

The Sufficiency of Christ!

Colossians 2:8-23

Today we wrap up the 2nd section of Colossians, the doctrinal section. Today we will look at the sufficiency of Christ verses the worldly philosophies.

There are 4 heresy's that Paul addresses in this passage. They are philosophy, legalism, mysticism and asceticism.

I. Philosophy or Christ? 2:8-10

Philosophy tries to answer questions like: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Unfortunately philosophy ineptly tries to answer these important questions.

Philosophy simply means "lover of wisdom." The problem is that it loves wisdom more than God and we know that all the wisdom of man does not lead to the knowledge of God or salvation.

Paul addresses man's attempts to find truth through philosophy in:

1 Corinthians 2:9, "However, as it is written:

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, (empiricism) and what no human mind has conceived" (rationalism)—the things God has prepared for those who love him"

Our rebellion against God has driven us beneath the line of despair. When we try to overlay the wisdom of man over the wisdom of God we create our own heresy.

Colossians 2:8-10, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. 9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority."

Paul reminds the Colossians that they have been set free so they shouldn't let themselves be taken captive by human wisdom. The concept of being taken captive here holds the idea of being carried off or kidnapped as the booty of war. You are not the spoils of war; you are a child of God.

Paul tells us that we can become a captive of false teaching. These philosophies are built upon traditions that have been handed down from one generation to the next, but that doesn't make it true.

These traditions have perpetuated error as they have been passed down. And within Jewish culture tradition simply added to rules on top of the law which had been passed down becoming more and more of a weight around the neck of the Jews.

The elemental forces Paul refers to is immaturity.

1 Corinthians 3:19a, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight."

So, why is Jesus' superior to worldly philosophies?

First, the 'fulness of deity lives in Jesus'. This deity has always been there. It is the house that deity indwells. Deity is at home in Jesus!

Second, Jesus is the head over every power and authority.

Third, we are brought to fulness in Jesus. Peter adds to this concept in:

2 Peter 1:3-4, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

Human philosophy leaves us with unanswered questions, while Jesus gives us everything we need for a godly life. Which will you choose?

II. Complete in Christ! 2:11-15

A. Complete salvation!

Colossians 2:11-12, "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

The problem Paul was dealing with here was that there were some teaching that you needed circumcision plus Jesus for salvation.

Now, some here will point to verse 12 and say that you need to be baptized plus Jesus for salvation. But again, this is wrong, baptism doesn't save any more than circumcision saves. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. Paul affirms that here by saying it is through faith in the working of God. It's not our working.

B. Complete forgiveness!

Colossians 2:13-14, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

Get this point: WE WERE DEAD before coming to Christ. Then, HE MADE US ALIVE. This is a spiritual resurrection, what's easier, to declare someone alive or to actually raise someone from the dead?

It's easier to declare it than to actually raise someone from the dead right? Well, Jesus did both. He raised Lazarus from the dead. So, if he can do that, we can

count on His declaration that we are now alive and free from sin, raised from the dead!

There are 6 characteristics of God's forgiveness:

1. It is gracious.

We didn't earn it, it's a free gift.

2. It is complete.

No sin is too bad to be forgiven. If we say there is we limit the power of Jesus.

3. It is eager.

God desires to forgive, He is eager for our reconciliation.

4. It is certain.

Because it is based on God's promise, not mans.

5. It is unequalled.

Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy."

There is no one like our God!

6. It is motivating.

God's forgiveness will motivate us when we've experienced it to forgive others.

You see, we are forgiven for all our transgressions!

(JESUS TORE UP OUR BILL OF DEBT!)

C. Complete victory!

Colossians 2:15, "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

The idea Paul is expressing here is similar to how the Romans would have their defeated foes marched through the streets on display demonstrating their complete victory over their enemies.

When this is done to the enemies of the cross, who would then worship them?

III. Spiritual Intimidation. 2:16-23

To this point Paul has dealt with the world's philosophies. Now he turns to the remaining 3 heresies.

A. Legalism

Colossians 2:16-17, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

Legalism sacrifices your freedom in Christ in exchange for a set of manmade rules. It rejects the forgiveness we have in Christ and trades it for self-righteousness based on some abstract list of dos and don'ts.

B. Mysticism

Colossians 2:18-19, "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow."

Mysticism defined is the pursuit of a deeper or higher subjective religious experience. It bases truth on ones

feelings or internal intuition rather than Scripture. It is the 'I feel this, so it must be true' concept.

We see this practiced in some charismatic expressions of faith that value the felt experience over the truth of Scripture.

Delighting in false humility is still pride. And again, Paul addresses angel worship and its inadequacy.

We are to hold fast to the head, Christ. He is our source of strength and growth.

C. Asceticism

Colossians 2:20-23, "Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."

An ascetic is one who lives a life of rigorous self-denial. An ascetic rigorously holds to their self designed attempt at making the body yield rather than simply giving up their sins and yielding their will to God's will.

You see, they are trying to replace the work of Christ with their own works to earn salvation.

Some even treat their bodies harshly as we have seen some practice self-flagellation. All in an attempt to become more holy or serve as penance for sins.

The problem here is that it dismisses the effectiveness of Jesus' perfect sacrifice.

1 Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

This is why I worship Jesus, He paid for my penalty completely!