Colossians 2: 6-23 Keep faithful, our side of the covenant

We continue today on our exploration of Colossians. The last two weeks we have looked at our true hope – which is the faith and trust that we have a resurrection life to look forward to, with eternity with Jesus, where His glory appears in fulness.

We can hope for other things too, but that one, true hope is what will change us, so that we live our lives with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, with the fruit of the Spirit being manifest: joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, peace, faithfulness, goodness and love.

It is this fruit that will be attractive to anyone who visits. The signs of a close relationship with our Lord.

Paul was writing to the small church in Colossae, a minority in a small town, to give them encouragement that they were not forgotten, they were still valued in Paul’s eyes. I emphasise his encouragement to you today, in a similar situation.

Keep Jesus as the Head of this church. Keep firm to trusting His character – God who loves and, rather than seeing all and getting angrier and angrier, God whose heart is grieved when He sees His children turn from Him and put themselves into danger and harm’s way.

But it is difficult at times, there is no denying. How can a God, who is good, righteous and just, allow such turmoil in His creation? All the way through history people have been trying to make sense of it all, and many theories abounded in the time Paul was writing – and still today.

It is easy to get pulled into some ways of thinking, but they will not be in line with the bible. In the first and second centuries, one belief out of many, was that God was in fact evil and the angels that spoke were evil, so all the prophets and Moses were led into their actions by evil angels. Jesus was completely separate and came to bring righteousness into the world, so therefore against God.

How close are we sometimes at wanting that to be true? The harsh actions of God were not actions of a God of loving goodness, but an evil being, and Jesus has come instead offering forgiveness?

Yes, Jesus does offer forgiveness, but if that were the case, where is the justice that we all desire?

Jesus IS God! And as His church we have been given His fullness, through the Holy Spirit within us, over any power and authority. That is massive power that we have, through Him.

If we are His, then He is ours. We are in a new covenant with the Lord God, through the sacrifice of Jesus, His Son.

In the scripture Paul mentions circumcision, a Jewish rite, a physical sign of their part in the covenant that God had sealed with Abraham. Paul states that our covenant with Jesus is symbolised by baptism.

Baptism is a public declaration of following Jesus. Immersive baptism is a physical sign that when you are submerged in the water you are symbolising yourself in the grave, dying to your old way of doing things, living for self, and when you emerge you have been washed clean and are ready to live your new life for Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you.

If you have experience infant baptism, that is no less powerful, but as you did not have the power to make the promise of following Jesus yourself as an infant, then a public declaration of your faith in Jesus is just as powerful.

A public act as a sign of your part in the covenant with Jesus. Your eternal life with Jesus begins at that point – not when you have died.

Forgiveness is given when we truly confess and our salvation is a present gift, not something for the future. Jesus has been crucified, so the gift is for now, His death was once, for all.

Paul states that when Jesus was crucified He disarmed the authorities. In the culture that Paul was writing that implied making a public spectacle of them, by His cross.

The image that would have been evoked was Roman soldiers who would strip defeated armies of their clothes and weapons and then process them through the streets to show their defeat, completely powerless.

When Jesus was processed through the streets, with His cross, the authorities would have assumed they were showing His complete defeat. But that public procession of defeat on the way to crucifixion was turned to public victory on His resurrection three days later.

This also had an impact on the law codes that the Jewish people followed. The sacrifices that had been required to make atonement for the sins of the people; the celebration of the festivals that were to remember times that God had saved His people.

That is what is meant by it being a shadow of the present. The laws had all been to renew relationship with God, but now, through Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice had been made for all people, and no other act of God in the past was as great as His Son being crucified – only to be raised to life eternal.

That is the act to be remembered, which we do when sharing Communion. But we are able to turn to that act and receive forgiveness at any time.

It is Jesus and all that He did that we need to keep as our focus. Other ideas may be presented to explain the mystery of God, Jesus, Holy Spirit and salvation.

The hunger for wisdom and knowledge have always, and will continue to, overtake the simplicity revealed – but the revelation is within mystery. I urge you to grasp Jesus, to hold onto that hope, through faith. Do not get dragged in to believing, or trusting in, anything that is not revealed in scripture. Invention and imagination can be very enticing – but it is not the truth.

Allow Jesus to be the Head of this church and He will grow it as He desires it to grow. When we look around, perhaps we do not think that we are complete – but what is complete?

Do we think that our body is deficient of any element? But we can see through physical bodies that even when an element may be missing, the body can still be effective.

I know that many of us feel weary, discouraged and any number of other emotions when we look and see our small church. But I encourage you, just as Paul did with the Colossians, maintain the law of Christ, keep our hope in Him, walk in our covenant with Him, allowing Him to rule over each of us, to trust in Him to guide us according to His plan.

I encourage each of us, as we continue to follow Jesus faithfully, we all have value in His kingdom. And through the Holy Spirit dwelling within each of us, we have the ability to bring His kingdom on earth now, to those He brings into our life.

Remain hopeful and trust in Him. Through Him we have the power - for He is God!