

Col 2:8-10
“Beware of Earthly Philosophies”

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8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Article: (Franklin Graham’s response to Pastor’s survey)

Introduction

We having been learning that it is:

“IN HIM”! In Jesus! In Christ Jesus our Lord!

Col 1:17

And He is before all things, and **“in Him” all things consist.**

Col 1:19

For it pleased the Father that **“in Him” all the fullness should dwell**

Last week we finished:

Col 2:6-7

6 As you therefore have received **Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk **“in Him”**,⁷ rooted and built up **“in Him”** and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Jesus is ALL, and He is ALL we need.

Whatever the question the answer is more, deeper, richer it’s “IN JESUS”!!!!!!

Col 2:3

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Thus far, they have stood fast against false teachings; Gnostics, Judaizers, mystery religions.

Col 2:5b

....rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

Paul now warns the Colossian church...as all good shepherds do...in order to protect the sheep.

2:8 Beware of philosophy of men

Col 2:8

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

A. Beware:

The Greek word is “blepo” and it means to see and is in the “present imperative”.

It is **“a command”**, to look and then to keep on looking...

We are to always be watching for the safety of the flock.

B. Why should we be concerned?

1. Satan is roaming about like a roaring lion seeking to devour somebody.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

2 Cor 11:13-15

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.** 14 And no wonder! **For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.** 15 Therefore **it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness,** whose end will be according to their works.

2. Wolves are amongst us:

Matt 7:15

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Acts 20:29-31

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

3. Beware of the "self-righteous":

Matt 16:6

Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

Matt 16:12

Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

4. Especially be warned in these last days:

1 Tim 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 Tim 3:13

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

2 Peter 3:3

... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts

C. Lest anyone cheat you or (“take you captive”)

The **word is rare** and **literally means to take as a captive of war**, to take spoils of war, or to take captive in order to enslave.

We are at a war for the minds and the hearts of people who Satan is trying to take away as prisoners.

People become gullible and think they have found some new truth which is going to bring about some super spiritual growth, which in reality only brings them into bondage.

D. Through philosophy:

The false teaching among the Colossians was marked by an emphasis on **philosophy and empty deceit**. Most of all, it was **according to the tradition of men**. It had the stamp of *man* on it, not *God*.

The Greek word is from phileo = love and Sophia-wisdom and means the love of wisdom. Paul is not against a pursuit of wisdom per se but that philosophy which is “**hallow and deceptive**,” as the NIV puts it.

- They thought they were coming into some form of higher knowledge through their mystical experiences, but Paul states that it is empty.
- The word deceptive means empty, fraud or trick. It sounded good but it was empty.
- The phrase empty and deceptive describes this particular philosophy.

In the time of the Bible, basically any theory about God, the world, and meaning of life, was labeled philosophy. Even a religious sect was referred to as a philosophy.

- But Paul would encourage us to have a love for knowledge and truth in general but not apart from Christ.

E. According to the tradition of men:

The word simply means that which is passed down from one to another: the problem is that when something gets repeated often enough, it eventually becomes truth to some.

So much in the church today shouldn't be seen so much as *good* or *bad*. It is simply a distraction because it comes **according to the tradition of men**, not from God's revealed Word.

Traditions may have merit in their own right.

- But they are *dangerous* when presented as even *close to equal* in authority to what God has said in His Word.
- When we take what man says as even near in authority to what God says, we get cheated.

Then they make it sound and/or seem like it is God's word:

Example:

- “The Lord helps those who help themselves”
- “Cleanliness is next to godliness”

1. Religion:

The problem with traditions was evident in the time of Christ. The Pharisees heeded their traditions and made the Word of God of no effect (null and void).

Mark 7:1-9

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, **with unwashed hands, they found fault.**³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless **they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.**⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. **And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.**

⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, **"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"**

⁶ He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

'This people honors Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.

⁷ And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

⁸ For **laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men** -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."⁹ He said to them, **"All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.**

2. False science:

The evolutionist and atheist want us to believe that we are just an accident and that there is no divine true meaning to life.

Poem:

"Once I was a tadpole, beginning to begin;
Then I was a frog with my tail tucked in.
I evolved into a monkey in a banyan tree.
Now, I am a professor with a Ph.D."

Rom 1:22-23

²¹ because, although they knew God, **they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful,** but **became futile in their thoughts,** and **their foolish hearts were darkened.** ²² **Professing** to be wise, they became fools,²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

F. According to the basic principles of the world,

The ancient Greek word translated **basic principles** is *stoicheia*. It simply refers to basic, elementary knowledge.

“A *stochion* (stoy-k-own) was originally a line of things; for instance, it can mean a file of soldiers. But **it came to mean the ABC**, and then **any elementary knowledge**.” (Barclay, in his commentary on Galatians)

Three suggestions have been offered as to its meaning:

1. Paul is stating by leaving Christ and Scripture for these teachings, they are not progressing, but they are like learned adults returning back to the ABC'S of kindergarten:
 - They were leaving maturity for infancy while they thought they were advancing.
 - Once a person leaves Jesus and the Word, they can only digress.

Heb 6:1-2 (Paul rebukes those Jews wanting to go back to Judaism)

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of **the elementary principles** of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

2. It is a reference to the Law of God:
 - The phrase is also seen in Gal 4:3, and some see this as a reference to the law of God.
Gal 4:3-5
3 Even so we, **when we were children, were in bondage** under **the elements of the world**.4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,5 **to redeem those who were under the law**, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
 - By returning to the Law of God they were not advancing as they thought, but were actually retreating and going back to childish learning.
 - The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, Paul would add.

3. The context:
In the context it may mean “the elemental spirits”.
 - In Gnosticism, you had God/The Creator on one end of the spectrum.
 - And then you have below that a series of various angel beings.
 - And one of those lower ranking angels made the “material world”, thus all matter is evil. Thus, God could never have created the “evil material world”, because if He did, He would have done evil.
 - Thus, if Jesus created this world He would also be evil and if Jesus really was in “human flesh”, that would also make Him evil. Thus, Jesus did not create the world and He was never in Human flesh. Thus, Jesus was just an “emanation” that looked like flesh but was really not.
 - Jesus was not the true and living God, but was one of the ranking angels, of a high order.

G. Principles of the world

False teaching is according to these **basic principles**, and not according to Jesus. The way that the world thinks and acts is contrary to the way that Jesus thinks and acts.

In Jesus, we die to the **basic principles** of the world (we will be looking at this later):

Col 2:20-23

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations --21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"22 which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men?23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

H. And not according to Christ:

This is the bottom line of the entire book; people were looking to something other than Jesus Christ to bring them salvation.

This is the bottom line of all other false religions; they are looking to something or someone other than Jesus Christ to bring them salvation.

They may give lip service to the Name of Jesus and the cross, but they say that He is not enough, the cross is not sufficient and you need to add this to make your salvation complete.

Col 2:3

...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2:9 In Jesus is all the fullness of the God head bodily

Col 2:9

9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

A. In Him:

Once again, it is "In Him". It is in the personal relationship with Jesus and daily walking in and with Him.

Do you know Jesus personally?

Are you walking, talking, laughing, crying, experiencing Him?

Acts 17:28a

.... for in Him we live and move and have our being

B. Dwells all the fullness

In Jesus there is nothing lacking.

John 14:5-9

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

9 **Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"**

C. Of the Godhead:

Our God is one God, but in 3 distinct persons. All 3 together making up the “Godhead” of the one God.

1. The 1st person of the tri-unity, Father
2. The 2nd person is – Son Jesus
3. The 3rd person is – Spirit

D. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead:

This is a dramatic, airtight declaration of the full deity of Jesus. Since **all the fullness of the Godhead** dwells in Jesus, He cannot be a halfway God or a “junior god.”

The **Greek word for “fullness”, is pleroma** and was the word which the Gnostics of the 2nd century used to describe God or all “**the emanations**” combined.

It was probably the word the Colossian false teachers used since Paul uses it in 1:19 as well in reference to the full deity of Christ.

Col 1:19

For it pleased the Father that **in Him all the fullness** should dwell.

His point is that not merely part of God dwelt in Jesus but the very fullness of God was in Him: **It wasn't some lesser emanation** (a divine spark) but the fullness.

The **Greek word “dwell”** means to **settle down** and **be at home** and is in the present **tense**, which means perpetually.

The word deity means divine nature thus it was not a piece of it but the fullness.

E. Bodily: (bodily form or flesh)

The false teaching among the Colossian Christians was something like an early form of the Gnostic heresies that would come later. These Gnostic heresies made a radical separation between the *spiritual* and the *material*.

They taught a false dualism between the spirit and material things:

- Since everything material was evil thus Jesus could not possibly have a physical body.
- Paul refutes that idea by stating that the full divine nature dwelt in the human body of Christ.

“Jesus will now be the God-Man forever”.

That's why Paul needed to make it clear that **all the fullness of the Godhead** was in Jesus **bodily**, not in some strange, mystical sense. John also dealt with this false teaching in **1 John 4:2-3** and other passages.

1 John 4:2-3

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: **Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God**, 3 and **every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the**

spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

2:10 You are complete “IN HIM”

Col 2:10

...and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

A. In Him:

Once again, it is “**In Him**”. It is in the personal relationship with Jesus and daily walking in and with Him.

Do you know Jesus personally?

Are you walking, talking, laughing, crying, experiencing Him?

Acts 17:28a ... for in Him we live and move and have our being

B. And you are complete in Him:

Paul uses another form the word “pleroo”, which is the same as in “fullness”.

It is “the verb form of the noun” which is in the “**perfect tense in this participle**”:

- The perfect tense communicates the idea of **a past act having present results**.
- Thus, our past “faith in Christ” has lasting results in the present and future

Paul says that this is “a fact” to be enjoyed, “not a status” to be achieved.

Note: (all of mankind is trying to find “completeness” or “wholeness”)

- Ever since the fall, man is incomplete, and is trying to find completion (wholeness) in many things:
 - Many try to complete themselves through pursuing after many different methods and philosophies and religious ideas.
 - The message here is that we can only become complete in Christ!

Right now! You can **receive** of His fullness:

John 1:14

And **the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth**.

John 1:16

And **of His fullness we have all received**, and grace for grace.

Story:

Back in 1830, George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail and was sentenced to be hanged. President Andrew Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but Wilson refused to accept it. The matter went to the Chief Justice Marshall, who concluded that Wilson would have to be executed. “A pardon is a slip of paper,” wrote Marshall, “the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged.” For some, the pardon come too late. For others, the pardon is not accepted.

C. Head of all principality and power:

In many New Testament passages, **principality and power** describes ranks of angelic beings, either faithful or fallen angelic beings (Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, Ephesians 3:10, Ephesians 6:12).

Paul here declares Jesus' authority over all spirit beings.

He is head over all rule and authority.

- **The basic meaning is that He is the head over the entire angelic realm.**
- The idea that these emanations in the spirit realm were made up of different ranks: **Jesus is not just a part of this realm, He is head over all of it.**

Conclusion

By “philosophy”, Paul is talking about:

1. Systems of thought, the premise of which is, not according to Christ, and not according to the Word of God.
2. Watch out! Paul said: You'll get cheated, ripped off of fellowship with God, ripped off of God's presence in your life
3. Because He is God... in Him we are complete, whole, healed... We are forgiven and filled with “His life”... by “His works”!.....not something for us to “achieve”, only by faith “received”!!