

# **Beware of Rattlesnakes**

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Colossians 2:2,3

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

## **The Mystery of God**

Colossians 1:26,27

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory

The mystery of God is Christ in you, the hope of glory!

Here in Colossians it seems there were some false teachers who were trying to teach the Colossian believers to pursue after worldly wisdom.

Colossians 2:4,5

And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

The wisdom of this world is not superior to God's wisdom:

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

First of all, we need to place our faith in the Lord and go on to respect Him — reverencing Him and worshipping Him as God Almighty. When we do this, it is the beginning of wisdom.

Now, Paul is encouraging those who believe in Christ to walk in Him:

Colossians 2:8

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

To walk in Christ is walking in the newness of life in Him:

Romans 6:4

Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

To walk in Christ is walking in love:

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

To walk with Christ is loving the Lord with all that's within us:

Luke 10:27

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

To walk with Christ is walking by faith, not by sight:

II Corinthians 5:7

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

And to walk with Christ is obeying all that He has commanded us to do:

John 15:10

If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

## **Beware!**

The Apostle Paul told the Colossian believers to beware:

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

To beware is to be on guard and pay mind to the warnings in the Scriptures. Today there are also a lot of false teachers who mislead those who pay heed to them.

Here in Colossians Paul was warning of false teachers who deceive through philosophy and worldly wisdom. They are out to take away one's faith in God and in His Word, spiritually destroying them through their erroneous teachings.

As Brother Dailey and I were traveling out west, we stopped at a place where you could stand by the road and look out and the view from the edge of a cliff. There was a sign that warned: *Beware of Rattlesnakes.*

By that cliff, if someone stepped past that sign and down into the bushes, they might step on a rattlesnake hidden under the brush. And if a rattlesnake bites you, their poison can take your physical life.

These false teachers that Paul was warning about could take away one's spiritual life if a person was not on guard, paying attention to Paul's warnings. And those warnings are for us today, as well.

We should beware of the books we read, and not read things that are contrary to the truths of God's Word. There are 66 books we should read regularly, and those are the 66 books of the Bible. We should read them — and meditate on them.

## **Search the Scriptures**

We should search the Scriptures so we would be able to know when a doctrine is false, because it contradicts what God has said in His Word. If you don't turn away from such, it won't be long before you become captive and spiritually destroyed.

When we are warned in the Bible to *beware* of something, it should let us know we need to be on guard and not open ourselves up to false teachings.

Many are deceived because they don't search the Scriptures, but they go along with anything they hear or read.

Acts 17:10-12

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

These at Berea received the Word with readiness of mind, then they searched the Scriptures daily to see if the preaching was true or not. And that is what we need to do when we hear a message preached or taught: take down the references and check them out to see if what is being preached goes along with the Word.

Revelation 3:11

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

If we're not doing what the Scriptures are telling us to do — guarding ourselves against false teachers and searching the Scriptures — we could allow some false teacher to take our crown.

We need to be on guard, watching to beware of such so that we make it into the kingdom of God.

## **Seek God's Wisdom, Not Worldly Wisdom**

Paul also warns not to look for worldly wisdom, but for the wisdom that God gives:

I Corinthians 1:21-24

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Those who seek after philosophy are wanting the wisdom of this world according to man's intellect and natural understanding. Such teaching only leads one into captivity and can take their soul.

Colossians 2:9

For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

In Jesus Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:10

And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power

When Christ abides in us as born again believers, we, too, have the fulness of the Godhead within — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And thus we are complete in Him.

Colossians 2:11

. . . in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ

Our past sins have been put off by Christ and His circumcision. As we read this chapter, we see we must have the foundation of these things working in our life through the working that Christ has done in us when we believed on Him as Lord and Saviour.

We no longer have to be subject to human wisdom or human works, but subject to the Lord. We need to make sure we know where we stand in Christ and be sure we're walking in this newness of life.

Colossians 3:12-14

Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross

This is what the Lord has done for us: blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which we were unable to keep. He took them and nailed them to the cross.

We need to hold fast to all Jesus has done for us and beware that we don't err away from the truths of the gospel.

## **Don't Be Gullible!**

Proverbs 19:27

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

We need to receive our instructions and knowledge from God's Word, which warns us to beware of false teachers.

We can't afford to be gullible. Some are quick to believe whatever they are told; they are quick to believe it because the one speaking claims to be a minister of the gospel. Claiming to be a minister of God doesn't make them a minister of the gospel if they are teaching contrary to God's Word.

Colossians 2:15

And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

This is what Jesus did on the cross, dying that horrible death. He was put in the tomb and arose triumphant from the dead, triumphing over these demonic forces.

Colossians 2:18

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind

*Let no man beguile you:* In other words, don't let anybody deceive you. We are warned not to worship angels.

Colossians 2:19,20

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances

## **Avoid Man-Made Traditions**

The Pharisees had a lot of traditions and man-made religious laws, such as dietary laws that many follow yet today. They have laws concerning the washing of pots and pans, and washing dishes — keeping dishes used to serve foods that contain milk separate from dishes used to serve meats. They have to have separate soaps and cannot use the milk and the meat dishes at the same meal.

Then there are those who make a religious law concerning the eating of meat: They will only eat vegetables and fruits.

I Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God

is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Here we see where God created meat to be received with thanksgiving, sanctifying it by the Word of God and prayer. A well-rounded diet is good for us, including meats and vegetables. Even in this we are to go by the Word of God and not man-made laws. God wouldn't tell us to do something if it were not good for us.

God also warns here of those who would forbid us to marry: but, again, we must go by God's Word and not some man's law:

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Matthew 19:9

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Colossians 2:20-23

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

The Lord is teaching us some important truths through Paul's ministry here to the Colossians. We are warned to *beware* because we can fall from our steadfastness if we pay heed to these false teachers and preachers. They claim to be preaching and teaching a message that will give you liberty, but how can they give liberty when they're in bondage themselves?

Now, the Scriptures here in Colossians tell us how we can go on and serve the Lord in true liberty.

## **Set Your Heart on the Lord**

Colossians 3:1-4

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

Our affections should be upon the Lord and upon the things of the Lord. We cannot allow ourselves to get our minds on the things of this earth. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. If we are dead and our lives are hid, how can we get involved in the things of this world?

Now, if we obey what the Scriptures would tell us, setting our heart and affection on the Lord, then we will appear with Christ in glory.

Colossians 3:5,6

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate

affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience

We will not walk in the flesh if we are obedient to the Word of God, but we will keep His commandments and walk in the Spirit. If we walk in the Lord, doing what He tells us to do, we will be in no danger of having anyone taking our crown from us.

Many open themselves up to danger by reading books that fill their minds with lies contrary to the Scriptures. You can get confused by what you allow yourself to read.

And you need to also be careful which preachers and teachers you listen to. Is what their preaching and teaching contradictory to the Word of God? If so, then reject it; don't allow it to enter into your heart. Once it enters into your heart, Satan will take it and use it to destroy you spiritually.

### **Trust, Don't Tempt the Lord**

We can learn something from the *Beware of Rattlesnakes* sign. If my husband and I had stepped down into those bushes, we could have been bitten by a rattlesnake and possibly have died! And if we had stepped down, knowing that the sign warned us not to, we would have been tempting God.

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

If you're deliberately opening yourself up to the things you are warned about in the Word, I believe you're tempting God. We need to be sure we take God's Word to heart. When the devil tried to tempt Jesus to sin in the wilderness, Jesus said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

We can be encouraged by reading a Christian biography as we read of some of the things God brought them through. We could even feel the dealings of God in our lives by reading what dealings they had in their walk with the Lord. But the best book we can read is the Word of God, meditating on it and feeding our soul.

I trust from this message that you take the warnings Paul gave to the Colossians, and be on guard that you don't let any false teachers or philosophers deceive you.