

Over the last few months, we have learnt that we have a frontline. Wherever we are daily whether at the school gate, in the office, at college, at the till buying food, we have an opportunity as followers of Jesus to make a difference. We can make this difference through our words and deeds, being transformed by the Spirit to be His hand and feet. Everyone of us has a part to play, we are all ministers of God's grace to a world desperate to know it's identity and purpose. The opening verses to our passage encourage us to journey on, to continue to live in Him. We are to be rooted and built up on Him, to grow deeper and build higher all to bring Him glory through the strength that comes through faith; being thankful in all we do.

I wish That I could stop here and ignore the rest of the passage, but I can not as it challenges us as a church. What does our frontline look like as an organism. I say organism rather than an organisation for we are a body, His body of believers, He is the Head – to whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grow as God causes it to grow. Paul warns us that we can become disconnected from our head, losing connection due to the distractions of human traditions and religious restrictions.

Paul warns the church at Colossae:

Against deceptive philosophy (2:8-15) Against irrelevant practices (2:16-17) Against empty promises (2:18-19)

Against false purity (2:20-23).

Paul calls these things the elemental spiritual forces of this world. Now we could interpret these as being like gods of air, earth, fire, and water. Or that they authorities and powers that pull the strings behind the scenes of governments and organisations. Verse 20 gives us the answer, they are rules, worldly (hence the elemental reference) ideas about religion and try to pass them off as truth. These human traditions and philosophies that set themselves up in addition to, or an alternative way of salvation.

It seems that some traditions from the teachers who felt that gentiles (non jews) needed to keep more of the Law, circumcision, keeping of special days, eating certain foods were infiltrating the church. Paul knew these were potential distractions from the core message that it is Jesus who saves not through a bunch of rules and regulations.

In the same way, we can get ourselves embroiled in concerns that keep us busy and do not enable us to be people engaged in mission.

As Christians today may be enticed by the ideas that checking all the boxes will earn favour with God. Keeping special days, getting distracted by things or rituals that in of themselves cannot save. These things are only tools to serve, but if they become the only thing. We can miss the point and enslave ourselves to 'we have always done it this way' mentality, making us irrelevant in reaching the world around us. Paul throughout this letter that Jesus alone is the only means of salvation not the additional things we can add to it.

#### Questions

1. In what ways have we (if any) taken on human traditions and/or religious restrictions? Why?
2. How can we make sure we are not distracted in our faith and miss out in mission?
3. Jesus was a master at telling a story (parables) to share the kingdom of God, he also didn't tell the crowd the point of it, he saved that for his disciples. What can we learn from the way Jesus taught and communicated with the crowd (Matthew 13:10-17)
4. Come up with some ways that we could creatively convey the message of the gospel and package it in a new fresh way?