

# The Consequence of Ideas

*Colossians*

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**Bible Text:** Colossians 2:8-9  
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It is a blessing to be back with you this morning, back home. We had a wonderful time of vacation but it's always good to come home and certainly where are you more at home than with the people of God? And so we're delighted to be back with you this morning.

I do want to thank Ken Temple for preaching and for Dalton for preaching as well, to be able to leave and know that the word of God is going to be brought. It's such a blessing but it's great to be back with you this morning.

I do want to also share with you, some of you may have seen if you have signed up for the prayer link, if you haven't, you can contact [admin@providenceduluth.org](mailto:admin@providenceduluth.org) if you'd like to be contacted with prayer requests. You just email [admin@providenceduluth.org](mailto:admin@providenceduluth.org) and let Bethany know that you would like to be added to the list. But we would love to have you praying for needs that go out and one that you may have seen if you are on that link this morning is an update about Irene Daunno that was sent by her husband, Paul. And so Irene, if you haven't heard was diagnosed with cancer, stage IV lung cancer in September and has been going through a series of treatment options trying to address that and was hopeful of starting a new experimental treatment. None of the treatments so far have been effective and she was hospitalized for testing and then has had complications and so things have definitely turned for the worse for her and we need to be praying for her and for Paul and Sarah and Ruth, Irene's daughter Sarah and her mom Ruth. And so Paul has asked us to pray this morning for them for wisdom in the email he sent. So I want us to pray for them this morning as a congregation. I encourage you to be praying for them, reach out to Paul, Sarah, Ruth and let them know and be praying for Irene.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are that we come to a God who truly is exalted above the heavens and yet though You are exalted and holy, holy, holy as the angels proclaimed, yet You are a God who knows and are intimately acquainted with our circumstances. You know our thoughts. You know our needs. You know the burdens that we carry. You know everything about us physically. You know the numbers of hair on our head. And so you know about our sister Irene and what's going on with her and we just want to lift her up to You, Lord. We want to stand with that family and pray for Your grace upon them.*

*Lord, we pray that You would minister comforting Scripture to Irene in her heart, in her mind, just remind her of the gospel and the confidence that she has in Christ, that she might have Your peace which passes understanding and know Your presence sustaining her in these difficult times. We pray that You would bless her physically. Lord, we pray that You would turn things around and bring healing to her. We pray for Your comfort for Paul, her husband, for her daughter Sarah, for her mother Ruth. Lord, the burdens of watching one that we love to suffer is so hard and so we pray that You would minister to them. We thank You, Lord, that when we come to You, we're not only coming to a Father who You describe in Your word as a father has compassion on his children so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. You're mindful of our frame. You remember that we are dust. We also come to a Savior who is a great High Priest, who is able to sympathize with us in our weakness because He was tempted in every way yet without sin. He was made like His brethren in all ways so that He might be able to come to our aid when we are tempted. And so, Lord Jesus, make Yourself so real to Irene and to Paul and to Sarah and to Ruth. May they find in You the depth and width and breadth and length of Your compassion and Your love. And Father, help us to express those same things. Love them through us. Help us to understand together with all the saints how great is the love of Christ. Father, bless those that are caring for Irene. Give them wisdom. Give them direction. Use them. And Father, most of all, may You be praised and glorified in all of our hearts. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Colossians 2. Not returning yet to Nehemiah for a couple of weeks. Lord willing, I'm planning to do that in the last week of June. I want to, I plan to preach on Father's Day on biblical masculinity. We preached on Mother's Day on biblical femininity and the guys deserve the same fair treatment, I guess. So we're all going to get that on, Lord willing, on June 20 but this morning I wanted to come to you on a subject that's of great urgency in our day as it is in every day, and that is the subject of the danger of false teaching.

The title of the message this morning is "The Consequence of Ideas." The consequence of ideas. I borrow that title from R. C. Sproul, a book he wrote 20-25 years ago in which he talks about how ideas and belief systems and structures and foundational assumptions in the culture have impact on the way we think and the way we live. And understanding that as Christians and learning to discern where we are holding unbiblical assumptions and then jettisoning those assumptions in favor of the word of God brings freedom. It brings blessing. It's the lie that Satan brings that kills, that destroys, and we come to a passage which speaks about the importance of being aware of this. And I think this is one of the things that it's such a subtle temptation and we tend to be asleep and miss it.

This is the history of the church. False teaching has always been a problem. It actually started in the garden of Eden. In the garden of Eden, God made man to hear his voice, to need to hear his voice. The first thing God did after he created man was he spoke to him. Before sin enters the world, man needed the word of God to understand his place in the world. God says to man, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it." He tells him what he's to eat. Puts him in the garden, tells him to tend it. He gives him a command, "Eat from any tree of the garden you're free to eat, but of the one tree that's in the middle

of the garden, you shall not eat. From the day you eat of it, you shall die." Man needed the word of God and so God's voice, God was graciously so kind in speaking to man and helping man figure out his place in the world. God made man to need the word of God but in the garden you have a second voice, the voice of the serpent. That also suggests an interpretation of reality and a way of thinking and a way of believing and it's an alternative interpretation that leads to the fall of man and to the destruction of so much of God's beauty and glory. And that second voice continues to speak and Satan loves to come where God is speaking and to counterfeit him, and this is the history all throughout of the Scriptures and through the Bible and through the history of the church. The danger of false teaching and false teaching arises in the most surprising places. We just don't expect it.

What we're going to see in a moment when we look through this a little more carefully, that the danger is from within. The most dangerous place is the church. Satan loves to sow his lies in the church, that is, in the local church, in the local body like us. He loves to sow these things among us. This is his modus operandi, his mode of operation. He loves to sow his lies among like-minded believers. He loves to sow his lies among those who say they love Jesus and believe the Bible. He doesn't send false teachers with labels, warning labels that say, "I'm a false teacher." No, they come as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan disguises, his messengers disguise themselves as angels of light.

And so we need to be more aware, more vigilant, and we come to a passage which speaks about that, Colossians 2. We're going to read verses 1 to 10 but we're going to focus in on verse 8 and verse 9. The imperative in verse 8 is what we want to really focus in on. We'll read Colossians 2:1-10 to set the context. Chapter 2, verse 1,

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 4 I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. 5 For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. 6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Paul describes for us the wonder and the fullness and the wealth that is ours in Christ. He is telling the Colossian believers, "Listen, I want you to attain to all the wealth that you have in Christ." But he sees that they are in a reality being plundered. I started to call this message "The Plundering of the Church" because that's what he's describing here is how Satan wants to plunder the church. This is his agenda every generation. We have been given all wealth as he said in verse 2, "I want you to attain to the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding." And look at verse 3, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." As Christians, we have all wealth. We have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Do you see how blessed we are? How happy we should be? We have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We have all the wealth of what Jesus Christ has done. We know God himself. We can come into his throne room. We can enter behind the veil through the flesh of Jesus Christ, the death of Christ. We have every blessing in the heavenly places. We have been blessed with every blessing in the heavenly places in Christ and yet why do we live like spiritual paupers? Because we fail to heed what Paul says here in verse 8.

"See to it that no one takes you captive." Interesting, that word verb "taken captive," to take captive. It's a rich word. It definitely does mean "to take captive." It pictures an armed conflict, a violent encounter, but it really emphasizes not just being taken captive but being plundered. The idea is to be defeated, to be basically beaten up and robbed. Or in warfare, to have your weapons taken from you, to be captured and all of your valuables to be plundered. And so the picture he's saying, "Listen, see to it that you are not plundered and the way that you're plundered is through unbiblical ideas." You are plundered by the enemy when you accept as true that which God says is a lie. That is Satan's method. That is Satan's means for plundering you. He loves to plunder God's people. He hates to see God's people walking in the fullness of the wealth of Christ. I'm talking about spiritual wealth here. We understand that, we're not talking about physical wealth, we're talking about spiritual wealth. We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. This world and the wealth of this world, relatively speaking, is irrelevant. We have the blessings of eternity, the blessings of righteousness and holiness, and Satan wants us to live like we have nothing.

The consequence of ideas. I was thinking about this. I heard an interesting discussion of a survey the other day. Dennis Prager was talking about a survey of young people. This illustrates this principle, the consequence of ideas, and how all that you have can be plundered through believing lies. He tells about a survey that was taken recently by Reuters in which they surveyed 18-25 year olds and they compared it to the survey of 18-25 year olds 10 years before, and they found that 18-25 year old Americans are now twice as likely as they were 10 years ago, twice as likely, the number has doubled percentage wise of people in the age group 18-25 who have suicidal thoughts, who have clinical depression, and who are involved in some type of self-harm. All three of those statistics have more than doubled in the last 10 years.

Now stop and think about that. It's really counter-intuitive. Now young people don't realize this but those of us who are old enough to know from experience, we know that

no generation has had it easier than 18-25 year olds today. No generation has had more blessing, material blessing, and ease. I mean, think about around the world, Americans are the most blessed and in the history of the world, it is staggering how easy it is to be alive today. Staggering. In fact, one of the things I heard someone else say recently is it's so easy to live, you have to manufacture reasons to be upset. And compared to all world history, the reason you don't think that is because you're ignorant. You haven't read enough about world history. People used to have to spend all their time trying to stay alive.

So how do you get that way? How do you become so incredibly depressed when you have everything relatively speaking? Now we understand we're talking about worldly stuff here but this is illustrating the principle. We know that in reality having everything in the world really doesn't amount to a hill of beans, but I'm just talking about, I'm talking about unbelievers 10 years removed from other unbelievers in the same stage, double depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts.

Prager goes on to say, he discusses, he says, "Well, listen, if you are listening to what's being said out there as an 18-25 year old, you have no future." Global warming is going to end the world. You have no hope. You not only have no future, you have no past. Your past is a record of incredible oppression and evil, and that's all it is. You have no present. To be living in America is to be living in the most unjust place in the world if you listen to what young people are being told.

Now if you listen to that, you have no future, you have no past, you have no present, why would you not be depressed? Ideas have consequences. When you accept something as true and you believe it, it changes you. That's why it's so critical for us to heed the exhortation of Scripture, test everything, hold to that which is good, 1 Thessalonians 5:21. He's talking about the prophecy, the things that are spoken in a church. Paul says in that passage, "Test it all. Test everything. Hold to that which is good." John uses the same word in 1 John 4:1 when he says, "Believe not every spirit but test the spirits." The spirit of the teaching that you're hearing. Test it to see if it is from God. And Paul is talking about the same thing. He's saying to the Colossians, "See to it that no one takes you captive. See to it. I've been talking to you about the wealth and the fullness that is yours because you have Christ and I want you to see to it that no one takes you captive, that no one plunders you, robs you, leaves you, as it were, beaten and robbed spiritually, so that no one can see the wealth, the spiritual wealth, no one can see the love, the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness because you're living as a spiritual pauper."

I want us to consider this under three points this morning to help us unpack this passage. The first is a clear and present danger. The first point: a clear and present danger. Paul is writing to this church at Colossae and he is warning them of a clear and present danger. Like I said, we tend to be gullible. We tend to not expect that we're really in danger when we are in danger spiritually, especially, we're especially gullible spiritually. We don't recognize the danger.

And so this first point, we need to see a clear and present danger. The verb there in verse 8, "see to it," is a present active imperative. It's a command. See to it. The present tense in Greek means primarily the type of action, that is, it's a continuous ongoing need. You need to keep on seeing or keep on watching. It basically means, "Watch out! Look! Keep looking!" Keep looking for what? Keep looking so that no one takes you captive, so that no one plunders you. You see, someone is trying to plunder you. This is an ongoing danger. It is a continual danger. Though it's often and most often unexpected, it's always a legitimate and rightful concern.

I mentioned Satan, the liar, the father of lies, and the whole Old Testament is full of false prophets. I was reading in Jeremiah 20 yesterday where Jeremiah is dealing with the false prophets. Jeremiah is a prophet of God but he is surrounded by false prophets. I mean, in Jerusalem they're hearing from way more false prophets than the true prophet. Why? Because Satan is a counterfeiter. When God speaks, he counterfeits the speech and he deceives and he through deception, he kills, he murders. As Jesus said, he's a liar and he's a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of lies.

You may remember when we were in Nehemiah 6, remember Nehemiah's prayer when he prays in Nehemiah 6:14, he prays particularly about the false prophet who was trying to deceive him into hiding away in the temple, remember? He recognizes this man did not prophesy from God and as he's praying, he prays about all of the other prophets, all the other prophets who had tried to make him afraid. Nehemiah and Ezra are ministering the word of God and they are surrounded by false prophets because that is the way that Satan operates.

You read through the New Testament and it's astounding and I want to show you some of these verses. Start with Matthew 7, the first extended sermon recorded in the New Testament in the gospel of Matthew is the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus covers so many important things but one of the things he says in chapter 7, verse 15, he's talking to citizens of the kingdom about how you're to live, he says, "Beware," Matthew 7:15, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Beware. Be on your guard. See to it that you are not taken captive by these false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. The wolf doesn't come saying, "I'm a wolf." I mean, I guess the real wolf does. He still tries to sneak up on the sheep, though, he doesn't really from a long way away let them know he's coming, does he? He tries to sneak up. But he's saying that in the church, the wolves dress up like sheep. Satan's strategy.

Jesus in chapter 24 of Matthew in verses 4 and 5 says, "See to it that no," this is verse 4, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." Listen, as I get ready to go, you need to understand that there will be many who will try to deceive you. We don't tend to think that, do we? I mean, if you're really honest about that, do you really think that you have to constantly be vigilant and on guard like the Scriptures show us to?

I want to continue to show this to you. Look at Acts 20, a really sobering passage where the Apostle Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders, a church he planted some years before. He's talking to men who many of whom were saved under his ministry and now have grown and matured to where they are shepherding the church of God and he says in verse 28 of Acts 20, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock," be on guard, "among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Why do you need to be on guard? Look at verse 29, "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Wolves will come in. You see the urgency. Jesus, Paul, "Be ready."

Look what he says next, verse 30, "and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." That had to hurt as Paul says this. The Spirit gives him this understanding as he's speaking to them, that even from among the men to whom he's talking, some will turn away from the faith but they're not going to go out and say, "I'm an unbeliever," they are within the church try to lead people astray from the truth of the gospel of Christ. You see this in every single book. I mean, it's virtually every single New Testament book.

Romans 16:17 and 18, the apostle who doesn't have a lot of personal knowledge of the Roman church, he's not been there yet but he says to them in verse 17 of Romans 16, "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites." He's talking about, I mean, doesn't it, it's counter-intuitive to me anyway that unbelievers want to stay in a church. Why if you don't believe in Jesus do you want to stay in the church?

I can remember when I was in seminary learning and one of the things that happened in my pilgrimage through my education was I ended up, I started out at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. When I went off to school, there were no Baptists, Southern Baptist who were teaching the inerrancy of Scripture. They were all liberal, every single one of them, all six, incredibly liberal. I mean, so liberal that the faculty was almost unanimously unsaved based on their stated beliefs. You had most, like a handful of people at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville who believed Jesus literally bodily rose from the dead. A handful out of a faculty of over 100.

So I didn't want to go there. So I ended up going to RTS, Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi and then I transferred to Beeson Divinity school which was a, well, I thought it was going to be more conservative than it turned out to be, but I thought it was going to be another conservative school at Sanford University. Anyway, while I was there, one of the interesting things that happened was we had, Beeson was a graduate school connected to the university so it's a seminary that's planted now at a university where you have mostly undergrads but we're graduates study seminary, divinity school. Okay, so you had a divinity school faculty and you had a religion department faculty. The religion department faculty was the undergrads, the divinity school was the seminary and they were completely polar opposites. The divinity school, everybody on faculty believed in the bodily resurrection of Christ, the substitutionary

atonement, the Trinity. Everybody in the religion department was teaching about Jesus but they didn't believe any of those things about the gospel. I can remember thinking, "I can't believe you guys want, what gets you up in the morning to go to work to teach people heresy? Why do you care. If really Christ hasn't been raised, what point do you have in doing this?" We can't get into the psychology and soul of someone who's doing that but we know Satan has an agenda. He disguises himself as angels of light and so that's what keeps them there. They're his messengers, his weapons, his tools, and what we are seeing in the New Testament, though, is that sometimes those who have been walking with us stop walking with us and become evident, as John says in 1 John 4, they went out from us because they were not of us.

We could go through the rest of the New Testament. The books of 1 and 2 Corinthians talk a lot about false teaching, false apostles, those who were teaching there is no resurrection. So 1 Corinthians, Paul as he writes the letters dealing with false teaching that is happening and, again, it's not people over there saying, "We're a cult. Come join our cult." I mean, we know that, that's even happened among cults that you know, right? Jehovah's Witnesses when they come to your door, they don't say, "Hey, I'm a member of a cult. Would you like to join?" No, they say, "I believe in Jesus. Do you believe in Jesus?" Mormons the same, right?

So false teaching is the same way. They use the same words but they load them with different meaning and we see this throughout the New Testament. We can go back to my book. The Galatian heresy of Judaizing where the Galatians were being taught by Jewish Christians, people who loved Jesus, said they loved Jesus, people who loved the gospel, who said, "Listen, yes, believe the gospel but you need to be circumcised." When Paul heard about this teaching, he said, "Listen, if someone comes to you," and it's amazing, Galatians 1:8 and 9 tells you how urgent is the danger of false teaching. Paul says this in Galatians 1:8. Listen carefully, he's writing to people to whom he's already preached his gospel. He's ministered there and he says, "Listen, if I," listen to this now, Paul says to the Galatians, "If I or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel other than that which you have received, let him be accursed." He repeats it, verse 9, "I will repeat it. If I or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel other than that which you've received, let him be accursed." He's basically saying, "If I do it, let me go to hell." That's what he's saying. So urgent is the proof that is the purity of the gospel. And there were people who were distorting the gospel in the name of the gospel.

In Philippians 3:2 and 3, Paul says, "we are the true circumcision," and he's talking about false teachers like the Galatian heretics who were teaching and deceiving. Colossians, the chapter that we are in, Colossians 2:4, he says, "I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument." Verse 8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world." Skip on down to verse 16, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day." Verse 18, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." He's describing some kind of, the Colossian



heresy was apparently a syncretistic blend of Judaizing tendencies along with asceticism that is the harsh treatment of the body to gain spiritual insight, along with some kind of pagan mysticism which saw the worship of the angels as some way of ascending to the heights of spirituality. The Colossian heresy was some kind of creative blending of these things, most scholars infer that as we look carefully at what Paul is saying about the heretics. But again, they're not saying, "I'm a heretic. Listen to me." They're saying, "I love Jesus. Listen to what I have to say so that you can have more of the Christian life the way God wants you to."

You turn over to 2 Thessalonians 2:1, "we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us." He's saying there are going to be people out there, they're sending letters, counterfeit letters as if from us and they are saying this, "the day of the Lord has already come." Paul says, "Listen, if you get a letter like that, it's not from me." He talks all about the false teacher, the lawless one throughout the rest of this.

1 Timothy, you turn over to the next page, the next book, 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I urged you," here Paul writes to Timothy, the pastor, the young pastor, verse 3 of chapter 1, "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." You stay there and you pastor the church and you stop the men who are teaching strange doctrines, "nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions." He talks about in chapter 4, "the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."

2 Timothy, he starts naming names of false teachers. Titus 1, right after 2 Timothy. I'm skipping over so much. As you read the Bible, just look for this. When he tells Titus, now the young pastor Titus who is pastoring on Crete. Timothy was a young pastor who was pastoring at Ephesus. Paul writes those two letters to tell him how to pastor. He writes this letter to Titus who is pastoring on Crete to tell him how to shepherd the church and he says, "Listen, you need to appoint elders," plural, "in every city as I directed you," verse 5. "I left you in Crete that you would do this, set in order what remains, appoint elders," and he tells you what the qualifications need to be, a lot like 1 Timothy 3. But look at what he says in verse 9, they need to "hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching so that an elder will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict." You see, an elder has to be ready to refute those who contradict in the church. He's not talking about going out in the world and finding everybody who's wrong and telling them they're wrong. That's irrelevant. He's talking about within the church, those who claim to be followers of Jesus. Look at what he says in verse 10, "for there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially

those of the circumcision who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain."

2 Peter 2, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned." Peter is saying, "Listen, false teachers are coming."

I mentioned 1 John 4, test every spirit, don't believe every spirit. 2 John 1:7, "many deceivers have gone out into the world." 3 John he warns about a particular one named Diotrephes. Jude says, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed." False teachers, "marked out for condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Isn't it something? I mean, just think about that. I mean, it was costly to become a Christian in the first century, wasn't it? I mean, for people that were Jewish to become a follower of Jesus cost them their inheritance, their family, and yet you had many Jewish false teachers. Satan is a counterfeiter and it is a clear and present danger and the history of the church is the history of false teaching and the faithful having to defend the truth against false teachers within. That's a clear and present danger. Today is no different than other days and other times. We have to always be vigilant. We should be vigilant. We should be examining ourselves and what we are teaching. Is it right? You should be testing, as Acts 17:11 says, being a Berean, to check out what I say or what any of the people who preach or teach in our church are saying. If it's not true to the Scriptures, then lovingly bring it to our attention. But do it. Paul says, "Listen, the danger is that you will lose all of the wealth that you have in Christ." You will become a person who is not enjoying the blessings of all that Jesus has done, but you will look just like the world. You will look like a person who was wealthy who has been now beaten up and left on the side of the road, and if you drove by them, you would think that's just some poor person possibly, you know, that's on drugs, strung out or something, you would know looking at them that this was a wealthy person. That's what Christians look like today who are listening to false teaching, and that's what any of us can experience.

So a clear and present danger. Secondly, a consistent and effective strategy. A consistent and effective strategy. We see the strategy, Paul gives us a window into that, back to Colossians 2, in verse 8 when he says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through," here is the means, the instrumental means by which you are captivated and plundered. See to it that no one, watch out, keep watching out so that no one takes you captive "through philosophy and empty deception." Philosophy, the love of wisdom. But man's wisdom, the love of man's wisdom is the idea here. And with the second term "empty deception," he's saying, "Listen, people will try to take you captive through man's wisdom and empty deceptive and alluring ideas." In fact, you add to this a little bit in chapter 2, verse 4 when he says, "I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument." Persuasive argument. No one would delude you. The verb "delude" actually is an interesting word itself. It pictures the idea of exercising your reason and reasoning to

the wrong conclusion. The word "logizomai" is the root there, and "logic" comes from that. Para logizomai, para, beside or alongside, logizomai, to reason and to end up off track. That's what the word "delude" means.

So the deluding is not just a statement, it's actually, there's a clever argument where someone, false teachers reason with you and convince you then to step aside from the truth. But there's a reasoning process. They don't just say, they don't say, "I'm a false teacher. Here's a lie. Listen to it." And they don't just say, "Hey, I'm not a false teacher. Here's the truth." They say, "I'm not a false teacher. Here's the truth and let me show you why it's true." They have an argumentation behind them.

And he says, "don't delude you with persuasive argument." This phrase "persuasive argument" literally is the word "persuade" and "words" together. It's a combination, a compound word. So it means persuasive speech, enticing words, appealing concepts. They're going to reason you to the wrong conclusion with appealing concepts, with enticing words, things that you want to hear. And we get a little more information about that when we look down back to verse 8 again when he says, "through philosophy and empty deception," and he says these next two prepositional phrases, "according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

So philosophy and empty deception are rooted in the tradition of men and are rooted in the elementary principles of the world. What he's describing here, again, he's talking about teachers who came along and said, "Listen, believe in Jesus. Yes, believe in Jesus. It's all about the gospel, yes. But listen, to really have a fuller experience of Jesus, you need to, you need to practice some ascetic practices that will help you get in touch with Him better." Verse 16, "no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink." Verse 21, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" These are the things, the elementary principles that they're trying to get you to live by. They were the ideas of you can attain more spirituality if you control your flesh, and you also need to add to the worship of Jesus reliance upon angels. Now to us, this is foreign and it sounds wacky but they came alongside things they were used to, that were appealing in the world. The mystery religions involved the use of spirits to help you to go higher and higher spiritually. There were spirits that would propel you on, and so they would basically take that worldly way of thinking and package it inside the gospel, and Paul says if you receive this, you will be plundered.

Interesting, this phrase in verse 8, "elementary principles of the world," which is repeated in verse 20, "the elementary principles of the world," interesting word here. Some of the other translations say, "elementary spirits." The word "spirit" is not there. It's an inference. It's certainly a possible inference but the idea is elementary concepts that have spiritual significance. The King James translates it "rudiments." It really pictures, the word means like the elements, the basic foundational truths, so to speak. They're not really truths, it's worldly truths, you get that. It's worldly truths that everyone knows to be true, do you hear what I'm saying? That as a worldly person, you know it's true. And the

reality, it's deceptive because all of us are sinners and the appeal of these kind of base principles, it strikes a chord deep in the soul of man. These elementary principles.

We might think about some that would qualify for this kind of a thought process this word is describing. Trust your heart. Everybody knows you should trust your heart. That is an elemental principle that is evident throughout history and especially today, isn't it? It's similar to another way of saying the same kind of thing is, to your own self be true. Be authentic. Live in accordance with your feelings. That's authenticity. Now I'm telling you, please understand, I'm telling you lies, that which Scripture condemns. But that which the world believes and when a false teacher takes things like that and brings them into the gospel, there's a ring in the soul, a sense in which it seems true and it makes it powerfully compelling and Paul's saying, "Listen, you have been, you are in danger of being captivated and plundered by teachers who are bringing Jesus plus these elemental principles."

Here's another one, you deserve better. You deserve to be respected. You deserve to be treated right. Everybody knows that, right? The question is are you going to live like we saw when Charles read from Proverbs 1. Basically the message of Proverbs is this, there are two ways to live. Just two ways. There is the one way which is submit to God and to his word and completely submit yourself to him through Christ, the gospel. Accept what he says about you, that you're a sinner. We are all sinners, that we are all hopeless, that we are all helpless. We can do nothing to redeem ourselves, nothing to help ourselves accept that assessment that God says about you that doesn't ring true to your own soul in some ways because you and I in our own souls have sin which says we should be like God. But in a deeper place, we know it is true because we are made in the image of God. When you're open, you know that the word is the one thing that truly rings true. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

So when you accept the assessment of Scripture that you are hopeless, that you deserve the wrath of God against your sin, I deserve the wrath of God against my sin, there is no hope for me, my only hope is the mercy of God through Christ. My only hope is grace alone. And when you repent and place your faith in Christ and rest only in his finished work, everything that he did, his perfect life, his sacrificial death as payment for your sins in full, his bodily resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, and you place your faith in all that he is and all that he did, then you are accepted by God forever. That is submitting to God's truth.

And so two ways to live, you either submit to God's truth or you determine for yourself. The way of the fool is to determine for himself. To believe the lie that you are your own God, to believe the lie that whatever your heart tells you is right, to believe the lie that you can determine your gender, you can determine your sexual preference. I'm not saying you don't have temptations. All of us do and the reality is we know, those of us who follow Jesus and have come to know him by grace, we know that we still cannot trust our hearts. We can only trust the word of God and the wonder of it is, as you learn to live submitted to the word of God, your heart over time begins to change and line up more

and more and more with the word of God. But you still never trust your heart without Scripture.

So the effective strategy, the consistent effective strategy of Satan is to blend and to mix up with the gospel these elemental principles of the world, and to confuse God's people and to make them to lose, to effectively live as though they have lost everything that they have in Christ. This is part of the reason that I'm doing this study on Wednesday that we are going to be doing as elders, the study on Wednesday that we are doing, thinking biblically, renewing your mind, because there are so many complex issues out there that are oversimplified in the world and that in oversimplification in the world, it's infiltrated the church, it's infiltrated our church, it's infiltrated our minds, it's infiltrated broader evangelicalism in so many ways, and we have to learn to think biblically, to take the Scriptures and to test these things and to honestly think and to not listen uncritically to even those who name the name of Christ and who seem like genuine loving people. We are to test everything and to hold to that which is good.

You know, one of the ways that you see this, I think we'll be talking a lot on Wednesdays about some of the issues around COVID. I mean, we're going to step on toes, just to let you know, okay? Step on my toes. I mean, I'm getting my toes stepped on to prepare to share anyway, so I just want to share the wealth. And I want to be faithful to the word of God but there's been too much complicity of thinking in the church and not enough critical evaluation in the church. When it comes to COVID, when it comes to social justice, these are huge issues that the word of God must be brought to bear.

Let me just give you an example of how thinking in this area. We'll take an example of some of the mindset of today. It comes up certainly with social justice but it's more about just a general way of thinking in general, and that is the idea like I said, these elemental principles. You deserve better. It becomes, you ought to be offended. You ought to be offended. The world is telling you that all the time, especially it's telling you that unless you're a white male. But it's telling you that if you're a white woman, you should be offended with white males. If you're another ethnicity other than white, you should be offended at white females and white males. You should be offended. You should look for micro-aggressions. You should be an antiracist.

But the problem is and there's a lot of complexity and we're going to work through this on Wednesday evenings, we can't do it today, there's not time but I want you to think about something with me. If the world is saying you should be offended, what does the church say? What is our response? How are we supposed to live? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The church are people who have learned to be poor in spirit, have a low estimate of themselves. To mourn over our sin more than we mourn over anything else, our own personal sin, not generational sin, not sins of past generations. No, God never deals with stuff like that the way the world is talking about that and the way it's coming to the church. We'll talk about that more on Wednesday evenings. The issue is individual repentance.

Ted mentioned earlier from 1 Corinthians 13, love hardly notices it when others do it wrong, keeps no record of wrongdoing. That's what love is like. If you have had the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, that's what you're called to. The elemental principles of the world blended in lead you to something else. One of the things that I do want to say a word about, social justice is a gospel issue. This is something that's said a lot. I've heard it said a number of times by some people I have a lot of respect for. Social justice is a gospel issue. Listen, there are issues related to justice that we need to look at and we need to think about, but we need to think about them more carefully than they're being thought about. There's a lot of data that has been talked about but a lot of data has been ignored and we need to be people, as Christians, who look at everything. We're not afraid to look at all of it.

But social justice is a gospel issue is just, I believe, biblically wrong the way that the world means it today and the way that evangelicals mean it today, and I think this is so obvious if you think about this. And I'm going to submit this to you, you consider it. It doesn't mean, justice, as a Christian you and I are called to treat one another and other people with justice, absolutely, and we are to call it out in the church when it's happening or not happening in the church. It can become a church discipline issue you can get put out of the church over if you won't repent or I won't repent. But the thing that I just can't get around and I wish more people were talking about this, when Jesus came, why did he say, "My kingdom is not of this world"? Why did Jesus not instruct his followers to work toward the abolition of slavery in the Roman Empire? Now listen, you hear me, I believe it was wonderful that slavery is abolished. I believe that God's word actually teaches the equal dignity of all people, that there should be none of that. There should never have been that, but nevertheless you've got to answer that question. Why did Jesus not address the issue? Why did Paul not address the issue? Why did Peter not address the issue? Why? Answer that question. Consider that. It's troubling, isn't it? It's unsettling.

I mean, I grieve over the wickedness of racial oppression that happened in our past. Recently there was the 100 year anniversary of what happened in Tulsa. I never knew about that and that's one of the problems we've had. We're not educated well enough about history. What a terrible and wicked thing. My family had roots that went to Tulsa thankfully after 1921 but how awful that was. How evil. What evil in the hearts of people to do something so heinous and so wicked.

But Jesus did not call the apostles to address the social issues of tyranny and oppression in the Roman Empire in the first century. You have to consider that question, why? Now I believe that what happens is when the gospel goes forth and it changes hearts, it changes institutions over time, and if you look at world mission's history, you'll see this. Every time the gospel goes into an area, things change structurally and justice-wise. Look at India and how the practice of burning wives on the funeral pyres of their husband who died, burning them alive on their husbands, ended. The salt of the gospel getting there exposed the evil and it changed practices, and that's what's going to happen with the gospel. But listen, we as Christians have to stay focused on the gospel of individual salvation, individual repentance. We can speak to the other things in its appropriate way but what's happening today is a merging of that and the distorting of the gospel.

The reason Jesus did not address the issue of slavery, the reason that Paul, I think we can infer is this. The illustration that I think is helpful is the illustration of triage. If you're an emergency room doctor and you're working on somebody, we are talking recently my dad had a trip to the emergency room some years back and he had a wound and he had fainted after they were messing with his broken bone, he has a tendency to faint a little bit so that happened and it was not surprising to him. But anyway, he's on a gurney. My mom gets to the hospital, my dad's in the hallway. Nobody is attending to him. Do you know why? Because a car accident happened and what happens when a car accident happens is if you have a broken finger and you have a broken arm or a broken leg, guess what? You have to wait because there's somebody that's in danger of dying.

Spiritually the gospel is of that magnitude, that if you get preoccupied with social issues, if you make that, not saying it doesn't have a place in your life but if you make that the main thing, you will bring the gospel down. Consider that prayerfully. Give me feedback. I'm reading on both sides of the issue but I cannot escape that reality. Jesus said nothing about these things. They wanted him to talk about the tyranny of Rome. They wanted to be delivered from the Romans, the way they were mistreating the Jews. That's where Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." And they said, "We've never been free." And they're talking about, "We've never been slaves to anyone," and they're really slaves to Rome. But he wasn't interested in delivering them from Rome as much, not that he wasn't at all, as much as he was delivering them from sin and the reign of Satan.

We have to keep the purity of the gospel. We can't let the elemental truths of the world be blended in. There are complex issues and we're going to work on them on Wednesday night beginning this Wednesday, and so pray for us as we and the elders work through these issues and talk about these things.

We didn't get to the third point. We'll come to that next week. I'm going to summarize it quickly. A costly and tragic outcome. The horror, the most ugly thing about it is not that the Christian church is plundered. That is terrible. It's not the fact that Christians are now not loving, not joyful, not filled with peace. That's tragic but what's most tragic is what it says about Jesus Christ. Paul is making a point throughout this passage about the fullness that we have, the wealth of all that Jesus is, and when you and I don't live rooted in the gospel, we don't live rooted in the wealth of all Christ is, we blaspheme the name of our Savior. We make it look like he's not worth following, one so great, so glorious. We'll talk more about that next week.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we thank You for the glory of the gospel. We thank You that You are a God who saves sinners and we know, Lord, we are all sinners. We are all selfish. We all seek our own way. We don't bow the knee as we ought to, to You apart from Your grace, but we thank You for the saving grace of Christ that opens the eyes of our hearts to see that our biggest problem is our sin, and to see the most precious thing in the world is the*

*forgiving grace of Jesus Christ. And so the greatest need of every other human being is to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way through salvation. Lord, we know there are many complex things in this world and there are many complicated arguments in this discussion we've talked about today, even there are many things that we need continued light from the word on, please help us. We want to walk together in truth. We want to walk together loving one another, walk together challenging one another, and provoking one another to love and good works. Help us, Lord, and help Your people to exhibit the wealth that is in Jesus, that we would be people who know the height, the width, the length and the breadth and know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we would be people who understand the peace that passes understanding, that we would be people to have joy unspeakable, full of glory, that we would be people who testify by our lives and by our hearts of the greatness of Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.*