



SERMON NOTES

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Title: Do not be deceived...

#5 in the Series on the Letter to the Colossians

1. Col. 2:8-10, *"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. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."*
 - a. Beware not to be led astray or taken as a spoil of war. Not only would we miss God's blessing, but also become captive to the slavery of sin and error.
 - b. Philosophy is the *"love of wisdom."* Our influence and source for knowledge is very important, and we must make sure it comes from God and not trends, feelings, or humanistic ideas. What we put in our minds drastically affects our virtue, values, character, and spiritual growth in how we are and behave in the world, either glorifying our Lord or tearing down His Church.
 - c. Tradition, the repeating of practices formed from ideas; without Scriptural guidance they should be considered evil. We must make certain that that our traditions are from Christ, that they are true, mutually beneficial, and used to further His Kingdom.
 - d. In Jesus Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.
 - e. Paul teaches that Christ's cosmic lordship is over all powers, which is God's final, decisive verdict against all competing powers (*i.e. Satan, demons, the Law, etc.*) Any ruling elite that challenges God's reign has already been humiliated on the cross.
2. Col. 2:11-12, *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."*
 - a. Circumcision represented the Law in the Old Testament and was a sign of the covenant. Gen. 17:10-11, *"This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised; it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."* **However**, we as Christians are no longer under the Law. Rom. 7:6, *"But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."*
 - b. Opponents of Paul were displeased that he did not require Gentile converts to become Jewish as well as Christian. Jews in Christianity did not see themselves as converts, whereas the Gentiles did, but not a conversion to Judaism. So how do you become a convert to the Jewish Messiah without becoming Jewish? Consequently, the religious Jews were offended.
 - c. *"Christian"* is now of the heart by the Spirit. Rom. 2:29, *"but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but*

from God.” Dt. 30:6, “the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”

- d. Christian baptism doesn’t replace the circumcision of the heart, but is the external manifestation of an internal transformation. Rom. 6:3-5, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,”
 - i. Baptism is one of the two sacraments of the Church and is both modeled & commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ. (cf. Mt. 3:13-15, Jn. 1:32-34, Mt. 28:19, Acts 2:38-39, Acts 8:12-16)
- e. We need put off our old sin-driven life with no need to follow the Old Covenant when we have a new one. Legalism of the Law or man's rules for our salvation and growth hinders us just as any other sin or obstacle to our relationship with Christ. Heb. 12:1-2a, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...”
- 3. Col. 2:13-15, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”
 - a. We were dead in our sins prior to Jesus; walking zombies.
 - b. “Titulus” above the head of Jesus on the cross. The law appointing many ordinances or observances in religion. The allusion is probably to a written contract, in which we bind ourselves to do any work, or to make a payment, and which remains in force against us until the bond is cancelled. That might be done, either by blotting out the names, or by drawing lines through it, or, as appears to have been practiced in the East, by driving a nail through it. The Jewish ceremonial law is here represented as such a contract, binding those under it to its observance, until it was nailed to the cross. The meaning here is, that the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law are abolished, and that its necessity is superseded by the death of Christ.
 - i. Perhaps the opposition was teaching that faith in Christ gets the believer into the covenant community, but that observance of Torah and tradition *keeps* the believer in.
 - c. Jesus took away our sins through “*substitutionary atonement*.” One example of this is the “scapegoat” used in the Old Testament (cf. Lev. 16:10) or of the transfer of sins from the people to an animal intended as a burnt offering. (cf. Lev. 1:4)
 - i. 1 Pet. 2:24, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”

- ii. 2 Cor. 5:21, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*
- d. Jesus made a public spectacle of His enemies; image of the triumphal display Roman Emperors would do after a successful military campaign.
- 4. Col. 2:16-17, *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."*
 - a. Paul previously explains that faith in Christ produces transformed character; a changed people who know what is true and live according to it. Faith in Christ should expect moral results. However, the danger comes with legalistic submission to such regulations, such that observing them can even replace a Christian's devotion to Christ; *"self-righteousness."*
 - b. Because Jesus won such a glorious victory on the cross, we are to let no one judge you in food or in drink or in other matters related to legalism. A life that is centered on Jesus and what He did on the cross has no place for legalism. *"It would be preposterous indeed for those who had reaped the benefit of Christ's victory to put themselves voluntarily under the control of the powers which he had conquered."* [Bruce]
 - c. Partial reference to an aspect of a pagan practice called *"asceticism,"* seeking to achieve spiritual power by secrets and manipulation or self abasement.
 - d. Both pagans and Jew observe new moons, festivals and dietary laws.
 - e. For Judaism, most of the celebrations and festivals were a preparation for the coming of the Messiah; they were a type and shadow testifying to the reality of Jesus the Christ. Why accept shadowy outlines when we live permanently in the fulfillment of those precepts?
 - i. The early church clearly met on the first day of the week (cf. Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1-2)
 - f. A parallel today would be whenever people place a special value on religious performance. Any kind of religious performance that is done without meaning or personal significance falls into the category Paul is describing. (i.e. *Lent, communion, no meat on Fridays, special clothing, kosher kitchens, chanting mantras, prayer wheels, blind observance of Sabbaths, sitting in sermons instead of engaging with them, etc.*) Mechanical worship is dull.
 - i. Some of these practices are good, but observing them for the end of observing them is like relating to pictures my wife & children instead of the actual relationship I have with them.
 - ii. Is. 1:13-15, *"Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies – I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood."*
- 5. Col. 2:18-19, *"Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God."*
 - a. Do not be disqualified from the prize.

- b. Paul's fears of a false humility relate to the sort of self-righteous spirituality or human effort to attain what God has already granted us in Christ. Religious observance without Christ is null. Which is why we ought to be sincerely concerned by false doctrines, they place people under bondage and into captivity.
- c. Gnosticism held that there is a hierarchy of angels between all human beings and God which must be placated and acknowledged, and that one's knowledge, which began in virtual ignorance, increased with such contact until at last one entered into the fullness of understanding of the Oneness of all things. The focus is on self and the real goal is to develop all your "*self*" powers, which is why it is called the human potential movement. The lie is that everything is already there inside of you, and all you need to do is bring it out and develop your possibilities and full potential; "*The Light you seek is in your own lantern.*"
- d. There is also the worship of angels.
 - i. On the one hand there is the inordinate affection and fascination for "*angels,*" those we associate with Heaven and God. (i.e. *Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, William Branham, and Ellen White*)
 - ii. On the other hand there is the worship and submission to "*spirit guides,*" which are nothing more than fallen angels. (i.e. *astrology, ouija boards, tarot cards, assorted holy men, psychics, swamis, yogis, gurus, etc.*)
- e. God commands that we do not worship created beings. Rev. 22:8-9, "*Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'*" (cf. Ex. 20:3-4)
- f. When these strange, mystical movements arise in the church, they don't appeal to the whole body, but only to a few "*elite*" Christians. But Jesus as Head wants all the body to grow together. This is God's plan for church growth, as we remain faithful and connected to Jesus, God gives the increase.
- g. Losing the connection with the Head is the problem.
- 6. Col. 2:20-23, "*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 – "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using – according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 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.*"
 - a. We have died to the elementary principles of the world which are the cardinal, sinful, and false teachings of the world. Col. 3:3, "*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*"
 - b. Some believe that our holiness before God depends on our behavior. However, our holiness before God is dependent upon the work of Christ alone. This does not mean sin is ok, we need to avoid ungodliness, but we have to make sure that our avoiding ungodliness is not done so that

we might maintain our position of salvation with God (which is a form of legalism). Rather, it should be motivated out of our desire to honor God and bring glory to him.

i. Mt. 15:17-20, *“Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.”*

c. Legalism began in the Garden. Gen. 3:2-3, *“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”*

d. We can never grow spiritually by seeking what we want or manipulating God through false humility, false self sacrifice, or indigence and rituals. Even if they are seemingly good, and we are disciplined, if the underlying purpose is to get our own way, we are in the way of His Way.

7. Take-aways

- a. Beware of being taken captive
- b. In Jesus dwells the fullness of God
- c. New hearts circumcised by Christ
- d. Dead and Resurrected in Christ
- e. Jesus took our sins upon Himself
- f. The festivals are shadows of Christ
- g. Mechanical worship is dull
- h. Make sure it’s genuine
- i. Remain connected to the Head
- j. Note those that teach contrary to good doctrine
- k. It’s relationship in Christ, not rules that transforms us

7 Characteristics of False Teachers: Different Source (2 Pet. 1:16; 2 Pet. 2:3), Different Message (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Pet. 2:1), Different Position (2 Pet. 1:4, 2 Pet. 2:19), Different Character (2 Pet. 1:5, 2 Pet. 2:10, 14), Different Appeal (2 Pet. 1:19, 2 Pet. 2:18), Different Fruit (2 Pet. 1:8, 2 Pet. 2:17), Different End (2 Pet. 1:11, 2 Pet. 2:1, 3)

Warren Wiersbe writes: *“Satan is the counterfeiter... he has a false gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), preached by false ministers (2 Cor. 11:13-12), producing false Christians (2 Cor. 11:26)... Satan plants his counterfeits wherever God plants true believers (Mt. 13:38).”*