

There's a Danger Out There: Beware of Worldly Philosophies
Colossians 2:8-10

Colossians 2:8-10 ⁸ 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. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

The only command in these verses is **Beware!**

Beware - βλέπω, blepō - see; look (on or at); beware of; consider, regard;

Paul is telling us to “look out! Keep your eyes open!” There is a real danger which Paul wants us to be aware of.

(“heads up” illustration)

I. Worldly Philosophies can capture us (vs. 8)

Colossians 2:8 ⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world,

Cheat - [UBS] συλαγωγέω, sulagōgeō - make a captive of.

37.10 συλαγωγέω: (a figurative extension of meaning of συλαγωγέω 'to carry off as booty or as captive in war,' not occurring in the NT) to take over complete control of a person as one would a captive - 'to control completely, to take control of, to make a captive of.' Louw-Nida Lexicon.

Paul is warning us that we can be taken captive by certain things. In this passage, it is not a physical captivity that Paul is concerned about, but rather a captivity of our minds and how we think and see the world.

A. Through philosophy

Philosophy - [UBS] φιλοσοφία, philosophia - philosophy (in a bad sense), human wisdom.

This word is literally “a love of wisdom,” but Paul is not using it here to describe a love of God’s wisdom. Instead this is referring to a mindset which does not come from God, but rather comes from man’s thoughts.

We need to beware. Man’s wisdom can be very persuasive, and yet is still not the truth. We can be lead astray if we follow a philosophy devised by men and not by God.

B. Through Empty Deceit

Empty – [UBS] κενός, kenos - empty, empty-handed; to no purpose, without result (εἰς κ. in vain); foolish, senseless

Deceit – [UBS] ἀπάτη, apate - deception; pl. deceitful ways (2 Pe 2.13)

Another way to describe these worldly philosophies is that they are “empty deceit.” They deceive us from the truth, and contrary to those who would insist that they still can help us, they are empty. They will not help us grow in our faith or come to know God in a better way.

Paul describes these philosophies:

C. According to the tradition of men

Tradition seems to be taught two ways in the Bible:

- 1) Apostolic tradition – which is the specific teachings which the apostles received from God.

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 11:2** Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you.

- 2) The traditions of men – which are the rules and regulations which men make to do what is right. I do not believe these are necessarily wrong in and of themselves. What made them wrong in the time of the New Testament is the emphasis that these made someone holy and acceptable to God.

Matthew 15:1-9 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." ³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ⁵ "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is a gift to God*" -- ⁶ 'then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ⁷ "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' "

(Notice that Jesus did not condemn the washing of hands – it, in and of itself is not a bad thing. What he did condemn is putting their traditions ahead of the commandments of God).

Mark 7:2-13 ² Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. ³ For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. ⁴ *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. ⁵ Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" ⁶ He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁷ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸ "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." ⁹ He said to them, "*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. ¹⁰ "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ¹¹ "But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is Corban*" -- ' (that is, a gift *to God*), ¹² "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, ¹³ "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

1 Peter 1:17-19 ¹⁷ And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here*

in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Scripture shows a contrast between the traditions which are taught and the things of God. In the 1 Peter passage, tradition had no power to redeem anyone. Only the blood of Christ could do that.

D. According to the basic principles of the world

We naturally think of the basic principles of the world as being those things which are blatantly against God, but they actually seem to refer to ideas which seem religious and good, but do not come from Christ.

Colossians 2:20-23 ²⁰ 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 -- ²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," ²² which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ 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.

These basic principles of the world seem to regard man trying to make himself righteous by works and not by God's grace. Notice that Paul states that these things have the **appearance of wisdom** but contain no real wisdom.

We must beware, be careful of worldly philosophies. It is important that we know what we are being taught, that it aligns itself with the word of God, and we must turn away from those philosophies which contradict the Bible.

II. Worldly Philosophies are against Christ's teachings (vs. 8, 9)

Colossians 2:8-9 and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

A. They are not according to Christ

There is a contrast in this verse – the worldly philosophies are **not** according to what Christ teaches. As people who are seeking to be like-minded with Christ, we need to be concerned with what philosophies we are listening to.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 ³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself.

The direct contrast to these philosophies and empty deceits is the philosophy which is according to Christ.

B. All the fullness of God dwells in Christ.

Our source of knowledge and wisdom should be Christ. In Him and Him alone dwells the fullness of God. He is the only source of truth.

Ephesians 3:14-19 ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height -- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; **that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Ephesians 4:11-13 ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

We must accept the teachings of Christ as He lays them out in his word. Christ has shown us who God is and what He desires of us. We must be diligent to know His will.

III. Worldly Philosophies contradict our position (vs.10)

Colossians 2:10 ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

A. Our Position – Complete in Christ.

It is important to remember that we are complete in Christ. Perhaps one of the temptations to follow a worldly philosophy is because we are lacking something. This could not be farther from the truth. We have every thing we need in Christ, including the truth.

B. Christ's Position – Head

Ephesians 1:20-21 ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 6:12 ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Colossians 1:16 ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Because we are complete in Christ, we should have no need for worldly philosophies. We have the truth. We have a God who changes us and completes us, who is the head over all principalities and powers.

What do we need to do:

- 1) In order to beware of these empty and deceitful philosophies, we need to know the truth. We need to be in God's word. We need to take the teachings which our pastors are teaching to us and review and study these things (Eph. 4).

- 2) Once we know the truth, we need to embrace the truth. We need to be convinced that what God's word says is the truth and we need to believe it and live by it.
- 3) We need to examine what we are putting into our heads, whether it is on the radio, on T.V., in a book or in just talking to other "Christians." Are these things proclaiming the truth, or are they leading me down a path of human philosophy?