**The Source of True Spiritual Living**

Colossians 2:11-12

**Introduction**

Have you ever felt like you were on the outside? Perhaps in a conversation, the other two people had a common friend or interest but you didn’t know what they were talking about. Maybe you have felt excluded at times because of your station in life, your lack of talent or athletic ability, or your family background. The Christians at Colossae were made to feel like they were on the outside of true spiritual living. The visiting teachers made them feel inferior in spiritual knowledge, experience, and growth. Paul blew the whistle on them because they were leading the people to doubt the sufficiency of Christ and His work of salvation in their lives by emphasizing the externals. Paul wrote to the Colossians to help them understand their actual standing in Christ as the source of true spiritual living. What is necessary for true spiritual living and how is it possible?

1. **The visiting teachers taught that circumcision was necessary for true spiritual living.** 
   1. They emphasized the importance of circumcision. Circumcision was a sign given to Abraham. It distinguished the Jews as the people of God. The Jews prided themselves in this status.
   2. The visiting teachers probably took this rite a step further.
      1. While the false teachers in Galatia said circumcision was necessary for salvation, it appears that the false teachers in Colossae taught circumcision was necessary for spiritual living. It may be that they viewed it as a step of dedication in their spiritual lives.
      2. They must have taught that it would bring the believers into a deeper union with God by removing the sin nature from the individual so that he could be truly spiritual.
   3. The problem with the teaching of the visiting teachers in Colossae was that they taught that the external ritual of circumcision could help them spiritually.
      1. Their teaching offered an empty promise of freedom from the sins of the flesh and a deeper union with God.
      2. They emphasized that true spiritual living was accomplished through the external practices of man.
      3. A clean heart and deeper union with God could never come through such external religious practices.
   4. Accepting their offer would leave the Colossians confused, frustrated, and without spiritual progress. While these teachers may have been well-intentioned, they were wrong. It may have worked for a while, but eventually they would be frustrated and going nowhere. True spiritual living is not possible through external rituals.
2. **Paul wrote to help the Colossians see that they already had what they needed for true spiritual living.** 
   1. Paul knew they would be tempted to follow the teaching of the false teachers.
      1. They would want to be free from the pull of their fleshly nature.
      2. They would struggle with thoughts of their own forgiveness.
      3. They would be tempted to follow someone who promised that they could have a deeper relationship with God.
      4. What they were offering sounded good. However, they were not offering it according to the right means.
   2. They did not need what they were being offered in light of what they already had.
3. They just needed to understand what they had.
4. They would need to comprehend the truth of who they are in Christ.
5. To try to add anything to who they are is to subtract from who they are.
6. They were already in a union with God.
   1. They **are** complete in Him.(2:10)
7. Note the verb tense. It is not that they will someday be complete in Christ, but rather that they are complete in Him.
8. The fullness of God is in Him.
9. It does not matter what credentials the teachers say they have (tradition of men; rudiments of the world), Christ is the head of all principality and power.
10. They have received a spiritual circumcision at the time of their salvation. (2:11a)
    * 1. Note again the verb tense – “ye are circumcised.”
11. Through the work of Christ they were made the people of God.
12. Physically, they had not been circumcised. Paul acknowledged that fact by indicating that he was not talking about the circumcision made with hands.
13. They were made right with God, but not through external practices, but an internal working of God in their lives.
14. This spiritual circumcision removed "the body of the sins of the flesh." (2:11b) What is meant by this statement?
15. Obviously, it doesn't mean that they are no longer in the body of flesh. They were still flesh and blood. Many taught that the body itself was sinful, but this is not what Paul is saying. He acknowledged that he himself was still in the fleshly body (2 Corinthians 5:1-8).
16. Paul must not be saying that the fleshly nature is put off by their salvation because in other passages it is clear that believers must still contend with the fleshly nature (Romans 7:18; 13:14; Galatians 5:17).
17. The focus here is on their forgiveness and new life in Christ. (2:13)
18. Through the work of Christ they were set free from the ruling power of sin, though not free from the presence of their fleshly nature. They have new life in Christ.
    * + 1. Through the work of Christ, they were forgiven; they were not condemned.
19. They still had the carnal nature, but were not condemned.
20. Why are they free from condemnation and able to have power over the ruling power of sin? They have identified with Christ.
21. They are buried with Him in baptism. (2:12a)
    * + 1. Their water baptism did not effect the change. It only symbolized the fact that the change had taken place.
        2. Water baptism points to a spiritual reality.
        3. You and I as believers identify with Christ in His death.
        4. Paul makes this statement in other passages.(Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:4-5)
22. They **are** risen with him. (2:12b)
23. Note again the verb tense. It is not that they will someday be resurrected. They are risen.
24. It is not just that they have life after death. They have life before death!
25. They have what they need for spiritual living because through Christ’s finished work they have been forgiven and have new life.
26. **Central Idea: Paul taught that true spiritual living is possible through the internal working of God rather than the external practices of man.** 
    1. Don’t allow yourself to be caught up in external forms of righteousness. Performance-based acceptance will leave you running an endless race.
    2. Through the work of Christ, you have all you need for spiritual living.
    3. The fact that you have been forgiven and have new life in Christ should change the way you view life and the way you live.

**Conclusion**

In his letter to the Philippian believers Paul said, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13) Spiritual growth requires the work of the Spirit of God. External changes in a believer’s life are the results of spiritual growth, not the means to spiritual growth.