

Message #9

Colossians 2:8-10

There is no greater waste of time, money or energy and no greater danger to Christianity than studying worldly philosophy. Worldly philosophy and worldly philosophers have been deceiving the masses even before the days of Paul.

Human philosophy goes nowhere and accomplishes nothing. It is nothing more than pooled ignorance. There is no one right system because each way of thinking is contingent upon another sinful man. That is clearly the way Paul saw it.

Paul believed in learning. Paul believed in systematic teaching. Paul believed in the acquisition of deep knowledge, but specific knowledge of God and His Word. He believed the most valuable thing the believer could do was to pursue an understanding of the deep things of God and he believed this emphasis ought to exist in the church.

NEVER ALLOW ANY PERSON, NO MATTER HOW INTELLECTUAL, OR SCHOLARLY OR SMOOTH, DRAW YOU AWAY FROM THE TRUTH OF GOD AND A FOCUS ON JESUS CHRIST.

The assumption of this text is that there will be those who will attempt to draw you away from this focus. They will be smooth, they will be scholarly, and they will be seductive. They will make their way of thinking seem logical and rational, but it will not be biblical.

Why would God allow wolves to try and seduce His people? One answer is Deuteronomy 13:1-3 to prove your love for Him and His Word!

The main charge of these verses comes from **verse 8**. The verb “see to it” is a strong warning against allowing anyone to take you captive from the Word of God and from a focus on Jesus Christ. The word “captive,” in this context, refers to an enemy of God’s truth who will try and captivate and carry off and away the believer so that he becomes the spoils of the enemy (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 472).

Notice the person responsible for not being swayed is you - “you see to it!”

Now the preposition “through” (**v. 8**) introduces the means by which God’s people will be attacked in an attempt to take them captive—specifically through “the philosophy and the empty deception.” In the original, the article “the” is written once and goes with both words, meaning the idea is one. In other words, the philosophy that will try to take one captive is empty deception. Philosophy and empty deception are the same according to the Word of God. Humanistic philosophy is empty deception. It will deceive you and move you away from God.

The Greek word “philosophy” literally means love of wisdom. The specific love of wisdom to which Paul refers here is the wisdom that was added to and contrary to the revelation of God.

Various educational lures were tugging at the Colossians, particularly a Gnostic philosophy and heresy which taught there was a deeper way to knowledge other than the through the Bible and one's relationship with God. All this was to the Apostle Paul was empty deceit that appealed to the ego. It was enticing, but it was also empty.

Let me read for you the words of H.A. Ironside, who wrote them back in 1929:

“It is a sad commentary on conditions of Christendom that in the average theological seminary far more time is given to the study of philosophy than to searching the Scriptures. Christianity owes no debt to Greek, Roman, Medieval, or Modern philosophy. A man can be a well-furnished minister of Jesus Christ, who has never heard the names of the great philosophers, whether pagan or Christian, and who is utterly ignorant of their systems and hypotheses, ‘providing he will study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’ The truest culture, intellectual or spiritual, is that which is drawn from the constant study of the Bible” (H.A. Ironside, *Colossians*, pp. 75-76).

Now there are three important prepositional phrases that Paul uses which give us further information as to how philosophy and empty deceit captivate a believer and pull him down (literally preposition “according to” has the root meaning of down (Dana & Mantey, p. 107). These phrases inform us what philosophy is and what it does.

Prepositional Phrase #1 - Philosophy and empty deception is according to the tradition of men. **2:8a**

The word “tradition” speaks of handing over and transmitting the teachings and doctrines of lost men as opposed to the teachings and truth of the Holy God.

False philosophy and concepts come from men. One sinful man hands his ideas over to another sinful man. They are man-centered, not God-centered. Humanistic reasoning is filled with deceit, with conceit, with lies and with errors. It may have some partial truth, but it is not really true.

Prepositional Phrase #2 - Philosophy and empty deception is according to the elementary principles of the world. **2:8b**

The words “elementary principles” literally refer to the elementary sounds and elements of the lost world. The term refers to very basic and very elementary level knowledge like learning to pronounce vowels or learning the ABC's.

Paul is basically saying this—any learning that is not based on the Word of God and on a relationship with Jesus Christ is very surface-level and shallow. What the world deems as scholarly, God deems as shallow.

If you really want depth, if you really want stability and strength, give yourself to digging deep into the Bible. Give yourself to the understanding of God's Word. That is where real depth is found. Anything else is surface-level and elementary when compared to that.

Prepositional Phrase #3 - Philosophy and empty deception is not according to Jesus Christ. **2:8c**

Philosophy is not designed to make you more Christ-centered, it is designed to take you away from Christ. It is not designed to take you deep into the Word of God. It is not according to truth pertaining to Jesus Christ.

Mark this and mark this well; worldly philosophy is always designed to take one away from Jesus Christ and from the truth of God. It is not according to Christ and it is not after Christ.

Now in **verses 9-10**, Paul clearly states two reasons why we must see to it that we must never allow philosophy to deceptively captivate us and move us away from our focus on Jesus Christ and God's Word:

REASON #1 - Because the fullness of God is in Christ. **2:9**

The word "deity" is a rare Greek word, used only here in the New Testament. It is even a stronger word than the word "divine nature" used in Romans 1:20. This word is clearly stating that "all the fullness of Deity" inhabits our lives in bodily form in the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, the totality of God, including His power, attributes, qualities and essence completely and fully exist in bodily form, in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now the fullness of Deity always existed in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was always and fully and completely God. But the fullness of Deity did not always exist in bodily form.

Ladies and Gentlemen, see it, read it, understand it—Jesus Christ was not a mere man, He was not an exalted angel, He was not a step down from God; He was and is fully God—thus sayeth the Word of God in **Colossians 2:9**. He is 100% God!

Paul's point is do not allow yourself to be seduced to pursue a study of worldly philosophy that will captivate you. You have a book, the Bible, which will unfold for you the deepest mysteries and truths you will ever read concerning the ultimate person to ever live.

REASON #2 – Because the fullness of Christ is in us. **2:10**

A full and complete relationship with God is not found in academics, it is not found in worldly philosophy, it is not found in personal achievement; it is fully and completely found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When you have Christ in your life, you are complete and you have the potential to develop and grow to great levels of spiritual depth and maturity. Christ is the head over everything.

Jesus Christ is the head of everything—He is the Designer (1:16a); He is the Creator (1:16b); He is the Sustainer (1:17); He is the Ruler (2:10); He is the Conqueror (2:15). Jesus Christ is head of all things; He is the Lord of all of life.

Why would anyone want to devote himself to the postulations, the suppositions, the contemplations, meditations and reflections of humanistic philosophers when you can devote yourself to not only learning about, but cultivating a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is fully God, and who is head of all things?

The greatest knowledge you can ever gain in this life is deep knowledge of the Word of God. The greatest person you can ever learn about is the person of Jesus Christ. The greatest relationship you can ever cultivate is a relationship with Jesus Christ. “See to it that no one takes you captive” from these realities!