” (v. 23).

Every aspect of the work, worship and organization of the group with which you are affiliated must derive its authority from the teachings of the New Testament. If your leadership has to revert to Old Testament teaching to justify activities, something is wrong. If they must appeal to the opinions and philosophies of men as the basis for their doctrines, they are robbing you of your liberty in Christ. Only the truth will make you free and only the New Testament of Jesus Christ contains the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

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