

ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:1-10

■ Mike Yaconelli writes in *The Whittenburg Door*:

I live in a small, rural community. There are lots of cattle ranches around here, and every once in a while a cow wanders off and gets lost.... Ask a rancher how a cow gets lost, and chances are he will reply, "Well, the cow starts nibbling on a tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass and starts nibbling on that one, and then it nibbles on a tuft of green grass right next to a hole in the fence. It then sees another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, so it nibbles on that one and then goes on to the next tuft. The next thing you know the cow has nibbled itself into being lost."

(Larson, 230)

People are much the same as cattle, it would seem. It doesn't take long for people to become sidetracked by some new doctrine or philosophy. Some people are always nibbling around for a new revelation or religious fad to spice up their religious world. And as soon as they have found something, Jesus gets traded off for a substitute that puts them back at the center of their world. They have drifted away into error. *Like the old cow, they have nibbled themselves into being lost.* This is just the sort of thing that Paul hopes to prevent in his letter to the Colossian church. The temptation to accept the ideas and teachings of the false teachers was a problem that had to be dealt with and Paul knew just how to do it. Out of his deep love and concern for the people, Paul appeals to them on the grounds of a mutual experience -- their commitment to Christ.

In the first ten verses of chapter two we see several *expressions* of Paul's deep affection for the Christians at Colosse and at Laodicea -- both of which he encourages to continue in the faith.

I. HE IS COMMITTED TO THEM (vv. 1-3).

A. As their leader, Paul cares about their struggles (v. 1).

He has the same Spirit within him. He has a heavenly bond with the

Colossian believers. When their souls are in danger he senses it.

B. He wants them to be encouraged and united (v. 2a).

False teachers always bring with them a sense of discontentment and confusion.

C. He wants them to come to a full understanding of Christ (v. 2b-3).

■ R. Kent Hughes sums up Paul's line of thought, "Here's the point: when we love Him and love the Scriptures and love the church so that we are united in love with each other, the mystery unfolds and we are in touch with 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'" ⁽⁵⁵⁾

II. HE IS CONFIDENT IN THEM (vv. 4-7).

A. He rejoices in the steadiness of their faith (vv. 4-5).

Steadfastness is a sign of a fruitful relationship with Christ.

B. He has the assurance they would continue on as they began (vv. 6-7).

The statement, "*As you have therefore received Christ,*" is evidence of Paul's confidence in their salvation experience.

The balance of verse 6 & 7 is instruction on how to keep their faith alive. He admonishes them to do 5 things:

1. Walk in Him.
2. (Be) rooted in Him.
3. (Be) built up in Him.
4. (Be) established in the faith.
5. Abound in thanksgiving.

III. HE IS CONCERNED FOR THEM (vv. 8-10).

A. He warns them not to be entrapped by those in error (vv. 8-9).

Remember, the false teachers were using the lure of “superior knowledge” to entrap those who would listen.

■ One writer explains, “It was all very mysterious, complicated, astrological, and snooty. But worst of all, it was very deadly because it mixed some of the truth of Hebrew religion with the delectably enticing mysteries of Eastern mysticism and Greek philosophy. This was presented as ‘something more’ which would elevate the ignorant Colossian Christians from their crude baby-faith to the truly deep things of God. Evidently some succumbed.” (Hughes, 69)

B. He warns them that to go into error is to lose Christ (v. 8b-9).

The “traditions of men” and “the basic principles of the world” are both contrary to the Spirit of God. In other words, they are demonic by nature!

To depart from Christ and to follow either is to lose Christ and your salvation!

C. He assures them that Christ is all-sufficient for their need (v. 10).

Two points to remember:

1. The fullness of God is contained in Christ -- we need no other.
2. We are complete only in Him -- we need no other.

CONCLUSION

■ “On March 6, 1987, Eamon Coughlan, the Irish world record holder at 1500 meters, was running in a qualifying heat at the World Indoor Track Championships in Indianapolis. With two and a half laps left, he was tripped. He fell, but he got up and with great effort managed to catch the leaders. With only 20 yards left in the race, he was in third place -- good enough to qualify for the finals.

He looked over his shoulder to the inside, and, seeing no one, he let up. But another runner, charging hard on the outside, passed Coughlan a yard before the finish, thus eliminating him from the finals. Coughlan’s great comeback effort was rendered worthless by taking his eyes off the finish line.

It’s tempting to let up when the sights around us look favorable. But we finish well in the Christian race only when we fix our eyes on the goal: Jesus Christ.” (Larson, 78)

Paul’s *expressions* of commitment, confidence, and concern for these Christians is the same as God’s expressions for us. Above everything, God wants us to continue in the faith and knowledge of Christ our Lord. When it comes to true salvation -- accept no substitutes.

References

Hughes, R. Kent (1989). *Colossians and Philemon*. Westchester, ILL: Crossway Books.

Larson, Craig B. (Ed.). (1993). *Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.