

PREACHING THE OLD PATHS PT 10 (A)

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“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. 17 Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. 18 Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.” Jer 6:16-19.”

We continue this evening on our studies of: “Preaching the Old Paths.” This is our 10th message on our subject of Preaching the Old Paths and our 6th on **To preach the OLD Paths is to PREACH the TRUTH about Jesus Christ.** We have been looking at the book of Colossians chapters 1 & 2 to speak on the Doctrine of Christ. I have set forth 4 things regarding the DOCTRINE OF CHRIST from Colossians 1 & 2:

- I. **The Similitude of Christ.** (Col.1:15-17)
- II. **The Supremacy of Christ.** (Col.1:18)
- III. **The Sufficiency of Christ.** (Col.2:1-8 &10)
- IV. **The Sovereignty of Christ.** (Col.2:9)

We also outlined chapter 2 for you and are currently on point 4 The Deception in verse 8, *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”* We said this verse is not only applicable to the first century saints but also to our day of 21st century saints.

After Paul gives us all the positive encouragements he now turns to the negative instruction to help us maintain a healthy Christian walk. He begins with a very important and applicable word, ‘BEWARE.’ We are commanded to beware that is, to take heed and Paul is very clear in saying, *“...lest any man...”* He is so clear and succinct to warn against the teachings of any man, any person, yea anything and or any teaching which is contrary to sound doctrine as set forth in the Bible, thus we must be on constant guard. We need to have our spiritual antennae turned on 24/7.

The problem we said this morning is that most professing Christians are not able to discern the essence of doctrinal error because of weak theology and because of no interest in reading. Sad to say but a word that describes most of Christendom in our day is IGNORANCE, ignorance of the Bible, ignorance of TRUTH and worse ignorance of ERROR! When Paul says, BEWARE, he is not just speaking to the pastors, but to everyone who names the name of Christ! Every child of God is individually responsible to God and to their own selves! Notice again the warning of Paul and the 4 specifics he uses

in commanding us to BEWARE: Again, we have said that Paul has set these 4 things in contrast to: "...and not after Christ."

1. Philosophy.
2. Vain Deceit.
3. The Tradition of men.
4. The Rudiments of the world.

I. The first thing we want to consider this evening is PHILOSOPHY. Paul says first, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy...*" It comes from 2 Greek words, 'phileo' and 'sophia.' Phileo means to love and Sophia means wisdom, thus it means lover of wisdom. Man has through the ages sought the essence of wisdom in order to determine the aspect of ultimate causes in the world and in the universe; like why are we here and where do we go from here? Or what is the purpose of life, man has tried to find the reason for our existence and for what is out there in the universe. Philosophers like to deal with ideas and concepts like, certainty, uncertainty, doubt, despair, struggle, skepticism and ethics. They seek to understand the whole of reality in striving for their quest. There have been many answers which philosophers have given, but they have all come short because they seek answers in man and each and everyone has their own ideas and concepts By no means am I saying that all philosophy is bad because everyone has a philosophy. My philosophy is my belief in God and the Bible, but we know that this is not what Paul means. He is talking about every ideology that is contrary to God's Word because it will take you away and or take you captive in drawing you away from God. Paul is speaking about that humanistic secular philosophy that is contrary to God's Word. Philosophy in the aspect of secular humanism is no doubt in contrast to divine revealed knowledge as found in the Bible. Now, we know that Gnosticism was rampant during Paul's day, the Gnostics were very fond of philosophy. This writer says, "*The Gnostics were fond of **philosophia**. The modern definition of the word must not be read into its use in the Bible. **Philosophy**, as the study of reality, knowledge, and values, is a profitable and biblically supported endeavor. However, this is not the meaning of the word in Scripture. There it carries a negative connotation and refers to quasi-religious doctrines and speculations (e.g., Gnosticism) all of which are irreconcilable with the Christian faith.*" When Paul was confronted by the philosophers of his day, he went directly to the Scriptures in Acts 17.

If you recall; in Acts 17 Paul preached with great power at Mars Hill. I do not want to spend too much time there, but we know he was confronted by the philosophers of his day as his heart was greatly stirred in verse 16, "...his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." It is said that you more easily find an idol in that place than person. Now, as he spoke daily at the market the philosophers confronted him in verse 18, "*Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: **because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.***" Paul was not fazed at all by these philosophers of his day, not should we in this 21st century especially if we preached the same message Paul did. The Epicureans were atheists who believed in no gods, they materialistic and their life was

to practice mere pleasure, that is, eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die and the Stoicks were pantheists who believed in many gods, to them everything was a god, they just wanted a pleasant life, but they in a joined effort came against Paul. I believe Paul was the church's first apologist, not Justin Martyr and no doubt he was a presuppositionist, notice how he begins his defense of the FAITH, he begins with GOD! (If time read 20-24) He does not even try to prove that God exists, no Paul declares Him as the SOVEREIGN God, that is; GOD IS! In verse 24 he begins his glorious defense of the RESURRECTION with, GOD! These philosophers taught various things but in general, the Epicureans would teach ENJOY LIFE, the Stoicks would teach ENDURE LIFE, but the Apostle Paul came preaching ETERNAL LIFE, with its foundation based on the resurrection of CHRIST! Paul also warns us in 1 Tim. 6:20 & 21, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."

This is the one thing philosophers can help you with, they might help to enjoy life somewhat or to endure life when problems arise; but they cannot help you with ETERNAL LIFE, only a SOVEREIGN GOD can help you with eternal life, because He is the author and giver of eternal life. You see, you can philosophize a man right into the pit of hell, but you can never philosophize a man into heaven! This is why Paul warned against Philosophers, because they cannot help you on; how to get right with God. Man's philosophy in the end is empty, hollow and deceptive! Spurgeon says, "Beware of those who pretend that they are going to enrich you, but whose real object is to plunder you. They say that they will give you advanced thought, deeper ideas, a system more congruous with the age Plenty of people would spoil you in this way, by teaching you their profound thoughts, their grand inventions, their bright ideas. Beware of all of them." Another writer says, "Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and enquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture. A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a man in some right direction; but who has ever heard of a man's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren." Consider the following quotes from Austin Precept webpage:

- **John Blanchard** says, "*Philosophy is the search for truth. In Jesus, the search ends.*"
- **G Campbell Morgan** – "*Philosophy has been a quest, and never a conquest.*"
- **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones** may have said it best "*If a philosophy of life cannot help me to die, then in a sense it cannot help me to live.*"
- **J. I. Packer** - "*No philosophy that will not teach us how to master death is worth two pence to us.*"
- "**Philosophers** are people who talk about something they don't understand and make you think it's your fault!"
- Someone else said that "*Philosophy is saying what everybody knows in language that no one can understand.*"
- **John Calvin** "The exhortations of the philosophers are cold and lifeless, if compared with the convictions, affections and boundless energy of the real believers....(and added that) The

sublimest virtue according to philosophy is to live the life of nature, but Scripture points us to the perfect Christ as our example.”

It is very interesting that, though philosophy was rampant in Paul's day in the Greco-Roman world, this is the only mentioned of philosophy in the Bible and it has a very stern warning. When the word is used in the plural as in Acts 17 it is also mentioned once and again Paul preached against it. We can perhaps say that the love of wisdom characterizes every worldly concept and or idea of philosophy, because they are concern with the wisdom and ideology of man, which in the end takes you away from Christ and the Word of God. Paul has already told us that in Christ are stored all the treasures of wisdom, why am I going to seek for man's wisdom in philosophy when we have God's wisdom and revelation in the Bible. Any and all philosophies that are men-centered and entrenched in secular humanistic ideology are bound to be false and harmful and this is what Paul is warning us about here in Colossians 2:8. Remember again that before Paul wrote chapter 2 he had already penned chapter which he told us clearly that it was Christ who had created all things and was sustaining all things and therefore, *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.”* Col.1:16-19.

Harry Ironside says, *“Philosophy is but worldly wisdom. It is the effort of the human mind to solve the mystery of the universe. It is not an exact science, for the philosophers have never been able to come to any satisfactory conclusion as to either the "why" or the "wherefore" of things....From Plato to Kant, and from Kant to the last of the moderns, one system has overturned another, so that the history of philosophy is a story of contradictory, discarded hypotheses. This is not to say that the philosophers were or are dishonest men, but it is to say that many of them have failed to avail themselves of that which would unravel every knot and solve every problem, namely, the revelation of God in Christ as given in the Holy Scriptures.”*

J Vernon McGee who was one of my early teachers in 1979 says, *“If you were to follow the history of philosophy beginning with Plato, including many of the church fathers, and coming down to more recent times (including Kant, Locke, and Bultmann, who seems to be the craze with some theologians right now), you would find that none of them have a high view of the inspiration of the Word of God. They are looking for answers to the problems of life, but they will not be found in philosophy. A true philosopher is a seeker after truth, but truth is not found in human wisdom. Christ is the answer, the answer to philosophy. Paul wrote, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom ...” (1Cor 1:30). But false philosophy is like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn't there—there is no hope for its search for truth. Paul warns the Colossians to beware of this.”*

II. Paul was very clear in warning us in Col.2:8 against philosophy and now he says secondly, *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit...”* He warns us secondly BEWARE of vain deceit, that is beware of empty deceit or empty deception, beware of that which is hollow and deceptive, I wonder if it has reference to what came to

be called theosophy because it seems to have a form of Gnosticism in it. About 15 years ago I read 2 books on A.W. Pink's biography and in both biographies I found out that before the Lord saved him he was a full fledged Theosophist and that was when I first heard of this term, Theosophy. A theosophist is a person who believes in various forms of philosophical or religious thought based on mystical insight into spirituality. It also incorporates Buddhist and Brahmanic theories which includes reincarnation and karma. Nonetheless, no doubt it is vain deceit. One writer says this about the phrase, "...through philosophy and vain deceit..." "The fact that the two nouns, "**philosophy**" and "**deceit**" are the objects of the one preposition **dia** ("through") and the lack of the article with "vain deceit or empty deception" indicate that the words "vain" and "deceit" both describe the character of the philosophy. This verse could then be read "Beware lest any man lead you away captive through the philosophy which is empty and deceptive."

The Greek word for vain is '**kenos**' which basically means empty, fruitless, vain, without usefulness or success and or false. Kenos is means that that there is nothing of truth or reality and describes that which basically has no purpose. Notice the contrast in its usage in the Septuagint in Deut. 32:46 & 47, "And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For **it** is **not a vain** thing for you; because **it** is your life: and through this **thing** ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." The contrast is the WORD of God, the word IT has reference to the WORD of God, the WORD of God in not a vain thing like philosophy of man, no the WORD of GOD IS YOUR LIFE! What a contrast and thus the best antidote for the poison of man's philosophy is the WORD OF GOD!

The Greek word of deceit is '**apate**' from '**apatao**' which means to cheat, delude, deceive and or beguile. It describes that which gives a false appearance and or a false impression by statement or influence, in other words it is speaking of anything that is seducing by words of man's wisdom. This Greek word so describes that which causes someone to have erroneous views concerning truth. It causes someone to be attracted to error and be led astray. It has to do with the word enticement, by actions or by words of deception which deliberately will cause someone to belief that which is not true. No doubt that the cults are good at this in knowingly deceiving people and leading them astray. So sad that many have been deceived to accept as true that which is false and vain because it is like the subtlety of Satan with Eve, he willingly deceived Eve by saying, "Yea, hath God said." This is what Paul is warning us about, BEWARE, be on guard and do not let anyone or anything deceive you because what the deception is, is but vain deceit, empty and hollow deception, we must take heed to what we have heard as Paul says in Hebrews, why because they might just slip through our finders, Hebrew 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

III. Thirdly, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, **after the tradition of men...**" Under no circumstances do not allow yourselves to be deceived and or spoiled by philosophy, vain deceit and AFTER THE TRADITION OF MAN! Paul now further identifies this empty and hollow deception which depends of human wisdom or human tradition in contrast to Christ. Error, false gospel, false teachings and heresy will always present itself

in some new form or new discovery of a certain hidden truth, but in reality is has developed itself in the mind of men. Amazing how people will do whatever it takes to keep tradition even if it goes against Christ and His teaching. This just shows how steep the bondage is in regards to religion. Traditions of men will leads to depend upon something or someone other than the Bible and our Lord Jesus Christ. They will turn us away, that is; spoil us from a complete dependence of God and the Bible. Consider the words of Charles Spurgeon, *“What do you want with their traditions? Christ has revealed his truth to you. What do you want with the world’s rudiments? You have gone beyond such elementary, useless knowledge as that, for you have got the truth itself. Cleave to Christ, beloved. Go no further than he leads you; and turn not away from him either to the right hand or to the left. In him are contained all the riches of grace, and all the treasures of knowledge. If you would become truly wise, seek to know more of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.”*

The Greek word for tradition is **‘paradosis’** from **‘paradidomi’** which means to completely surrender, to yield and or entrust by delivering up. It also gives the idea of a giving over or passing over. Paradidomi it used by Paul in 1 Cor.15:3 when he says, *“For I **delivered** unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”* Tradition is handing down or over some teaching or belief. Now, just because something has been handed down through the years does not necessarily make it true, the question that need to ask is, is this tradition according to the Scriptures? If we are led away by tradition and it has no higher authority than that of the men who handed it down, then it will lead you away from Christ. Paul is not saying that all traditions are wrong; in fact there are traditions that are good. Notice what he said to the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”* Notice how these traditions are qualified by the WORD of God and or an EPISTLE of Paul. Perhaps this is not the best example, but I hope you understand. Now Sunday School in not taught in the Scriptures and therefore is a tradition of man, but it’s application and principle is good as long as it does not take you away from Christ. Wednesday night prayer meeting; it is not on the Lord’s day and just a midweek service is no doubt a tradition of man, but nonetheless again as long as it does not take you away from the word of God it’s OK. Now, when traditions of men cause you to remove yourself from the things of Christ or take you away from the word of God then it is dangerous and must be reconsidered. One of these subtle traditions is infant baptism, you will not find 1 verse to substantialize this teaching, but many are hook in this tradition. Dispensationalism also in entrenched in the traditions of men and not the word of God; you have to quote a writer of a book before you can quote a verse to defend this teaching, therefore nothing but the traditions of men that begin in the 1800’s. I hope you understand what I am saying and that I am not confusing as to what I am saying: because any teaching or tradition of man that takes you away from the word of God is no doubt suspicious.

Look at how Christ dealt with this in Mark 7:7 - 9, *“For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition”* If the traditions of men causes you to reject the word of God, then you know this is what Paul is speaking about.

We need to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” They were even questioning the teaching of Paul to make sure it squared up with the Scriptures. We need to search those Scriptures daily to keep us away from the traditions of men. Tradition usually serves in perpetrating error. For example how many have fallen under the tradition of Theistic Evolution with the false assertion that this is what scientist have always believed. I mean if a missionary from a third world country would come to America he would no doubt be astounded at the beliefs and practices of many churches. Again, so sad that many man made traditions like infant baptism and Dispensationalism are often given more importance that the GOD-BREATHE TRUE DOCTRINES of God’s WORD! Oh to God, that preacher’s would understand that any and all teachings must be tested by the standard and or PLUMB LINE of God’s Holy WORD! Let’s look at 3 quick things that deceive man who whole heartily lay hold of traditions of men seasoned in false doctrines:

1. Be sure of this, traditions entrenched in false teaching are usually **very cunning and very subtle**. Consider this quote from this author, “*False teaching is not a blatant disavowal of accepted belief. It is usually an exaggeration of some kernal of truth. It is one element of truth taken to an extreme. As one has said, "truth taken to the exclusion of other truth, is error". Most false teaching will not stand up and scream "This is a Teaching Which Contradicts the Bible". Instead it will take a portion of the Bible and mis-use it. It will take one element of the truth to an extreme that discounts the rest of the truth. It is distortion.*” Reminds of what John MacArthur said years ago and I don’t know if I can remember it verbatim, “*The error lies not so much in what they say, but in what they don’t say.*”
2. Secondly, not only are false teachings in traditions very cunning and subtle but also **very appealing because they are very attractive**. This is what makes Joel Osteen so famous and so deceiving, because his teaching is very appealing and very attractive in that it emphasizes man’s potential to achieve. It’s all based on being positive, he is but a modern day Stoick, he gives people what they want to hear, a very positive and pleasant message. It’s the same thing as the health and wealth gospel, many flock to it because it’s very appealing, I mean who doesn’t want to be wealthy and who doesn’t want to healthy. Joel Osteen is but the second coming or Robert Schuller. It’s always base on personal benefits, that is, what it there for me, because it’s all about me. I’m sorry to inform you that it is not all about you, it is all about GOD! This type of message causes many to have a fleshly appeal of inner carnal desire to be as God. Isn’t that what Satan did in Isaiah 14? Those like Joel Osteen promise to give his followers something more than simple faith in Christ as they focus on some deeper experience which is nothing but neo-Gnosticism, as they follow his ‘secret truth’ for success.
3. And last but not least, traditions of men in false teachings are usually **implemented by a lot of Bible quoting**. Satan is not stupid if he can seasoned it with Scripture to sound good, who cares as long as they bite the bait and expect deliverance but sadly are doomed to an eternal hell if they do not truly repent and believe the TRUE GOSPEL!. Remember even the cults have enough sense to use the Bible. Thus, we see again that

Paul warns against traditions of men that are no after Christ. I have run out of time and we'll pick up here next time, let's pray.