

“Jesus is the Christ: The Superiority of the Son” Colossians 2:8-15, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
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Morning Worship Service

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.⁹ For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;¹¹ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.¹³ And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” (Colossians 2:8-15 NAS)

We are taking the time this holiday season to look intently at the Lord Jesus Christ

- He is worthy of all our praise and adoration
- He is alone is worthy of our worship and reverence

At Christmas time we come to remember the birth of our Lord and it is easy to fall into the trap of viewing Jesus emotionally

- Oh how cute, baby Jesus crying in a manger
- Oh the poor momma who had to deliver her child in a first century barn

These facts are true but they are the furthest thing from what was most significant at that time

- What was most significant is that God entered into our world

I believe, as this is what the Scriptures teach, that God entered into this world the same way we did, by conception, birth, and lived a life like us

This is simply an unimaginable work for man, but for God it was His glory to hide Himself in plain sight

- It was the glory of God to use weakness to hide His power and foolishness to hide His wisdom

When we come to worship Jesus Christ we come to worship God

- When we come to Christ we come to the creator of the World
- When we come to Christ we come to the Savior
- When we come to Christ we come to our Judge
- When we come to Christ we come to the one who Rules and Reigns over all

So to come to this time of year we come to reflect upon God and His glory

We are not surprised by Christ, His nature, or His work

- None of you, if you have been in the Church for any amount of time, are surprised by what I said about Christ
- We should not be because this is what the scriptures had promised long ago
- A good look at the Person and Work of Christ gives us as a Church security and strength

Many in the Church look for strength in the ministry in a lot of different resources

- Some look for economic stability. Financial stability can bring peace to a ministry as the demands are not pressing
- Some look for strong leadership. A preacher who is a good orator. Someone who is engaging and relatable. A little funny and not overly serious. Someone who is real, genuine. After all we cannot stand someone fake
- Some look to comfortable environment. Place is close, it has the style of leadership I want, it needs me

None of these things ultimately help us

- Money gives a false sense of security
- It is here today and gone tomorrow
- Leaders and people willing to lead are a dime a dozen and many great orators have significant character flaws. It is hard to put our faith in man
- Buildings and properties and convenient locations cannot be the basis of your church because you need more than an easy church to get to

What anchors us in the midst of difficulty, what gives us a sense of security in difficult days, what settles us in the storm is the person and work of Jesus Christ

- He is the one who protects the Church
- He also protects us as we face different trials and difficulties

This is what makes Christ superior to all others

- As we saw last week, the Superiority of Christ is evidenced because of His glory
- He is God, Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Son

It is His superiority which acts as a firm foundation for the Church

This is evident in Paul's instruction to the Colossian Church in Colossians 2

- The Church had faced false teachers who were seeking to lead the Church astray
- They faced a hybrid of error
- Not uncommon for a city which in its heyday was in a central trade route so there would be a lot of traffic coming through the city
 - The Colossian error was a mix of Jewish theology
 - Legalism
 - Angel Worship
 - Charismatic Theology – Seeing Visions vs 18
 - Pietism
 - And Gnosticism

They had the full mix. Any idea they wanted there was a form of teaching to capture their attention

- **Holy Living** – let me introduce you to the ascetic lifestyle. The ascetic practiced extreme self-denial. Find holiness by practicing extreme self-discipline
- **Exciting** – Worship Angels. Mystical, spiritual, thrilling.
- **Fresh** – Find God's vision for you. There are a lot of self-willed people running around doing their own thing. When you confront them, and remind them of their need to be a part of the Church they say "God has spoken to me" or "God has given me a vision of what he wants me to do." These self-willed people hide from accountability and submission to Christ. You could find this in the Colossian Church.
- **Educational** – they even had the current trend setters who had all the newest knowledge. These Philosophers would proclaim their new ideas to capture the minds of the intellectuals in Colossae.

What is the Church to do when it is bombarded by these kinds of attacks?

- Are we helpless?
- Do we need to keep changing our message to keep up with the fads?
- What if other Churches are embracing these ideas and mixing them in to their worship and are even having some kind of success?

Where does the Church turn when all around is new fad, new ideas, new ways to worship God?

This is answered for us in the book of Colossians

- The solution for the Church is to fix its eyes upon Christ. We need to turn to a sufficient Christ and fix our hope on Him

There are a lot of reasons why each of us has come here this morning. Some of you came willingly because you wanted a ministry which taught the Word of God and practiced it

- Some of you came unexpectedly as you faced family trials and difficulties and you needed help and found it here
- Some of you were forced, as your Church has come under the leadership here
- Some of you came because there was no better option and you are hovering around thinking I will wait and see if this is real

- There are many different reasons why you may be here this morning

I hope that you will come here and be involved here for one reason, because Jesus Christ is lifted up here and proclaimed here. And if there is a place which preaches Christ and follows Christ better than we do please go there. We desire for our Lord to be lifted up not us

1) Introduction - The Command

The same problem persists in the book of Colossians. Since you have people resistant to the truth and a young pastor who needs help you have the writing of the book of Colossians

He labors for them 2:1;

He wants them to be protected from deluding arguments 2:4

Our text is Colossians 2:8-15

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

In verse 8: Paul starts with a compelling command

See to it. This is a present active imperative. Which means this is a command that must be continually fulfilled. You can say it this way. Continually make sure that nobody takes you captive

How does this captivity take place?

Literally Paul's command here is “Beware that no one carries you off captive through empty philosophies.” By implication, we are to make sure we are not lead astray. This is our responsibility

We have the personal responsibility to make sure we are not deceived

- You have the responsibility to be on guard
- We are commanded by God to be careful of the spiritual dangers in the World

- We have to beware

This is a strong command. It is a command of vigilance. We are to be on guard. We are to stand alert. We are to be aware of the very real dangers that await us. In this case these dangers are going to slip in not as overt attacks but subtle distractions. The danger is not a physical persecution. The danger is not a specific person or group. Instead the danger is a subtle teaching. The text goes on and give us three distinct characteristics of this “empty Philosophy.” Two statements about what it is and one statement about what it is not

Literally the word for according (the Greek preposition kata) is here three times

- It is according to the tradition of men
- It is according to the elementary principles of the world
- It is not according to Christ

Error always looks like this, it takes our eyes off of Christ and places it on other things. To listen to Jesus’ message for my life is not putting my hope in Jesus but in what Jesus is going to give me

It has as its goal to take our eyes off of Christ and place them on men. This philosophical teaching appeals to us. It draws us in. It is inherently dangerous. Notice this Philosophy appeals to our flesh. Their teaching will be according to the tradition of men. That is to say they will have no Absolute Basis to make their claims but it sounds right. We have been doing things this way for thousands of years so it must be right. As well these Philosophies are natural and carnal. That is, they are earthly. They are according to the elementary principles of the world

When Paul speaks of elementary things he speaks of man-made religion 2:16; 2:20

You see these teachers were leading the people astray. They were changing the message of the bible. Instead of delivering people from their bondage these men were placing the people under a yoke of bondage

Let me say this

Any attempt to create a religion that does not reflect the teaching of the scriptures and does not accurately teach the Christ of the scriptures necessarily presents itself as an enemy of the scriptures and an enemy of the God of the Scriptures

If we embrace error we make God our enemy because we are opposed to His truth. Therefore we must be on guard

Here is the Simple measure for all religion: Does it lead you towards Christ or away from him?

Verse 8 leads to an important question: If these philosophies are pervasive and if they appeal to our natural fleshly cravings then how are we protected?

This is where Paul's answer is great. Instead of turning to wisdom or understanding he turns to the source of all wisdom and understanding and he says look to Christ

From the command to guard ourselves from false doctrine Paul gives us six reasons why Christ is a superior source of protection

1. He is God vs. 9
2. He has made us complete vs. 10a
3. He is Authoritative vs. 10b
4. He has transformed us vs. 11-13
5. He has Borne our Penalty vs. 14
6. He is Triumphant vs. 15

In the midst of this book to the Colossians there are great themes. We see a wonderful picture of Christ. He is the one we seek to honor in our walk 1:10. He is the one God the Father used to transfer us from the domain of darkness into Christ's kingdom vs 13. He is God vs 15 and so much more in verses 15-20. He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge 2:1-3. In Christ then we have the power to live a transformed life Ch 3. And He is the unifying factor to all Christian ministry Ch 4.

If you want to be protected from the deceptions of this world you need to seek Christ

1) He is God vs. 9

Because in Him resides all the fullness of the Godhead bodily vs 9

All that God is, Christ is

All the glory God has Christ has

All the power God has Christ has

All the wisdom and knowledge God Posses Christ Possess

All the holiness God has Christ has

Christ is superior to human knowledge and wisdom because he is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. That is exactly what Paul Said in verse 3

We are not seeking a man, we are not seeking the teachings of men. Peter said

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty

- We are following God when we follow Christ

Jesus is God and necessarily we have no right to show Him anything less than the full glory that is due Him

Human wisdom and understanding and the traditions of men will only lead us astray

We are to seek Christ because He is God. In seeking Him we find protection from the empty deceptions of men

By implication friends, more important to our daily spiritual lives than knowing God's will for us, is knowing the God who has a will for us.

God's will is to lead us to know Him better. Know Jesus and you will know God

2) He has made us complete vs. 10a

How many of you feel complete? How many of you feel full and without void?

- each day we suffer the effects of sin
- We struggle with temptations
- We find ourselves in despair
- We find ourselves deficient of any kind of personal holiness
- Why is it so difficult to read the bible – it constantly puts our true condition on display. It is much easier reading a man who explains away a passage than it is to read the book and let it pierce the soul
- As we see our true condition, we see ourselves as anything but whole
- We don't feel whole or complete

But in Christ we are perfectly complete

As one author put it:

As a result of the fall, man is in a state of incompleteness. He is spiritually incomplete because He is totally out of fellowship with God

He is morally incomplete because he lives outside of God's will

He is mentally incomplete because he does not know ultimate truth

At salvation believers become partakers of the divine nature and are made complete. They are spiritually complete because they have fellowship with God. They are morally complete because they recognize the authority of God's will. And they are mentally complete because they know the truth about ultimate reality

In Christ we stand perfectly righteous. In Christ we who were far off have been brought near. In Christ we who were at one-time enemies have now been made to be Children of God

To be complete or full is to speak of being without any need. We are not lacking

- It is Christ alone who satisfies our desires and demands

Why would we seek anything else if we have been made complete in Christ?

Look, and listen carefully, if the devil can get you caught up with yourself rather than Christ, he has won

But all of these things are empty when Christ is presented. The world's philosophies, man's glory, and worldly pleasures are seen as worthless where Christ is seen as valuable

We then seek Christ because

He has filled our missing voids

He has made us righteous

He has given us the ability to stand before God

He has given us renewed minds

And He has made us useful to God again

In short, in Christ we are complete

and in Him you have been made complete, Col 2:10

3) He is Authoritative vs. 10b

He is the head over all rule and authority Col 2:10b

Paul likes this theme. He is the Authority of Authorities

All governments, all rulers, all leaders, all men receive their authority from God

No man has authority unless God has granted it.

Jesus responded to Pilate this way in John 19

John 19:10 "Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has *the* greater sin."

Here Paul says that we are to develop all of our teaching according to Christ

We preach Christ because there is no one higher

We preach Christ because there is no one greater

We preach Christ because there is no one better

We preach Christ because there is no one purer

We preach Christ because there is no one more perfect

You see because of Christ's deity and because of his authority he has the right of exclusive worship and devotion

Any religion that does not have Christ as its focus has Christ as His enemy. To the degree that you stray from Christ is to the degree that you make yourself an enemy of Christ

Eph 1:20-21 He is over all authority

There is no greater object of worship and pursuit than the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, nothing can compare to Him

4) He has transformed us vs. 11-13

Colossians 2:11 “and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,”

- Do not strip God of his glory, if you could have saved yourself Christ died needlessly

Christ performed a work only He could accomplish

We are His workmanship

We have been born again, we have been lifted up, we have been transformed, the old man has been stripped away, the new man has come

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

We have, by the work of God through the Son, been transformed

Vs 11-12

Baptism symbolizes our death and resurrection

We then seek Christ because in Him we have found a new life

5) He has Borne our Penalty vs. 14

Man’s biggest problem is the law of God. God’s righteous law stands firm and unalterable. It proclaims that we must obey. And yet the reality is we have disobeyed in every part.

He has born our penalty

Notice the text

Colossians 2:14 "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

These decrees are not as some say the law of God. That would be antinomian. These decrees are our personal violations of God's law

Look God's law rightfully stands over you. Each one of the commandments can bring a charge against you

While we may have not committed some of these things physically we have committed these things in our hearts

The glory of our position in Christ is this, every violation, past present and future has been written down and nailed to the cross. Christ has borne or penalty. He has taken the punishment that should have fallen upon us, upon himself. We are justly condemned by the law and instead of removing the standard, Christ bore the punishment

We have been transformed by Christ as we have been set free because of Christ's work. We are now free to walk like free men. Why would we seek anything else?

6) He is Triumphant vs. 15

He walks victorious over all those who oppose Him

Why would we align ourselves with the losing party?

Why would we align ourselves with those who are destined to be trampled underfoot?

We are not fools to be lead astray! We are transformed to display the glory of Christ. We are not going to be entertained by the worlds pleasures and teachings. Instead we are going to fix our eyes upon Christ because He has triumphed over his enemies

Noticed the text

Because all those who align themselves with the devil will suffer the same fate as the Devil

Why do our shepherd's concern themselves with our protection? Why do they seek to proclaim the full counsel of God? Because they are convinced that in Christ they have everything they need. In Christ we are lacking nothing

Conclusion

If I could sum up I would say this: if the teaching you are seeking does not lead you to Christ; if it does not exalt Christ; if it does not reveal Christ; if it does not honor Christ; if it does not teach the true Christ; then do not pursue it. For in the end you will be carried off captive by the empty deception of men

There are so many wonderful pursuits in this life. God has created a marvelous wonder which can richly satisfy our deepest curiosities and challenge us for ages to come

- God has created a place where we can be cared for to sustain life
- A world which at the very same time reveals God and cloaks God

Now we must heed the warning of Paul in verse 8, see to it that no one takes you captive

- Measure everyone by the standard of Christ
- See His superiority

We will not be measured by the language we speak

We will not be measured by the culture we live in

We will not be measured by the traditions we have

We will not be measured by the music we play or the songs we choose

We will not be measured by the building or buildings we have or their locations

We will not be measured by the website or our advertising materials

We will not be measured by our programs

We will be measured by Christ

- Do we live like Christ?
- Do we teach the doctrine of Christ?
- Do we evidence in our lives that He is our Lord?

Jesus Christ is the superior priority of the Christian life

- His will rules
- His way is our path
- His message is our delight
- His commands are our duty
- His love is our example
- His mercy is our practice
- His grace is our reward
- His life is our righteousness
- His death is our deliverance
- His resurrection is our hope

Friends, as you know, this Church belongs to Jesus Christ. It is a church filled with people who belong to Jesus Christ. So, let us live like the Lord of the Church is superior than any rival good

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