

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

From the beginning of Christianity, doctrine has been a problem. Many of the epistles in the New Testament were written to counter false doctrine. As Paul wrote instructions to the young evangelist, Timothy, he warned of the abandonment of the truth of apostolic teachings. In 2 Timothy 4:2-4 he admonished, "Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Since these words were written, numerous departures have been made from Christianity in its purest form to a form that could scarcely be recognized were the apostles alive today. With multiple choices of "churches", every denomination, sect and group has its own set of doctrines. To those who are desirous of becoming Christians, the multiplicity of choices is mind-boggling. Some question, "Which group has the truth?" Others assume that truth is relative, and choose a church on the basis of such matters as its attraction to youth, or its standing in the community.

What Paul wrote the church at Colosse gives some direction that we would do well to heed today. Paul wrote them, "Ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2:10), referring to their completeness in Christ, identified as "the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18a). Our spiritual relationship with God is not through man's imposition of his own authority upon others, nor even through angels, but only Through Christ. As Paul also wrote, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Some regard themselves as receiving special enlightenment apart from, and often contradictory to, the words of Christ and His apostles. In the early years of the church, Gnosticism challenged apostolic authority, claiming special enlightenment apart from Christ. Every generation since has been bewitched by elements of this ancient heresy. The fact is that if we are in Christ, we have equal access to the truth and blessings that are in Him. Or as Paul stated it, "Ye are complete in him." There is no supplementary source of grace or instruction that God has given us. They are to be found only in Christ and His word. -Ron